Teaching about Religion in Public Schools: A Study of Media Discourse

By

Erica K. Johnson

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

M. Elizabeth Graue, Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Diana Hess, Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Simone A. Schweber, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Charles L. Cohen, Professor, Departments of History and Religious Studies

Travis Wright, Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Abstract

Anchored in reviews of the literature on teaching about religion in public schools, media portrayals of education, and media portrayals of religion, this study poses the following question: *How is teaching about religion in public schools portrayed in the media?* The author identifies four "camps" through the literature: the *clarifiers*, who seek to communicate that teaching about religions is legal and desirable; the *returners*, who seek to return prayer and Bible reading to public schools; the *fideists*, who claim that Scripture is sacred and should only be taught by believers for the purpose of spreading faith; and the *secularists*, who believe that a focus on religion will inevitably lead to sectarianism. Based on a sample of 251 news articles, 73 opinion articles, and 91 Internet blog posts published between January 1, 1980, and June 1, 2010, the author conducts a discourse analysis of six articles/posts from the sample and interviews 12 writers of articles/posts from the dataset. The author identifies and analyzes the following topics: (a) Bible-based courses (43%), (b) religion-focused social studies standards (37%), and (c) teaching about world religions (15%). Applying a theoretical framework developed by Walter R. Fisher's conception of the narrative paradigm and complemented by Walter J. Ong's notion of the fictionalized audience, interview analyses reveal three types of narratives writers invoke: *experience stories,* which detail events that occurred either to them personally or to someone they know; *imagined situations,* which concern writers' ideas about what they believe could or should happen in various circumstances; and narratives of *the way things are,* which provide snapshots of how the writers think about society. Major findings of this study include: (a) what people believe teaching about religion should look like in schools is related to their *narrative rationality*; (b) references to the culture war are evident in most media about this topic in that

writers either *rally the troops* or attempt to *convene a parley*; and (c) moving forward, the challenge for advocates is to determine when and how religious studies content can and should be integrated into the *education cycle*.

Chapter One

The Context for this Project

The purpose of this dissertation is to study a facet of the public discourse on teaching about religion in public schools. Specifically, I pose the following question: *How is teaching about religion in public schools portrayed in media?* Herein I examine how teaching about religion in public schools is portrayed in newspaper news and opinion articles and Internet blog posts (collectively referred to as *media* throughout). I also explore how media writers understand their roles and how their stories influence their writing. This layering (religion through education through media and media through writers' personal narratives) results in a discussion that is as revealing as it is complex since multiple lenses are being applied throughout—each with the power to reconstruct meaning for an audience.

Variously referred to as *teaching about religion(s)* (Haynes, 2011a; Lester, 2011), *religious studies* (W. A. Nord, 2002; Piediscalzi & Collie, 1977b), and *the academic study of religion* (Piediscalzi & Collie, 1977b), the idea of teaching about religion in public K-12 education is compatible with what is referred to as *religious studies* at the postsecondary level. Departments of religious studies are common in universities and colleges across the country. Religious studies is an inclusive, secular, multidisciplinary field with epistemological and methodological commitments rooted in the social sciences and humanities. It is the scholarly *neutral*, *nonadvocative* (W. A. Nord, 2002, 2010), and *inclusive* study of multiple religious traditions. According to Stephen Prothero (2007), "Religious studies explore[s] how other human beings … ruminate on sacred things … to understand what religious people say, believe, know, feel, and experience" (p. 8). For example, though Buddhism and Confucianism are often considered "philosophies" rather than "religions," per se, because they do not make references to

supernatural (God, or god-like) influences, religious studies would include these philosophies. In university departments of religious studies, one may find people studying religion and religious ideas (broadly conceived) through the theoretical lenses of feminism, critical theory, queer theory, post-structural theory, or postmodernism using anthropological, sociological, or philosophical frames and methods. There are many options for how to approach the study of religion.

Many of those who study religion as it relates to elementary and secondary schools do so through the lens of the ongoing "culture wars," focusing exclusively on the controversies that result from clashing worldviews (e.g., Bates, 1993; Binder, 2002; DelFattore, 2004; Gaddy, Hall, & Marzano, 1996; Greenawalt, 2005; Humes, 2007; Merino, 2008; R. M. Thomas, 2006; R. M. Thomas, 2007). For example, Amy J. Binder (2002) details four Creationist challenges to school curricula in which fundamentalist Christians (i.e., Biblical literalists) attempt to persuade schools to include the theory of divine creation or *creationism* in science courses as an alternative to the theory of evolution. Many of the books referenced above recount tales from the "front lines" of battles in the culture war, pitting members of the religious right against liberal secularists, labels that some believe serve to homogenize diverse groups (Herrington, 2000) and polarize the nation. Diane L. Moore (2007) writes that such "battles" (e.g., intelligent design and creationism versus evolution, abstinence-only education versus sex education) fuel those who hold extreme positions on these matters. She sees this as "reason enough to any concerned citizen to get involved with this debate if only to challenge the legitimacy of the terms of the discourse themselves" (p. xiv). In this project, I attempt to disentangle media discourse on teaching *about* religion from these battles by focusing on instances when religion is the explicit curricular focus rather than instances when religious thinking is the implicit byproduct of value-laden curricula.

My purpose in this chapter is to contextualize and discuss the research question through literature.[1] In the first section, *Religion Defined*, I discuss how various scholars operationally define religion in their writing. In the second section, *Religion in Public Schools*, I provide background on topics regarding the relationship between religion and public schools, including: religion in the curriculum; laws, statutes, and policies that govern its inclusion; the arguments invoked by proponents and opponents of its inclusion; and the challenges inclusion poses for teachers, schools, and teacher educators. In the third section, *Media and Agenda-Setting*, I provide my rationale for focusing on the media in this project. Finally, I close this chapter with a brief conclusion.

Religion Defined[2]

Teaching about religion in public schools would be infinitely easier if "religion" were straightforward to discuss or simple to define. However, as evidenced by the ways in which scholars of education, social science, and the humanities approach this definitional conundrum, defining religion is neither straightforward nor simple. For example, as a scholar who has studied schools, Emile Lester (2011) uses a broad categorization to discuss the challenges religion poses for a religiously pluralistic and democratic society in relation to religious tolerance (particularly in the face of religiously motivated intolerance): "religion is not a only crucial aspect of many Americans' identities; it is also the matrix that holds their identity together and shapes other crucial aspects of their identities" (pp. 19-20). Others, like Robert J. Nash (1999), use intertextual references to define religion by writing that he prefers:

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[1] In Chapter 2, I review literature on the media portrayal of schooling, education, and religion.

[2] This section focuses on defining religion from an academic perspective. To be sure, there are numerous ways to define religion from theological or devotional perspectives that this section does not address. The reason for this is that this dissertation is an academic work and this section serves to define religion operationally. Perspectives of religious devotees on issues of religious studies in public schools are addressed later in the chapter.

> The definition of religion in the *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (Smith, 1995), as "a system of beliefs and practices that are relative to superhuman beings" (p. 893) … [and adding that] throughout history, people have constructed a number of illuminating religious narratives, complete with appropriate symbols, doctrines, rituals, and moral precepts, in order to "mobilize the feelings and wills of human beings" (Smart, 1983, pp. 1, 7, 8). (p. 12)

Ronald D. Anderson (2004) describes religion by hypothesizing how most religious people would describe their own religions, imagining that they would include: (a) key beliefs people of their faith ascribe to (e.g., Christians would likely mention God and Jesus), (b) actions and interactions that are informed by their religions, and (c) a description of their morals and ethics, as informed by their religions.

Turning to literature in fields other than education, one traditional position on this topic is that "religion" represents supernatural or illusory practices or assertions and their corresponding behaviors (Pals, 2006). For scholars who support this position, the "secular" represents all that is logical, scientific, objective, and worldly (and therefore "real"):

> One notion that is generally taken to be characteristic of all that is religious is the notion of the supernatural. By that is meant any order of things that goes beyond our understanding; the supernatural is the world of mystery, the unknowable, or the incomprehensible. *Religion would then be a kind of speculation upon all that escapes science, and clear thinking in general.* (Durkheim, 1995, p. 22, emphasis added)

According to Freud (1961), this type of speculation (i.e., religion) "disregards" the relationship between the desire for wish fulfillment (which, in Freud's opinion is the basis for religious belief) and *objective reality*. Thus, religious belief, like illusion, "*sets no store by* [doesn't value]

verification" (p. 40, emphasis added). Similar to Freud, Marx argued that religion is an illusion, but one with nefarious origins and consequences: "[religion is] the most extreme example of ideology, or a belief system whose chief purpose is simply to provide reasons—excuses, really—for keeping things in society just as the oppressors like them" (Pals, 2006, p.132). For Durkheim, religion and religious behavior had wholly social purposes, serving to unify social groups and thereby distinguishing insiders from outsiders (Durkheim, 1995; Pals, 2006). Whatever the nature of the illusion, be it psychological (Freud, 1961), sociological (Durkheim, 1995; Pals, 2006), or politico-economic (Pals, 2006), in traditional academic depictions the religious is contrasted with all that represents "clear thinking."

Another approach to understanding religion is offered by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1991). Smith proposes separate intellectual categories for what he refers to as *cumulative traditions* and *faith*. Smith defines *cumulative traditions* as:

> The entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit, as it were, of the past religious life of the community in question: temples, scriptures, theological systems, dance patterns… and so on; anything that can be and is transmitted from one person, one generation, to another and that an historian can observe. (pp. 156- 157)

Conversely, his conception of *faith* refers to "an inner religious experience or involvement of a particular person; the impingement on him of the transcendent, putative or real" (p. 156). This designation flows from Smith's idea that "secular academics have regularly failed or refused to recognize that there is a transcendent dimension to human life at all" (p. 139). Smith suggests that academics refrain from using the word "religion" (though he does so throughout his writing) because it is "imprecise and liable to distort what [it is] asked to represent" (p. 125). Although Talal Asad (2001) criticizes Smith for failing to recognize that cumulative traditions and faith are

actually inseparable, Smith's critique of theorists who dichotomize the religious and secular serves to illuminate how the potential for people's subjective experiences to constitute reality for them is missing from their analyses. Smith also proposes that "the notion of human history might prove more intelligible if we learned to think of religion and the religions as adjectives rather than nouns—that is, as secondary to the persons or things rather than things in themselves" (p. 20). If religions are "secondary to the persons or things," then what is left is people, in all of their complexity.

Those who are sensitive to the subjective experiences of religious believers tend to shy away from strict definitions. They do not concern themselves with the essence of religion. On this matter, William James (1982) wrote:

> The theorizing mind tends always to the over-simplification of its materials. … let us rather admit freely at the outset that we may very likely find no one essence, but many characters which may alternatively be equally important in religion. (p. 26)

Others, like Huston Smith (1991), define through metaphor, thereby circumventing the dangers of essentializing the nature of what is or is not religious:

> The religions begin by assuring us that if we could see the full picture we would find it more integrated than we normally suppose. Life gives us no view of the whole. … It is as if life were a great tapestry, which we face from the wrong side. (p. 388)

These theorists are inclined to present observations and metaphors that contribute to their theories and, ultimately, lead their audiences to inductive ends. By refusing to strictly categorize what constitutes religion or the religious, these authors leave open a variety of interpretations and allow for the subjective reality of religious perspectives. Moreover, they refer to religious perspectives in terms that credit them with portraying (at least a type of) rationality.

As the one notable exception to the aforementioned shying away from definition, Mircea Eliade (1957) uses "the sacred" and "the profane" (terminology first used by Durkheim, 1995) to contrast the religious and the secular. In describing these categories, Eliade states that his analysis is concerned with "*the sacred in its entirety* . . . the first possible definition of the *sacred* is that it is the *opposite of the profane*" (p. 10, emphasis original) but expands this definition throughout his discussion by describing the ways in which the sacred and the profane are at once separable and indivisible. Eliade relates the corpus of religious history to hierophanies, or the revelations of the sacred, in saying that the history of the religious "is constituted by a great number of hierophanies, by manifestations of sacred realities" (p.11). He contends that the "religious man" spends his existence attempting to remain as close to the sacred as possible:

> Religious man's profound nostalgia is to inhabit a "divine world," [it] is his desire that his house shall be like the house of the gods . . . In short, this religious nostalgia expresses *the desire to love in a pure and holy cosmos, as it was in the beginning, when it came fresh from the Creator's hands*. (p. 65, italics original)

These hierophanies manifest in profane objects and places, thereby creating the sacred within the profane. Eliade steers his discussion of the sacred and the profane away from issues of rationality and irrationality and refers only to these "mysterious acts" as "sacred realities" which are "manifestations of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world" (p. 11). Though his use of the term "other-worldly" draws parallels to some of the rational/irrational theorizing of others, he diverges from them when he refers to these manifestations as "realities."

Eliade contends that the "religious man" believes there is "an absolute reality, which transcends this world, but manifests itself in this world" (p. 202). He posits that it is only in

modern societies of the West that the concept of the "nonreligious man" has fully developed, assuming a new "existential situation" in that he (non-religious man) "regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history," thereby refusing "all appeal to transcendence" (p. 203). However, Eliade contends that even the non- or anti-religious man,[3] in his attempt to "purify" himself from the superstitions of his ancestors, "cannot help preserving some vestiges of behavior of religious man, though they are emptied of religious meaning" (p. 204). Eliade argues that the irreligious man still behaves religiously, by retaining a large stock of "camouflaged myths and degenerated rituals" (p. 204) such as those of renewal, like New Year's, birth, and marriage. "In short," Eliade claims, "the majority of men 'without religion' still hold to pseudo religious and degenerated mythologies . . . [because] profane man is the descendant of *homo religiosus* and he cannot wipe out his own history," (p. 209) and because the unconscious has a "religious aura" (p. 210).

It is clear that no official consensus has been reached in either the education or broader academic community regarding a concise definition of religion.

Religion in Public Schools

Much debate has transpired over the place of religion in public schools. In the early years of the common school the idea of excluding "Christian instruction was unthinkable to most citizens" (Reese, 2005, p. 37). Religious groups wanted their own brand of religious instruction included in schools and supported by taxes. Indeed, over the course of the twentieth century, numerous cases traveled up the judicial ladder over the issue of federal funding, to what extent it can be used to support sectarian schools, and whether public school time and space may be used

[3] Throughout this chapter many quotes include the term "man." Please read all instance of the word "man" as if the [sic] follows it, even though it doesn't appear.

for religious instruction (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). According to Kern Alexander and M. David Alexander (2005), over the past 150 years:

> The effort to secularize the public schools [has been] a long-running melodrama that has produced much antipathy toward public schools. As a plethora of Supreme Court decisions indicate…attempts at incursions into public schools by religious groups are an unceasing phenomenon. (p. 211)

Despite these efforts, officially, public schools themselves have become increasingly non-sectarian over time. According to William Reese (2005), in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, public schools:

> By custom, the teachers began the school day with the Lord's Prayer and excerpts from the King James version of the Bible, usually read without comment. Protestants congratulated themselves for their magnanimity and open-mindedness in doing so, since this was part of their celebrated non-denominational ethos. (p. 36)

Though this form of "non-sectarianism" is sectarian by today's standards, this was a controversial stance for the era.

Religion in public life has been a topic of regulation since the inception of the United States as a nation. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (U.S. Const., amend. I.). There has been wide disagreement about what these words truly mean for the country, its government, and its citizens. One common interpretation connects these clauses (the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause, respectively) to Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in January 1802, in which he writes:

> Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. (The Library of Congress, 2011)

The idea that the Establishment Clause "builds wall of separation between church and state" has been influential in many federal, circuit, and Supreme Court decisions and influences popular rhetoric around issues of religion and education.

In 1948, the Supreme Court held that "release time" for religious instruction in public schools, regardless of it voluntary nature, was unconstitutional (*McCollum v. Board of Education*, 1948). In 1962, the Court ruled that it was unconstitutional for school officials to compose an official school prayer and encourage its recitation (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962). The following year, it held that state-enforced Bible reading and prayer in the public schools are unconstitutional (*Abington v. Schempp*, 1963).[4] In the *Abington* decision, Justice Clark also recognized that a "breach of neutrality that is today a trickling stream may all too soon become a raging torrent…." The Court subsequently ruled that a state statute authorizing a period for meditation or voluntary prayer in public schools (*Wallace v. Jaffree*, 1985), nonsectarian prayer at school graduation (*Lee v. Weisman*, 1992), and a school district policy permitting student-led prayer at football games (*Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*, 2000) all violate the

[4] Specifically, the court held that a Pennsylvania Statute requiring that "at least ten verses from the Holy Bible shall be read" without comment at the beginning of the school day and a Maryland law requiring Bible reading or the recitation of the Lord's Prayer are intended as religious exercises and, therefore, unconstitutional in public schools. *Murray v. Curlett* (the Maryland case) was consolidated with *Abington v. Shempp* (the Pennsylvania case) on appeal.

Establishment Clause. Situations in which circuit courts have rendered different decisions throughout the country (as was the case with prayer at graduation before *Lee*) and about which the Supreme Court has yet to comment leave school boards open to litigation and controversy (Black, 2003).

Though school-sponsored (and therefore government-sponsored) prayer has been officially cast out of public schools, this has not ended the practice. For example, in 2008 a Delaware mother's request that prayers at a local high school graduation be "more generic and less exclusionary" and avoid "proclaiming Jesus as the only way to the truth" incited a flurry of protests, which eventuated in her moving her children to another town (Banerjee, 2008). Schools throughout the country continue to sponsor group prayer. Whether this practice and those like it should be seen as resistance to or ignorance of court decisions is difficult to surmise. Most likely, these practices constitute some combination of the two.

Regarding teaching about religion in public schools, it was the *Abington v. Schempp* decision in 1963 that generated the most questions regarding the school curriculum. Delivering the majority opinion of the court in *Abington*, Justice Clark wrote that:

> It might well be said that *one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion* or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be affected consistently with the First Amendment. (emphasis added)

Though Justice Clark's idea that "one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion" (1963) is a statement on permissibility rather than a mandate

for schools, it has been used as justification for many different approaches to incorporating the study of religion in public school curricula (e.g., Haynes & Thomas, 2001a; Piediscalzi & Collie, 1977b; Webb, 2002).

References to the words of Justice Clark are commonplace. For example, in the first chapter of their 1977 book (where Justice Clark is quoted in the first chapter), *Teaching About Religion in Public Schools*, Nicholas Piediscalzi and William E. Collie write that their purpose is:

> To provide a response to the numerous requests of interested school officials, teachers, and members of the public who have become aware of the fact that religion studies legally can take place in a public school setting and who favor its inclusion in the curriculum but who ask the practical question: How can it be done? (p. 1)

More recently in the introduction to *Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools* (Haynes & Thomas, 2001a), which provides guidelines for taking religion seriously across the curriculum, John Seigenthaler (2001) writes that:

> Many school administrators and teachers worried that *Finding Common Ground* [first published in 1994] was a radical, even a dangerous idea. They feared that Haynes' vision was naïve and if put into practice would fly in the face of court rulings. They were concerned that it would invite lawsuits and incite further controversy. In fact, teaching ***about*** religion was an eminently rational and timely idea. In no sense was it radical. Fears that it would stimulate lawsuits were groundless. Concerns that it would drive people apart were wrongheaded. In fact, once in place the program actually helped resolve many community conflicts, both legal and ideological. In action, Haynes' initiative comported

> perfectly with a stream of Supreme Court decisions dating back almost four decades to an opinion crafted by Justice Tom Clark. (p. vii, emphasis original)

The National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (2012) also invokes Justice Clark's words on their website as evidence for the legality of their curriculum guide, *The Bible in History and Literature*.

In addition to Justice Clark's *Abington* decision, among other oft-cited sources for supporting teaching about religion in public schools is The U.S. Department of Education's (1995) guidelines on religion and public schools:

> Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach <u>about</u> religion, including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies. Although public schools may teach about religious holidays, including their religious aspects, and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays, schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observance by students. (para. 28, emphasis original)

In its statement "Study About Religions in the Social Studies Curriculum," the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] (1998) notes that:

> The NCSS Curriculum Standards for Social Studies state that "Students in social studies programs must study the development of social phenomena and concepts over time; must have a sense of place and interrelationships… ; must understand institutions and processes that define our democratic republic…" The study about religions, then, has "a

> rightful place in the public school curriculum because of the pervasive nature of religious beliefs, practices, institutions, and sensitivities." Knowledge about religions is not only a characteristic of an educated person but is absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity. Knowledge of religious differences and the role of religion in the contemporary world can help promote understanding and alleviate prejudice. … Study about religions may be dealt with in special courses and units or wherever and whenever knowledge of the religious dimension of human history and culture is needed for a balanced and comprehensive understanding. (paras. 3-4)

Even though teaching about religion is permitted and many consider it to be important, how it ought to be incorporated into K-12 schools and curricula is a source of disagreement.

Shortly after the *Abington* decision, what I refer to as *the return movement* and *the clarification movement* began. The clarifiers began writing guidelines, articles, and books to assist administrators and teachers on matters of legality and to help support appropriate inclusion of religion—practices that are still common today (e.g., Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, 2008; Greenawalt, 2005; Haynes & Thomas, 2001a; Lupu, Masci, & Tuttle, 2007). The first set of guidelines, written by James V. Panoch and David Barr in 1968 (shortly after the *Abington* decision), employed what have been referred to as "pair-words" to help school officials determine what is legal and illegal for them to pursue with children (Piediscalzi & Collie, 1977a). These pair-words continue to be used, with slight variations (e.g., Haynes & Thomas, 2001a; Moore & AAR Religion in the Schools Task Force, 2010; Mountain Brook Board of Education, 2011):

> 1. The school may sponsor the *study* of religion, but should not sponsor the *practice* of religion.

2. The school may *expose* students to a variety of religious views, but should not *impose* any particular view.

3. The school's approach to religion is one of *instruction*, not one of *indoctrination*.

4. The function of the school is to *educate* about religions, not to *convert* to any one religion.

5. The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.

6. The school may teach about different beliefs, but should not teach a student what he or she should believe.

7. The school may strive for student *awareness* of various religions, but should not press for student *acceptance* of any one religion.

8. The school may seek to *inform* the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to *conform* him or her to any one belief.

Around the same time, the return movement began its quest to have Bible reading, prayer, and other religious devotions returned to schools (e.g., Bennett, 1970).[5] Supported by a small number of scholarly works (e.g., Jeynes, 2009), efforts in this vein include congressional legislation (Boles, 1984; Wood, 1984) proposing to "eliminate or sharply restrict the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction in matters involving religion in schools" (Boles, 1984, p. 55) and other initiatives designed to authorize Bible reading (Boles, 1984) and to introduce courses that focus on the Bible as literature or history (Chancey, 2007b). Both groups have had successes in different areas of the country. While the clarifiers focus their efforts on teacher professional development and curricular resources (e.g., Haynes & Thomas, 2001a), the returners focus on

[5] One of the approaches to "Bible-based" curricula discussed in Chapter 4 is a current iteration of what I refer to as the "return movement."

political avenues to incorporation (e.g., National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, 2010b).

Religion regulated. One of the primary reasons there are so many sets of guidelines, articles, and books on teaching about religion in public schools (e.g., Haynes & Thomas, 2001a; Moore & AAR Religion in the Schools Task Force, 2010; Piediscalzi & Collie, 1977b) is to equip teachers and other school officials with recommendations for teaching about religion without infringing on students' constitutional rights and becoming embroiled in lawsuits. Another reason is because there are so many federal regulations, state statutes, and local policies regulating religion in government-sponsored spaces (like schools) and religious speech by individuals who represent the state (like public schools teachers) to impressionable audiences (like students). To address religion without at least a cursory study of these regulations would be ill-advised because "public education arguably involves the largest and most varied number of policy-making participants of any of our nation's fundamental institutions" (S. P. Brown & Bowling, 2003, p. 260).

Notably, it is not only the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and interpretations of its implications that concern the treatment of religion in public schools. Each state approaches religion (and religion in public schools) differently, with various references to religion and schools in state constitutions (Wood, 1984), state codes, and state education standards (Douglass, 2000). For example, contrasting Wisconsin, Washington, Florida, and Arizona, one will find starkly different approaches. While a Wisconsin statute allows for students to be excused from up to three hours of school per week for religious instruction (The State of Wisconsin, 2011), Washington State's statutes only mention religion in a short reference to the state constitution which stipulates that "All schools maintained or supported wholly or in part by the public funds

shall be forever free from sectarian control or influence" (The State of Washington, 2012). The state codes of Arizona and Florida both specifically mention the study of the Bible. An Arizona statute (2012) calls on the state board of education to design standards specific to the study of the Bible and specifies the content of such a course:

> A. The state board of education shall include in history or English arts standards, or both, concepts that include: 1. The history and literature of the old testament[6] era. 2. The history and literature of the new testament era. …
>
> E. A course offered under this section shall be designed to: 1. Familiarize pupils with the contents, characters, poetry and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory and public policy.
>
> 2. Familiarize pupils with the following: (a) The contents of the old testament and the new testament. (b) The history recorded by the old testament and the new testament.
>
> (c) The literary style and structure of the old testament and the new testament. (d) The influence of the old testament and the new testament on laws, history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values and culture. …
>
> G. A pupil shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the old testament or the new testament… (paras. 1- 12)

Similarly, a Florida statute allows for both the study of the Bible and religion (as well as a daily, brief meditation/prayer period):

> Permitting study of the Bible and religion; permitting brief meditation period—

[6] The words "old testament" and "new testament" are not capitalized in the state code.

> (1) The district school board may install in the public schools in the district a secular program of education including, but not limited to, an objective study of the Bible and of religion.
>
> (2) The district school board may provide that a brief period, not to exceed 2 minutes, for the purpose of silent prayer or meditation be set aside at the start of each school day or each school week in the public schools in the district. (The State of Florida, 2012)[7]

The amount of guidance teachers and administrators are provided on the inclusion of religion in the curriculum varies immensely by state and, at times, conflicts with Supreme Court rulings.

State boards of education also vary in their approach to religion in public schools. For example, the Virginia History and Social Science standards for high school (Virginia Department of Education, 2012) mention the words "religion" or "religious" 18 times, stipulating that students will learn about the influence of religion in three different historical eras from 1000 B.C. [*sic*] though to 1650 A.D. [*sic*] and religious changes, conflicts, and freedoms from that point to the present. The Colorado Academic Standards for high school social studies (The Colorado Department of Education, 2012) mention the words religion and religious four times, focusing on religious conflicts, religious thought, the effect of religious traditions on the development of political institutions, and the overarching role of religion in U.S. history.

Though jurisprudence related to the U.S. Constitution is applicable in every state in the country, state constitutions, codes, and standards only affect specific states—and there are few across-the-board commonalities upon which one can rely. Books that advocate teaching about religion in public schools rarely account for state-to-state differences and instead focus on the

[7] To my understanding of case law, the Florida statute allowing for "a brief period, not to exceed 2 minutes, for the purpose of silent prayer or meditation" is unconstitutional in light of *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 1985.

implications of the U.S. Constitution and Supreme Court decisions. Teaching about religion in public schools has been deemed worthy of the attention of some state legislatures and most school boards. Yet, though many scholars and organizations (e.g., Lester, 2011; Moore, 2007; Moore & AAR Religion in the Schools Task Force, 2010; W. A. Nord, 1990; Prothero, 2007) claim that religion is an under-taught topic that deserves greater recognition, no large-scale research has been conducted regarding how public school teachers incorporate teaching about religion in classrooms across the country.

Regardless of school practices (though a worthy area for future research), there seems to be a disconnect among scholars in this area, who generally believe religion should be given more attention, politicians and bureaucrats, who believe teaching about religion can and should be controlled and regulated, and members of the public, some of whom are under the impression that it is unlawful to teach about religion or use Bibles in public schools (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010). The purpose of this project is to better understand how newspapers and blogs, as means of communication between these groups (Rubin & Staples, 1996), mediates this disconnect.

Advocates. Convincing audiences that religion is important and should be taught about is seen as an important first step in its gaining acceptance as an integral component of public school curricula (R. D. Anderson, 2004). Considering this, most proponents of teaching about religion in public schools begin their treatises by outlining myriad reasons that teaching about religion would benefit students and society.

Many authors (e.g., Hall, 2012; Haynes, 2011a; Keating, 2011; Prothero, 2007) use measures of the American public's religious (il)literacy and cite national survey data as evidence that public schools do not currently (but should) teach about religion. On one such survey (The

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010) containing 32 religious knowledge question items, respondents answered only half of them correctly on average. While at least two-thirds of the respondents knew that Mother Theresa was Catholic (82%) and an atheist is someone who does not believe in God (85%), only about half knew that the Quran[8] is the Islamic holy book (54%), the Dalai Lama is Buddhist (47%), or that the Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday (45%). Regarding teaching about religion in public school, 89% of the respondents knew that teachers could not lead a class in prayer and 68% knew that the "Constitution says government shall neither establish nor interfere with religion," [*sic*] but only 36% knew that public schools could offer a comparative religion course and 23% knew that teachers can read from the Bible as an example of literature.

Many who invoke the religious illiteracy justification (e.g, Lester, 2011; Moore, 2007; Prothero, 2007) cite the well-documented instances of hate speech that occurred across the country in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 as evidence that our religious illiteracy needs to be rectified. For example, in *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy*, Moore (2007) states that:

> It is well known that in the wake of the terrorist attacks Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and people who were perceived by others to be of Middle Eastern and South Asian descents were targeted with hate crimes due to their presumed affiliation with terrorism. … Though I am not suggesting that our widespread religious illiteracy is the sole cause of these phenomena, I do contend that our lack of understanding about the ways that religion itself is an integral dimension of social/historical/political experience coupled

[8] There are numerous ways to spell the name of the Islamic Holy Book in English: Quran, Qur'an, Koran, among others. Throughout this dissertation, I use the spelling "Quran" in my writing, but when quoting others, I use their spelling.

> with our ignorance about the specific tenets of the world's religious traditions significantly hinder our capacity to function as engaged, informed and responsible citizens of our democracy. (pp. 3-4)

The argument herein is that robust ignorance coupled with the unparalleled anger many felt in response to the actions of terrorists led to hate crimes aimed at innocent Americans and foreign nationals. Many propose that these situations could have been prevented if we, as a nation, were more religiously literate.

Others contend that in order to understand what constitutes fair treatment for people of different religious orientations, one must first know something about them (Moore, 2007; Passe & Willox, 2009). For Moore (2007), finding common civic ground is about learning as much as possible about diverse perspectives and attempting to create spaces in which everyone could be comfortable expressing his or her beliefs. In order to maintain civic agreements for coexistence and cohabitation, Moore believes schools and districts must aim to nurture justice-disposed students who contribute to the co-(re)creation of society, wherein people of all faiths, no faith, and all traditions are treated with fairness and respect. This position is also supported by Caroline Branch (2007), who states that "increased religious literacy will better equip citizens to integrate the nation's basic commitment to religious freedom into domestic and foreign policies" (p. 451). According to Emile Lester (2011):

> To ensure a more inclusive American democracy in the future, *they should teach students that a robust respect for religious freedom involves the right of all believers*—especially those newest to America's religious landscape—not only to practice their beliefs but to express their religious identities, views, and values in public without inhibition. (Lester, 2011, p. 3, emphasis added)

This argument forwards the notion that it is the responsibility of schools to nurture students to respect the rights of all believers (and nonbelievers) to express their views and values in public. According to these scholars, the best way for students to learn that the expression of views is acceptable and encouraged is to work within a community (e.g., a school or classroom) where this type of expression is respected (Lester, 2011; Moore, 2007; Webb, 2002).

Some argue that exposing students to multiple perspectives and worldviews is a necessary component of a complete education (Dever, Whitaker, & Byrnes, 2001; Nash, 1999; Nash & Bishop, 2010; W. A. Nord, 1995, 2010; Rosenblith & Bailey, 2007) since "religious worldviews provide alternative frameworks from which to critique normative cultural assumptions" (Moore, 2007, p. 4). Barbara Curry and Neil Houser (1997) believe that schools should adopt a "moderate secularism" wherein they "promote critical investigation into the nature of spirituality itself and authentic inquiry into the philosophical aspects of various forms of religion" (p. 53). Doret de Ruyter and Michael Merry (2009) argue for the teaching of religious "ideals" as a way to understand religion from an adherent's perspective. Warren Nord and Charles C. Haynes (1998) use a legal framework to support their case for teaching various ways of making sense of the world:

> For more than 50 years, ever since it first applied the First Amendment to the states, the Supreme Court has held that government, and therefore the public schools, must be *neutral* in matters of religion—neutral among religions, and neutral between religion and nonreligion. It is not proper for public schools to take sides on religiously contested questions. … To be truly neutral they must be truly *fair*—and this means including in the curriculum religious and well as secular ways of making sense of the world when we

> disagree. Government can no more inhibit religion than promote it. (p. 8, emphasis original)

In other words, their view is that to teach any subject from a solely secular perspective is to privilege the secular worldview over competing (religious, spiritual, etc.) worldviews. In their words, "It is important to remember—and to remind students—that the disagreements among different religious and secular traditions are about *what the truth is*" (W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998, p. 54, emphasis original). The purpose of discussing multiple worldviews in school is to facilitate conversations concerning truth rather than to decide what truth is and present it as such. They believe that to be truly neutral, multiple perspectives must be considered.

Ronald D. Anderson (2004) states that there is still room for improvement in public schools in terms of acknowledging religion as part of the spectrum of multiculturalism: "Multiculturalism… has given important and significant attention to … pluralism and diversity in terms of gender, ethnic and racial matters… diversity with respect to religion and spirituality has not received comparable attention, though many would claim it deserves it" (p. 2). According to Nash and Bishop (2010):

> The ideal that teaching students to understand and respect diverse religious beliefs is yet another, very important way to "honor" multiculturalism. To put it succinctly, as committed multicultural pluralists, we believe that students, regardless of their religious beliefs (or lack of them), ought always to be treated with respect, understanding, and integrity. Moreover, they ought to be enthusiastically invited into the multicultural conversation as worthy participants who have much to teach all of us. (p. 6)

Although Nash and Bishop present one of the first cogent arguments for including religious diversity in a multicultural framework, others argue in this vein without invoking the term. For example, Lester (2011) states that:

> The public school curriculum—what it includes and what it lacks—also sends a potent symbolic message to communities in the present. Public schools send a powerful democratic message when the curriculum models full inclusion and when they provide each ground with a sense of ownership over the curriculum. But they fail to be truly public when any significant group feels its values and views are simply ignored. (p. 3)

In other words, this view contends that including the study of religion in the curriculum would help to provide students who may feel marginalized with a sense of belonging and ownership over the curriculum.

In 1988, a group of religious and educational organizations endorsed a statement of principles entitled *Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answe*rs (W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998). Sponsored jointly by the American Academy of Religion, the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Jewish Congress, Americans United Research Foundation, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Christian Legal Society, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the First Amendment Center, The Islamic Society of North America, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Conference of Community and Justice, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Education Association, and the National School Boards Association, this statement, referred to as the New Consensus (W. A. Nord &

Haynes, 1998), describes the importance of teaching about religion. Describing why and where religion should be included in the curriculum, it stipulates that:

> Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art and contemporary life unintelligible. [Religion should be included] wherever it naturally arises. On the secondary level, the social studies, literature and the arts offer many opportunities for the inclusion of information about religions — their ideas and themes. On the elementary level, natural opportunities arise in discussions of the family and community life and in instruction about festivals and different cultures. Many educators believe that integrating study about religion into existing courses is an educationally sound way to acquaint students with the role of religion in history and society. Religion also may be taught about in special courses or units. Some secondary schools, for example, offer such courses as world religions, the Bible as literature, and the religious literature of the West and of the East. (Haynes & Thomas, 2001a, pp. 90-91)

This New Consensus, per se, is among scholars, advocates, and religious organizations. Though its recommendations are legally sound, dissenting voices persist and they are not typically emphasized within the literature.

An analysis of state education standards found that religion is referred to directly or indirectly in most state standards documents, with a high concentration of references in standards developed for students in fifth through eighth grades (Douglass, 2000). On the level of practice,

much of the information about what actually occurs in public school classrooms comes from advocates of specific approaches or proprietors of specific programs reporting on where their ideas or materials are being implemented (e.g., National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, 2010c). Access to information on religious studies courses is limited by the fact that many teachers use an integrated approach to teaching about religion, wherein religion is included in the curriculum when it naturally arises topically and thematically (Collie & Apt, 1978). Other data are supplied by academic researchers who periodically conduct surveys and university-housed centers, such as the Public Education Religious Studies Center (Wright State University 1976-77), the National Council on Religion and Public Education (Indiana University in Pennsylvania, 1971 to mid-1990s), and the Religion and Public Education Resource Center (California State University-Chico, 1995-current) (Religion and Public Education Resource Center, 2012).

In 1978, William E. Collie and Madeline H. Apt referred to religion studies as a "growing trend" (p. 547) in secondary education. With the help of the Internet, today there is a growing mass of information available for interested parties to peruse. From guidelines regarding what can and cannot be legally taught in public school classrooms (Haynes & Thomas, 2001a; Moore & AAR Religion in the Schools Task Force, 2010) and ideas for integration (Dever et al., 2001), to comprehensive information on various religious traditions (e.g., Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, 2012), to formal certificate programs like the Religious Studies and Education Certificate offered through Harvard Extension School (2012), a teacher who is interested in designing a course or incorporating teaching about religion into his to her classroom has many options for self-education. Despite the information available for teachers

and curriculum writers, calls for more attention to religion in public schools persist, often premised on the idea that (though resources are far from scarce) this topic is being ignored.

Advocates of teaching about religion in public school do concede that there are problems that still need to be addressed (Black, 2003). One concern is that many teachers do not have backgrounds in the study of religion from an academic perspective. In turn, calls have been made for more study of high quality teaching that incorporates the study of religion in various U.S. contexts. As Nord and Haynes (1998) recognize:

> One might expect there to be a vast scholarly literature that deals with the role of religion in the public school curriculum. After all, the public square is often filled with smoke from battles over religion and schooling… and yet, with only a few exceptions, scholars and schools of education have ignored our subject. (p. v)

Nord (2010) reports that his "sense of the matter is that teacher education programs and schools of education are largely tone-deaf to religion" (p. 202) and that most scholars who "take seriously the idea of taking religion seriously in the curriculum… are in fields other than education" (p. 202).

Conversely, Nash (1999) notes that many people who advocate for the study of religion in public school curricula (like Nord and Haynes) have not talked about the "*what* and *how* of dealing with religion in the actual classroom; they prefer, understandably, to concentrate on the why, along with more controversial policy issues" (p. 6). Nash finds this preference understandable because pedagogy is not their primary field of study; many are philosophers or experts in religious studies. With some notable exceptions (detailed in the next section), most authors emphasize content (e.g., the importance of various worldviews, the role of empathy, the importance of considering live religious ideas, the ideal of discussion-based classes) rather than

approaches to instruction. Though these types of recommendations are valuable for teachers who have some background in religious studies, they do not address teaching and the complexities of working with diverse students quite clearly enough to be of much use to teachers without such a background.

Suggestions for teaching *about* religion in the public school curriculum. Many approaches to teaching about religion have been suggested by scholars. Many recommend that teachers prepare specific content for presentation to audiences of students (implying a teacher-centered approach). Moore (2007) suggests utilizing a student-centered, *problem-posing* approach to instruction that engages and challenges all students, regardless of background knowledge and religious orientation. Similarly, Robert J. Nash and Penny A. Bishop (2010) and Nash (1999) take a narrative approach to discussing a variety of worldviews (religious worldviews, among others) to "model the kind of respectful and generous dialogue about religions that [they] hope to encourage in middle and high school classrooms" (p. 18).

Most authors who make recommendations about how teachers could or should teach about religion in public schools do so through a developmental lens. Early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school recommendations are considered separately. There are few, if any, specific recommendations for how to address religion with early childhood students, but as Nancy Carlsson-Paige (2001) puts it: "Children's spiritual questions and ideas can come to school if teachers can find ways to let them in… teachers can listen for these ideas and accept them openly" (p. 24). Ben Mardell and Mona Abo-Zena (2010) provide an example of this type of conversation between kindergarteners at snack time:

> Max: You know who made flowers? God. Who made clouds? God. That's what my mom told me.

Emily: Just because your mom says he's real doesn't mean he is real.

Robert: Who made the first person on earth?

Max: God.

Emily: Gorillas. People evolved from gorillas and started to lose their hair to be more like people.

Max: God made the first person on Earth. The first people are Adam and Eve. I'm sure God is the one. Gorillas can't talk. They do nothing.

Emily: That's not true.

Max: It is true. Gorillas are not a person that has magic. (p. 12)

Mardell and Abo-Zena (2010) state that "because early childhood is the genesis of knowledge about and dispositions toward differences, it is a good time for guided explorations of different beliefs that can help children develop healthy attitudes toward others and themselves" (p. 13). For these authors, learning about religion in the early childhood classroom is about setting the stage—opening the classroom to dialogue based on children's questions, concerns, and experiences. It is about a creating classroom environment where conversations, such as the one above, are permitted. By allowing these types of conversations, Mardell and Abo-Zena maintain that students will begin to understand that people have different beliefs. For some this could be their first exposure to the concept of religious pluralism.

Regarding the elementary level, Nord and Haynes (1998) recognize that "An elementary school curriculum that ignores religion gives students the false message that religion doesn't matter to people—that we live in a religion-free world... [which] is neither fair nor accurate" (p. 75). They state that the priorities for these grade levels are for students to learn "that we are different in how we understand the world" and "that our civic agreements protect our right to be

different" (p. 68). Therefore, Nord and Haynes recommend that teachers include "some basic knowledge of the religious beliefs and practices of others and a commitment to our civic framework of religious liberty" (p. 68) as part of the elementary school curriculum through activities such as learning about diverse holidays and traditions, using student-initiated art and religious symbols as teaching tools, reading and discussing children's literature that include religious ideas and motifs, and teaching through attribution (e.g., "many Christians believe…") (Kollar, 2009; W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998). Nord and Haynes see the inclusion of teaching about religion ramping up as students mature: "Only as children become more mature should teachers ask them to think more critically about differences among religions and within religions—and, of course, the tensions between religious and secular ways of understanding the world" (p. 62). Though they believe ignoring religion in the elementary school curriculum communicates an inaccurate message to children, they state that teachers of elementary-aged students should proceed with caution when addressing it, advising against the use of role play in lessons (for fear of crossing over into "practicing" religion) and only discussing religion around December holidays (thereby likely focusing on Christmas and Hanukkah and ignoring religions other than Christianity and Judaism and their holidays). From these recommendations, one can infer that the study of religion, like any other school subject, should be addressed in a way that is consistent with the practices of the individual classrooms and the developmental stages of the students.

The majority of those who support teaching about religion in public schools focus on how and what to teach in middle (e.g., Ayers & Reid, 2005; Bishop & Nash, 2007) and high schools (e.g., Moore, 2007; Rosenblith & Bailey, 2007), or through particular subjects, like social studies (Passe & Willox, 2009). At these levels, two approaches to incorporating religion in the

curriculum are recommended by scholars: natural inclusion throughout the curriculum (i.e., including religion whenever and wherever it is relevant) and courses dedicated to religious studies (Lester, 2011; W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998; Prothero, 2007). Nord and Haynes (1998) and Nord (2010) provide various ideas for incorporating religion-centric content and religious perspectives in subject areas across the curriculum including history, civics and economics, literature and the arts, the sciences, and moral education. It is important to note that, to some, "natural inclusion" means more than simply mentioning religion in history and literature when appropriate—it means considering religious perspectives as alternatives in *all* courses, thereby not favoring a secular worldview over a religious worldview in any course (W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998). In a book written shortly before his death, Nord (2010) reversed his previous recommendations for the inclusion of religious perspectives across the curriculum and, instead, argues for a required religious studies course. He arrives at this conclusion based on his beliefs that (a) with the amount of material that must be "crammed" into most courses, religion would not receive the attention it is due, (b) teaching about religion "requires sophistication" and many educators are poorly prepared to teach about religion, and (c) the disciplinary structure of the curriculum makes including religion in biology or economics "unnatural" (p. 196). Others, like Lester (2007), argue for "religious denominations themselves to play a significant role in determining the representation of their religion in a religious education" (p. 204).

Addressing both of Nord and Haynes's (1998) suggested avenues for incorporation (natural inclusion and dedicated religious studies courses), Moore (2007) recommends taking a cultural studies approach to teaching about religion. To Moore, this means an approach that is "multidisciplinary in that it assumes that religion is deeply imbedded in all dimensions of human experience and therefore requires multiple lenses through which to understand its multivalent

social/cultural influences" (p. 79). To Moore, a cultural studies approach: (a) "challenges the legitimacy of the assumption that human experience can be accurately studied through a discrete disciplinary lens" (p. 79); (b) recognizes that "all knowledge claims are 'situated' claims in that they arise out of certain social/historical/cultural/personal contexts and therefore represent particular and necessarily partial perspectives" (p. 79); and (c) acknowledges that "the lens of the interpreter is also one that is situated and therefore partial, biased, and particular" (p. 80). Also, this approach "explicitly addresses issues related to power and powerlessness" and "self-consciously affirms the political dimensions of the educational enterprise" (p. 80).

In their study of the one required public school course on world religions and religious liberty known to exist in the U.S. (taught in Modesto, California over a nine-week period in ninth grade), Emile Lester and Patrick S. Roberts (2006) found that the course had a positive impact on students' respect for religious liberty, support of the basic First Amendment and political rights of others, knowledge of religions and the Bill of Rights, and appreciation for the similarities between religions. Notably, the course did "not stir up any notable controversy in the community" (p. 6), likely due to teacher training and how the subject was framed and presented.

Those who advocate for more attention to religion in public schools suggest certain adjustments teacher education programs can make to improve the status quo, including: (a) working with university religious studies departments to offer courses for prospective teachers in order to address matters of religion in the public school (R. D. Anderson, 2004; Moore, 2007; Nash, 1999; W. A. Nord, 1995, 2010), (b) making "religious studies" a certifiable field of teaching (W. A. Nord, 2010), (c) attending to religion in portions of the teacher education program related to multicultural education (R. D. Anderson, 2004), and (d) encouraging pre-service teachers to contemplate issues of religious faith and practice as well as their place in

pluralist democracies and to challenge their own cultural assumptions (Barton & James, 2010; Yob, 1994). Anderson further argues that teaching practices will not change unless teachers' attitudes and values (i.e., what they think is important) change. Moore (2007) states that though:

> The study of religion has been increasingly incorporated in state standards and frameworks… [the] correspondingly few teacher training opportunities or resources available for teachers to learn for themselves about the study of religion… [results in instructors who are] informed by ignorance, stereotype and unexamined sectarianism. (p. 4)

Advocates of teaching about religion in public schools see the education of teachers, administrators, and the public in general as an important first step in achieving their goals.

Opposition. Notably, this "cause" is not supported by all (e.g., Baer & Carper, 2000). Moore (2007) provides the example that "many orthodox practitioners from a variety of traditions object on the grounds that they believe the academic approach to the study of religion (as opposed to the devotional approach) contradicts theological convictions" (p. 6) and should not be included in the curriculum.[9] Others object to teaching about religion in public schools due to their belief that "sectarian biases will inevitably prevail when religion is taught in public school" (p. 6). However, as an advocate, Moore contends that religion is already being taught—oftentimes poorly, based on understandings rooted in stereotype and ignorance. Given this, her aim is to "help educators recognize how religion is deeply imbedded in our culture and to be more transparent about how it is addressed and engaged" (p. 6).

Though published criticism is not common, presumably because opponents choose to write on topics they find more deserving of their attention (e.g., Doerr, 1998), it does exist. For

[9] See also: (Nash & Bishop, 2010)

example, arguing that secular humanism is a form of religion when religion is understood functionally, in their article written from an evangelical Christian perspective, Richard Baer and James Carper (2000) state that:

> In the broad, functional sense of the term *religious*, all education is inescapably religious. Every coherent curriculum rests on certain foundational beliefs about human nature, what the good life is like, how we ought to live, and so forth, and there simply is no neutral way to deal with these questions, and this is true whether we think of neutrality among different religions or neutrality between the religious and the secular. (p. 610, emphasis original)

In other words, Bear and Carper argue that if schools preserve a set of core beliefs through the implementation of their instructional programs, then they are teaching a functional form of religion. They conclude that the only answer to this legal conundrum is to institute universal school choice and release time. This position is distinct from that held by those I have referred to as part of the "return" movement. On the topic of teaching the Bible as literature, Baer and Carper write:

> Is it objective to teach the Bible as literature rather than as scripture, as our courts have indicated they would find acceptable? We think not. For most Christians, the Bible clearly is not well described as literature; it is *scripture* or *Word of God*, and these terms carry with them all kinds of theological baggage that nonbelievers find unacceptable. (p. 612, emphases original)

They argue that presenting information about various religions is relativistic and against their religious beliefs.

Among those who advocate for teaching about religion in public schools, very few consider the inner-religious and spiritual lives of teachers and how strong personal beliefs (Hartwick, 2004; Nelson, 2010) could interfere (J. H. James, 2010, 2011) with advocates' ideals with regard to how a teacher should teach about religion. Moreover, it has been found that only 72% of people surveyed supported the claim, "An atheist should be allowed to teach in the public schools," while 74% supported the claim, "A religious fundamentalist should be allowed to teach in the public schools" (Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 484). Only 60% supported both claims. Support for these claims varied based on the type and strength of respondents' religious views. Robert Putnam and David Campbell (2010) found that, "Opposition to atheists as teachers is heavily concentrated among highly religious people, whereas opposition to fundamentalists as teachers is less concentrated among secular Americans" (p. 484). Their findings indicate that 40% of the people surveyed believed that either atheists or religious fundamentalists should be prevented from teaching in public schools. If this many people would object to a teacher whose religious beliefs differ from their own teaching math or reading, one can only imagine how they might feel about this person teaching about religion.

Whether implicit or explicit, the treatises of proponents of teaching about religion are always based on values the writers believe are or should be universal:

> If we value religious tolerance or autonomy, we must breach the silence about religion in public schools, and add a comparative religious education to the compulsory curriculum at the high school level. (Lester, 2007, p. 181)

What many do not consider is that these values are not universal. Religious tolerance speaks to a liberal, Rawlsian ideal (Rawls, 2001) to which some communities do not ascribe. This is less a critique than an observation. If we, as an American public, cannot agree on basic values, it is

difficult to see how arguments premised on these values will ever persuade multiple audiences. Values disconnects like these are seen by some as the primary reason some groups are losing confidence in public schools and movements that remove students from public schools are continuing to gain momentum (Herrington, 2000; Milligan, 2000). In response to these types of criticisms, advocates counter that rethinking the relationship between public schools and religion toward inclusion and acceptance of religious ways of making sense of the world is more inclusive than ignoring religion.

At this juncture, we can identify four camps in this milieu: (a) the clarifiers, who seek to communicate that teaching about religions is legal and desirable, (b) the returners, who seek to return prayer and Bible reading to public schools, (c) the fideists,[10] who claim that Scripture is sacred and should only be taught by believers for the purposes of spreading faith, and (d) the secularists, who believe that a focus on religion will inevitably lead to sectarianism. This project explores how each of these camps is portrayed in the media and how writers who represent each camp think about the role of public schools in teaching about religion.

Media and Agenda-Setting

> It is all but inevitable that [taking religion seriously across the curriculum] calls to mind the rhetoric and images of a culture war. Much of the public debate is framed in terms of the combat between two polarized groups: those religious conservatives who would restore prayer to school activities, add creationism to the curriculum, and drop sex education from it; and those liberals who would keep prayer out of schools, keep religion out of the curriculum, and keep sex education in it. Battles in this culture war are fought regularly in courtrooms, direct-mail campaigns, local school board elections, and national

[10] Derived from the word "fideism." The Latin root *fides* literally translated is "faith."

> politics. *Journalistic dispatches* from the front typically frame the conflict in its most dramatic and polarized terms. (W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998, p. 1, emphasis added)

Some maintain that regarding religion and education, media focus on "the most sensational stories" and tend to invite only "the most partisan and polarizing voices to comment on these stories" (Lester, 2011, p. 5). Lester (2011) posits that the "religious conflicts the mainstream media harps on have left many American public school officials anxious. In an environment where saying anything could lead to recriminations and even lawsuits, silence about religion was the golden rule that governed much curriculum" (p. 48). Moore (2007) asserts that media's selective attention when it comes to religion and public schools:

> Fuel both the "Religious Right" proponents who claim there is a "secular conspiracy" to keep religion out of the schools and "liberal secularists" who equate religion with right-wing fanaticism. This debate is increasingly polarized to the extent that all other voices are rendered unintelligible because they fall outside of the context of these narrowly designated spheres of discourse. (p. xiv)

Moore claims that the quality of the discourse about controversies involving the public school and religion has "diminished to the extent that caricature and vitriol are commonplace" (p. xiii).

The idea that media practices "fuel" the debate in a way that verges on being antidemocratic is worthy of attention. A study of media coverage on this topic is warranted first and foremost to explore whether and how such claims are supportable. One purpose of this project is to examine whether and how teaching about religion in public schools is rhetorically connected to culture war issues in media. Also, since there appears to be a disconnect between the public's understanding of what can be taught in public schools and the law, it is important to

investigate which attributes of this topic are emphasized in the media as a potential source for this misunderstanding.

Another reason for focusing on media is that it has been shown to serve an *agenda-setting* function and influence people's perspectives on what the important issues are. Researchers have noted that though the press may not be able to instruct the public on what to believe, it is remarkably successful in telling readers what to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In a landmark study of 1968 presidential campaign, researchers assessed the relationship between what voters said were the important issues in the campaign and the content of mass media messages about the campaign, concluding that "the media appear to have exerted a considerable impact on voters' judgments of what they consider the major issues of the campaign" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 180). Moreover, voters' judgments reflected the composite of mass media coverage rather than the perspective of a specific media outlet. Subsequently, in a non-election setting, Cohen found a similar effect regarding the development of Lake Monroe in central Indiana. The attributes of the development issue emphasized in media coverage correlated highly with the attributes emphasized and discussed by the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). According to John E. Richardson (2007):

> Journalism has social effects: through its power to shape issue agendas and public discourse, it can reinforce beliefs; it can shape people's opinions not only of the world but also of their place and role in the world; or, if not shape your opinions on a particular matter, *it can at the very least influence what you have opinions on*; in sum, it can help shape social reality by shaping our views of social reality. For these reasons, and many more, the language of the news media needs to be taken very seriously. (p. 13, emphasis added)

Even if people's personal experiences eclipse what they read in or view in media, McCombs and Shaw (1972, 1993) have found *what they have opinions on* is influenced by the media.

Logically, this makes sense. If numerous media outlets cover an issue or event, it becomes both news- and attention-worthy. Readers' opinions may not be swayed by the manner in which it is framed (for example, imagine a staunch liberal reading a conservative news website) but, if the issue is covered widely, a reader is likely to come away with a sense of the relative importance of the issue and the salient aspects of the issue, possibly seeking out different perspectives, or composing one of his or her own through personal reflection or discussions with associates. Moreover, this perception could have a recursive effect, creating a desire for more coverage and, therefore, the likelihood that the media will continue its coverage.

In addition to exploring the primary research question, a parallel purpose of this study is to bring the media portrayals of education issues to the fore for analysis and consideration. There are many topics in education where researchers' findings and public perceptions do not coincide. Having a better understanding of how the media portrays educational issues could help education researchers and advocates better formulate and communicate their messages. In this case, having an understanding of how teaching about religion in public schools has been portrayed by media writers, their audiences, and throughout their constituent institutions will provide those interested in the topic with avenues through which to engage in and influence ongoing conversations—as audiences, as writers, and as experts. Understanding the media writers' narratives will provide interested parties with better ways to connect with various interest groups.

Conclusion

By exploring the legal and regulatory issues involved with teaching about religion in public schools, reviewing the multiple ways religion is understood and conceptualized by the

academic community, and discussing the position of scholars who support or oppose teaching about religion in the public school curriculum, this chapter has contextualized my primary research question: *How is teaching about religion in public schools portrayed in the media?* Religion is a focus of regulation at multiple levels of governmental and educational oversight. It is an important topic within our country and a baseline understanding of the multiple ways people approach it and how it, in turn, it influences their lives and worldviews is worthy of attention and exploration.

According to a 2001 survey conducted by the Public Agenda, 79% of people support public high schools offering elective courses in the world's major religions and 11% believe such a course should be required (Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2001). This is an increase from a 1994 survey conducted by the same group that found that 71% of the general population supported to teaching students about non-Christian religions (Johnson & Immerwahr, 1994). In general, the majority of the public does support teaching about religion in schools, but many claim that it is still not being taught and, at least in part, blame the media (e.g., Moore, 2007; W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998). It is their contention that the media emphasizes controversial aspects of the interplay between religion and public schools in such a way that to think about "religion and public schools" is to think about "controversy." Some see the problem being that the media does not focus on positive images of teaching about religion in schools:

> For as many front page stories decrying the further erosion of the wall of separation between religion and government, there are many examples of non-newsworthy stories of educationally valuable, constitutionally permissible, and socially and culturally desirable work in the growing subfield of religion and public education. (Rosenblith & Bailey, 2007, p. 96)

Though statements such as these are common, they are not supported by systematic research.

If the treatment of religion is a major focus at all levels of government in the United States, the general level of religious literacy is low (Farkas et al., 2001; The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010), the public generally supports teaching about religion in schools (Farkas et al., 2001; Johnson & Immerwahr, 1994), compulsory courses can be designed in such a way that controversy is not ignited (Lester & Roberts, 2006), what prevents the practice? What role do the media play, if any?

The next chapter reviews literature related to the portrayals of education and religion in the media. It closes with a discussion of how the ideas presented in this chapter are reflected in this literature.

Chapter Two

Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to my primary research question: *How is teaching about religion in public school portrayed in the media?* My purpose herein is to explore literature related to how the social institutions of education and religion are rendered in the media. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on scholarship pertaining to media portrayals of education and schools. The second section focuses on media portrayals of religion. The third and final section offers a brief analysis of the literature in relation to this dissertation and serves as a bridge to the forthcoming chapters.

In order to provide a solid foundation for this study and to ensure readers who may be unfamiliar with various aspects of these literature bases that all of the references included herein have been vetted by experts in their respective fields, it is important to note that refereed scholarship from peer-reviewed journals has been emphasized in this chapter. Though other forms of scholarship, such as books and reports, are important and useful, I have chosen to emphasize them elsewhere in this dissertation.

Additionally, the following choices have been made and should be made explicit. First, when discussing education, I have emphasized articles that concern public primary and secondary schooling and have excluded those that concern private and higher education.[11] Since neither post-secondary nor private K-12 education is compulsory, the relationship between religion and education in those institutions is sufficiently different from the relationship between religion and education in public K-12 education to merit their exclusion. Second, "education"

[11] The only exception to this is when the article provides salient theories about the media's role in society in general.

considered herein includes all topics concerning teaching and learning in schools, inclusive of curricular, administrative, organization, and political issues. For example, though numerous articles have been written on the media's portrayal of school shootings and violence (Burns & Crawford, 1999; DeFoster, 2010; Hsiang & McCombs, 2004; Killingbeck, 2001; Leavy & Maloney, 2009; Maguire, Weatherby, & Mathers, 2002; Muschert, 2009; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Park, Holody, & Zhang, 2012), they have been omitted from this review because they rarely address curricular issues at any level. Third, though this dissertation project is focused on news, opinion, and blogs for reasons I enumerate in Chapter 3, this review treats media inclusively, including, for example, some references to scholarship on television news and newsmagazines. Finally, literature based on studies conducted in countries other than the United States has been included in this review. Though it is acknowledged that including such scholarship (e.g., an article on television news from Australia) may require additional parsing of what is and is not relevant in a U. S. context—particularly related to the section on religion in the media—given cultural and institutional differences, it has been determined that these studies provide valuable and valid conceptual and theoretical constructs within which U.S. educational matters may be considered.

Media Portrayals of Education

Media are interconnected with the development and interpretation of educational policy and practice (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Gerstl-Pepin, 2007; Stack & Kelly, 2006; Wallace, 1993). According to Michelle Stack and Deirdre Kelly (2006):

> The media are the primary vehicle through which we come to know ourselves and others. They are so embedded in our daily lives that their power is naturalized. We can be

> skeptical, but even in our skepticism we are engaging in a process of comparing media narratives rather than being independent of them. (p. 20)

Studies demonstrate that the media are not monolithic (Stack & Kelly, 2006) and that viewers/readers "can interpret any media text in a number of ways" (Stack & Kelly, 2006, p. 8). Readers know that the media do not simply channel reality—they mediate (G. L. Anderson, 2007) or filter it. According to Anderson (2007), "When it comes to news media coverage, where some semblance of verisimilitude with reality is expected, we know that news is subtly and not-so-subtly shaped by audiences' prurient interests, the interests of corporate sponsors, and ideological bias" (p. 104). Furthermore, media should not be assumed to constitute a coordinated set of practices, but rather, media are "multiple, fragmentary and contingent processes [that] can possess a density which informs the actions of schools and teachers (and indeed policy developers)" (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003, p. 590).

Two roles of media are "agenda setting" and "political socialization" (Wong & Jain, 1999). By controlling news coverage, frequency, timing, and style as well as information selection and the interpretation of that information, the media define what should be considered worthy of public attention (agenda setting). In other words, they set the agenda for public conversation and prime the audience/readers/viewers for how to think about events and issues in the present and similar events and issues in the future. Media also help to create frameworks for understanding society and our role within it. In pluralist democracy, media can bring public attention to minority viewpoints, but more often they serve to legitimize people and institutions with political capital by amplifying their viewpoints and agendas (political socialization) (Wong & Jain, 1999).

Though many envision a world in which media support democratic aims to the fullest extent possible (e.g., G. L. Anderson, 2007; Moses, 2007), research illustrates that media most often serve to preserve and reify existing social inequities. Embattled political parties and major corporations are continually improving their capacities to use media to circulate misleading "disinformation" that is beneficial to their agendas (G. L. Anderson, 2007). Gary Anderson (2007) draws attention to the roles the media have played in construction and deployment of disinformation, specifically "political spectacle" and "moral panics." A political spectacle is "a distorted of reality" (p. 105) wherein the media are either used to manipulate or is manipulated into covering events or issues to political ends. Moreover, political spectacle is "produced intentionally to sell to the public policy that meets the needs of a small group while purporting to meet the greater good" (C. A. Brown & Wright, 2011, p. 117). By way of example, Anderson recounts the "Texas miracle" from the 2000-01 school year when the Houston Independent School District reported an extremely low dropout rate of 1.5%. This "miracle" was seen as a success of Texas's high-stakes testing practices. The district won an award and the superintendent of the district, Rod Paige, was appointed to be the U.S. Secretary of Education. By 2003, it was discovered that the district misclassified more than 2,000 of its dropouts (e.g., they were erroneously listed as transfers rather than dropouts) upon their exit. Though misreported, the initial dropout rate statistics gave President Bush and Secretary Paige the political capital to pursue their education agenda with bipartisan support. By the time Texas miracle was debunked, enough inertia had been built up for them to continue achieving their goals.

Many researchers who study education analyze how journalists and media outlets "frame" stories (e.g., Bollen & Baten, 2010; C. A. Brown & Wright, 2011; Grimm, 2009;

Mebane, Yam, & Rimer, 2006; Tarasawa, 2008). Anita Fleming-Rife and Jennifer M. Proffitt (2004) describe framing here:

> Given the universe of news and information, journalists and media practitioners are critical to framing the social world into meaningful and understandable structures… implicit in this process is selection, omission, and emphasis. In other words, when journalists select, omit, and emphasize certain attributes of news over other attributes, they are framing the story. In this way, they tell the reader how to think. (Fleming-Rife & Proffitt, 2004, pp. 244-245).

Anderson (2007) argues that language and framing are crucial to creating and deploying this type of political spectacle:

> The political right has learned that with the right framing, turning language on its head is to turn reality on its head. When the media report language emanating from the White House pressroom like NCLB, tax relief, clear skies act, healthy forest act, U.S.A. patriot act, homeland security, and so forth, you can be sure that the precise language has been carefully crafted to frame an issue in a particular way, usually in a way that distorts the reality of the proposed policies. (p. 110)

Like political spectacle, moral panic is also co-created by the media and leveraged for political ends. Moral panic is when "certain social groups become stigmatized as deviant, through an overreaction of the mass media, police, and local community groups to the activities of the group" (G. L. Anderson, 2007, p. 113). These targeted groups come to represent a moral threat to the community. Those who present solutions (e.g., politicians, businesses) are given free reign to address these "threats" as they see fit. In short, political spectacles and moral panics are co-created by the ruling elite in conjunction with the media (G. L. Anderson, 2007). This creates

opportunities that subsequently benefit their producers (i.e., more media are consumed and more political capital is accumulated). Of course, political spectacles and moral panic would not have so much power if not for an audience with an "appetite for drama" (Ungerleider, 2006):

> The media often use the image of a glass half empty to create conflict that appeals to and builds an audience. Improving graduate rates and test results become stories about 'not improving enough' … Information that counts as news is typically constructed into a narrative or story structure. The narrative structure of the news casts people as heroes, villains, or victims; issues are framed as conflicts between opposing forces with one of the forces often case in the role of hero and the other of villain. (Ungerleider, 2006, p. 75)

In addition to enabling our appetites for drama, some argue that media limit the information available to the public and diminish opportunities for democratic citizenship. For example, the media's failure to report everyday acts of protest and resistance (Stack & Kelly, 2006) could be seen as limiting citizens' opportunities to join such acts. Others contend that because "selling papers has become the bottom line" (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003, p. 590), mainstream media are little more than consumerist gimmicks and political weapons.

Many believe that the onus for improvement lies with the media itself. Michele Moses (2007) writes that media have a responsibility to serve an educative role in a democracy. Acknowledging that news media cannot cover every angle of a story, Moses (2007) proposes they aim for coverage that is complete "enough" in that it is the amount of information that an "intelligent nonexpert would need in order to weigh the different facets of an issue" (p. 156). Moses and others (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Gerstl-Pepin, 2007; Ungerleider, 2006; Wallace, 1993) have found the media coverage falls short of this ideal in numerous ways. For example, the media often covers policymakers' viewpoints and public reactions to issues rather than the

issues themselves (Gerstl-Pepin, 2007). Even when space for dialogue is provided, those spaces tend to be exclusive (i.e., inhabited by experts) (Gerstl-Pepin, 2007). Also, journalists lack understandings of educational issues (Ungerleider, 2006) and encourage educational consumerism among parents by printing school "report cards" and other information related to high-stakes testing without challenge or critique (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003). Though its faults are many, Gerstl-Pepin (2007) contends the media do not purposefully oppress or misrepresent groups, but rather, they subscribe to "tacit cultural assumptions that may exclude the concerns" (p. 4) of marginalized groups.

Regardless of whether scholars blame media or view media as having fallen victim to cultural norms, V. Darleen Opfer (2007) believes the critique of the media reflects an ahistorical view of media impact, misattributes causation, and rests on inappropriate assumptions about the role of the public in this dynamic. She refers to this as *media malaise* and claims that extant literature is flawed in its approach. Opfer states that the literature on education and the media typically focuses on the negative impact the media has on "public perceptions of, and support for, public education" (p. 166). Opfer argues that researchers (e.g., Moses, 2007) take a variety of approaches to reach the same conclusion, namely that the media are responsible for many politics ills within society. She believes that the relationship among the media, education, and society is much more nuanced than typically presented. For example, she found a positive correlation between public confidence in government, press, and public education. In other words, people trust (or do not trust) these institutions to similar degrees. It is not the case that the public blindly trusts the media and, due to this blind trust, mistrusts government and education; conversely, they are linked. She states that "as the media attack institutions such as public education and as public education officials (and researchers) attack the media, they

simultaneously cause public disengagement and distrust of both themselves and the institutions" (p. 169). Moreover, she argues, the idea of a passive, captive audience that many invoke is anachronistic. Part of the problem, as she sees it, is that many researchers do not have a framework through which to view the role of the media in a democratic society. She suggests that those who study education in the media use the following framework: (a) media as a civic forum (e.g., Is coverage of education issues widely and easily available to all sectors of society?), (b) media as a mobilizing agent (e.g., Do the media provide practical knowledge about the probable consequences of educational action and inaction?), and (c) media as watchdog (e.g., Do the media provide critical coverage and analysis of educational events and plans?).

Others choose to focus on the relationships between schools, media, and government. Though school leaders and media representatives generally view each other positively, leaders in larger school districts and representatives from larger papers are more adversarial than others (Gorton & Newsome, 1986), likely because their schools' reputations are more vulnerable to critique. Viewed as consumers, media-savvy parents can use the information provided to decide how to best use their social and economic capital to benefit their children or communities—sometimes at the expense of other children, communities, or schools (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003). Also, since media and government have a mutually reinforcing relationship, media turn to government sources for reliable information and vice versa (Ungerleider, 2006). At times, this relationship is used to circumvent school communities. It has been shown that media can be used to communicate directly, and strategically, with a self-interested public (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003) by providing government with a mode for manufacturing public consent and testing policy proposals in a public forum before initiating formal processes. This makes school officials:

> …fearful of having their internal 'can of worms' open for public display, and therefore increases their self-management and fabrication. So at the moment when the demand for educational information is at its greatest within a market-oriented education system, the desire to control and limit, or at least shape, the information which reaches the public eye is at its greatest. (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003, p. 594)

Because media advance the "culture of performativity" (G. L. Anderson, 2007) by reporting on standardized test scores without critique (Stack, 2006, 2007; Sung & Kang, 2012; Warmington & Murphy, 2007), media and schools are often at odds. Additionally, there are times when schools are used as scapegoats for social problems toward political ends. In an example from Canada, Charles Ungerleider (2006):

> Canadian media have successfully identified the anxieties that many have about Canada's economic future. Many politicians have successfully mined this same vein of anxiety for political and ideological advantage. Such messages have misrepresented data that indicate that public education is actually doing quite well and gradually improving; fed the media's voracious appetite for comparisons; and used anxiety to fuel the desire for choice and competition within the public school system and between the public system and private alternatives. (p. 73)

Managing and manipulating information is becoming an increasingly critical strategy for schools and educators (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003). Moreover, when the quality of schools or teachers is called into question, their relative authority is discursively diminished in media (Thomas, 1999). In times like these, Sue Thomas (1999) observes:

> Common-sense understandings constructed a hierarchy of power relations that privileged some groups and marginalised others. Most significantly, at a time when teacher quality

> was under question, teachers were positioned consistently in a manner that diminished and undermined their authority. (p. 31)

At times when educators could contribute perspective on issues, their ideas and expertise are devalued.

Regarding teachers' voices in the press, Jennifer Cohen (2010) studied education news from the Chicago Tribune in 2006 and 2007, attending in particular to the "social languages" of "Accountability" and "Caring." James Paul Gee (2011a) describes social languages as:

> Styles or varieties of a language (or mixture of languages) that enact and as associated with a particular social identity. … Social languages are what we learn and what we speak. … Some examples of social languages are: the language of medicine, literature, street gangs, sociology, law, rap, and informal dinner-time talk among friends. (p. 156)

Cohen (2010) contends that the accepted news practice of seeking out "the other side" when constructing the news lead journalists to writing articles profiling individual teachers to contrast the newspapers' accountability focus (i.e., measuring schools', teachers', and students' success or failure through discrete performance-based indictors—most often high stakes standardized tests). Teacher profile features employed the social language of Caring, whereas the majority of the other education news employed the social language of Accountability. However:

> The grammar features that most strongly characterize the social language of Caring as a counter-discourse simultaneously diminish Caring as an authoritative voice on education. This dynamic occurs because the ways in which knowledge claims are constructed and grounded… [which] actively disassociate teacher professional identity from the kinds of knowledge about education recognized as authoritative within a positivist framework. The grammar features characterizing the language of Caring instead frame teacher

> knowledge and authority in terms of the traditionally feminized work of personal relationships within the private sphere, diminishing teachers' authority to act in the public sphere…. Even if an individual reporter's goal in writing stories in the social language of Caring is to offer a counter discourse… those stories remain framed by Accountability and reinscribe the construction of teachers as lacking authority and knowledge, or even as the cause of student failure. (p. 116)

Even when teachers are viewed positively, the ways in which their work and expertise is characterized reinscribes them as "lacking" the types of knowledge desired by those who value accountability. Even the positive can be negative, depending on context.

But how should educators think about media and its role in a democratic society? According to Stack and Kelly (2006), one approach would be to classify mainstream news, popular culture, and knowledge production as "public pedagogies," or "texts and cultural practices of everyday life, linked to democratic possibilities" (p. 6), and help students learn to analyze media from a critical perspective:

> Given the pervasiveness and influence of media in our daily lives, the informal public pedagogies of popular (news and entertainment) media may be surpassing the formal public pedagogies of schooling and postsecondary education in terms of where and how we form citizens. Yet with the largely for-profit, advertising-supported media system in fewer and fewer corporate hands, it has become more difficult for the press to hold people in power to public account, to present a wide range of informed views on the important issues facing the citizenry, and to promote democracy… Citizenship is at risk of being reduced to consumerism. The need to strengthen public education's

> responsibility to prepare people to participate in a democratic public sphere has rarely been so urgent. (p. 9)

In other words, by teaching critical media education and educating for democratic participation, educators can help students understand the media as constructions and analyze the media industry, its audiences, codes, conventions, values, and ideology (Stack & Kelly, 2006).

Researchers use a variety of methods to sample and analyze the media's representation of curricular, organizational, administrative, and political issues in education. Most researchers select a time frame from which to sample articles, which ranges from a few weeks (Galindo, 2004) to years (Allgaier, 2010, 2012; Allgaier & Holliman, 2006; Bollen & Baten, 2010; C. A. Brown & Wright, 2011; Kingori et al., 2004; Mebane et al., 2006; Shipps, Fowlkes, & Peltzman, 2006; Simey & Wellings, 2008; Tarasawa, 2008). Popular foci of this scholarship include: descriptive pieces on media support or opposition for a proposition, policy, or proposal (Bollen & Baten, 2010; Kingori et al., 2004; Simey & Wellings, 2008), analyses of themes or frames used to describe educational issues (Bollen & Baten, 2010; Grimm, 2009; Mebane et al., 2006; Tarasawa, 2008), close analyses of a few representative articles (Cohen, 2010; Galindo, 2004) or headlines (Kingori et al., 2004; Stack, 2006, 2007; Warmington & Murphy, 2004, 2007) on a selected educational issue, analyses of spokespeople referenced or quotation patterns (Kingori et al., 2004; McCune, 2003; Siu, 2008), and analyses of how research and data is reported (Mebane et al., 2006). While most analyses rely on news articles alone, others incorporate interviews (McCune, 2003; Shipps et al., 2006; Warmington & Murphy, 2004) and surveys (Rubin & Staples, 1996). Many articles are meant to be comparative—contrasting coverage of educational issues in different [types of] newspapers (Bullock, 2007; Fleming-Rife & Proffitt, 2004; Grimm, 2009; Pettigrew, 1997; Shipps et al., 2006; Simey & Wellings, 2008; Siu, 2008; Tarasawa,

2008), different cities (Grimm, 2009; Shipps et al., 2006), coverage of different types of schools (Rubin & Staples, 1996), coverage before and after critical events (Fleming-Rife & Proffitt, 2004), and coverage in various modes of media (Warmington & Murphy, 2007).

There are a limited number of studies that focus on what types of education news, events, and stories that print news focuses on, descriptively and comparatively. In studies of education editors, Earnest Hynds (1981, 1989) found that a variety of topics are covered annually, such as: school board meetings, sports activities, needs and programs for disadvantaged, programs for gifted, drugs and alcohol, discipline in schools, in-service programs for teachers, school integration, and venereal disease among teenagers and youths.[12] Other researchers choose to focus on comparing the education coverage of newspapers in different countries or categories. For example, award winning newspapers and non-award winning newspapers do not vary significantly in their coverage of education. The major difference is that award-winning newspapers include longer articles on education (DeRiemer, 1988). Newspapers with larger circulations are more likely to cover controversial issues such as integration, drugs, or sexually transmitted diseases, while newspapers with smaller circulations are more likely to print articles written by schoolchildren (Hynds, 1981). Over a six week sample period, a newspaper in Zulia, Venezuela and a newspaper in Vancouver, British Columbia printed more stories on teachers' political discontent than a newspaper in Chicago (50%, 40%, and 13%, respectively) (Johns, Brownlie, & Ramirez, 1986).

Many of the authors who do focus on the content of education coverage are critical of what they find, perhaps because most coverage of the system of education as a whole tends to

[12] Sic. All labels and terminology are Hynds's.

stress conflict, failings, and problems (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Levin, 2004).[13] Some propose that one reason for this is the cultural belief that all social ills can be corrected through proper schooling (Levin, 2004; MacMillan, 2002). In other words, press coverage on education is not about education; it is about the condition of society and who is to blame. For example, in her study of which stories are covered by the British tabloid news, Katie MacMillan (2002) found that though education stories were rarely highlighted in tabloid news, when they were, the overarching theme of the stories was that the events covered in the story are a "sign of the times"—a school where a pupil was expelled for attacking a teacher, teachers threatening to strike if troubled pupils were not removed from the school, and students rioting were used to illustrate contemporary moral and social decline. She stated that though the source of most education news in the British press was official press releases, media reports use these releases as the basis for new stories that assign blame for problems in the education system (i.e., the press release details a problem and how it will be addressed and the reporter interviews people who speculate about who is at fault for the problem). In closing, MacMillan comments that, "education isn't the issue, but the vehicle by which the press has its say" (p. 37).

In exploring questions about who constitutes the "press" in education, Earnest C. Hynds (1981, 1989) found that education editors reported[14] their training or experience in the field of education as follows: 7% (2%) had undergraduate degrees in education, 3%[15] had graduate degrees in education, 22% (7%) had teaching or other experience, 11% (7%) had taken college courses in education, and 18% (5%) had attended short courses on education or education reporting. Since less than 20% had any type of training in the field of education and more than

[13] Though it should be noted that some media coverage in education tends to be positive, particularly when focusing on the accomplishments of individual students or schools (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Levin, 2004).
[14] Hynds' 1989 statistics are included in the main prose and Hynds' 1981 statistics are included parenthetically.
[15] Only data from 1981 was available for this measure.

half of the editors reported relying on their staff members to produce the majority of printed copy (Hynds, 1981, 1989).

The issue of education expertise is a concern of Eric Haas (2004, 2007). Haas studied how think tanks are portrayed by the media in relation to education. In his study of education reporting and The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, Haas (2004) found that in 2001 the foundation was cited regularly in various forms of media (print, television, and radio), often without critique. He also found that its objectivity and the expertise of its staff were rarely questioned by the media, though evidence of bias and lack of expertise was readily available. Haas finds this problematic because by giving equal time to various sides of education debates, spokespeople from think tanks like the Heritage Foundation are discursively equated with other, more credible sources. In a subsequent study, despite variation in their missions, staffing and financing practices, and the quality and objectivity of their products, Haas (2007) found that "the news media presented all the think tanks as credible sources of research, facts, and figures on education, regardless of the extent to which each think tank emphasized policy and political advocacy over the professional norms of academic research" (p. 63). In Haas's view this media practice "may be undermining the whole concept of rationality in public policy generally and education policy specifically" (p. 96).

However, media alone cannot be held at fault for the construction of education policy. Illustrating the complex nature of the relationship between government, education, and the media, Ben Levin (2004) recounted the following anecdote from his time working in a governmental education agency:

> Our unit conducted a number of studies on important issues in education and I wanted to make the reports public. The Minster of the day… was resistant to doing so. We had

> several discussions in which I pointed out the importance of making our work public to enhance credibility and impact. … She could see no particular good coming out of releasing our studies, only the likelihood of difficult questions being asked. To make matters worse, when I related this story a few years later to a newspaper reporter who had been covering education issues, she told me that I had wasted by time trying to get the reports made public. "I wouldn't have believed any report that the Department issued anyway," she told me. (p. 272)

In his discussion of governmental education agency practices and media, Levin states that there needs to be more media attention (which would lead to more public attention) on issues of long-term importance in ways that contribute to healthy political debate and less to problem-finding and blame. Similar concerns have been voiced in research on school curriculum in the media and school organizational, administrative, and political issues in the media, all of which are addressed in the sections that follow.

Research on school curriculum. Studies on areas of the school curriculum in the media often focus on controversial political issues and how they are framed by various media outlets. For example, researchers who study the media representation of sex education commonly do so by focusing on specific initiatives or movements, how they are framed by the media, and who and what articles feature (Kingori et al., 2004; Mebane et al., 2006; Simey & Wellings, 2008). It has been shown that complex issues (e.g., bilingual education) are presented by the media as simplistic and isolated from all other educational factors that could affect student learning and other outcomes (Galindo, 2004) and press coverage of educational controversies (e.g., Intelligent Design and evolution) can precipitate their construction in a polarizing manner (Allgaier, 2010).

Researchers found that media reports on curricular issues in education are generally critical of current practices, even if they communicate support of schools and education in general. For example, Piers Simey and Kaye Wellings (2008) found that despite a broad scale initiative by the British government to address problems associated with teenage pregnancy and parenthood, only slightly less than one-quarter of articles published on teen sex and pregnancy over a four year period mentioned sex and relationship education [SRE]. They also found that, when mentioned, the teaching of SRE is depicted as inadequate, though only three articles describe a class that a journalist actually observed (Simey & Wellings, 2008). A study on the media's representation of virginity pledges found that only one of five of the major frames used to discuss virginity pledges focused on sex education and the frame did so critically (i.e., to the conclusion that sex education is faulty) (Mebane et al., 2006).

The question of media bias is commonly pursued, most often quantitatively by tallying the number of articles supporting or opposing an initiative (e.g., Bollen & Baten, 2010; Kingori et al., 2004; Simey & Wellings, 2008). Occasionally, though, inquiry regarding media bias assumes a view that is more nuanced than simple support or opposition. For example, in their study on media coverage of bilingual education policy initiatives in Beligum, Katrien Bollen and Kristof Baten (2010) found that the majority of the coverage supported bilingual education for native speakers of Dutch and French but rejected it for immigrants and minorities. However, these positions were rarely stated explicitly:

> It is clear that the media coverage of BE [bilingual education] displays little overt bias, as editors' personal opinions are only made explicit in a small number of editorials. In addition, most articles present themselves as conveying factual information rather than opinions, with news articles making up half of the total. Paradoxically, however, the bias

> is particularly noticeable in the supposedly factual genres. This is possible due to the covert way in which the Flemish press shapes public opinion—namely, through the selection of certain topics instead of others and the granting or denying key groups a voice in the debate. (p. 428)

Others, like Grimm (2009), note that the journalistic norm of balanced reporting—wherein journalists strive to give equal attention to each side of a debate, even if the "sides" are not equal in terms of quality of argument or representation within a community—gives the impression that certain issues are contested in various discourse communities even when this is not the case.

Noting the reciprocal relationship between the media and political advocates and spokespeople, many researchers study the ways in which media portray curricular issues for the sake of informing advocates or other interested parties about potential avenues for influencing public opinion and policy (e.g., Kingori et al., 2004; Mebane et al., 2006). For example, Cynthia A. McCune (2003) uses the 1996 legislative debate over Tennessee Senate Bill 3229, which proposed to prohibit evolution from being taught as a fact in the state's public schools, to interrogate the idea that media are both influential and subject to influence. McCune found that negative frames (i.e., those opposing the bill) dominated the news coverage by a three-to-one margin and that the debate was largely framed by legislators and political advocates. Advocates on both sides used cultural symbols and social values to create resonance and influence the narrative of the debate. The bill's supporters reported that their main concern was "to protect children and families," invoking public idioms of fairness and equality and arguing that "morals, values, and telling the truth" (p. 12) were at stake. The bill's opponents took advantage of the state's history as the site of the 1925 Scopes trial by coining TN Senate Bill 3229 "the monkey bill" as a way to ridicule its goal and supporters. They also co-opted the conservative notion of

"local control" to sway public opinion. McCune found that "public debates are framed by all involved parties" (p. 5) and "relative power position held by each side… may have been affected by their interactions with the news media" (p. 5).

Researchers have also found that certain types of spokespeople or source types (e.g., politicians, advocacy groups, education experts) are used to convey specific tones, positions, and messages on curricular issues. Patricia Kingori, et al. (2004) found that government spokespeople and others in support of the British government's Teen Pregnancy Strategy, an educational program which aimed to reduce the under-18 conception rate and mitigate the social exclusion experienced by teenage parents, were more often featured in articles that were classified as having a positive (i.e., supportive) tone while representatives from "family values" groups were more likely to be featured in articles classified as having neutral or negative (i.e., unsupportive) tones. Similarly, Joshua Grimm (2009) found that politicians were most likely to be in favor of Intelligent Design and scientists were most likely to be in support of evolution. Grimm also found that certain frames were more likely to be invoked by certain source types (e.g., "evolution as controversy" was most likely to be used by spokespersons and politicians). Citing the case of Richard Dawkins, a well-known evolutionary biologist, author, and atheist, Allgaier (2010) found that some scientific experts have "a particular affinity for appearing in the media" and are "seen as good media talent" (p. 805). Allgaier notes that people like Dawkins were not only identified by name, title, and institutional affiliation, but were also described with phrases imply they should be held in high regard like "eminent scientist," "leading academic," or "authority on evolution," which Allgaier interprets as "clear illustrations that some descriptions of experts by journalists can add credibility to their statements" (p. 806). These studies illustrate

that who is cited in an article and how they are referenced by the writer is a window to the intentions of the writer.

Differences have also been found between different types of publications in terms of what evidence is cited, which actors are referenced, and the overall tone of articles (Grimm, 2009; Pettigrew, 1997; Tarasawa, 2008). For example, a bilingual (Spanish and English) newspaper in Atlanta, Georgia, referenced educational research in more than 70% of its articles on bilingual education and was most likely to cite education officials, while an English-only newspaper referenced educational research in only 10% of its articles on bilingual education and was most likely to cite politicians (Tarasawa, 2008). In his content analysis of newspapers in three states, Grimm (2009) sought to discover how geography and sourcing affected the framing of the evolution/intelligent design debate. Grimm (2009) studied news articles published in newspapers over a five year period in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Kansas and found that there was a significant relationship between state, source type and dominant frame (e.g., most Kansan sources were politicians and the dominant frame was "evolution is controversial").

Researchers' recommendations for future work in the area of education and the media are typically meant to help education advocates better achieve their goals. In the area of sex education, Kingori, et al. (2004) recommend that proponents of sex education take a pro-active approach to working with the media, stating that "a strategy of directly contacting high circulation newspapers with a view to positively influencing the tone of relevant articles and reports would be of considerable benefit to those involved in SRE, teenage pregnancy and related interventions" (p. 123). Smiley and Wellings (2004) recommend making sex education a statutory component of the British national curriculum in order to protect teachers from public scrutiny for how, or if, they teach it. Mebane, Yam, and Rimer (2006) recommend experts

consider existing media frames when communicating about sex education and virginity pledges so as to ensure they can counteract the lack of balanced reporting they observed.

Research on organizational, administrative, and political issues. As noted previously, many of those who study media are critical of how education is portrayed (e.g., Pinto, Boler, & Norris, 2007; Stack, 2006, 2007; Warmington & Murphy, 2004, 2007) and argue that the media are failing in myriad ways. The same holds true for those who study representations of school organizational, administrative, and political issues in the media. For example, researchers have critiqued the media for not including enough perspectives (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Pinto et al., 2007), presenting test results as objective measures of progress (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Stack, 2006), presenting business and government solutions to educational problems as common sense (Stack, 2007), and presenting improvements in test scores as evidence of falling standards and grade inflation (Warmington & Murphy, 2004, 2007). After interviewing numerous editors, Dorothy Shipps, Elizabeth Fowlkes, and Alissa Peltzman (2006) concluded that some editors did not respect the wherewithal of the public to competently participate in democratic processes and that such beliefs affected their editorial decisions:

> Those who independently envisioned residents as disinterested and uninformed did not support a participatory role in decision making, even when formal processes of citizen engagement leaned toward participation. They continued to rely on authoritative sources for the news they reported, serving as a megaphone and translator, partly because they agreed with the authorities. (p. 387)

Just as Anderson (2007) and Moses (2007) argued, many who study organizational, administrative and political issues also argue that better coverage is needed for a better public debate.

While these authors are critical of media, others recognize diversity within the media and how it can be used for communicating with the public and influencing public opinion. Though school administrators and reporters differ in how they view press access and newsworthiness of certain school issues (Gorton & Newsome, 1986), many people who work in education administration still use it to communicate their messages to the public (Blackmore & Thomson, 2004; Gorton & Newsome, 1986; Mills, 2004; Rubin & Staples, 1996). A British study found that 90% of the school board chairs and board of supervisors chairs surveyed use newspapers to convey information to the public while 30% claim that newspapers inform their decision making (Rubin & Staples, 1996). Though media are useful in this way, it also presents challenges for education professionals:

> Media is viewed by both government and the head teachers as the means by which they can position themselves, and also make a case for their school and their sector, at the same time they struggle against allowing negative representations to emerge. (Blackmore & Thomson, 2004, p. 301)

Jill Blackmore and Pat Thomson (2004) found that, in education, media was "at best" used for reporting the positive impact of individuals and "at worst" used for personalizing policy agendas that produce competitiveness. In the context of their study, they surmise that "media is not a forum in which rigorous debates about the nature of headship and public schooling are enabled" (p. 316). Through her analysis of major television, newspaper, and radio coverage of the 2000 United State Presidential election, Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin (2002) showed that:

> The media… represent shallow depictions of educational issues, which tend to be tightly controlled by how candidates define educational problems. These representations of education in the media tend to reinforce and reflect public assumptions that America's

> educational system is failing. Only rarely did the major news media report educators' concerns about how educational problems were being represented or the concerns of minority groups. By excluding alternative viewpoints, the author asserts that media (mis)representations hinder democracy. (p. 37)

Others have found that the media is not only generally unhelpful in enabling debates but also negative and derisory in its coverage of government schools, teachers, and teachers' unions (in middle-market British tabloids) (Baker, 1994). Sharon Gewirtz, Marny Dickson, and Sally Power (2004) have studied the role of "spin" (i.e., the purposeful management of information in the policy process) and found that not only is spin used to manage public impressions, but it also plays a constitutive role in policy. In other words, they found instances where school practices were re-oriented so that "success" can be communicated to the public (via the media). The relationship among government and media and education is further complicated when journalists are rewarded (with "exclusives," for example) for writing about policies in ways that government officials desire. Moreover, "the media's credibility as a political institution rests on its ability to claim objectivity and impartiality… a reporter that is critical of a candidate's presentation of issues could be interpreted as biased" (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002, p. 51). Manipulating policies to supply sound bites of success (Gewirtz et al., 2004), special relationships between journalists and government (Gewirtz et al., 2004), and a public unwilling to accept that solving social problems could involve long-term sacrifice and commitment (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002) all contribute to the complexities of how education is portrayed in the media. "Truth," as it were, is elusive.

As previously stated, not all media are the same. Even when the details of an incident are held constant, two newspapers can communicate very different messages to the public (Bullock, 2007; Siu, 2008; Thomas, 1999). In her study comparing two newspapers' coverage of the 1957

desegregation of Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas, Cathy Ferrand Bullock (2007) found that "the *Gazette* came across as the regretful realist suggesting that Central must be desegregated, while the *Democrat* appeared to be a manual for segregationists seeking to resist desegregation" (p. 13). These types of messages are typically implicit and communicated in a variety of ways, such as: who is given the authority to speak for or on education, the exclusion of opposition voices, and the use of value-laden modifiers, declarative sentences, metaphors, and words like "we" (Thomas, 1999).

Shipps, et. al (2006) identify four types of journalists in a comparison of education coverage in market-oriented newspapers and independent newspapers in two cities: (a) advocacy journalists, who provide news from the perspective of special interest groups, (b) market journalists, who are primarily concerned with newspaper and advertising sales, (c) trustee journalists, who view journalism paternalistically, and (d) public journalists whose purpose is to support participatory democracy by "bridg[ing] the gaps of understanding and empathy between members of the public so that different groups understand one another's perspective and can make reasoned decisions for the common good" (p. 373). After interviewing editors and analyzing newspapers, Shipps, et al. (2006) found that civic capacity for school reform influenced journalistic coverage, regardless of journalistic style employed, and that market-oriented newspapers rarely covered education news:

> Daily newspapers simply do not cover education thoroughly. Even when the schools become part of the prestigious city hall beat, educational reporting is scant and is further diminished by the tendency of media-savvy politicians to manage the news. Specialty publications… but also Web newspapers, newsletters and blogs, and talk radio and cable television punditry may be better sources of data for answering questions about how

> journalism contributes to the maintenance of particular kinds of civic capacity. (p. 385-386)

Their findings also make a case for looking beyond newspapers when studying journalism's impact on school reform and for studying how various factors (e.g., civic capacity) affect coverage.

In their study comparing the coverage of *Brown v The Board of Education* by Black- and White-owned newspapers, Fleming-Rife and Proffitt (2004) identified three frames: (a) the "conflict" frame, which highlighted struggles between individuals, groups, or institutions and the notion that one side must win and the other must lose, (b) the "consequences" frame, which accentuated the potential penalties that would occur if the Court found in favor of desegregation and braced the readers for the short and long term consequences of the Court's ruling, and (c) the "domination/subordination" frame, which reinscribed existing hegemonic power relations between African Americans and Whites. The study found that between 1953 and 1954, these newspapers "told their readers what to think and how to think about desegregation" (p. 251), which for the most part involved thinking about conflict (protest, resistance, and compliance):

> In late summer of 1953, in anticipating the decision of the Court, [the *Topeka Daily Capital*] began running stories that suggested compliance; however, there were alternate frames of resistances imbedded within these news articles. That is, each story that discussed compliance also reported resistance. (p. 251)

Fleming-Rife and Proffitt (2004) also found that "the reform measures made in opposition to desegregation have survived for nearly 50 years and are now framed as public education policy measures aimed to assist disadvantaged students to acquire improved educational access" (p.

252). In other words, the frames employed by newspapers did not fade from our collective memory, rather, they were repurposed.

Others who study educational administration, organization, and politics in the media have focused on the relationship between media portrayal and public opinion and the ability of each to affect the other. As an example of how the media can be used to shift public opinion, Richard A. Pride (1995) found that:

> The collective definition of a social problem is accelerated more by critical events than performance trends because critical events are more likely to stimulate competition among movement activists and media operatives over the meaning to be given to newly problematic aspects of our collective lives. (p. 6)

Pride's study uses the case of a 1980s tax referendum in Nashville, Tennessee. The referendum, framed by supporters as an issue of distributive justice, was successfully reframed by their conservative opponents as an issue of schools' inability to efficiently produce successful students. Notably, those on each side of the debate contributed to narratives critical of the public schools—one referring to the lack of support as the reason public schools are lacking and the other referring to the schools as inefficient and therefore lacking. Both narratives led to the same rhetorical outcome: schools are bad. Polling indicated that the public was swayed that the schools were lacking. Pride found that the public "substantially lowered its assessment of the public schools in a short period of time even though performance indicators for the schools seemed not to warrant this diminution in public esteem" (p. 6). Trends of more articles with a negative tone and fewer articles with a positive tone corresponded to the trends of flagging public support for the schools. Conversely, the media are also influenced by public opinion. Wanda Luen Wun Siu (2008) found that newspaper coverage of teachers' suicides in Hong

Kong, reportedly due to work pressure, was influenced by intense public opinion: "The expression of intense public opinion… lead to a convergence of news content across newspapers of different ideologies. It is the pressure exerted by the energized public state that affects education news coverage" (p. 266). Siu's work implies that if we, as members of the public, express intense opinions, media will broadcast our concerns and alter the discourse. We, as a public, are not powerless.

This section has focused on various perspectives on the relationship between media and education, the media portrayal of curricular issues, and the media portrayal of organizational, administrative, and political issues in education. In some instances researchers' theoretical frameworks, data, methods, and findings have also been discussed in detail to help ground some of the work presented in this dissertation. Since many of the same types of theories and methods are used to analyze articles on religion, the next section explores the media portrayals of religion and religious people and groups, focusing primarily on researchers' findings.

Media Portrayals of Religion

Scholars claim that, although religion and media have been linked for centuries, these connections have evolved over time. According to David Paul Nord (1984), it was the "missionary impulse" that "lay at the foundation of the popularization of print in the 19th century" (p. 2) and it was the "evangelical Christian publicists in the Bible and tract societies who first dreamed the dream of a genuinely mass medium – that is, they proposed to deliver the same printed message to *everyone* in America" (p. 2, emphasis original). Elsewhere, citing numerous parallels between news and religious messages communicated to congregations, Nord (1990) argues that:

> The characteristics of American news—its subject matter and its method of reporting—are deeply rooted in the religious culture of seventeenth-century New England… The defining elements of news [occurrence, current, public, and reporting] were shaped by the belief that everything happened according to God's perfect plan. News was, in a word, teleological. (p. 10)

And, though the teleological meaning of news faded, "the fundamental characteristics of news and the methods of news reporting laid down in the seventeenth century persisted" (p. 11). In other words, though news became disconnected from its purpose of reporting "God's plan," it persisted in reporting "important" and "interesting" occurrences, even when the cause or meaning of the occurrences were subject to interpretation. Later, as media became a cultural mainstay, religious organizations began exploring how to use it for religious purposes. Ronald R. Rodgers (2010) writes that throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Christian churches attempted to discover ways to use the press to communicate religious messages to the public because "in the modern age of literacy driven by compulsory education, the press was the primary way people became acquainted with the ideas that generated public opinion" (p. 10). In Rodgers's view, media had displaced the pulpit as the primary means of spreading newsworthy information to the masses and, because of this, it should be viewed as a change agent and moral authority and held to account as such (Rodgers, 2010).

Others focus not on media as a religious enterprise but as a way in which religion and religious people, groups, identities, and motives are communicated to a broad audience. In terms of coverage of religion, what one finds seems to depend on where (and when) one looks. For example, analysis of 648 religion sections appearing in *Time* magazine between 1947 and 1976 revealed that "religion is depicted as a conflict-ridden human enterprise" (Hart, Turner, &

Knupp, 1980, p. 256), while analysis of religion and faith sections of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and the *Houston Chronicle* in the years 1992 and 2000 revealed that conflict coverage varied by year and paper, with the highest percentage being more than 57% portraying conflict (in Houston in 1992) and the lowest being 17% portraying conflict (in Atlanta in 1992) (Vultee, Craft, & Velker, 2010). Portrayals of religious people were overwhelmingly (7:1) found to be neutral or positive (Vultee et al., 2010).

Some scholars use media coverage of religion as a way to gauge the government's and society's disposition toward religion or the social meaning of specific terms. For example, Qingjiang Yao, Daniel A. Stout, and Zhaoxi Liu (2011) found that over a ten-year period surrounding a high-ranking Chinese government official's speech wherein he spoke positively of religion, the online version of a prestigious Chinese newspaper gradually mentioned religion more often and its tone was more positive. Douglas Hartmann, Xuefeng Zhang, and William Wischstadt (2005) studied the media's use of the term "Judeo-Christian" over a roughly twenty-year period and found that its meaning has shifted dramatically:

> In the middle part of the past century, the Judeo-Christian concept was often controversial and advanced primarily for liberal social causes…. By the 1980s, the United States was widely believed to have a core Judeo-Christian culture; the term appeared primarily as a reference point in the so-called culture wars and was most often appropriated for conservative purposes. … The post-9/11 era brought another set of transformations, with overall references declining markedly and the term now associated mainly with discussions of Muslim and Islamic inclusion in America and renewed concerns about church–state separation. (p. 207)

While initially the term Judeo-Christian was used to denote unity and moral responsibility, it now denotes an American cultural core of exclusion and social boundaries. Since much of what is communicated by the media is assumed to have a *prima facie* meaning, analyses such as these can help to illuminate how connotations shift over time.

Researchers are also interested media portrayals of various religious groups and denominations. Through analysis of the religion coverage of the New York Times and the Washington Post in 1977, John P. Ferre (1980) found that coverage of religious denominations was not representative of the American population:

> Readers who think newspapers report what is newsworthy may learn to believe that the Jewish and the Anglican faiths are larger and more important to society than their memberships would indicate. Readers will know that the Roman Catholic church is prominent, but they also may think that the Baptists are smaller than they are and suspect that they are not respected. (p. 281)

Rather than framing this as a problem for the press and newspapers, Ferre (1980) interpreted this as an issue of poor publicity on the part of the religious groups. Similarly, Roderick P. Hart, Kathleen J. Turner and Ralph E. Knupp (1980) found that *Time* magazine overrepresented Catholics, Jews, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians while under-representing Methodists, Lutherans, and Baptists. They posited that, "By devoting 68 percent of its religious coverage to the activities of three denominations [Catholics, Jews, and Episcopalians], *Time* writers may be transmuting what is local news for them into national news for the American people" (Hart et al., 1980, p. 270). In other words, journalists and editors accepted that what was local for them in the Northeastern section of the United States would (or should) be accepted as relevant news for the entire country.

Both Ferre (1980) and Hart, et al. (1980) propose that coverage of religion is, in part, related to the perceptions of journalists and religion editors and their relationships with religious leaders and spokespeople. Earnest C. Hynds (1988, 1999) conducted two surveys to learn about religion journalists, editors, and coverage in the United States.[16] Among those who replied to the survey, about half of the editors and reporters were men and 94% (91%) were white. About half of the editors indicated they were members of religious organizations in 1999, a sharp decline from 78% in 1988. Religious affiliations claimed by respondents were (all from 1999, in descending order of percentage) 63% Christian (35% Roman Catholic, 26% Methodists, 16% Episcopalian, 10% Lutheran, 7% Presbyterian, and 3% Southern Baptist), 17% Jewish, 16% spiritual/unclassified, and 4% agnostic. Sixty-three percent (69%) report that they chose their assignment as religion editors and reporters, self-reporting their qualifications as their interest in religion, church membership, college courses or degrees in religion, or seminary courses.

Regarding coverage of religion, the past 60 years have seen a great deal of change (Buddenbaum, 1986; Willey, 2008). In the 1950s and early 1960s most religion writers covered stories from a local angle and emphasized the news values of proximity, novelty, human interest, disaster and conflict. In the 1970s writers and editors began to prefer in-depth stories over simple accounts of local events (Buddenbaum, 1986). In her study of the religion coverage in three large newspapers in the summer of 1981, Judith M. Buddenbaum (1986) found that religion coverage was no longer confined to local news and events, though denominations with the largest membership in the area still received the most attention. Regarding the potential for newspapers to serve an educative function, Buddenbaum found that:

[16] Data from Hynds (1999) are reported in the prose, while data from Hynds (1988) are reported parenthetically.

> Although interviews with religion journalists indicate they approve of stories designed to teach about religious beliefs, this study found religion writers actually produce very few such stories. Religious beliefs and practices seemed to be covered when they were the subject of conflict. (p. 605)

Additionally, she found that Christians and Christian organizations (particularly Protestant churches) were common foci. Beginning in the 1990s, some newspapers began publishing entire sections devoted religion and religious issues (Willey, 2008). Hynds (1999) found that in the decade between his studies (published in 1988 and 1999), spiritual and ethical issues were given more attention in newspapers than were denominational issues.

> Newspapers in the late 1990s appear to be… covering institutional activities such as pastoral changes, but they are also reporting on a variety of doctrinal, social and political issues and they are increasingly concerned with providing information about a confident faith to live by. (p. 52)

The first decade of the 21st century saw a drastic decline of these religion sections as newspaper sales and revenue were in sharp decline and many religion sections were downsized or eliminated (Willey, 2008).

Studies of the media portrayal of specific religious groups are typically conducted in the wake of significant events (e.g., Chen, 2003; Cragun & Nielsen, 2009; d'Haenens & Bink, 2007; Poole, 2011) or to empirically examine claims of media mischaracterization (e.g., Cragun & Nielsen, 2009; Haskell, 2007). The three religious groups most commonly focused on are Mormons (Chen, 2003; Chen & Yorgason, 1999; Cragun & Nielsen, 2009), Fundamentalist Christians (Bolce & De Maio, 2008; Evensen, 2002; Haskell, 2007; Kerr, 2003; Kerr & Moy,

2002), and Muslims (Mishra, 2008; Pervez & Saeed, 2010; Poole, 2011; Rahman, 2010)—discussed subsequently in turn.

Analyses of the portrayal of Mormons in the media have focused on how the group is depicted in relation to mainstream American culture. Chiung Hwang Chen and Ethan Yorgason (1999) analyzed a 1997 *Time* magazine article entitled "Kingdom Come" for its portrayal of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), commonly referred to as "Mormons" though this term has historically been contested by the LDS Church hierarchy (Cragun & Nielsen, 2009). Chen and Yorgason found that Mormons were portrayed within a "model minority" discourse:

> Our use of the term "model" plays upon two important connotations. Models are worthy of emulation and admiration. But model also implies a frozen, static representation of something inherently more real. Models are strangely ahistorical in this sense. "Minority" gains meaning through opposition to the majority. Minority can be defined sociologically (as an identifiable group smaller than another group—the majority) or culturally (as a group whose values or practices clarify the boundaries of the mainstream by symbolizing opposition to majority norms). We depend more on the latter definition. To the dominant culture, minorities constitute sites of difference, strangeness, and otherness. (p. 107)

However, Chen and Yorgason (1999) note, this characterization of Mormons as minorities is problematic in that most of them are white and have, historically, been a part of the persecuting majority.[17] The authors conclude by suggesting that since:

> White Mormons stand in a good position to seriously question the privileges of whiteness

[17] This is not to imply that Mormons have not been persecuted, but the authors' argument is that as white Americans they have also been persecutors.

> in America… Rather than feverishly working to prove what normal Americans they are, white Mormons should slow down and ponder what being a minority entails. They should not be patronizing, with a false empathy that suggests being Mormon is just like being Asian American, African American, or Native American. Mormons ought to respect real difference and understand their historical complicity with the oppressive majority. (p. 128)

Subsequently, in examining newspapers and mainstream news magazines in the year surrounding the 2002 Winter Olympics, held in Salt Lake City, Utah, where the majority of the population is Mormon, Chen (2003) found that Mormons were once again portrayed as a "clannish minority with significant gaps that separate them from 'normal' Americans… that needs watching so that it does not gain too much power" (p. 44). Perhaps because of this portrayal, in the wake of events that could serve to further marginalize them, LDS members vie for legitimacy by being portrayed as "consonant with the broader [American] culture" (Cragun & Nielsen, 2009, p. 94). One such incident that threatened the public understanding of Mormons was the 2008 arrest of Warren Jeffs, President and Prophet of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), for the sexual assault of children. Since being conflated or associated with FLDS would delegitimize it in the eyes of the American people, the LDS church worked to distinguish itself from what they view as fringe groups (like the FLDS group led by Jeffs). Though LDS leadership claimed that only five percent of the news articles accurately distinguished between LDS and FLDS, Ryan T. Cragun and Michael Nielsen (2009) found that, with the exception of one opinion piece published in Mexico, the media did not confuse the two groups.

Although it has not always been the case (Evensen, 2002), studies of the media portrayal of fundamentalist and evangelical Christians have found that they are typically depicted more

negatively than positively (Bolce & De Maio, 2008; Kerr, 2003; Kerr & Moy, 2002). Between the years of 1980 and 2000, Peter A. Kerr and Patricia Moy (2002) found that article type influenced the portrayal of Fundamentalist Christians:

> The results of our content analysis indicate that newspapers in the United States consistently have been slightly cool, but not cold, toward fundamentalist Christians, with much of the stronger antipathy (specifically regarding general favorability and tolerance) found in letters to the editors and weekly columns. Features, on the other hand, have tended to take a less negative stance, perhaps because they appear more often in religious sections of newspapers. Individuals motivated enough to write letters to the editor may be prone to express more extreme—and potentially negative—opinions, while weekly columnists may focus on negative aspects of fundamentalist Christians, perhaps to engage their audiences. News stories tended to fall "in between" in their portrayal of this group. This particular finding may very well be grounded in journalists' professional norm of objectivity, dictating stories be balanced by reporting more than one side of an issue. (p. 63)

Kerr (2003) found that Fundamentalist Christians typically were in the news due to their political activity and interactions and they were "shown as being somewhat violent, imposing their views, and intolerant… [as well as] patriotic" (p. 231). The issues to which they were tied dealt with "the conflict between church and state, often questioning the validity of the Christian Right's activities in politics, and grappling with how to integrate an exclusivist religion into pluralistic society" (p. 231). In his study of Canadian television news between 1994 and 2004, David M. Haskell (2007) found that evangelical Christians were, for the most part, treated fairly. However, he holds that:

> In terms of audience perceptions it could be suggested that the concentrated negative frames (because of their increased saliency) wield more influence over viewers' attitudes than a numerically significant, yet thematically disparate, collection of positive and balanced frames. Research has shown that a correlation exists between repetitive viewing of specific, similar content on television and the holding of specific perceptions or beliefs about the world. (pp. 140-141).

Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio (2008) forward the idea that "anti-*Christian fundamentalism* has become a very fashionable prejudice of the sophisticated classes" (p. 178, emphasis original) and that those who hold extreme negative opinions of fundamentalist Christians are those who are most attentive to media.

Critical events have been shown to negatively affect the tone of media coverage on Muslims. Studies show that the majority, though not all (Faimau, 2011), of secular coverage of Muslims and Islam post-September 11, 2001 has been negative and related to terrorism (Pervez & Saeed, 2010; Poole, 2011). Sadia Pervez and Shazia Saeed (2010) found that between March 2007 and March 2009, talk shows on CNN and Fox News depicted Muslims negatively, with CNN portraying them slightly more negatively than Fox News. They found that 42% of the sentences were related to terrorism, that the teachings of Islam were misinterpreted, and that the Muslim world received more attention in situations of crisis. According to Pervez and Saeed (2010), "The positive references of Muslims and Islam were either insignificant or were so juxtaposed that they were overshadowed by the negative treatment of both Islam and Muslims" (p. 137). In European and American media, a distinction is made between in-country Muslims and out-country-Muslims (d'Haenens & Bink, 2007; Ibrahim, 2010). Though television network news coverage of American Muslims immediately following the attack of September 11, 2001 in

the United States was positive and sympathetic, coverage of Muslims in other counties was focused on violence and terrorism (Ibrahim, 2010). Critical events, however, can also affect this depiction. For example, Dutch media coverage of Dutch Muslims was negatively affected by the murder of a Dutch filmmaker by a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim (d'Haenens & Bink, 2007). Elizabeth Poole (2011) found that British coverage focused on Muslims' "inherently different cultural and religious values that conflict with 'British values' (a construction)" (p. 58) and this theme "runs through a variety of popular topics such as education, relationships, legal issues, gender issues, religious practice, criminality, and political values" (p. 58). When in-country Muslim individuals participate in an act of mass murder or terrorism, the media focuses on the offenders' criminality rather than any political motives they may have had (Featherstone, Holohan, & Poole, 2010).

Regarding politics, the major themes about Islam between September 2001 and December 2005 in the U.S. prestige press (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Los Angles Times*) were the assumed incompatibility of Islam and democracy and the need to secularize and modernize Islam according to Western standards (Mishra, 2008). Any visible religiosity in the public and political sphere was interpreted as a lack of commitment to democracy and human rights. Though counter-discourses existed, their infrequency did little to challenge these portrayals. In contrast to the many findings of negative portrayals, Bushra H. Rahman (2010) found that with few exceptions between the years of 1979 and 2002, the *Time* and *Newsweek* magazine portrayal of Muslim political women, though subjected to gender stereotype, was positive. Notably, it was also devoid of any reference to Islam. In the Canadian press, Muslim women have been found to be portrayed as a powerless, homogeneous group of outsiders (Kassam, 2008).

Moving Forward

The scholarship on media portrayals of education is overwhelmingly critical of media for giving undue credit to questionable expert sources (Cohen, 2010; Grimm, 2009; Haas, 2007), depicting educational problems as representative of social ills (MacMillan, 2002), oversimplifying or polarizing complex and nuanced issues (Allgaier, 2010; Galindo, 2004), biased selection of sources (Kingori et al., 2004) or data (Tarasawa, 2008), assisting politicians in circumventing school communities (Gewirtz et al., 2004; Ungerleider, 2006), and focusing on educational conflicts and failings (Baker, 1994; Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Levin, 2004). However, for better or worse, the media are interconnected with the development and interpretation of educational policy and practice (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Gerstl-Pepin, 2007; Stack & Kelly, 2006; Wallace, 1993). Scholars recognize that more research is needed on understanding this relationship (Gerstl-Pepin, 2007; Wallace, 1993).

Media portrayal of religion depends on the unit of analysis; religious beliefs and practices are portrayed as conflict-ridden (Buddenbaum, 1986; Hart et al., 1980) while religious individuals are generally portrayed either neutrally or positively (Vultee et al., 2010). Studies of the media portrayal of religious groups are typically conducted in the wake of significant events (e.g., Chen, 2003; Cragun & Nielsen, 2009; d'Haenens & Bink, 2007; Poole, 2011) or to empirically examine claims of media mischaracterization of particular religious groups (e.g., Cragun & Nielsen, 2009; Haskell, 2007). The coverage of religion has changed since the 1950s, when the press focused on local occurrences, human interest stories, and instances of novelty (Buddenbaum, 1986). Since then, coverage has shifted to conflict-driven news stories (Buddenbaum, 1986). It has also been found that coverage of religious denominations was not

representative of the American population (Ferre, 1980), though local denominations with the largest membership receive the most attention in local media (Buddenbaum, 1986).

Both schools and media (Moses, 2007) serve educative roles in our society. Just as Opfer (2007) said of media, schools are also civic forums (Gutmann, 1987) and mobilizing agents (Anyon, 2005; Apple, 2006). Schools and media introduce information to those variously informed and support various interpretations of said information. According to a 2010 report:

> One-half of reporters say the biggest challenge to covering religion is a lack of knowledge about the subject. Only a fifth of reporters say they are "very knowledgeable" about religion, and most of these are mainly familiar with their own religious traditions, not the wider array of faiths and practices. (Winston & Green, p. 1)

If schooling influences journalists' perspectives on and knowledge about religion and journalists' writing influences school policy, examining how journalists portray teaching about religion in public schools in their writing way to better understand this dynamic. This dissertation examines the following question: *How is teaching about religion in public schools portrayed in the media?* The next Chapter, *Methods: The Question and My Approach,* details my methods for investigating this question.

Chapter Three

Methods: The Question and My Approach

As discussed in Chapter 1, my question is as follows: *How is teaching about religion in public schools portrayed in the media?* In this chapter, I discuss my approach to this question. I begin with my theoretical framework, Walter R. Fisher's (1984, 1985) conception of the narrative paradigm coupled with Walter J. Ong's (1975) notion of the fictionalized audience. Next, I present a brief review of media and discourse analysis to situate my theoretical perspective, data, and analyses. Finally, I address choices I have made regarding data collection, data analysis, and data representation, and I close with a short section about myself as the researcher.

Theoretical Framework: The Narrative Paradigm and the Imagined Audience

Individuals' ideas and interpretations as well as artifacts created by them are influenced by a multiplicity of factors (e.g., common narratives, personal experiences). If I were to label this assertion's implied epistemology, I would call it "constructionist," as encapsulated by Michael Crotty (1998):

> While humans may be described, in a constructionist spirit, as engaging with their world and making sense of it, such a description is misleading if is it is not set in a genuine historical and social perspective. It is clearly not the case that individuals encounter phenomena in the world and make sense of them one by one. Instead, we are all born into a world of meaning. We enter a social milieu in which a "system of intelligibility" prevails. We inherit a "system of significant symbols." For each of us, when we first see

> the world in meaningful fashion, we are inevitably viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture. (Crotty, 1998, p. 54)

Claiming constructionism as my epistemology is an inclusive choice. It is not one that rejects that reality exists; conversely, it presupposes that there are multiple versions of reality. My work embraces the idea that:

> At different times and in different places, there have been and are very divergent interpretations of the same phenomena. . . . We need to recognize that different people may well inhabit quite different worlds. Their different worlds constitute for them diverse ways of knowing, distinguishable sets of meanings, separate realities. (Crotty, 1998, p. 64)

As is appropriate for a constructionist, my methodology is an amalgamation of multiple perspectives: narrative rationality from rhetorical theory, the concept of the audience as a fiction from literary theory, and discourse analysis from linguistic theory.

The narrative paradigm. According to Allen Bell (1991):

> Journalists are the professional story-tellers of our age. The fairy tale starts: "Once upon a time." The news story begins: "Fifteen people were injured today when a bus plunged…" The journalist's work is focused on the getting and writing of stories. … A good journalist "gets good stories" or "knows a good story." A critical news editor asks: "Is this really a story?" "Where is the story in this?" (p. 147)

But what makes something a "good story" or a persuasive argument? For Fisher (1984, 1985), a good story is one that has narrative rationality. This way of conceiving of the world falls within what Fisher refers to as the *narrative paradigm*, which he contrasts with the *rational world paradigm*. According to Fisher (1984):

> The narrative paradigm… can be considered a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme. … The narrative paradigm insists that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative rationality, and as inevitably moral inducements. ... The narrative paradigm does not deny reason and rationality; it reconstitutes them, making then amenable to all forms of human communication. (p. 2)

A story has narrative rationality if it is found to have *narrative probability*, in that the characters and elements within the story are consistent with what is considered likely in the everyday world, and *narrative fidelity*, in that the story "rings true" with the stories the audience knows to be true in their lives. A simple way of understanding this is to consider national (U.S.) politics. The majority of adults in the United States are members of either the Republican Party or the Democrat Party, likely because they identify with the narratives of the particular parties (i.e., the stories the parties tell make sense to them). The values they present and ideas they communicate are consistent and they ring true with what they experience and "know" from their lives. Similarly, people who adhere to a particular religion (in societies where religion is a matter of choice) do so for reasons that make sense to them and may seem nonsensical to their neighbors because these reasons do not resonate in their lives—they do not have narrative fidelity for the neighbor.

Fisher (1984) forwards the notion that the best story is not necessarily the one that makes the most cogent or logical argument but, rather, is the one that resonates most with readers, listeners, or viewers. The narrative paradigm is based on the ideas that:

> (1) Humans are essentially storytellers; (2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is "good reasons" which vary in form among communication situations, genres, and media; (3) the production and practice of good reasons is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character…; (4) *rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings—their inherent awareness of... what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing ... whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives*. (Fisher, 1984, pp. 7-8, emphasis added)

Conversely, the rational world paradigm presupposes that:

> (1) Humans are essentially rational beings; (2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is argument…; (3) the conduct of argument is ruled by the dictates of situations—legal, scientific, legislative, public, and so on; (4) *rationality is determined by subject matter knowledge, argumentative ability, and skill in employing the rules of advocacy in given fields*; and (5) the world is a set of logic puzzles which can be resolved through appropriate analysis and application of reason conceived as an argumentative construct. (Fisher, 1984, p. 4, emphasis added)

The fourth aspect of the rational world paradigm is the one that most troubles Fisher (1984) because it reifies his concern that through application of the rational world paradigm, the public will always be rendered irrational because "traditional rationality implies some sort of hierarchical system, a community in which some persons are qualified to judge and to lead and some other persons follow" (p. 9). If specialized training in argumentation and subject mater are required before someone can be deemed qualified to participate in public discourse, as the rational world paradigm dictates, a *de facto* class system is produced in which some have the

qualifications to deliberate because of their training while others do not. According to Fisher (1984), "People do not have the capacity to be equally rational in the rational world paradigm" (p. 10).

Traditional rationality (in the rational world paradigm) is not normative because "one must reason according to prescribed rules of calculation or inference making" (p. 9). In contrast, narrative rationality is normative and descriptive. It offers an account, or understanding, of an instance of human choice and action:

> The primary function of the paradigm is to offer a way of interpreting and assessing human communication that leads to critique, a determination of whether or not a given instance of discourse provides a reliable, trustworthy, and desirable guide to thought and action in the world. It predicates that all normal human discourse is meaningful and is subject to the tests of narrative rationality. Contrary to structuralist thinking, it holds that meaning is a matter of history, culture, and character as well as linguistic convention and interanimation. (Fisher, 1985, p. 351)

While the narrative paradigm does not provide a specific method of analysis, it does propose a precise perspective for critically reading texts:

> Regardless of its genre, a text is viewed as composed of good reasons, elements that give warrants for believing or acting in accord with the message fostered by the text. … This perspective focuses on the message, the individuated forms that constitute it, and the reliability, trustworthiness, and desirability of the message as determined by the tests of narrative rationality. (Fisher, 1985, p. 357)

Applying this perspective involves contextualizing discourse, investigating whether the reasoning provided withstands tests of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and

considering how it may reify its audience's self conception in such a way that it resonates with them.

The audience. Writing is a dialogic process with an implicit audience. Bakhtin (1981) contends that, "All rhetorical forms, monologic in their compositional structure, are oriented toward the listener and his answer… this orientation (toward the listener) is usually considered the basic constitutive feature of rhetorical discourse" (p. 280). Being an audience is also an active social act. As Fowler (1991) points out:

> There is every reason to propose that being a reader is an active, creative practice. … It is now believed that perception and understanding involve the active deployment (not necessarily conscious, of course) of mental schemes and processing strategies which the subject knows in advance of his or her encounter with the object being processed: these are projected on to the perceptual data in a trial at 'making sense'; their relevance, their success, is confirmed by structural or contextual cues. (p. 43)

According to Fisher (1984), audiences are persons who conceive of themselves in very specific ways and "if a story denies a person's self conception, it does not matter what it says about the world" (p. 14) because it will be rejected. Using the example of a protest, Fisher states that when arguers appealing to justice and equality contend with adversaries who based their case on success, survival, and liberty, they talk past each other. These "rival factions' stories deny each other in respect to self-conceptions and the world" (p. 14) and "the only way to bridge this gap, if it can be bridged through discourse, is by telling stories that do not negate the self-conceptions people hold of themselves" (p. 14).

Regarding the concept of an audience, Ong (1975) posits that the audience is a *fiction* for at least two reasons: "First, that the writer must cast in his imagination, an audience case in some

sort of role—entertainment seekers, reflective sharers of experience… [Second,] an audience must correspondingly fictionalize itself" (p. 12). In creating his or her (fictionalized) audience, the writer appeals to readers' self-conceptions. For example, the appeal of idealistic stories "resides in presuming the best in people and activating it" (Fisher, 1985, p. 362).

A writer is not simply further away in time and space from his or her audience than an orator:

> If the writer succeeds in writing, it is generally because he can fictionalize in his imagination an audience he has learned to know not from daily life but from earlier writers who were fictionalizing in their imagination audiences they had learned to know in still earlier writers, and so on back to the dawn of written narrative. If and when he becomes truly adept, an "original writer," he can do more than project the earlier audience, he can alter it. (Ong, 1975, p. 11)

To some degree, the term *audience* itself is a fiction (though Ong persists in using it, he writes that he finds it quite misleading) because:

> A writer addresses readers—only, he not quite "address" either: he writes for them. The orator has before him an audience which is a true audience, a collectivity. "Audience" is a collective noun. There is no such collective noun for readers, nor as far as I am able to puzzle it out, can there be. "Readers" is a plural. Readers do not form a collectivity, acting here and now as members of an audience do. (pp. 10-11)

Even if at one point a speaker asks members of an audience to read silently to themselves, the audience immediately fragments in that "each individual retires into his own microcosm" (p. 11). Within this microcosm "a reader has to play the role in which the author casts him, which seldom coincides with his role in the rest of his life" (p. 12). For media discourse, if this role coincides

with how the reader conceives of him- or herself, it will likely resonate with him or her. If the role appeals to values that conflict with the reader's self-concept (as in the example of the protest) it will not have narrative fidelity and will fail the test of narrative rationality and be rejected.

It is important to note that the concept of narrative rationality is not relativistic. The narrative paradigm does not preclude a role for experts nor does it "deny that the existence and desirability of genius in individuals or the 'people' to formulate and to adopt new stories that better account for their lives or the mystery of life itself" (Fisher, 1984, p. 9). In the narrative paradigm, an expert is a counselor, which is "the true function of the storyteller" (Fisher, 1984, p. 13). An expert's "contribution to public dialogue is to impart knowledge, like a teacher, or wisdom, like a sage … it is not to pronounce a story that ends all storytelling" (p. 13). Locating and respecting the internal logic of a piece does not prevent one from critiquing it. But, without first understanding the appeal of a story and the self-conception that a new story cannot negate, it is challenging, if not impossible, to create new stories that will be accepted.

When taken in light of Fisher's narrative paradigm and Ong's audience concept, media discourse is particularly interesting because it allows for immediate access to credible narratives of the people who constitute its public. The stories are credible because if the ways in which ideas were communicated were so dramatically out of sync with what the readers expect or "know" to be true, the discourse would not have narrative rationality and would be rejected (either by the editorial staff, preventing it from being published, or by the reading public itself). Further, because media discourse is (a) meant for the public and (b) this public (constructed and fictionalized by the writer) is inscribed in the text, the people who make up the public therefore may be identified and analyzed in the text of the media discourse.

Conceptual Framework: Media and Discourse Analysis

Regarding media, Fowler (1991) "take[s] the view that the 'content' of newspapers is not facts about the world, but in a very general sense 'ideas'" (p. 1). As such, in his discussion of language in the news, Fowler refers to these *ideas* as beliefs, values, theories, propositions, or ideology, whichever term seems most appropriate in his discussion. Richardson (2007) concurs with this perspective when he challenges the prevailing assumptions that: (a) language "acts as a neutral window on the world," (b) "objects and structures of a language exist as a kind of an apolitical structure" (p. 13), and (c) journalism is neutral and factual. Fowler's (1991) major concern is showing that "language is not neutral, but a highly constructive mediator" (p. 1). If language is a highly constitutive mediator and media does not communicate facts but rather ideas or theories, then the point of studying it is to better understand how language is used to (re)constitute beliefs, values, theories, propositions, or ideas in our society.

Journalists, along with editors, select which events and topics are appropriate for reporting according to a complex set of criteria which "are probably more or less unconscious in editorial practice" (Fowler, 1991, p. 13). Known as "news values," these criteria serve a gate-keeping role "filtering and restricting news input" (p. 13). Fowler (1991) states that:

> Events are subject to conventional processes of selection; they are not intrinsically newsworthy, but only become "news" when selected for inclusion in news reports. The vast majority of events are not mentioned, and so selection immediately gives us a partial view of the world. (p. 11)

Fowler further states that the more "news values" criteria are satisfied, the more likely an event or topic is to be reported. These criteria are: (a) *frequency*, a single event is more likely to be reported than a long process, (b) *threshold* (absolute intensity or intensity increase), a catastrophe

involving hundreds of people is more likely to be reported than one involving three, (c) *unambiguity*, events or topics with clear significance are more likely to be reported than those requiring interpretation, (d) *meaningfulness* (cultural proximity or relevance), for U.S. readers, events in New Jersey are more likely to be reported than events in South Africa, (e) *consonance* (predictability or demand), events that people either expect to happen or want to happen are more likely to be reported, (f) *unexpectedness* (unpredictability or scarcity), highly unusual events are likely to be reported (e.g., the airline pilot completing a successful emergency landing on the Hudson River), (g) *continuity*, once something is reported, subsequent developments are more likely to be reported, (h) *composition*, content related to other things being reported (i.e., a macro-level perspective of the day's news), or reference to (i) elite nations, (j) elite people, (k) persons, or (l) something negative (adapted from Fowler, 1991, pp. 14-15). Fowler draws attention to the extent that the aforementioned values criteria are cultural rather than natural and that "news is not a natural phenomenon emerging straight from 'reality', but a product… [that] reflects, and in return shapes, the prevailing values of a society in a particular historical context" (p. 222).

Media is "a particularly important example of the power of all language in the social construction of reality … [and newspaper discourse] is a major element in our daily experience of language" (pp. 8-9). Media discourse presents ideas about the world, which are neither neutral nor merely factual and are subject to a set of criteria for selection that filter which ideas will be communicated to readers. This being the case, news and opinion articles and blog posts provide a rich dataset for studying how ideas are constituted as part of our cultural understanding and an appropriate subject for discourse analysis, particularly insofar as the media has the capacity to

direct *what we have opinions on,* as Richardson (2007) contends. Richardson (2007) further states that:

> Most of us think we can identify bias in the news, or those instances when the journalist seems to have an agenda that they're pushing. It is much harder to be able to identify exactly *why* you come to this conclusion; *why* you think that a particular article is biased. (p. 8, emphasis original)

It is important not only to analyze how media direct our attention, but also to *identify evidence* supporting our notions about any messages media may purposefully or inadvertently communicate. Providing linguistic detail from the writer's work as evidence to support the assertion that he or she communicates certain messages or values is a thought- and conversation-provoking approach. It provides others with tangible points with which to agree or disagree, thereby enhancing and deepening the conversation instead of stagnating it.

Any piece of discourse – spoken, written, visual, and otherwise – can be understood as an instance of a "who-doing-what" (Gee, 2005). According to James Paul Gee (2011a):

> Discourse analysis is the study of language-in-use. Better put, it is the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, *but to do things*. People use language to communicate, co-operate, help others, and build things like marriages, reputations, and institutions. They also use it to lie, advantage themselves, harm people, and destroy things like marriages, reputations, and institutions. (p. i, emphasis added)

Certain identities are constructed (or destructed) by the authors/speakers/producers of a piece of discourse. Both producing and consuming discourse are social acts, replete with social significance and meaning construction. According to Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland (2006):

> The meaning of an event or of a single utterance is only partly accounted for by its formal features (that is, by the "direct meaning" of the words used). The social significance of discourse … lies in the relationship between linguistic meanings and the wider context (i.e., the social, cultural, economic, demographic and other characteristics of the communicative event) in which interaction takes place. (p. 11)

It is the task of the discourse analyst to use language as the window (or mirror) to theorizing about wider cultural contexts. According to Teun A. van Dijk (1988):

> The major aim of discourse analysis… is to produce explicit and systematic descriptions of units of language use that we have called discourse. Such descriptions have two main dimensions, which we may simply call textual and contextual. Textual dimensions account for the structures of discourse at various levels of description. Contextual dimensions relate these structural descriptions to various properties of the context, such as cognitive processes and representations or sociocultural factors. (p. 25)

More specifically, the analysis of discourse:

> Involves a progression from interpretation to description back to interpretation: from interpretation of the discourse practice (processes of text production and consumption), to description of the text, to interpretation of both of these in the light of the social practice in which the discourse is embedded. (Fairclough, 1992, p. 231)

In relation to this project, this means I must provide my interpretation for why the media presents a significant form of discourse for study (Chapter One and here), a description of the texts and analyses (Chapters Four and Five), and an interpretation of both of these "in light of the social practice in which the discourse is embedded" (Chapter Six).

Data Collection

For this project I have two sources of data: documents (newspaper articles, opinion articles, and blog posts) and interviews. I limited the "media" in this project to newspaper articles (news and opinion) and web logs or "blogs" as they are known. I have included blogs because many people (experts and others) regularly use them to communicate their ideas to the public. The popularity of the formal newspaper "op-ed" piece is waning. As shown in the literature review, analyses of newspaper articles are common in studies of media discourse. Studies of blogs are also common, but typically focus on blogs like diaries or journals rather than sources of informational media. All blogs analyzed for this project are akin to digital newspapers rather than personal journals.

I chose to focus on text because it is ready for textual analysis in its original form—no additional translation (as would be necessary with television news and constructing transcripts thereof, for example) is required. If I were to transcribe television news, subtle vocal inflections or facial expressions and the information they communicate would be lost. This choice allowed me to apply consistent analytic methods to all documents. It also allowed me to focus on one type of media producer—writers. If I were to focus on television media, many people are involved with the creation of news stories (e.g., producers, anchors, researchers). Identifying a single person responsible for the final product to interview would not have been parallel to the process involved with identifying a writer of a textual piece. Though editors have some influence over the final content of newspaper stories, none of the writers I spoke with mentioned the editor as influencing why or how they wrote. However, the choice to focus on text also limited the project. Individuals consume media in various forms; to limit my conception of media to text ignores what people learn from radio, television, podcasts, cartoons, and article placement within

newspapers. Analyses of visual news artifacts on teaching about religion in public schools would be a rich area for future research.

Document collection. Written artifacts are what Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985) refer to as "documents." The documents collected as part of this project were news articles, opinion articles, and blog posts. According to Bell (1991):

> In a newspaper, everything other than advertising is called 'editorial'. Most editorial content is written 'copy'. … We can divide copy into three broad categories: service information, opinion and news. … Opinion copy includes what are often called editorials or leaders—a statement of the newspaper's own views on an issue… Much of the remaining opinion copy is regular contributed columns, letters to the editor and reviews. … Although numerous media researchers have shown that fact and opinion are by no means easy to separate, this has made little difference to how newsworkers perceive—or newspapers present—these categories. (p. 13)

The articles analyzed for this study from newspapers fall into two categories: opinion and news. They were published between January 1, 1980 and June 1, 2010 and collected using the LexisNexis (LN) database. To conduct the search, I used LN's Power Search option, limiting sources to those classified as "All News – English" and published in the United States. I used the search terms[18] religio!, curricul!, and public school! and limited the results to those with "curricula" as the indexed subject. Only articles where the primary topic was teaching about religion or the use of religious texts in public schools were considered relevant.

[18] An exclamation point denotes that the search should include all word endings, such as religion, religious, and religions for religio! and curricula, curricular, and curriculum for curricul!.

The decision to focus on "teaching about religion" is significant because it determines how this dissertation unfolds. There are two (overlapping) ways to understand "the inclusion of religion": (a) content related to world religions and (b) religious worldviews. They are overlapping in that discussion of one could naturally lead to discussion of the other. For example, in teaching about contemporary fundamentalist Christian political initiatives (e.g., Intelligent Design or abstinence-only education), it would likely be necessary to also discuss why some believe these to be worthy topics—what it is about their belief systems and worldviews that leads them to pursue issues related to these topics. It may also be necessary to discuss why some others are opposed to these initiatives (and the general worldviews that contribute to these objections). However, when examining the discourse of teaching about religion in public schools, these two ways of understanding can be separated. On one hand, there is curricular content related to explicitly teaching about religion. These are basic initiatives to scaffold religious literacy. On the other hand, there are movements to inculcate religious worldviews throughout the curriculum. Creationism, Intelligent Design, and abstinence-only sex education are often understood as religious perspectives, even without the explicit mention of religion or religious belief in the curriculum. These are distinct from efforts to improve religious literacy. I have limited my data to those that deal with explicitly teaching about religion in public schools.

In my first pass through the results from LN, I determined which articles concerned teaching about religion, using religious texts, or incorporating content related to world religions in public schools. This yielded 362 relevant articles: 251 news articles, 73 opinion articles, 7 "other articles" (i.e., 1 book review, 1 magazine piece, and 5 articles which were difficult to categorize as either "news" or "opinion" because they contained elements of each), and 31 articles that were found to be either duplicates or not relevant on the second pass. My dataset

also included blog posts. According to Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs (2006), blogs have a variety of uses. Beyond the basic definition of "blogging," or: "The reverse-chronological posting of individually authored entries that include the capacity to provide hypertext links and often allow comment-based responses from readers" (p. 2) the term "blog" has very little meaning unless "a descriptive qualifier" (p. 3) can be attached. Moreover, it is the:

> Specific implementation of a blog that determines its value: its operational structures and response mechanism, as well as the style of writing and methods of recording ideas, commentary, and institutionally relevant information, all influence significance, reputation, and success of a blog. (p. 3)

For this project, blogs were collected in two ways. First, I performed the same search, using LN, adding the qualifiers "not intelligent design" and "not evolution." I added these search criteria because I am concerned with the explicit teaching of religion and these topics tend to usurp the dataset.[19] This yielded 52 relevant blogs. Second, I used Internet search engines (such as Google Blog Search) to augment the set of blogs from LN, searching for prominent terms in the relevant articles procured through LN because I noticed that many popular blogs sites, such as the Huffington Post and Red State, were not included in the LN database.[20] This free form search yielded an additional 39 blogs for analysis. Additional context for the sources of blog posts (91 total) will be described when they are used in analysis.

Interviews. Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey (2003) refer to interviewing as "one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings"

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[19] Though critics of Intelligent Design claim that it is religious ideology, proponents refer to it as a scientific critique of Darwin's theory of evolution (The Discovery Institute, 2011). Though this may be an interesting case for study, it is not my concern at this time.

[20] Using the same search terms in Google Blog search as I originally used for the LexisNexis search yielded over 40,000 hits.

(p. 62). As with any form of data collection (or knowledge, for that matter), I do not see interviews as "neutral" depictions of people's understandings. The interview is a negotiated process—an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. What results from the interview in the form of notes and transcripts is, in itself, an interpretation or construction. According to Fontana and Frey (2003), there is a growing recognition that interviews are "negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place" (p. 91).

For this project, twelve writers were interviewed: four authors of news articles, four authors of opinion articles, and four authors of blog posts. Writers were selected and contacted for interviews based on a first pass analysis of the data. Attempts were made to interview writers who could help me understand and communicate the diverse opinions people have on this topic. A total of twenty-six writers were contacted via e-mail for interviews (seven news, nine opinion, ten blog). A second message requesting interviews was sent to eight of the writers who did not initially respond a week after the initial contact. Consent forms were collected. Out of the twenty-six writers originally contacted, fifteen responded: one person declined to participate, two people initially agreed to be interviewed but then stopped responding after they received the consent form, and twelve completed the interview process.

Eleven of the interviews were conducted over the phone and one was conducted in person.[21] One of the phone interviews resulted in no recording because I plugged in the recorder incorrectly, and the interviewee kindly agreed to speak with me a second time. Only his second interview has been used as data.

[21] The consent form indicated that, if feasible, the interview could be conducted in person and the one person for whom this was feasible agreed to an in-person interview.

I used the following semi-structured interview protocol to frame the interviews:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. For this project I am investigating how people think about the study of religion in public schools. You have been invited to participate because of your work related to the study of religion in public schools. This interview should last between 30 minutes and 1 hour.[22] I will be asking a few questions about your writing and a couple about teaching about religion in public schools.

I have been advised to mention that in some circumstances, disclosure of personal beliefs could have unintended consequences. I will make every effort to make this a neutral setting for discussion. Do you have any questions that I can answer before we begin?

Background

- First, tell me a bit about yourself. How did you come to be interested in the topic of religion and education?
- As I mentioned in my e-mail, I wanted to interview you because of [name/describe specific blog, article, or opinion piece]. How would you describe this piece to someone who hasn't read it? [Prompts: What prompted you to write it? What do you hope people learn from it? In what ways has it and has it not achieved this purpose?]
- When you wrote this piece, whom did you imagine as your audience? In general, what groups do you imagine as being interested in this topic? [Prompts: What

[22] After completing a few interviews, I learned that the actual time need was between 20 and 45 minutes, so I began stating that time, instead of the one written on the protocol.

feedback have you received from readers, if any? How did you react to this feedback?]

- If you were to write this piece today, what would you do the same way you did it before? What would you do differently?

Curriculum questions

- In your opinion, how does religion as a topic in education rate in terms of being controversial as compared to other topics in education? Why? [Prompts: In what ways is it more or less controversial than other topics like history, biology, or literature?]
- In your experience, how do different groups view teaching about religion in public schools? Where do you stand on the issue?
- What is important for American schoolchildren to know about religion? Who should decide what is included or omitted?

Your work

- How is your work different from the work of [name two other formats, e.g. journalists, opinion writers, bloggers]? [Prompts: Can you name some strengths or limitations that other types of writers do not need to worry about? What would or could you do differently if you were a blogger/journalist?]
- Who are your greatest supporters? Who are your most notable critics?
- What more do I need to know about this? What other questions should I ask you or someone else?

The writers were asked to assent to being quoted directly and being identified by name in my work. This allowed me to connect what writers said in their interviews with what they had written for the media. In cases where I was not given permission to identify the writers by name,

I could not reference their written work without jeopardizing their confidentiality because a cursory Internet search would reveal their identities. I would describe most writers as being wholly unfazed by the proposition of being identified. Those who expressed concerns did consent to being identified. Two writers (both journalists) declined to be identified and one of these two individuals declined to be quoted directly. All others consented to being identified and quoted directly. Though it is possible that writers' lack of anonymity affected their comfort in sharing their personal opinions and experiences candidly, as the interviewer, I did not sense hesitation. Given the benefits of connecting writers' interviews with their work, I was willing to risk potential self-censorship. As the writer of this dissertation I was cognizant of the fact people had entrusted me with their personal opinions and that those opinion would be tied herein to their names and professions. It has been my goal throughout this dissertation to discuss the positions of those who agreed to be interviewed with the utmost respect for their professional lives and general welfare.

Writers were also given the opportunity to comment on the transcripts of their interviews if they so chose. Six of the twelve writers asked for a copy of their transcripts, which were sent either via e-mail or postal mail at their request. Three writers responded with comments. One was unsure of whether he provided me with "enough to meet my needs" and offered to follow-up if I wanted to. Another writer was surprised by his own use of conversational discontinuities (e.g., "um" and "you know"). I assured him that those types of utterances would be edited if I chose to quote him in my writing. Another writer's assistant contacted me to correct a city name (it was Charleston, but it should have been Charlottesville). Table 1 shows each writer I interviewed, their connection to the discourse on religion and public schools, the type of piece they wrote, and their topic.

Table 1

Interviewed Writers, their Connection to the Discourse, Type of Writing and Topic

Name	Connection to the discourse	Type	Topic
Lee Jefferson	Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion, Centre College	Blog	Bible
Diane Winston	Knight Chair in Media and Religion, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the USC	Blog	World religion and TEKS
John Whitehead	Constitutional Attorney, Founder of the Rutherford Institute	Blog	TEKS
Charles Haynes	Director, Religious Freedom Education Project, Newseum	Blog	World religion and TEKS
Journalist A	Journalist	News	Bible and TEKS
Gary Scharrer	Journalist, Houston Chronicle	News	Bible and TEKS
Jim Remsen	Former Journalist, Philadelphia Inquirer	News	World Religion
Journalist B	Journalist	News	World religion
Gregory Rummo	Writer, columnist "An Evangelical View"	Opinion	Bible
Christopher Fontenot	Christian, concerned citizen	Opinion	Bible
William McKenzie	Editorial columnist, Dallas Morning News	Opinion	Bible
Jeff Kaley	Journalist, The Duncan Banner	Opinion	World religion

Data Analysis

Coding and theme identification were used throughout this research process. After loading all of the data into NVivo (a qualitative research software program), my first read of the data consisted of my LN newspaper sorting the data into the following topic codes (see Table 2).

Table 2

First Pass Coding Results, Examples, and Decisions

Topic	#	Example title	Included in "official dataset?"
Arts	7	*When Arts Proponents and Educators Clash*	no
Censorship	16	*School Books Stir Up Cauldron of Trouble; Group Says Reading Curriculum Urges Witchcraft*	no
Diversity	45	*New York Education Chief Seeks New Stress on Nonwhite Cultures*	no
GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered)	57	*Under 'Rainbow,' a War: When Politics, Morals, and Learning Mix*	no
Health	111	*Jersey Retreats on Sex Courses for All Grades*	no
Influential organizations	72	*Education Chief Takes 'Radical' Stand for Tough Standards*	no
Not relevant	572	*76% of Voters Support Permitting Prayer in Public Schools*	no
Religion	226	*Educators Urge Turn to Studies about Religion*	**yes**
Religious belief	4	*Parental Bill of Rights has Dangers and Merit*	no
Science	294	*Science Teachers' Supervisor Balks at State Creation Law*	no
Social studies	136	*New World History Standards Blasted*	**yes**
Values and character education	46	*Teaching Values in U.S. Schools; New Movement Addresses 'Character,' Not Religion*	no

The topics of Religion and Social Studies were determined to constitute the official dataset for this project because they were most closely related to explicitly teaching about religion. For example, the majority of the articles concerning values and character education explicitly state that the curricula discussed do not reference religion. Articles within the Science category are about Evolution, Creationism, and Intelligent Design (ID). Though Intelligent Design is often supported by Conservative Christian groups, the theory is not about teaching religion per se. In fact its supporters go to great lengths to argue that the theory is scientific, not religious. Articles categorized as (a) Health (sex education), (b) GLBT, and (c) Censorship all

concern religious people and their perspectives on school curricula: not curricula that explicitly address religion.

The difference between being coded under a topic and being labeled "not relevant" depended on whether or not the main topic of the piece concerned religion in public schools and concerned a specific area of public school curriculum. Examples of topics that fell under the category of "not relevant" (i.e., not included in the dataset) are: book reviews, obituaries, prayer, private schools, international schools, higher education, and duplicates. The Diversity topic contained primarily articles about racial diversity, including some that did not mention religion at all.

During the second pass through the dataset (the first pass through the newly constituted official dataset), the following three questions were used as a guide: (a) Is this a news article, opinion article, or blog entry? (b) What is the primary topic of the piece? (c) What is the primary theme of the piece? In order to identify themes, I read documents multiple times to identify their narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). After the newspaper articles were coded, I determined which of the topics in the existing dataset were most prominent and then collected additional blog posts on these topics. Figure 1 provides the percentages of the data (i.e., individual news articles, opinion articles, and blog posts) which are categorized under each topic (N=422 pieces).

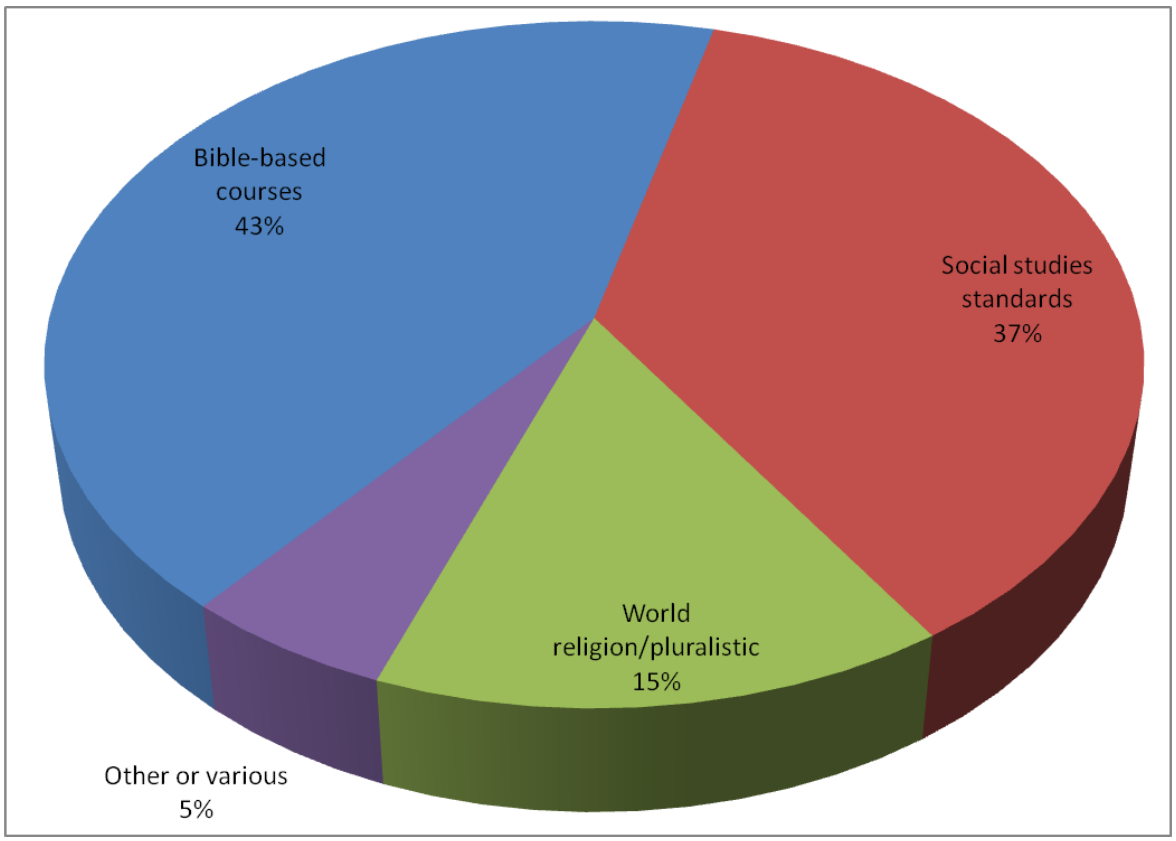


Figure 1. Percentage of news articles, opinion articles, and blog posts in the official dataset categorized by topic (N=422).

NVivo was also used to support the analysis of the interviews. During the first pass analysis I free coded the interviews with the intention of discovering patterns and themes that directly emerged from how I asked interview questions, as well as those that I may not have previously anticipated. Next, I grouped these nodes into groups, based on common themes, sidelining nodes that only resulted in one or two references. The resultant categories (also known as parent nodes) were: Social Institutions, Writing and Media, Self and Role, and Anecdotes (Table 3 gives more detail about this coding scheme). Finally, I retuned to the interviews to code them a second time based on the now established nodes.

Table 3

Interview Codes

Parent Nodes	Child Nodes	Description	# of interviews (N=12)
Social Institution	Politics	About politics	7
	Religion	About religion	7
	Education*	About schools, teachers, teaching about religion, teaching the Bible	12
Media	Business	About the business of media in the United States	5
	Bias	On issues of media bias	4
	Writing for media- comparison	Writing for newspapers versus writing for blogs	8
	Writing for media- general	General thoughts on writing for media	2
Self and Role	Audience	Who they write for, demographically and as their imagined audience	10
	Connection to religion	Descriptions of religion in their lives	8
	Feedback	What they have heard back from their readers about their writing	10
	Misunderstanding	Perceptions of public misunderstands about religion	3
	On the public forum	On their role in the "public square"	4
	Reasons for writing	Reasons for writing about religion and education	12
Anecdotes	The way the world is	Stories about our world, how things are, or how things work	11
	History	Stories about how things once were	3
	Hypothetical situation	Stories wherein the interviewee provides his/her reaction to a hypothetical situation they create	4
	Occurred to acquaintance	True stories that occurred to a friend or relative	4
	Occurred to self	True stories that occurred to the writer	7
	Vision or ideal	The way our world should be	9

* Only one of the child nodes (schools) has its own child nodes (teachers, teaching comparative religion, teaching religious context, and teaching the Bible).

First level child nodes are not mutually exclusive. For example this paragraph from an interview is coded under: (a) Social Institutions/education, (b) Anecdotes/hypothetical situation, and (c) Anecdotes/vision or ideal.

> I mean it's a balance, it's a balancing act. Because you do, you could get a teacher who believes it and just you know starts spinning in a way where you, they are rapturous about it. And it looks like they are proselytizing. You almost need to script it, what the teachers would say. That is not derogatory, nor you know selling it. And I don't know if that's in some of the curricular material that you're seeing. You know, how exactly to describe this in a way that is making the point... So it's really worthwhile, um, you know exploring how to do that and being sure it's done carefully. Because you lose something by not teaching about it. You make everything a little bland and you know superficial. I think it's good to get deeper into it.

This paragraph is only a small part of the "education" and "vision or ideal" references coded in this section of this interview, but constitutes the whole "hypothetical situation" code for this part of this interview. Also, it is important to mention that this paragraph is cut directly from interview transcripts and includes all of the speech discontinuities inherent to a conversation. When I use sections from interviews in the prose of this dissertation, I always edit them for ease of reading. The paragraph above would ultimately be presented thusly if it were to be used:

> I mean, it's a balancing act. Because you could get a teacher who believes it and just starts spinning in a way where they are rapturous about it and it looks like they are proselytizing. You almost need to script what the teachers would say. [So that it's] not derogatory, nor selling it. I don't know if that's in some of the curricular material that you're seeing. ... It's really worthwhile—exploring how to do that and being sure it's done carefully, because you lose something by not teaching about it. You make everything a little bland and superficial. I think it's good to get deeper into it.

My goal in editing is to make it easier for my readers to get a sense of how the person is talking without stumbling though speech discontinuities.

Analyses

Tools of analysis included coding, theme identification, and memoing. The primary method for analyzing the newspaper news and opinion articles and blog posts was discourse analysis. After selecting a piece of data that "both interests you and you believe will speak to or illuminate an important issue or question" (Gee, 2005, p. 115), the discourse analyst applies a set of "tools" and questions to the data, all the while taking notes and making observations. According to Gee (2011a):

> A tool for discourse analysis is a specific question to ask of the data. Each question makes the reader look quite closely at the details of language in an oral or written communication. … [Tools are] all meant to apply at once to any data that is being analyzed. For some data, some tools will yield more illuminating information than for other data. (p. x)

Each datum selected for close analysis was chosen because I judged it to be both representative in some respects and unique in others. They were simultaneously reflective and insightful.

Using tools for discourse analysis, I identified patterns in the data that shed light on the research question. It is important to note that although discourse analysis is a method for analyzing data, the use of the word "method" can be misleading and should be qualified:

> Since the word "method" triggers in our minds ideas of a "step-by-step" set of "rules" to follow, [it is important] to stress … that that is not what 'method' means here. Rather, it means sets of "thinking devices" with which one can investigate certain sorts of

> questions, with due regard for how others have investigated such questions, but with adaptation, innovation, and creativity as well. (Gee, 2005, p. 9)

When researching how to successfully write using discourse analysis, I was struck by the way in which the authors who use it are explicit about their tools and explain their methods in detail as they write (e.g., Fowler, 1991; Gee, 2011b; J. E. Richardson, 2007; Teo, 2000). They discuss the practice of discourse analysis, present tools for discourse analysis, and use their data to present concrete examples which serve as their analysis and a foundation for discussion. Following this practice, the specific tools or "thinking devices" I have applied to the data are detailed throughout the analysis section, using concrete examples from my articles to illustrate them. Notably, I have applied more tools than I present. The tools that are presented are those that provide the most illuminating information.

In order to identify themes, I read and reread interview transcripts to analyze participants' narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), all the while creating memos. According to Elizabeth Graue and Daniel Walsh (1998), memos "elaborate the researcher's understanding, building from the codes by making connections and positing hunches. … Put more simply, memos are written notes to yourself about the thoughts you have about the data and your understanding of them" (p. 166). The use of memos helped to crystallize the subtleties within themes as they emerged.

Validity. For a constructionist, "validity is social, not individual" (Gee, 2005, p. 114). For a constructionist discourse analyst, validity is not "constituted by arguing that a discourse analysis 'reflects reality'" (p. 133). It is the hope of the discourse analyst that his or her work will have: (a) internal and external convergence, wherein the application of multiple tools lead to similar themes and these themes are also identifiable in other data; (b) agreement, insofar as

others who examine your work and apply tools would or could come to similar conclusions; (c) coverage, in that the analysis can be applied to help understand other data; and (d) linguistic detail, insofar as it is based on accepted ways of understanding and analyzing language (Gee, 2005). Applying this view, an internally valid discourse analysis puts forth a hypothesis supported with linguistic detail and evidence. Validity is a social process in that a discourse analyst relies on readers and other analysts to continue the conversation, critiquing or supporting their hypotheses and theories. Like narrative rationality, a discursive analysis will be consistent and ring true or not depending on how well the analyst tells the story of the data and connects that story to other stories. This stance on validity is compatible with the notions of *trustworthiness* and *transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), wherein readers of qualitative research make connections from the case presented to their own knowledge and experience. Readers evaluate research based on the degree to which the findings appear to resonate with their understanding of the existing literature and the presentation of the case.

The Researcher

Since this is a qualitative project informed by how I as the researcher collect, understand, and interpret data, I feel that it is necessary to provide my readers with a brief account of how I am connected to this discourse and project.

Regarding the definition of religion, the idea discussed in Chapter 1 that most resonates with my purpose in this project is W. C. Smith's (1991) notion that religion and the religions should be thought of as adjectives (rather than nouns) and secondary to persons and things, rather than things themselves. I also believe that we ought to think more adjectivally than nominally. Also, like Eliade (1957), I contend that regardless of direct affiliations with particular religions, religion "modifies" us all. For some this connection is direct insofar as they are religious. For

others it is reactionary because they define themselves or their acts as purposefully antireligious. For most, our connection is at the very least culturally mediated, in that we exist in a world of religious people, acts, and norms. Teachers, students, administrators, curriculum writers, and community members are all connected, in some way, to religion.

Regarding the "movements" discussed in Chapter 1, I am more concerned with how each of these movements is represented in the media than I am concerned with taking sides. Taking this position does implicitly align this project with those in the clarification movement. Those who write for the public via the media have clear ideas about what teaching about religion in public schools means (or could mean) for society. The narrative rationality inherent to their stories is cogent and persuasive to them. That being said, nothing written here should be seen as supporting unconstitutional proselytization or religious practice in public schools. While I am sympathetic to the motivations of those in the return movement in that many truly believe that teaching the Bible and praying would help to ameliorate social ills, I disagree with their presupposition that religious inculcation of American public school students is the answer. Moreover, schools should take care not to infringe upon students' constitutional rights.

In general, I support teaching about religion in public schools if it is done respectfully and in a non-proselytizing manner. I believe that it is important for people to have some knowledge of each other's lives and worldviews if we are to respectfully discuss political issues and peacefully cohabitate in our country. I have felt like a religious outsider (being raised Episcopalian in a Catholic area) and have experienced more than a few moments when I wished I had more knowledge about religious practices and norms. However, having been a teacher, I know that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to teach about religion if they have not had any formal schooling or training about religion or how to teach it. In other words, while I recognize

that not teaching about religion is ignoring an important area of study, I also do not see mandating it as a quick fix. I elaborate on this point in Chapter 6.

Though I support the motivations of those who offer ideas for how teachers can acknowledge and teach about religion at all levels of K-12 education (particularly those put forth by Diane L. Moore, 2007), I believe that our lack of knowledge about various religions is a systemic problem. If schools do not teach about religion and we, as the American public, are as ignorant as many surveys portend (e.g., The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010), it is not enough to simply provide teachers with recommendations. Teachers are members of the public. To assume their knowledge surpasses that of the average man or woman "on the street" is overly optimistic. I agree with the position held by Warren A. Nord (2010)—if religion is to be taught, students deserve for it to be taught by people who have studied religion at the post-secondary level and for it to be taught in a course dedicated to it. This is not to say that teachers should not use the natural inclusion approach when they know that they are well positioned to do so. To force the teaching of any subject without proper preparation will only breed more misunderstanding and these misunderstandings would be school-certified. Like others, I believe that more attention to religion in schools of education in conjunction with departments of religious studies could go a long way to ameliorating systemic ignorance of knowledge about religions. I also acknowledge the possibility that the idea that religion is a "taboo" subject may be so ingrained in our culture that teaching about religion in public schools will never become a widespread practice.

Regarding my personal religious beliefs, when I began this project, I probably would have described myself as "spiritual" or agnostic. Currently, I see myself as an atheist, in its literal sense in that I am not a theist or a deist. I have, at times, attended meetings of American

Buddhists and have enjoyed the experiences. I do not currently associate with humanist or atheist groups because I have found that many of them focus on mocking religious believers, which I find ignorant and mean-spirited. I believe that we each follow a religious path that works best for our lives and provides us with the most comfort, whether that includes following the traditions of our parents or community, converting to a religion that makes us feel welcome (or whatever it is we were hoping to feel), or eschewing all religion and focusing on the existential and terrestrial. I believe that we all deserve respect, regardless of our religious orientations. During data collection, I discussed my personal beliefs in interviews when asked. Only one person directly asked me during the recorded interview if I was a Christian and I responded that I was not. I briefly discussed my beliefs with another person in an unrecorded conversation. In both cases these discussions occurred at the end or after the interviews.

I believe that my beliefs and life experiences have influenced this project. If I were raised or were living in a place other than the U.S. I would likely have a different perspective on religion. If I had never felt like a religious outsider as a child and adolescent, I likely would never have been fascinated with the relationship between religion and public schools. If I did not think teaching about religion in public schools was a worthy enterprise I likely would never have posed this question. If I saw malicious intent inherent in causes sponsored by the Religious Right, I likely would have focused on that aspect of "religion and public schools." If I did not have Mormon, Jewish, conservative and mainline Christian, and secularist friends, a Muslim ex-husband, and if I had not lived in communities in New Jersey, Florida, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and the DC metro area, I may not have the same level of respect for people's perspectives as I do. I also do not have any desire to vilify media writers. Those with whom I

spoke were lovely people with different perspectives and worldviews, sometimes informed by their religions. My goal is not to blame—it is to better understand.

All of this being said, I have tried—insofar as it is possible—to approach this project without an agenda. It has been my goal to present various perspectives on teaching about religion in public schools and to understand and present the narrative rationality of various people. As my reader, you are the judge of my success, as are other researchers who choose to explore questions like those I have presented here.

I imagine my audience as researchers, scholars, and advocates who are interested in the topic of teaching about religion in public schools as well as those who study education in the media. I also imagine my audience as the people who have knowingly or unknowingly participated in this process with me, including my dissertation committee, the writers I interviewed, and the writers whose work I analyzed and reviewed.

Data Representation

I have used writing as a mode of inquiry (L. Richardson, 2003), both in the analysis and representation of my research. In practice, this has resulted in my writing and editing chapters as part of the analytic process. Rejecting the idea that there is a single, unified reality and that it is possible to "depict" it for the reader, any writing I have engaged in has required political, literary, and ethical choices. Through writing I have constituted my interpretation of "reality" for my readers. My approach was a combination of what Beth Graue (2006) refers to as writing as "interpreting" and writing as "constituting." As I have read, coded, re-coded, and written about my data, I have interpreted—which is inevitable. I also see writing as "simultaneously empirical, literary, political, ethical, and wholly constituting—of content and author" (B. Graue, 2006, p. 522) as well as audience (Ong, 1975).

Chapter 4 focuses on the three most frequent topics in the dataset: Bible-based courses, teaching about world religions, and religion-centric social studies standards. I first analyze a sample of headlines and leads from each topic and then I complete close discourse analyses of six pieces from the dataset (two from each topic). In Chapter 5 I provide a thematic analysis of the interviews. Finally, in Chapter 6 I revisit the question of how teaching about religion in public schools is portrayed in the media in relation to the culture war narrative, discuss writers' imagined audiences and how the narratives they invoke can influence their contribution to the discourse, detail the types of narratives people invoke when discussing teaching about religion in public schools, and provide thoughts on this study's implications for theory, research and practice.

Chapter Four

Media Discourse on Teaching about Religion in Public Schools

Analyzing the teaching about religion in public schools dataset constructed for this project, I found the following three topics to be the most prevalent: (a) Bible-based courses, (b) teaching about world religions, and (c) religion-focused social studies standards. Framing this analysis with the aforementioned topics allows me to explore which events and stories are believed to merit the public's attention. In the first section of this chapter I focus on each topic in turn, first by providing a brief overview of the topic and problems associated with it and then by analyzing sample of headlines and leads. In the second section I apply tools of discourse analysis to six individual pieces from my dataset (two pieces from each of the three topics presented). My purpose herein is to better understand the topics by seeing how they are situated within the discourse and exploring what might be learned by posing a variety of questions generated through a close examination of the texts.

At this juncture I believe Diana Hess's (2009) framework for distinguishing among topics, problems, issues, and controversial political issues is helpful to understand how I employ the terms:

> Topics, problems, and issues are three concepts commonly, although mistakenly, used in conversation to mean the same thing. This conflation is problematic because it can dampen the controversy unique to issues, which is what makes them such good topics for discussion. (p. 40)

By way of example, Hess (2009) uses the case of healthcare. Healthcare is a *topic*. While there are numerous *problems* related to healthcare that some believe we as a society need to address

(e.g., access to healthcare, quality of healthcare, cost of healthcare), these problems are not, on their own, issues per se. *Issues* are identifiable policy proposals that are, or perhaps should be, considered to address the problems. Further, Hess (2009) defines *controversial political issues* as:

> Questions of public policy that spark significant disagreement. These are authentic questions about the kinds of public policies that should be adopted to address public problems… . Such issues require deliberation among a "we" to determine which policy is the best response to a particular problem. (p. 37)

This framework is helpful because many sources portray the topic of religion and education as controversial (e.g., Matus, 2007) without ever broaching problems or issues, much less identifying "questions of public policy that spark significant disagreement" (Hess, 2009, p. 37).

Topics

After a brief overview of each topic I focus on headline and lead analyses. Headlines "express, in a highly concise form, the crux of a news event and to orient the reader to process the text in a pre-determined direction" (Teo, 2000, p. 13). Leads (i.e., first sentences) have been referred to as "the story in microcosm" (Bell, 1991, p. 174). According to Teo (2000), "this means that a reader need only to glance at the headline or lead to obtain a fairly accurate idea of what the whole report is about" (p. 13). The purpose of providing a sample of headlines and leads at this juncture is to orient you, my reader, to the general tone of the discourse prior to focusing on specific pieces.

The Bible in public schools. Since 1994, in communities across the country, school boards and state legislatures have been approached by individuals recommending the adoption of a curriculum developed by the North Carolina-based National Council on Bible Curriculum in

Public Schools (NCBCPS). Over 180 (43%) of the articles and blog posts in the dataset mentioned Bible-based curricula. Of these, more than 100 specifically mentioned the NCBCPS. Their curriculum, *The Bible in History and Literature,* uses the Bible as a textbook, which NCBCPS currently recommends that high school students bring from home (National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, 2010a). Their website reports that the curriculum has been:

> Voted into 593 school districts (2,135 high schools) in 38 states. 93% of school boards that have been approached with this to date, [*sic*] have voted to implement it. It is not just in the Bible belt, but it has been voted into school districts from Alaska and California, straight across the board to Pennsylvania and Florida. Over 550,000 students have already taken our course nationwide. (National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, 2010c)

The NCBCPS has advertised its curriculum in various formats through Christian media. In one commercial, actor Chuck Norris and his wife Gena O'Kelley tout the virtues of the curriculum and encourage viewers to call 1-888-BIBLE NOW to "help."

In a report sponsored by the Texas Freedom Network, a "nonpartisan, grassroots organization … [which] acts as the state's watchdog, monitoring far-right issues, organizations, money and leaders" (para.1), Mark Chancey (2005a), an associate professor of Religious Studies at Southern Methodist University, states that in his:

> Professional judgment as a biblical scholar… this curriculum on the whole is a sectarian document, and I cannot recommend it for usage in a public school setting. It attempts to persuade students to adopt views that are held primarily within certain conservative Protestant circles but not within the scholarly community, and it presents Christian faith claims as history: *The Bible is explicitly characterized as inspired by God. Discussions of*

> *science are based on the claims of biblical creationists. Jesus is presented as fulfilling "Old Testament" prophecy. Archaeological findings are cited as support for claims of the Bible's complete historical accuracy.* Furthermore, much of the course appears designed to persuade students and teachers that America is a distinctively Christian nation — an agenda publicly embraced by many of the members of NCBCPS's Board of Advisors and endorsers. (p. 2, emphasis original)

In this report Chancey also expresses his concerns about factual errors, plagiarism, and shoddy research in the curriculum. Elsewhere, Chancey (2005b) emphasizes "a Bible course in a public school must be taught in a non-sectarian manner, and it must be academically informed" (para.7) and notes that:

> The [NCBCPS's] Board of Directors and Board of Advisors Advisory Committee are a who's who list of the Religious Right. The Board of Advisors does include one Jew: Rabbi Daniel Lapin, who heads an organization called Toward Tradition that is closely connected with the Christian Religious Right. The Advisory Board includes no biblical scholars. (para.8)

The NCBCPS addressed some of Chancey's criticisms by revising the text and dismissed others claiming that they represented minor scholarly disputes and that they had permission to reproduce all unreferenced text within the curriculum (Chancey, 2005c).

The NCBPS program is often contrasted with a curriculum developed by The Bible Literacy Project (2011) entitled *The Bible and Its Influence* (Schippe & Stetson, 2005). The Bible Literacy project textbook uses a "variety of several [Bible] translations so that there is a broad representation inside the textbook" (Sec. 2, para. 4). According to Chancey (2007a), "some legislators [have] hailed [it] as a model of academic responsibility while others [have] attacked it

as undermining Christianity" (p. 1). Though errors have been found in the textbook, they have not been interpreted as ideologically driven (S. L. McKenzie, 2005). According to McKenzie (2005), *The Bible and Its Influence* adopts:

> … an "attribution" approach, which is, *in nuce*, study *about* the Bible rather than study *of* the Bible. Such an approach may, for instance, attribute an interpretation to a particular religious perspective or faith community without endorsing it. … The best parts of this book are those that discuss the Bible's influence and importance for modern culture. Its pages are richly adorned with images of persons, documents, works of art, and the like. … As I read the book, I found myself wishing that all my undergraduate students were exposed to this material for the appreciation it would give them of the impact that the Bible has on their lives. I imagine, perhaps naïvely, that they would be much more interested and involved in my courses if such were the case.
>
> The "down side" of the attribution approach is that this textbook does not engage in what most [biblical scholars] would consider academic study of the Bible. There is no real critical analysis concerning such matters as authorship, date, and historicity of biblical books. The treatment of the biblical material is essentially a superficial summary of content. Statements in the text are, for the most part, accepted at face value without the recognition that such acceptance is in itself an interpretation. (paras. 2-5)

Chancey claims that despite its flaws, the textbook "displays what appears to be a good faith effort to be nonsectarian" (p. 3).

In summary, there are two textbooks that typically compete for acceptance when Bible courses are considered. One approach is typically supported by evangelical Christians and the other is typically supported by ecumenical groups. Each has been criticized by supporters of the

other for its depiction of Christianity. In order to broadly explore the media discourse on teaching about religion in public schools I will examine a sample of headlines and leads for each of the aforementioned topics. According to Teo (2000), "In a genre of discourse where space is a premium, news headlines have to be crafted in such a way as to employ the minimum number of words to package maximum information" (p. 14). The headlines and leads presented in Table 4 offer a glimpse of the media discourse on the Bible in public schools. Three characteristics are especially interesting: (a) the use of *religious references* (italicized text), (b) the references to **controversy** (bold text), and (c) the references to agents (players or actors in the narrative) and their actions (underlined text).

Table 4

Sample of Headlines and Leads on Bible-based Courses

Source, Date, Type	Headline	Lead
***News & Record*, 3/27/1994, news**	*Group Spreads Word* About Bible Class	A Greensboro group is leading a national effort to put Bible courses into the public schools.
***Christian Science Monitor*, 10/29/1997, news**	More Schools Mix *Jeremiah* with Gerunds	A high school course that seeks to teach the Bible as history has set the stage in Fort Meyers, Fla., for what looks to the national's next **legal showdown** over the place of religion in public schools.
***The Washington Post*, 6/15/1997, news**	The *Resurrection* of 'The Oldest Textbook'; Amid **Controversy**, Christian Coalition Pushes Bible History Class in Florida Public School District	About the time the head of the Christian Coalition said he "would rather have a thousand school board members… than a single president," local members of the conservative political group began showing up at meetings of the Lee County school board here.
***St. Petersburg Times*, 7/30/2000, news**	Bible **Battle Brewing** in Schools	A citizens' group is mounting a push to bring elective Bible courses to Pinellas schools.
***The Dallas Morning News*, 8/17/2005, opinion**	Bible Class Doesn't Have to be ***Holy War***	Whether they like it or not, the good citizens of Odessa, Texas, stand on the **newest battlefield** in America's **culture war**.
***Education Week*, 8/10/2005, news**	Bible Curriculum Criticized as Having Sectarian Slant	A religious-watchdog group is calling a Bible course promoted by the Greensboro, N.C.-based National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools unfit for public schools.
***The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2/14/2006, editorial**	A *Good Book* for all; Secular study of the Bible Beneficial	The Bible, like it or not, is an integral part of American culture.
***In the Pink Texas,* 4/17/2007, blog**	*Thou Shalt* Do Thy Homework	Bible-as-literature is one of those sticky subjects for public schools, but fortunately Rep. Warren Chisum's HB 1287 will unstuck the situation by requiring all Texas public schools to offer electives in New and Old Testament studies.
***Austin American-Statesman*, 3/28/2008, editorial**	Bible Class a recipe for **Legal Trouble**	A pandering Texas Legislature and a meddlesome State Board of Education have combined to create an **unnecessary legal bramble** in Texas schools.
***Huffington Post*, 3/16/2011, blog**	Legislation of *Biblical Proportions*: Can We Really Have an 'Academic' Study of the Bible in Public Schools?	My first full-time teaching job was as a Latin and religion instructor at a religiously-affiliated (Episcopalian) middle and upper school.

While playful references and puns may be viewed as merely "entertaining aspects of… news discourse, like all rhetorical features, they often underscore a newspaper's [or other publication's] editorial and often political agenda" (J. E. Richardson, 2007, p. 70). Many of the

headlines in Table 4 use intertextual religious references. According to Gee (2011a), intertextuality is: "When we speak or write we often quote or allude to what others have said. … There are obviously lots of ways one text can quote, refer to, or allude to another one" (p. 166). In instances of intertextuality, the role of the discourse analyst is to hypothesize why this reference is being used in the context of the utterance. What follows are hypotheses. They are my ideas about what the writers or editors could have meant to imply. I acknowledge that other readers would likely have different ideas. It is not my intention to criticize any writer or editor. Rather, it is my intention to open a conversation about the implication of the tone of articles and blog posts on teaching about religion in public schools and to use the resultant conversation as a way to better understand why writers make the choices they do.

Regarding intertextuality, some references communicate support for these initiatives ("Good Book" and "Group Spreads Word") while others communicate the potential immensity of the actions ("Holy War" and "Legislation of Biblical Proportions"). The supportive messages carry a positive tone while the hyperbolic messages emphasize newsworthiness. Hyperbolic messages emphasize that the outcome of decisions made in this situation will have implications for the country, and in this case, the separation of church and state. Another intertextual reference, the headline "Thou Shalt Do Thy Homework" (*In the Pink Texas,* 4/17/2007), is reminiscent of the Ten Commandments (a set of biblical principles related to ethics and worship), implying that those who wish to (re)introduce the Bible to public schools have a broader agenda than they claim—one that involves introducing biblical ethics to students.

The references to controversy take on various forms. The most prominent are battle and war metaphors, newly located in specific towns, cities, and municipalities. For example, the lead, "Whether they like it or not, the good citizens of Odessa, Texas, stand on the newest battlefield

in America's culture war" (*The Dallas Morning News*, 8/17/2005) locates the newest battlefield in Odessa, Texas. Similarly, the lead "A high school course that seeks to teach the Bible as history has set the stage in Fort Meyers, Fla., for what looks to the national's next legal showdown over the place of religion in public schools" (*Christian Science Monitor*, 10/29/1997) locates the next legal showdown in Fort Meyers. The implication here is that the culture war is an ongoing circumstance in the United States and these battles/showdowns pop up periodically in various localities. Battle metaphors imply an "us against them" mentality where everyone must pick a side and fight to the death. This all or nothing thinking does not support respect, conversation, or compromise.

Finally, by labeling and describing the agents of the actions as they do (e.g., "the Christian Coalition," "a pandering Texas Legislature," "a meddlesome State Board of Education"), writers send clear messages to readers about the political nature of these stories. The overarching narrative contained herein is that introducing Bible courses to any public school can be a highly political, divisive act urged by people with religious, rather than educational, motivations.

In the next chapter I investigate the types of narratives writers invoke when discussing teaching about religion in public schools and the relationships between the types of narrative employed and the perspectives on teaching about religion in public schools offered in each. This analysis sheds light on how writers think about these types of moves and choose to frame them as they do.

The variety of religions. The idea that public schools should teach about world religions has been (re)introduced numerous times since the early 1980s. This idea usually gains media attention in the wake of an event such as an academic conference or symposia on the topic, the

release of a new book on the subject, or a report that highlights Americans' lack of religious literacy. More than 60 pieces (15%) in my dataset are concerned with teaching about various religions in public schools. Subtopics include religious pluralism, world religions, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Although I initially planned to limit this topic to pieces that were specifically on the topic of teaching various religions in public schools, I found that I had to expand this idea if I wanted to include pieces from both supporters and critics. Supporters typically link their articles about world religions to the importance of learning about pluralism while critics typically focus their attention on a school practice to which they object.

Table 5 provides a sample of headlines and leads that fall under the purview of this topic. The agents (underlined) of the actions (bold) regarding the issue (parentheses) are in stylized text (as indicated parenthetically). Three narratives occur within the headlines in Table 5: (a) a learned group of people (scholars, educators, experts) are trying to persuade (urge, make a pitch [to]) someone that public schools should teach about religion (articles published in 1987, 1989), (b) though this was not always the case, it is now known that schools can or do teach about religion (pieces published in 1989, 1989, 1995, 2009), and (c) religion is important and should be taught (pieces published in 2009, 2010, 2010). One article, "Whether Whispered or Broadcast, a Lie is Just a Lie" (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 1/19/2002), focuses on the misinformation provided to the public via an ideologically-driven news service about teaching practices in California. Though the topic of Islam and public schools is not prevalent in this sample, it is not rare in the data. The lead here, "Hijackers, both of aviation and of theology, have combined to displace biology as the most dangerous subject in American schools, putting in its place social studies, as practiced by seventh-graders in bathrobes," is intertextual, written in the same incendiary tone as the news reports it is attempting to debunk in an effort to draw the attention of those who were

persuaded by the fallacious reports. The writers of pieces included in (c) are all bloggers. One is a professor and Ph.D., one is an attorney, and one is described as a world affairs expert. They are "learned" individuals, like those described in (a) in the late 1980s. Though the perspective changed over the 23-year span of time, from reporting about groups of experts to experts writing for themselves, the message is the same: experts believe schools should teach about religion. The story that schools "can or do" teach about religion in (b) is interesting because it reoccurs multiple times over a twenty year span. The headlines communicate novelty each time, as if it had recently been decided that teaching about religion is allowed in schools and "now" (1989, 1995, 2009) it is becoming commonplace.

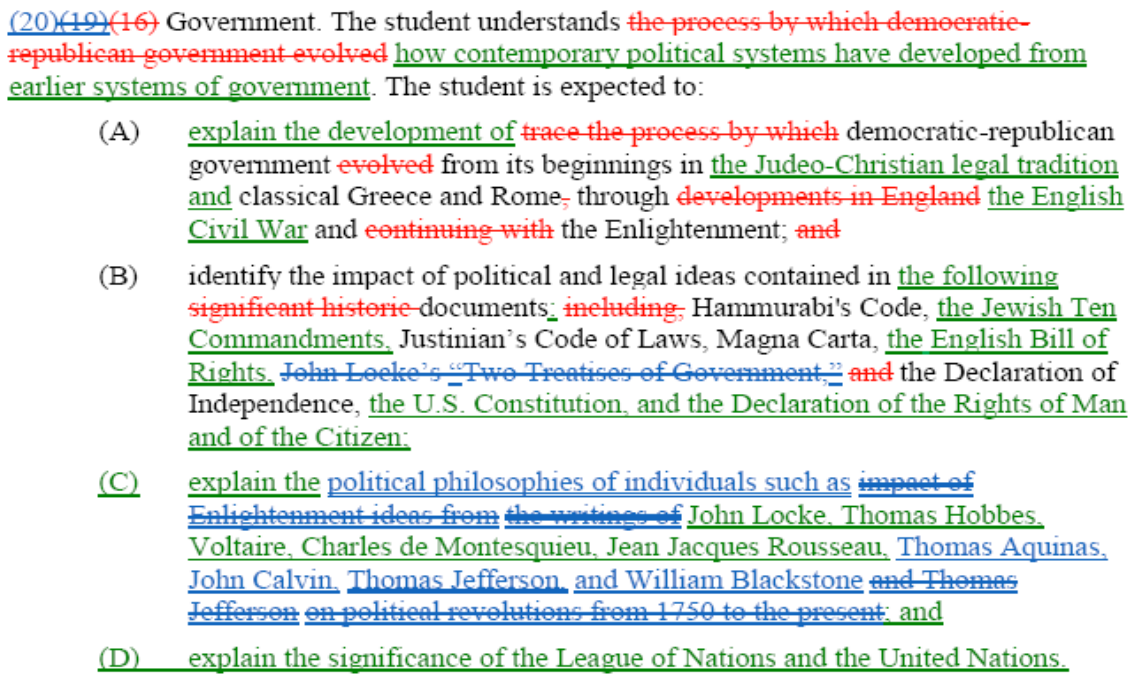
Table 5

Headlines and Leads on Teaching about World Religions

Source, Date, Type	Headline	Lead
***The Washington Post*, 7/2/1987, news**	Educators **Urge** *Wider Teaching of Religion*	A national education group urged public schools nationwide yesterday to expand instruction about religion and suggested that local school officials involve ministers and other religious professionals in curriculum decisions.
***Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 9/26/1998, features**	Scholars **Make Pitch** *for Putting Religion Back in Schools*	Two experts on the controversial relationship between religion and the public schools say it is unconstitutional for educators to exclude religion from the curricula of the nation's schools.
***The New York Times*, 3/19/1989, column**	Trend Gaining in Public Schools **To Add** *Teaching About Religion*	After decades of shunning classroom discussions of religion, fearing that it was too divisive a subject or that church-state separation might be breached, many American public schools are now moving to incorporate it into their curriculums.
***St. Petersburg Times*, 12/2/1989, news**	'Minor Miracle': Left and Right **Agree** on *Teaching About Religion*	After years of acrimonious debate, Americans are beginning to arrive at a consensus on the role of religion in public schools, according to educators taking part in a recent American Academy of Religion conference.
***Telegraph Herald*, 9/9/1995, features**	Public Schools **Can Teach** *About Religion*	President Clinton, the U.S. secretary of education and the Dubuque School District all agree.
***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 1/19/2002, opinion**	Whether **Whispered** or **Broadcast**, *a Lie is Just a Lie*	Hijackers, both of aviation and of theology, have combined to displace biology as the most dangerous subject in American schools, putting in its place social studies, as practiced by seventh-graders in bathrobes.
***Pittsburgh Tribune Review*, 7/2/2009, news**	Schools **No Longer Shun** *Religions in School Curriculum*	Ron Sakolowsky's classroom at A.E. Oblock Junior High School in Plum displays statues of Buddha, a menorah, a Mongolian prayer shawl and a poster that cites the Golden Rule from the viewpoint of 12 world religions.
***The Huffington Post*, 2/20/2009, blog**	Why **Is** Religion **Taboo** *in American Schools*?	Our young people are growing up in a world in which GOD is the new four-letter word.
***The Huffington Post*, 8/10/2010, blog**	The Crisis of Religious Understanding: **Redefining** *the 'Educated Person'*	How can the United States guarantee multi-religious understanding, pluralistic tolerance, and strong social cohesion amongst its citizenry of different faiths for years to come?
***The Huffington Post*, 10/6/2010, blog**	What Americans Really **Need to Know** *About Religion*	Much wailing and gnashing of teeth followed the recent release of the Pew Forum's survey of Americans' religious knowledge.

Incorporating religious details into U. S. social studies courses. Though there are successful examples of incorporating teaching about religion into social studies classes (e.g., Lester & Roberts, 2006; The Pluralism Project, 2006), it is not an apolitical, straightforward task. For example, approximately every ten years the Texas School Board revises its curriculum standards. For social studies, the most common reason given for revising periodically is to keep standards current (e.g., adding references to new U.S. presidents). In 2009-10, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Social Studies[23] (Texas Education Agency, 2011) exam underwent a thorough review and the proposed revisions garnered a great deal of media attention. Figure 2 provides a small section of the 80-page text under review. Over 115 (37%) pieces in my dataset pertain to this revision. Though the revisions touched every area of the Texas TEKS, the articles in my dataset are only those that pertain, at least in part, to religion (my selection criteria, described in Chapter 3, would not have "caught" those that did not include a variant of the word "religion").

[23] More commonly known as "standards" in other parts of the U.S.



(20)~~(19)~~~~(16)~~ Government. The student understands ~~the process by which democratic-republican government evolved~~ how contemporary political systems have developed from earlier systems of government. The student is expected to:

(A) explain the development of ~~trace the process by which~~ democratic-republican government ~~evolved~~ from its beginnings in the Judeo-Christian legal tradition and classical Greece and Rome~~,~~ through ~~developments in England~~ the English Civil War and ~~continuing with~~ the Enlightenment; ~~and~~

(B) identify the impact of political and legal ideas contained in the following ~~significant historic~~ documents~~;~~ ~~including,~~ Hammurabi's Code, the Jewish Ten Commandments, Justinian's Code of Laws, Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, ~~John Locke's "Two Treatises of Government,"~~ ~~and~~ the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen;

(C) explain the political philosophies of individuals such as ~~impact of Enlightenment ideas from~~ ~~the writings of~~ John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, Charles de Montesquieu, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Thomas Jefferson, and William Blackstone ~~and Thomas Jefferson~~ ~~on political revolutions from 1750 to the present~~; and

(D) explain the significance of the League of Nations and the United Nations.

Figure 2. A section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies with revision markup (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

The section provided in Figure 2 pertains to the role of the federal government. The black text was part of the TX TEKS prior to review. The green and red text was added or deleted by the TEKS review committee—educators, parents, business and industry representatives, and employers appointed by the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE). The blue text was added or deleted by the SBOE after the TEKS review committee had reviewed it. For this small section of text it seems that the TEKS review committee aimed to emphasize explaining and describing and deemphasize evaluating. For example, through the entire process, section A was changed from "trace the process by which democratic-republican government evolved from its beginnings in classical Greece and Rome through development in England and continuing with the Enlightenment" to (changes in bold) "**explain the development of** democratic-republican

government from its beginnings in **the Judeo-Christian legal tradition** and classical Greece and Rome through **the English Civil War** and the Enlightenment" by the TEKS review committee (which was not altered by the State Board of Education in subsequent revisions). A pervasive emphasis on religion, particularly Christianity, and a de-emphasis on writers such as Thomas Jefferson and leaders such as Cesar Chavez precipitated critics' charges that the changes to the 80-page standards were ideologically motivated.

A Texas reporter I interviewed provides additional background on the Texas TEKS for social studies revision:

> In Texas, we have about 4.9 million students in the K-12 system. And right now minority children, I'm talking about Hispanics, African-Americans, Asians, Native Americans, they make up about 69% of the enrollment. … The State Board of Education has 15 members. And … when they were rewriting the curriculum standards you had a number of organizations come in and protest the proposed standards dealing with history interpretation, emphases, even some religion-related issues. You had the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], you had LULAC [The League of United Latin American Citizens], you had the MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund], you had MALC [Mexican American Legislative Caucus]… all come in and protest and object. But the Board, again 15 members, ten were White, Anglo, Republicans, and they had a majority, and they exercised that muscle and most of the votes broke down along partisan party lines. So you had ten Anglos, or White members… dictating the curriculum that will last for at least a decade involving students who were almost 70% minority…. And they wouldn't listen to the civil rights and

> minority organizations and it created tension and conflict. But when you have the majority, guess what? You can rule. (Scharrer, Interview, October 2011)

Table 6 presents a sample of the headlines and leads for the Texas TEKS for social studies. Though changes are proposed for every facet of curriculum standards, there is a clear emphasis on religion in the pieces (in bold text) from emphasizing religion, to promoting Christian heritage, to targeting a supposed "pro-Islamic bias" in current texts. Religion and the place of religion in the social studies curriculum are debated throughout the revision. The purveyors of these changes, the Texas State Board of Education and their appointees, are described by critics as "absurdly unqualified ideologues" and "irresponsible, bigoted, [and] revisionist" who are interested in promoting "culture war" politics. The overarching theme of these headlines and leads is that there are controversial, politically- and ideologically-motivated changes being made to the Texas TEKS for social studies.

Table 6

Headlines and Leads on Social Studies Standards on Religion

Source, Date, Type	Headline	Lead
Off the Kuff, 4/30/2009, blog	First They Came For the Science Books…	The Texas State Board of Education is set to appoint a social studies curriculum "expert" panel that includes absurdly unqualified ideologues who are hostile to public education and argue that laws and public policies should be based on their **narrow interpretations of the Bible**.
The Houston Chronicle, 7/13/2009, news	Less Lincoln, **More Religion** in Class? Proposed Revisions to Texas Social Studies Curriculum Could Ruffle Feathers	Biographies of Washington, Lincoln, Stephen F. Austin? Not fit reading material in the early grades.
Austin American-Statesman, 9/17/2009, news	Reviewers Push For **Emphasis on Religion**	The clamor this summer over social studies curriculum standards for Texas public schools has been a mere prelude to the real debate that begins today at the State Board of Education.
Dakota Voice, 1/16/2010, blog	Texas School Board Delays Decision on **Christian Heritage** Education	The Texas State Board of Education has delayed its first vote on a new social studies curriculum to March.
The Capital Times, 3/16/2010, opinion	Protect Kids from Terrible 10 in Texas	I hereby petition the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to protect our children from the irresponsible, bigoted, revisionist Terrible 10.
Texas Insider, 5/6/2010, blog	Leftists Demand to (re)Write Social Studies Standards	The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) has done an outstanding job in restoring historically accurate social studies and history standards.
Texas Freedom Network TFN Insider, 9/15/2010, blog	Texas Ed Board Targets **'Pro-Islamic Bias'**	Need more evidence that Texas State Board of Education members are more interested in promoting "culture war" politics than ensuring schoolchildren get a quality education?

Discourse Analysis

In this section, six pieces (news articles, opinion articles, and blog posts) are presented for close analysis (two for each topic: Bible-based courses, teaching about world religions, and integrating religious content into social studies standards). As mentioned in Chapter 3, when researching discourse analysis, I was struck by the fact that most books and articles that use this

method teach as they write (e.g., Fowler, 1991; Gee, 2011b; J. E. Richardson, 2007; Teo, 2000). In other words, after discussing discourse analysis in general (which I have already done), the authors present specific tools for discourse analysis and use their data to provide concrete examples of how each tool can be used to analyze discourse. This analysis *is* their analysis; it is not completed as a second step. Following the example set by these authors, in this section I describe each tool I employ and then apply the tool to my data. This differs from the majority of qualitative analyses I am familiar with because oftentimes discussions of methods are confined to the methods section. Instead, in this chapter I weave a description of my methods into my data analysis. Each of the articles referenced in this section can be found in its entirety in the Appendices.

The first two pieces I analyze are on proposals to adopt the NCBCPS curriculum in local high schools: "Board Approves High School Bible Course" from *The Houston Chronicle* (M. Curry, 2005) and "Bible Study at Howell High?" from the *Ann Arbor News* (News staff reporter, 2006). The next two are on teaching about world religions: "Islam Should Not Be Main Religious Focus in Public Schools" from Texas A&M University's paper *The Battalion* (Maddox, 2002) and "Religion in the Public Schools: A Story About Civics in the Bronx and Queens" from *The Huffington Post* (Weiner, 2009). Finally, I present two pieces on the revision of the Texas TEKS for social studies: "Texas Conservatives Seek Deeper Stamp on Texts" from *The New York Times* (McKinley, 2010) and "Leftists demand to (re)write social studies standards" from *TexasInsider.org* (C. H. Haynes, 2010). My goal in choosing these pairings was

to present different perspectives on the same issue in order to better understand how these perspectives represent the discourse.[24]

The purposes of this section are to: (a) provide in-depth analyses of six articles, two from each topic, in order to provide a sample of how media writers construct teaching about religion in public schools, and (b) to use writers' constructions of teaching about religion in public schools to derive questions that will guide the analysis and discussion of the authors' interviews.

Houston Chronicle: Board approves high school Bible course. The *Houston Chronicle's* December 2005 news article, "Board Approves High School Bible Course" (Curry, 2005), is about how the board of trustees for the Ector County Independent School District (ESISD) approved the NCBCPS's Bible curriculum, *The Bible in History and Literature*. Prior to this point in time, this story had already garnered media attention, beginning with the board's decision in April 2005 to add a Bible elective for the 2006-2007 school year. In October 2005, the board appointed a committee of teachers and administrators to review possible curricula. After reviewing the available curricula and gathering public input, the committee recommended both the NCBCPS curriculum as well as the Bible Literacy Project's curriculum. The board voted 4-2 in favor of the NCBCPS's curriculum (which is the decision that precipitated this article). In May 2007, the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way Foundation, the ACLU of Texas, and Jenner & Block LLP filed a federal lawsuit (Moreno v. Ector County Independent School District Board of Trustees) in Midland on behalf of eight parents and taxpayers stating the course violated students' religious liberties. The suit was eventually settled and the plaintiffs and trustees entered mediation. In March 2008 the mediation

[24] This is not to say that each perspective is equally represented in the discourse. Pieces presenting perspectives generally classified as liberal far outnumber those that could be classified as conservative.

resulted in the formation of a committee to develop a new Bible curriculum, written by the members of the committee, using the Bible as its textbook.

According to John E. Richardson (2007), the presupposition tool for discourse analysis acknowledges that:

> Not all meaning is immediately "there" in a text to be simply read from the manifest content; there are also *hidden* or *presupposed* meanings in texts. A presupposition is a taken for granted, implicit claim embedded within the explicit meaning of a text or utterance. (p. 63)

For example, both change of state verbs (e.g., begin, stop, continue) and implicative verbs (e.g., forget, manage) "invoke presupposed meaning with their use" (p. 63). In the *Houston Chronicle's* "Board Approves High School Bible Course" (Curry, 2005), a news piece from 2005 about a West Texas School Board's decision to approve the NCBCPS's curriculum, *The Bible in History and Literature*, there are a few interesting presuppositions. Notably, most presuppositions are neither correct nor incorrect—applying this tool is not meant to reveal truth or lack thereof. *It is meant to reveal what the author assumes about his or her audience's knowledge and what the writer takes for granted when writing.* Presuppositions reveal the connections the writer felt were obvious if left unstated. For example, Curry's use of the term "injects" in the sentence, "The decision came the same day a federal judge barred the Dover school district in Pennsylvania from teaching 'intelligent design,' saying the concept is creationism in disguise and *injects* religious views into the classroom" (M. Curry, 2005, para. 2, emphasis added), presupposes that his audience believes that religious views *are not* in the classroom and, moreover, do not belong in the classroom. Moreover, the word *injects* implies that religious views are being forced into the classroom. The use of the word "disguise" in the

same sentence ("'intelligent design' … is creationism in disguise") presupposes the audience believes that creationism was disguised by someone and, by disguising creationism, this unnamed agent has attempted to deceive. Both the practices of forcing religious views into the classroom and deception are dishonest, implying that the audience believes these acts to be objectionable.

Adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions also contain presuppositions (J. E. Richardson, 2007). In the lead paragraph of the *Houston Chronicle's* "Board Approves High School Bible Course" (Curry, 2005):

> A West Texas school board, *undeterred* by the possibility of legal challenges, has approved teaching the King James version of the Bible in a high school elective course critics say will lead to Christian proselytizing *instead* of education. (M. Curry, 2005, para. 1, emphasis added)

By using the qualifier "undeterred," the author presupposes that the school board could have been deterred by the possibility of legal challenges and he also leaves open the question that they should have been deterred. He also uses intertextuality when he reports that, "critics say will lead to Christian proselytization instead of education." With the aforementioned "critics" being unidentified and unreferenced, the implication is that there are many and he, as the author, need not cite specific people. Additionally, the phrase at the end of the excerpt, "Christian proselytizing instead of education," shows that Curry presupposes that his audience believes that proselytization and education cannot coexist. Put differently, it presupposes that education does not proselytize in other ways already and that proselytization is strictly the domain of religion.

Citing more evidence for the idea that the school board's decision was religiously motivated, Curry reports that the curriculum was "chosen over that offered by the Bible Literacy

Project, which uses the text *The Bible and Its Influence* and includes discussions of other faiths" (para. 5) and that the school board president voted for the NCBCPS curriculum "because it uses the Bible as its textbook" (para. 6). Curry presupposes that selecting a course that uses the Bible as a textbook over a course that (or, as he implies, *because it*) includes discussions of other faiths means the school board has religious motivations, taking the quality of the textbooks for granted and assuming they are (at minimum) of equal quality and there is no possibility that the first text is better. As a closing thought, he provides a snapshot of the school board meeting, from the perspective of someone in attendance.

> But Ryan Valentine, a Texas Freedom Network spokesman who attended the board meeting, said choosing the King James version instead of the Roman Catholic Bible or other religious writings shows favoritism toward Protestant Christianity. *He said reaction to the vote proved* it was all about religion, not academics.
>
> "There was a crowd of 50 folks singing a song with the words, 'Victory is mine, victory is mine, I told Satan to get thee behind, victory today is mine.' *So the idea that religion wasn't right at the base of what was happening in Odessa yesterday is just laughable*," he said. (M. Curry, 2005, para. 8-9, emphasis added)

The "idea that religious wasn't at the base… is just laughable" once again presupposes that people (this time the crowd) were trying to conceal their real motivations. Curry assumes that his audience would believe that, like the agents who disguised Creationism as Intelligent Design, the supporters of this curriculum are attempting to deceive. The way Curry constructs his audience implies that they would believe that religious motivations are unacceptable for debates over public school curricula.

According to Tao (2000), in newspaper discourse "quotes—both direct and indirect—are frequently woven into the fabric of the news discourse to give it a semblance of 'facticity' and authenticity" (p.18). The words that are quoted are just as important as who is quoted because "the use of quotation becomes a gate-keeping device that admits only those in positions of power and influence while shutting out the opinions and perspectives of those deemed by society to be powerless" (p. 18). Through application of the quotation patterns tool, one can learn which ideas the journalist chooses to apply facticity to and who journalists believe to be the important or powerful actors in the event.

Table 7

Quotation Patterns Tool Applied to "Board Approves High School Bible Course" from The Houston Chronicle (Curry, 2005)

Name and affiliation	**Quoted text (both direct and paraphrase)**
Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, a religious rights watchdog	"For those who don't know how this story will end, the federal judge in the Dover case provided a preview."
Elizabeth Ridenour, president of the Greensboro, N.C.-based National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools	• "a reach" • She said the curriculum is used in hundreds of school districts.
School board President Randy Rives	"This is an elective course," --- "It's not like anybody's going to hold a gun to anybody's head to take it."
Ryan Valentine, a Texas Freedom Network spokesman	"There was a crowd of 50 folks singing a song with the words, `Victory is mine, victory is mine, I told Satan to get thee behind, victory today is mine.' So the idea that religion wasn't right at the base of what was happening in Odessa yesterday is just laughable."

Though Curry quotes two representatives of each side (two people opposing the curriculum and two supporting the curriculum) the nature of the quotations is quite different (see Table 7). Both Kathy Miller and Ryan Valentine from the Texas Freedom Network are quoted at length, providing evidence supporting Curry's primary claims (the Bible course is unconstitutional and its supporters are religiously motivated). The quotation from the school board president uses a violent metaphor which, if the reader is to imagine what he is saying (even though he says it's

"not" what is going to happen), brings to mind school officials holding a gun to the head of a child holding a Bible. Notably, no parents, community members, teachers, or students were interviewed for this article. The power, from Curry's perspective, is in the hands of the politicians, advocacy organizations, and curriculum writers.

For Curry and his imagined audience, this Bible course poses a real problem. The questions this analysis has evoked for further discussion are: (a) How is Curry, or, more broadly, how do writers relate to their audiences? (b) How do the way writers' relate to their audiences affect their construction of their readers and their construction of teaching about religion in public schools for these readers? (c) How do writers' personal connections to religion influence their construction of teaching about religion in public schools?

Ann Arbor News: Bible study at Howell High? The unnamed reporter, credited only as "News staff reporter" (whom I will refer to as NSR and "she" in this subsection), reports on a similar event—the proposed use of the NCBCPS curriculum—differently than Curry (News staff reporter, 2006). "Bible study at Howell High," (News staff reporter, 2006) from the *Ann Arbor News*, presents another instance when the NCBCPS's curriculum was proposed as an elective. This article focuses on the initial proposal, which was brought to the school board by community member Tim Thatcher. After this article was published the curriculum was reviewed by the district's K12 Social Studies Curriculum Committee, which rejected it on grounds that its content overlapped with their World Religion course. One board member moved to approve the curriculum (it is unclear whether the review of the curriculum had been presented at that point), but none of the other six board members seconded the motion and a formal vote never occurred. The district concluded that, without the approval of the Social Studies Curriculum Committee, the course would not be considered further.

Once again, I apply the presuppositions tool and the quotations pattern tool (see Table 8).

Table 8

Quotation Patterns Tool Applied to Ann Arbor News, "Bible Study at Howell High" (News staff reporter, 2006)

Name and affiliation	**Quoted text (both direct and paraphrase)**
Jeanne Farina, assistant superintendent for curriculum, staff development and assessment for the Howell Public Schools	• "We would not impose any kind of religion." • The proposal is being reviewed. If it is recommended at the building level, a district curriculum council would then consider it, she said. • Farina said the class does not cover the doctrine of the Bible, but touches on historic events and looks at it as literature. • Farina said teachers involved with that class are reviewing the proposal to see it would fit into the class and that she will advise the board at a future meeting as to whether it is being recommended.
• A Howell parent • An Oceola Township resident with a son in the seventh grade in the Howell district, Thatcher	• "It would not be taught in a preaching or doctrinal way," – "It (the Bible) has a lot of beautiful art and literature. I think if it is within our legal rights and it's good for the community, then why not consider it?" • "The program is within the grounds of separation of church and state." • "The only thing negative in my mind is that there might be some students who study the Koran or other books" – "But our founding fathers read the Bible; it is what our country was founded on."

NSR only uses quotations from supporters of the curriculum and quotes each of them numerous times. NSR also refers to someone else she attempted to contact, Elizabeth Ridenour, President of the NCBCPS, who is also a supporter of the program. If these quotations can be understood as lending "facticity" to the story, then we can glean that this curriculum would not "impose any kind of religion" or be "taught in a preaching or doctrinal way" even though it would cover the doctrine of the Bible. The fact that Thatcher is a parent seems to be of particular importance for NSR. She not only mentions it in the subtitle ("School District to Consider Proposal by a Parent for an Elective Class") and lead of the story ("A Howell parent has proposed an elective Bible

study class be taught at Howell High School, something that has been taken under advisement by the school district"), but refers to Thatcher as both a parent and a resident of the Township three times within the article. While Curry (2005) uses the School Board, the decision, and the coursework as the agents of action in his piece, NSR uses "a Howell parent" (para. 1), "parent Tim Thatcher" (para. 2), "the program" (para. 3), and "Thatcher" (para. 4). The quotations also illuminate presuppositions:

> "It would not be taught in a preaching or doctrinal way," Thatcher said. "It (the Bible) has a lot of beautiful art and literature. I think if it is within our legal rights and *it's good for the community*, then why not consider it?" (para. 5)… The program "is within the grounds of separation of church and state," Thatcher told the board last week. "The only thing negative in my mind is that there might be some students who study the Koran or other books," he said in an interview following the meeting. "But our founding fathers read the Bible; it is what our country was founded on." (paras. 9-10, emphasis added).

The phrase "*it's* good for the community" is ambiguous. What is good for the community? Is the curriculum good for the community or the Bible good for the community? By including the parenthetical indicating that Thatcher's use of the pronoun "it" refers to the Bible, NSR implies that his subsequent use of the pronoun also refers to the Bible.

Within this article, NSR cites multiple reasons Thatcher believes this Bible course should be adopted, all of which include presuppositions (see Table 9).

Table 9

Presuppositions Tool Applied to Ann Arbor News, "Bible study at Howell High" (News staff reporter, 2006)

Reason for Adopting the Bible Curriculum	**Presuppositions**
it has a lot of beautiful art and literature	• the Bible contains beautiful art (it is illustrated) and literature • *beautiful and literature art is worthy of school time*
it's good for the community	• either the Bible or the curriculum is good for the community • *things that are good for the community should be included in schools*
the program is within the grounds of separation of church and state	• there is a separation of church and state • this curriculum follows necessary legal guidelines
the founding fathers read the Bible	• there are specific men who founded the country • what these men did when they were alive matters and deserves emulation
it is what our country was founded on	• and ideas that influenced the establishment of the United States should receive attention in schools • the country was founded on the Bible

If facticity is implied by quotes, the last quote from Thatcher (which closes the article) implies the NSR and her imagined audience are of the belief that the Bible is what the United States was founded on (a position echoed in the next chapter by one of the interviewed writers and discussed in the final chapter):

> "The only thing negative in my mind is that there might be some students who study the Koran or other books," he said in an interview following the meeting. "But our founding fathers read the Bible; it is what our country was founded on." (para. 10)

For Thatcher, NSR, and her imagined audience, the proposition of a Bible class in a local public school is only appealing if "the Koran and other books" (likely meaning other devotional texts) are not the focus of study. Applying rational world rationality (Fisher, 1984), this concern negates some of the reasons provided for adopting a Bible course (since one could assume that

the Quran and other books could also have beautiful art and literature and are within the grounds of the separation of church and state), but applying narrative rationality (Fisher, 1984) this concern makes sense, because under this worldview Christianity should be the focus of any study of teaching about religion in public schools in the United States because it has influenced our society and laws to such a degree that it deserves attention. The three remaining reasons (the Bible or the curriculum is good for the community, the founding fathers read the Bible, and it is what our country was founded on) further reveal an agenda characteristic of a Conservative or evangelical Christian. And NSR, and her imagined audience, is sympathetic to this position.

According to Richardson (2007), "Journalism is best approached as an argumentative discourse genre… given that journalists—like all of us—are unable to provide reports of events that are entirely true and objective, they employ rhetorical strategies" (p. 64-65) to persuade their readers. By engaging in a rhetorical enterprise (i.e., writing to persuade), NSR attempts to assuage many of the concerns communicated by Curry: there would be no preaching in this course and it is entirely legal. NSR constructs her audience as people who would agree with her presuppositions about the Bible. Though Curry (2005) and NSR (2006) approach the story of the NCBCPS curriculum from different perspectives, in the end they both communicate that the supporters of the curriculum are likely Conservative Christians. Depending on the religious and political perspective of their audiences (or readers) (Ong, 1975), this could be a reason to support or object to the use of the curriculum.

Like Curry's (2005) article, this article begs questions of how writers imagine and connect to their audiences and how this affects their construction of teaching about religion in public schools. Contrasting these articles and the writers' imagined audiences, it is clear that they adhere to different worldviews. The questions this raises for further discussion are: What is the

connection between writers' (particularly news writers') worldviews and their position on teaching about religion in public schools? Is there a discernable difference between news and opinion writers?

The Battalion: Islam Should Not Be Main Religious Focus in Public Schools. I now turn to two pieces on teaching about world religions in public schools. Both are in essence opinion articles (the first is a column, the second a blog post). As such, they are meant to communicate the writers' opinions in contrast with news pieces, which are generally meant to be unbiased. Three of the four journalists I interviewed expressed that their news articles did not communicate their opinions. With blog posts and newspaper opinion articles (inclusive of editorials, columns, letters to the editor), expressing one's opinion is both acceptable and expected. The pieces I have chosen for analysis are "Islam Should Not Be Main Religious Focus in Public Schools" from Texas A&M University's paper *The Battalion* (Maddox, 2002) and "Religion in the Public Schools: A Story About Civics in the Bronx and Queens" from the blog website, *The Huffington Post* (Weiner, 2009).

"Islam Should Not Be Main Religious Focus in Public Schools" (Maddox, 2002) from Texas A&M University's paper *The Battalion* is about the practices at Excelsior Middle School in Byron County, California. The California State Board of Education requires that seventh grade world history classes contain a unit on Islamic history, culture, and religion. Parents of Excelsior students believed that the unit of study, which contained role-playing activities, violated the First Amendment. After this article was published, the Eklunds, parents of two students in the middle school, sued the district on behalf of their children (*Eklund v. Byron County School District*, 2003 U.S. Dist.). The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California held that the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution was not violated by the school or teacher because

students "participated in activities which, while analogous to those pillars of faith, were not actually the Islamic religious rites." The Eklunds appealed and the decision of the District Court was affirmed by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court subsequently denied the Eklunds' petition for writ of certiorari. Regarding Maddox's sources, he references the ASSIST News Service. It was reported elsewhere that the ASSIST News Service (specifically Rev. Austin Miles, the writer of the article) provided misinformation to its subscribers about this incident and Islam (Roddy, 2002), so it should be noted that Maddox may have been basing his article on misinformation.

The *rhetorical tropes tool* helps an analyst identify which words are used to "denote-connote something apart from their ordinary meaning" (J. E. Richardson, 2007, p.65). Though there are hundreds of tropes in rhetorical theory, the four I will focus on here are: hyperbole (exaggeration), metaphor (assigning the characteristics of one thing to another), metonym (replacing users with products or giving objects agency), and puns (wordplays).

Matthew Maddox (2002) begins his commentary on teaching practices in a seventh grade classroom in California with metonym and pun, "For years, people have believed that California *borders the Pacific and insanity*" (para. 1, emphasis added). This is a homographic pun (J. E. Richardson, 2007) which exploits the dual meanings of the word "borders." As a student in Texas, writing for a group of students in Texas, Maddox's use of this pun illustrates his belief that California is not only geographically distant, but California (now seen as a human with a capacity for sanity or insanity) is "out there" mentally. Since California, as a land mass, has no mental capacity, Maddox is calling the people of California crazy without directly insulting them as people. Maddox's use of metonym continues throughout his article. Objects, locations, and organizations are assigned agency. For example:

> When a Kentucky school *hung* a copy of the Ten Commandments near its entrance, the ACLU *went* to court and *had* the Commandments removed from sight. However, when copies of the Five Pillars of the Islamic Faith *are distributed* to every student, the ACLU *looks* the other way. (para. 6, emphasis added)

Though this paragraph contains many references to actions (hung, went, had, looks, are distributed), there are no named agents of this action that are people and thereby capable of the action. Even "distributed," which is not a metonym, is an agentless action. One could assume that a teacher actually distributed the handout of the Five Pillars of Islam to the students, but Maddox does not draw attention to this. Throughout the article students are: instructed, *taught* to pray "in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful" and chant, "praise to Allah, Lord of Creation" (para. 2), made to "adopt Islamic names, plan a pilgrimage to Mecca and stage their own jihad by using a dice game" (para. 2) by no one in particular.

The word "teacher" is only referenced once, hyperbolically: "Parents and priests are the correct instructors for this [religious] material, *not an atheist middle school teacher with a GED*" (para. 4, emphasis added). Though there is no evidence given for the teacher's religious orientation or education level, one can assume that the middle school teacher graduated from college because that is a requirement of the profession. Referring to the teacher as an atheist draws attention to the idea that the teacher is not Christian (like the author and his imagined audience). Referring to the teacher as having a GED is considered an insult (particularly since both the author and the audience are college students) signaling that the teacher is not as intelligent as the writer or his audience. Finally, Maddox uses metaphor in the sentence, "The ACLU, in its quest for political correctness, has decided to *play a game of political pool with which religion is prosecuted and promulgated*" (para. 7). Depending on the player, pool can be a

haphazard or systematic game. Depending on the ACLU's proficiency at "pool," the group is either purposefully or inadvertently prosecuting or promulgating religion.

Why wouldn't Maddox name the agents of the action? There are a few possibilities. First, it's possible he just didn't have much information about his subject. He references the ASSIST News Service (2011), which according to its website was created to provide "access to stories that are of interest to Christians worldwide." The ASSIST News Service may have had incomplete information. Second, he could have been wary of actually criticizing people, preferring to comment on institutions and practices. Third, it could be unimportant to him and what he is trying to accomplish with his article.

To learn more, I turn to what Gee (2011a) refers to as the *politics building tool* (with politics referring to social goods, not governmental political parties). This tool helps to illuminate what the writer positions as social goods and how these social goods should be distributed. According to Gee (2011a):

> We use language to build and destroy social goods. … [One category of social goods] which can be given or withheld in many different ways are thinks like having ourselves, our behaviors, or our possessions treated as "normal," appropriate," "correct," "natural," "worthy," or "good." (p. 120)

From the beginning, Maddox establishes the curriculum he is about to describe as insane, disturbing, and indoctrinatory, referring to it as an effort for "political correctness" (paras. 1 & 7) and contrasting it with "common sense" (paras. 3 & 9).

Table 10

Politics Tool Applied to "Islam Should Not be Main Religious Focus in Public Schools" from Texas A&M University's paper The Battalion *(Maddox, 2002)*

Valued social good	**Current "insane" distribution**	**Preferred "common sense" distribution**
Student time in school	3 weeks of Islamic studies in 7th grade: pretending to be warriors for Islam, dressing in robes, praying, chanting, writing Islamic phrases, recitation of Islamic proverbs, memorization of "passages from the Koran" (para. 4), etc.	English comprehension
The attention of the ACLU	• "demand[ing] that creationism cannot be taught in schools" (para. 5) • Suing a school for displaying the Ten Commandments • Political correctness	• "students being taught that Allah is the Lord of Creation" (para. 5) • Distribution of "copies of the Five Pillars of the Islamic Faith" (para. 6)
Textbook portrayal	"…the history textbook used by California presents a biased view of Islam. The references to Christianity are dark, dealing with the Crusades and the Inquisition." (para. 8)	"mention …of the violence or conquest that spread Islam for centuries. The invading Moors of Spain, the Battle of Tours and the mass execution of the Jewish residents of Quarayza in ancient Islam..." (para. 8)

Maddox presents three valued social goods for distribution: student time in school, the attention of the ACLU, and textbook portrayal. Social goods do not distribute themselves. If we look at who is distributing each of these goods, it reveals whom Maddox is blaming for the current state of "insanity." California's Department of Education and State Board of Education are responsible for the curricular frameworks that "dictate" (para. 1) how students spend time in schools. Second, people working for the American Civil Liberties Union, a membership organization that acts as "our nation's guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country" (American Civil Liberties Union, 2011), distribute their own attention and the organization's resources. Finally, writers of

textbooks and the companies that publish them are responsible for how different groups are portrayed.

Taken together, it seems that the government, a large national membership organization, and a private company are all part of a conspiracy of sorts to promote Islam, degrade Christianity, and ignore students' English comprehension. Whether or not he would claim that an actual conspiracy is to blame, it is clear that he is comfortable blaming the geographically far away (physically distant from the author), Godless (spiritually distant from the author), GED-holding (academically distant from the author) people for this "insanity." Whoever they are, they are not like him or his imagined audience. This article is more about Maddox commenting on who he is, what he values, and what he believes—and the ways in which people who are unlike him are disrespecting him, his values, and his beliefs—than it is about students and the quality of their education.

Further, Maddox invokes a larger narrative in which his worldview and ways of life are in danger because those who are unlike him are attacking his way. This raises questions about how writers view society and the place of teaching about religion in public schools within it. What narratives do writers employ when thinking about teaching about religion in public schools?

The Huffington Post: Religion in the Public Schools: A Story About Civics in the Bronx and Queens. Like the article written by Maddox (2002), "Religion in the Public Schools: A Story About Civics in the Bronx and Queens," by Matthew Weiner (2009), a Program Director for the Interfaith Center of New York, details students' school-based experiences with world religions. This post is about a high school class's field trip to a mosque, a Hindu temple, and a

Chinese Buddhist temple (all in one day). Once again, the quotation patterns tool is useful (see Table 11).

Table 11

Quotation Patterns Tool Applied to "Religion in the Public Schools, A Story About Civics in the Bronx and Queens" from the blog website, The Huffington Post (Weiner, 2009)

Name and affiliation	**Quoted text (both direct and paraphrase)**
Joshua Adland, a first year teacher of Global History at Explorations Academy who teaches his small belief systems unit in the larger Global History course	"*Students like it.*" (para. 2) "*They find it interesting*." (para. 2) "*They hear about their religion, but don't know about oth*ers. *They are basically all Christians, from different backgrounds, so they can relate*." (para. 2) "I'm from Kentucky and I'm Jewish. I know what it means to be different, and why it's important for people to know something about those who are different." (para. 5) "*It was important for them. An epic journey.*" (para.11) The Hindu temple was "pretty mind blowing." (para. 11) The Buddhist temple "was really nice. *Kneeling, for them, was cool*." (para. 11) **Most [students], he said, found the rules such as covering heads, taking off shoes, not eating meat funny, and yet also an important way to respect the space of their hosts**. (para. 11) "This came up again and again. Respect, meaning respecting others." (para.11)
Rev. Alfonso Wyatt, vice president of the Fund for the City of New York, and a former school teacher	"When I was growing up in Queens, there was only English in my high school. But when I went back for a visit, there were over a hundred languages, and who knows how many religions. Students and yes, teachers, need to know something about this." (para. 6)
Caitlyn, one of Adland's students	"I know my religion isn't the only one. I like Muslims and Jews, they pray a lot." (para. 7)
one student, the son of a Pentecostal minister	"I'll show them why they're wrong." (para. 7)
their host at the Hindu temple	"Because God comes in many forms for many different people." (para. 8) "To show respect." (para. 8)
Students	It was "interesting and weird and good to connect to others." (para. 11)

All of the quotations, with the exception of one ("I'll show them why they're wrong" para. 7), support the endeavor of the teacher to expose students to multiple religions and places of worship. Many of the quotations are of the teacher relaying the perspectives of the students (in italics). Others (underlined) are individuals' self-reports, which fall into two categories: (a)

adults stating why they believe it is important to learn about religious difference, or (b) what students actually said about the experience. The one instance of paraphrasing (in bold text) concerns the fact that most students found rules such as covering heads, taking off shoes, and not eating meat "funny" (para. 11). Both this phrase (religious practices being "funny") and the phrase that follow the student's proclamation that he would "'show them why they're wrong,' he said, as others playfully rolled their eyes behind him" (para. 7) draw attention to a recurrent practice throughout this piece: downplaying the scale of the lessons and soft-pedaling negativity expressed by the high school students. Specifically, Weiner (2009) states that the teacher is teaching a "*small* belief systems unit" (para. 2) and that students find "some concepts, like reincarnation, a *little* baffling" (para. 7). He also downplays their reluctance to engage in certain practices and customs and minimizes their assent: "at the Hindu temple, several didn't want to take their shoes off, but *once they did*, and came inside, they were *silent*, watching a white bearded priest chant and wash the god Ganesha with milk" (para. 8), "at the mosque, girls put on headscarves and took pictures of one another" (para. 9), and "some put their sweatshirt hoods on, which the Imam said would *suffice*" (para. 9).

Weiner (2009) emphasizes that this endeavor is simultaneously very important and very small. By writing that the unit is small and students' reactions to unfamiliar religious beliefs as a "little" baffled, he plays down the scale of this day. He also focuses on things students had to do for admittance to the places of worship such as removing their shoes and covering their heads. The students were reluctant, but he minimizes the potential importance and symbolism of these acts by quickly stating a resolution—what happened once students did remove their shoes and girls being permitted to wear their sweatshirt hoods instead of hijabs (head scarves). He states repeatedly that agreeing to these practices is a sign of respect.

Both Maddox (2002) and Weiner (2009) discuss public school practices that potentially cross the line between learning about a religion and practicing a religion, with Maddox emphasizing that the practices are completely unacceptable and Weiner emphasizing that the practices are completely acceptable. However, even staunch supporters of teaching about religion in public schools believe that role playing and religious reenactments should be avoided because:

> The possibility that a moment or ritual considered sacred might be trivialized or mocked, even unwittingly, is too great to risk. The other problem, of course, is the very real possibility that the activity will violate the conscious of the students who participate. (W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998, p. 73)

Instead, they write, audiovisual tools should be used to give students "some feel" (p. 73) for how others practice their faiths without violating the students' freedom of conscience.

Both writers employ narratives related to specific students' experiences in schools. Both groups of students were exposed to religious practices that the writers framed as being unfamiliar to the students. The questions this contrast compels are: Why do writers choose to frame the school practices as they do? Writers of opinion articles and blog posts usually have the freedom to decide whether, how, or even if they contribute to the discourse. How do writers' reasons for contributing to the discourse influence their construction of teaching about religion in public schools? And, again, how does a writer's personal connection to religion influence their construction of teaching about religion in public schools?

The New York Times: Texas Conservatives Seek Deeper Stamp on Texts. Next, I analyze two pieces focused on the Texas TEKS standards revision described at the beginning of this chapter. In contrast with Maddox's (2002) approach to commenting on public school

curricula, James McKinley (2010) directly ties actions to their agents and rarely uses metonym. From this we learn that McKinley wants readers to attribute the actions he describes in Texas to conservative members of the Texas Board of Education. In McKinley's 2010 piece, "Texas Conservatives Seek Deeper Stamp on Texts" about the Texas TEKS for social studies revision, the agents are referred to as: "Texas Conservatives," (headline) "the Texas School Board" (para. 1); "the 15-member State Board of Education" (para. 2); "the board," "the seven conservative Republicans on the board" (para. 3); "Conservatives" (para. 4); "Don McLeroy, a dentist from College Station who heads up the board's conservative faction" (para. 5); "the seven hard-core conservatives [who are] joined by one or more moderate members in votes" (para. 6); "Dr. McLeroy… along with rest of the religious conservatives on the board" (para. 7); "conservatives on the board" (para. 9); "the conservatives" (para. 12); and "Mr. McLeroy and other conservatives" (para. 14). Other agents at the school board meeting were "Hispanic activists" who "asked" for more attention to Latino figures, "American Indians" who "complained" that their history was not given enough attention (para. 17), and a "man" who "asserted" that the Tea Party movement be included in the standards (para. 18).

There are two social goods McKinley values in this piece: inclusion in the Texas curriculum standards and the power to direct those standards. The distributers of the valued social goods are the Texas State Board of Education and voters, respectively. However, the voters—as distributors of the social good of power—are rendered irrelevant:

> The three-day meeting is the first time the board has met since voters in last week's Republican primaries voted to oust Dr. McLeroy and another conservative and *threw* the future makeup of the board *up in the air*. Two other members -- a conservative Republican and a moderate Democrat -- are not seeking re-election, and it is unclear what

> the *balance of power* will be after the general election. At present, the seven *hard-core* conservatives are often joined by one or more moderate members in votes on curriculum questions.
>
> Dr. McLeroy still has 10 months to serve and he, along with rest of the religious conservatives on the board, *have vowed to put their mark* on the guidelines for social studies texts. (paras. 6-7, emphasis added)

Though the future *balance of power* of the board has been thrown *up in the air* (implying a wholly unpredictable result), the *hard-core* conservatives have vowed to *put their mark* (a single mark, implying they are united in purpose) on the standards. In other words, despite the fact that the voters redistributed the social good of power, this *hard-core, Texan, religious, conservative faction* is making decisions that could affect students in the entire country (insofar as Texas policies influence textbook publishers). Regarding religion, the group is intent on "Highlight[ing] what they see as the Christian roots of the Constitution and other founding documents. 'To deny the Judeo-Christian values of our founding fathers is just a lie to our kids,' said Ken Mercer, a San Antonio Republican" (paras. 14-15, emphasis added). McKinley and numerous others find the position extreme.

Like others, McKinley constructs his audience as people who would find the motivations and actions of the SBOE unacceptable. Since it seems that the majority of the writers whose articles and blog posts discussed thus far imagine their audience as having specific (perhaps even stereotypical) worldviews, is this the case with all writers? Do writers typically use their platforms to affect (e.g., incite, inspire, invigorate, educate) those who agree with them or those who disagree with them (or neither)? How does this affect their construction of teaching about religion in public schools?

TexasInsider.org: Leftists Demand to (Re)Write Social Studies Standards. In her blog entry for the Texas Insider, Carole Hornsby Haynes (2010)[25] fully supports the Texas SBOE. Perhaps because the SBOE had so much power influencing the revision process—which would not be replicated in the near future—there are few news articles, opinion articles, or blog posts supporting their position. C. H. Haynes (2010) is one of the few, but analyzing her position may reveal something about the position of SBOE supporters and their views. According to Gee (2011a), the *stanza tool* is useful for thinking about how information is organized. Stanzas are groups of "idea units about one important… character, theme, image, topic, or perspective" (p. 74). Haynes's blog post can be divided into nine stanzas or sections of themed ideas. Each of these stanzas focuses on particular agents and their activities (see Table 12).

[25] It should be noted that Carole H. Haynes is a different person than Charles C. Haynes. Since their names and initials are similar, it seems important to note this so readers do not get confused.

Table 12
Stanza Tool Applied to TexasInsider.org: "Leftists demand to (re)write social studies standards" (C. H. Haynes, 2010)

St	Agents	Actions
1	the Texas State Board of Education	• restored historically accurate social studies & history standards • released updated social studies standards that received preliminary approval
2	liberal "experts"	• have written distortions and blatant lies • proclaimed themselves experts • are ready to tar and feather the SBOE for "revising our American history", leaving Thomas Jefferson out, and "bringing religion back into the schools" • have not read the curriculum standards • have not read original founding documents • rely on works of revisionist historians
	revisionist historians	• altered our American history to fit their Progressive ideology
	normally intelligent, gullible Americans	• have bought into this leftist smear • foolishly believe mainstream media • turn a deaf ear and blind eye
	main stream media	• does not bother with independent research
3	SBOE	• approved the Celebrate Freedom Week standard
	students	• will be instructed "in the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, in their historical contexts" • will study and recite
	teachers	• have not been required to teach the founding documents and their importance to our liberty
4	Americans	• are unable to answer even simple questions about the Constitution • have no idea
	our federal government and our elected representatives	• usurped our unalienable rights • have passed legislation that is unconstitutional
7	a small rowdy minority	• petitioning the SBOE to trash these standards and permit a group of "experts" to write new standards • attempting to push their own radical revisionist agenda • claim the voice of the people has been ignored • have blatantly ignored the fact that more than 14,000 emails and 30+ hours of public testimony have been received • have ignored the fact that there is strong public support
	higher education "faculty and research experts"	• are demanding that they make the decisions about what our Texas school children learn • deem themselves to be so much better qualified
	"qualified" educrats	• have created mass damage to our public school system • have dumbed down the curriculum • used student centered methodology to such an extent that 42% of those entering college require remedial work • have been responsible for ridiculous changes to our standards

Examining these stanzas with the *activities building tool* (Gee, 2011a) I ask "What activity or activities is this communication seeking to get others to recognize as being accomplished?" (p. 98) and "What social groups, institutions, or cultures support and norm (set norms for) whatever activities are being built or enacted)?" (p. 98). Those who disagree with the actions of the SBOE are portrayed as deceptive, dishonest, or naive: liberal "experts" (presumption: pretending to be experts), revisionist historians (presumption: they falsify history), normally intelligent, gullible Americans, a small rowdy minority (presumption: a few displeased, highly vocal people), higher education "faculty and research experts" (presumption: they pretend to be experts), "qualified" educrats (presumption: not really qualified, education bureaucrats). From Haynes's perspective, schools have been influenced by deceptive people for too long. The people who should make decisions for schools are elected officials and their appointees. In this instance, the SBOE has restored historically accurate information to standards and has required that students be taught proper information in acceptable formats.

It is interesting that Haynes so trusts the elected SBOE when she so distrusts the American public, the federal government, and elected representatives. It seems that how C. H. Haynes distributes her trust has more to do with the agenda of the group than its elected status. If this can be assumed, then Haynes can be seen as supporting those who wish to: restore historically accurate social studies and history standards (paras. 1, 22, 24); require that students study our founding documents, the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence and the critical role they play in our country (para. 6); create standards related to American Exceptionalism (para. 13); support the study of the American founders, American heroes, American entrepreneurs, and Americans who have pursued the great American Dream (para. 13); create standards on the unintended consequences of government actions such as the

New Deal, the Great Society, and Title IX (para. 15); and promote academic success and pride in our country, our leaders, and our values instead of the leftist negative view of shame (para. 23). From Haynes's perspective, America is an exceptional country—the greatest country in the world (para. 21), which, sadly, has been marred by liberals, who are deceptive ideologues (para. 23). Regarding the inclusion of religion, Haynes believes that educrats are responsible for the removal of Christmas and religious heritage language from school (para. 21) and wish to destroy the "shining city on the hill" (para. 23).

Attending to the commonalities in these two pieces reveals that McKinley (2010) and C. H. Haynes (2010) agree that: (a) the SBOE has a great deal of power and influence in the revision of the Texas TEKS, (b) social studies standards are value laden, and (c) some Texans are protesting the tone of the revisions, but the SBOE overruled them. Each of them devotes space to describing what "they" are doing. For McKinley, "they" are the conservatives. For Haynes, "they" are the liberals. Rather then focusing on the individuals whom they support, both of these writers attempt to persuade their readers by enumerating the despicable practices of "them," thereby potentially recruiting like-minded people to join the fight on the side of the non-ideological group (for McKinley the liberals, for Haynes the conservatives). They are firmly in the camp of writers who wish to affect like-minded readers rather than persuade those who disagree with them.

Both McKinley's news article and C. H. Haynes's blog post are undergirded by a narrative about "the way the world is." In her worldview, students should be taught the greatness of the United States, without qualification. Those who seek to qualify or complicate this greatness are deceptive at best. What other types of narratives do writers employ when framing teaching about religion in public schools for themselves and their imagined audiences?

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the three topics concerning teaching about religion in public schools in the media: Bible-based courses, teaching about world religions, and the portrayal religion in social studies standards. By analyzing a sample of headlines and leads as well as two newspaper articles or blog posts from each topic, my goal was to provide a general orientation to the discourse as well as a thorough analysis of individual writers and their pieces.

When contributing to public discourse, writers have specific goals: to inform, to persuade, to support, to enrage, etc., and they build these goals on the narratives of their lives and work. These narratives undergird their positions, usually unnamed, through their writing. The purpose of this chapter was to take a closer look at the typical ways teaching about religion in public schools is portrayed in the media and to pose questions for further examination. Moving forward, the goal is to better understand why writers make the choices they do and what narratives they invoke when discussing their goals, beliefs, and, most relevant to this project, their positions on teaching about religion in public schools.

The discourse analysis section of this chapter has prompted questions for further discussion. First, how do writers imagine and relate to their audiences? How do the writers' constructions of audience affect their framing of teaching about religion in public schools for public discourse? Exploring questions of audience allows consideration of Ong's (1975) idea that the writer must appeal to the audience's (or rather, the individual readers') self-conceptions. If a writer is appealing to the self-conceptions of his or her readers, then the writer is, in part, constructing his or her audience and constructing the topic (in this case, teaching about religion in public schools) in a way that he or she predicts will appeal to the audience. By interrogating

how writers construct their audiences, we begin to understand how teaching about religion in public schools is constructed for them and why.

The second set of questions prompted by this analysis concern why writers choose to contribute to public discourse. By understanding more about why people choose to contribute, it is possible to better understand how media (i.e., writers and editors) construct teaching about religion in public schools as it does. If there is something about people that makes them more likely to contribute, what is it? What do contributors have in common in terms of their motivations or resources?

Finally, to learn more about the writers and the narratives that undergird their positions on teaching about religion in public schools, the following questions will be posed: How do writers' personal connections to religion and expressed worldviews influence their framing of teaching about religion in public schools? What narratives do writers employ when thinking about teaching about religion in public schools? Do news and opinion writers differ in significant ways?

All of the aforementioned questions will be explored through analyses of the writers' interviews in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

The Writers' Stories

For this chapter, my overarching question is: *How do writers' personal narratives relate to their writing for the public on the topic of teaching about religion in public schools?* Herein, I more closely explore the perspectives of the writers I interviewed and tie these perspectives, whenever possible, to their contributions to the discourse. The purpose of this analysis is to better understand how teaching about religion in public schools is portrayed in the media and what influences that portrayal.

There are three common types of narratives the writers invoked during their interviews. *Experience stories* detailed events that occurred either to them personally or to someone they know. *Imagined situations* laid out the writers' ideas about what they believe could, hypothetically, or should, ideally, happen in various circumstances. Narratives of *the way things are* provided snapshots of how the writers think about society. Over the course of the interviews many such narratives surfaced, as one would assume would be the case in conversations on broad social issues. Though the questions I asked during the interviews created opportunities for participants to tell each of the aforementioned types of stories, if the types of stories the writers invoked had all perfectly aligned with the question I asked or if no questions were phrased in a way that could prompt multiple types of narratives, there would have been little to share in terms of findings. However, this was not the case. The writers invoked different types of narratives to the same questions and prompts. The question, "How did you come to be interested in the topic of religion and education?" clearly prompts an experience narrative, but writers chose to tell both experience stories and stories of the way things are. Other questions were more open to

interpretation. For example, the question, "What is important for American schoolchildren to know about religion?" prompted experience stories, imagined situations, and narratives of the way things are. That narratives were invoked does not necessarily illuminate much about the discourse—but which types of narratives were invoked (experience stories, imagined situations, and the way things are narratives), coupled with how these invocations relate to the writers' work provides insight into some of the ideas that undergird the writers' framing of the issues.

Throughout this chapter I explore the subtle differences between those who write news and those who write opinion. Beyond the obvious assumed differences between the two types of writing, some more nuanced differences have emerged among those I interviewed.

The Imagined (Fictional) Audience

This section analyzes how writers responded to the question: "When you wrote this piece, whom did you imagine as your audience?" Included are writers' responses along with a concluding discussion of how their conceptions of their audiences/readers could be understood as narratives.

The journalists interviewed for this study seem to know the general demographic characteristics of the people who live in their newspapers' distribution areas. When writing, some say that they imagine their audience as this demographic. As a columnist in a small town, Jeff Kaley has a clear idea of his likely readers:

> I'd say middle to low-middle class folks. [A multinational corporation] brought a little bit more of a higher educated demographic to town. … But, in general, it's mainly middle and lower middle-class folks, because the other big industries around here are ranching and farming. So, [I write for] both. … And I'm a baby boomer, and I gear a lot of stuff

> toward my generation. But it does surprise me, sometimes. I have a younger following too. (Kaley, Interview, October 2011)

Kaley's imagined audience is a combination of what he knows of the surrounding community and people like himself. He considers their socio-economic status as well as their age. Similarly, both Journalist A and Jim Remsen target a combination of what they know about their readers and how they imagine themselves as readers:

> I try to imagine a pretty educated, thoughtful person, who is not super ideological, but that may be my ideal reader and not who is actually reading it. (Journalist A, Interview, November 2011)

> I think it was always a combination of the loyal readers and people who were curious [about religion in civic life] … because it was in the news, because it's in the public sphere, public schools, public education. Religion is sort of a hot-button issue; they would want to read it just because they hadn't read about this before. (Remsen, Interview, October 2011)

The journalists' imagined audiences ranged from realistic to ideal. Journalist A imagines the type of reader she wants to attract, namely, someone who is not "super ideological." As the former editor for the Faith-Life section of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Remsen imagines people who are curious about religion. They appear to be writing to people like themselves (educated, thoughtful, curious and "not super ideological") more than the other types of writers whom I interviewed.

When asked how they imagine their audiences, some opinion writers had clear ideas about whom they were trying to reach. Their primary purpose in writing is to reach their target

audience. Chris Fontenot, a Christian writing against the introduction of Bible classes in public schools, attempts to reach Christian supporters of the initiative and to persuade them otherwise:

> [There are] a lot of strong conservative Christian people here in the state, in the city, who believe that we should teach the Bible in school…. That's who I thought my audience would be. I wasn't trying to convince people who didn't want to teach the Bible, I was bringing a viewpoint: that scripture needs to be taught by Bible teachers and churches, not by school teachers. (Fontenot, Interview, October 2011)

Through his letter to the editor, Fontenot was trying to reach Christians, like himself, whose opinions differ from his own on this one issue. As a way to convince other Christians of his commitment to his faith, Fontenot follows his main point about not teaching the Bible in public schools with statements of his commitment to other Christian activities in and around public schools:

> I do oppose the current method of teaching evolution as a scientific fact ... it is still an unproven theory ... without the introduction of the idea of creation. Our children must be allowed to think and reason for themselves, and it just is not logical to teach as fact the idea that all of what exists happened by chance.
>
> If Christians want to have Bible clubs, Bible studies and youth groups, then the schools should give equal access as they do all other groups.
>
> There are no laws preventing our children from bringing their Bibles to school or sharing their faith with other classmates. We still have that freedom. (Fontenot, 2006, para. 5 -7)

Fontenot's assertions of support to other Christian-led initiatives are meant to prove the authenticity of his Christian identity to his imagined audience. In other words, he uses insider

knowledge to attempt to gain acceptance for what could be seen as a radical position on this issue (Gee, 2011b). While Fontenot's imagined audience is likeminded people whose perspective differs from him on one issue, Gregory Rummo takes a broader approach by proposing to reach everyone from evangelical Christians to atheists through this writing:

> My mission was to write pieces that reflect an evangelical view, to write a religious piece. … I had a responsibility, to my Christian audience, to review a good book that was putting religion in a positive light in a secular world and in public schools. Also [I wanted] to address the concerns of atheists … because basically you're running away from something that's so pervasive in every culture, how can you deny it? You know it exists. Whether you believe it or not. (Rummo, Interview, September 2011)

Rummo's article cites Nord and Haynes' book, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (1998) in an effort to prove that incorporating religion in public school is not only permissible but necessary. He believes that all people, regardless of their stance on religion should concede this fact. Both Fontenot and Rummo, writers of opinion articles, partially want to reach those with whom they disagreed in an effort to persuade them of their perspective.

In contrast, many of the bloggers I interviewed (specifically John Whitehead and Lee Jefferson) focus on what they can offer to the conversation other than the characteristics or identities of their readers. For example, when asked whom he imagines as his audience, John Whitehead said:

> The general public. The large general, left wing, right wing, in between wing. … I'm a civil libertarian so I'm for everybody's rights and I'm not political. I haven't voted in twenty-some years. I just don't get involved in politics. I don't like politics at all. [Interviewer: That's interesting for a constitutional attorney.] Yes, but it's the best place

> to be because I don't let politics influence my decision for what cases we have or what I write. (Whitehead, Interview, December 2011)

For Whitehead, his audience is less of a concern than his ideas. He has ideas that he does not see represented in the public discourse and uses the platform available to him as a blogger to contribute his perspective.

With years of experience working with teachers and communities on topics involving religion and education Charles Haynes, among all of the writers I interviewed, maintains the clearest sense of whom he envisions when he writes:

> I'm thinking of the people I've met in these small towns and communities across the country. I actually picture in my mind [the] times I've been involved in communities, either doing workshops or negotiating a conflict. And so I know who these people are. I know the local atheists, I know the local pastor, the fundamentalist pastor; I know the parents. And basically, I don't mean to be Pollyanna, [but] again, [they are] great people. If you take out the Internet, and you take out the national groups coming in and taking over the debate and you just look at the people in the community, mostly they want to deal with it and get along. Very few are strident... very few are ideological to the degree where they won't listen. I've had really good experiences, so I try to remember that. I want to be reasonable. I want to be as fair as I can to both sides—or different sides—even though I might have a view. ... Enough people [repeat] the party line on religion and public life. So I try to kind of give them another way to think about it. And, if I can, bring them in. (Haynes, Interview, December 2011)

Haynes anchors his imagined audience in his experience. His imagined audience is real to him. They are people who are more concerned with the vitality of their communities and settling

disputes than garnering political clout. They are "great people" who want to "get along" and are not "ideological to the degree where they won't listen."

In this excerpt from a commentary posted on the First Amendment Center's website and entitled, "School Wars Over Religion Heating Up (Again)" (Haynes, 2011b), Haynes comments on lawsuits that concern religion and education:

> … On the other side of the divide, some administrators are still living in the 1950s, when many public schools freely promoted the majority faith. They either didn't get the Supreme Court memo about ending government endorsement of religion in schools, or they choose to ignore what the law requires of schools under the First Amendment.
>
> Consider the elementary school principal in Baltimore whose worries about high-stakes testing led her to call on a Higher Power. On March 5, the principal sponsored her second annual prayer service "to ask God to bless our school to pass the MSA (Maryland School Assessments)."
>
> What this principal apparently doesn't understand is that school officials represent the state — not the church. When carrying out their duties as administrators and teachers, they aren't free to take sides in religion. Of course, teachers may — indeed must — teach *about* religions as part of a good education. But they may neither inculcate nor denigrate any religion. (paras. 7-11)

In his commentaries and blog posts, Haynes aims his frustration at administrators and politicians who are either ignorant of the law and their role in it or who are ideologically driven and divisive. It seems that Haynes imagines himself as the representative of reasonable people and charged with challenging those who would divide the community for political purposes or out of ignorance.

As I wrote in Chapter 3, any piece of discourse—spoken, written, visual, and otherwise—can be understood as an instance of a "who-doing-what" (Gee, 2005). According to Gee (2011a):

> Discourse analysis is the study of language-in-use. Better put, it is the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, *but to do things*. People use language to communicate, co-operate, help others, and build things like marriages, reputations, and institutions. They also use it to lie, advantage themselves, harm people, and destroy things like marriages, reputations, and institutions. (p. i, emphasis added)

Certain identities are constructed (or destructed) by the authors/speakers/producers of a piece of discourse. Both producing and consuming discourse are social acts, replete with social significance and meaning construction. Writers are producers of media discourse and I asked them a variety of questions about why they wrote their pieces and whom they imagined as their audience.[26] If a writer's audience is always a fiction, as Ong (1975) contends, then how one imagines an audience has implications for how readers receive writers' work. How writers imagine their audiences is related to the regularity with which they write and their experiences with people around the topic under consideration. Writers who contribute to public discourse daily or weekly identify with their imagined audiences—in many ways they are imagining someone like themselves. Writers who contribute less frequently (e.g., Fontenot, Jefferson) do so to reach people who disagree with them and to expose them to a new perspective on the topic under consideration.

From a narrative perspective, what do their conceptions of their audiences communicate? Across the board, the writers I interviewed consider their readers to be reasonable people. Journalists, who likely write for the public more often than the others, see themselves more

[26] My interview protocol is included in chapter 3.

embedded with the public than non-journalist opinion writers and bloggers. Journalists are stewards of news and information. Their narratives are imaginings of the way things are. Some opinion writers invoke imagined situations in fictionalizing their audience. They believe that if people have the opportunity to read their positions, they will concur. In Fontenot's case, he writes for people like himself who are inundated with what he believes to be a wrong-headed/hearted position and who, if exposed to his position, will agree with him. Rummo, believes that regardless of what one believes, people exposed to his position will agree. These are imagined situations insofar as the writers imagine that their readers will be persuaded to agree with their positions. The argument could also be made that Fontenot presents an experience narrative for understanding his audience. He writes as a Christian insider to other Christian insiders and presents a perspective that he has found persuasive to others who may find it persuasive. Bloggers invoke experience stories in their conceptions of their audiences. Based on his experience, Whitehead removes himself from the political spectrum to communicate ideas rather than communicate with ideologues. Haynes imagines specific people he has worked with on issues of religion in schools.

Why Contribute to the Discourse?

The writers provide various reasons for why they choose to write about teaching about religion in public schools. Though each individual has his or her own reason for contributing to the discourse, there are similarities. In the case of opinion writers, each writer sees the discourse as lacking something—a perspective or information that they believe they can provide. In the case of news writers, they are responsible for covering certain topics, for example, education or state government, for their newspapers. Their reasons for writing about this topic concern its newsworthiness in relation to their beats.

To frame their ideas about what the discourse was lacking, writers often invoke narratives about the way things are. Professor Diane Winston, the Knight Chair of Media and Religion at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California, observes:

> Ever since 9/11, it was obvious to me that the coverage of Islam needed to change. … Reporters, as members of society, are no better than their educations allow them to be. If schools aren't doing a very good job of teaching world religions you can't expect reporters to be sensitive to the issues, so I have been focusing a lot of my class time, a lot of my programmatic activities at USC, on coverage of Islam. … So when I read [the article I commented on in the blog] it seemed like a good example of folks who were well-intentioned having a tremendous blind spot. Because … religious extremism is extreme no matter whether you're Jewish, Muslim, Islamic [*sic*], Buddhist, or Hindu. (Interview, December 2011)

Insofar as she can influence the next generation of journalists through her role as a chaired professor, Winston chooses to focus her time on teaching about coverage of Islam. She believes that public schools can do more to eradicate ignorance about religion. In her blog post, "Rewriting the Textbooks on Islam" (2009), Winston provides a reaction to a piece in *The Weekly Standard*, a weekly conservative magazine and blog, entitled "What Johnny Needs to Learn about Islam: Texas, Florida, and California Revise Their Textbook Standards" (Schwartz, 2009), in which she dealt with the Texas Social Studies Standards revision. In this blog post Winston writes that "Most Americans know very little about their own religion's history, creeds and theology, much less anyone else's. That's unlikely to change until the nation's classrooms intelligently incorporate world religions into their curricula" (Winston, 2009, para. 1). As a

former professional reporter with a Ph.D. in religion who works with aspiring journalists, Winston has teaches aspiring journalists, has expertise in the study of religion, and has a platform for communicating with a professional community. In other words, she perceives a gap in the discourse (a narrative about the way things are), feels that she has a perspective worth sharing, and recognizes she has a platform to do so.

Similarly, as a Christian, Fontenot has spent years studying the Bible under different pastors to better understand Scripture. In 2006, Fontenot was made aware of the efforts of some to introduce Bible courses in local public schools. His narrative regarding the way things are details his perspective on what is missing in some modern churches and why teaching the Bible should be left to pastors:

> What happens a lot in modern-day churches today, especially those that call themselves Christian churches, is they soft-sell the gospel. They tell all the good things about God but they don't tell all of the things. They talk about God's great love, but they don't talk about his great wrath. They talk about his great mercy but they don't talk about his great judgment. And I've come to realize that what they're doing is basically marketing Christianity. … So it is with that understanding, that revelation I guess you could call it, in studying Scripture and the hard things that Jesus taught about true Christianity and true discipleship as far as being a disciple of Christ, you come to realize that what Christianity in America mostly teaches are those truly soft things, the soft-sell approach. Don't want to offend anybody, don't want to make anybody upset. We want everybody to love Jesus, we don't want to say anything about him or say any of the things that he said that may offend someone. And it's with that understanding that I wrote what I wrote because if we try to teach Scripture in schools, and we try to teach the Bible in schools… we have

> churches in America that call themselves Christian that don't get it right. How in the world are we going to get a teacher who may or may not be a Christian, in an hour or 30 minutes, or however long the class might be, how are we going to let them properly teach Christian doctrine? (Chris Fontenot, Interview, October 2011)

By invoking an imagined situation narrative, Fontenot hypothesizes that since so many Christian churches "don't get it right" it is unlikely that public school teachers, who already have a lot of responsibilities, could "get it right," either. Like Winston and others, Fontenot recognizes a gap in discourse and recognizes himself as a person capable of remedying the gap. Unlike Winston, Fontenot did not have a readymade platform for sharing his thoughts. He had to submit his article to a local newspaper for consideration by the editor.

The journalists I interviewed said that they choose which topics to write about on the basis of the topic's newsworthiness and whether it has been covered by others. In other words, they ask themselves if there is a gap in the discourse that they can rectify. Some journalists understand "gaps" to be issues their newspapers have yet to cover:

> I routinely cover State Board of Education meetings and … in recent years that has focused on the State Board writing new curriculum standards for language arts and reading… science and… social studies/history. And then in 2007 the legislature considered legislation that would have required all public schools to teach a Bible course and it went through the process… and it went from mandatory to elective. There was some controversy and conflict over the curriculum for that Bible Study course… and so that's an example of where I would have developed some stories. (Gary Scharrer, Interview, October 2011)

> I mean both of them [Bible courses and the Texas TEKS revision] … were in the news. [The Bible course story] was topical, it was timely… I'm always looking for stories that … have some national interest. And I thought that was an issue that certainly did, and brought up a lot of good, thoughtful questions that might be of interest to readers. With the Texas one, I … thought it was a very interesting topic. Again, I think that while this is about Texas you know it can affect a lot of other states as they're doing this. It was also one that was getting a fair amount of attention and I think deservedly so. (Journalist A, Interview, November 2011)

For these journalists, relevance is their primary concern. Gary Scharrer covered stories about the Texas TEKS revision and the proposed Bible classes because they fell within his purview as the reporter who covers the state house. Journalist A has more leeway to decide which stories she will cover and strives to be relevant locally as well as nationally.

Journalists also bring a sort of expertise to the discourse. However, their expertise manifests through their reporting and striving for balanced coverage of the topic:

> I find that with very, very few exceptions I can usually at least give a credible, intellectual argument to the other [side]. I want to try and understand it from their point of view and, it may not change my mind, but I think there's usually a reasonable argument to be heard. It's fair to let them put it out there and to not try and sway my piece one way or the other. There have been a couple of things where I really don't think the other argument has anything to say but, even in that case, I can at least let the best possible person speak for it and put it in their own words, and maybe other people will think it's as ridiculous as I do. (Journalist A, Interview, November 2011)

Journalist A does not claim to be unbiased. On the contrary, she acknowledges that she has an opinion. However, she does strive to present all sides for her readers. This, of course, is a choice that she makes as a journalist. She has the power to allow voices of the opposition to speak to her readers through her writing or not; this is power that she does not take lightly.

As an editorial columnist, Bill McKenzie expresses a desire to educate his readers on interesting topics. On why he chose to report on a proposal for a Bible course in Odessa, Texas, McKenzie had this to say:

> Well, number one, I didn't know a lot about how you would structure a curriculum that would deal with religion in public schools so I was somewhat curious about that. Number two, you know and I'm not an expert on this, I just want to keep underscoring it … there's got to be a, there can be a right and wrong way to do it. You're talking about personal beliefs, I mean it's obviously not a forum for … teachers to persuade others to their beliefs. Yet it also deals with values and ideas and morality to some extent, so there's a [lot to know about] how you structure it and what you teach and how you teach it. (Bill McKenzie, Interview, September 2011)

McKenzie began his investigation with curiosity and an open mind. He does not recall having an agenda other than understanding the situation better and communicating it to his readers. This perspective comes across in his writing, which is thorough and balanced. In his column, entitled "Bible Class Doesn't Have to be Holy War" (2005), McKenzie invites readers to follow him on his exploration of the issue, taking us through his thought and discovery processes:

> Some Odessa residents who support the [Bible] course particularly favor a curriculum produced by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, a North Carolina group with a strong conservative advisory board. … Dr. Chancey, a biblical

> studies professor at Southern Methodist University, says the material lacks scholarship and fairness.
>
> Curriculum advocates responded with a news conference. Their basic message: Sue us if you think our material violates the Constitution.
>
> Curious about this flap, I read the national council's curriculum, as well as Dr. Chancey's report.
>
> As a layperson, I came away thinking much of it is fairly innocuous. Students would have to walk through plenty of dates. They would have to compare biblical styles of writing. And they would have to learn about such biblical figures as Moses, about which surveys show numerous students know zero. Nothing wrong there, as far as I could tell.
>
> But then you hit the problems. As Dr. Chancey notes in his report, the curriculum implies archaeology consistently supports the Bible's stories. It refers to two scholars who say as much - and no one else….
>
> Dr. Chancey also picks up on the curriculum's clear link between the Bible and America. You can see this connection right on the cover. An American flag and the Declaration of Independence are right below the title, "The Bible in History and Literature."
>
> And there's the part of one section devoted to America's roots as a Christian nation. Never mind that this assertion is hotly disputed. Why does a discussion of it belong in a curriculum devoted to the Bible? It strikes me as another attempt to marry nationalism with Christianity, a dangerous concoction. (W. McKenzie, 2005, para. 3-9)

McKenzie reads both the curriculum and Chancey's report. He is doing work that the typical community member likely does not have the time nor the resources to do and presents his

impressions. McKenzie is arguably a good example of a thorough, open-minded columnist, concerned with educating the public on issues in the news.

As an opinion writer, John Whitehead, constitutional attorney and founder of the Rutherford Institute, "a civil liberties organization that provides free legal services to people whose constitutional and human rights have been threatened or violated" (The Rutherford Institute, 2012, para. 1) acknowledges that:

> If you read… a good journalist who is investigating a subject—[he] is going to give every point of view and all the facts. There will be times when I have my point of view and I just say, "This is what I believe." And I'm not going to give everybody's viewpoint. You don't have enough words to do that. But a good journalist is going to do that. And when I see it in newspapers I will write him and say, "Great journalism." Because … unfortunately, I don't see a lot of good journalism anymore, but occasionally I do. …
>
> When people read my pieces they know I have a point of view… I'm going to say it.

Opinion writers have to stay attuned to the public discourse on topics they have interest in. John Whitehead chose to contribute to the discourse on the Texas TEKS revision because, at one time, the committee was considering downplaying Thomas Jefferson in the standards. This incited Whitehead to write about it. In his words:

> I chose to write it because Jefferson is greatly misunderstood. The separation of church and state and his view on that, it's greatly misunderstood. [The Texas SBOE was] supposedly going to greatly limit access to Jefferson and … and they were going to remove him from the Texas public school curriculum. … Supposedly one of the big reasons was … his view of religion [and] the separation of church and state and those kinds of things. If you study Jefferson carefully, he wasn't anti-religious at all. … What

> Jefferson was talking about there was leaving religion to the state governments to do as they saw fit. He wasn't talking about completely wiping religion off the face of the public country, if you read carefully. (John Whitehead, Interview, December 2012)

Opinion writers believe that they have the ability to address a public misunderstanding that is represented through media discourse. This perception is based on knowledge they have that they believe is not represented in the discourse. For some this is knowledge they attained in graduate or law school, and for others it is knowledge they obtained in a church or through personal research.

If opinion writers notice a lack of something in media discourse, be it a perspective or information, it is because they are aware of what is being written about topics that interest them:

> I look for what might be a hot topic in the religion world—mostly the religious liberty angle on the hot topics. … I keep my antennae up... for public school issues because that's my lifelong interest. … This is a deep interest to me so if I ever see a new fight, whether it's about Islam in textbooks which is sort of bubbling in some places… or these cases involving teachers either promoting religion or being hostile to religion… My radar is up for those. (Charles C. Haynes, Interview, December 2011)

They are not only aware and knowledgeable about media discourse but also willing to participate and deal with any feedback they may receive from readers.

> So I'll write on something that I know is going to irritate a certain group. Like this one on Jefferson. It was going to irritate people who don't like Jefferson, but, again, I try to present the truth as I see it and put my information out there. … Sometimes when I write something I get a lot of criticism, people [say], "You've gone too far this time," or some people write and say, "You're treasonous," then I'll write one and everybody says,

> "You're great." But when you're writing for the general public you can't be thin-skinned or you won't write. You can't be afraid to touch a subject. (John Whitehead, Interview, December 2012)

Writers chose to contribute to the media discourse on teaching about religion in public schools for a variety of reasons. Opinion writers: (a) are aware of the discourse on topics and issues that interest them, (b) notice a lack of a perspective or information in media coverage, (c) acknowledge their own expertise or ability to ameliorate the lack they noticed, (d) are willing to contribute to the discourse, and (e) have –or find—a platform to share their ideas. News writers feel a responsibility to cover certain topics for their newspapers because they are timely, newsworthy, and relevant. They notice a gap in coverage and remedy this gap for their newspapers' readership. There is, of course, some crossover between these two groups. Professional journalists and columnists who write opinion articles tend to present a perspective that is not based in expertise nor is it to fulfill a professional responsibility to inform others regarding relevant issues. There is a tone of "concerned citizen" rather than "expert with knowledge to impart." These distinctions, between writers of opinion and news and between professional journalists and others, will be revisited in the sections that follow.

Personal Connections to Religion and Education

Of the twelve writers I interviewed, nine expressed a personal interest in or connection to religion and eight expressed a personal interest in or connection to teaching or education. In this section I focus on the stories the writers tell about their connections to religion and education and how their connections inform their writing.

Three writers (Haynes, Winston, and Jefferson) have academic interests in religion, hold Ph.D. degrees in religion, and have taught at the high school or college level. Two of these

writers (Haynes and Jefferson) attended seminary without ordination. One writer, Charles C. Haynes, Director of the Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum, in Washington, D. C., authored a number of scholarly pieces I reviewed for this project. Of all of the writers I interviewed, Haynes is the most deeply connected to issues of teaching about religion in public schools. His interest in these topics began early:

> I was interested in religion and education early on because I've always been interested in religion, even as a young child. When I went to college and majored in religion at Emory University one of my professors, John Fenton … was instrumental to helping develop materials for teaching about religion in Pennsylvania during that spike in interest after the 60's Supreme Court decisions. … So I got the idea… to use my religious studies background perhaps in a school teaching, but there weren't many opportunities. … Then when I went to Harvard Divinity School … and I felt [that] teaching about religion in the public schools would be something that I could use all of this education to do. And I love the idea of teaching … so I went to the dean and … I said, "This is my interest but I'm not sure how to do that." He said, "Set up a program!" … So I went over to the [education] school and I said, "Well, how could we do this?" So we set up a joint program, which would really be a degree at the divinity school, a Master of Theological Studies, or MTS and [students] take courses at the Ed. School, do preservice training and so forth, but get the degree from the Divinity School. So we set it up and it's still going. (Haynes, Interview, December 2011)

Haynes says he has been interested in religion for as long as he can remember. His professional career evolved as opportunities arose. In each of the four pieces I analyzed for this project, Haynes's apparent intent is to educate his readers on issues of teaching about religion and

religious expression in public schools. In one blog post from 2010, Haynes recounts the results of a survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2010) and uses it to extol the importance of religious literacy in contemporary society and the potential for public schools to ameliorate this social deficiency.

> Religious literacy matters because religion matters. For better and for worse, religious convictions help shape events and public policies in the U.S. and throughout the world. As we learned early on confronting sectarian violence in Iraq, what we don't know about religion can hurt us.
>
> Religious literacy also matters because religious freedom matters. Ignorance breeds intolerance and prejudice, as evidenced in our own history by periodic outbreaks of nativism and the persistence of anti-Semitism.
>
> In the current climate of uncertainty and fear, a little knowledge (especially when based on propaganda from the Internet) can do considerable harm. Witness the anti-mosque protests around the country this summer fueled by dissemination of distorted, incomplete and often ugly misinformation about Islam and American Muslims.
>
> One obvious fix for religious illiteracy is for public schools to do a better job teaching about the major world religions. (C. C. Haynes, 2010, para. 5-10)

The theme this section of Haynes's post is that ignorance can breed hateful acts. As a clarifier, Haynes wants to help ameliorate the ignorance of religion that can lead to violence.

Three of the writers (Fontenot, Rummo, and Scharrer) mention that their strong personal connections to religion is based in their faith. Greg Rummo is a born-again Christian and the author of the column "An Evangelical View" for *The Record*, a Bergen County, New Jersey newspaper. Gary Scharrer states that he went to parochial schools and his "Christianity trumps

everything,"[27] but, because he is a reporter and feels a responsibility to cover stories fairly, he focuses "on the facts and [tries] to present a balanced view where each side gets to make its case…" (Interview, October 2011). During his interview, Christopher Fontenot recounted the beginning of his commitment to living "a life that is pleasing to God":

> Well (sighs), let's see in 2001 I was in the car business… I happened to get hired at a dealership with about four or five guys that were Christians. And they would discuss different doctrines of Christianity. … They would debate their position on it but they were never argumentative or disrespectful to one another. And one of the guys that was working there happened to be the Associate Pastor of an inner city black church in Baton Rouge, and he and I had become good friends and he was preaching one Sunday and I said, "Well, look, I'm gonna come up and listen to you preach." So I attended his church and I was the only white guy in the room and about 700 people in that church and I was convicted that I was in very serious trouble before God and his judgment. And God saved me that day. And from April of 2001 through today I have lived, I have hopefully … lived a life that is pleasing to God and one that pursues his holiness and his righteousness. (Fontenot, Interview, October 2011)

In his op-ed for *The Advocate*, based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, entitled, "Don't Teach the Bible in Public Schools" (2006), Fontenot states his position on teach the Bible in public schools, which many members of the evangelical Christian community support:

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[27] Scharrer shared this story in the following context: There's this… perception out there that the media is liberal and biased toward liberal perspectives…. [Interviewer: What do you think about that perception?] Well, I answer all my e-mails and sometimes I explain my own background and perspective…. I went to parochial school. I mean, for me, my Christianity trumps everything.... But I'm the reporter and I'm going to focus on the facts and try to present a balanced view where each side gets to make its case and that's the way it's going to be. [Int: Does that seem to calm people's concerns or do you not hear back from them?] Well, sometimes they want to go further and then what I'll do is I'll go to my personal e-mail and I will carry the discussion further emphasizing that I am not speaking on behalf of either newspaper but I just share with them more personal perspective. And sometimes I go back and forth, back and forth. (Gary Scharrer, Interview, October 2011)

> Let me go on record as saying that I oppose any idea of teaching the Bible in public schools. First of all, we have burdened our teachers with more non-academic curricula than they deserve.… If the majority of Christian preachers, teachers and evangelists have it all wrong, what makes us think that secular society and its public education can teach biblical morality to our children…. If just half of the two largest non-denominational churches in our city would verbally share their faith with just one person a day for a year, we could impact the lives of more than 3 million people. Then our culture will change. If we wait on secular education to change our culture then be prepared to call good evil and evil good.

Fontenot gears his article toward other Christians, stating that while he agrees with them on many issues, he has clear reason for disagreeing with them on teaching the Bible in secular (public) schools. In his view, the biblical message is too important to trust to nonbelievers.

Three of the writers (Kaley, Remsen, and Journalist B) speak of their connections to religion through their families. In their interviews, all three of these writers contrast their religions with that of others—in two cases, their spouses (or former spouses), and in one case, the surrounding community. Journalist B attended parochial schools, which he contrasts with the experiences of his ex-wife, who was from a non-religious family and attended public schools where she felt compelled to lie about church attendance to fit in. It was not until Kaley's family relocated to Oklahoma that he discovered that many people believed that his family's denomination, Disciples of Christ, was considered a liberal denomination by the evangelical community. He attributes his own interest in religion to his mother, who had a similar interest, and to this awareness of being different from the majority of his community. When recounting

how he became editor of the (now defunct) Faith-Life section of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Remsen recalled the following:

> I had been on the Metro desk at the paper but back in the mid-80s as my wife and I were raising our kids and she's Jewish and I was raised Protestant. And we were just thinking about what to do with the kids and how to raise them and what we thought and etcetera. I remember looking for some book that might be of some guidance on the issue of interfaith marriage, and didn't find anything and thought, "Well, maybe that would be a book to write." … And I talked to a friend of mine who had been thinking about something like that as well, so we got our thoughts together and ended up writing a book … called *The Intermarriage Handbook*. … I got a year's leave from the paper to go do it … and I was just seeing patterns and story ideas [for the paper]. And came back [and] I made a pitch to the top editors of the paper that I thought we were missing the beat on a lot of what religion meant to people by just covering it as a news story…. So they approved the idea and appointed me to be the founding editor of this. So that's how I got involved in covering religion. And it was really interesting … we were looking at deeper things like prayer, not just as something you do, but as different modes and different systems of prayer and what they mean if you're sitting right there doing it…. (Remsen, Interview, October 2011)

For his article, "Adding Religion to Education's 3 R's" (2001), Remsen attended the "Teaching World Religions" history institute for teachers, sponsored by the Marvin Wachman Fund for International Education, held at American College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, in late April of 2001. There he sat in on sessions and interviewed both participants and presenters before and during the institute. The take-away message of the article (and Remsen's lead) was: "You can't

preach it but you can teach it" (para. 1). Remsen interviews University of North Carolina professor Warren Nord, Swarthmore College professor James Kurth, Gilbert Sewall, director of the American Textbook Council in New York, Julie Copty, assistant director of the Association of American Publishers' school division, state-level social studies coordinators for both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, as well as three high school teachers who attended the institute. Highlighting the idea that religion is "woefully 'undertaught'," Remsen offers Kurth's approach to integrating religion into the curriculum:

> Swarthmore College professor James Kurth, a member of last Sunday's concluding panel, encouraged that effort - which he called "breaking out of the tyranny of the textbook." He said he does it with his own political-science classes, and he offered some tips on how to do it with nuance.
>
> Present religious thought as an "alternative interpretation" of material, Kurth said. For instance, he said, when delving into economic theory, he has had his students read a papal encyclical on the topic. Similarly, teaching about faith-based "conceptions of sacrifice and service held by different ethnic groups" has enhanced certain sociology and politics lessons, he said.
>
> "It's easy but superficial to teach about a religion in secular terms, about its rise and fall, its competition with other groups," Kurth said. "Getting the voices inside, the primary sources, is the hard part." (paras. 9-11)

Like other writers, Remsen, a field of education outsider in many ways, finds his inspiration in his personal interest in religion and incorporates that interest into his work. His interest in religion led to an interest in religion and education, eventuating in his writing this article.

Whether professional, personal, or familial, nine of the writers reference a connection with religion. Of the eight writers who mention personal connections to education, two note having briefly taught at the high school level (Haynes and Jefferson), three have taught at the college level (Haynes, Jefferson, and Winston), one is married to a teacher (Fontenot), two mention experiences with their children's teachers (Kaley and Rummo), one recalls personal experiences in school (Journalist B), and one is primarily an education reporter (Journalist A). Two thirds of the writers (8 of 12) reference connections to education while three quarters (9 of 12) reference connections to religion. It is possible that there is something about having a story about how one is connected to a social institution that empowers one to feel qualified to write about it for the public (or possibly to accept an invitation to be interviewed about your writing).

Perspectives on Teaching about Religion in Public Schools

Thus far, this chapter has explored why writers chose to contribute to the discourse, their personal connections to religion and education, and whom they imagine as their audience. In this, the final section before the conclusion, the goal is to better understand how these twelve writers (who are largely outsiders to the field of education with a few exceptions) think about teaching about religion in public schools. This section also explores the following questions: What frames writers' perspectives on school and education? What types of stories do news, opinion, and blog writers invoke when discussing teaching about religion in public schools?

Many writers invoke stories about the way things are when discussing schools and teaching about religion in public schools. All of the news writers I interviewed believe that American schoolchildren should have a basic understanding of world religions. For example, Gary Scharrer said:

> They should have a basic understanding of at least a half-dozen different religions. What do Christians believe? What do Jewish people believe? What do Muslims believe? Sikhs? Hindus? You know, again, I'm not sure where they draw the line but at least … give kids a basic understanding of some of the major religions. (Gary Scharrer, Interview, October 2011)

More often than not, when discussing teaching about religion in public schools, writers (news writers and others) invoke stories of the way things are to communicate the perspectives of the American public. In the words of Journalist A:

> I would say there is one group of people… the more Bible Belt/evangelical or Christian conservatives, that definitely wants teaching, now they would probably say they want teaching *about religion* but *teaching religion*. I would say there's a big difference [if you use the word] "about." … At the other end… there's probably a group at the far end of that spectrum that has a knee-jerk reaction to anything smacking of religion in schools, even if it's done in a more thoughtful way. … [They] are certainly going to be wary of any efforts that would get into prayer in schools or something like the Texas textbook controversy, or promoting a certain religion over others in a public school. … And then I think there's probably some group in the middle that might see that there's some complexity or that it might be okay to have a course about world religions or that it really depends on how it's being done. (Journalist A, Interview, November 2011)

Journalist A, who thinks of her ideal reader (and likely herself) as "pretty educated, thoughtful person, who is not super ideological," communicates the complexities of teaching about religion in public schools by describing what she sees as the typical beliefs of people at different points of the ideological spectrum. In the terms used in Chapter 1, she identifies returners, secularists,

and clarifiers. Remsen expands on the idea of complexity in religion, recalling to the teacher he met when covering the "Teaching World Religions" history institute for teachers:

> In reading over the story, I really was intrigued and wished I had the teacher who said he would take students back to the sources. He was teaching something like economic theory and he had them read a papal encyclical. I think that's really just as somebody who does appreciate there's a lot of deep thinking in religion and whole … worldview systems. [There are] concepts in there that all that really should be taught. And on their own terms. … What does economic theory mean to somebody who believes they were called to do certain things and how does that play out in the world? So that's what I think is a fair way to teach about religion that is not proselytizing. But it's sensitizing. Yeah, I guess that's what I would think should be done. Do it in a way that sensitizes people to not just how influential it's been in history but how much depth and content it has to it. (Jim Remsen, Interview, October 2011)

The news writers interviewed for this project were intrigued by complexity and nuance. Perhaps because of their profession, they wanted to understand issues from multiple perspectives and believed that American students should have access to this type of information in relation to world religions.

Conversely, newspaper opinion writers (op-ed writers and columnists) are far from united in their understandings of or positions on teaching about religion in public schools. Though Rummo shares that American schoolchildren "should be taught world history just like they should be taught… our Judeo-Christian tradition, and all religions" (Interview, September 2011), he places a great deal of emphasis on students learning that the United States was founded on Judeo-Christian principles which he emphasizes in his the way things are narrative:

> …And atheists labor hard to deny the truth of that and yet, every coin says In God We Trust, every dollar bill says In God We Trust, there are inscriptions all over the place in Washington. You read speeches of our framers and you read drafts of the Constitution, drafts of the Declaration of Independence what was going through their minds as they wrote these documents. People say the Constitution doesn't mention God and they're right. But the Declaration of Independence does. And the Declaration of Independence is what laid out the philosophy of the United States of America and the Constitution laid out the legal principals upon which it would be based. Even our form of government, three separate branches, comes from a verse in Isaiah where it describes God as a law giver, a king, and a judge. And there you have the legislative, the executive, and the judicial branches of the government wrapped up in the nature of God. And that's where that was derived from. (Greg Rummo, Interview, September 2011)

Reading this one might think that Rummo is against any mention of teaching about various religions in public schools, but when asked if he thinks it would be important for school children to learn about other cultures' faiths, he replied: "Absolutely. That's like asking me 'Do you think school children should only be taught American history?'" In his column entitled "Getting Religion Back into Classrooms" (2002), Rummo reviews Nord and Haynes's book, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (1998). Rummo's article proceeds in three sections. First, he provides quotations from the Nord and Haynes book and the Clinton era guidelines on *Religious Expression in Public Schools* (The U.S. Department of Education, 1995) to support his idea that public schools can teach religion. Concluding this section, he states that "This may shock those who assume the Bible is forbidden inside the public school classroom, a misconception likely due to widespread misunderstanding about the separation of church and

state" (Rummo, 2002, para. 9). He then proceeds to hypothesize why there is not more teaching of the Bible in schools and closes with his position, again supported with quotations from the Nord and Haynes book, that:

> Learning about a religious sense of the world here and now—in which a living God is actively involved in the affairs of people—would be an excellent lesson for students in the public schools to master. But this will never happen until educators are willing to accept the challenge. (para. 21)

Rummo applies his worldview to Nord's and Haynes's words about the importance of teaching about religion in public schools (1998) and the Clinton era's guidelines statement that school may teach the Bible (and other scripture) as literature as well as the role of religion in the history of U.S. and other countries (The U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Like the news writers, Rummo believes students need breadth of knowledge on the world and, also like the news writers, Rummo applies his understanding of the role of religion in the world and our society to the idea that schools should teach religion, concluding that religion should be taught how he perceives it.

Though he is against teaching the Bible in public schools because "it's too important" to get wrong, Fontenot echoes certain aspects of Rummo's position when he states that:

> I believe I think first of all what American school children need to know is that there are true religions and false religions. There are man-made religions and there are God-made religions. If we understand first and foremost that there is absolute truth, then we can approach religion with the discernment that there is absolute truth, so we can discern what is true religion and what is not. (Chris Fontenot, Interview, October 2011)

Though he doesn't claim that this view should be taught in schools and feels very strongly that the Bible should not be taught in schools, he thinks that all American school children need to understand this idea.

In his commentary, "Comparative Religious Study for our Teens" (2010), Jeff Kaley refers to a measure passed by the Oklahoma Senate to allow the Bible to be taught in public schools as a missed opportunity to teach comparative religion in high schools. He recounts the results of a study about Americans' religious knowledge (though he could not recall the source of the research) and uses its conclusions to support his idea that, "It's simple, actually: If we're to coexist in a world of many religions, doesn't it make sense to know something about the different sects, like what they believe and why they believe it?" (para. 13). After affirming his staunch support of the separation of church and state he concludes: "Giving teenagers an academic perspective of religion and ethics might result in human beings understanding one another better. And who knows where that might lead?" (para. 23). Kaley further explains his position in his interview, invoking an experience story to illustrate:

> If all of your religious knowledge comes from that church you attend every week, you're always going to get only that church's slant. And I think public education has a responsibility to open minds. … A comprehensive study of religion, I support that. I think it's a good idea. But what I don't want to see is … teach[ing] this particular religion. ... One of my sons had a history teacher here who started off the year by telling them that he believes in creationism and he believes that the Bible is the basis of history but he will try to teach us the other stuff, "because that's what I'm supposed to do." … I was not real happy. (Jeff Kaley, Interview, October 2011)

When speaking about his connection to religion, Kaley attributes his early interest to his awareness of being different from the majority of his community. Kaley's experience stories, first as a newcomer to Oklahoma and then as a father to a student, anchor his perspective. He has sympathy for the minority and therefore supports learning about various world religions and loathes proselytization.

The final opinion writer, Bill McKenzie, uses an imagined (in this case hypothetical) situation narrative to illustrate his perspective on teaching about religion in public schools:

> What if I were the teacher? How would I want to do it? And you know here's an example. If you're teaching about Christianity, I mean the heart of it is Jesus. So how do you teach Jesus in a public school way? (laughs) .... It's one thing to teach it at Sunday School. … You don't want to strip part of you know what Jesus' essence is about, meaning the son of God, versus just being a teacher. … So I think if I were a teacher, you know this is my own view, I'd probably think, "Well, good luck to my colleague in teaching that."... I think if you were only to focus on Christianity for example, you know which would be the major one in our country, as well as much of the world, I think you're at risk of making it… appear, I'm not saying it would be, but it could appear more proselytizing. (McKenzie, Interview, September 2011)

Questions such as these likely contributed to the curiosity which led him to read both the curriculum of the NCBPC and Chancey's report on the curriculum (2005a) in their entirety and to provide a review of each for his readers.

One thing the blog writers have in common is their desire to discuss semantics. Like the news writers, they all invoke the way things are narratives when responding to the question of whether public schools should teach about religion. Winston distinguishes between teaching

belief and teaching *history* and then draws a distinction between *inculcating belief* and *imparting information*:

> Obviously people have been thinking about this for quite a long time and it's been controversial because people, people who don't agree with it think that if you teach religion you're teaching *belief* as opposed to *history*. I distinguished between the two. And I think you can teach religion without indoctrinating folks one way or the other. But again it's a controversial thing. I personally think that all curriculum should include history of world religions and should include a basic familiarity with theology with texts. ... And that just because you do that you're not inculcating belief, you're imparting information. And that information is important for being a well-informed citizen of the 21st century. (Diane Winston, Interview, December 2011)

Jefferson emphasized the need for students to understand the diversity of religion and to understand the implications of living one's life "according to the Bible":

> You look at the people that … talk about the Bible as building this moral character. Well, what does that mean? People that always say, "I wanted to live my life according to the Bible and what the Bible says." You have to ask yourself, "Do I really want to live my life according to what the Bible says?" Because the Bible says a lot of things. The Bible says a lot of *contradictory* things. The Bible says a lot of things about genocide, about slavery [being] acceptable, about things that are very disturbing. It [also] says a lot of things that are or could be beneficial. …if you are coming from a tradition that utilizes the Bible then you at least need to be literate in your own tradition and [understand] the diversity it includes. I think first and foremost that's important. Not only at providing

> diversity of world religions … of Islam, of Buddhism, of Hinduism, but also diversity within the Judeo-Christian tradition itself. (Lee Jefferson, Interview, December 2011)

Whitehead stresses that religion should be taught in an *educative* sense. He states that lacking knowledge about religions made one religiously illiterate:

> Yes. I think that religion should be taught in the schools but in an *educative* sense. Every kid should have comparative religion courses in school that should start probably in… maybe middle school. What do the different religions believe? Because we live in a country that's just flowing with religion from Muslims to Jews to Christians to Hindus to whatever. So to graduate from a school in America and not have a clear grasp of the different religions makes you religiously illiterate. … It doesn't make any sense to me to be able to dissect a frog but you … don't have a good idea of what Muslims believe today or Christians or Jews believe when it's in the news all the time. So yes, it can be taught. It doesn't have to be taught religiously but in an educational sense, sure. (John Whitehead, Interview, December 2011)[28]

Winston sees teaching belief distinct from teaching history and inculcating belief different from imparting information. Jefferson wants people to fully understand the implications of living one's life "according to the Bible." Whitehead sees teaching religion in an educative sense distinct from teaching it in a devotional sense.

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[28] Whitehead also had strong views on teaching ethics, saying: "I think that there should be ethics courses taught in school, right and wrong. Really clearly. Throughout the curriculum. But we don't do that anymore" (John Whitehead, Interview, December 2011). Though including thoughts about ethics did not fit within the purview of this project, I felt it was important to mention his position on the matter since he mentioned ethics at least twice in his interview. Though he did not wish ethics to be taught in a religious sense (i.e., he wasn't supporting Christian ethics per se), he wanted to be clear on his position. Journalist A also mentioned ethics, but thought they could be taught comparatively.

Though blog writers are technically opinion writers, they have more in common with news writers in thinking about how to teach about religion in public schools than they shared with opinion writers. Both news writers and bloggers invoke the way things are narratives. Journalist A draws a semantic distinction between teaching religion and teaching about religion, Remsen distinguishes between inculcating and sensitizing, and Scharrer poses questions like Whitehead regarding various groups' beliefs.

Narratives Types and Teaching about Religion in Public Schools

The type of narrative invoked when discussing teaching about religion in public schools is a window into how writers construct teaching about religion in public schools for themselves. If they believe there are general characteristics of society that make teaching about religion in public schools beneficial (or not), they are likely to invoke the way things are narratives. If they or their close relatives or friends have had experiences that inform their beliefs, they are likely to invoke experience narratives. If they try to imagine the possible benefits or complications involved with teaching about religion in public schools, they are likely to invoke imagined narratives.

Regarding teaching about religion in public schools, the two writers who invoke imagined situation narratives (Fontenot and McKenzie) were the least *prima facie* supportive. It seems logical that someone who imagines various teachers with various religious understandings, beliefs, and perspectives, throughout a city, state, or country responsible for teaching a topic they feel is highly important, but very delicate, would have misgivings about teaching about religion in public schools. Teaching about religion in public schools, like teaching any subject in public schools, requires a great deal of public and parental trust that teachers will "get it right." With so many variables at work (e.g., proselytizing versus sensitizing), as

highlighted by those focused on semantics, it is understandable that trusting millions of people to "get it right" (whatever that means for the individual) could be too much for some people to imagine. Thinking about individual teachers in their classrooms with their students makes teaching about religion in public schools a complicated issue for these writers.

Two writers (Kaley and Remsen) invoke experience narratives. Kaley recalls an experience with his son's history teacher and Remsen recalls his experience speaking with teachers at history institute. Both of these writers support teaching about religion in public schools as a way to understand that people have various understandings of the world. Kaley invokes two experience narratives, both of which illustrate that, religiously, he has felt like an outsider in his Oklahoma town. Remsen's experience narratives concern different ways of approaching constructs such as prayer and childrearing and illustrate that he wants to understand and respect religious difference. Like the imagined situation writers, experience writers place themselves in the situation, albeit in a different way. Kaley, as someone who has experienced feeling different, can understand how teaching about religion in public schools could benefit students who are part of minority religions or who have none at all. Remsen is acutely aware that various religions take different perspectives on things and believes it would behoove students to learn about religion in order to be sensitized to various ways of approaching issues. Both of the experience writers want individuals to be heard and understood, on their own terms, especially if they happen to be the minority.

Those who invoke the way things are narratives tend to take a broader perspective on teaching about religion in public schools. They do not think about teachers and classrooms. Rather, they think about society and world events. They think about the adult citizens whom the public schools helped to nurture. They anchor their position on teaching about religion in public

schools in their worldviews. Though all of the writers who invoke the way things are narratives support teaching about religion in public schools, they support it on their own terms. For example, Rummo wants students to be taught the Bible and our country's Judeo-Christian legacy. Winston, Whitehead, Scharrer and others want students to have a general understanding of comparative religion so they can understand world events.

In the next chapter, I revisit the question of how teaching about religion in public schools is portrayed in the media in relation to the culture war narrative, discuss writers' imagined audiences and how the narratives they invoke can influence their contribution to the discourse, detail the types of narratives people invoke when discussing teaching about religion in public schools, and provide thoughts on this study's implications for theory, research and practice.

Chapter 6

What Prevents the Widespread Practice of Teaching about Religion in Public Schools?

The findings presented in this dissertation have implications for those who support teaching about religion in public schools. This concluding chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I revisit two of the hypotheses mentioned in Chapter 1 about what is preventing the widespread practice of teaching about religion public schools. Specifically, I address the hypotheses that: (a) teachers and school leaders are unaware that it is constitutionally acceptable to teach about religion in a non-proselytizing manner, and (b) teachers and school leaders fear any mention of religion in the curriculum because it will precipitate controversy. After critiquing the explanatory merit of each of these ideas, in the second section I take a closer look at the role of media in reinforcing and intensifying this fear of controversy. Next, in the third section, I propose a new avenue for advocacy based on my hypothesis that the reason we do not teach about religion in public schools is that teachers and teacher educators lack knowledge sufficient for them to feel comfortable pursuing the in-depth study of religion in their classrooms. In this section I also discuss what I see as the challenge for advocates moving forward: to determine when and how religious studies content can and should be integrated into the *education cycle*. Finally, the concluding section details an imagined situation in which introducing religious studies into the education cycle shifts writers' narrative rationality on the topic.

The educational cycle, as I use it throughout this chapter, refers to the ways in which schooling is recursive. Jean-Claude Passeron (1986) and others (e.g., Luhmann, 1995) have acknowledged that institutionalized systems engage in self-reproduction and standardization to

maintain their legitimacy. However systems, like formal schooling, are not perfectly self-reproductive; they are approximate or partial models and can be affected by sources outside of systematic processes (Passeron, 1986). In other words, cycles and standardization help schools maintain their societal legitimacy from one generation to the next while allowing for a modicum of change along the way. We begin formal schooling as children. This is when we learn how schools work in general and the many roles and functions various people serve. We learn about what is acceptable in school and what is not. When students graduate, some choose to become teachers. These students enter teacher preparation programs with various philosophies. Some teacher preparatory programs focus on creating more teachers without challenging students' preconceived notions of "what belongs" in schools, thereby replenishing the teaching force without significantly altering it. Other programs focus on challenging students' beliefs as part of efforts to change schools and how students are served through them—typically through focusing on issues of social justice. When these prospective teachers become teachers, they will to varying degrees rely on what they learned as students as well as what they learned in their teacher training. The students they teach will learn what school "is" and what "belongs" in school through these teachers. Teacher preparatory programs are one of the few ways this "cycle" can be interrupted and influenced.

Challenging Implicit and Explicit Hypotheses

The first hypothesis implicitly forwarded by advocates (e.g., Haynes & Thomas, 2001b; Nash & Bishop, 2010; National Council for the Social Studies, 1998; National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, 2010b) for teaching about religion in public schools is that teachers, school leaders, and others are unaware that it is constitutionally acceptable to teach about religion in public schools. By beginning their pleas for teaching about religion in public

schools with evidence about the constitutionality of the practice, they are presuming that many readers believe that the U.S. Constitution stipulates that the practice breaches the First Amendment rights of students. If this assumption were true, it would take very little to ameliorate this misunderstanding. Even a brief introduction to the legal aspects of teaching about religion in teacher preparatory or professional development programs—for example, a discussion of the Panoch and Barr "pair-word" guidelines (Piediscalzi & Collie, 1977a)—would help to improve this presumed teacher understanding.

In the media discourse I analyzed for this dissertation, the idea that "teaching about religion is unconstitutional" was never invoked. The only exceptions were cases where specific practices were challenged (e.g., recitation of Islamic prayers as part of lessons on Islam), but challenging specific practices is not the same as protesting teaching about religion in general. Teaching about religion in public schools was never referred to as wholly unconstitutional in the discourse I studied. However, the opposite idea—that teaching about religion is "legal"—is mentioned often, thusly conveying the presumption that many people believe that teaching about religion is "illegal" (though evidence of the fact that these people exist and are decision-makers within schools and communities never surfaced). To be clear, I do not know whether teachers know much about education law. It stands to reason that administrators have some knowledge of it, as they were likely introduced to it during their certification courses. My point is this: if ignorance of constitutionality were the primary reason the practice is uncommon, it would be easily rectifiable. If knowledge of constitutionality were the only hurdle to the widespread practice of teaching about religion, one focused public awareness campaign would be enough to

change beliefs and free teachers and school leaders to institute the practice.[29] Ignorance of the fact that teaching about religion is constitutional is likely not the reason that religion is not an explicit curricular focus in most schools.

This is not to say that there is no ignorance of the constitutionality of teaching about religion in public schools. It is important to recognize that the public, in general, is not well-versed on what is permitted in public schools. As previously mentioned, according to a 2010 survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 64% of those surveyed did not know that schools could offer a comparative religion course and 77% did not know that teachers can read from the Bible as an example of literature. But not once did people who were involved in media reports on teaching about religion in public schools refer to it as wholly unconstitutional. Perhaps the public (or rather, the representative sample of the public the Pew Forum surveyed) is not well-versed in education law. Perhaps they could not recall being taught about religion in their school experiences and know about some controversies involving religion and public schools (such as school prayer, sex education, or creationism) and answer the survey questions as best they can. It would be interesting to return to the Pew data and disaggregate answers to these questions by the respondents' professions, if possible. However, since the constitutionality of teaching about religion in general[30] is not called into question by participants

[29] Unlike topics where scientific evidence is used to persuade people of certain positions (e.g., global warming, evolution), in the case of teaching about religion in public schools, the evidence is based in law, not science. Scientific findings are often doubted if they conflict with one's experience and narrative rationality, especially when there are conflicting reports from various scientific experts and conflicting perspectives on the relative expertise of scientists. To my knowledge, there are no legal scholars who would claim that teaching about religion in public schools is unconstitutional. There are certainly people who would find it unwise for other reasons not having to do with constitutionality. In this section, I am focusing only on the claim that ignorance of constitutionality is preventing the practice.

[30] I reiterate "in general" because there are certainly ways of discussing religion (e.g., preaching or teaching for belief) that would be unconstitutional in public schools. In circumstances where teaching practices were thought to have crossed this line, participants in media discourse did (rightfully) question constitutionality.

in media discourse (writers or sources), it can be surmised that those involved are not ignorant about its constitutionality. However, writers' focus on constitutionality has both narrative rationality and potential ramifications.

Those who write on the topic of teaching about religion may focus on issues of constitutionality because: (a) they believe that those they imagine as their audiences require such an introduction or (b) introductions that focus on constitutionality have become prerequisites to writing on this topic. Writers (scholars, journalists, bloggers, and opinion article authors) who imagine their audience as the public in general could be aware of surveys like the one conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2010). If they are, then they would know that the public in general is relatively uninformed about matters of teaching about religion in public schools. If one imagines his or her audience as non-specialists, then when one intends to teach about a new topic through writing, one must begin with the foundational information that would introduce the beginner to the parameters of the conversation. Considering the Pew findings, in the case of teaching about religion in public schools it would be reasonable to begin writing with an introduction to the legal aspects of the relationship between religion and public schools. The side effect of a preoccupation with legality and constitutionality is that these explanations could inadvertently recreate the problem they are meant to thwart. By dwelling on the idea that teaching about religion could be unconstitutional if done incorrectly, writers could be precipitating more fear than they placating. Another reason that writers focus on issues of constitutionality may be that this sort of introduction to the topic is a rhetorical prerequisite for writing about religion and public schools. For example, in an early iteration of this dissertation, I did not include a section on the constitutionality of teaching about religion because I imagined my audience as people with a basic knowledge of education law. I was later advised to include a

detailed account of the legal aspects of teaching about religion in public schools. Still, I chose to outline it rather than expound on it. For a writer to focus on any specific aspect of an issue, particularly when introducing it, is to communicate to readers that the aspect is important and more worthy of attention than other aspects. This discursive requirement prevents writers from focusing on more important aspects of teaching about religion in public schools, such as how and when to do it and what type of training can help one do it well.

The second hypothesis forwarded by advocates is that teachers and school leaders fear any mention of religion in the curriculum because it will precipitate controversy. At first glance, this hypothesis seems plausible given the many perspectives on the practice of teaching about religion in public schools offered by members of the various camps discussed in Chapter 1 (clarifiers, returners, fideists, and secularists).[31] Given this, it stands to reason that if a school population is religiously or philosophically diverse, it could be difficult to present information about religion without offending someone's sensibilities and sensitivities. However, polarization alone does not prevent schools from addressing controversial topics within history, science, or health education. Any single interpretation of social travesties (e.g., slavery, terrorism, genocide) or scientific findings related to politics (e.g., climate change) could be considered controversial by those whose narrative rationalities conflict with that interpretation. Schools deal with controversial issues regularly without inciting public protests (e.g., Hess, 2009; Lester & Roberts, 2006). Though surely some avoid such conversations, others use these topics as a way to teach about the various perspectives on them (e.g., Hess, 2009). They use these topics, and the problems and issues inherent to them, to teach students about civil discourse and conflict within

[31] The four camps were identified in Chapter 1 as: (a) the clarifiers, who seek to communicate that teaching about religions is legal and desirable, (b) the returners, who seek to return prayer and Bible reading to public schools, (c) the fideists, who claim that Scripture is sacred and should only be taught by believers for the purposes of spreading faith, and (d) the secularists, who believe that a focus on religion will inevitably lead to sectarianism.

our society. Rather than avoid these issues, school people address them with care, considering state and district expectations as well as students' capacities for engagement with them. Notably, they are not summarily dismissed as viable topics for curricular focus because of fear of controversy.

Though religion can precipitate impassioned conversations because it is connected to many people's core beliefs about the nature and purpose of existence, the same can said of political issues like war, health issues like abortion, and social issues like sexism. However, controversial issues such as these are not wholly avoided in schools. In 1999, The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement surveyed civics teachers and secondary school students from 28 countries (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Respondents reported that, among the eight instructional methods listed,[32] discussions of controversial issues was the third most frequently used. Subsequent findings indicate that only 8% of secondary teachers report that they never teach about issues they consider to be controversial in their classrooms (Oulton, Day, Dillon, & Grace, 2004). Is it that teachers' willingness to discuss controversial issues is dependant on their comfort with the topic? How can and do teacher education programs and professional organizations influence teacher comfort? If teachers have had exposure to certain topics as students, how does that affect their willingness to teach about them?[33] The fear of controversy, in and of itself, cannot be the primary reason why religion is not a curricular focus.

It is common to find both support and contempt for perspectives on educational issues in media. Looking only to media for information on different perspectives on teaching about

[32] Rankings were as follows (from most to least frequent): Textbooks, recitation, controversial issues, worksheets, group work, lectures, projects, role play

[33] Teachers do not embrace all issues they consider controversial in the classroom (e.g., Puchner & Klein, 2011).

religion, one would find the various "camps" (as identified in Chapter 1) lauded by supporters and lambasted by critics. For example, critics of the returners portray them as pandering, meddlesome, deceptive, as preferring proselytization over education, and as willing to infringe on students' constitutional rights to achieve their goals. Their supporters portray them as informed, patriotic, mindful of students' constitutional rights, and as the rightful caretakers of society. The clarifiers' supporters portray them as learned experts while their critics portray them as relativists. However, this evidence of polarization within the discourse alone is not reason enough for teachers and school leaders to shy away from religion, as many other topics (e.g., evolution, sex education) are similarly controversial in the media. Instead of refusing to engage with these topics, school representatives come to compromises about what will be taught. The point is it gets done. Controversial topics are not relegated to the category of "that which will not be mentioned." The fear of controversy and polarization alone is not reason enough to avoid a topic completely.

A Closer Look at the Role of the Media

Do the media reinforce and intensify teachers' and school leaders' fears of controversy, as some (Lester, 2011; Moore, 2007; W. A. Nord & Haynes, 1998) imply? As discussed in Chapter 2, media often focus on educational failings and conflict (Baker, 1994; Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Levin, 2004) because conflict is newsworthy (Fowler, 1991). However, the findings discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 indicate that media writers position teaching about religion in public schools in relation to the culture war in ways that go beyond presenting simplistic conflict narratives.

In their book, *The Metaphors We Live By* (2003), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write that the conceptual metaphor we live by concerning arguments is war. Claims can be

indefensible, weak points can be *attacked*, and arguments can be *demolished* or *shot down*. We use battle terminology when discussing arguments (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In the United States, when civic disagreement is paired with religion—as is the case with teaching about religion in public schools—the war we speak or write about is not just "any" war: it is the culture war. Whether it is specifically mentioned or not, the culture war is evident in most news and opinion articles as well as most blog posts on teaching about religion in public schools. But this does not mean that writers are always focused on conflict. They write about various aspects of this war, inclusive of battles and treaties. To extend the metaphor, writers are either *rallying the troops* or attempting to *convene a parley*. In news stories, for example, these purposes are often conveyed though quotations. Looking to the six pieces used for discourse analysis, Curry (2005), Maddox (2002), McKinley (2010), and C. H. Haynes (2010) were rallying the troops. They wrote for like-minded audiences to inform them of the treacherous actions of their adversaries. Curry portrays those who support the use of *The Bible in History and Literature* as deceptive ideologues whose goal is Christian proselytization. Maddox's disdain for those who support teaching about Islam favorably is evident throughout his article. McKinley portrays conservative legislators as using the Texas social studies standards to instill politically conservative values in students despite the will of the voters. C. H. Haynes depicts the mainstream media, liberals, and education experts and their position on the Texas social studies standards as ignorant, un-American, and revisionist. On the other hand, NSR (2006) and Weiner (2009) tried to minimize the concerns of those who may, at first glance, be disturbed by issues on which they wrote to persuade readers to support their selected version of teaching about religion. Theirs are attempts at parley. NSR attempts to assuage the concerns of those against teaching a Bible course by providing multiple reasons why it is not only permissible, but preferable. Weiner minimized

students' concerns about engaging in (what could be considered) religious practices by quoting the teacher's take on students' reactions on the experience of visiting religious sites rather than focusing on students' actual responses.

Looking more broadly to the dataset, references to the culture war are similarly positioned. Some articles directly cite the culture war:

> Whether they like it or not, the good citizens of Odessa, Texas, stand on the newest battlefield in America's *culture war*. Odessa is the next Antietam because local school trustees voted in April to offer high school students an elective Bible course. As everyone awaits the course curriculum, people on all sides are ready to march *into battle*— again. ... Texans got a view of the coming *skirmish* last week. (W. McKenzie, 2005, para. 1, emphasis added)

While others aim to downplay the problem it poses, they still acknowledge it. Using the media to learn which topics are worthy of attention (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and having opinions on (J. E. Richardson, 2007) in the area of teaching about religion, the following topics would be of note: (a) the contentious nature of Bible-centered curricula, (b) the idea that schools are "now"[34] beginning teach about world religions, and (c) the politicized character of how to include religion in education standards. Looking to the sample headlines and leads, stories of Bible-based curricula and standards revisions are the most contentious, while teaching world religions is the least contentious. Though stories of teaching about world (or a variety of) religion(s) still acknowledge the culture war, they typically[35] do not seek to rally the troops—they are presented

[34] This is a reference to data presented in Chapter 4 under "The variety of religions" subheading, where I discuss how the headlines and leads portray this topic: "The headlines communicate novelty each time, as if it had recently been decided that teaching about religion is allowed in schools and "now" (1989, 1995, 2009) it is becoming commonplace."

[35] Maddox (2002) is evidence that some who write about teaching world religions seek to rally the troops.

as evidence of armistice. For example, in *'Minor Miracle': Left and Right Agree on Teaching About Religion* (Fagerstrom, 1989), the left and right are depicted as finally coming to an agreement on the role of religion in school "after years of acrimonious debate" (para. 1).

Prior research has found that the media focus on conflict in both education (Baker, 1994; Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Levin, 2004) and religion (Hart et al., 1980). This is not solely an indictment of media. We are, in Ong's (1975) terms, willing to fictionalize ourselves as members of groups whose values and ideals are in peril and under attack by opponents. Also, we, as the public, have an "appetite for drama" (Ungerleider, 2006). We do not hold media writers to a standard of the public journalists whose purpose is to support participatory democracy by "bridg[ing] the gaps of understanding and empathy between members of the public so that different groups understand one another's perspective and can make reasoned decisions for the common good" (Shipps et al., 2006, p. 373). We have come to expect drama and conflict rather than stories of collaboration and that is what we are "served." In the words of Diane Winston:

> With journalists, there's a premium put *not on light but on heat*. You have a certain number of words and you know that your editor would prefer that you set up a story where people are having a pissing match, as we say, rather than setting up a story that really illuminates the larger issues of what should be taught and why. … So the very structure of journalism mitigates against doing the kind of [work that illuminates larger issues]. (Interview, December 2011)

This does not negate examples of resistance to this norm. Those who eschew culture war thinking and write in a way that attempts to create spaces for camps to engage in dialogue refuse to be drafted by either faction.

Media writers invoke the culture war metaphor when writing about this topic insofar as we allow and expect it. Once again, this is also the case with many topics that are not avoided in public schools, such as evolution/creationism and sex education/abstinence-only education. However, those topics are taught in schools, using various approaches. What makes religion different?

New Direction for Advocacy

From everything I have learned through this project, I believe that advocates ignore one of the biggest challenges to incorporating the study of religion into public schools. The main problem is not ignorance of constitutionality and guidelines or fear of local or mediated controversy, though both of these are related to what I see as the primary challenge: religious illiteracy begets religious illiteracy. Most teachers and teacher educators are not well versed in religion because religious studies is not part of our education cycle. We (generally) have no baseline understanding about this topic and, therefore, no way of teaching about it. We do not understand how to navigate it in the context of public schools because we do not have experience with it as students, teachers do not take courses in religious studies, and teacher preparatory programs generally ignore it.

Through this dissertation, I have explored how the media portrays teaching about religion in public schools. Both before I began and while completing this project, I have read many accounts (generated by advocates) of why public schools generally do not teach about religion and some examples (generated by experts) of how one could teach about religion. At the outset of this project, I believed that if I could isolate media discourse on teaching about religion in public schools from other issues involving religion and public schools (e.g., school prayer, sex education, evolution and Intelligent Design), I would be able to show that stories about teaching

about religion did not involve culture war references. I thought they would be free of controversy and full of compromise and collaboration. What I learned as a result of analyzing the discourse and interviewing writers is that this subject is connected to culture war politics, but in a highly nuanced way. It is used as evidence of conflict like other topics, but it is also used as evidence of compromise. People who write about religion and public schools in the media feel connected to both subjects. To explain their positions (based in their narrative rationality), they recount stories of personal experiences, tell tales of the way things are, and imagine situations where both ideal and ruinous turns of events come to pass. In other words, they tell stories that help them make sense of their positions. These stories help them explain their positions; positions that inform their work.

A few things called my attention to the significance of the illiteracy/ignorance challenge while I was analyzing the newspaper discourse and the interviews. First, the hypotheses implicitly and explicitly forwarded by advocates of teaching about religion regarding school people's ignorance of the constitutionality of teaching about religion and their avoiding teaching about religion out of fear of controversy does not tell the whole story. As mentioned, media discourse provides examples of conflict and comprise. Writers rally the troops, but they also convene parleys. The discourse is not so engulfed in controversy that schools would fear teaching about religion more than teaching evolution or sex education. Second, generally people support teaching about religion in public schools (Farkas et al., 2001). This held true for those I interviewed. Though there were some who were concerned about how it would or could be framed, the people I interviewed were interested in the practice and open to suggestions about how it could be done well. Finally, after reviewing scholarly advice on how to teach about religion I realized that the best books (in my opinion) are written by experts in religious studies

(e.g., Moore, 2007; Nash & Bishop, 2010) or by people studying programs with a lot of expert oversight (e.g., Lester & Roberts, 2006). Expertise gives these authors an advantage over most teachers because they have spent significant parts of their lives studying and thinking about issues of religion. Without more training and education, most teachers could not think about religion in the context of their classrooms like these experts suggest. Where does this leave the everyday teacher who knows that teaching about religion is constitutionally acceptable, does not fear controversy, and is not an expert in religious studies?

Though certainly not the case for all teachers, for most teachers, religious education has occurred under the auspices of devotion. My hunch is that most have not had much (if any) exposure to religious studies as a field. Future researchers may wish to take up this hunch and explore how exposure to the field of religious studies affects teachers' dispositions toward teaching about religion. At what juncture do we expect prospective teachers to gain enough expertise about teaching about religion (or religious studies) to be able to teach about it in a non-proselytizing manner? As discussed previously, there are many resources available for teachers who choose to proactively incorporate teaching about religion into the curriculum. However, we must ask when else this self-taught approach is expected and accepted for teachers of complex subject areas. High school teachers are supposed to have a degree, some training, or professional development, and demonstrated competency in the subjects they teach (The U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Why then would it be acceptable for a teacher who is not formally trained to incorporate religious studies into their classroom without any expectation of formal training, professional development, or demonstrated competency? Or, if religious studies should be seen as a required subject within social studies, how can instructors of social studies content and

pedagogy courses in teacher preparatory programs be encouraged to fully engage with religion in their classrooms?

In order for "teaching about religion" to occur, we must first "learn about religion." But where and how should this occur? The approach advocated by many of those discussed in Chapter 1 is to teach about religion in public schools as a matter of course. However, without a teaching force capable of doing so thoughtfully, this becomes chicken/egg problem. If we do not teach about religion, then students are not exposed to religious studies. Those students who later go on to professions in which they may have the opportunity to teach about religion (e.g., media writers, teachers) or support the practice of teaching about religion (e.g., instructors of pre-service teachers or aspiring journalists) likely have little formal training in religious studies and therefore feel (or are) underprepared to teach others about it. Since teaching about religion has never been a priority in public schools nor in schools of education (across the board, at least), if teaching/learning about religion is a desired practice, then our real problem is deciding when and how to introduce religion into this system. If we are able to interrupt this cycle of ignorance, the media portrayal of teaching about religion in public schools would no longer matter because stories of conflict would conflict with people's narrative rationality and stories of compromise and collaboration would be so commonplace that they would not be newsworthy.

Conclusion: Shifting Narrative Rationality

There was a time when most Americans could not imagine a time when interracial marriage or same sex marriage would or could be considered "normal." Now, one would find a range of perspectives on these topics, some supportive and some not, but one could not claim that the majority American finds these marriages unimaginable. Narrative rationality shifts gradually, but it is possible. Efforts to teach about religion in teacher preparatory programs could

help shepherd the practice of teaching about religion in public schools and, gradually, influence the portrayal of the practice in media. Interviews with media writers illustrate that the types of narratives they use to discuss teaching about religion in public school are related to their portrayals of it. Those who invoke stories of the way things are focus on what they believe is best for society as a whole. For some, this means lamenting the moral decline of society and forwarding the idea that the Bible should be taught in schools to help remedy this state of affairs. For others, it means decrying our ignorance of others' religious customs, practices, and beliefs and forwarding the idea that learning about various religions in schools could remedy this state of affairs. Those who invoke imagined situation stories consider variables such as teachers' knowledge or religious beliefs and conclude that there are too many variables to control and, therefore, that it's better to avoid the practice. It is not that these writers do not acknowledge that learning about religions could benefit students and society as others do, but they find the range of factors that would need control and oversight too daunting for the practice to be practical. Writers who invoke experience stories recall times when knowing more about various religions would have benefited them (or others). They remember times when more understanding (or *sensitizing* as one writer put it) would have been helpful. If the practice of teaching about religion were more commonplace, these narratives would gradually shift as the writers encounter more information about the practice. Additional information and examples of successful approaches to teaching about religion in public schools could create dissonance between their existing narratives and what they learn. Eventually, narrative rationality would shift to allow for the new information.

Similarly, the types of books and other writing published on this issue would change as well. Many of the scholars whose work I reviewed have had experiences in teaching or other

evidence that anecdotally proves that their proposals induce the desired outcomes. For example, there is evidence that students' respect for religious liberty, support of the basic First Amendment and political rights of others, knowledge of religions and the Bill of Rights, and appreciation for the similarities between religions is fostered through learning about world religions (Lester & Roberts, 2006). However, this finding was obtained through research in one school district where a world religions course was required. Experts in the field designed this course and its teachers were provided with focused professional development. In many ways, this was an ideal situation that led to an optimized result. Unless public schools in the United States teach about religion as a matter of course, it is impossible to know what kinds of effects various approaches could have at a statewide or national scale. If public schools were to regularly teach about religion, arguments for why one should teach about religion would likely be replaced by (a) tales of how teachers with various types of backgrounds and training take up the challenge and (b) stories of how students respond and interact with the subject matter. Experience narratives of scholars, such as those who recount stories wherein learning about religious diversity (e.g., R. D. Anderson, 2004; Lester, 2011; Nash & Bishop, 2010) empowers those who feel marginalized with a sense of belonging, could be more common and therefore more likely to coincide with a reader's narrative rationality. Scholars who focus on religious illiteracy as "the way things are" (e.g, Lester, 2011; Moore, 2007; Prothero, 2007) would be able to change their narratives to the way things "were" and contrast it with current practices and the way things "are now." Those who invoke imagined situations in which teaching about religion could help members of our society come to civic agreements for coexistence and cohabitation (e.g., Branch, 2007; Lester, 2011; Moore, 2007; Passe & Willox, 2009) through learning about various religious worldviews (e.g., Moore, 2007; Nash & Bishop, 2010; W. A. Nord, 2010;

Rosenblith & Bailey, 2007) would have more evidence to support (or debunk) their claims. The discourse would need to change.

Moreover, media accounts about teaching about religion in public schools would not be published because writers would not be able to fictionalize their audiences as they do now. The way writers I interviewed imagined, or fictionalized (Ong, 1975), their audience influenced how they portray the topic of teaching about religion in public schools. Assuming that (like those I interviewed) most writers imagine their audiences as reasonable people who are sympathetic to their perspectives, the degree to which writers buy into culture war thinking affects how they write. Emile Lester, author of *Teaching About Religions: A Democratic Approach for Public Schools* (2011), believes the degree to which culture war mentality pervades communities across America has been exaggerated:

> Organized by the most extreme partisans on both sides of the cultural divide, their power, support, and funding depend on distorting this divide. By exaggerating the size and nature of the threat posed by their opponents, presenting stark and rigid political position as their adherents' only options, *the culture war industry has, with the help of the media, manufactured dissent*. Polls consistently show that the vast majority of Americans on all sides of the cultural divide are open to compromise on controversial cultural and political issues. However, too often convinced by the culture war industry that their opponents do not share their goodwill, they allow extremists to speak for them. (pp. 64-65, emphasis added)

While characterizing those with whom one disagrees as abhorrent ideologues incapable of compromise may help to reify the self-conceptions of a target audience (Fisher, 1984), it serves to alienate others and obliterates any possibility for respectful dialogue and compromise. If

teaching about religion were common practice, many people's narrative rationality would conflict with the fictionalizations that imply that they believe teaching about religion is controversial. If teaching about religion can be done well and without significant controversy, as numerous authors and scholars presuppose and some provide evidence for (Lester & Roberts, 2006; Moore, 2007; Nash, 1999; Nash & Bishop, 2010), stories that buy into the culture war-conflict narrative would diverge with their sense of narrative fidelity. Of course, this shift only occurs if advocates are right about the benefits of teaching about religion in public schools nationwide—a theory that can only be tested in practice where actual reactions, approaches, interpretations, results, and outcomes can be studied.

All of this is interesting in terms of an "imagined situation," but for now, the problem remains. When and how should knowledge of religious studies content be integrated into the education cycle? It seems that the only way to teach the students is to begin by teaching the teachers. Universities that house both teacher education and religious studies programs can bridge this gap through collaboration. Teacher preparation courses can invite faculty from religious studies to give guest lectures on religious diversity. Religious studies programs can design courses for prospective teachers in collaboration with teacher educators. Shifting narrative rationality is a gradual process. For prospective teachers, interest may be piqued with exposure. For education and religious studies faculty, meeting and working together may encourage additional partnerships and collaborations. Gradually, narrative rationality about teaching about religion in public schools may begin to shift. And the media portrayal will have to shift with it.

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Appendix A: *Houston Chronicle*: Board approves high school Bible course

The Houston Chronicle, Thursday, December 22, 2005 Thursday

Board approves high school Bible course; Petition sparked decision to add an elective on religion

Byline: Matt Curry, Associated Press

Section: B; Pg. 3

Length: 440 words

1 DALLAS - A West Texas school board, undeterred by the possibility of legal challenges, has approved teaching the King James version of the Bible in a high school elective course critics say will lead to Christian proselytizing instead of education.

2 The Ector County Independent School Board voted 4-2 Tuesday night to adopt the coursework. The decision came the same day a federal judge barred the Dover school district in Pennsylvania from teaching "intelligent design," saying the concept is creationism in disguise and injects religious views into the classroom.

3 "For those who don't know how this story will end, the federal judge in the Dover case provided a preview," said Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, a religious rights watchdog that opposes the Odessa board's decision.

4 Elizabeth Ridenour, president of the Greensboro, N.C.-based National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, which produces the material, called the comparison "a reach." She said the curriculum is used in hundreds of school districts.

5 The coursework, which will be taught in the district's three high schools starting next fall, was chosen over that offered by the Bible Literacy Project, which uses the text "The Bible and Its Influence" and includes discussions of other faiths.

6 School board President Randy Rives said a petition earlier this year with more than 6,000 names sparked the decision to add a course on the Bible. He voted for the National Council curriculum because it uses the Bible as its textbook.

7 "This is an elective course," said Rives. "It's not like anybody's going to hold a gun to anybody's head to take it."

8 But Ryan Valentine, a Texas Freedom Network spokesman who attended the board meeting, said choosing the King James version instead of the Roman Catholic Bible or other religious writings shows favoritism toward Protestant Christianity. He said reaction to the vote proved it was all about religion, not academics.

9 "There was a crowd of 50 folks singing a song with the words, `Victory is mine, victory is mine, I told Satan to get thee behind, victory today is mine.' So the idea that religion wasn't right at the base of what was happening in Odessa yesterday is just laughable," he said.

10 In the Pennsylvania case, U.S. District Judge John E. Jones delivered a stinging attack on the Dover Area School Board, saying its first-in-the-nation decision in October 2004 to insert intelligent design into the science curriculum violated the constitutional separation of church and state. Intelligent design holds that living organisms are so complex that they must have been created by some kind of higher force.

Appendix B: *Ann Arbor News*: Bible study at Howell High?

Ann Arbor News (Michigan)

December 22, 2006 Friday

Bible study at Howell High? School district to consider proposal by a parent for an elective class

Length: 413 words

By: News Staff Reporter

1 A Howell parent has proposed an elective Bible study class be taught at Howell High School, something that has been taken under advisement by the school district.

2 According to Jeanne Farina, assistant superintendent for curriculum, staff development and assessment for the Howell Public Schools, parent Tim Thatcher has brought information about a program offered through the North Carolina-based National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools. The group is affiliated with the American Family Association, a national nonprofit group that promotes Christian family values. Calls to the program's founder, Elizabeth Ridenour, to obtain more information about the program were not returned.

3 The program, as proposed through the NCBCPS, uses the Bible as a textbook, Thatcher said.

4 An Oceola Township resident with a son in the seventh grade in the Howell district, Thatcher said he became interested in the program after hearing about it on a radio show about a year ago, and purchased a copy of the curriculum that he has shared with the district.

5 "It would not be taught in a preaching or doctrinal way," Thatcher said. "It (the Bible) has a lot of beautiful art and literature. I think if it is within our legal rights and it's good for the community, then why not consider it?"

6 Farina said Thatcher has proposed an elective class that would allow teaching of geography, politics and literature as it is found in the Bible. "We would not impose any kind of religion," she told the school board last week.

7 The proposal is being reviewed. If it is recommended at the building level, a district curriculum council would then consider it, she said.

8 The district has a social studies class called World Religions that, as the name indicates, studies different religions of the world. Farina said the class does not cover the doctrine of the Bible, but touches on historic events and looks at it as literature. Farina said teachers involved with that class are reviewing the proposal to see it would fit into the class and that she will advise the board at a future meeting as to whether it is being recommended.

9 The program "is within the grounds of separation of church and state," Thatcher told the board last week.

10 "The only thing negative in my mind is that there might be some students who study the Koran or other books," he said in an interview following the meeting. "But our founding fathers read the Bible; it is what our country was founded on."

Appendix C: *The Battalion*: Islam should not be main religious focus in public schools

University Wire, January 29, 2002

Byline: Matthew Maddox, The Battalion

Source: Texas A&M U.

Column. 550 words, College Station, Texas

1 For years, people have believed that California borders the Pacific and insanity. However, the proof was not evident until now. In 1998, California approved a statewide curriculum that dictated that students have three weeks of Islamic studies in seventh grade, and the results were disturbing. Objective religious studies are important in education, but religious indoctrination should be a parent's or individual's decision and not an attempt at political correctness by public schools.

2 Students of San Luis Obispo of Southern California, as a part of their course work, pretend to be warriors fighting for Islam. Students at some schools are instructed to dress in robes, are taught to pray "in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful" and chant, "praise to Allah, Lord of Creation." Students also adopt Islamic names, plan a pilgrimage to Mecca and stage their own jihad by using a dice game.

3 A jihad is commonly defined as a holy war against the enemies of Islam. One student told the ASSIST News Service, "The jihad was like playing a video game." Besides lacking academic reason, this lesson lacks common sense. At a public middle school near Oakland, Calif., students learn to write Islamic phrases in Arabic. In an area of the country that ranks poorest in English comprehension, this should not be a priority.

4 Not only do these students partake in more superficial activities, they are also required to recite Islamic proverbs, memorize passages from the Koran and learn the Five Pillars of the Islamic faith. While there may be nothing wrong with learning most of this material, from an objective standpoint it belongs in Mosques and not the public classroom. Parents and priests are the correct instructors for this material, not an atheist middle school teacher with a GED.

5 While the ACLU demands that creationism cannot be taught in schools, it has not said a word about students being taught that Allah is the Lord of Creation.

6 When a Kentucky school hung a copy of the Ten Commandments near its entrance, the ACLU went to court and had the Commandments removed from sight. However, when copies of the Five Pillars of the Islamic Faith are distributed to every student, the ACLU looks the other way.

7 The ACLU, in its quest for political correctness, has decided to play a game of political pool with which religion is prosecuted and promulgated.

8 On top of the double standard in policy, the history textbook used by California presents a biased view of Islam. The references to Christianity are dark, dealing with the Crusades and the Inquisition. There is no mention in the text of any of the violence or conquest that spread Islam for centuries. The invading Moors of Spain, the Battle of Tours and the mass execution of the Jewish residents of Quarayza in ancient Islam are all left out.

9 Nancy Castro, principal of a California school, told the ASSIST News Service that "[the course] is not religion, but ancient culture and history." A handout from her school to students reads, "From the beginning, you and your classmates will become Muslims." Objective study means that students do not need to become anything to achieve understanding. What California schools need is a lesson in common sense, not in jihad.

Appendix D: *The Huffington Post:* Religion in the public schools: A story about civics in the Bronx and Queens

The Huffington Post (Blog)

Religion in the Public Schools A Story About Civics in the Bronx and Queens

Matthew Weiner

Program Director, Interfaith Center of New York

Posted: June 29, 2009 07:45 AM

1 Why should students at a predominantly Latino public High School in the South Bronx learn about religion? And what happens when fifty of these students take a field trip to visit Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims in Queens? As it turns out, the result is a mixture of controlled chaos, curiosity, and civic engagement.

2 Joshua Adland is just now finishing his first year teaching Global History at Explorations Academy, a small 350-student high school on Boston Road in the Bronx. As part of the New York State curriculum in his subject, Adland is required to give an overview of belief systems in the world, and at the end of the course, there is often at least one question on New York's Global History Regents Exam that relates to religion. Though public schools are required to be a secular space in America, how one defines secularism has been a work in progress from this nation's beginning. As any student of history knows, religion has played a central role in shaping world events. Thus, to study the culture and history of the world, one must take a look at religion, however non-religiously it is done. Adland teaches his small belief systems unit in the larger Global History course, and "students like it." he says. "They find it interesting." Why? "They

hear about their religion, but don't know about others. They are basically all Christians, from different backgrounds, so they can relate."

3 After providing some of the basics, Adland decided that his general explanations were not enough--or rather, they were too academic. In the world's most religiously diverse city, his students should actually have the opportunity to meet people from other faiths and see where they congregate. Through a little help from Ralf Timarchi, the Interfaith Center of New York's education coordinator, he developed a field trip to a meet Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists--all a subway ride away in Queens. Sikhs? They would have to wait for another day. The Interfaith Center--a non-profit that has for twelve years frequently taught about religion by using the city itself as a classroom--often collaborates with judges, social workers, and school teachers, who have a desire to understand the diversity of the populations they serve.

4 And so, on a sunny Thursday morning a few weeks ago, the students arrived at school enthusiastically awaiting their field trip. Gathering in front of the school, Adland and his fellow teachers, all in their early twenties and addressing one another by last name, split up the group and reiterated guidelines for the day. Then they began the difficult task of steering their group through the subways. On the #7 train which crosses Queens above ground, many peered out as if glimpsing a foreign country, having rarely, if ever, left the Bronx. Had they met Hindus or Muslims before? It seemed they had not, though they liked the idea.

5 Teaching about religion is part of Adland's job, but perhaps there is something more to it. "I'm from Kentucky and I'm Jewish," he explained. "I know what it means to be different, and why it's important for people to know something about those who are different." For Adland and many of us who teach about religion in secular contexts, it seems that education about religion is not a religious activity, but instead a critical way for different groups to learn about each other,

while acknowledging their own identity.

6 Rev. Alfonso Wyatt, vice president of the Fund for the City of New York, and a former school teacher added another context. "When I was growing up in Queens, there was only English in my high school. But when I went back for a visit, there were over a hundred languages, and who knows how many religions. Students and yes, teachers, need to know something about this."

7 "I know my religion isn't the only one," Caitlyn, one of Adland's students, said while on the train. "I like Muslims and Jews, they pray a lot." Adland said that the students were interested in the five pillars of Islam, but found some concepts, like reincarnation, a little baffling. One student, the son of a Pentecostal minister, was eager to debate other faiths. "I'll show them why they're wrong," he said, as others playfully rolled their eyes behind him.

8 The group got off in downtown Flushing, a bustling Chinatown, and went to a Hindu Mandir, a Pakistani based Mosque, and then a Chinese Buddhist temple. At the Hindu temple, several didn't want to take their shoes off, but once they did, and came inside, they were silent, watching a white bearded priest chant and wash the god Ganesha with milk. When it came time for questions, people asked why so many gods existed in this religion, to which their host replied, "Because God comes in many forms for many different people." Students also asked why no shoes were allowed in the Mandir, and they were told it was, "to show respect."

9 At the mosque, girls put on headscarves and took pictures of one another. Some put their sweatshirt hoods on, which the Imam said would suffice. The Imam went on to explain that Muslims washed before they prayed, that they believed in Jesus, but saw him as a profit not God, and that they respected women, but thought men and women were better separated during prayer.

10 At the Buddhist temple students knelt in the Chinese style pews as a guide answered

questions about Chinese calligraphy, and Timarchi told the story of the Buddha. Then they ate lunch: peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, because, the guide explained, as Buddhists do not believe in killing animals.

11 In a class discussion the next day, Adland said the students enjoyed the trip. "It was important for them. An epic journey," he said. The Hindu temple was "pretty mind blowing." The Buddhist temple "was really nice. Kneeling, for them, was cool." Students said it was "interesting and weird and good to connect to others." Most, he said, found the rules such as covering heads, taking off shoes, not eating meat funny, and yet also an important way to respect the space of their hosts. "This came up again and again," Adland said. "Respect, meaning respecting others." Encountering religious difference, then, became an important way to learn, and learn respect.

12 The idea of interfaith interaction is often thought of as an intellectual enterprise or spiritual exploration, and the interest in interfaith programming is still something experienced more often by those on the high end of the economic and educational ladder. Yet here in the Bronx a high school class -where a high percentage of students live in households on public assistance, and where not all will go to college--had an important experience about American civic life through an interfaith lens.

13 A public school seems an ideal location for just such an experiment: a place where children learn basic educational skills that prepare them for the workforce, but also civic skills, which imply understanding and working with those that are different from ones own family--thus preparing them to be, for lack of a better term, good citizens. What can be more important than that?

Appendix E: *The New York Times*: Texas conservatives seek deeper stamp on texts

The New York Times

March 11, 2010 Thursday

Late Edition - Final

Texas Conservatives Seek Deeper Stamp on Texts

Byline: By James C. McKinley Jr.

Section: Section A; Column 0; National Desk; Pg. 20

Length: 779 words

1 AUSTIN, Tex. -- Even as a panel of educators laid out a vision Wednesday for national standards for public schools, the Texas school board was going in a different direction, holding hearings on changes to its social studies curriculum that would portray conservatives in a more positive light, emphasize the role of Christianity in American history and include Republican political philosophies in textbooks.

2 The hearings are the latest round in a long-running cultural battle on the 15-member State Board of Education, a battle that could have profound consequences for the rest of the country, since Texas is one of the largest buyers of textbooks.

3 The board is expected to take a preliminary vote this week on a raft of changes to the state's social studies curriculum proposed by the seven conservative Republicans on the board. A final vote will come in May.

4 Conservatives argue that the proposed curriculum, written by a panel of teachers, emphasizes the accomplishments of liberal politicians -- like the New Deal and the Great Society

-- and gives less importance to efforts by conservatives like President Ronald Reagan to limit the size of government.

5 "There is a bias," said Don McLeroy, a dentist from College Station who heads up the board's conservative faction. "I think the left has a real problem seeing their own bias."

6 The three-day meeting is the first time the board has met since voters in last week's Republican primaries voted to oust Dr. McLeroy and another conservative and threw the future makeup of the board up in the air. Two other members -- a conservative Republican and a moderate Democrat -- are not seeking re-election, and it is unclear what the balance of power will be after the general election. At present, the seven hard-core conservatives are often joined by one or more moderate members in votes on curriculum questions.

7 Dr. McLeroy still has 10 months to serve and he, along with rest of the religious conservatives on the board, have vowed to put their mark on the guidelines for social studies texts.

8 For instance, one guideline requires publishers to include a section on "the conservative resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s, including Phyllis Schlafly, the Contract with America, the Heritage Foundation, the Moral Majority and the National Rifle Association."

9 There have also been efforts among conservatives on the board to tweak the history of the civil rights movement. One amendment states that the movement created "unrealistic expectations of equal outcomes" among minorities. Another proposed change removes any reference to race, sex or religion in talking about how different groups have contributed to the national identity.

10 The amendments are also intended to emphasize the unalloyed superiority of the "free-enterprise system" over others and the desirability of limited government.

11 One says publishers should "describe the effects of increasing government regulation and taxation on economic development and business planning."

12 Throughout the standards, the conservatives have pushed to drop references to American "imperialism," preferring to call it expansionism. "Country and western music" has been added to the list of cultural movements to be studied.

13 References to Ralph Nader and Ross Perot are proposed to be removed, while Stonewall Jackson, the Confederate general, is to be listed as a role model for effective leadership, and the ideas in Jefferson Davis's inaugural address are to be laid side by side with Abraham Lincoln's speeches.

14 Early in the hearing on Wednesday, Mr. McLeroy and other conservatives on the board made it clear they would offer still more planks to highlight what they see as the Christian roots of the Constitution and other founding documents.

15 "To deny the Judeo-Christian values of our founding fathers is just a lie to our kids," said Ken Mercer, a San Antonio Republican.

16 The new guidelines, when finally approved, will influence textbooks for elementary, middle school and high school. They will be written next year and will be in effect for 10 years.

17 In other testimony Wednesday, Hispanic activists asked that more Latino figures be written into the social studies curriculum, particularly early residents of Texas who fought the central government in Mexico when Texas still was part of Mexico. American Indians complained that their history had been given short shrift.

18 Many other people came to the meeting to support the conservative slate of amendments, including some people enraged at what they saw as socialist tendencies in Washington. One man asserted that the Tea Party movement should be included in the textbooks.

Appendix F: *TexasInsider.org*: Leftists demand to (re)write social studies standards

TexasInsider.org (blog)

Leftists demand to (re)write social studies standards

By Carole Hornsby Haynes, Ph.D.

June 29, 2009

1 The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) has done an outstanding job in restoring historically accurate social studies & history standards. Recently, the SBOE released updated social studies standards that received preliminary approval in their March meeting.

2 Distortions and blatant lies have been written by liberal "experts" who are ready to tar and feather the SBOE for "revising our American history", leaving Thomas Jefferson out, and "bringing religion back into the schools". It's doubtful whether these self proclaimed experts have read the curriculum standards, which are available online to the public.

3 It's also doubtful they have ever read any of our original founding documents, relying instead upon the works of revisionist historians who long ago altered our American history to fit their Progressive ideology.

4 Normally intelligent Americans have bought into this leftist smear about the Texas Social Studies standards because they foolishly believe mainstream media to be reliable in its reporting. These gullible Americans turn a deaf ear and blind eye to the fact that main stream media does not bother with independent research.

5 Whatever happened to unbiased, investigative reporting?

6 One of the most important standards approved by the SBOE is the Celebrate Freedom Week

(designated by law HB 1776), during which students will study our founding documents, the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence and the critical role they play in our country. The standard mandates that students will be instructed "in the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, in their historical contexts."

7 Grades 3-12 will study and recite the following text: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness–That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed."

8 Although Freedom Week is not new, it has not been a part of the curriculum standards and testing. Therefore, teachers have not been required to teach the founding documents and their importance to our liberty.

9 It's appalling that so many Americans are unable to answer even simple questions about the Constitution. Nor do they have any idea their unalienable rights are being usurped by our federal government and our elected representatives, who, for decades, have passed legislation that is unconstitutional.

10 Wonder how many Americans were outraged and alarmed when the Democrat Congressman stated recently that he did 'not care about the Constitution', his concern was only about the people?

11 Those liberals who were so concerned about Thomas Jefferson "being removed" from the standards ignore Jefferson's belief in limited government. Rather they tout that socialism–and big government–is good for the people and capitalism is evil.

12 Leftists attempted to remove references about our Judeo Christian heritage from the standards, claiming right wing extremists were merely trying to bring religion into our schools. They have denied that our founding fathers and their political philosophies were profoundly influenced by the Bible, even though thousands of historical documents serve as evidence.

13 A very important addition the SBOE has made to the standards is that of American Exceptionalism, a term first used by Alexis de Tocqueville in the mid 19th century to describe what makes America so special.

14 After many years of viewing America through a negative lens, our youth again will have the opportunity to study from a positive perspective our American founders, American heroes, American entrepreneurs, and Americans who have pursued the great American Dream.

15 Also added to the standards is the analysis of unintended consequences of government actions such as the New Deal, the Great Society, and Title IX. Not told in our Texas American history textbooks is the truth about how big government intervention not only failed to end poverty, but caused millions to give up their freedom to a new plantation master in return for a lifetime of poverty, crime, and low self-esteem. Along with this came the destruction of the black family unit.

16 A small rowdy minority now is petitioning the SBOE to trash these standards and permit a group of "experts" to write new standards in order to push their own radical revisionist agenda.

17 They claim the voice of the people has been ignored. Yet it is they who have blatantly ignored the fact that more than 14,000 emails and 30+ hours of public testimony have been received by the SBOE. They have ignored the fact that there is strong public support for the new Social Studies standards approved by the SBOE in March.

18 These higher education "faculty and research experts" are demanding that they, rather than

our elected SBOE members, make the decisions about what our Texas school children learn because they deem themselves to be so much better qualified.

19 Reality is that "qualified" educrats have created mass damage to our public school system. They have dumbed down the curriculum and used student centered methodology to such an extent that 42% of those entering college require remedial work. These intellectual elites have thrown our American values to the winds. As an unelected review panel they have been responsible for ridiculous changes to our standards including the removal of:

- Christmas
- Albert Einstein
- Neil Armstrong
- Veterans Day
- Independence Day
- Religious heritage language
- And much more……

20 These changes were overruled by our elected SBOE members, their expert review panel, parents, and taxpayers of Texas. ALL significant historical facts were returned to our Texas standards.

21 The screams by liberals across the country are nothing more than those of irresponsible, special interest elitists who have had their radical agenda for our schools and children exposed, an agenda designed:

- to alter the historical facts about our Founding Fathers and founding documents along

with their real intent and meaning

- to destroy the truth about how American Exceptionalism and our free enterprise system have made America the greatest nation in the world
- to destroy the American dream
- to destroy the "shining city on the hill"
- to indoctrinate children in Marxist ideology
- to insure that all future generations will know only what the left wing ideologues want them to know, thus being unable to think and reason independently

22 Because our country's future lies with our children, we must accept responsibility for their learning and being inspired by a positive and accurate history of America and of Texas.

23 Our SBOE members have produced social studies curriculum standards designed to promote academic success and pride in our country, our leaders, and our values instead of the leftist negative view of shame.

24 It is important that we show our support for the fine work the SBOE has done in creating strong and historically accurate social studies standards.

25 It is important that we let them know we want them to finalize these social studies standards when they reconvene in May.

26 To find your representative and contact information, copy and paste the following link into your browser (http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us), or click here. Then enter your address.

1. Write a brief, respectful letter to your representative prior to May 19th.
2. Public testimony. During their meeting on May 19, 2010, the SBOE members will be

taking public testimony. Anyone can sign up to make a three-minute presentation. Those who can attend … sign up to testify by calling (512) 463-9007, starting at 8 a.m. on Friday, May 14th.

3. Written testimony can also be submitted. Instructions can be found at: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=3958#Public Testimony

27 To review the SBOE released social studies standards that received preliminary approval in their March meeting, visit http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=3643.

28 The author welcomes reader comments at chaynes777@yahoo.com.