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Avoiding Engagement with 'Invisibles:' Religious Issues and the Field of English Education

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AVOIDING ENGAGEMENT WITH “INVISIBLES:”
RELIGIOUS ISSUES AND THE FIELD OF ENGLISH EDUCATION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Curriculum and Instruction

by
Robert Todd Bruce
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

This study used content analysis of selected documents representing the three dimensions of the field of English Education (curriculum, teacher preparation and development, and research) to ascertain how the field was responding to the larger societal problem that religious intolerance and ignorance pose, especially given the growing religious diversity of American society. Data from the documents were classified into four categories derived from various proposals for the incorporation of religious issues into the public school curriculum: religious literacy, religious concerns related to personal development, religious aspects of multiculturalism, and religious issues related to improved civic engagement.

The documents related to curriculum analyzed in this study included national standards, state standards, policy/position statements, and American literature textbooks. Documents related to teacher preparation and developed included English methods textbooks, curricular requirements of English teacher preparation programs, blog posts, and blog comments. The research dimension was represented by journal articles.

Data from the documents suggest that religious content is a part of the curriculum, but that, generally speaking, English teacher preparation programs do not well prepare teachers to handle religious issues. Where religious issues are raised, documents are most congruent with the aim of religious literacy. Multiculturalism is a concern of the field; however, religious aspects of multiculturalism are most often implied rather than explicitly stated. Personal development is a minor theme in the documents studied while the civic engagement approach was nearly invisible. This study has implications for a

variety of constituencies, but in particular English teachers and English teacher educators. The results suggests that English teachers should be aware of the potential problems religious issues in the curriculum can raise. The work concludes with a number of possible options teacher educators can pursue to address this societal issue.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my brilliant, beautiful wife, Chrystal. Without her encouragement and support, I could never have completed this program. Without her selfless giving of her time and effort, I could never have finished this dissertation. She is my most insightful critic, my keenest-eyed editor, my best friend, the mother to our wonderful children, and the other half of my heart.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary American society faces a serious problem in the form of religious intolerance. Many who write about religion and public life in the United States have commented on the extreme polarization that characterizes discourse about this topic. On one side stands an extremely aggressive, outspoken group who promote what Nussbaum (2008) calls a “Christian evangelical fundamentalism” (p. 5). They also decry as discrimination any attempt by other religious groups or nonreligious groups to argue or promote other views. On the other side stands another aggressive, outspoken group who “equate [all] religion with right-wing fanaticism” (Moore, 2007, p. xiv). Neither side seems willing to listen to or consider any other perspective. Moore (2007) maintains that “all other voices are rendered unintelligible because they fall outside of the context of these narrowly designated spheres of discourse” (p. xiv).

The recent media firestorm over Park51, the so-called “Ground Zero mosque,” shows the first group in action. According to Elliott (2010), despite initial positive news coverage from both the *New York Times* and Fox News, the ensuing controversy was initiated by the efforts of an anti-Muslim blogger, Pamela Geller, and then fueled by Rupert Murdoch’s media empire, following her lead. It is interesting to note that the purpose of the Park51 project, then called Cordoba House, was to “push back against the extremists” (Blumenthal and Mowjood, 2009). Geller, instead painted their goals as “Islamic domination and expansionism” (quoted by Elliott, 2010).

In local communities around the country, similar outbreaks of intolerance appear when local religious minorities, often Muslim or Buddhist, attempt to build religious structures. A controversy in the small Tennessee city of Murfreesboro attracted national attention in early 2010 when vandalism, arson, and marches marked an attempt to build an Islamic Center (Kreimer 2011). Tennessee's lieutenant governor, then a candidate for governor, spoke against the mosque, calling Islam a cult, and unsuccessful plaintiffs in a lawsuit opposing the center maintained its purpose was to advance *sharia* law in the United States.

Nussbaum (2010) sees a threat to American equality in efforts to enshrine fundamentalist religious views as a kind of state religion. She lists a variety of public statements where "the rhetoric of important political officials highlights Christianity, implicitly suggesting the inequality of non-Christians" (p. 5). As examples, she provides pronouncements from John Ashcroft, George W. Bush, and Alan Keyes that suggest that those who do not share specific Christian views are "less than fully American and less than fully equal" (p. 6). If all citizens are to be equal under the law, then the government has no place creating a religious in-group through preferential treatment.

The second group, the outspoken secularists, are (like Geller) extremely active online. Comments by outraged atheists are present on nearly every post at CNN's Belief Blog (Gilgoff, 2011, June 8). The Belief Blog's very first post drew comments referring to the blog with words like *fairy tale*, *pathetic*, and *terrifying*. Certainly, there are those in the "anti-religion" camp who seem to delight in tormenting their opponents. Blogger P.Z. Myers was outraged by news that a college student was receiving death threats and facing

possible expulsion from his public university after removing a consecrated Eucharist wafer from a Catholic church. Myers (2008) responded by asking readers to send him some consecrated communion wafers so that he could subject them to “profound disrespect and heinous cracker abuse.”

As science has often come under attack from religious fundamentalists, it should perhaps not be surprising that many outspoken atheists make it a mission to promote science and, at times, attack religion. According to Dawkins’s website (<http://richarddawkins.net/pages/mission>), the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science promotes critical thinking and science education while struggling to overcome “religious fundamentalism, superstition, intolerance and suffering.” As the title of his book, *The God Delusion*, makes clear, Dawson believes that any belief in a personal deity falls under the category of superstition. Another outspoken atheist, Christopher Hitchens is even more direct; the subtitle of his book *God is Not Great is How Religion Poisons Everything*.

Unfortunately, neither this polarization of discourse nor religious intolerance in general is a new force in American society. Moore (2007) describes the sensationalistic media framing of a 2004 lawsuit in which a teacher was prohibited from handing out historical documents highlighting religious content to his class because his principal felt he was promoting an agenda which violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment; however, the teacher saw the principal’s actions as discrimination based on the teacher’s religious faith. Conservative websites and media outlets soon painted that case as one of “secularists” banning the Declaration of Independence for mentioning

God. Moore points out that incidents like this one (or more strictly the media framing of these events) give evidence to both those who believe in a secular conspiracy to keep God out of schools and to those who equate religion with conservative fanaticism.

A decade earlier, similar conflicts were seen as part of a “culture war.” Sears (1995) describes the battle that erupted when his decision to teach a graduate seminar at the University of South Carolina titled “Christian Fundamentalism and Public Education” in the summer of 1993 became news:

Some viewed the course as “Christian-bashing,” while others saw this criticism as rampant homophobia; some questioned my ability to deliver an “objective” course, while others saw the ensuing controversy as evidence of the Christian Right’s growing influence in the state; a few wondered why a public university would ever want to challenge the views of a “majority” of the state’s taxpayers, while others waved the tattered flag of academic freedom.” (p. 36)

Letters poured in to the university with a ratio of 100:1 against the course, many threatening to discontinue their financial support of the institution. Sears summed up one of the dangers of this “war” mindset, “Here complex issues become reified into simplistic slogans... as a variety of ideological and theological positions get reduced into competing binaries: *us/them, right/wrong, win/lose, sinner/saint, left/right*” (p. 40).

In the summer of 1986, a small country courthouse in northeast Tennessee became the focus of rather lopsided media coverage. Following her discovery of a story about aliens and mental telepathy in her child’s reading book, Vicki Frost was concerned. She had read books by leading authors from the religious right warning about sinister

influences on children (like Tim LaHaye's *The Battle for the Mind*), and she feared that the books' worst predictions were coming true in her small town. The resulting struggle of several parents to protect their children from the evils of "secular humanism" (as present in reading textbooks) is recounted in Bates (1993). The judge in the resulting trial, *Mozert vs. Hawkins County Board of Education*, had to decide the complex question of whether being required to read the textbooks would constitute an undue burden on the plaintiffs' religious beliefs, but the media were all too ready to present the situation as superstitious hillbillies attempting to censor fairy tales. Nord (1995) points out that the textbook publishers' documents subpoenaed in the case revealed that, at the time, publishers were much more willing to respond from pressure from the Left (pushing gender- and racial-balance, for example) than from the Right.

These recent events do not reflect some sudden flowering of conflict and intolerance, however. Societal conflicts between religious groups, within religious groups, and between religious and nonreligious groups are a sadly consistent theme in American history. The "Scopes monkey trial" is often presented as the culmination of the fundamentalists' war against modernity. Marsden (1991) describes the efforts of fundamentalists in the early twentieth century to save America from heresy, social change, and infidelity to the fundamental teachings of the Bible. After World War I, their efforts often centered on preventing the teaching of biological evolution. Shortly thereafter, an antievolution law in Tennessee was tested in the Scopes Trial of 1925 with Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan facing off in another small Tennessee courthouse in front of an army of reporters. While the law was left in place at the

conclusion of the trial, “the rural setting and the press’s caricatures of fundamentalists as rubes and hicks discredited fundamentalism and made it difficult to pursue further the serious aspects of the movement” (p. 60).

Sadly, earlier decades feature a number of incidents where anti-Mormon, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic sentiments erupted into actual violence. Ahlstrom (2004) explains that “nativism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism... were prominent and functional features of the Protestant Establishment in America during the last troubled decades of its hegemony” (p. 856). Ahlstrom also describes the repeated acts of violence that followed the Mormons as they moved west from New York to Utah: Joseph Smith tarred and feathered, followed by “schism, rioting, fires” in Ohio (p. 505), growing hostilities and promises of vengeance in Missouri, and finally, in Illinois, the lynching of Joseph Smith and his brother (p. 506).

While modern religious intolerance and conflict arise from this long history, Moore (2007) and Prothero (2007) both see contemporary religious ignorance as an important aggravating factor. Prothero believes that the FBI’s ignorance about David Koresh’s apocalyptic theology contributed to the disaster at Waco, but a lack of knowledge about religion is far from limited to the FBI. The results of a poll designed to evaluate religious knowledge by the Pew Forum on Religion in American Life (2010) demonstrate that many Americans are ignorant about a variety of faith traditions, including their own. Protestants and Catholics alike only answered about half of the religious knowledge questions correctly. Fewer than half of Americans identified the Dalai Lama as Buddhist and even fewer correctly connected Vishnu and Shiva to

Hinduism. Less than half of Catholics knew the doctrine of transubstantiation, and only slightly more than half of Protestants identified Martin Luther as the inspiration for the Reformation.

Another aggravating factor to religious intolerance is the increase in religious diversity in the United States; according to survey results from another Pew Forum (2008) study, Protestantism, once considered the *de facto* official religion of the country, is on the verge of becoming a minority religion in the United States. As the Protestant proportion of the American populace decreases, other categories increase: nearly one-eighth of Americans are unaffiliated with any religion at all, and Buddhists actually outnumber Muslims in the U.S. Immigrants make up a large proportion of the Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu populations, and despite their small overall numbers, as Wuthnow (2005) explains, these groups have a disproportionately large impact on the wider culture: his work reveals a high level of discomfort about their presence in America felt by many native-born Christians.

Writing to an implied audience of these same native-born American Christians, Eck (2001) paints a vivid picture of modern American religious diversity, describing the diversity within American Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus and their struggles to make a place for themselves in the United States. Additionally, inter-religious encounters provide a civic challenge as well. Eck describes several examples where Americans use existing civic processes to their advantage in excluding newcomer religions; a common method of exclusion is to use zoning laws and zoning boards to prohibit the building of an unwanted religious structure.

One of Eck's arguments (that America is the most religiously diverse nation on Earth) has been questioned by others, including Prothero (2007) who points out that America is far too homogenous (85% Christian, compared to Singapore with 42% Buddhists, 15% Muslims, 15% Christians, 8% Taoists, and 4% Hindus) for this label (p. 25). Prothero agrees, however, that America has perhaps the most diverse religious marketplace in the world, citing over 200 places of worship in Flushing, Queens, along with more than thirty non-Christian options (p. 25).

The proportion of the population which practices a variety of non-Protestant traditions is growing in the United States; however, diversity is also an important consideration *within* Protestant denominations. Scholars have used a variety of schemes to explain intrareligious diversity in American Protestantism, and some of these divisions provide insight into possible sources for the conflict mindset that characterizes much of the religious intolerance previously discussed.

Wuthnow (2005) characterizes and profiles three main types of "mainstream" religious individuals: spiritual shoppers, inclusive Christians, and exclusive Christians. Spiritual shoppers include those who have changed denominations repeatedly and those who have created a personal religious synthesis from a variety of Christian denominations and other religious traditions. Inclusive Christians still identify themselves as Christians but also believe that other religions have some degree of validity. In fact, 57% of inclusive Christians agreed with both of the seemingly contradictory statements "Christianity is the best way to understand God" and "All religions are equally good ways of knowing about God" (p. 131). Exclusive Christians disagree with the latter

statement and have often been stereotyped as being poorly educated and sheltered, but Wuthnow's study showed that they typically have had experiences with persons of other faiths and are a more complex group than commonly believed.

The division between inclusive and exclusive Christianity has many overlaps with Wuthnow's (1988) earlier scheme of divisions between conservative and liberal Christians, which Hunter (1991) refigures into two drives, a drive toward orthodoxy and a drive toward progressivism. Wuthnow describes the origins of this divide in the post-World War II period via the growth of special interest groups within denominations. These groups promoted interdenominationalism on the one hand: a Baptist group interested in helping world hunger might very well decide to collaborate with a Methodist or Episcopal group with the same focus. However, they also contributed to divisions within denominations without outright schism. Groups with a social justice orientation could pursue their aims within the existing denomination as easily as groups with a more evangelistic orientation.

Carper (1998) believes that most Americans are not firmly in either camp but admits that on important, divisive issues like moral education and sex education, a division arises between those who believe in a "transcendent source of moral authority" and "those who are more 'this-worldly' in orientation" (p. 21). He also points out that extreme positions do manage to attract an inordinate amount of attention:

While serving as an advisor to [South Carolina] Governor David Beasley, almost every other week I spoke with or heard from someone who labeled those on the "other side" evil, crypto-fascists, divisive, extremists, threats to the public

schools, and so on. Orthodox and progressive representatives frequently attempt to marginalize one another by equating competing agendas with, among other things, the politics of hate, imposition of alien beliefs, or a departure from the “American way.” Emotive language and *ad hominem* attacks do nothing to advance public discourse regarding the issues at hand. (p. 21)

Prothero (2007) also charts tensions within the Christian churches, dividing modern American Christians into three groups: confessionalists (with a focus on doctrine), experientialists (with a focus on emotion), and moralists (with a focus on behavior). He is quick to point out that this typology crosses both sides of the culture war; the battle over ordination of a gay bishop in the Episcopal church is a struggle between two groups who both believe that moral behavior is the most important thing. Prothero sees those fault lines as the natural outgrowth of a slow two-hundred-year process that moved religion away from doctrine, theology, and knowledge toward emotion, feeling, and action. He describes the explosive growth of Baptist and Methodist churches as the replacement of the heartless Tin Man of Calvinism with a brainless Scarecrow, (obviously, this is an oversimplification for rhetorical purposes; however, the point remains).

In summary, American society is currently characterized by some rather profound rifts within the Protestant denominations that historically dominated American culture. Additionally, Americans who follow non-Protestant faiths or no religion at all are increasing in number. This growing diversity along with widespread religious ignorance

serves as an aggravating factor for the ever-present specter of religious intolerance in America.

Public Schooling as a Possible Solution

It seems natural to look to America's public schools and teachers to solve a problem like ignorance, and certainly, public school teachers have often been on the front lines of the battles to improve tolerance as well, especially in other areas of cultural identity like race and sexuality. There are a number of proposals that seek to address the societal problems of ignorance and intolerance through the action of public schools.

One of the most prominent proposals is that of Warren Nord (1995). Believing strongly in the value of liberal education, he lays out a detailed case, calling for educators to take religion more seriously for a variety of reasons. His bottom line is fairly simple:

because of the massive importance of religion in human affairs, because religion continues to contest secular accounts of the world, because public institutions must take seriously the full range of ideas in our marketplace of ideas, because the Establishment Clause requires neutrality between religion and nonreligion, and because the truth has become increasingly elusive even for intellectuals, religion must be taken seriously in public schools and universities. (pp. 378-379)

Nord's plea for the academy to take religion seriously ends with a call for schools to provide elementary students with basic knowledge: about the importance of religion to the lives of people around the world, about our constitutional commitment to religious freedom, and about the religions of the United States and the world. When students are

capable of critical thinking, they should be encouraged to apply this skill to religious issues, such as religious difference and the secular-religious divide. A follow-up book (Nord & Haynes, 1997) attempts to remind teachers and administrators of the places where religion already occurs or should occur in the existing curriculum. In a posthumously-published (2010) work, Nord clarifies his aims for education related to religion (religious literacy, religious understanding, the use of a comparative perspective, and some exposure to both religious and secular explanations of religions and the religious) and calls for a yearlong course in religion in both the high school and the undergraduate general education curriculum.

While Nord's argument and proposal are comprehensive, some proposals have a more specific focus. *Finding Common Ground* (Haynes and Thomas, 2007) places its emphasis on the important role schools can play in modeling peaceful civic dialogue both for students and the community at large. Haynes and Thomas believe that it is a vindication of American democratic principles for schools to bring communities together in making positive policies about contentious issues like religion and sexuality. This document centers its discussion around the First Amendment and the rights and responsibilities inherent in the freedoms it provides. Haynes and Thomas maintain that schools are "the principal institution charged with enabling Americans to live with our deepest differences" (p. 3), and that they have a central role to play in sustaining America's traditions of religious liberty.

Noddings (1993) also sees a great purpose for education as well. However, she focuses not on the public good but rather a more personal good: the personal

development of each student as a human being. Lester (2011) points out that the emergence of academic disciplinary specialties in the high school and undergraduate curriculum has created a situation in which “no branch of education is concerned with transforming students into good men and women.” (p. 68). Noddings calls on all teachers to nurture student development by including existential and metaphysical questions in their curricula because “all students deserve an opportunity to engage matters central to life in an environment that is noncoercive and supportive” (p. 133).

Noddings attempts to stake out a neutral position dividing both the religious and the nonreligious alike into two groups. She establishes that some believers and unbelievers hold unexamined beliefs that have been inherited wholesale from authority figures and families. She finds that believers and nonbelievers that do critically examine their beliefs (or lack thereof) have several commonalities: both experience similar doubts and anxieties, focus on ethical matters, and castigate organized religions for social ills and political oppression. She labels this latter group “intelligent believers and unbelievers” and believes that schools can play a role in helping to create this sort of intelligent belief or unbelief. In a later work (2010), she emphasizes the additional effort that may be required for fair treatment of unbelief and unbelievers given the historical privileging of Christianity in American society.

Drawing on the findings of Wuthnow (2005) that Americans know little of the religious other and his claim that defusing intolerance requires engagement across lines of religious difference, Rosenblith & Bailey’s (2006, 2007, and 2008) proposals call for religious studies course work at the high school level to address the mitigating factor of

religious ignorance. Heavily influenced by the Religious Education curriculum used in the United Kingdom, they have specified teacher qualifications (a religious studies degree), aims and objectives, and assessments for such courses in which students would develop knowledge and understanding of and respect for religious traditions as well as explore existential concerns relevant to these traditions.

A proposal which strives both to address religious ignorance and to strengthen democracy comes from Diane Moore (2007), who suggests using a pedagogy that derives from a cultural studies approach. She contends that religion is deeply embedded in all aspects of human experience and full understanding of it requires the use of multidisciplinary lenses, a recognition of the importance of context, and an awareness of power relationships. She points out a number of similarities between her proposal and the basic tenets of multicultural education (specifically those described by Sleeter and Grant, 1999) and claims that “many of the tools developed in the field of multicultural education are quite relevant for teaching about religion responsibly” (p. 72).

Teaching of Literature as a Solution

Whether comprehensive in scope like Nord or restricted to a more specific purpose (strengthening democracy, cultivating student development, curbing religious ignorance, or pursuing the aims of multiculturalism), these proposals, if considered seriously, have the potential to have a substantial impact on public schooling in the United States. While some advocate adding something like a collegiate religious studies department to American high schools, the average citizen might think that the social

sciences (particularly high school history and geography classes) and the humanities (particularly high school literature classes) are the most natural places to explore religious issues in the existing curriculum. The social sciences can provide students with the opportunity to study religion as an aspect of personal and cultural identity while the humanities (particularly the study of literature) can provide students with the opportunity to truly grapple with what it means to live in a society marked by profound differences.

In fact, the teaching of literature in high schools is in many ways well positioned by its history to address the various aims of these proposals. In their description of the history of the field usually referred to as English, Wilhelm and Novak (2011) point out that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the name of the language served as a powerful symbol for the curricular goals of providing a common grammar and common literary tradition for the United States. It was believed that such an effort could shore up democracy against the threats of ethnic and economic diversity. Fifty scholars in the field met in the Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 and proposed replacing both the language skills and cultural heritage models with a discipline focused on the personal growth of each student. Despite the difficulties that curricula based on this model faced over the years, the “powerful convictions” of this approach “kept those ideas alive” (p. 27). Another attempt at redefining the field came from the Wye Conference in 1987. The only consensus reached there was a firm rejection of E.D. Hirsch’s cultural literacy model. Various groups within the conference defined the profession in a variety of ways, some stressing the importance of the discipline to a democratic society, others focusing on the importance of multicultural perspectives, and still others wanting to pursue a focus on the

development of the whole student through the pursuit of existential concerns like *joy*. Wilhelm and Novak point out repeatedly that English is a very nebulous field, but it should be noted that there are considerable overlaps between the proposed directions for the field suggested at the Wye Conference and the proposals for including religion as a component of the public school curriculum.

Despite its nebulous nature, there are many features of the contemporary structure of the field of English (and specifically the teaching of literature) that particularly mark it as a suitable arena for enacting a variety of proposal for including religious issues in the classroom. Certainly, Nord and Haynes (1998) believe that “literature and the arts provide marvelous ways of coming to understand religion from the ‘inside.’ ... students can imaginatively and vicariously experience something of what it means to be religious” (p. 131).

Advancing Religious Multiculturalism Through Literature

The teaching of literature certainly has natural connections with the goals of multiculturalism. To interact with others across the complex boundaries of differences in social identities like race, class, sex, or religion requires compassion and empathy, which Nussbaum (1998) sees as a natural result of the development of narrative imagination. She describes this capacity as the ability to imagine life from a different perspective and sees it as a natural consequence of the study of literature. For most persons, they first learn to “walk in someone else’s shoes” through experiencing the events of a book through the eyes of a narrator. For example, reading a book with a gay protagonist, like

Geography Club by Brent Hartinger, can provide straight students who have never even considered it an insight into life as a gay high school student.

Nord (2010) sees literature as one of the only subjects in school that provides students with the opportunity to learn about other persons and to really consider what he calls the Big Questions: “it is essential that [students] acquire the imaginative understanding of good and evil, justice and injustice, sin and salvation, to be found in great literature” (p. 224). He also points out that literature “opens a wider window on the world than do [other] disciplines. Good literature—great literature—enables us to breathe deeply the air from those opened windows—and this is exhilarating” (quoted in Nash, 2011, p. 80).

This idea of opened windows is an important metaphor for the importance of multicultural concerns in the curriculum. As the growing religious diversity in our nation highlights, religion is an important aspect of many Americans’ cultural identities. The curriculum should provide students with both mirrors (opportunities to see themselves reflected in the curriculum) and windows (opportunities to learn about the lives and experiences of others). If religion is absent, what message does that send to students for whom religion is important? It also denies students who are not religious an opportunity; life in our democracy has shown us that the religious can have a profound impact on political decisions. As described by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2004), public life will require a citizenry with global awareness, skills in communication and collaboration, and social and cross-cultural skills. Omission of such an important aspect of personal and cultural identity as religion seems irresponsible at best.

Pursuing Personal Development Through Literature

As Nord's mention of literature's Big Questions demonstrates, much of the teaching of literature is targeted toward helping students develop their personal and social identities and to become their truest, richest selves. Noddings (2003) discusses the importance of literature to personal development, pointing out the existential issues that can arise in the teaching of poetry (Emily Dickinson's meditations on death) or novels (*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*). Rosenblatt (1995) points out that active participation in literature has many benefits for students, primarily the growth of imagination, which is necessary for both social change and empathy. Through the study of literature, she claims, "the great abstractions—love, honor, integrity, compassion, individuality, democracy—will take on ... human meaning" (p. 276). The rapid expansion of electronic books, blogging, and Twitter has some questioning the future of the school subject literature; however, Carol Jago (2010), the current president of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), points out that "English class may be the last place students can unplug themselves from the solipsism of Facebook postings and enter a milieu different from their own in order to learn about human problems worthy of attention" (p. 11).

Strengthening Democracy Through Literature

Many of the human problems explored as part of a high school literature curriculum also have implications for students' understandings of American democracy and public life. One widely-used high school American literature textbook frames its study of contemporary American literature with a series of deep questions:

- Are we responsible for the whole world?
- Can all Americans achieve equal rights?
- What makes an American?
- What is the American dream? (*McDougal Littell*, p. 1090-1091)

Some of these questions have religious implications, and certainly class discussion of these issues might bring different religious and nonreligious views into conflict. A teacher who guides students through the difficulties of negotiating shared space and amicable disagreements is a teacher who is helping to shape an involved citizenry and who is modeling the types of conversations and discussions that our society needs.

The Importance of Religious Knowledge to Literature

Certainly, it stands to reason that matters like religion, which have so much importance in individual lives, must have an impact on literature. As Thorp (1961) discovered, every fiction best seller list from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century had at least one explicitly religious work on it, and Baker (1961) sees the King James translation of the Christian Bible as highly influential in matters of both style and image in American literature. The Bible is frequently cited as one of the most common sources of allusions in literature, so it is no surprise that a research project found 650 Biblical allusions in the complete works of Herman Melville (reported in Baker, 1961).

A lack of religious knowledge can become an obstacle in the literature classroom, even for a teacher who has no interest in pursuing the aims of incorporating religious issues into schooling. One secondary English teacher claims that “Religion is not beside

the point of literature, it's the crucial point of literature: What is behind that symbol and what does it mean? Recognizing a symbol's religious significance opens the door to literary insight" (quoted in Moore, 2007, p. 70).

Purves and Pradl (2003) point out that lack of cultural knowledge assumed by a text can cause difficulty for a student. "Texts within a culture, particularly literary texts, build on each other, so that contemporary texts employ a complex web of allusion or metaphor building upon previous texts" (p. 851). A study by Broudy (1982) explored this idea of an allusive web and his results suggest that readers who lack prerequisite knowledge often simply stop reading or responding, a finding in line with many teachers' lived experiences. A lack of religious literacy can then have a serious impact on the efforts of high school literature teachers to teach any number of frequently taught texts, from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* to Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" to Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find."

Teachers of literature who want to ensure student understanding of important texts will naturally be interested in providing religious background knowledge and understanding for their students. In much the same fashion, depending on their personal and professional interests, the same teachers may wish to incorporate religious issues into curricula to strengthen democracy, aid students' personal development, and build bridges of understanding across cultural boundaries.

Potential Roadblocks to this Solution

It is clear that the high school literature classroom offers a number of opportunities to address the problem that religious intolerance poses, given widespread religious ignorance and the growing religious diversity of American society. Unfortunately, the inclusion of religious issues in the literature class in particular also poses a number of problems. The polarization and cultural warfare described above are not strangers to English teachers. In a recent article, public school English teacher Ryan Kennedy (2010) explores the complex interplay of religious diversity and ignorance that complicates his attempts to teach the works of Dante and Milton to his students in a small high school in a small Missouri town, most of whom come from evangelical Protestant backgrounds. He also discusses the unwelcome attention that his use of “Catholic” writers brought to his classroom from parents and concerned citizens in the community. Purves and Pradl (1993) explain that “because literary texts are ‘open’ representations of what it means to be human, no other school subject has the capacity for exposing and consequently interrogating the values and beliefs of society” (p. 849). As a result, the English classroom is frequently a flashpoint for conflict: frequently, this conflict often escalates when parental concern over a chosen text’s “indecent” becomes a community struggle about censorship, as depicted in *The Sledding Hill*, a young adult novel by frequently-banned author Chris Crutcher (2005).

Besides avoidance of controversy, there are other factors that may complicate high school literature teachers’ efforts to consider religious issues in their curriculum. Namely, as Purves and Pradl (2003) point out, the school subject literature is often

subsumed into the larger category of English language arts, where literature becomes a vehicle for measuring reading comprehension and the discussion of literature is funneled into assessments of writing proficiency. At times, an encounter with a work of literature is reduced to an opportunity to demonstrate recall or perform “scripted academic routines” (p. 848): analyzing a text after the manner of a particular critical tradition. National standards, not only those produced by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association but especially the new Common Core State Standards place a dominant focus on language use and the language arts. A focus on language use is not necessarily a bad thing, nor is the existence of standards; however, an encounter with Shakespeare’s plays in school has the opportunity to lead in so many directions, but a school system that translates these standards into scripted lessons and pacing guides could reduce that powerful encounter into a lesson or two about allusions.

Despite these developments, the study of literature does still exist, and Purves and Pradl (2003) position literary texts at the center of the literature curriculum, surrounded by extratextual information (historical, cultural, biographical), metatextual information (literary terminology) and various transactions between and within members of the classroom community (reading the texts, thinking about the texts, discussing the texts, and writing about the texts). Another curriculum schema, also presented by Purves and Pradl (2003), breaks the curriculum into three dimensions: skills (for responding, for analysis, and for interpretation), a body of knowledge and values (much of the extratextual information), and a developmental dimension (helping students to develop a mature sense of self). Too much focus on the first two, however, leads to a loss of

enjoyment in reading itself and consequently a failure to use literature for the third dimension. To use the terminology of Rosenblatt (1995), a focus on efferent reading to the detriment of aesthetic reading can stunt the student's growth as a reader and as a human being. And it is precisely the potential for this growth as a human being that draws many teachers into the field of literature.

An Unanswered Question

At a time when religious diversity, religious intolerance, and religious ignorance have coalesced into a serious societal problem, it is unclear to what extent English teachers are willing or able to be part of a solution. Given the potential overlap between the teaching of literature and the various proposals to address the problem, it is important to find an answer. Unfortunately, the professional literature does not provide much guidance. While a few resources do exist, there is a dearth of research involving religious issues and the teaching of literature. The most recent article (Wachlin, 1997) relating to religion in *Research in the Teaching of English* was published more than ten years ago, and there have been only thirteen articles relating to religion published in the last decade in the more practitioner-oriented *English Journal*. One might expect that religious issues would have a place in the multiculturalism literature; however, Grant, Elbree, and Fondrie (2004) identify religion as one of two areas seriously neglected in research into multiculturalism (the other being sexuality): "Despite the fact that religion is tied closely with culture and ethnicity, there is little [research] to show how it affects pedagogy,

learning, school/classroom environment, or curriculum selection” (p. 197). Nord (2010) fails to find any studies connecting religious issues and teacher education.

Perhaps these absences should not be surprising, Nord (1995) presents a strong case that the academy in general has a noticeable bias against religion. Nor are these absences unique to the field of teaching or literature, Schultz and Harvey (2010) explain that despite the growing consensus that American religious history is crucial to understanding American history in general, historians of modern America fail to include religious issues outside of racialized or politically marginalized arenas.

Given these absences, the question becomes even more urgent: to what degree is the larger field of English education, which includes high school literature teachers, responding to the larger societal problem posed by religious intolerance?

Purpose and Nature of the Study

Many of the proposals for increasing religious literacy make note of the natural match between the teaching of literature and the development of religious literacy and tolerance (including Nord and Haynes, 1988; AAR Religion and Schools Task Force, 2010; and Nussbaum, 1998). Given the growing religious diversity of the United States, how is the field of English Education responding to this challenge? The study attempted to answer this question through *content analysis* of important, representative documents in the field. The Council on English Education (CEE) of NCTE (2005) has defined the field of English education as encompassing three dimensions: 1) the teaching and learning of English, broadly and inclusively defined; 2) the preparation and continuing

professional support of teachers of English at all levels of education; and 3) systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning of English.

Documents concerned with the first dimension relate primarily to the K-12 curriculum; these include state and national curriculum standards (including the new Common Core standards and related documents), policy and position statements from national organizations pertaining to the teaching of the English language arts, and curricular materials, such as textbooks.

Documents representing the second dimension include the NCTE standards for English teacher preparation used by NCATE-accredited institutions, policy and position statements concerned with the preparation of English language arts teachers, English methods textbooks, and curricular requirements of programs that prepare English teachers. Additionally, practitioner journals and English teacher blogs represent resources that practicing teachers would access for personal professional development.

The third dimension is represented by the body of research literature pertaining to the teaching of English language arts.

Research Question

This study addressed one main research question: Based on published documents representing all three aspects of the field of English Education, to what degree is the field responding to the challenge of religious issues in contemporary America?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various proposals to address the intertwined societal problems of religious intolerance and religious ignorance propose public schooling as the primary solution. The first section of this chapter explores in detail both the contentious history of the relationship between religion and public schooling and the current consensus concerning the proper place of religion in public education. Since it is likely that any response from the field of English education to the challenge of religious intolerance and religious ignorance may be more or less consonant with some of these larger proposals, the second section of this chapter explores a wider variety of those proposals in more detail, so as to provide a point of reference in answering the research question.

The final section of this chapter explores the relationship between religion and American literature. The literature classroom, in general, shows promise as a site for enacting the various proposals; for a number of reasons, this study focuses on the American literature classroom more specifically. Because this problem is a pressing concern for American society, it seems sensible to examine the course that has the most connection with American society. Exploring complex issues of identity and personal belief only becomes developmentally appropriate as students near the end of high school, and since students typically study American literature in eleventh grade, the American literature classroom seems more appropriate than an eighth- or ninth-grade classroom. However, if there is no connection between religion and the subject matter of American literature, then another grade or subject would need to be chosen despite the other factors

that demonstrate the fitness of the American literature classroom as an arena for addressing religious intolerance and ignorance. For this reason, it is important to confirm the existence of a relationship before embarking on the research itself.

Religion and Public Schooling

The History of Religion and Public Schooling

Sadker and Zittleman (2009), covering the history of American education in a foundations textbook, depict the colonial period as a time in which American education was extremely diverse, taking place in homes, churches, workplace apprenticeships, and local schools. Leaders like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson saw American education as a break with European traditions (particularly in regards to class), but, above all, the most common thread was the domination of the curriculum by religious content.

One of the first laws requiring education for children was passed in Massachusetts in 1647. The legislators were concerned that, without a proper education, children might fall victim to “that old deluder, Satan” and be unable to distinguish true religion from heresy (Farrand, 1929). Not surprisingly then, early Massachusetts schools had a strong religious component. In fact, according to both Herberg (1961) and Spring (1986), most schools in the colonies saw religious instruction as the dominant purpose of education. Nord (1995) reports that the most widely used textbook in colonial schools, the *New England Primer*, took God and human relationships with God as its “great theme” (p. 65). Reinforcing the integral role of religion in colonial education, Nord also points out

that eight of the nine American colleges at the time of the American Revolution had denominational origins.

It should be remembered that religious concerns, while widespread and influential, were not the only motivating force for education at the time of the Revolution. Adair (1982), in his book about Puritanism in both England and the colonies, describes Puritans as the heirs of two traditions: the Reformation and the Renaissance. This double heritage explains, in part, Nord's discussion of the Revolutionary-era colleges: most were founded out of concern for a lack of clergymen, but the curriculum at each was centered on the liberal arts ideal.

Cremin (1980) points out in the early national period, educational diversity was still the rule rather than the exception. In addition to the colonial-era English schools, Latin grammar schools, and academies, the early national period saw the emergence of infant schools and high schools. Replacing the *New England Primer* as the dominant textbook were the McGuffey Readers, described by Westerhoff as more theology than schoolbook (cited in Nord, 1995). While much of the more stringent theology had disappeared from later editions of the Readers in the second half of the nineteenth century, moral piety and basic Protestant beliefs remained a dominant force.

Even though the first state-supported common schools—as championed by Horace Mann—were officially nonsectarian, the Bible was still used on a regular basis and the teaching of Christian morality was an expectation. Most early opposition that Mann's common schools faced arose from conservative Protestants who saw the “nonsectarian” schools as a façade, behind which Mann's Unitarian beliefs would subvert

their version of Christianity. As immigration brought increasing numbers of Catholics to the U.S., Protestants united behind the cause of common schools. Like the early Protestant opponents, however, Catholic parents saw that “nonsectarian” was just a code for the perspective of their opponents, in this case, Protestants. The Catholic-Protestant conflict over tax money and curricular materials eventually erupted into actual violence (Nord, 1995, pp. 71-74).

Cremin (1977, 1980, 1988) points out that increasing cooperation among Protestant denominations, especially after the Civil War, created “an American *paideia*, a core of affirmations and aspirations that would characterize the divine mission of the United States at home and throughout the world” (1988, p. 115). At the same time, American schools were gradually replacing religion with nationalism as their guiding principle (Nord, 1995, pp 74-76, but see also Wuthnow, 1988, and Prothero, 2007). By the time the Supreme Court rulings of the mid-twentieth century removed the formal trappings of religion from schools (chapel services, prayer, and daily Bible reading), the schools themselves had ceased to be religious in any meaningful way over half a century before (Nord, 1995, p. 96).

Although Waters (2010) makes it clear that this removal was “not a result of activism of atheists, like Madelyn Murray O’Hair, nor did it begin in the 1960s, as many assume” (p. 123), for many parties the contemporary struggles all seem to point back to these Supreme Court decisions as the beginning of the battle. One website (www.bibleinschools.net/Is-this-Legal) supporting teaching the Bible in schools begins its argument with the sentence: “There has been a great social regression *since the Bible*

was removed from our schools” [emphasis added]. There are numerous groups and individuals that seek to solve this “regression” by making schools more religious in (often) explicitly sectarian ways; Smith (2010) outlines the various strategies that have been and continue to be actively used to undermine the Supreme Court decisions, ranging from exploiting what are seen as “loopholes” (schools cannot infringe on students’ right to pray, so student-led prayers are seen as universally acceptable) to blatant disregard for the law (principals who continue to lead the student body in prayer). For these reasons, it is important to explore the legal and judicial environment surrounding the issue of religion in public schooling.

Legal and Judicial Frameworks for Religion and Public Education

The foundation for all law in the United States is the United States Constitution. In exploring the issue of religion and public school, most attention is focused on the first two parts of the First Amendment,

- the Establishment Clause: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion,” and
- the Free Exercise Clause “or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;” (U.S. Const. amend. I).

These statements, along with the prohibition of religious tests for qualification for office (U.S. Const. art. VI, § 3), demonstrate what Nussbaum (2008) calls the Founders’ “radical statement of religious equality” (p. 97). Given the prevalence of test oaths in Britain at the time, that a statement forbidding such could pass without objection in a young nation sent a clear message about the mindset in the newborn United States.

Many Americans believe that their nation was founded on Christian principles by devout men who would be outraged by later interpretations of the First Amendment. However, Nussbaum (2008) draws a very clear line from current interpretations all the way back to ideas of Roger Williams and provides clear expressions of the importance of avoiding establishment (government maintenance of and entanglement with religion) in the writings of James Madison. Marty (1984) reminds readers that the Deistic beliefs of the Founders and their focus on reason and morals rather than on faith and grace set them clearly apart from the ideas of Christian devotion that many “Christian-nation” proponents would recognize as orthodox.

To fully understand the import of these two powerful clauses, it is important to consider the decisions of the judicial system. After all, as Haynes and Thomas (2007) point out, “the Supreme Court and the lower courts are the final arbiters of the Constitution.” However, there were very few occasions for Supreme Court interpretations of the meaning of the first amendment prior to the 1940s because prior to that time, the First Amendment was only applied to the federal government. Drawing on the Fourteenth Amendment which states that “no state shall... deprive any person of... liberty without due process of law”, the Supreme Court has ruled that key provisions of the Bill of Rights must apply to the states (this view is called *incorporation*). Among the liberties so incorporated are both the free exercise clause (per *Cantwell v. Connecticut* in 1940) and the establishment clause (per *Everson v. Board of Education* in 1947).

Establishment. According to Haynes and Thomas (2007), the Establishment Clause is usually understood to prohibit the government from showing preference for one

religion over another or from promoting religion in general. This clause is often construed as erecting a wall of separation between church and state (language drawn from Thomas Jefferson's famous 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association); however, Justice Burger in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* described this so-called wall as "a blurred, indistinct, and variable barrier" that is dependent on the context of the particular situation. *Lemon v. Kurtzman* also provided the widely-used *Lemon* test, which requires (1) that government action have a bona fide secular or civic purpose, (2) that the primary effect of the action neither advance nor inhibit religion, and (3) that the action avoids governmental entanglement with religion. Some Supreme court justices have proposed other tests. Former Justice O'Connor suggested that the test should ask whether the law amounts to governmental *endorsement* of religion, while Justice Kennedy would allow more governmental interaction with religion as long as it was not direct aid or *coercing* persons to participate in religion against their will.

Free Exercise. As with free speech, the government may place some limits on the exercise of religion. Haynes and Thomas (2007) point to the example of human sacrifice: one is free to believe that human sacrifice is required by one's religion; however, acting on that belief remains illegal despite the First Amendment. While free exercise is not unlimited, most free exercise cases look for *accommodation* of minority religious beliefs, which Nussbaum (2008) hold to be an important aspect of religious liberty. She points out that because laws typically reflect the interests of the majority, laws could force members of religious minorities to make an agonizing decision between following a law and following their conscience. The principle that the government should not force such a

choice requires that, at times, religious minorities be granted an accommodation or exemption from a law. The 1963 *Sherbert v. Verner* case, in which a Seventh-Day Adventist sued after being denied unemployment for refusing to work on Saturday, established the *Sherbert* test. Persons who believe that their free-exercise rights have been violated must demonstrate that their actions are (1) motivated by sincere religious belief and (2) substantially burdened by the government. The government can still curtail free exercise if (1) there is a compelling state interest and (2) the government's actions use the least restrictive means.

Nussbaum (2008) points that American law concerning religion is hardly a philosophical ideal: not “neat, well-articulated, each step connected to the one before by a convincing path of reasoning” (p. 26). Her book sets out to articulate the central principles that seem to govern most cases.

- *Equality*: All citizens have equal rights and deserve equal respect for the government under which they live.
- *Respect for Conscience*: Respect for citizens requires that the public sphere respect the fact that they have different religious commitments (and possibly nonreligious commitments in the area of life's ultimate meaning and ethical basis) and provide a protected space within which citizens may act as their conscience dictates. If respect for persons is to be equal, this consideration for the conditions in which conscience operates must also be equal: all citizens enter the public sphere “on equal conditions.”

- *Liberty*: Respect for people’s conscientious commitments requires ample liberty.
- *Accommodation*: Sometimes some people (usually members of religious minorities) should be exempted from generally applicable laws for reasons of conscience.
- *Nonestablishment*: The state may make no endorsements in religious matters that would signify an orthodoxy, creating an in-group and out-groups.
- *Separation*: A certain degree of separation should be created between church and state: on the whole, church and state should have separate spheres of jurisdiction. (p. 22-25)

She commends this particular American concoction “because of its depth and ethical value (on the whole)” (p. 32). This “concoction” was also celebrated in the Williamsburg Charter, a 1988 document that brought together a number of religious and nonreligious groups to affirm the importance of America’s religious liberty and outline the threats it faced in a time of polarized conflict characterized by religious intolerance and religious ignorance (the Charter is reproduced as an appendix in Haynes and Thomas, 2007).

Religion and Public Education. Cases involving compulsory public education and the rights of religious minorities often provide textbook examples of the principles of accommodation that Nussbaum (2008) describes. *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), while controversial, found that that Wisconsin’s compulsory high school attendance laws were too burdensome for the Old Amish and Mennonites. Much earlier, *West Virginia State*

Board of Education v. Barnette (1943) had granted an exemption to a mandatory flag salute law for Jehovah's Witnesses, overturning the earlier *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* (which Nussbaum, 2008, characterizes as a blunder on the order of the *Dred Scott* decision).

These cases, while important, did not have the societal impact of the series of Supreme Court Establishment Clause cases which removed the final trappings of religion from the public school systems of the United States in the middle of the twentieth century. In *McCullum v. Board of Education* (1948), the court forbade religious instruction in public schools. In 1962, *Engel v. Vitale* struck down the use of any prayer composed by public school officials. Finally, *Abington Township School District v. Schempp* (1963) found Bible reading over the intercom unconstitutional. Rogers (2011) notes that many teachers and administrators mistakenly believe that these Establishment Clause decisions require schools to be "religion-free" zones. On the contrary, Associate Justice Tom Clark wrote for the Court in *Abington Township School District v. Schempp*:

[I]t 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 effected consistently with the First Amendment. (quoted in Haynes and Thomas, 2007, p. 42).

Guidelines for the Teaching of Religion in Public Schools. The curriculum guidelines issued by the American Academy of Religion's Religion and the Schools Task Force (2010) provide the most recent model of the legal use of religion for classroom teachers. It begins with reasons to teach religion (combating religious illiteracy which itself can be the cause for prejudice and conflict), provides legal guidelines for the teaching of religion, and concludes with concrete suggestions for the actual teaching process. As the document points out, religious issues arise naturally in schools from student questions, from the history/social studies curriculum, and when "the novels or stories [teachers] teach have explicit religious themes or allusions" (p. 10). This point is extremely important for teachers of literature to consider; American literature is particularly rich with Biblical allusions and religious themes abound in a number of canonical works.

Drawing on the consensus building approach used with the Williamsburg Charter, Haynes and Thomas (2007) also provide guidelines for the proper role of religion in schools (p. 45-46), which appear in identical form in the AAR Religion and Schools Task Force document (2010, p. 8):

- The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.
- The school strives for student *awareness* of religions, but does not press for student *acceptance* of any religion.
- The school sponsors *study about* religion, not the *practice of* religion.
- The school may *expose* students to a diversity of religious views, but may not *impose* any particular view.

- The school *educates* about all religions, it does not *promote* or *denigrate* religion.
- The school *informs* students about various beliefs; it does not seek to *conform* students to any particular belief

Chancey (2010) provides guidelines for a nonsectarian course that makes use of the Bible. A nonsectarian course

- Recognizes that school-sponsored evangelism is illegal;
- Informs students about the different Bibles of different religious traditions;
- Recognizes that biblical translations themselves reflect particular religious orientations, and it exposes students to translations associated with different religious traditions;
- Is sensitive to the fact that some religious traditions regard the Bible as inspired, but it takes no position one way or another on the issue;
- Recognizes the importance of biblical texts as historical sources without lapsing into a tone that assumes complete historical accuracy;
- Recognizes that the Bible is a religious text, not a science textbook;
- Discusses the ethical instructions in the Bible without presenting them as the students' normative moral guide;
- Ideally relies on instructional material that is informed by biblical scholarship and written with sensitivity toward issues of religious diversity.

Some religious parents have expressed concerns that a course of this nature could damage their children's faith. The Society of Biblical Literature (2008) helpfully references a study that shows that this is not, in fact, the case.

Chancey (2007) examines the difficulties in producing religion curricula for public school purposes, using the efforts of the Bible Literacy Project as a case study. "Court rulings require neutrality between various religious perspectives and between religion and non-religion, but some organizations and individuals will not be comfortable with textbooks that do not adequately reflect their own religious views" (p. 42). The more academic the material becomes, the more unacceptable it becomes to some of the loudest voices in this conflict. This, unfortunately, often leads to school districts adopting sectarian curricula that verge on illegality.

The documents containing these legal guidelines express a number of purposes for encouraging the legal, academic study of religion, religious beliefs and practices, and religious texts: to answer student questions, to deal adequately with required course content, to model civil dialogue and promote democratic engagement, and to promote intercultural understanding. Many of the proposals put forward in response to the larger societal problem posed by religious ignorance and intolerance in a religiously diverse society have similar aims.

Proposals for Addressing Religious Intolerance and Ignorance Through Public Schooling

The last two decades have seen a variety of proposals designed to address the larger societal problem of religious ignorance and intolerance by incorporating religious content into the public school curriculum. Each proposal promotes learning about and discussing religion and related ideas; however, there seem to be four main purposes for this learning. A number of proposals (exemplified by Haynes and Thomas's *Finding Common Ground*, 2007) advocate learning about religion and working through the implications of religious differences in American society to improve civic engagement and to ensure the future of America's participatory democracy. Noddings (1993), among others, champions learning about and thinking deeply about religion in order to promote each student's personal development. Some proposals (like those of Rosenblith & Bailey, 2006, 2007, and 2008) suggest learning about religion in service to an ideal of religious literacy. Since religion is an important element of cultural identity for many, it stands to reason that some proposals (like that of Moore, 2007) will suggest the teaching about various religions and religious beliefs in service to the larger ideals of multiculturalism.

Many proposals follow the lead of Haynes and Thomas (2007) and make use of the type of informed discussion that strives to exemplify democratic principles in one way or another; these models stress dealing with religious issues as a tool to improve civic engagement. Sears and Carper (1998) promote dialogue with those who have opposing perspectives, hoping to find compromise on contentious issues like sex education, moral education, and science education. Rogers (2011) worries that "we

cannot have peaceful pluralism when so many lack understanding of and respect for fundamental religious liberty guarantees” (p. 42). The call for discussion in Marty and Moore (2002) and Marty (2002) arises from a concern for what they define as the common good: a “goal sought by citizens across the personal boundaries of religion, race, philosophy, taste, and commitment,” which may include moral, civil, aesthetic, and spiritual elements (p. 7). Marty and Moore even encourage their readers to consider not just public schooling but all education; all education, they point out, is in some sense “public” because of its ultimate impact on the public order.

This is an important counterpoint to voices, like McConnell (1995) or Carper and Hunt (2011), who advocate some form of what might be called educational disestablishment. Carper and Hunt (2011) recommend that just as the United States has no state church neither should it have a state school and that educational system more in line with our “confessional pluralism” would be more constitutionally appropriate (p. 82). They agree with Nord’s analysis concerning the dominant secular paradigm of public school and fear that even his recommendation would not be enough to satisfy everyone. For this reason, just as the government does not privilege any variety of religion or non-religion, neither should it privilege one system of education (currently public schooling) over others. In other words, parents should not have to pay taxes to support an educational system they disagree with and then pay again to educate their own children.

Strike (1995) lays out some important guidelines for the sort of discussion many reformers have suggested. He says that for discussion to be productive, participants must first agree on shared claims in order to focus the discussion on true points of difference

and avoid straw man arguments. In looking at the abortion debate, he suggests that both sides might agree both that privacy is important and that killing people is wrong. It is then that debate might focus on true differences between the two positions. His guidelines are as follows:

- Public dialogue should be governed by conversational restraint.
- Tolerance does not depend on moral relativism, nor does it convey acceptance of the views tolerated.
- Absolutism and relativism are not useful concepts.
- We need to be better at distinguishing between what schools can discuss and what they can advocate.
- Dialogue depends on adequate grounding of people in their own perspectives.
- Dialogue depends on the virtue of reasonableness. (p. 62)

He calls on participants with deeply-held religious beliefs to “set them aside,” a process he defines as refraining from making personal convictions obligatory or privileging them for the lives of those who do not share them.

Kunzman (2006) also presents a strong argument for the use of what he calls Ethical Dialogue in high school classrooms. He worries that avoidance of ethical issues in schools “bodes ill for our civic capacity for informed and respectful discourse” (p. 5). His model looks for a middle ground, “acknowledging the importance of being able to understand and engage with the religious convictions of fellow citizens, while also guarding against the dogmatic imposition of religiously informed policies that affect all of us” (p. 6). He presents examples of helping students reason through various issues, all

the while helping them to understand that reasonable people may disagree about the best way to live and that recognizing that someone is reasonable does not automatically entail agreement. He divides the world into several spheres; the private sphere is the realm in which each person's own ethical commitments holds sway (family, religious groups, freely chosen associations), the civic sphere is the realm in which persons with differing ethical commitments work out how they will live together. He champions dialogue as an important tool in the civic sphere. He also identifies a political sphere, the subset of the civic sphere in which state power is used to control how persons will live together. It is only in this political arena that private commitments not shared by all should be excluded or at least outweighed by shared public commitments.

Nash (2011) has spent decades developing a pedagogy that nurtures what he calls *moral conversation*, an interpersonal nonjudgmental conversation. He asks students to attribute the best possible motives to others as they explain their personal beliefs, to be generous in their own sharing of beliefs, to listen with compassion, and be courageous in their responses. His goal is to invert the typical academic communication—to converse rather than discourse or critique. He suggests his students first look for truth in positions with which they disagree and error in the positions with which they agree.

In all of the proposals presented thus far, there is a common theme of using conversation and dialogue to pursue the aims of improving civic engagement and strengthening America's participatory democracy. Many of these approaches also echo Nord's call for the academy to take religion seriously. Pritchard (2010), a critic of this model, sets out

to raise concern with what I take to be the submerged “politics” of these calls. Whereas these calls are issued for the express purpose of creating public and scholarly places in which religious voices, *qua* religious (and not necessarily reasonable, familiar, polite, or liberating) may be heard, this goal is undermined by a tacit discomfort with, and ritualistic management of, difference and conflict...[T]he possibility of dissent and conflict is preempted in advance. (p. 1108)

While characterizing Haynes and Thomas (2007)’s Common Ground approach, to take one example, as “ritualistic management of difference and conflict” may be accurate; it is **not** accurate, however, to see them as preempting “the possibility of dissent and conflict.” All of the proposals related to religious content and public schooling see this as an area rife with conflict but also see it as a prime opportunity for democratic processes to operate. Greene (1998) certainly does not shy away from the tensions inherent in many proposals: “We do not have to agree on everything; but we do have to live together. I will allow fundamentalists space to talk, read, and demonstrate; but I will insist on their giving me space” (p. 31).

In order to create a world where everyone can “live together” (as Greene puts it), Nash (2005) uses a framework of global citizenship to ask schools to help students cultivate knowledge of religion as both a spiritual force for good and a political force for evil by exploring evocative, challenging questions in an authentic and open-ended way. A global citizen, he claims, cannot fail to be aware of the tensions inherent in most religions, when the political evils and spiritual benefits of various religions are a part of

everyday life in our global village. Nash's thoughts on globalization suggest a connection with the ideals of multiculturalism in which learning about and with "the other" is an important component of education.

It is difficult to reach across cultural boundaries when ignorance is a significant factor, however. In surveys of his students and a larger nation-wide poll, Prothero (2007) determined that Americans, in general, have a serious lack of religious literacy, which he defines as "ability to understand and use in one's day-to-day life the basic building blocks of religious traditions—their key terms, symbols, doctrines, practices, sayings, characters, metaphors, and narratives" (pp. 11-12). The inability to really understand religious issues is a serious civic problem: how can one understand the Middle East, Sri Lanka, American politics, Vietnam war protests, or those who kill in a name of a god without knowledge of religious fundamentals? Prothero specifically makes the argument that schools must fill this religious literacy gap—it is clearly not enough to assume that students receive this sort of knowledge at home and clearly not all religious traditions present a fair view of others. Prothero advocates a high school Bible course, a high school World Religions course, and a college religious studies course for all Americans.

Even those who agree with the aims of the various proposals—improving civic engagement, promoting personal development, improving cross-cultural understanding, and building cultural literacy—may say that the demands of Noddings, Nash, Nord, and others ask too much of teachers; their proposals are too radical and teachers are not ready. Indeed, Greenawalt (2011) notes that teacher incompetence in regard to religious issues is

likely to create constitutionally impermissible situations (such as teachers proselytizing for their own faiths). Noddings (1993) counters with this perspective:

We profess the fear that teachers do not have the competence to teach the required material, but a considerable number of practicing teachers of mathematics do not have the mathematical competence of a proficient high school calculus student. Yet we do not abandon mathematics teaching. Mathematics is important..., and we keep trying to improve both teaching and curriculum. An acknowledgement of the importance of intelligent belief or unbelief should induce similar efforts. (p. 141)

It should be noted that these proposals do have some chance at success. As Tyack and Cuban (1995) point out, reforms are more likely to succeed if they do not tamper with what they call the “basic grammar of schooling” (p. 85), and none of these proposals call for massive changes to the way school is done. It should be noted, however, that some proposals are more economically feasible than others. For example, changing teacher preparation and providing teacher development is less expensive than hiring an entire religious studies department. In any case, literature classrooms (and particularly those studying American literature) seem to be attractive sites for implementation of many of the proposals, as long as there is in fact some connection between religion and the subject matter of literature.

Religion and American Literature

If the literature classroom is indeed well-suited for implementing the various proposals designed to remedy the serious problem that religious intolerance and religious ignorance pose to an increasingly religiously diverse American society, then it stands to reason that a classroom studying American literature specifically could be the ideal arena. After all, most American literature textbooks see American literature as a reflection of American society. It is, therefore, important to know exactly what relationship American literature has with American religion.

Religion and Literary Studies

One potential problem is pointed out by Nord (1995), who paints a clear picture of how the academy has distanced itself from religious issues. Fessenden (2007) notes that academic discourse about literature is strongly secularized; however, she makes the argument that this “secular” paradigm is itself strongly shaped by the Protestant hegemony that it “replaced:”

When secularism in the United States is understood merely as the absence of religious faith, or neutrality in relation to religious faiths, rather than as a variety of possible relationships to different religious traditions—for example, an avowedly secular United States is broadly accommodating of mainstream and evangelical Protestantism, minimally less so of Catholicism, unevenly so of Judaism, much less so of Islam, perhaps still less so of Native American religious practices that fall outside the bounds of the acceptable decorative or “spiritual”—then religion comes to be defined as “Christian” by default, and an implicit

association between “American” and “Christian” is upheld even by those who have, one imagines, very little invested in its maintenance. (p. 3)

Fessenden believes that secularist position held by many academics in literary studies is still a response to Christianity, and that ignoring religion altogether marks a failure to understand the very paradigm in which they operate.

Franchot (1995) surveys the study of American literature and comes to the conclusion that “We are apparently content to leave religion to historians and anthropologists, as if it has no significant role in the production and reception of literary texts or in the construction and deconstruction of American national identity” (p. 838). She suggests that a lack of religiosity (or animosity toward it) on the part of literary scholars may lead to a lack of acknowledgement of the significance of religion. “Such narrowness . . . is especially ruinous in our field, since America has been and continues to be manifestly religious in complex and intriguing ways. And not only America but American literature” (p. 839). Franchot also emphasizes that religious questions are often converted into questions about race, gender, or sexual orientation. This failure to engage religious issues as religious issues does a severe disservice to the lives and works of authors as varied as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and James Agee. She cautions that this focus on other perspectives has allowed scholars “to provide a detour around America's engagement with ‘invisibles,’ and in so doing we have allowed ourselves to become ignorant” (p. 841-842). Hulsether (1997) takes a similar approach in his exploration of challenges to the field of American Studies. He points to ways in which a failure to engage with religion as such could cause a less than complete understanding

of a cultural artifact (he uses songs by Bruce Springsteen and Sinead O'Connor as examples).

There have been (and continue to be) some efforts to engage with the invisible, but, as Taylor (1998) acknowledges, these efforts do not constitute “one of the major discourses of the academy” (p. 4). In one notable example, Van Anglin (1998) explores ways in which the secularizing tendency of the late 20th century academy can cause fundamental misreadings of Transcendentalist texts: “ways that rob Transcendentalist prose and poetry of their complexity as documents indicating the ebb and flow of religious belief” (p. 166).

An edited volume concerning religion and American literature takes its name in part from Franchot's perspective. *Invisible Conversations* is the published result of the American Literature and Religion Seminar, assembled at Notre Dame by Nathan Hatch and James Turner to explore issues from Emerson to the present (Lundin, 2009a). The various chapters of this work cover a “broad historical and cultural landscape that has become, over the history of this culture, packed with private meditations and public reflections on the existence of God, the nature of religious experience, and the place of faith in public life. Often lively, sometimes divisive, and invariably illuminating, these conversations have been central to American culture for centuries” (p. 1-2). The various chapters take a variety of approaches but all engage literature and religion from a variety of perspectives. Far from speaking with one voice, the authors disagree with each other, but the resulting book is rich with the heterogeneity of their voices. For example, Hauerwas and Wood (2009) note that

It is surely a scandal that “a nation with the soul of a church,” as G.K. Chesterton famously described our country, should have produced so few writers who are Christian in any substantive sense of the word. Emerson, Thoreau, Dickinson, Melville, Poe, Hawthorne, Twain, James, Frost, Faulkner: nearly all of our eminent writers are heterodox at best, atheist or even nihilist at worst. Only such major-minor writers as Flannery O’Connor and Walker Percy can be called distinctively Christian: writers whose artistic vision and work derive from the scandalous claims of God’s own self-identification in the Jews and Jesus and the church. (p. 159)

They put forward the provocative theory that American churches have become so identified with general American life that the churches provide no authentic, distinctively Christian message for artists to hear or to which they might respond. Lundin (2009b) responds that this oversimplifies the real issues that various writers had with the churches of their time: “For [Dickinson], as for Melville, Twain, Wharton, Frost, and others, the barriers to belief involved serious questions of epistemology, historical consciousness, and scientific materialism” (p. 190).

Buell (2009) brings Franchot’s notion of religion as invisible into sharp focus by pointing out that “for American narrative, a case can be made for it being either haunted by religion or insulated from it” (p. 39). He then presents a matched list of American novels and authors and asks which is more typical: Jonathan Edwards or Ben Franklin, Flannery O’Connor or Carson McCullers, *The Bluest Eye* or *Paradise*.

This examination of the relationship between religion and American literature from the perspective of literary studies demonstrates that a variety of scholars believe that there is a strong and complex relationship but also that the field is to some degree blind to this connection.

Literature in American Religious History

If Nord, Franchot, and Taylor are correct about the academy's blindness to religion in literature in the area of literary studies, then another discipline, like religious history, might assist in exploring the relationship between religion and American literature. A survey of three American religious history texts provides interesting insights into the importance of literature to America's religious history.

Ahlstrom's National-Book-Award-winning *A Religious History of the American People* (2004, originally published in 1972) is cited by Hall (2004) in its Forward as an "enduring authoritative history" (p. xvii) and at more than one thousand pages, it makes a valid claim toward comprehensiveness. Ahlstrom's work is organized into nine Parts, arranged chronologically, divided into chapters which are organized both chronologically and more thematically, often exploring movements and denominations of interest during the period. While none of the chapters (with two possible exceptions) explicitly focus on literature, authors are mentioned throughout the text (with over 50 authors listed in the index). For example, in a section entitled "The Antebellum Unitarian Ethos," Ahlstrom writes "when Unitarianism's aspiring spirit was conveyed to the nation in the literary forms of Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, and Holmes, it was accepted, loved, and learned by heart" (p. 401). The two chapters that come the closest to a focus on literary history occur

in the his consideration of nineteenth century America: Ahlstrom found it necessary to explore the history of romanticism in Europe and the United States in one chapter before beginning an examination of “Romantic Religion in New England,” which includes a substantial account of transcendentalism in general and Emerson in particular.

Noll’s history (1992) attempts to reflect contemporary currents in religious historiography by attempting to recover the everyday experiences of common people. One means was to increase focus on groups often excluded (women and persons of color) and another was to use recent studies to incorporate a relevant hymn from each period under discussion. Noll also endeavors to provide a measure of comparison by exploring Canadian religious history. Unlike Ahlstrom, Noll’s work omits the history of non-Christian faiths, hoping to provide a different perspective: he says, “I hope this can be a text more concerned with how the Christian religion has fared in America than with how Christians have added their bit to the story of America” (p. 3).

Noll’s work (1992), much like Ahlstrom’s, is organized into chronological parts, which are typically divided into thematic chapters. Also like Ahlstrom, Noll mentions authors frequently throughout the text, weaving them in where appropriate. Unlike Ahlstrom, Noll also includes a subchapter on literature and religion. This subchapter “Literature Preoccupied with God” reviews both inspirational novels (*Ben Hur*, *In His Steps*, *Quo Vadis?*) and canonical literature with strong religious themes. He mentions that canonical literature is rarely simplistic or uplifting but considers religious issues deeply, citing Hurston, Baldwin, and Walker as authors who consider the role of the church in African American communities. He lists Hawthorne, Melville, Dickinson,

Twain, and Faulkner as authors whose works demonstrate a central concern with “a persistent return to spiritual questions, a steady employment of biblical language, and moving accounts of a fall, vicarious passion, and redemption” (p. 414). Noll also considers contemporary writers such as John Updike and Robert Irwin, Catholic writers Flannery O’Connor and Walker Percy, fantasist Madeleine L’Engle, and poets Robert Lowell and John Berryman.

Wentz (2003) takes as his primary purpose helping the reader to understand each of the religious traditions he describes. Most chapters are divided into sections exploring verbal, practical, and social expressions of each faith. The chapters on these traditions are then arranged roughly chronologically. While no chapters deal explicitly with literature, once again writers are woven throughout the fabric of the development of the various religious traditions in America. A close reading of all three works leaves one with the sense that America’s literary tradition is closely tied with its religious history.

The study of American literature often explores thematically questions of what it means to be American. It is apparent that the history of this country and its literature both contain an important religious strand. If a course on American literature is to achieve its goals, its teachers must be willing to deal with that strand. Making it invisible does a disservice to the works of literature being studied, as much as it does to the development of the students studying it. Religion’s invisibility in the multicultural classroom closes windows and covers mirrors. Invisibility also allows misrepresentation and ignorance to continue to threaten our participatory democracy.

To summarize, religion and public schooling in the United States have a long and contentious history; however, the current consensus guidelines on legal approaches to religion in public schools provide an important framework for understanding the various proposals for addressing the problems of ignorance and intolerance in the face of America's growing religious diversity. These proposals seek a variety of aims: religious literacy, personal development, multiculturalism, and civic engagement. Because of the historical development and current structure of the field of English, the literature classroom seems an excellent place to enact many of these proposals. More specifically, because of the complex relationship between religion and literature in the United States and the developmentally appropriate age of the pupils, a classroom engaged in the study of American literature seems ideal. Unfortunately, it is not clear to what extent the field of English education is responding to this larger societal challenge.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The United States is an incredibly religiously diverse society that is often fragmented by religious difference (both between and within religious groups). A number of proposals have been advanced to remedy this problem by including religious content within the curriculum and teaching practices of American public schools. It is clear that there is potential overlap between these proposals and the teaching of literature at the high school level, and it is also clear that American religion, American religious history, and American literature are interconnected in complex and fascinating ways. It is not clear to what extent the field of English Education is responding to this challenge.

The remaining sections of this chapter describe the purpose of the study; restate both the problem and the research question; provide operational definitions for the four research subquestions; and briefly describe the methodology of content analysis, the documents chosen for analysis, the rationale for the sampling decisions made in each case, the processes of data collection and analysis, and some comments about rigor in qualitative research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if major, pertinent documents representing the field of English Education discussed the incorporation of religious issues into the 1) K-12 English language arts curriculum, 2) preparation and professional development of English teachers, and 3) research into the teaching of English. It also

examined the congruence between religious issues in the documents and four aims of incorporating religious issues into the curriculum: 1) religious literacy, 2) personal development, 3) multiculturalism, and 4) civic engagement.

Statement of the Problem

Coupled with the growth of religious diversity, ongoing religious intolerance in the United States poses a serious problem. Various proposals exist to address this by incorporating religious issues into the public school curriculum. English language arts is frequently mentioned as a subject that already includes religious issues as a part of the curriculum, and many view the teaching of literature as a natural fit with the ideals of these proposals. However, it is unknown to what extent the field of English Education is actually incorporating religious issues.

Specific Research Question

This study addressed one main research question with four subquestions. Based on published documents representing all three aspects of the field of English Education, to what degree is the field responding to the challenge of religious issues in contemporary America? Specifically, 1) how is the field addressing the aim of religious literacy? 2) How is the field addressing the religious concerns related of students' personal development? 3) How is the field supporting religious aspects of multiculturalism? And, 4) how is the field handling religious issues related to improved civic engagement?

As the documents were analyzed, it was found that some lacked any explicit reference (and often any implicit references as well) to religions, religious beliefs or practices, or religious groups. The documents were characterized by the theme of *Absence*. Absence of references to religious issues can have a variety of meanings (which are explored in more detail in the discussion of the limitations of this study in chapter five).

The Aim of Religious Literacy

Religious literacy, as defined by Prothero (2007) and Rosenblith and Bailey (2008), begins with basic knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices, but typically moves on to some sort of use of this knowledge. For Prothero, this use comes in the form of being able to make sense of modern culture. Rosenblith and Bailey provide more specific learning targets that exist at higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (using analysis, contextualization, and synthesis).

A document from the field of English education was identified as congruent with the aim of religious literacy when, at the most basic level, knowledge of religious issues and texts were important inasmuch as they assisted with the meaning of another text. For example, the Common Core standards (2010), require that students "Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new" (p.37) Since, in this case, knowledge of religious texts (the Bible and myths) is required for the purpose of understanding a "modern work of

fiction,” this incorporation of religious texts into the curriculum serves the aim of religious literacy.

Religious Concerns Related to Personal Development

An English education document was identified as congruent with the aim of religious studies as personal development when it highlighted religious issues for the purpose of helping students develop their personal identity or moral and ethical frameworks. Many English teachers believe that literature is a powerful force in encouraging students to develop as whole persons. Wilhelm and Novak (2011) recount the history of this mindset within the profession, positing that, rather than centering on language, perhaps “English” is actually focused on the “role of meaning in human life” (p.34). They are not opposed to the use of explicitly religious texts in the classroom, citing *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse as a particular favorite.

The IRA/NCTE national standards require students to read widely in order “to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.” The supporting documentation reveals that purpose of the standard is to help “students learn to think about and to question their own perspectives; ... learn to assume different, critical stances toward events, circumstances, and issues” (p.22). This encounter with various dimensions of human experience is required in order to help students develop critical thinking and a personal (not inherited) ethical framework. For this reason, this statement aligns with the personal development goal.

Religious Aspects of Multiculturalism

Multicultural education is defined by Banks (1995) as a reform effort designed to ensure equity for students regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and other social identities that typically involves five dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture. Content integration (use of materials reflecting various cultures) and prejudice reduction are often the dominant factors in multicultural education. The implementation of knowledge construction helps students to understand how various cultural factors can impact the creation and acceptance of knowledge. Both equity pedagogy and empowering school culture strive to ensure academic achievement of historically underperforming groups; the former focuses on teaching methods while the latter involves restructuring school culture.

An English education document was identified as congruent with the goals of multiculturalism if religious issues were raised with the goals of helping students understand another culture and respond respectfully to it. An article in the practitioner-oriented *English Journal* by Atiyat (2006) discusses her clothing choices as a Muslim woman and her use of literature to help her students understand her perspective in the wake of 9/11. Because her non-Muslim American students had been bombarded by media misrepresentations of and stereotypes about Islam, she felt a powerful need to explain her choice to wear *hijab* and *jilbaab* and help her students understand her. Due to its focus on reaching across cultural boundaries for personal understanding, this

document was identified as congruent with multicultural goals as they relate to religious issues.

Religious Issues Related to Improved Civic Engagement

A document from English education was identified as congruent with the goal of improved civic engagement when it referenced religious concerns that might impact concepts like participatory democracy or political issues, or when it considered possible implications of religion/schooling issues on American society. Dana Huff (2005, October 13) blogged about a classroom situation involving her Jewish private-school students wanting to learn more about the Lord's Prayer, which they have heard recited in a film version of *The Crucible*. This post considered the interplay of her personal religious beliefs, her obligations as a teacher, and the larger societal implications of possible conflicts between the two. For this reason, this post was identified as congruent with civic engagement.

For simplicity, in the remainder of the study, each of the four aims mentioned above will be referred to by a capitalized and italicized key word: *Religious Literacy*, *Multiculturalism*, *Personal Development*, and *Civic Engagement*.

Research Design

Content analysis originated in the field of communications and is used to examine documents and other texts. Content analysis makes use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies; this particular study was primarily qualitative. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis takes advantage of the fact that texts of any sort

exist in a larger context. The analysis of these texts allows the researcher to make inferences about that broader context. In this case, the analysis of important documents produced by actors in the field of English Education will allow inferences to be drawn about the field itself.

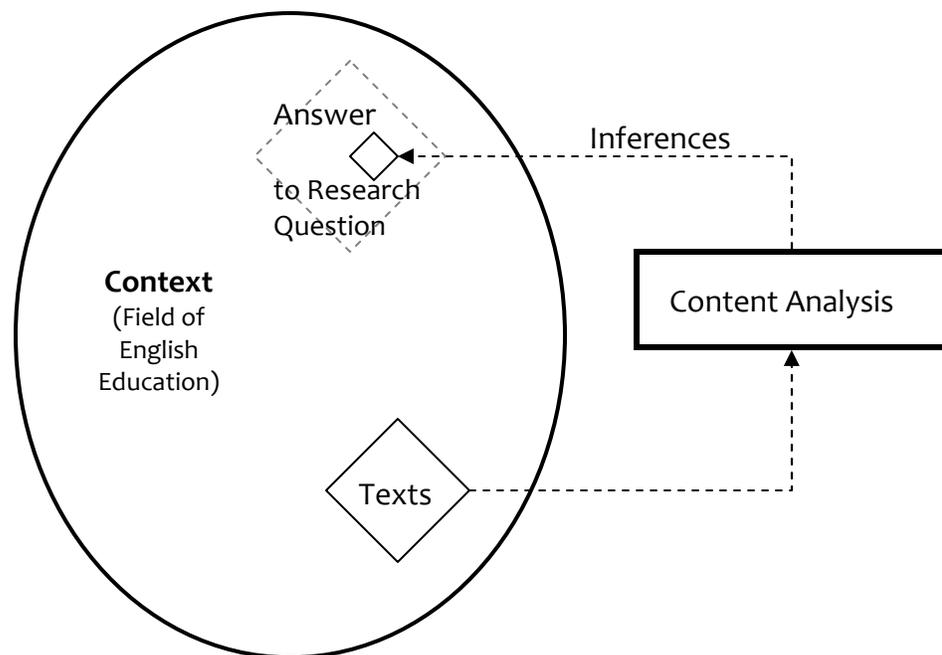


Figure 3.1: A symbolic representation of content analysis. Adapted from Krippendorff (2004), p. 82.

The actual process of qualitative content analysis is similar to other qualitative methodologies (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The documents are read repeatedly so that large quantities of text can be organized into categories—patterns and themes that are directly expressed in the text or that emerge during analysis. The resulting themes are

then used to guide the description of the data and to draw inferences about the larger context of the field of English Education.

Documents

The documents analyzed in this study can be organized into three groups, representing the three dimensions in the definition of the field of English education: (1) the teaching and learning of English, broadly and inclusively defined; (2) the preparation and continuing professional support of teachers of English at all levels of education; and (3) systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning of English (CEE, 2005).

Because the problem driving the study concerns American society and because most of the proposals concern education in the United States, when possible, documents were chosen that related to the teaching of American literature (which is usually in the eleventh grade year). Students at the end of high school are often more developmentally ready to tackle existential questions in a way that eighth or ninth grade students might not be, suggesting a stronger possibility of finding connections with religious issues in materials relating to eleventh grade.

Teaching and Learning of English

Documents from this dimension concern the K-12 curriculum. Venezky (1992) specifies several levels of curriculum. The *needed curriculum* is the one evoked by politicians and philosophers, which describes what the speaker believes students need to study or learn or know (the proposals of Noddings and Nord would fall into this category). Venezky's next level of curriculum, the *desired curriculum*, is identified as

still distant from classrooms but beginning to consider operational issues; Venezky describes state and district guidelines as existing at this level. While that may have been true in 1992, the growth in standards movement since then has moved state control to the next level of curriculum, the *prescribed curriculum*, which in the 1980s and early 1990s, was dictated by textbooks and other materials that prescribe content, sequence, and strategies. As various sources (including Apple, 1991; Apple, 1992; and Morrison, 1993) indicate, these prescriptions are often mediated by the teachers; similarly, the students' reception of what is taught also may diverge from what their teachers intend. Venezky recognizes this in the final levels of curriculum, the *delivered curriculum* and the *received curriculum*.

It seems most sensible to limit K-12 curriculum documents to those which relate to the prescribed curriculum. With *No Child Left Behind's* insistence that every state adopt and test content standards in English language arts and the recent widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards, standards (as a representation of the prescribed curriculum) have the power to affect every English classroom in the entire country. None of the proposals existing at the desired/needed curriculum levels can match that level of impact. While it is true that the delivered and received curricula would provide a more accurate picture of what is actually happening in English classrooms, unfortunately, collecting enough data to make inferences about the field as a whole from examining the practices of individual teachers (the delivered curriculum) would require an unfeasible number of subjects. A study of the received curriculum faces a similar

challenge in addition to the potential issues raised in reducing the complex art and science of teaching to any measure of student outcomes.

National standards. The first important set of documents related to the prescribed curriculum is standards. The first set of national standards for the teaching of English language arts was jointly created by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English in 1996. More recently, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) has issued a set of standards that have been adopted by the District of Columbia and all but nine states. As with numerous other categories, documents were chosen to attempt to capture the broadest possible view of the field. While the CCSSI standards were not entirely produced by leaders in the field, these standards, due to their wide adoption across the country, are poised to have a tremendous impact on the teaching of English.

State standards. At least at the K-8 level, state standards are not well correlated with each other or with national standards according to Porter and Polikoff (2009) and Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang (2011). (Beach, 2011, provides some insight into reasons for this discrepancy.) For this reason, it is important to also analyze state curriculum standards. This is a large collection of texts (even after restricting the analysis to Grade 11); therefore, the analysis looked at the eleventh-grade standards from eighteen states (two chosen randomly from each of the nine U.S. Census Bureau divisions of the country). The lists of states in each division were taken from the Census Bureau's website (http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf), and the list for each division was sorted randomly using random.org. Standards from the first two states in the

resulting list were obtained from the states' websites. In the Pacific division, the first two states selected (Alaska and Washington) do not have Grade 11 English language arts standards, so the third and fourth states (Hawaii and California) were used instead. The states selected and the web addresses of their standards are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
States Selected for Analysis of Grade 11 English Language Arts standards

Region	State	Web Address
East North Central	Illinois	http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/Default.htm
East North Central	Indiana	http://dc.doe.in.gov/Standards/AcademicStandards/index.shtml
East South Central	Kentucky	http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/ Instructional+Resources/ Curriculum+Documents+and+Resources/
East South Central	Tennessee	http://www.tn.gov/education/curriculum.shtml
Middle Atlantic	Pennsylvania	http://www.pdesas.org/Standard/Views
Middle Atlantic	New York	http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/ela/elarg.html
Mountain	Colorado	http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/ UAS/CoAcademicStandards.html
Mountain	Montana	http://opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/Index.html?gpm=1_8
New England	New Hampshire	http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/ curriculum/english_lang/index.htm
New England	Massachusetts	http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/
Pacific	Hawaii	http://165.248.30.40/hcpsv3/about.jsp
Pacific	California	http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/
South Atlantic	Delaware	http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/staff/ci/default.shtml
South Atlantic	Maryland	http://mdk12.org/instruction/curriculum/index.html
West North Central	Minnesota	http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/ Academic_Excellence/Academic_Standards/index.html
West North Central	North Dakota	http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/standard/index.shtml
West South Central	Texas	http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/index.html
West South Central	Arkansas	http://arkansased.org/educators/curriculum.html

Note. The first two Pacific states selected were not used due to lack of Grade 11 standards. Alaska's standards are located at <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/GLEHome.html> and Washington's are at http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/EALR_GLE.aspx#EALR-GLE

Standards-related materials. Additional curricular materials include a set of curriculum maps based on the Common Core Standards, created by Common Core Inc. This group is a nonprofit organization formed to promote an elementary and secondary education rich in content and with a strong liberal arts orientation. They created approximately six content-rich units for each grade K through 12 in the English language arts, aligned with the Common Core Standards. Although expanded versions of the maps are online for a membership fee (and soon in print), the “first edition” maps remain freely available. The Grade 11 maps were analyzed since it is possible that many school districts may make use of these maps as a free replacement for existing pacing guides. According to their website (<http://commoncore.org/maps/about/locations>), more than fifty towns, school districts, or schools from all over the country are making use of these maps as of October 2011.

Policy and position statements. Policy and position statements pertaining to religion in the literature classroom were sought both from the International Reading Association and from the National Council of Teachers of English via their websites. There were no standards that addressed religion as their central topic, so each position statement was read to see if religion was mentioned as an aspect of another topic; mentions of religion were found only in position statements relating to censorship and assessment (NCTE) and diversity/cultural background (IRA).

K-12 textbooks. Another important set of texts relating to the prescribed curriculum are K-12 textbooks. Venezky (1992) refers to their power in driving curriculum. Textbooks may, in fact, prove an exceptionally fruitful source of data, for as

Elson (1964) points out, nineteenth century textbooks “both created and solidified American traditions” (vii). Even in contemporary society, Apple (1991) raises a valid point: “Whether we like it or not, the curriculum in most American schools is not defined by courses of study or suggested programs, but by one particular artifact, the standardized, grade-level-specific text in mathematics, reading, social studies, science... and so on” (p. 24). Textbooks are also useful tools in dealing with a cultural issue like religion, for, as Apple points out, the textbook is the “one artifact that plays such a major role in defining whose culture is taught” (p. 4). It is conceivable for a high school literature teacher to make do without a textbook (reading only trade books, for instance), and many, in fact, do precisely this. It is clear, however, that the literature anthology is present in many classrooms.

Three of the leading high school textbook publishers produce five textbooks used in English language arts classrooms in textbook-adoption states across the country. A smaller publisher produces the remaining title. Table 3.2 lists the books along with the number of states who have adopted each text. The *AGC Globe* is identified on the Pearson website (<http://www.pearsonschool.com/index.cfm?locator=PSZvOu>) as being targeted at struggling readers and has been adopted by very few states, consequently it was omitted from the analysis.

Table 3.2

American Literature Textbooks with National Adoption Figures

Textbook (Publisher)	Number of States
<i>Holt Elements</i> (Houghton Mifflin)	18
<i>Prentice Hall</i> (Pearson)	18
<i>Mirrors and Windows</i> (EMC/Paradigm)	16
<i>McDougal Littell</i> (Houghton Mifflin)	15
<i>Glencoe</i> (McGraw-Hill)	15
<i>AGS Globe</i> (Pearson)	7

Note. Map in Sadker and Zittleman (2009, p. 336) depicts 22 textbook adoption states. California only adopts textbooks for grades K-8 and adoption lists were unavailable for Illinois and Nevada, so data are reported for only 19 states. Full details for adoption states available in Appendix A.

The organization of each textbook is remarkably similar. Each is divided into units that progress through American literary history in chronological order. Within each unit, stories, poems, and other writing are grouped either by theme or literary movement. Each grouping usually has a mix of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, along with writing activities, and language and literary study items.

In order to answer the research question, five textbooks were examined to see whether religious material was present and how it was handled. Since the textbooks together total more than 5000 pages, each textbook was sampled in a manner designed to elicit the most religious information possible. All unit introductions (which typically contain historical and thematic information as context for the actual literary works) were analyzed as were any works that take an explicitly religious form (myth, sermon, prayer).

An initial set of authors was chosen because various scholars (such as Van Anglin and those writing in *Invisible Conversations*) have identified them as texts for which religious perspectives provide important context and understanding. These authors include the Transcendentalists, Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, and Walker Percy.

Additional authors were selected from important authors cited by American religious historians. Noll's (1992) discussion of religious literature in American religious history also includes Hawthorne, Melville, Dickinson, Twain, and Faulkner. He mentions the importance of African-American authors to this topic, so Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr were also added to the list of items to analyze. Alhstrom's (2004) American religious history suggests the Transcendentalists, the Fireside poets, the Puritans, and Native American literature as topics for sampling.

Upon initial examination of the textbooks for analysis, it was determined that no textbooks contained works by Walker Percy and the only religious forms included not already covered by other topics were spirituals (all myths were covered in the analysis of Native American texts and all sermons and prayers were covered in the analysis of Puritan literature). The final list of authors sampled in roughly chronological order is as follows: Native Americans, Puritans, the Fireside poets, Transcendentalists, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, spirituals, Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, Martin Luther King Jr., and Alice Walker.

It should be noted that the authors appearing in most high school textbooks are fairly consistent, despite the fact that neither CCSSI or IRA/NCTE national standards mandate specific authors or works to be studied in a course focusing on American literature. Most state standards are similarly nonspecific. This consistency suggests the survival of the idea that there is a canon of works that constitute the core of American literature. As Lauter (1983) points out, the canon is usually considered to be “that set of authors and works generally included in basic American literature college courses and textbooks, and those ordinarily discussed in standard volumes of literary history, bibliography, or criticism” (435). The list of authors and topics chosen for sampling was compared to a list, hoped to be representative of the current canon of American literature, compiled from the tables of contents of four widely-used collegiate American literature anthologies: *the Norton Anthology* (Baym, Franklin, Gura, & Krupat, 2007); the *Bedford Anthology* (Belasco & Johnson, 2008); the *Heath Anthology* (Lauter et al., 2005); and Perkins & Perkins (2009). All items chosen for analysis (with only three exceptions) are included in all four college-level anthologies. Those exceptions are Alice Walker (omitted from *Heath*); Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (only included in *Heath* and Perkins); and spirituals (only in *Bedford* and *Heath*). For this reason, it is fair to say that all topics chosen for sampling are texts fairly central to the American literature canon.

Preparation and Professional Development

Paralleling the selection of material from the first dimension, standards and policy/position statements were analyzed.

Standards. Institutions that prepare English teachers and are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education must use the *NCTE/NCATE Standards for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Secondary English Language Arts, Grades 7–12*.

Policy and position statements. Policy and position statements from NCTE and IRA were searched as described above. There were no statements specifically addressing the preparation of English teachers.

Methods textbooks. While it may be a reasonable assumption that American literature textbooks have a strong influence on the prescribed K-12 curriculum, especially in textbook-adoption states, the same cannot be said for the influence of English methods textbooks and the curricula of methods courses in English teacher preparation programs. However, it also cannot be said that there is no impact at all. For this reason, a sampling of English methods textbooks was necessary.

Deciding which books to review was a more daunting task, as there are a wide variety of texts in use in methods courses across the country. So that the sample would best reflect an “average” methods class, the texts chosen were restricted to books that presented a comprehensive view of teaching the English Language Arts. For this reason, books that focused on a single subject (writing, testing, or poetry, for example) were excluded as well as books that were targeted toward other college courses (young adult literature, content area reading/literacy).

Since Barrell’s general review (1996) was over a decade old, online catalogs of the major publishers (Pearson—including both Prentice Hall and Allyn &

Bacon/Longman, McGraw Hill Higher Education, Cengage—including Wadsworth, Houghton Mifflin College Division, Heinemann, NCTE Books, and the Teachers College Press Language and Literacy Series), were searched for books designed for methods courses. Initial results of the data analysis were meager, so the “single-subject” exclusion criterion was relaxed for one publisher in hopes that perhaps texts with a focus on teaching literature might include more coverage of religious issues. The publisher selected was Heinemann, due to its history as a leading publisher of professional books for English teachers and its status as publisher of important NCTE players like Carol Jago, Jim Burke, and Leila Christenbury. However, the additional texts did not add much to the analysis, so the relaxed criterion was not pursued with other publishers such as Teachers College Press or NCTE Books. The entire sample of books reviewed is listed below in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Textbooks Selected for Review

Publisher (Publisher’s Category)	Author (Year)	Title
Pearson Prentice Hall (English Methods: Secondary)	Maxwell & Meiser (2005)	<i>Teaching English in Middle and Secondary Schools</i>
Pearson Prentice Hall (English Methods: Secondary)	Milner & Milner (2003)	<i>Bridging English</i>
Pearson Prentice Hall (English Methods: Secondary)	Smagorinsky (2002)	<i>English through Principled Practice</i>
Pearson Allyn & Bacon/ Longman (Secondary English Methods)	Tchudi & Mitchell (1999)	<i>Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts</i>

Heinemann (Methods)	Burke (2003)	<i>The English Teacher's Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession</i>
Heinemann (Methods)	Christenbury (2006)	<i>Making the Journey: Being and Becoming a Teacher of English Language Arts</i>
Heinemann (Methods)	Kearns (1997)	<i>Where to Begin: A Guide to Teaching Secondary English</i>
Heinemann (Methods)	Strickland & Strickland (2002)	<i>Engaged in Learning: Teaching English, 6-12</i>
Heinemann (Methods)	Tchudi & Tchudi (1999)	<i>The English Language Arts Handbook: Classroom Strategies for Teachers</i>
Heinemann (Other)	Antinarella & Salbu (2003)	<i>Tried and True: Lessons, Strategies, and Activities for Teaching Secondary English</i>
Heinemann (Other)	Bigelow & Vokoun (2005)	<i>"What Choice Do I Have?" Reading, Writing and Speaking Activities to Empower Students</i>
Heinemann (Other)	Jago (2001)	<i>Beyond Standards: Excellence in the High School English Classroom</i>
Heinemann (Other)	Jago (2004)	<i>Classics in the Classroom: Designing Accessible Literature Lessons</i>

Curricular requirements. In order to further explore the curricula of teacher preparation programs, the curricular requirements of programs that prepare English teachers were analyzed (specifically, the list of required courses, course descriptions and any other material *publically available* on the institutional websites). According to the

NCTE website (<http://www.ncte.org/cee/ncate/institutions>), 142 programs have been nationally recognized by NCTE as part of those program’s institutional NCATE accreditation process between Spring 2004 and Fall 2010. Thirty programs were selected at random with the condition that at least two programs were selected in each of the nine U.S. Census Bureau divisions of the country.

First, the list of 142 programs was obtained from <http://www.ncte.org/cee/ncate>. After each program was labeled as to its U.S. Census Bureau division, the list was randomized using <http://random.org>, and the first thirty programs were initially selected. The total count of schools by region is shown in the Total column of Table 3.4. The initial column represents the number of schools in each region that appeared in the initial list of thirty.

Table 3.4
Selection of Programs by Region

Region	Total	Initial	After Additions	Final
East North Central	38	8	8	5
East South Central	8	0	2	2
Middle Atlantic	33	7	7	7
Mountain	5	3	3	3
New England	9	2	2	2
Pacific	2	0	2	2
South Atlantic	26	7	7	5
West North Central	1	0	1	1
West South Central	20	3	3	3
Total	142	30	35	30

In the initial list, there were three regions unrepresented (East South Central, Pacific, and West North Central). As there was only one recognized program in the West North Central region, it (Southeast Missouri State University) was added. Similarly, both Pacific programs (Alaska and Hawaii) were added. The first two programs on the randomized list from East South Central (Jackson State University at #34 and Vanderbilt University at #47) were also added. In order to return the list to 30, random.org was used to randomize the list of all schools in all divisions except New England and the three just mentioned. The first five items on this new list were then deleted, taking care not to eliminate more than one program from the West South Central or Mountain divisions. Three of these programs came from the East North Central division (Defiance College in Ohio, University of Dayton in Ohio, and Wright State University-Dayton in Ohio) and two from the South Atlantic division (Salisbury State University in Maryland and Presbyterian College-Columbia in South Carolina). The final list of institutions selected along with their religious affiliation (or lack thereof) and relative size appears in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

NCTE-Recognized Programs Selected for Analysis

Division	Institution (State)	Control	Size
East North Central	Kent State University (Ohio)	Public	Large
East North Central	Hiram College (Ohio)	Private	Small
East North Central	Lewis University, Romeoville (Illinois)	Catholic	Medium
East North Central	Otterbein College, Westerville (Ohio)	Methodist	Small
East North Central	Wheaton College (Illinois)	Evangelical	Small
East South Central	Jackson State University (Mississippi)	Public	Medium
East South Central	Vanderbilt University/Peabody College, Nashville (Tennessee)	Private	Large
Middle Atlantic	State University of New York, Geneseo	Public	Medium
Middle Atlantic	Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	Public	Medium
Middle Atlantic	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	Public	Medium
Middle Atlantic	King's College, Wilkes Barre (Pennsylvania)	Catholic	Small
Middle Atlantic	Teachers College/Columbia University (New York)	Private	Large
Middle Atlantic	Hunter College (CUNY)	Public	Large
Middle Atlantic	State University of New York, Brockport	Public	Medium
Mountain	Metropolitan State College, Denver (Colorado)	Public	Large
Mountain	University of Colorado, Denver (Colorado)	Public	Large
Mountain	University of Northern Colorado, Greeley (Colorado)	Public	Large
New England	Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven	Public	Medium
New England	University of Massachusetts, Amherst	Public	Large
Pacific	University of Alaska, Fairbanks	Public	Medium
Pacific	University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu	Public	Large
South Atlantic	Radford University (Virginia)	Public	Medium
South Atlantic	Columbia College (South Carolina)	Methodist	Small
South Atlantic	West Virginia State University, Institute	Public	Small
South Atlantic	Concord University, Athens (West Virginia)	Public	Small
South Atlantic	Towson University, Baltimore (Maryland)	Public	Large
West North Central	Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau	Public	Medium
West South Central	Arkansas Tech University, Russellville	Public	Medium
West South Central	Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond	Public	Large
West South Central	Harding University, Searcy (Arkansas)	Church of Christ	Medium

Note: Basic data concerning size and control (public/private) from the Carnegie Foundation (http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup_listings/institution.php). Based on data from institutional websites, Religiously-affiliated Private institutions are identified by their affiliation.

Practitioner journals. To represent the professional development aspect of this dimension, texts were chosen to reflect materials that practitioners would be likely to access; these include articles from practitioner journals that relate to religious issues in the teaching of literature as well as post and comments from the growing community of English teacher blogs. *English Journal* (published by NCTE), *ALAN Review* (published by the Adolescent Literature Assembly of NCTE), and the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* (published by IRA) represent the leading journals. All are indexed on the ERIC database and were searched for relevant articles in the last ten years. Due to the low number of hits, searches were extended back into the 1990s.

Blog posts and comments. The Internet is becoming increasingly important as a source of personal professional development for teachers. The interactive communities created on teacher and administrator blogs become places for exposure to new ideas. In order to analyze blog posts and comments for this study, blogs relating to the teaching of literature at the middle and high school level were identified. The first blogs selected, listed in Table 3.6, were those previously identified by this researcher (URLs for all blogs are listed in Appendix C).

Table 3.6

Initially Identified English Teacher Blogs

Blog Name	Author	Description
ChalkDust 101	Patrick Higgins, Jr.	administrator/former English teacher
Ludwig Richter's Blog	Ludwig Richter	history/literature
The Line	Dina	middle school English/technology
Fried Technology	Amy Meyer UrEnglish Teacher	English/technology
Superfluous Thoughts	Peyton Dobbs	middle school English teacher

Most blogs contain a blogroll or list of other blogs read by the blogger. These lists were checked for other blogs that meet the criteria. Additionally, the nominees for the Edublog Awards for the last two years were checked. In order to ensure as broad a selection of blogs as possible, Google's blog search engine was searched. The full set of blogs identified is listed in Table 3.7. Each blog was searched for posts relating to religious issues in the literature classroom; these posts and their related comments were analyzed. Most of the documents selected for analysis up to this point represent major players in the field, professional organizations, major publishing houses, leading researchers, and nationally recognized practitioners. The decision to explore English teacher blogs was done to attempt to explore the wider diversity that exists outside of these other key actors.

Despite their lack of traditional status, bloggers can, thanks to the world-wide reach of the Internet, still play an important role in the field as a whole.

Table 3.7

Additional English Teacher Blogs

Blog Name	Author	Description	Source
Interpolations: Thoughts on Books and Stuff	Kevin Neilson	lover of prose fiction	Richter
Novel Readings: Notes on Literature and Criticism	Rohan Maitzen	literature professor	Richter
A Commonplace Blog	D.G. Myers	critic and literary historian, Jewish Studies	Neilson
Fred's Place	Fred Runk	retired educator, books	Neilson
Bob Einstein Presents his Literary Equations	Matt Rowan	studying to be an English teacher	Neilson
Fernham	Anne Fernald	English professor/books	Maitzen
Anecdotal Evidence	Patrick Kurp	elementary teacher/literature	Maitzen
The Little Professor: Things Victorian and Academic	Miriam Burstein	English professor/Victorian religious literature	Maitzen
Necromancy Never Pays	Jeanne	director of Kenyon College Writing Center/book reviews	Maitzen
Of Books and Bicycles	Rebecca Hussey	English teacher/Books	Maitzen

Perplexed with Narrow Passages	Christopher Vilmar	Lit professor/books	Maitzen
The Scholastic Scribe: Lessons Learned in the Classroom, and Beyond	Melissa B.	H.S. Journalism Teacher	Google
Enhanced English Teacher: a blog about using technology in an English classroom	Tara Seale	H.S. English/technology	Google
Jim Burke: The English Teacher's Companion-- thoughts about teaching teens, literacy, and literature in our brave new world	Jim Burke	H.S. English (author of a methods texts and a number of professional books)	Seale
Huffenglish.com: Issues, ideas, and discussion in English Education and technology	Dana Huff	H.S. English/technology	Seale
NCTE Secondary Section	group		Burke
All Hands on Deck: Reflections on Teaching, New Literacies, & English Education in a Time of Change	Karen Labonte		Huff
Bud the Teacher: Inquiry & Reflection for Better Learning	Bud Hunt	Technology, former H.S. English teacher	Huff
Edumacation: Reflections on Teaching, Learning, and Technology	Kevin Hurt	H.S. English	Huff
Mr. B-G's English blog	Mr. B-G	H.S. English/Journalism	Hurt
Epic Adventures are Often Uncomfortable	Clix	H.S. English	Huff
Evolving English Teacher	Glenda Funk		Huff

Hedgetoad	pseud	H.S. English teacher	Huff
Hipteacher: Where a High School Teacher Goes High-Tech, Parochial, and Single-Gender in One Fell Swoop	pseud	H.S. English teacher	Huff
The Follis Files	Candace Follis	H.S. English	Huff
What's Not Wrong	Gary Anderson	H.S. English/writing	Labonte
Mary's Madness	Mary J.	M.S. English	Hipteacher
English Teacher, Too	pseud	H.S. English	Follis
Teacher in Transition	Heather Mason	M.S. English	Follis
In for Good: Personal Reflections on Teaching and Learning	Meredith Stewart	M.S. Language Arts	Follis
Hi. I'm Steve Moore. I teach. I read. I learn. I live.	Steve Moore	H.S. Reading and Writing	Follis
Birds Fly, fish swim	Steve Shann	Ed prof/former H.S. English	Follis

The Research Literature

The final dimension of the field is represented by the research literature. The leading research journal in the field is *Research in the Teaching of English*. Each issue for the last ten years was checked for articles and reviews related to religious issues in the literature classroom. Additionally, *English Education*, the journal of NCTE's Council on

English Education, was searched. None of the other constituent groups of NCTE or IRA publish relevant journals. The most recent article in either journal to deal with religious issues in the secondary English classroom was Wachlin (1997). Clearly, religion is not a major factor in the systematic inequity into the teaching and learning of English.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The documents were subjected to repeated close readings (and electronic searches, where feasible) to find explicit mentions of religious texts, religions, important religious figures, or religiously significant philosophical ideas (such as transcendentalism). The context of these mentions and references were then examined so as to evaluate the data with regards to the four research subquestions:

- How do the documents address the aim of *Religious Literacy*?
- How do the documents address religious concerns related to students' *Personal Development*?
- How do the documents support religious aspects of *Multiculturalism*?
- How do the documents handle religious issues related to *Civic Engagement*?

Finally, the documents were viewed as a whole to attempt to answer the overall research question: Based on evidence from the documents representing all three aspects of the field of English Education, to what degree is the field responding to the challenge of religious issues in contemporary America?

Rigor in Qualitative Research

According to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), at the heart of the concepts of validity and reliability in quantitative research is a concern for rigor: are data consistent and are the inferences drawn from those data valid in a particular context? There are a number of analogous concepts in qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers use the term *credibility* to refer to the truthfulness of the inquiry's findings. Strategies used in this study to bolster credibility include the use of peer debriefing (which involves the presentation of the raw data and the researcher's interpretations to an outside colleague who judges the reasonableness of the interpretation), low-inference descriptors (direct quotations from and rich descriptions of the various documents), and reflexivity (the use of self-reflection to seek out and expose researcher bias during the research process).

Trustworthiness is the extent to which variation in the replication of a study can be understood. This chapter and the next should serve as an audit trail, allowing outside researchers to assess the dependability of the procedures used and whether the findings are sensible given the data from which they were collected.

Finally, the qualitative analogue to objectivity, *confirmability* focuses on neutrality and lack of bias. Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) suggest using an audit trail (which allows another researcher to check conclusions based on the same evidence and context), peer debriefing (to provide corroboration), and reflexivity (to demonstrate lack of bias), all three of which were present in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis described in chapter three. The first three sections of the chapter present the analysis of data from three categories of documents: Curriculum documents (concerned with the first dimension of the definition of English education—the teaching and learning of English—such as K-12 standards and textbooks), Teacher Preparation and Development documents (such as NCATE/NCTE standards, English education program requirements, methods textbooks, practitioner journals and blog posts and comments), and Research documents (research journal articles).

Each of these three sections provides a rich description of the findings and a description of the documents' alignment with the four types of proposals for including religious issues in the classroom (*Religious Literacy, Multiculturalism, Civic Engagement, and Personal Development*). The final section presents a summary of the analysis and inferences about the field of English Education based on the analysis of the various documents.

Dimension One: Curriculum Documents

The documents defining the elementary and secondary English language arts curriculum at the national level are divided into two main subcategories. The first subcategory, driving the prescribed curriculum, is that of standards, the most important of which are the 1996 *Standards for the English Language Arts* created by NCTE and IRA

and the 2010 *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* created by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). In addition, this study also examined standards from eighteen states and additional curricular materials such as curriculum maps and policy and position statements. The second subcategory, which arguably may have a stronger influence on the delivered and received curriculum, consists of the K-12 textbooks.

Standards

The IRA/NCTE and CCSSI Standards have one thing in common: religious issues and religious texts do not make much of an explicit appearance in the language of the standards themselves, appearing only in supporting documentation or parenthetical examples.

IRA/NCTE Standards. While the standards themselves do not mention religion, the IRA/NCTE glossary does include religion as a factor of note in its definitions of the terms *diversity*, *ethnicity*, and *language diversity*. Additionally, the writers of the standards document elaborate on each standard with several pages of explanation and clarification. At this level of detail, there are some explicit mentions of religious texts and religious issues. In the explanation of the first standard,

Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. (p. 19),

Greek myths are mentioned as an example of texts that can be read for a variety of purposes: “as delightful, entertaining stories, as representations of mythic archetypes, or as cultural, religious, or philosophical histories of particular regions or people” (p. 20). Additionally, it is suggested that the “wide range” of texts should reflect the diversity of the United States (and the world), with religious diversity mentioned explicitly.

Since the glossary specifically includes religious diversity as an element of language diversity, the focus of the ninth standard, the explanation there is also relevant for this analysis. The study of language difference “thoughtfully allows the discovery that different cultures’ diverse ways of knowing the world are embodied in their languages,” which enables connections with other content areas, such as the exploration of, “for instance, the history of oral cultures and their many philosophical and religious traditions” (p. 29).

For many Americans, the ideas of morality, ethics, and religion are strongly linked. Because of this linkage, it is likely that the exploration of the ethical dimensions of human experience called for by standard two will require consideration of religious beliefs and ideas. The additional explanation of standard two suggests as much: “Many literary texts—not just fiction, but also essays, other prose works, plays, and poems—give students opportunities to engage in ethical and philosophical reflection on the values and beliefs of their own cultures, of other cultures, and of other times and places” (p. 22)

It also raises the possibility that an encounter with literature may cause students to reconsider their own deeply held-beliefs;

Students who have learned, through literary texts, to view their own lives and the world around them in new and different ways are *more apt to consider alternatives rather than simply accepting things as they are....* Through literary reading, students learn to think about and to *question their own perspectives*; they learn to assume different, critical stances toward events, circumstances, and issues.” [emphasis added] (p. 22)

This is certainly a statement with possible religious implications!

In summary, the IRA/NCTE standards view religion primarily as an element of diversity, making religion a part of the knowledge aspect of the curriculum, something learned about through literature and also for the purpose of understanding literature and others. As the supplementary discussion cited above makes clear, the knowledge focus in these standards is more aligned with *Multicultural* goals than with *Religious Literacy* goals (in other words, the religious material is to be learned because it is a part of other people’s lives not solely in order to enrich understanding of a given text). As the language of all of the standards falls short of endorsing study for the purposes of enriching democratic society, these standards only align implicitly with *Civic Engagement* goals, however, they are rich with the language of *Personal Development*, particularly the discussion of standard two, which implicitly includes religion as an element of ethical and personal reflection and as the object of critical thinking.

CCSSI Standards. On first examination, the CCSSI standards do not seem to reference religion or religious issues much at all. Reading Standard 9 calls for eighth grade students to “analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of

events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new” (p.37). There is a corresponding Writing Standard that asks that students apply this standard to literature (9a) and literary nonfiction (9b). Reading Standard 9 and Writing Standard 9 for ninth and tenth grade students are similar; the Reading Standard asks that students “analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare)” (p. 38). These items are the sole explicit mentions of religious texts or religious issues in the standards, both taking a low-level *Religious Literacy* approach to the use of religious texts.

There is no glossary to reveal that religion is to be understood as an aspect of culture in these standards; however, the introduction to the CCSSI Standards points out that these standards are not intended to provide a complete picture of a student’s education: “the Standards ... do not—indeed, cannot—enumerate all or even most of the content that students should learn. The Standards must therefore be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum consistent with the expectations laid out in this document” (p. 6). Therefore, the absence of other religious issues should not be taken as exclusionary. Indeed, the aims of the standards as a whole have strong multicultural elements, as demonstrated in the portrait they contain of students who meet these standards:

They come to understand other perspectives and cultures. Students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people

from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own. (p. 7)

Additionally, some of the sample performance tasks supplied in Appendix B of the CCSSI Standards suggest that these standards will require students to grapple with deep philosophical ideas and with religious symbolism:

- “Students provide an objective summary of Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* wherein they analyze how he articulates the central ideas of living simply and being self-reliant and how those ideas interact and build on one another (e.g., ‘According to Thoreau, how specifically does moving toward complexity in one’s life undermine self-reliance?’)” (p.171)
- “Students compare and contrast how the protagonists of Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd* and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* maintain their integrity when confronting authority, and they relate their analysis of that theme to other portrayals in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature they have read” (p.163)

In summary, the CCSSI standards only explicitly address religious issues in the context of a low-level *Religious Literacy*; however, the strong focus on cultural understanding could be seen as implying some alignment with the goals of *Multiculturalism*. Similarly, some of the sample performance tasks suggest an awareness that discussion and consideration of the texts might serve *Personal Development* aims, as well.

State Standards. The impact of the new CCSSI Standards becomes rapidly apparent when one examines the state standards. Of the eighteen states sampled, seven—California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, and North Dakota—have adopted them as their state standards, in some case making additions or modifications (none of which had any relevance for this inquiry). In all seven cases, the state’s previous standards were still available on the websites and were analyzed as well.

In many cases (Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Texas, and Washington), there are no explicit mentions of religious texts or other religious issues in the eleventh-grade standards; however, in all of these states, eleventh-grade standards do address cultural and historical context in various ways, and as these standards were likely produced under the influence of the IRA/NCATE standards, they could be seen as implicitly including religious issues using a *Multicultural* framework. For example, in Colorado’s 1995 *Model Content Standards Reading & Writing*, Standard 6 states, “Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience” (p.15) The rationale for this standard includes the comment, “The study of literature and writers of the United States honors the heritage and cultures of all

people who live or have lived in America, and it thus helps students develop an understanding of our national experience” (p. 15).

New York’s previous standards, the *1994 Frameworks*, rested on the 1984 Regents’ Goals, one of which explicitly included religion in a *Multicultural* context, requiring the schools to give students the opportunity to “develop the ability to understand, appreciate, and cooperate with people of different race, sex, ability, cultural heritage, national origin, religion, and political, economic, and social background, and to understand and appreciate their values, beliefs, and attitudes” (p. 60).

Some states do (or did, prior to the adoption of the CCSSI Standards) make explicit references to religion and religious texts in their eleventh-grade standards. Arkansas, California, Indiana, and Tennessee share a low-level *Religious Literacy* lens when they require students to recognize allusions to religious texts and to understand those allusions in a variety of genres including religious writings. North Dakota requires that students understand the characteristics of genre and specifically be able to analyze biography and religious or political writing. California’s, Indiana’s, and Pennsylvania’s standards all contain similar language, asking students to understand the historical context of a literary work and be able to “examine the important philosophical, religious, social, political, or ethical ideas of the time” (Pennsylvania Standard 1.3.11, p. 16).

Delaware’s standards are markedly different from those of other states, incorporating the *Understanding by Design* model of Wiggins and McTighe (2005). Figure 4.1 excerpts one standard, two of its performance indicators (along with Essential

Questions and Enduring Understandings), and their associated grade level indicators for Grade 11.

Standard 4 — Student will use literary knowledge accessed through print and visual media to connect self to society and culture

4.1c (9–12) – Connect their own experience to those of literary characters by relating to the feelings of characters or varying ages, genders, nationalities, races, cultures, religions, and disabilities.

Essential Questions: What is the relationship between reader and writer?

Enduring Understandings: 1. Different readers may respond to the same text in different ways. The better responses are those that provide that provide greater insight into the text and/or the issues raised.

Students will use 11th grade or higher texts to

- Read and analyze stories from different cultures and eras to broaden cultural awareness
- Demonstrate an understanding of the experiences and feelings of fictional characters (e.g., show empathy for, disagree with, compare to personal or other familiar experiences) based on age, gender, nationalities, races, cultures, and/or disabilities
- Compare works of literature from the same historical period written by authors from different (cultural, generational and gender) perspectives

4.3a (9–12) – Respond to literary texts and media representing the diversity of American cultural heritage inclusive of ages, genders, nationalities, races, religions, and disabilities; respond to literary text and media representative of various nations and cultures.

Enduring Understandings: 1. Great literature provides rich and timeless insights into the key themes, dilemmas, and challenges that we face. They present complex stories in which the inner and outer lives of human beings are revealed.

Essential Questions: How do texts about other ages, genders, nationalities, races, religions, and disabilities tell experiences similar to mine?

- Read and evaluate complex stories from different cultures and eras to broaden cultural awareness
- Empathize with experiences and feelings of fictional characters based on age, gender, nationalities, races, cultures, and/or disabilities
- Compare works of literature from the same historical period written by authors from different (cultural, generational and gender) perspectives

Figure 4.1: Excerpts from Delaware’s *English Language Arts Standard 4 Grade-Level Expectations*

Delaware’s standards provide a full and explicit picture of religious issues as an aspect of a *Multicultural* curriculum; additionally, the curriculum’s focus on the reader’s experience and the use of essential questions and enduring understandings also suggest a connection to the goal of the student’s own *Personal Development*.

In general, state standards provide an example of a set of documents that exemplify a variety of aims. While many omit explicit references to religious issues, many have an implicit *Multicultural* focus with only New York and Delaware explicitly including religious identity as an aspect of culture. Eight of the eighteen states contained standards with a specific *Religious Literacy* approach.

Additional Curricular Materials: Curriculum Maps. Each unit in the Grade 11 maps contains an Overview, a list of Focus Standards (taken from the CCSSI Standards), Suggested Student Objectives, Suggested Works, Sample Activities and Assessments, Additional Resources, and a Terminology glossary. Many also contain a “Mini-Map,” a sample lesson plan from the unit demonstrating differentiated instruction. The suggested works in each lesson align fairly well with those available in the textbooks reviewed below. The analysis focused on the sections Suggested Student Objectives, Sample Activities and Assessments, Additional Resources, and Terminology.

The first unit, The New World, contains a good deal of material relating to Puritan literature, and so, not surprisingly, is rich in references to religion. Three of the six objectives tackle religious topics: the impact of the First Great Awakening, the characteristics of Puritan literature, and the role of religion in early American life. Two of the tasks suggested for students also ask students to engage with religious material. One asks students to consider how typical or atypical Anne Bradstreet’s work is in comparison with other Puritan literature; another asks students to consider what aspects of contemporary American culture can be traced back to Puritan cultural influences. The

Additional Resources section points teachers to an NEH curriculum unit on Religion in Eighteenth Century America.

Later units have fewer religious connections. Religious concepts appear in Terminology sections (*deism* in The New Nation and *manifest destiny* in American Romanticism). One goal in the American Romanticism unit, asking students to define transcendentalism, should probably require some exploration of religious issues, but may not depending on how transcendentalism is discussed in the classroom. The remaining units (A Troubled Young Nation, Emerging Modernism, and Challenges and Successes of the Twentieth Century) make no mention of religious issues in Objectives, Activities, Resources, or Terminology. Some of these units do suggest texts with religious significance (spirituals in A Troubled Young Nation, for example), but that is not reflected in the components of the unit analyzed here. It seems that since religion is only mentioned in this curricular material when it is necessary to understand and fully engage with the texts being read that these maps best align with the *Religious Literacy* goal.

Additional Curricular Materials: Policy and Position Statements. This category of documents is once again most strongly categorized by the idea of absence. Other than a mention in the IRA Standards Glossary (http://www.reading.org/General/CurrentResearch/Standards/ProfessionalStandards2010/ProfessionalStandards2010_Glossary.aspx) that religion is an element of diversity and cultural background, no IRA standards mention religion. Religion is mentioned in several NCTE standards as a motivation for censorship, but the only other document to include an explicit reference to

religion is the *NCTE Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing, Revised Edition (2009)*:

We live in a multicultural society with laws that promise equal rights to all. Our school communities must work to ensure that all students, as different as they are in cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and economic background, receive a fair and equitable education.... To be fair, then, assessment must be as free as possible of biases based on ethnic group, gender, nationality, religion, socioeconomic condition, sexual orientation, or disability. (from the text of Standard 6)

This particular document is extremely difficult to assign to a category. It recognizes and celebrates religion as an aspect of *Multiculturalism*; however, the language on equal rights, laws, and equity aligns the goal of *Civic Engagement*. Additionally, the idea of assessment bias seems to recognize that different religious groups might have different *Religious Literacies*; for this reason, test items requiring religious knowledge not possessed by all should be avoided. Using the language of the *Civic Engagement* model to consolidate *Religious Literacy* and *Multicultural* concerns could provide a powerful model for other position statements.

General Comments about Standards. The prescribed curriculum, as reflected in the various standards documents and other curricular material concerned with the teaching of American literature, is primarily characterized by an absence of explicit mentions of religion. Often, references to religious issues are included (or hidden) in references to culture (and given the controversy that can arise over religion, this may, in fact, be a wise strategy). If it is assumed that references to culture in this category of

documents include religion, then the IRA/NCTE standards, many state standards, and professional policy and position statements are most strongly consistent with the ideals of *Multiculturalism* (although this may be an artifact of folding religion into culture) with some alignment with *Personal Development* aims (considering the IRA/NCTE standard on ethics, the sample CCSSI tasks, and Delaware's use of essential questions). On the other hand, the CCSSI Standards and curriculum maps, as well as a number of state standards, indicate an alignment with the *Religious Literacy* mindset where religious issues are present. With the large number of states who have recently adopted or plan to soon adopt the CCSSI standards as their state standards, it is possible that there could be a very strong shift in the way the field of English Education handles religious issues over the next decade. It should be noted, despite the specter of absence, that some of the explicit mentions of religion here demonstrate good models for the explicit inclusion of religion in the curriculum, particularly Delaware's marriage of *Multicultural* and *Personal Development* emphases. The single relevant NCTE position statement also provides an example of integrating other concerns using the language of the *Civic Engagement* model.

American Literature Textbooks

A variety of sources (Venezky, 1992; Elson, 1964; Apple, 1991, are but a few) point out that textbooks are a powerful force driving the prescribed curriculum, and their constant presence in so many high school English classrooms across the country may even suggest a stronger influence than standards. All English language arts standards reviewed for this analysis are strongly skill-focused, at best listing suggested texts. The

textbook is the artifact that provides those texts to millions of students across the country. The content of the textbooks was strategically sampled: analysis focused on unit introductions and timelines, Native American literature, Puritan literature, Transcendentalist literature, other nineteenth-century authors and genres (Emily Dickinson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, the Fireside poets, spirituals, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain), and twentieth century authors (William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Martin Luther King Jr.). After descriptions of the textbooks' treatments of each of these groups of texts, a summary of each textbook is provided, as well as a discussion of the textbooks as a whole.

Textbook Introductions and Timelines. The five textbooks reviewed share certain commonalities between their unit introductions. Each provides important historical and cultural background for the time period being studied, timelines, and relevant images. *McDougal Littell* frames each unit introduction with “Questions of the Times” to highlight important literary themes. *Holt Elements* organizes each introduction by placing all information under three Key Concepts. *Glencoe* uses a similar approach with “Big Ideas” and also features a “By the Numbers” page for each unit, depicting various infographics about the historical period in question.

Prentice Hall uses a slightly different approach by organizing the entire textbook around three framing questions:

- What is the relationship between place and literature?
- What makes American literature American? and
- How does literature shape or reflect society?

In each introduction, following a “Snapshot of the Period” (an image framed by an excerpt from a literary work from the unit) and a “Historical Overview,” each of the questions is explored through historical relevant subquestions. For example, in “The Modern Age” unit, the first question is explored through questions like “What American and non-American places especially affected American life in the first half of the twentieth century?” and “How did these places show up in the work of modern American writers?” *Prentice Hall* also makes prominent use of informational text boxes throughout the introductions to make connections with language study and other content areas.

With their general focus on providing background information and historical/cultural context, the presence of religion in the textbook introductions is most consonant with a low-level *Religious Literacy* approach, providing students with information about religion to enable them to read and understand texts that are so culturally distant from them.

Each textbooks’ treatment of religion in unit introductions is remarkably similar. The first unit in all cases includes Native American myths, stories, and songs; documents of early European explorers and settlers; and Puritan literature. Compared to later units, the introduction for the first unit in each text is uniformly strong in providing some information about religion in Native American societies (often emphasizing the importance of myth in the oral tradition) and the role of religion during the early years of European settlement (with some explanation of Puritan beliefs and values). All units point out what is explicit in one of *Glencoe*’s Key Ideas: “Religion was the most

influential cultural force on writers of this period. Puritan values and beliefs directed people's everyday lives as well as the formation of an American society" (p. 20).

Some of the textbooks, however, occasionally fall victim to mentioning ideas rather than explaining them. *McDougal Littell*'s quick coverage of the Enlightenment paints it as a purely political phenomenon, and *Holt* mentions that Puritans understood wealth as a sign of God's favor without any explanation of the history of this idea or possible problems with this view. In general, though, important religious concepts (like Puritan beliefs and the First Great Awakening) are explained in enough detail that students should be able to properly engage with the stories, poems, and nonfiction that follow, as well as be aware of possible continuing impacts. For example, *Glencoe* points out that the democratization of religion that resulted in part from the Great Awakening may have impacted the eagerness of colonists for a more democratic government.

Mirrors & Windows provides an extremely nuanced view of religion in this period. A surprisingly thorough three-page history of Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay Colony (p. 4-6) includes the typical concepts of Bradford and Winthrop, the "city on a hill" ideal, the nature of the New England theocracy, Roger Williams, and Anne Hutchison; perhaps more surprisingly, it discusses the decline of orthodoxy in New England, the struggles of defining church membership in connection with voting rights, the political impact of the events in Salem, and the Puritan persecution of Quakers. This particular text also provides a fuller account of the Enlightenment than others and religious and political impacts of the Enlightenment on the early colonists.

Mirrors & Windows is consistent in its attempts to avoid oversimplification and overgeneralization. The discussion of Native American traditions pairs its discussion of consistent threads in Native religion with a paragraph about the diversity of religious traditions in Native cultures (p.7). Similarly, it takes pains to differentiate Puritan and Quaker religious beliefs that continue to impact American cultures, and even points out that, while Puritans were not representative of most of the colonists, “nevertheless, the Puritans’ story and worldview is deeply engrained in our national consciousness” (p.27).

The textbook introductions to the next unit, which in all cases includes Romanticism, the Fireside poets, Transcendentalism, Hawthorne, and Melville, typically still contains some aspects of religion, but there are more instances of religion not being mentioned when one might expect it to be. For one example, *Holt Elements* points out that Transcendentalism has religious roots and implications, discussing the role of intuition in allowing a person to “gaze on nature and feel the presence of a Divine Soul” (p. 206) and while *Mirrors & Windows* mentions a belief in spiritual truths, *McDougal Littell* defines transcendentalism as merely a “philosophical and literary movement.” (It should be kept in mind that Ahlstrom felt that Emerson and Transcendentalism had enough religious significance to spend nearly an entire chapter on them.) As another example, *Glencoe* is the only text to mention the Second Great Awakening at all, and then only as an inspiration for the great reform movements of the antebellum period.

Specific and nuanced discussions of religion begin, with these units, to be replaced by more general and vague language like “manifest destiny” or “moral reform.” Discussions on Hawthorne and Melville mention the concepts of *sin* and *evil*, but in

contexts that suggest literary themes rather than specific religious beliefs. Religion begins to fade from the foreground. *Prentice Hall* describe Hawthorne's Hester Prynne as a type of Romantic individualist, who privileges love and honor above the repression of her society, and *Glencoe* claims that Hawthorne viewed Puritan New England as "a strange, stark world that provided a richly textured background for the explorations of the nature of good and evil in his fiction" (p. 184).

As the textbook contents move forward from the Civil War, coverage of religion decreases, often completely disappearing, suggesting that the importance of religion is something that belongs only to the distance past. (Indeed, only *Glencoe* mentions the role of religion in the fight to end slavery.) While sadly consistent with Schultz and Harvey's (2010) description of the field of American history, it ignores the important point that Franchot (1995) makes that ignoring religion distorts understanding of many important American writers and of the society in which they lived. One of the few explicit mentions of religion in later unit introductions contributes to the idea that religion has faded in modern American life: in one of *McDougal Littell's* Questions of the Times for Unit 6: Contemporary Literature (What is the American dream?") the text explains that

The Pilgrims and the Puritans dreamed of a new world where they would be free to practice their religion. Later immigrants dreamed of a country where any child could grow up to be the President. In the postwar era of the 1950s, the dream focused on consumer goods—"a car in every garage." (p. 1091)

Discussions of the civil rights movement occasionally explicitly mention religion. Both *McDougal Littell* and *Mirrors & Windows* mention the 1963 Birmingham church

bombing. With regard to Martin Luther King, only *Prentice Hall* identifies him as a pastor, and only *McDougal Littell* notes his use of the Bible as inspiration. Despite some coverage in all textbooks of Native Americans in the nineteenth century, only *Mirrors & Windows* mentions the continuing relevance of religion to Native peoples: “Oratory was used at ceremonial events to address supernatural powers and at council meetings to decide legal and political issues” (p. 439).

Frequently, the textbooks mention topics and persons with profound religious implications (Darwin, Freud, social Darwinism, abolition, Prohibition), but these implications are only addressed in vague, general terms. For instance, *Holt* mentions that Darwin’s findings led to a belief that “human beings are wholly subject to the natural laws of the universe” (p. 612), and *Mirrors & Windows* explains that “Naturalism held that people’s actions and beliefs resulted not from free will but from the arbitrary, outside forces of heredity and environment” (p. 379). Moral and ethical issues are referenced in general terms, as well; in the wake of the Holocaust, *Mirrors & Windows* mentions that “Other combatants, too, had moral issues to ponder after the war, including Japan’s destruction of Nanking, the Allied firebombing of civilian Dresden, and the United States’ dropping of a second atomic bomb” (p. 692).

Unfortunately, in later unit introductions, religion is all too often completely ignored. In *McDougal Littell* and *Prentice Hall*, topics like the struggle over slavery and the Civil War; the rise of naturalism; social Darwinism; nineteenth century Native American culture; youth culture in the Jazz Age; and the new ideas of Freud, Marx, and

Einstein pass without a single mention of religion. *Holt Elements* lacks any mention of religion in the civil rights movements in addition to the other lacunae already mentioned.

Each unit introduction contains a timeline listing important events for each period. The percentage of persons or events of possible religious significance appearing on the timeline for each time period is graphed in Figure 4.2. This graph demonstrates the general trend described above of religious matters fading from the textbooks' narratives of American history as time moves forward, although there is an interesting increase in the inclusion of religious topics in the timelines since World War II. The data set used to generate Figure 4.2, including a list of items judged to be of possible religious significance, is included in Appendix C.

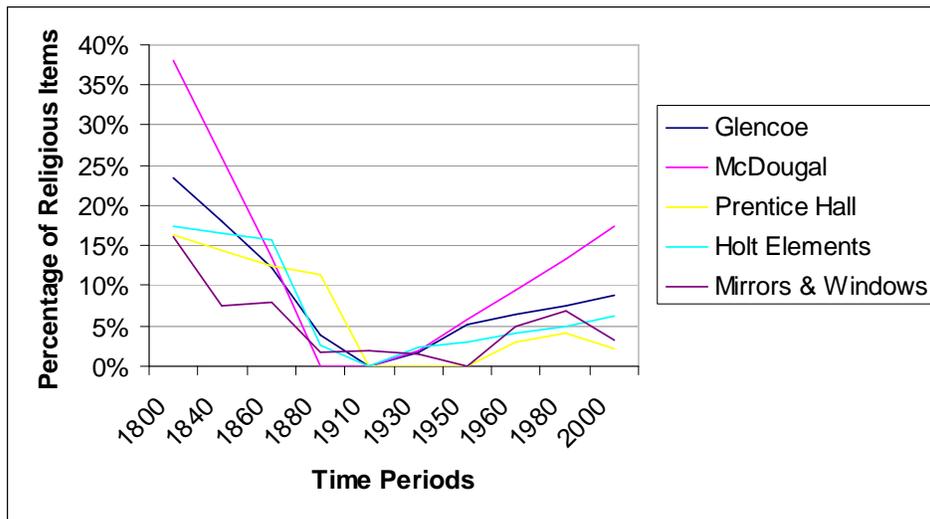


Figure 4.2: Percentage of Religiously-Significant Items on Textbook Timelines

There are a few times when the textbook introductions depart from the *Religious Literacy* model that typically predominates. The “Questions of the Times” that *McDougal Littell* uses to frame each unit are often existential questions that bring to mind *Personal*

Development approaches like that of Noddings (1993). In the unit on regionalism and naturalism, one of the questions—after pointing out that so many groups of people lived such hard lives and had little or no outlet for escape—asks “Does the universe care?” (p. 616-617). One of the questions from unit one has the potential to elicit a strong class discussion in which students are very likely to draw on their own personal religious beliefs: “Are people basically good?” The text itself frames the question around Puritan and Enlightenment answers to this question.

One of the suggested activities from Prentice Hall’s first unit has the possibility of improving *Multicultural* understanding; it asks students to extend their learning about the Puritans by researching and performing a Puritan hymn or sermon. The attempt to experience life from someone else’s perspective is much a part of multicultural ideals.

As might be expected for the most part, textbook unit introductions, when they contain information related to religion, religious beliefs and practices, and religious groups, align most strongly with the *Religious Literacy* approach, providing students with important background knowledge to prepare them to understand the authors and texts that follow. As students and teachers move forward in time, religious mentions become increasingly rare, nearly disappearing after the Civil War.

Textbook Treatment of Native American literature. All of the textbooks feature Native American myths and songs as a portion of the introductory unit of the book. The books differ to some degree in their placement of additional Native American texts. *Holt Elements*, *Glencoe*, and *McDougal Littell* all include an excerpt of N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as a selection in Unit 1 (under the headings “Link to Today,”

“Cultural Perspective,” and “Themes Across Time” respectively), while *Mirrors & Windows* places it in the Early Contemporary Unit where it is grouped with other memoirs by Gwendolyn Brooks and Maxine Hong Kingston. *Prentice Hall* also situates Momaday’s work, in this case an excerpt from his memoir *The Names*, with other contemporary memoirs. Other common Native American selections are excerpts from *The Iroquois Constitution*, Chief Joseph’s speech “I Will Fight No More Forever,” and Louise Erdich’s essay “The Names of Women.” These are usually placed in sections relating to the Revolutionary War, westward expansion, and contemporary cultural identity, respectively. *Mirrors and Windows* is the only book to provide significantly more coverage, adding a number of selections of nineteenth century Native works to contextualize Chief Joseph and attempt to capture the Native perspective to the United States’ invasion from the east.

One important commonality in all of the texts is an emphasis that Native American myths and songs should be viewed as part of a live tradition, which the introductions, biography, activities, and questions attempt to help students understand. , Several texts to place Momaday, a contemporary author in Unit 1; his memoir makes extensive use of myth, reflecting his connection with the much older texts presented it. *Holt Elements* makes this focus on a living tradition explicit and also cautions students about making generalizations about Native American cultures (p. 17). *Prentice Hall* uses commentary and an essay by another contemporary American Indian, Susan Power, to join the ancient Native American texts in Unit One with a contemporary figure. Many of the questions and activities ask students to attempt to understand and make connections

with important ideas and beliefs reflected in the texts. For example, several texts suggests students compare the creation myths they read with other accounts of creation (including Biblical and scientific accounts). In connection with a Tewa tribal song, students are asked to make a personal connection with singer by considering the question “When do you feel that you ‘walk fittingly’ on the earth? (*Mirrors & Windows*, p.16). All of this points to a strong *Multicultural* emphasis on the textbooks’ treatment of Native American cultures. It should be pointed out that the Tewa question also may provoke students to consider broader issues that may or may not have religious connections. Textbook questions for many of the topics suggest a possible connection with the *Personal Development* approach, as well.

Textbook Treatment of Puritan Literature. In general, the textbooks continue a *Multicultural* emphasis in their presentation of Puritan literature. Certainly the *Religious Literacy* approach is present as well, in annotations of Biblical and religious references and clear explanations of Puritan and other early colonial religious beliefs; however, the questions and other activities in the texts often ask students to imagine life as a Puritan, to think about things from a Puritan perspective. For example, *McDougal Littell* includes this item:

The Puritans strongly disapproved of women writers. A Puritan minister even wrote a letter to his sister in England saying, “Your printing of a book, beyond the custom of your sex, doth rankly smell.” In spite of this disapproval, do you think the Puritan community would have considered any aspects of Anne Bradstreet’s poetry praiseworthy? Explain your answer. (p.117)

Occasionally, the textbook questions approach the *Personal Development* mindset, using Puritan beliefs or texts to prompt students to consider and articulate their own beliefs and values. In connection with *Of Plymouth Plantation*, *Glencoe* asks students to discuss two questions with a partner: “How important are your beliefs and your ability to share them with others? Would you put everything on the line for a particular cause?” (p. 63). *McDougal Littell* pairs Anne Bradstreet with Edward Taylor’s poem “Huswifery” and invites students to consider the prompt “The Puritan poets you are about to read valued family life and their religious faith above all things. What do you prize most in your life?” and then to quickwrite about why they would not trade their answer for a million dollars. In an Extension activity related to the Puritans’ legacy in contemporary America, students are prompted to consider how Puritan values might impact contemporary answers to host of existential questions, like “What is true love? Why do bad things happen to good people? How can faith sustain us? How is best for humans to serve God? and “Are people basically good or bad?” (p.221). All of this exploration may aid students in conceptualizing themselves as whole persons and moving toward adult stages of social, moral, and psychological development, a mark of the *Personal Development* approach.

Textbook Treatment of Transcendentalism. Discussions of Transcendentalism in the textbooks are much clearer about the religious roots and implications of the movement than the corresponding material in the unit introductions, suggesting that the vagueness of the unit introductions is more due to a lack of sufficient space to deal with the complexities of Transcendentalism than some sort of intentional act. All five

textbooks discuss Emerson's history as a Unitarian minister, his crisis of faith, and the various philosophical and religious influences that shaped Transcendentalism. However, perhaps prompted by the nature of the works included in this section, the *Religious Literacy* and *Multicultural* approaches so prevalent in earlier portions of the textbook are eclipsed by the *Personal Development* approach. As an example of the fading of the *Literacy* approach, things that might have been annotated or explained in introductions are at times left unmarked: Margaret Fuller's mentions of the idea that woman was made *for* man or explaining why Emerson would lump Christ, Copernicus, Luther, Washington, and Franklin together in "Self-Reliance."

It is much more frequent with this movement to see questions prompting students to consider profound questions about life and society. *Prentice Hall* suggests that students consider and evaluate the balance between individuals and institutions in society, and in the same textbook, a commentary by Erlich encourages students to follow the model she learned from Emerson who, she says, "gave me permission to question everything" (p. 362). *McDougal Littell* asks students to consider whether Emerson's view of the world was accurate or if Henry James was right in criticizing Emerson for having no real concept of the evil that exists in the world. *Holt Elements* asks students to evaluate in small groups Emerson's perspective on the role spirituality should play in people's lives. Finally, *Mirror & Windows* asks students to think about why "society sometimes discourage[s] individuals from acting according to their consciences?" (p. 189). This focus on critical thinking and questioning received tradition from authority figures is very reminiscent of Nodding's (1993) proposal for creating intelligent belief

and unbelief, aligning most of the Transcendentalist material strongly with the *Personal Development* approach

Textbook Treatment of Other Nineteenth-Century Authors and Genres. Up to this point, the textbooks have provided religious issues with some attention. However, coverage of other nineteenth-century topics is much more uneven. Despite Ahlstrom's (2004) characterization of the Fireside poets as conveyers of "Unitarianism's aspiring spirit" (p.401), the textbooks focus discussion only on concepts like romanticism, American values, and moralism in connection with these writers. This is exemplified in two items about "Thanatopsis:" "Use details from the poem to determine what lessons Bryant conveys about life and nature." and "How does 'Thanatopsis' reflect Romantic notions of nature and democratic values?" (*McDougal Littell*, p. 332) Religious coverage of the Fireside poets is for the most part characterized by absence.

Hawthorne and Melville are frequently conjoined in the textbooks as "dark romantics" or "American gothicists." However, Hawthorne receives much more attention than Melville in all five textbooks. Melville is typically represented by a short excerpt from *Moby Dick* and the introductions and questions attached to the excerpt do not delve into the religious allusions, symbolism, or implications of the text. Hawthorne is represented in all five texts by "The Minister's Black Veil." The handling of the excerpt in terms of author biography, introductions, questions, and activities is very consistent with the handling of Puritan literature described above. Religious information needed to understand the story (*Religious Literacy*) is provided by comments like "Puritans believed human beings were sinful by nature and deserved eternal punishment but that

God had ‘elected’ some people to be saved” (*Glencoe*, p. 279). Activities attempt to help students understand a different culture and adopt a different mindset (*Multiculturalism*): “Imagine you are a Puritan teenager. How do you feel about yourself and the world around you? Write a brief journal entry describing your thoughts, actions, feelings about your community or a similar topic” (*Mirrors & Windows*, p.253). There is the occasional question that asks students to contemplate existential issues: “Do you ever wear a ‘veil’ to hide or distance yourself from others? At what cost?” (*Glencoe*, p. 278).

Emily Dickinson, as befits her status as a monumental American poet, receives a good deal of coverage in the textbook. However, connections with religion vary widely from textbook to textbook. *Prentice Hall* mentions nothing about religion in any of the biographical materials, introductions, questions, and activities relating to Emily Dickinson. On the other hand, *McDougal Littell* describes her use of hymn meter and her unconventional religious views: the biography tells of her departure from Mt. Holyoke because of her resentment of “the intense pressure she felt there to join the church. All her life, Dickinson felt torn between her own convictions and the religious beliefs of those around her” (p. 524). *Mirrors & Windows* also considers the religious context of many of Dickinson’s poetry in an introductory box:

As a member of a solid New England family, Emily Dickinson was immersed in the Puritan tradition, and for many years, she attended church services twice each Sunday. Many of her poems deal with religious subjects, often with questions about the relationship of the individual soul to God and about immortality and the afterlife. (p. 358)

Glencoe too mentions, in the biography, the pressure to be “an outspoken Christian” and her love of “shockingly secular” books (p. 437). Curiously, *Holt Elements* suggests her departure from Mt. Holyoke was primarily due to homesickness but points out that she often questioned and challenged authority and that her “explorations of abstract concepts, such as truth and the soul, reveal profound insights” (p. 549). Despite the possible evasion of religious content this implies, a later question asks students to consider how her poems reflect her concern with faith. For the most part, religious material related to Dickinson (when it appears) is providing important background information (the *Religious Literacy* approach). On one occasion, Dickinson’s poetry is used to spark existential inquiry in students: “Emily Dickinson has a great deal to say about death and dying. But does she—or any other poet—speak for you? What do you think about such weighty matters as death, success, and solitude? What is your truth?” (*McDougal Littell*, p. 525)

The final two nineteenth century subjects—spirituals and Mark Twain—match up the pattern of the textbook unit introductions. Moving forward into the nineteenth and twentieth century, religion begins to disappear. In most of the textbooks, political and practical aspects of spirituals are stressed rather than religious aspects. While some religious allusion are annotated, these annotations sometimes fall short: *Prentice Hall* explains the location of the Jordan River in a footnote to “Go Down, Moses,” but there’s no indication of why “crossing the Jordan” was such an important metaphor to imprisoned slaves. Only *Glencoe* attempts to help students understand the religious culture of antebellum slavery and its implications for understand the full meaning of

spirituals like “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Go Down, Moses:” “In spirituals, African Americans were depicted as the beloved children of a just and mighty God, destined for freedom” (p. 345). Continuing with this *Multicultural* approach, students are encouraged to connect to the spirituals by considering the question “What music do you turn to for inspiration or comfort?” (p. 345).

The textbook treatments of Mark Twain are nearly absent of religious content. What does appear are *Literacy*-oriented footnotes annotating comments about camp meetings in “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” in all five textbooks. Twain’s religious views are mostly left unremarked, even though the excerpt in all five textbooks from *Life on the Mississippi* is full of Twain’s typical wit as he tells a story where Sunday school values are turned upside down and sarcastically remarks on the “partiality of Providence.” A similar comment represents the entire Expanding Frontiers 1865-1910 unit in *Mirrors & Windows*, a quote pulled from Twain’s discussion of the Filipino rebellion: “and so by the Providences of God—and the phrase is the government’s, not mine—we are a World Power” (p. 378). Without additional assistance (annotations or discussion in an introduction), are students prepared to understand Twain’s pointed critique at institutionalized nineteenth-century religion and its role in supporting American imperialism?

In summary, the textbooks’ treatment of the nineteenth-century topics sampled (aside from Transcendentalism) is mostly characterized by absence with the exception of Nathaniel Hawthorne whose Puritan subject matter perhaps entitles him to the same sort of treatment which Puritan literature received. Some (but not all) textbooks correctly

characterized Emily Dickinson's religious idiosyncrasies. However, Melville, Twain, and spirituals are presented without much attention to religious matters.

Textbook Treatment of Twentieth Century Authors. Based on the pattern observed in the textbook unit introductions, one would expect to find little explicit coverage of religion in twentieth century authors; however, for the authors chosen for this analysis (with two exceptions), there are some interesting findings. The first exception is William Faulkner: true, *McDougal Littell* mentions of him in his biography that "his themes often resonate with the thunder of the Old Testament, and his stream-of-consciousness narratives wander around the dark labyrinths of the heart and mind" (p.1018); however, the works included in all the anthologies ("A Rose for Emily" and an excerpt from his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech) hardly exemplify Faulkner's tendency toward Old Testament thunder, and there are no other annotations, questions, activities, or textboxes with religious relevance in connection with Faulkner in any of the texts. The second exception is Alice Walker. There are no substantive references to religion in any of the textbooks even though four of the five textbooks chose a different work of Walker's to include: an excerpt from *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens* (*Holt Elements* and *McDougal Littell*), "A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." (*Glencoe*), "My Mother's Blue Bowl" (*Mirrors & Windows*), and "Everyday Use" (*Prentice Hall*).

It is impossible to study Flannery O'Connor without discussing religion. All of the textbooks include O'Connor's story "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," and each textbook mentions her Catholic faith. In a rather dramatic introduction, *Holt Elements* says

A thunder-and-lightning Christian ideology fills every story and novel she wrote. Her attraction to the grotesque and the violent puts off some readers who fail to appreciate that the violent motifs in her short stories and novels grow from her passionate Christian vision of secular society. (p. 938).

Each textbook also engages students in exploring religious imagery and symbolism from the story (Shiftlet's arms forming a crooked cross or the comparison of Shiftlet to a snake) and in connecting the title with various conceptions of grace. The annotations, biographical material, and some of the reading questions take a *Religious Literacy* approach, ensuring students have the knowledge needed to understand the text. However, some of the questions take a *Multicultural* approach inviting students who do not share O'Connor's religious views to speculate about her intentions in this sort of story: *Holt Elements* asks "Why might a devout Christian like Flannery O'Connor be drawn to characters without a spiritual center, like hypocrites and swindlers?" Another more extended essay-writing activity asks students to consider the significance of the title and look for evidence from the text to determine how O'Connor judges Shiftlet, considering "how he is potential savior of his own life and others, how and why he fails, and whether he has any redeeming features or hopelessly lost" (p.1044). Both of these tasks require students to attempt to imagine life from the point of view of someone (a devout Catholic surrounded by evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants) who, in all likelihood, is very religious and culturally different: a solid example of the aims of *Multiculturalism*.

Religious information features in the textbooks' presentations of Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin, in both cases, following a low-level *Religious Literacy*

approach. Four of the textbooks carry an excerpt from Hurston's autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (*McDougal Littell* instead has an essay with no religious connections). The autobiographical excerpt in all four texts features Hurston's humorous description of her favorite Bible stories. Each of the textbooks carefully annotates her references to provide requisite Biblical knowledge to explain her story. The only question relating to religion (in *Glencoe*) asks students to review the concept of *allusion* and use Hurston's allusions to David to draw a comparison between the two characters. The introductions, biographies, and pre-reading questions in the five textbooks for James Baldwin's story "The Rockpile" mention Baldwin's religious background and prepare students for religious references in the story, additional evidence of *Religious Literacy*.

Textbook treatment of religion and Martin Luther King, Jr. is fairly similar to that of Hurston and Baldwin. Working from a *Religious Literacy* perspective, biographical details and annotations in four of the five texts provide students with the information they need to properly understand the excerpts presented from King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (slightly different selections from the letter are included in four of the textbooks, while *Glencoe* uses a passage from *Strike Toward Freedom* with similar themes). King's background as a minister and his use of the New Testament, Thoreau, and Gandhi as inspiration are described in four of the biographies, and four of the textbooks explain via annotation the Biblical and religious allusions King makes in the letter. Most curiously, *Holt Elements* makes absolutely no mention of religion in King's biography, citing his inspirations as Thoreau and Gandhi. The excerpt from the letter in this textbook contains no Biblical allusion, and neither the introduction nor the questions

point out the religious context for the letter itself. King wrote the letter in response to a “Call for Unity” issued by white clergymen that painted him as an outside agitator. Understanding the religious context for this letter could allow for examination of why he chose particular religious allusions and what their possible significance might have been to King and to white clergymen to whom he was responding. This is an excellent example of a missed opportunity to promote *Religious Literacy*.

Summaries of Each Textbook. It is very difficult to make comments that explain how each textbook differs from the general discussion above. A particular omission or approach with one topic does not imply that all topics will suffer similar omissions or take the same approach. For example, *Prentice Hall* is the only textbook to mention that King was a pastor in its unit introduction dealing with the civil rights movement; however, it also completely omits any mentions of religion in its coverage of Emily Dickinson. Similarly, while *McDougal Littell* is the only textbook to make use of the *Personal Development* approach in its unit introductions, it provided the best example of an exercise with a *Multicultural* orientation for the Puritan period. This variability may be an artifact of sampling; it is possible that an analysis of the entire textbook would provide stronger evidence to draw some sort of conclusion. It is also possible that this variability is an artifact of the textbook production process: each textbook lists upwards of twenty authors/editors. The presence of so many authors could make it difficult for a text to maintain a consistent approach to religious issues (or indeed any issue).

Taking all of that into consideration, the discussion above does seem suggestive that *Prentice Hall* and *Holt Elements* are somewhat less inclusive of religious content

than the other three textbooks: *Prentice Hall* and *Holt Elements* both lack coverage of religious issues in the later unit introductions and both strangely omit religious factors in the biographies of important authors (Dickinson for *Prentice Hall* and King for *Holt Elements*).

General Comments about Textbooks. The results of this analysis suggest that the prescribed curriculum for American literature, as reflected in textbooks, contains religious issues. In the early units, religious content is dominant and explicit, but as teachers and students progress through the book, the religious content becomes vague and often disappears entirely (a similar approach should be noted in the Common Core curriculum maps discussed above). In general, when religious material is present, textbooks are predominantly consonant with the *Religious Literacy* approach: religious content is important inasmuch as it aids student understanding of the texts. When the texts originate from a strongly religious environment (like ancient North America or Puritan New England), the textbook focus often becomes more *Multicultural*: the religious aspects of the texts and indeed the texts themselves become a window through which students can begin to understand another culture. Examples of the *Personal Development* approach appear occasionally in the textbooks which may be reflective of the fact that English as a field has a “deep prehistory” (according to Wilhelm and Novak, 2011) of sympathy for humanistic approaches to education. The *Personal Development* mindset appears most clearly in the material related to Transcendentalism, a likely cause is that the Transcendental texts (usually by Emerson and Thoreau) selected for students to

read, by their very nature, prompt self-reflection and deep consideration of important issues.

However, it must be said that for any of the approaches, textbooks are not providing thorough coverage of religious issues. For instance, tasks and questions related to *Personal Development* with explicit connections to religious issues appear only occasionally, a more consistent approach would produce more consistent growth. The absence of any references that might connect to the *Civic Engagement* goal is shocking. While this study did not examine the sections of the textbook where one might find texts written by the “Founding Fathers” (usually called something along the lines of “A New Nation”), it is unlikely that were *Civic Engagement* a major theme, it would have been absent from the sampled texts altogether.

From both a *Religious Literacy* and a *Multicultural* approach, the textbooks fall far short of providing students with a thorough (or even a general) introduction to the religious diversity of this nation. Based on the analysis of the unit introductions and on the literature review that guided the selection of sample authors and topics, the important religious figures in American literature are apparently Protestants (mostly Puritans) or something more aligned to Wuthnow’s “spiritual shoppers” (like the Transcendentalists or Emily Dickinson). Other faiths may receive a nod, a Quaker here or a Catholic there, but there is no attempt to explore other faiths or other varieties of Christianity. There is little discussion of colonial Quakers and none about Anabaptists. Only one textbook mentions the Second Great Awakening, and after that religion pretty much vanishes. There is a mention that religious groups in the north opposed slavery, but no indications

that numerous southern churches supported it vociferously. Where are the distinctly American Mormons? Where is the religiously-motivated conflict that cropped up throughout the nineteenth century? The important role that Jewish writers and thinkers have played in American society is also invisible.

General Comments about the Curriculum

Considering all of the curriculum documents as a whole as a representation of one of the three dimensions of the field of English Education leads to some interesting conclusions. Religion is a definite part of the prescribed American literature curriculum. The level of importance varies based on the particular texts being studied, with a general trend of texts being seen as less religious over time. Because religious issues are often considered a characteristic of the text, author, or author's culture, knowledge about religions and the religious individuals and cultures is an important part of the curriculum. When religious matters are considered at all, the *Religious Literacy* approach is the dominant thread in this class of documents (albeit mostly at a knowledge-level rather than at a synthesis- or analysis-level); however, the documents cannot be characterized as providing a full and complete picture of religious literacy, given the many absences and omissions that characterize both textbooks and the standards documents.

Curiously, in a curriculum concerned with American culture and American society, religious concerns related to *Civic Engagement* are almost completely absent in the curriculum documents. Because cultural diversity is an important curricular consideration (given the focus of many standards documents on multicultural ideals) the religious aspects of *Multiculturalism* are part of the curriculum; however, given the

implicit nature of religious inclusion in the majority of standards documents and its far-from-ubiquitous presence in the textbooks, one cannot say it is a major portion of the curriculum.

Given the fact that students themselves have religious (or nonreligious) identities, religious considerations will likely appear in the curriculum when students encounter big questions. As such questions appear occasionally in these documents with explicit religious mentions, the contribution of religious issues to *Personal Development* is a small thread in the curriculum—minor, but not unimportant.

Dimension Two: Teacher Preparation and Development Documents

Documents sampled to capture a representative snapshot of the process of teacher preparation include the NCTE Standards used in the NCATE accreditation process, policy and position statements from NCTE and IRA, documents describing program-requirements for nationally recognized English Education programs, and a sample of methods textbooks. The documents chosen to provide a glimpse of ongoing teacher development were articles from practitioner journals and posts and comments from English teacher blogs.

NCTE/NCATE Standards

There are no mentions of religious issues in the *NCTE/NCATE Standards for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Secondary English Language Arts Grades 7–12*. However, as discussed above, the glossary to the IRA/NCTE curriculum standards includes religion as an element of cultural diversity, so it stands to reason that this

document may also consider religion as an element of culture. Several standards do mention culture. Standard 2.0 which focuses on Candidate Attitudes, notes that appropriate professional attitudes will be demonstrated when candidates “(2.2) use ELA extensively and creatively to help their students become more familiar with their own and others' cultures” and “(2.5) make meaningful and creative connections between the ELA curriculum and developments in culture, society, and education” (p. 3-4). Their knowledge of the English language and its variation will (3.1.4) manifest itself through instruction and assessment sensitive to language variation across cultural groups. Their knowledge of reading processes will enable them to (3.3.2) help students use their social and cultural knowledge to understand texts. Finally, they also have the pedagogical skills to “create opportunities for students to analyze how social context affects language and to monitor their own language use and behavior in terms of demonstrating respect for individual differences of ethnicity, race, language, culture, gender, and ability.” For the most part, all of the standards dealing with culture (and implicitly religion) are aligned firmly with *Multicultural* goals.

The one exception to this *Multicultural* alignment is standard 3.5.2 which requires students to have knowledge of literature from a wide variety of cultures. This goal, on its face, requires knowledge for the sake of being able to teach specific texts, which is a variation on the *Religious Literacy* model, especially in the context of the other goals under 3.5. These goals require knowledge of a broad spectrum of historical and contemporary American literature, British literature, world literature, non-Western

literature, women's literature, literature by authors of color, children's literature, and young adult literature.

Policy and Position Statements

There were no policy or position statements on NCTE or IRA websites specifically addressing religious issues in the preparation of English teachers. This is again, a bit surprising, considering possible religious problems that a teacher of literature might encounter.

Curricular Requirements

The program requirements examined for this study had many commonalities. Typically, required courses for future English teachers come from both the English and Education departments with slightly more courses provided by the English departments. Following the NCTE/NCATE standards described above, it is typically a requirement that some course content address multiculturalism; most English departments achieve this by providing a menu of courses focusing on various cultural/ethnic groups or on women's literature and requiring students to choose a required number of these courses. Future English teachers are also typically required to take a course on young adult literature, and like all teacher candidates at NCATE accredited institutions, their education course work is required to have a strong focus on diversity. These requirements specifically provide places where one might expect some coverage of religious issues; however, only eight institutions of the thirty sampled made explicit mention of religious texts or issues in requirements, course titles, or course descriptions.

At the majority of the institutions that do specifically mention religious issues, that mention occurs in connection with one or more of the courses on the multiculturalism menu. Table 4.1 summarizes the institutions for whom this is true.

Table 4.1

Institutions That Include Religious Topics in Multicultural Literature Classes

Institution Name	Type of Choice	Course Titles	Religious Connection
SUNY Geneseo	Choose 1 of 9	ENGL 237 Voice and Perspectives ENGL 267 Non-Western Literature	Contextual factors include religion Islamic literature mentioned as possible topic
	Required	ENG 236 British Lit. I	will discuss religious questions that influenced writers
Shippensburg Univ. of Penn.	Choose 4 of 16	ENG 256 Introduction to Mythology	mentions the impact of religious changes on 18 th century literature
		ENG 377 Studies in Restoration/18 th Century Lit. ENG 378 Studies in Early American Lit.	
King's College, Wilkes Barre	Choose 5 of 13	ENGL 355 Victorian Lit.	includes a focus on religious change
		ENGL 363 American Realists	will attend to a variety of matters, including religion
Kent State University	Choose 1 of 6	ENG 21001 Introduction to the Ethnic Literature of the United States	includes Jewish writers
Southern Connecticut State Univ.	Required	Literature of the Ancient World	see note below
Hunter College (CUNY)	Choose 1 of 2	ENG 320 Multi-Ethnic American Literature	some sections include Jewish writers
Towson University	Choose 1 of 6	ENGL 239 Jewish Literature of the 19 th and 20 th Centuries	
	Choose 1 of 7	ENGL 341 History and Literature of the Old Testament ENGL 343 Myth and Literature	

Note: Students at Southern Connecticut State are required to choose one of the following classes to satisfy the requirement for Literature of the Ancient World: LIT 300 Literature of the Hebrew Bible, LIT 302 Literature of the New Testament, LIT 310 Mythology, LIT 311 Norse and Celtic Mythology, or LIT 406 Classical Drama: Greek and Roman.

While various English departments may have a variety of purposes for offering these courses, they are being required for future English teachers to satisfy NCTE/NCATE standard 3.5.2. Standard 3.5 requires that “Candidates demonstrate knowledge of, and uses for, an extensive range of literature. As a result, [at the Target level] candidates demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of, and an ability to use, varied teaching applications for: ... (3.5.2) Works from a wide variety of genres and cultures, works by female authors, and works by authors of color” (p.8). As the standard is presented, this candidate knowledge is knowledge for its own sake—for the understanding and interpretation of texts. Therefore, all of the English department requirements above fall under the category of *Religious Literacy*.

Radford College requires a course in its education department called EDU 318 Moral and Political Foundations of Teaching which is “designed to develop understanding of public education in the United States from historical, sociological, political, and moral perspectives.” While not explicitly religious, this was the only education course description required of future English teachers in the 30 programs sampled to even come close to mentioning religious issues. With its focus on legislation and court cases, this course probably hews most closely to the *Civic Engagement* goal.

Methods Textbooks

A sample of methods textbooks were reviewed to provide another glimpse into the preparation of English teachers. Generally speaking, the texts reviewed should do an excellent job of preparing future English language arts (ELA) teachers for life in their classrooms. Most books cover a wide range of topics and are about evenly split between

those in which literature occupies a central place in the curriculum and those in which literature is but one aspect of the entire classroom. All of these features give methods instructors many options in selecting a text (or several texts) for methods courses in teacher preparation programs. Unfortunately, the issues under review in this particular study were not as widely covered. In addition to looking for explicit mentions of religious texts, religions, religious beliefs and practices, and religious groups, additional topics were reviewed to attempt to capture any implicit inclusions of religious issues. These additional topics were connections with the community (for possible indicators of coping with religious diversity) and existential issues (for possible connections with *Personal Development*).

Community Connections. Several texts urge teacher candidates to have their students make connections with their communities, but only one really comments on the possible difficulties that religious diversity can pose. Tchudi & Tchudi (1999) make several simple suggestions, such as having students write for a real audience: town councils, local business leaders, and service organizations (p. 145-147). Candidates are encouraged to consider service learning as a component of units during planning (p. 32) and to make writing a vital part of such projects (p. 172-173). The authors also give practical advice for the candidate about connecting with communities in a professional and positive way (p. 254-256). Burke (2003) makes the community an important part of the ELA curriculum. An entire chapter is devoted to Service Learning (p. 350-360). He describes a program wherein his high school juniors made a connection with a kindergarten class. The students wanted to provide all of the children books, and so they

had to write grants and meet with potential funding sources. The project was an overwhelming success for everyone involved. Burke also spends some time on the need for professional teachers to make personal connections with the communities they serve (p. 454-457).

For Smagorinsky (2002), the relationship between the teacher candidate and the community underlies much of good teaching. He alone cautions candidates about the difference between the values of the university environment and the values of most public schools, sharing the story of a young teacher who was fired due to a clash of values (p. 46-47). He goes on to mention the need for sensitivity to the community in many contexts: selection of materials (p. 54-56), planning (p. 104-105, 172-173), multiculturalism (p. 290), and character education (p. 304-305).

Despite a widespread awareness of the importance of connecting to the local community, there is little to no mention of the implications of dealing with religious diversity, even Smagorinsky talks only of “values.”

Existential Issues. Several texts encourage teachers to have students explore existential concerns. Burke (2003) provides an entire chapter on the teaching of ethics (p. 390-396), as well encouraging candidates to construct units that provide students a chance to explore relevant themes in their own life. Smagorinsky (2002)’s unit approach is similar, and he also encourages character education (p. 302-312). He calls for teachers to re-examine their thoughts about character education in order to break out of a didactic individualist approach and use units to promote community-oriented reflective development of character. Christenbury (2006) also includes a chapter on the teaching of

ethics (p. 274-287), and she encourages candidates to create a classroom environment conducive to the discussion of big issues. Jago (2004) pushes candidates to grapple with existential concerns themselves: Why teach literature? and What do we hope our students will get out of it?

To be fair, almost all of the texts, while making no explicit mentions of these types of issues, do contain advice and instruction to create a classroom where students would feel safe and possibly even encouraged to discuss important issues of existential concern (such as “Who am I?” or “Who am I becoming?”). It is true that while not all existential questions are religious in nature, students having these types of conversations may bring up religious topics, and none of texts provide guidance on navigating religious discussions.

Inclusion of Religious Texts. Despite the importance of the Bible to the western literary tradition, only Burke (2003) and Smagorinsky (2002) make mention of using the Bible in class. Burke (2003) discusses using the Bible in several ways in his chapter on ethics. He mentions using the Bible as story to illuminate allusions in *Lord of the Flies* and *Cry, the Beloved Country*, but he also uses it to study cultural similarities and differences. He asks students to identify the sources of passages about Moses, Noah, Jesus, and Mary: do the passages come from the Old Testament, the New Testament, or the Koran (p. 393)? Smagorinsky (2003) similarly uses the Bible as a source of texts. In the sample units he offers throughout his text and on his website, he chooses, when appropriate, a Biblical story that relates to the same theme; for example, the story of the Golden Calf (from Exodus) could be used in a unit about conflict with authority (p. 369).

(Of the 64 units offered, 11 feature Biblical selections to accompany them). Other sacred texts are completely absent from the methods texts (barring Burke's mention of the Koran). The methods texts also lack any explicit discussion of the religious issues and references present in frequently taught canonical texts such as *The Canterbury Tales* (although an argument could be made that Smagorinsky's suggested unit on the Puritan ethic [p. 41, 401-402] would require some discussion of the nature of Puritan religious beliefs, it is not expressly stated in that way).

Coverage of Explicitly Religious Issues. The only materials in the methods texts reviewed in this section that deal explicitly with issues of religion are already mentioned above. Once again, Burke (2003) and Smagorinsky (2002) are the only two authors of that have explicit mentions of issues relating to religion in any context other than censorship. As mentioned above, Burke uses the Jewish Scriptures, the Christian New Testament, and the Koran in order to help his students begin a conversation about cultural diversity (p. 393), while Smagorinsky encourages candidates to use Biblical stories as part of thematic units and to be aware of religious beliefs in their communities. Both authors encourage the use of religious texts in the study of character and ethics.

Any religious issues in the methods textbooks are, for the most part raised only implicitly. The discussion of ethics in Smagorinsky (2002), Burke (2003), Jago (2004), and Christenbury (2006) implicitly depict religious issues as part of students' *Personal Development*. Smagorinsky's community focus and use of religious texts also depicts religious awareness as an important component of teachers' *Personal Development*, but his language of sensitivity and focus on community relationships also aligns his book

closely with the *Civic Engagement* goal. Burke's uses of religious texts depict religion as a knowledge element of the curriculum and align his book with the *Religious Literacy* and *Multiculturalism* goals. In summary, however, the methods textbooks for the most part fall into the category of absence. The methods textbooks send a clear message to prospective teachers that religious knowledge or sensitivity to religious diversity and its impact on democratic society are irrelevant to the teaching of English language arts at the high school level.

Practitioner Journals

Following a 1997 research article (the most recent in *Research of the Teaching of English* to address religious issues), in which she finds that the Bible occupies a very small place in the literature curriculum, Wachlin (1998) makes a subsequent argument in the pages of *English Journal* that the Bible needs to be taught more frequently. She cites a variety of sources (including E.D. Hirsch) to make clear the importance of Biblical knowledge for the understanding of both Western culture and American and British speech and writing. Carter (2002) agrees; however, as an afterthought, he suggests the use of the Hebrew scriptures and the Koran in classrooms might help students develop insight into other cultures.

Religion is included as an important component of culture that teachers need to address in their classrooms by several authors. Reese (2002) teaches world literature at an international school and shares his experiences attempting "to foster openness to other cultures, religions, and ways of being" (p. 63). Atiyat (2006) discusses her clothing choices as a Muslim woman and her use of literature to help her students understand her

perspective. With the explicit goal of providing students with a more accurate conception of Islam and Islamic world, Phelps (2010) uses techniques of critical literacy with his students. Similarly, Baer and Glasgow (2010), who position themselves firmly in the multicultural tradition, use young adult literature and experiential activities to teach their students about Muslim cultures.

Other articles occasionally mention religious issues from the teacher's perspective, focusing on ways to handle potential difficult matters. Branham (1998) discusses the potential minefield that can erupt in the teaching of the role of the Enlightenment in shaping American culture; her suggestions, like the texts she champions, embody ideals central to the political and cultural framework of American democracy; these teaching ideas include an exploration of ethics through keeping of a Ben-Franklin-style journal, an analysis of deism in the words of Thomas Paine, and discussion of essays by Locke and Rousseau and exploring their impact on American government and public life. Sullivan (1997) points out that classroom teachers may need to both be aware of and to combat misconceptions about various ethnic and religious groups perpetrated in novels used in class; Sullivan takes particular issue with what he views as an almost libelous portrait of Shakers in Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die*. An essay by Williams (2005) explores possible reactions when students write about religious topics in a secular classroom setting, although her setting is the college classroom, her thoughts and concerns are relevant for high school teachers, as well. Her essay provides a sensitive look at the cultural boundaries that separate many teachers

from their most-deeply religious students and provides modeling in ways to cross that barrier with sensitivity.

Another group of articles came from two special issues of *English Journal* focusing on ethics. Christenbury (2008) places ethics at the center of the English teacher's practice; while this is a deeply felt powerfully-written article, the only real connection to religion she makes is to note that "the consideration of questions of morality and ethics, of right and wrong is not confined to churches and mosques and synagogues; it also exists outside religious frameworks, notably in the schools and in teaching" (p. 32). Nelms (2008) finds the English classroom to be the place where the exploration of existential questions leads to the shaping of future citizens and the building of civic literacy. Lindblom (2011) explores the meaning of an ethical response to the events of 9/11 in a wide-ranging essay that touches on imagination, world religions, ethics of science and teaching, coping with fear, and promoting empathy. Using a *Multicultural* mindset: he asks, "How has your English class helped students to better appreciate differences and similarities among peace-loving religions?" (p.12-13). He also hopes that the efforts of English teachers can help students "better understand how people who are not much like them live" (p. 13). VanDeWeghe (2011) proposes centering the English curriculum on the values of mindfulness, unity, and compassion, to accomplish the multicultural goals of helping students understand those who are different but also with the idea that these values will help students develop to their fullest potential: "envisioning a good literacy education as one that prepares students not only for college and career but also for life" (p.32). Vaughn (2011) describes a unit designed to help in

“spreading awareness and changing attitudes so that we can find common human understanding” (p.66). He seeks, through teaching what he calls the literature of war, to explore global perspectives on ethics and help students understand those who are different, mentioning politics, age, race, class, gender, and religion as topics that students need to understand more deeply.

Several articles discuss religious issues in the context of young adult novels. Radley (2001) points out that many authors avoid spiritual issues to avoid conflict and controversy but also describes the authorial strategy of placing the protagonist on a spiritual journey, concluding that this approach has merits as it allows adolescent readers to explore and develop their beliefs along with the protagonist, rather than simply being told what to believe. Also working from the perspective that teens’ identity development often includes interest in religious issues, Mitchell (2005) reviews the relatively few young adult novels with explicitly religious themes. An updated review covering religious themes in young adult novels published in the interim was provided by Letcher (2011).

Two articles concerning the role of religion in young adult novels use a *Religious Literacy* framework, but each has a unique approach. Thomas (2003) provides a number of reasons for teachers to consider teaching the genre of fantasy novels. He recommends C.S. Lewis’s Narnia books on the grounds of their religious symbolism and connections with Dante and Spenser, citing *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* in particular as “an ideal companion to any literature class in which the Christian Bible and its influences on literature are studied” (p. 61) A YA author herself, Donna Jo Napoli (1997) discusses

the role fairy tales, myths, and religious stories play in her works. She says she uses these foundation stories because they “deal with the very heart and soul of humanity” (para. 9). Rather than the usual literacy mindset that stories are important for their impact on other stories, she explains the reason they have such enduring appeal.

As might be expected, there are a wide variety of views expressed in practitioner journals; it should also be noted that articles relating to religious issues in these three journals are not common. A comparison of the number of articles relating to various aspects of multicultural identities is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Number of Articles Returned by a Search of English Education Journals from 1998 to 2011 Using the ERIC Database

Topic	<i>English Journal</i>	<i>ALAN Review</i>	<i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i>
<i>relig*</i>	9	1	6
<i>sexuality</i>	12	2	6
<i>gender issues</i>	14	3	13
<i>race</i>	17	3	8
<i>homosexuality</i>	30	4	4
<i>culture</i>	106	15	97
<i>Total published articles</i>	1283	191	815

Note: The Total row reflects a search restricted to the particular journal in the years 1998 and 2011 with no topic specified, which should represent the total number of articles indexed for the period.

As with the methods texts, the most prominent category is one of absence. With some exceptions, most of the articles with mentions of religious issues promoted religion as an aspect of *Multiculturalism*. The articles that did not use either the *Religious Literacy* framework (Wachlin, Carter, Thomas, and Napoli) or the *Civic Engagement* framework (Branham and Nelms). Only the articles concerning religion in young adult novels (Radley, Mitchell, and Lechter) tackled the issue with an emphasis on *Personal Development*. These articles, unlike the K-12 textbooks, do a better job of capturing contemporary changes in religious diversity; several articles focus on Islam and many of the young adult novels reviewed feature teens exploring a variety of religious traditions.

Wilhelm and Novak (2011) build a case that as the professional field of English Education has developed over time, “both literature and education have gradually been detached from the deeply, humanly democratizing political agenda that they were once more clearly an integral part of” (p. 45). From this perspective, the fact that few articles (and only those with a young adult literature connection) align with the all-too-“soft” *Personal Development* approach may not be altogether surprising.

Blog Posts and Comments

Blogs are used by their authors for a variety of purposes—thinking, considering, sharing resources and ideas, asking for assistance—and are presumably read with a variety of goals as well—entertaining, challenging, encouraging. Both author and readers often create a sense of community in the comments section of blogs by carrying on conversations and building relationships with each other. The frequent sharing of links

and teacher ideas by many bloggers is why many readers seek out blogs for personal professional development, and the public nature of blogs (and the ease of electronic searching) make blog posts and comments ideal to represent an aspect of the professional development dimension of the field of English Education.

Because blogs so often represent a personal extension of their authors, it is to be expected that many blogs would completely avoid religious issues while others might deal with religious issues on a fairly regular basis. Since human beings vary greatly in the extent to which religion forms a portion of their personal identities, their blogs should vary as well. Many bloggers often post personal essays; several blogs had posts of this sort which mentioned religion. For example, in a rather free-wheeling essay about nature writing and the lure of spring on her blog *The Line*, Dina (2008, April 22) ponders the non-morality of nature and C.S. Lewis's attempts to reconcile the truth of pain with the nature of God. In a brief post (2007, 20 December), she also considers the role of Christmas in further distancing those "outside of mainstream culture," thinking mainly of a Muslim student she teaches. In a similar vein, Rebecca Hussey at *Of Books and Bicycles* shares openly her simultaneous resistance and attraction to church attendance (2007, September 23)

Rohan Maitzen, a college professor who blogs at *Novel Readings*, identifies herself as sympathetic to the "new atheism" and often wrestles with personal religious issues, but rarely brings those concerns to her discussions of teaching literature. Most of Patrick Kurp's posts at *Anecdotal Evidence* take the form of personal essays with connections to literature (and occasionally religion), but rarely do those essays touch on

his classroom experiences. D.G. Myers usually publishes more straight forward reviews of books on *Commonplace Blog*; while he frequently foregrounds the religious (Jewish) aspects of his identity in interacting with the texts he reviews, there are very few connections with the classroom or the curriculum. As these types of posts do not mention any connection with classrooms, curriculum, or students, they do not really fit the analytic categories of this study; however, there are blog posts and comments that do mention religious issues in connection with the literature classroom: some bloggers discuss the religious connections and allusions they find in various texts and authors, some consider the broader implications of religious views on society, and some discuss dealing with religious issues in actual classrooms.

Religious Connections with Texts and Authors. Several bloggers take note of the possible religious connections of various texts. Ludwig Richter pulls together a selection of Thoreau's pithiest quotes about religion from *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* in one post (2009, July 11), ponders Montaigne's essays and their relationship to the author's Catholicism in another (2008, February 18), and explores the nature of faith in connection with showing the film *Doubt* to his Theory of Knowledge class (2010, June 8). In a post (2010, July 10) on his blog *Bob Einstein Presents his Literary Equations*, Matt Rowan presents a very nuanced review of the role of religious in Z.Z. Packer's short story collection:

As I see it, Packer is not condemning the idea of religion, nor is she condemning it specifically as a cultural referent with respect to African Americans, but she does see the institutional hypocrisies to be found anywhere in which power is to

be had, likewise. She says African American churches are no different from any other in this way, and not everything is roses. I find that emphasis fascinating, along with so much else Packer succeeds at in her stories.

In much the same vein, Patrick Kurp admires the nuanced view of religion he sees expressed by Philip Larkin's "On Church Going:" "the speaker hates neither faith nor those who believe, like a vulgarly militant atheist, nor can he permit himself to relax into belief." He goes on to make a connection with Hawthorne's view of Melville as someone trapped between belief and unbelief. Miriam Burstein, in a post (2011, March 9) at *The Little Professor*, reminds her readers that interpretation of religious issues in a text are strongly shaped by historical context, pointing out the contrast between modern views of *Jane Eyre* as a thoroughly Christian work and Victorian readers who saw the novel as "radical" and "subversive." Not all references to religion in a text are so admiring: in a conversation in the comments sections of a post (10 March 2011) by Jeanne at *Necromancy Never Pays*, she mentions that some readers dislike *A Wrinkle in Time* precisely because of the religious worldview presented in the book.

Looking at an entire era rather than a single author, Rohan Maitzen shares the religious element of an important strand of Victorian literature in a post (2009, March 10) about her class on Victorian Literature of Faith and Doubt:

Our progression ... has been from writers wrestling with specific challenges to their faith (or, with Darwin, presenting findings with challenging implications) to writers reimagining society and morality in the absence of that faith (the secular fable of *Silas Marner*, in which the major value of church-going is that it fosters

community and sympathy) or now, with Arnold, seeking in poetry and culture alternative sources of inspiration and spirituality. But while Eliot eases her readers through the transition, in his poetry at least Arnold captures the sense of dislocation and grief that could also be part of the weaning from religion.

This particular type of blog post is best classified as congruent with the *Religious Literacy* aim because of its recognition that there is a certain level of religious knowledge required to truly grapple with texts and its emphasis on context; however, unlike many of the other documents in this category, these posts also explore the implications of this knowledge and context on the readers, revealing a more humanistic approach to *Religious Literacy*. One particularly fine exemplar of this type of post is depicted in Figure 4.3.

I spent yesterday reading Samuel Johnson's diaries and puzzling out how the Psalter works in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. I'm writing a paper and I found what I think is one of Johnson's allusions to the Psalms. I'm curious to understand, as exactly as I can, when and how an Anglican like Johnson may have encountered a particular Psalm: was it sung? recited? prayed? and where? when? And so on: I want to know the circumstances, the exact historical contexts, he came into contact with the Psalms, and how he used them habitually.

If this were fifty years ago, I might just assume a basic familiarity with the Psalms and get on with the serious business of unpacking the (alleged) textual allusion. If I were a theorist, I'd meet Foucault (or someone else) on the road back from the eighteenth-century Church of England with a fine tale about the largely deleterious implications of its ideology, and in lieu of taking my own journey there I'd take that account on faith (as it were) and run with it in my own work. But being what I am—perplexed with narrow passages—I wasn't satisfied till I trudged out there for myself to see what's to be seen. And since I'm a slow walker, I haven't gotten there yet or seen all I intend to see. I won't be resolving these perplexities anytime soon, which means that I won't be publishing at an excessive rate and therefore will not be the recipient of *afestschrift* or an endowed chair or any of the other perks that go with being one of the intelligentsia.

Figure 4.3: A Blog Post on Religious Literacy and the Reader's Response, from Vilmar (2008, December 24)

Teachers who explore blogs for professional development can find excellent models of engagement with texts with religious references, as these examples demonstrate

Broader Implications of Religious Views. Many bloggers consider religious issues on a more philosophical level, considering their broader implications for education and society. At times, these posts, like those of the personal-essay-type described above, escape from the scope of this project; an example is Ludwig Richter's ponderings about the relative epistemologies of religion and science (2009, October 20). Some of these philosophical discussions align neatly with the aim of *Civic Engagement*. Based on a school incident, Dana Huff reflects on the importance of the separation of church and state in one post (2005, October 13). The comments in a post by Bud Hunt (2008, April 11) about teaching controversial novels at *Bud the Teacher* branched into a larger discussion about the balance between rights and responsibilities of English teachers in choosing curriculum and considering parental wishes. Clay Burell, a commenter, described a situation in which he brought in adults to model reasoned dialogue to help defuse a situation between Christian and atheist students.

Jim Burke's consideration of moral and philosophical issues and the nature of English as a discipline in a post at *Jim Burke: The English Teacher's Companion* (2009, August 7) is very clearly oriented toward the *Personal Development* aim. In his attempt to discover what English is (beyond the teaching of various literacies), he assembles a variety of perspectives depicting the richness of the English curriculum in helping students reach their ultimate potential. He discusses Edmundson's assertion that "we read

to answer the question ‘what does this book tell us about how we should live our lives?’”

He also presents Carol Jago’s challenge to teachers:

The young people trusted to our care need to know how to make a life. And real life all too often poses moral dilemmas like the one Atticus Finch confronted...Walking a mile in Atticus’s shoes, vicariously experiencing both his fear and his courage, can help to prepare students for the hard choices they will make in their own lives.

Just as blogs can provide teachers with models of engagement with text, they can also encourage teachers to think about broader implications from a variety of perspectives, especially the *Civic Engagement* and *Personal Development* mindsets.

Religious Issues in the Literature Classroom. Many blogs also directly discuss dealing with religious issues that arise in the literature classroom; these posts are particularly diverse in the approaches they take to religious issues. In the provocatively-titled post, “In my class we worship at the altar of literature,” Jim Burke describes the wide variety of religious texts he used to enrich the students discussion of *Siddhartha* in a way that perfectly fits with current legal guidelines. This particular post is difficult to classify; his methods textbook cited above indicates a *Multicultural* aim for this type of lesson, but his rapturous language in the post (“enjoying rich conversations” and “All faiths enriched the discussion”) as well as his concluding thought (“Some days I can't believe I get paid to do what I would want to do anyway: read great literature and talk about it with kids I enjoy.”) suggest that the *Personal Development* of his students is also a factor.

Ludwig Richter in a post on *compromise* (2009, May 5) considered the difficulties of teaching across cultural barriers in dealing with a student, a Muslim “enthusiast,” who announced that scientists do not *know*, they are just *guessing*. In a similar vein, a review (2010, March 22) of an Alex Sanchez novel prompts Jeanne at *Necromancy Never Pays* to discuss her impatience with religiously-motivated homophobia in her college classroom. These bloggers’ attempts to understand their reaction to cultural differences identify these posts as ones with a *Multicultural* orientation.

Miriam Burstein’s post (2011, February 28) at *The Little Professor* takes a *Religious Literacy* approach as she prepares to provide students with “the Reader's Digest Condensed Version of why evangelicals suddenly got so interested in Wycliffe and the Lollards” so that they will be ready to understand excerpts from some Victorian religious novels.

Kate Kellan (2007, November 1) at the *NCTE Secondary Section Blog* finds herself using the language of *Civic Engagement* to discourage faith-based argumentation in research papers about student-selected topics:

When a student writes, “God teaches us that this is wrong,” it pains me to write, “In the United States, laws need to represent those people who don’t believe in God, too—why else is this wrong? What secular reasons can you provide?” over and over and over again.

Blogs were selected for analysis in this study to provide diversity, and while there were not comparatively many posts or comments dealing with religious issues, the ones

that did tackle the subject provided a variety of examples of all four approaches to the inclusion of religion in the classroom.

General Comments about Teacher Preparation and Development

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this class of documents is that concern for religious issues is not a major factor in the dimension of the field of English Education concerned with the preparation and development of teachers of English. There are only implicit references to religion in the NCATE/NCTE Standards, no policies and procedures concerned with teacher preparation that relate to religion, only eight of the thirty English Education programs sampled have explicit mentions of religious content in required courses, only two methods textbooks make explicit mention of religions or religious texts, and there are only a handful of articles in professional journals in the last decade that raise religious issues. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the four research subquestions in this dimension of English education because of the paucity of mentions; however, it is interesting that this dimension displays greater diversity in approaches to religion than the curriculum dimension does, with the *Multicultural* approach being used the most frequently.

Dimension Three: Research Documents

The most recent article in either *Research in the Teaching of English* or *English Education* to deal with religious issues in the secondary English classroom was Wachlin's (1997) study of the use of the Bible as a text in high school English classrooms. Since no studies have been published in journals specific to the field in more

than a decade, it is safe to say religion is not currently a major topic in the systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning of English.

Inferences About English Education

Based on the analysis above, it is important to note that religion, religious beliefs and values, and religious texts are all factors that impact the American literature curriculum. However, the frequent invisibility of religion in documents related to teacher preparation, teacher development, and research suggest that teacher candidates may not be well prepared for dealing with these particular issues.

To answer the research question: based on published documents representing all three aspects of the field of English Education, the field does not seem to be responding strongly to the challenge of preparing and developing teachers to handle religious issues in contemporary American classrooms despite the presence of religious matters in the curriculum and in the worlds that students inhabit. The documents suggest that the students need religious literacy to be successful in understanding texts that are studied, and when they mention religious topics, textbooks and standards documents are primarily consistent with this approach. The documents suggest that the field of English Education is highly concerned with multiculturalism although religious multiculturalism is most often implied rather than explicitly spotlighted. The documents suggest that personal development is an important minor thread in the curriculum and in teacher preparation and development; while it does not appear with great frequency, it does manifest in nearly every class of document. The documents lack much mention of the religious

factors involved in improved civic engagement, at all. Additionally, some of the more significant absences—the lack of other faith traditions and a failure of emphasis in methods textbooks—point to a sobering conclusion: it appears that general concerns about the absence of meaningful engagement with religion in American education may apply to the field of English Education as well.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Many scholars and educators have advanced proposals seeking to incorporate religious issues into the public school curriculum based on their awareness of the serious problem that ongoing religious intolerance poses in light of the growing religious diversity of the United States. The teaching of literature is frequently connected with the aims of these proposals, but it is unknown to what degree the field of English Education is responding to the challenge of religious issues in contemporary American public schooling. For this reason, this study attempted to discover, through content analysis of sampled published documents representing the field, how the field is responding. Additionally, the study attempted to answer four subquestions related to general categories of religion-schooling proposals: How is the field addressing 1) the aim of religious literacy? 2) religious concerns related to students' personal development? 3) religious aspects of multiculturalism? and 4) the religious issues related to improved civic engagement?

To judge from the analysis of published documents, the field does not seem to be preparing prospective English teachers for or developing current teachers in dealing with religious issues, which is troublesome considering the documents also indicate religious content is a part of the curriculum. The documents suggest that students in English language arts classrooms and prospective English teachers need some degree of religious literacy to successfully read or teach the texts that are the object of study. As an example, all textbooks include authors, texts, and movements that require some understanding of

religious content. The field of English Education is strongly aligned with multicultural approaches to cultural diversity, although religious aspects of multiculturalism are mostly implied rather than stated outright. The various sets of standards are rich in language about cultural diversity; however, only a few explicitly mention religion in the context of such diversity. Though present, the impact of religious studies on personal development is not a major theme of the documents. Some of the blog posts highlighted the impact that studying religion can make on a student's personal development. A substantial number of the religion-schooling proposals discussed in chapter two argue from a civic engagement mindset; however, that aim is nearly invisible in the documents from the field of English Education. For example, none of the methods textbooks addressed the need for future English teachers to understand the rights and protections offered by the First Amendment. The remainder of this chapter will consist of the following sections: 1) some cautions about these results in the form of an examination of limitations of the study, and 2) an exploration of the implications of these results for a variety of constituencies.

Limitations of the Study

Although the existing evidence strongly suggests that the field of English education is not deliberately addressing religious issues in any systematic or proactive way, there are a few limitations to this study; these include the following: 1) the very real diversity and scope of the field of English Education, 2) the choice of document classes to represent the three dimensions of the field, 3) the restrictions placed on the concept of

curriculum, 4) sampling decisions within document classes, and 5) the range of possible meanings of the category of absence.

Scope of the Field

The field of English Education, as defined by NCTE's Council on English Education, is an incredibly vast concept, encompassing the work of hundreds of thousands¹ of professionals in a variety of settings. Many of the documents chosen for this study have some connection with the National Council of Teachers of English, fitting in that NCTE is the professional organization most closely associated with the field; however, NCTE's website (<http://www1.ncte.org/about/gov>) boasts of "over 60,000 members and subscribers." Despite its large membership and the variety of resources it produces for teachers, it is likely that most English teachers will never be involved with the organization.

Even within the bounds of NCTE, diversity of opinion and approach to almost any topic is the rule, rather than the exception. In a recent issue of *English Journal* celebrating the organization's centennial, many articles take note of the conversation, debate, and disagreement that so often characterize NCTE. Goodman (2011) recounts her sixty years of watching struggles between different models of instruction, which Kist (2011) dramatizes in an illustration of the history of the struggles over "new" literacies during the past century. Nelms (2011) characterizes NCTE as a place of both "consensus

¹ An explanation for this estimate: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://bls.gov/oes/current/oes252031.htm>), in May 2010, there were more than one million secondary school teachers in the United States, a significant fraction of whom teach English. Add in all of the elementary and middle school teachers of English, curriculum specialists, college instructors, administrators, state and federal employees involved in the field and the number begins to skyrocket. Many of these professionals, of course, never become involved in professional organizations like NCTE that offer guidance in the field, which makes it difficult to know what these teachers are doing in their classrooms.

and dissent” (p. 26), and Zuidema (2011) provides a specific example in her discussion of the “grammar wars” that periodically flare up in *English Journal*. On a more personal level, Myers (2011) writes a scathing critique of recent histories that he feels misrepresent the development of the 1996 standards. Logan (2011) describes diversity as a core value of NCTE, but the next several articles detail the struggles for equality within and attention from the organization of various groups including women (Gerlach, 2011) and lesbians and gay men (Henkin, 2011, and Pruitt, 2011).

The scope of the field and the diversity within it should serve to temper any overbroad generalizations; however, it seems reasonable to assume that if religious issues were a major factor in English Education, the documents selected should have given some indication of that importance. After all, several authors cited above mention NCTE’s (and implicitly the profession’s) commitment to diversity and multicultural education. While religious issues were often obscured or implicit, many of the documents analyzed for this study were replete with language suggesting the field’s commitment to multiculturalism (These include especially the IRA/NCTE standards, K-12 textbooks, NCTE/NCATE standards, and English Education program requirement, but also, to a smaller degree, methods textbooks, journal articles, and blog posts.) However, because of this scope and diversity of the field, the selection of documents to represent the field is another important consideration.

Document Choice

Because the field of English education is so vast and diverse, there is a universe of possible documents that could have been chosen, and one could become overwhelmed by

the amount of data. One of the most consequential decisions in document choice dealt with the decision to focus the curriculum dimension strictly on documents that were relevant to the *prescribed* curriculum. The implications of this decision are discussed in the next section.

However, there were also a number of choices made in regards to the second dimension of the field—the preparation and development of teachers. For teacher preparation, the decision was made to look at program requirements of only those programs nationally recognized by NCTE. It is safe to assume that national recognition by NCTE provides, at the least, a certain minimum level of quality; however, it is impossible to know why a program is not recognized, and many programs are not—a comment on the NCTE website (http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/CEE/NCATE/Reviewer_Handout_Jan11.pdf) indicates that Fall 2010's pass rate of 55% was the highest fall semester rate ever. This process is required for accreditation through NCATE only, so TEAC-accredited or non-accredited programs were not considered. In some states, the individual program review process is optional even for NCATE accreditation. This, of course, means that there may be a wide variety of programs excluded from the study that might have shown a more thorough and explicit coverage of religious material. However, a study that including all programs that prepare English teachers in the population from which the sample was to be drawn would need some criteria to ensure program quality or representativeness, and an external criterion (however limited) was deemed more objective.

A study of syllabi for methods and other teacher preparation classes might have provided a much better look into these NCATE-accredited programs than catalog descriptions and website information. (It also could have provided better guidance for a representative sample of methods textbooks.) Unfortunately, in these days of course management software, relatively few syllabi are publically available on the departmental or personal web pages. A survey requesting this information would be subject to additional limitations, so the decision was made to limit the study to documents publicly available. Since the Federal Department of Education requires institutions to make catalogs available to the public, it was safe to assume that, at the very least, it would be possible to access an electronic copy of a catalog for every institution.

It would be naïve to assume that the general methods textbooks, practitioner and research articles (representing the third dimension) from leading journals exhausts the documents used by teacher educators to prepare teachers or by practicing teachers to pursue their own professional development; however, the documents were chosen in order to provide a representative, general picture. The decision not to include pre-packaged professional development curricula was one of access, since so many of these programs are proprietary and gaining access to them is problematic. Professional books are often narrowly-focused, so general methods textbooks were used instead to represent the teacher preparation element. Many books for professional development as well as more research-oriented texts develop from journal articles, so it was decided that articles would be used rather than books. (As there is often a significant time lag between the publication of an article and a subsequent book, it was also thought that journal articles

would provide more timely information.) Despite the many possibilities of additional texts that exist, it seems reasonable to assume that if the preparation of teachers to deal with religious issues specific to the English language arts classroom was a major element of the second and third dimensions of the field, it would be explicit in the language of the standards, mentioned in multiple course descriptions at a wide variety of institutions, prominent in general methods textbooks, and well represented in both practitioner and research articles in the leading journals in the field.

Restricting Curriculum

The decision to focus, in this study, on the *prescribed* curriculum (as described by Venezky, 1992) comes from a realization that education in the United States is currently characterized by a focus on standards and mandated high-stakes assessment. As Myers (2011) points out, the falling out between the IRA/NCTE standards group and the federal government in the early 1990s was viewed as a victory by many in NCTE, and despite the involvement of at least some members of the profession in the latest round of standards development, “this time the governors wrote the standards, and the federal government made adoption of the Common Core Standards a condition for receiving federal funding” (p. 37). The focus on standards has placed many within NCTE in a difficult position; Goodman (2011) describes the dilemma well:

[Professional organizations] can oppose the laws or they can accept “a seat at the table” and hope to exert positive or moderating influence. If they do the latter, they can appear to be co-opted and in support of laws their members vigorously oppose. (p.23)

While there are a number of documents that represent the *desired* and *needed* curriculum produced by major players both inside English Education (including materials from the Dartmouth Seminar in 1967 and the Wye Conference in 1987) and outside of the field (such as *A Nation at Risk*), in the current climate, the *prescribed* curriculum is dominant.

From a different perspective, using the *delivered* and *received* curricula would require a different type of study altogether as there are very few documents that represent these levels of curriculum, and a study, using other methods, would require an unfeasibly large number of subjects in order to answer the research question.

A second restriction was placed on the concept of curriculum for the purpose of this study: state standards, curriculum maps, and K-12 textbooks were restricted to grade 11. On one level, this was a strategic sampling decision, as it reduced the total number of documents for analysis. On another level, this decision to limit the study was done in response to the research question. If the larger problem is truly a fundamental American tension point (and it is), then it stands to reason that the part of the English language arts curriculum which deals most strongly in questions about American society and American identity would be the most likely to deal with the problem. Also, the age of the students was a factor. Many of the proposals reviewed in chapter two point out that children and early adolescents are not developmentally ready to engage with all aspects of the study of existential issues, religion and the religious (and nonreligious). Despite this intention, it is entirely possible that a look at the entire high school (or even K-12) curriculum might give different results. It is likely, however, that while some of the nuances might change, the overall assessment of curriculum would not.

Sampling Decisions

There were a number of other sampling decisions made in this study that could conceivably impact the results. State standards were sampled in such a way as to ensure geographical diversity but without consideration of other factors, such as religious or political demographics. The results indicate that explicit conclusion of religion does not seem to follow any sort of political or religious demographic, however. Of the states studied, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Indiana, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Tennessee explicit mention religion in their curricula; the states that do not are Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, and Texas. There is no apparent pattern here, so additional demographic considerations seem unnecessary.

Similar sampling decisions were made about selecting nationally approved English preparation programs. The resulting sample contains examples of institutions of various size (although it should be pointed out that size of institution and size of the English Education program are not necessarily correlated) and types of control, and, once again, the results did not indicate any type of patterning that would indicate problems created by a non-representative sample. The results do not seem to indicate that religiously-affiliated schools, for instance, have more religious coverage in courses required of future English teachers. (It should be noted that religious schools did require religious courses to satisfy general education requirements more than non-religious schools, but those courses were not focused specifically for English education majors.)

The study examined blog posts and comments in an attempt to sample the diversity of the field outside of major players and in an attempt to recognize the growing importance of online communities to the field. The selection process was designed to replicate the way in which many professionals discover blogs: web searches and links from blogs already read. The process was carried a bit further than most teachers would take it in an effort to get a very broad picture. It is always possible that some blogs that were not found could have added something to the analysis, but the fact that so many blogs did not touch on religious issues at all must have some implications for this story.

The Meanings of *Absence*

Indeed, many of the categories of documents in this study were best characterized by absence: a complete lack of mentions of religions, religious texts, and religious groups. These absences impact all four areas of analysis. For example, some textbooks fail to provide students with religious background knowledge essential to the understanding of a text or a historical period. Specifically, the unit introduction in the *McDougal Littell* American literature textbook providing historical background for texts concerned with Transcendentalism defines it as a literary movement and philosophy, ignoring the important religious elements of the movement. An absence related to personal development comes from Maxwell and Meiser (2005), a methods textbook which never mentions that the teaching of literature involves exploration of existential questions, some of which have religious significance. An example of multicultural absence comes from the Massachusetts standards (Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education, 2001) take as a guiding principle that “An effective English

language arts curriculum draws on literature from many genres, time periods, and cultures, featuring works that reflect our common literary heritage” (p. 4). One appendix provides a list of suggested authors reflecting *common heritage*, another provides a list of those reflecting *other cultures*; the list of names for American literature reflects a variety of races only.

An example of absence in terms of civic engagement comes from the entire category of methods textbooks; none of the textbooks reviewed featured a discussion of legal guidelines for the teaching religious material in public school classrooms!

The meaning of these absences (and the possibly related issue of religion being folded into cultural diversity) is not entirely clear. A number of the articles in practitioner journals explain possible reasons for the absence of religion from curricula, textbooks, and public documents by pointing to the possible negative consequences of including religion. English teachers are well aware that many administrators are extremely avoidant when it comes to controversial material that may raise the ire of parents, and it may be a sense of self-preservation that prompts teachers to avoid religious material or, at the very least, keep it “under the table” or “behind closed doors.” An absence in public documents cannot speak for itself and does not indicate whether it is a true absence or merely avoidance of scrutiny.

It is certain that this absence can be significant. If this issue is so controversial that all (or most) references to it must be hidden from the public, it can send a clear message to nervous teacher candidates to stay away from such a dangerous topic. In either case, the ambiguity of absence does nothing to change the conclusion that the field is not

preparing potential teachers to handle religious issues in the classroom despite the presence of those issues in the curriculum.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have a number of implications for a wide variety of constituencies, including 1) the research community, 2) professionals involved in the preparation of English teachers, 3) professional organizations, 4) current and future teachers, 5) textbook publishers, and 6) American society at large.

Research Community

The primary implication of this study for the larger research community is to indicate the need for further study. There are a variety of research questions that could spin out of this study. Some arise from attempting to address some of the limitations described above. There are a few options that could shed light on the *delivered* curriculum. A large scale survey-based study of the practices of individual teachers in regards to handling religious issues in the American literature curriculum could provide additional information in support or contradiction of the findings of this study. A smaller-scale qualitative study of teacher practices in handling sensitive religious topics could provide important contextualization of teacher practices in handling controversy in the classroom and suggest strategies for teacher educators. Would enlarging some of the categories (from methods textbooks to professional books) or gaining access to additional documents (syllabi and professional development curricula) change the findings of this study?

Language about “student learning outcomes” is very much in vogue in educational policy circles, particularly as it relates to accreditation and teacher quality. Does religious literacy have an impact on student learning outcomes in English language arts? Does a multicultural curriculum with full, explicit treatment of religious topics make a difference? Would a curriculum explicitly structured around a civic engagement model or a personal development approach impact outcomes? Similar questions could be asked at the policy level—does one of these approaches contribute to sustainable change to larger educational systems? For this last question, an emerging technique called design-based implementation research might be ideal (this technique, described in Renuel, Fishman, Cheng, and Sabelli, 2011, builds on the ideas of design research as described in Reinking & Bradley, 2008).

The approach used in this study is innovative: taking an established definition for a particular field and selecting a wide variety of documents to attempt to gain a representative view of the field to answer a particular research question. This variation of content analysis could prove an interesting model for other researchers. It might be interesting to take this approach and examine issues of religious integration in other fields, like social studies education or educational leadership. This method might also be useful for researchers in multicultural education, as well.

Teacher Preparation

This study raises a number of important concerns for professionals in the field of English Education who prepare teachers. Frequently serving as the “bridge” between English and Education departments at their institutions, these faculty members are in a

unique position to ensure that future English teachers are as prepared as possible for their future career. By serving as bridge builders, perhaps, they can advocate for increased attention to religious issues in texts in English departments. I know, from personal experience, that Nord's and Franchot's concerns about academic attitudes toward religion are often true in English departments. While studying *Moby-Dick*, a professor of mine revealed (almost boasted) that he knew no more about Jonah than what the text presented in Father Mapple's sermon in the whalers' church. (Knowing, as I did, both the story of Jonah as it appears in the Hebrew Bible and traditional Christian interpretations of the tale allowed me to see that Father Mapple had, in fact, added a great deal of his own interpretation to the rather simple Biblical story and in doing so had revealed a lot about the whaling life that Ishmael is about to undertake. This would not have been lost on Melville's initial readers but was lost on those in this particular class who did not have the necessary religious knowledge). English teacher educators can also work to ensure that preparation from education departments for dealing with religion goes beyond the basic guidelines of legality and considers English-specific concerns about religious content in texts, interacting sensitively with students and families with strong religious identities, pursuing their student's personal development through consideration of existential issues, and modeling the reasoned dialogue and interaction so important to the future of America's participatory democracy.

English Organizations

Considering the religious content in the English language arts curriculum, not only that uncovered in this study but also the religious content inherent in a thorough

study of British and World Literatures, the overwhelming silence from NCTE is a bit surprising, especially considering the organization's willingness to advocate controversial causes (honoring the student's own language; boycotting states with discriminatory policies; promoting young adult literature about controversial subjects like drug use, homosexuality, and abortion). There is more to the interface of religion and the field of English education than censorship, but it would be difficult to learn that from the NCTE website.

NCTE is an organization that is responsive to the needs of its members, so the best strategy would probably be to follow the path charted by several other interest groups: begin by finding others with similar interests at national conventions and seek some sort of official status. One option would be to seek out the support of the Conference on English Education to charter a commission, a group that focuses on a particular topic within the field of English Education. Another strategy would be to get involved in an existing commission (most likely the Commission on English Methods Teaching and Learning). However, in order to impact the entire profession, organization as an assembly should probably be a long-term goal.

Significant change in K-12 national curriculum standards is unlikely at this point; however, this study points to the opportunity to influence teacher education programs through the NCTE/NCATE standards. With NCATE's recent merger with TEAC to form CAEP, the possibility of making change through explicit language relating to religion in English teacher education has probably never been greater. Anyone who has participated in a recent NCATE accreditation will certainly agree that the demands of the accreditor

are a powerful force for change. Some possible suggestions include a requirement that candidates are given the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and dispositions that specifically relate to teaching literature with religious content. A standard like this would require programs to include this material in courses taught and in the program assessment system.

Current and Future Teachers

The biggest implication of this study for current and future teachers is a message to be prepared. If, as the evidence suggests is likely, the teacher was not well prepared to face religious issues in the classroom, many textbook questions and activities could lead to sticky classroom situations that will, if not carefully managed, lead to a variety of negative outcomes: constitutionally-impermissible advocacy of a particular faith tradition, parental complaints, or a local dust-up between culture warriors in the op-ed section of the local paper. Engaging students in conversations around questions like “Are people ultimately good?” and “Does the universe care?” could be wonderful opportunities to encourage personal development or could result in absolute disasters. The potential for problems was apparent in the shocked faces of my teacher educator colleagues when I shared with them the suggestion from one textbook of allowing a student to perform a Puritan hymn or sermon as means of extending learning.

Textbook Publishers

All four categories of proposals for including religious content in public school curricula agree that one of the reasons for such inclusion is that American culture, American literature, and many Americans are profoundly religious. Students need

knowledge of religion to understand texts and American culture; students need their own religious (and nonreligious) identities mirrored back at them from the curriculum and need to see through windows into other religious/nonreligious identities as well. This is important for both their own development and for the functioning of our democracy.

Unfortunately, major textbooks follow the model of academia, where religion does not constitute “one of the major discourses” (Taylor, 1998, p. 4). The textbooks fall into the trap described by Schultz and Harvey (2010) where religion is only seen as an element of the distant past (myths and Puritans) or as the racialized other (Islam, Native Americans, and even African Americans). The textbooks, especially in the unit introductions, are sending a very clear (but perhaps unintentional) message to students that religion *was* important but no longer matters quite so much. A quick glance at the Republican Presidential debates is enough to cast doubt on that message.

American Society

As Nussbaum (2008) points out, “equality, and respect for equality, are difficult for human beings to sustain. Particularly in the area of religion”, but as she reminds us, “this is a country that respects people’s committed search for a way of life according to their consciences” (p. 2). Public schools have long been seen as the cradle of America’s participatory democracy, and as such, they must help to prepare students for citizenship in an increasingly religiously diverse nation. An appropriate solution will be complex and might involve changes to curriculum and teacher preparation in social studies, the addition of religious studies programs in high schools and as a required part of the college curriculum, and a serious commitment from teachers of high school literature and

the professional who prepare them for teaching. While it is not fair for English educators to carry this burden alone, the nature of their profession means that they must be a part of the larger societal and systemic changes that are necessary to meet the challenge.

In conclusion, this study attempted to discover through content analysis of documents representing the three dimensions of the field of English Education how the field was responding to the societal challenge posed by ongoing religious intolerance in the face of growing religious diversity and whether that response was consistent with four categories of proposal for addressing the challenge. The data from the documents indicated that despite the presence of religious issues in the curriculum, the field was not adequately preparing prospective teachers for the challenges religious issues might pose in their classrooms. There are a variety of implications of this study, but the most important is a call for the field of English Education to better prepare English teachers who can make a positive impact on society by helping their students to engage with the oft-times “invisible” religious aspects of the curriculum.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

State Textbook Adoption

According to the map in Sadker and Zittleman (2009), there are 22 textbook adoption states. Table A.1 lists the state agency responsible for textbook adoption, the document or database that lists the adopted texts, and its web address. Neither Nevada's nor Illinois's lists are on the web. Table A.2 shows which textbooks have been adopted by which states.

Table A.1

State Agencies and Textbook Records

State Agency	Document Name	Web Address
Alabama Department of Education	<i>State Approved List</i>	http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/documents.asp?section=54&sort=14&footer=sections
Arkansas Department of Education	<i>State Adopted Textbook List</i>	http://arkansased.org/educators/instructional.html
California Department of Education		http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cfi/
Florida Department of Education	<i>Catalog of State Adopted Instructional Materials</i>	http://www.fldoe.org/bii/instruct_mat/catalog1.asp
Georgia Department of Education	<i>Georgia Textbook & Instructional Material Guide</i>	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServBooks
Idaho State Department of Education	<i>Adoption Guide</i>	http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/curricular_materials/adoption_guide.htm
Illinois State Board of Education		http://www.isbe.state.il.us/default.htm
Indiana Department of Education	<i>Textbook Adoption</i>	http://www.doe.in.gov/opd/textbook/
Kentucky Department of Education	<i>Textbooks and Other Instructional Resources</i>	http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Textbooks+and+Other+Instructional+Resources/
Louisiana Department of Education	<i>Approved Textbooks</i>	http://www.doe.state.la.us/topics/approved_textbooks.html
Mississippi Department of Education	<i>2009-2010 Textbook Adoption List</i>	http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/textbook/textbooks.htm
Nevada Department of Education		http://www.doe.nv.gov/Resources_TextbookAdoption.htm
New Mexico Public	<i>Instructional Materials</i>	http://www.ped.state.nm.us/InstructionalMaterial/index.html

Education Department	<i>Bureau Adopted Multiple Lists</i>	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction	<i>North Carolina State Adopted Textbooks</i>	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/textbook/adopted/
Oklahoma State Department of Education	<i>Oklahoma State Textbook Committee Approved Titles</i>	http://oktextbooks.state.ok.us/
Oregon Department of Education	<i>Adopted Instructional Materials</i>	http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=92
South Carolina Department of Education	<i>2009-2010 New Adopted Instructional Materials</i>	http://www.mysctextbooks.com
Tennessee Department of Education	<i>Tennessee Book Company Textbook Catalog</i>	http://www.tennesseebook.com/web_pages/catalogs/text_catalog.asp
Texas Education Agency	<i>The Instructional Materials Bulletin</i>	http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/textbooks/materials/index.html
Utah State Office of Education	<i>Utah's Recommended Instructional Materials Searchable Database</i>	http://www.schools.utah.gov/CURR/imc/RIMs-Search.aspx
Virginia Department of Education	<i>Textbooks & Instructional Materials</i>	http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/textbooks/english/index.shtml
West Virginia Department of Education	<i>West Virginia Official State Multiple Listings</i>	http://wvde.state.wv.us/materials/multiple.html

Table A.2

Textbooks Adopted by Textbook Adoption States

	Holt Elements	McDougal Littell	Prentice Hall	Glencoe	Mirrors and Windows	AGS Globe	Apex
Alabama	x	x	x	x		x	
Arkansas		x	x	x	x		
California							
Florida	x		x	x			
Georgia	x	x	x	x	x		x
Idaho	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Illinois							
Indiana	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Kentucky	x	x	x		x	x	
Louisiana	x	x		x			
Mississippi	x	x	x	x	x		
Nevada							
New Mexico	x		x	x	x		
North Carolina	x		x		x		
Oklahoma	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Oregon	x	x	x	x	x		
South Carolina	x	x	x	x	x		
Tennessee	x	x	x		x	x	
Texas	x		x	x	x		
Utah	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Virginia	x	x	x		x		
West Virginia	x	x	x	x	x		

Appendix B

English Teacher Blogs

Table B.1

English Teacher Blog URLs

Blog Name	URL
All Hands on Deck: Reflections on Teaching, New Literacies, & English Education in a Time of Change	http://klabonte.edublogs.org/
Anecdotal Evidence	http://evidenceanecdotal.blogspot.com/
Birds Fly, fish swim	http://steveshann.wordpress.com/
Bob Einstein's Literary Equations	http://literaryequations.blogspot.com/
Bud the Teacher	http://budtheteacher.com/blog/about/
ChalkDust 101	http://chalkdust101.wordpress.com/
A Commonplace Blog	http://dgmyers.blogspot.com/
Edumacation: Reflections on Teaching, Learning, and Technology	http://thehurt.wordpress.com/
English Teacher, Too	http://englishteacher2.wordpress.com/
Enhanced English Teacher: a blog about using technology in an English classroom	http://enhancedenglishteachertseale.edublogs.org/
Epic Adventures are Often Uncomfortable	http://uncomfortableadventures.blogspot.com/
Evolving English Teacher	http://evolvingenglishteacher.blogspot.com/
Fernham	http://fernham.blogspot.com/
Fred's Place	http://freds-ramblings.blogspot.com/
Fried Technology	http://friedtechnology.blogspot.com/
Hedgetoad	http://hedgetoad.blogspot.com/
Hi. I'm Steve Moore. I teach. I read. I learn. I live.	http://mooreonthepage.com/
Hipteacher: Where a High School Teacher Goes High-Tech, Parochial, and Single-Gender in One Fell Swoop	http://hipteacher.typepad.com/schoolblog/
Huffenglish.com: Issues, ideas, and discussion in English Education and technology	http://www.huffenglish.com/
In for Good: Personal Reflections on Teaching and Learning	http://inforgood.wordpress.com/
Interpolations: Thoughts on Books and Stuff	http://interpolations.wordpress.com/
Jim Burke: The English Teacher's Companion-- thoughts about teaching teens, literacy, and literature in our brave new world	http://jimburke.typepad.com/my_weblog/
The Line	http://theline.edublogs.org/
The Little Professor: Things Victorian and Academic	http://littleprofessor.typepad.com/the_little_professor/
Ludwig Richter's Blog	http://ludwig-richter.blogspot.com/

Mary's Madness	http://bluehairedmary.blogspot.com/
Mr. B-G's English blog	http://bgenglish.blogspot.com/
NCTE Secondary Section	http://nctesecondary.blogspot.com/
Necromancy Never Pays	https://necromancyneverpays.wordpress.com/
Novel Readings: Notes on Literature and Criticism	http://www.openlettersmonthly.com/novelreadings/
Of Books and Bicycles	http://ofbooksandbikes.wordpress.com/
Perplexed with Narrow Passages	http://christophervilmar.wordpress.com/
The Scholastic Scribe: Lessons Learned in the Classroom, and Beyond	http://scholastic-scribe.blogspot.com/
Superfluous Thoughts	http://superfluousthought.wordpress.com/
Teacher in Transition	http://teacherintransition.wordpress.com/
The Follis Files	http://follisfiles.wordpress.com/
What's Not Wrong	http://whatsnotwrong.wordpress.com/

Appendix C

Textbook Timelines Dataset

For each textbook, the time period is listed. For each timeline pertaining to the period, the total number of items is listed in parentheses and then items judged to have possible religious significance based on the literature review in Chapter Two are listed. For each time period, the total percentage of items with possible religious significance was calculated, then the percentages were placed in Table C.1. Each textbook divides time up in different ways and into a different number of periods. The percentages were arranged so that periods with the same significant events (Revolutionary War, Civil War, Depression, World War II, “the present”) were in the same column.

Glencoe

Time Period: 1500-1800

American Literature (16): *Of Plymouth Plantation*, *Bay Psalm Book*, Anne Bradstreet; captivity narrative of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson

United States Events (23): Pilgrims arrive; Anne Hutchison banished; Penn founds Pennsylvania; Witchcraft trials; Great Awakening

World Events (12): Reformation begins; Puritan rule of England begins; Puritan rule ends

Time Period: 1800-1860

American Literature (19): Chief Red Jacket explains Native American beliefs; Emerson resigns from ministry; Transcendental Club founded

United States Events (18): none

World Events (12): Muhammad Ali rules Egypt, Marx and Engels, Darwin

Time Period: 1850-1880

American Literature (15): "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Mary Baker Eddy

United States Events (22): none

World Events (15): none

Time Period: 1880-1910

American Literature (19): none

United States Events (22): none

World Events (14): none

Time Period: 1910-1930s

American literature (20): none

United States Events (24): Scopes trial

World Events (16): none

Time Period: 1930s-1960s

American literature (20): Faulkner, Hurston, O'Connor

United States Events (19): none

World Events (18): Jews declared non-citizens, Final Solution, liberation of
concentration camps

Time Periods: 1960s-Present

American Literature (21): King, Malcolm X, *Maus*, Morrison

United States Events (20): 9/11

World Events (16): none

McDougal Littell

Time Period: 1600-1750

American Literary Milestones (13): Bradford, Bay Psalm Book, Bradstreet,
Rowlandson, Cotton Mather, Franklin critical of Puritans, Jonathan
Edwards

Historical Context (15): Mayflower, first public school founded, Puritans fight in
French and Indian Wars, Penn, Quakers, Salem witch trials, Great
Awakening

World Culture and Events (14): Inquisition tries Galileo, *Bhagavad-Gita*
translated into English

Time Period: 1800-1850

American Literary Milestones (14): Bryant, Transcendental Club, Longfellow,
Scarlet Letter

Historical Context (15): Quakers involved in Underground Railroad

World Culture and Events (15): Marx and Engel

Time Period: 1855-1867

American Literary Milestones (11): none

Historical Context (12): none

World Culture and Events (13): none

Time Period: 1870-1900

American Literary Milestones (14): none

Historical Context (13): none

World Culture and Events (15): none

Time Period: 1910-1935

American Literary Milestones (18): none

Historical Context (16): none

World Culture and Events (15): Freud

Time Period: 1940-2000

American Literary Milestones (15): *Crucible*, Momaday

Historical Context (16): King's speech, death of Malcolm X, death of King, 9/11

World Culture and Events (15): Israel

Prentice Hall

Time Period: 1490-1800 (43): Sistine Chapel, Pilgrims' arrival, *Bay Psalm Book*, free public school, *Paradise Lost*, Salem, Great Awakening, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*

Time Period: 1800-1870 (35) entries: Bryant, Marx and Engel, Hawthorne, Melville,
Thoreau

Time Period: 1850-1914 (49): none

Time Period: 1914-1945 (48): none

Time Period: 1945-1970 (48): Flannery O'Connor, King dies

Time Period: 1970-Present (47): 9/11

Holt Elements

Time Period: 1500-1800

United States Literary Events (12): Bradford, Bradstreet, Rowlandson, *Sinners in
the Hands of an Angry God*

United States Historical Events (19): Puritans arrive, founding of Yale, Great
Awakening

World Events (15): none

Time Period: 1800-1860

United States Literary Events (13): Bryant, Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne,
Melville

United States Historical Events (14): none

World Events (11): Darwin

Time Period: 1850-1890

United States Literary Events (12): none

United States Historical Events (16): none

World Events (11): Darwin

Time Period: 1880-1914

United States Literary Events (13): none

United States Historical Events (12): none

World Events (13): none

Time Period: 1914-1939

United States Literary Events (15): Hurston

United States Historical Events (14): none

World Events (15): none

Time Period: 1940-2010

United States Literary Events (21): Faulkner, *Autobiography of Malcolm X*

United States Historical Events (13): 9/11

World Events (14): none

Mirrors & Windows

Time Period: BCE – 1775

American Literature (18): *Bay Psalm Book*, first Bible printed in US,

Rowlandson, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*

American History (22): Plymouth, Boston Latin School, Salem

World History (22): Protestantism outlawed in France

Time Period: 1800-1840

American Literature (20): *Book of Mormon*, Emerson, *Scarlet Letter*

American History (20): none

World History (20): Marx

Time Period: 1850-1863

American Literature (21): *Scarlet Letter*, Melville, “Battle Hymn of the Republic”

American History (21): none

World History (21): Darwin, Salvation Army

Time Period: 1865-1900

American Literature (20): none

American History (18): none

World History (20): Marx

Time Period: 1910-1929

American Literature (25): none

American History (18): Scopes trial

World History (20): none

Time Period: 1929-1945

American Literature ((23): none

American History (21): none

World History (24): none

Time Period: 1945-1957

American Literature (21): none

American History (20): King-bus boycott

World History (19): Israel, Dalai Lama

Time Period: 1960-1980

American Literature (20): Malcolm X

American History (22): King's speech, church bombing, King's death

World History (17): none

Time Period: 1980-Present

American Literature (22): none

American History (21): Waco, Al-Qaeda

World History (21): none

Table C.1

Percentage of Religiously-Significant Items on Textbook Timelines

Event or Ending Year	Revolution	1840	1860	Civil War	Turn of the Century	Depression	WWII	1957	1980	The Present
<i>Glencoe</i>	24%		12%	4%	0%	2%	5%			9%
<i>McDougal Littell</i>	38%		14%	0%	0%	2%				17%
<i>Prentice Hall</i>	16%			11%	0%		0%		4%	2%
<i>Holt Elements</i>	17%		16%	3%	0%	2%				6%
<i>Mirrors & Windows</i>	16%	8%	8%	2%		2%	0%	5%	7%	3%

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