

5-2011

# Perceptions and Experiences of BSW Students with Religion and Spirituality in Social Work Education and Practice

Clifford J M Rosenbohm

George Fox University, [crosenbo@georgefox.edu](mailto:crosenbo@georgefox.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/sw\\_fac](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/sw_fac)

 Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Rosenbohm, Clifford J M, "Perceptions and Experiences of BSW Students with Religion and Spirituality in Social Work Education and Practice" (2011). *Faculty Publications - School of Social Work*. Paper 2.

[http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/sw\\_fac/2](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/sw_fac/2)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Work at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications - School of Social Work by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University.

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF BSW STUDENTS WITH  
RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN  
SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

by

CLIFFORD JAMES MICHAEL ROSENBOHM

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation Adviser: Dr. Kathleen Farkas

Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences  
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

May 2011

**CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

We hereby approve the dissertation of Clifford James Michael Rosenbohm, candidate for the Ph.D. degree\*.

Kathleen Farkas, Ph.D. (Chair of the committee)

Joy Bostic, Ph.D.

Terry M.C. Hokenstad, Ph. D.

Elizabeth Tracy, Ph.D.

March 15, 2011

\* We also certify that written approval has been obtained for any proprietary material contained therein.

**Dedication**

**Soli Deo Gloria!**

## Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
List of Tables	vi
Preface	viii
Abstract	xi
Chapter 1	1
Importance of Topic to Social Work	7
Focus on BSW Students	12
The study of religion and the problem of definitions	15
Statement of Problem	18
Purpose of the Study/Research Question	19
Summary	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review	21
Historical Overview of Empirical Studies: 1988-1998	21
Faculty-Focused Studies	21
Practitioner-Focused Studies	29
Student-Focused Studies	42
Empirical Studies within the Last Decade: 1999-2009	43
Practitioner-Focused Studies	43
Student-Focused Studies	63
Summary	86
Chapter 3: Methods	90
Study Design	90

Setting	91
Sampling	92
Data Collection Procedures	95
Justification for Online Survey and Data Collection	96
Measures/Instrumentation	98
Human Subjects Protection	101
Data Analysis Plan	102
Chapter 4: Results	104
Descriptive Statistics of the Sample	104
Research Question 1	106
Descriptive Statistics of the RRSP	106
Analyses of RRSP and Relationship to Demographic Variables	107
Research Questions 2 and 3	107
Research Question 4	112
Research Question 5	112
Research Question 6	114
Research Question 7	116
Research Question 8	117
Research Question 9	121
Chapter 5: Discussion	132
Overview of Significant Findings	132
Consideration of Findings in Light of Existing Research Studies	142
Limitations of Study	148

Recommendations for Further Research	149
Implications for Practice	150
Appendices	153
Appendix A   Informed Consent for Web Survey	154
Appendix B   Email Letter of Invitation to Program Directors	156
Appendix C   Survey Questionnaire	157
References	167

## **List of Tables**

Table 1:	Institutional Auspices of CSWE Accredited BSW Programs	92
Table 2:	Demographic Information	105
Table 3:	Respondents' Use of Spiritually Derived Interventions	109
Table 4:	Respondents' Views on Appropriateness of Spiritually Derived Interventions	110
Table 5:	Preparation to address religion and spirituality	112
Table 6:	Student Perceptions on Frequency of R/S discussion in SW education	113
Table 7:	Satisfaction with Religious and Spiritual Content in Social Work Education	114
Table 8:	Religious and Spiritual are Part of Multicultural Diversity.	115
Table 9:	Religious and Spiritual are a Dimension of Human Existence	116
Table 10:	Frequency of Religious and Spiritual Content in Curriculum	123
Table 11:	Levels of Satisfaction by Auspice	124
Table 12:	Interest in Course on Religion and Spirituality in Social Work	128
Table 13:	Ideological Position Scale by Auspice	129
Table 14	Views about Religious or Spiritual Content in the Social Work Curriculum by Auspice	141
Table 15:	Comparison of MSW and BSW Students on Religious and Spiritual Variables	144
Table 16:	MSW and BSW Students Relationship to Organized Religion or Spiritual Group	145
Table 17:	MSW and BSW Students Views on Religious and Spiritual Content in Curriculum	146
Table 18:	MSW and BSW Students Satisfaction with Religious or Spiritual Content in the Social Work Curriculum	146



Table 19:	MSW and BSW Students views about Religious or Spiritual Content in the Social Work Curriculum	147
-----------	---	-----

## **Preface**

As a graduate student in a social work program housed in a Seminary, I often was drawn into conversations of religion, faith, and spirituality along with the practice of social work. Maybe it was taken for granted or seen as such an integral part of who we were as people that we did not stop to think about the implications of discussing what some believe to be two conflicting worlds, social work and religion. Spirituality and faith were not separate from religion because it was not part of my thinking to see religion, spirituality and faith as being totally distinct concepts. As concepts they can be defined and spoken about as if they are distinct entities but in our discussions, these distinctions were seldom made. One could argue that spirituality and religion can be practiced separately, but the two are linked. And while faith does not have to be religious in a traditional sense it could be argued that it is still related to how we practice social work and view the world around us. “We always come to the world, including social work practice, with our faith (worldview assumptions)—wherever we got it, however good or bad it is, and however embryonic it may be” (Sherwood, 2002, p. 10).

My first employment as a social worker after completing my MSW was with a county agency that partnered with a Catholic diocese to assist with the problem of homeless or throwaway youth as they were called in the late 1980s. It was interesting that the focus of service dealt with the physical, mental and social needs of the youth but not with the spiritual or religious needs. Maybe because the services were housed in a converted Catholic school next to a Catholic church it was assumed the client’s need for spiritual or religious supports were somehow met through a proximity to the holy without having to assess these issues as part of the social work practice process. Administration,

however, was clear that church (religion) and state were separate matters even though this was a partnership between the church and the state.

During my ten years working in the public child welfare system with children and families who were caught in the cycle of abuse and neglect, tension between religion, spirituality and social work were evident. Although many workers knew that the church community could be a valuable resource for families, little was done to encourage workers to explore the religious or spiritual aspects of families' lives. There were some social workers who were willing to impose their concept of the spiritual or religious in clients' lives. However, these were often inappropriate actions and bordered on being unethical. Many other workers were simply satisfied with falling back on the separation of church and state argument as a way to avoid confronting the boundaries between religion, spirituality and professional social work. This led me to ask, how should social workers tap into spiritual and religious resources that are prevalent in society and have the potential for positive impact for clients without crossing professional boundaries?

As my career transitioned to the world of higher education, academia presented new challenges to a search for some balance between a predominant bio-psycho-social model and the spiritual and religious aspects of life. It was interesting to note my students' comments about the topics of religion, spirituality and faith when I began teaching full-time. Students would say, "We were told that you don't discuss religion in social work" or "No one ever talked about this before." Many professors were uncomfortable with the topic of religion and spirituality being discussed in the same conversation with professional social work practice. Even in "faith-based" colleges and universities there was concern that a focus on client spirituality and religious practice

might violate professional practice boundaries.

Things have changed some since my initial introduction to the politics of higher education. Spirituality, as distinct from religion, has made its way back into the conversation of social work education as an area of assessment and intervention (Coholic, Nichols & Cadell, 2008). However, how social work education prepares students for the use of spirituality and religion in practice remains an area for continued conversation and research. This is what led me to focus my research on religion and spirituality in social work education and practice.

Perceptions and Experiences of BSW Students with Religion and Spirituality in  
Social Work Education and Practice

Abstract

By

CLIFFORD JAMES MICHAEL ROSENBOHM

The role of religion and spirituality has not always been included in conversations about social work education and practice, but there has been an increased interest in the topics as evidenced by the attention given to religion and spirituality in the professional literature. Although there have been multiple studies focused on students at the masters' level as well as with practitioners and a few with faculty there were even less with social work students at the undergraduate level.

Using a cross-sectional survey design, a national stratified random sample of social work programs were asked to invite senior BSW students to respond to an online questionnaire about their perceptions and experiences of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. The final sample consisted of 412 seniors enrolled in 56 accredited social work programs from across the United States.

Student perceptions about the role of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice were explored with specific attention to differences between students attending public and church-related schools. Students' experiences with religion and spirituality in their education as well as their personal religious and/or spiritual

beliefs and practices were investigated. Views about the appropriateness and use of specific spiritually-derived interventions were explored. Student attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice were generally positive, however there were significant differences between students on several items (e.g. levels of preparation, satisfaction, content, and personal beliefs).

## Perceptions and Experiences of BSW Students with Religion and Spirituality in Social Work Education and Practice

The social work profession has had an interesting relationship with religion and spirituality. The roots of social work have been debated and documented by numerous authors over the years with religion being at the heart of the debate (Bowpitt, 1998; Canda, 1988; Kreutziger, 2002; Loewenberg, 1988; Niebuhr, 1932; Popple & Leighninger, 2002; Trattner, 1994; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004). The relationship between religion and spirituality in connection with the social work profession has been part of an ongoing discussion taking place within the social work profession since its earliest development. One of the profession's forebears, Mary Richmond, presented a paper on the profession's relations to the church in 1899 (Richmond, 1930). Richmond says, "the Church supplies the charitable *motive*" and "we are prepared to give *method*..." (p. 115). One could argue this relationship needs to be continued with healthy dialogue. Niebuhr (1932) notes the early contribution of religion to the social work profession. He states, "...religion does create a conscience which is quick to understand social need and ready to move toward its alleviation, if not ready to work for its elimination" (p. 17).

The inclusion of religious and spiritual content in training and education came with the territory of many of the early charity workers in the social services because of the influence and the involvement of the church and other religious organizations in the provision and delivery of services. While the topic of religion and spirituality has been seen as important by the social work profession, it has received very little attention historically in the social work literature. In 1980, Martin Marty summarized the

profession's lack of attention to the matter this way, “. . . most of the time the literature of the profession genially and serenely ignores religion” (p. 465). Spencer (1961, 1956) addressed the issue of religion and social work on several occasions in her writing. Spencer (1961) mentioned that the “question of whether or not religious content should be incorporated in social work education received official consideration when the 1952 Curriculum Policy Statement was adopted by the American Association of Schools of Social Work” (pp.161-162). Even though “there was a strong sentiment that the term ‘social’ was inclusive enough to cover the religious area” (p.162), the word spiritual was included in the section on human growth and behavior and received official recognition. There appeared to be no open hostility toward the inclusion of religion and spirituality both in the curriculum and the many formal meetings as social work developed professionally. There are many examples of speeches and addresses given at social work conferences that sound like sermons from the pulpit when one reads the language used in the presentations (Loewenberg, 1988; Spencer, 1956).

Social work education has not demonstrated much interest in the topics of religion and spirituality if one were to measure interest by the amount of literature produced in the first 70 to 80 years of social work education's existence. Over the last fifteen years, however, the professional literature has included more work on the topic, looking at the attitudes and experiences of faculty, practitioners, and MSW students toward religion and spirituality (Derezotes, 1995; Derezotes & Evans, 1995; Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999; Rizer & McColley, 1996; Russel, 1998; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999; Sheridan, Bullis, Adcock, Berlin & Miller, 1992; Sheridan, Wilmer & Atcheson, 1994). Most of



the writing has focused on graduate social work education with very little attention being given to undergraduate social work programs.

In the 1994 Curriculum Policy Statement (CPS) by the Council on Social Work Education, the word religion is mentioned in several places and the word spiritual is used once in each section of the BSW and MSW curriculum content. The 2003 Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) called for theories and knowledge of "spiritual development across the life span" (CSWE, 2003, p. 35). The Accreditation Standards (Section 6.0) also addresses providing "a learning context in which respect for all persons and understanding of diversity" includes religion (CSWE, 2003, p. 40). The most recent EPAS (CSWE, 2008) references religion twice, once in the "explicit curriculum" under engaging diversity and difference in practice, and secondly in the "implicit curriculum" addressing programs' commitment to diversity (CSWE, 2008, pp. 5, 11). The word spiritual is addressed in one place in the "explicit curriculum" section in reference to human behavior and the social environment (CSWE, 2008, p. 6). This newest EPAS remains consistent with previous statements by CSWE about religion and spirituality.

The relationship between religion and social work has been described as one of "approach-avoidance" (Ellor, et al., 1999, p. 13). Although the social work literature repeatedly mentions a lack of attention to the religious and spiritual components of human existence within the literature, the literature is growing. Cascio (1999) notes that the professional literature addressing issues of religion and spirituality "has fallen into three categories. First, there are the works that deal specifically with religious matters;

another body of literature looks at spirituality, and a third addresses the concerns of workers facing religious and spiritual issues in the practice setting” (p. 131).

The relationship between social work education and the sectarian roots of the social work profession has often been characterized by one of strain and mutual exclusion. There have been times over the years when the literature in social work has called for the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work education (Canda, 1989; Derezotes, 1995; Derezotes & Evans, 1995; Faver, 1987; Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999; Marty, 1980; Sheridan, Bullis, Adcock, Berlin & Miller, 1992; Sheridan, Wilmer & Atcheson, 1994; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999; Spencer, 1956 & 1961). Within the last couple of decades there have been many articles in the social work literature recognizing the spiritual dimension of humans and the need to address this aspect in practice (Canda, 1998; Derezotes, 1995; Faver, 1987; Graham, Kaiser, & Garrett, 1998; Jacobs, 1997; Johnson, 1997; Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999; Sherwood, 1998; Thayne, 1997). Groundwork has been laid in studies about the attitudes, practices and education of social work students, practitioners and faculty with regard to religion, faith, and spirituality (Derezotes, 1995; Derezotes & Evans, 1995; Sheridan, et al., 1992; Sheridan, et al., 1994). Russel (1998) conducted an initial exploratory study looking at the number and characteristics of courses on spirituality and/or religion being offered by MSW programs in the United States. In the literature review for a study on students in social work programs, Cascio (1999) points out “two significant gaps” (p. 133) in previous studies addressing the importance of religious and spiritual issues in practice and education. The first gap is the reliance of the studies “on a questionnaire format” and the

second gap deals with none of the studies being “conducted with students in social work programs” (p. 133).

David Sherwood (1998) makes an excellent point about the relationship between the importance of spirituality and religion during this time in the social work profession:

Our professional paradigms legitimize and even mandate the inclusion of spirituality and religion as integral dimensions of assessment and practice.

The fundamental social work concepts of persons-in-situation, systems, and holistic understanding are critically violated to the extent that we functionally ignore or marginalize spirituality and religion as sources of meaning, values, life-direction, and substantive emotional and physical resources for people. (p. 82)

Students need to be educated in order to be able to practice effectively and competently in areas that involve religion and spirituality. They need to understand their own religious and spiritual heritage, views, and practices as a starting point to understanding the heritage, views, and practices of others they will serve in practice. Faver (1987) proposes specific attention be given to religion in social work education because of the significant impact it has on the attitudes and behaviors of both the clients and the social workers. Canda and Furman (1999) conducted a literature review covering thirty selected publications debating inclusion of spirituality and religion in social work education from 1988-1999. The overwhelming majority of the publications (27 out of 30) supported the inclusion of spirituality and religion in social work education.

While the relationship between religion and spirituality and the field of social work has had a long history dating back to the evolution and development of social work

as a profession the same cannot be said for the development of theory and empirical research about this topic. Canda and Furman (1999) point out “three broad historical phases can be distinguished” (p.87) in the relationship between spirituality and the social work profession. The three phases are “sectarian origins (colonial period through early twentieth century), professionalization and secularization (1920s through 1970s), and resurgence of interest in spirituality (1980s through present)” (pp. 87-88). This historical relationship between spirituality and social work has lacked any clear theoretical model or conceptual framework to guide any research agenda for religious and spiritual content in social work education. The development of theory and empirical research about religion and spirituality in relationship to social work education is relatively new. The literature, as referenced in Canda, Nakashima, Burgess, & Russel (1999) supports the idea that the development of theory and empirical research is relatively new in the area of religion and spirituality and social work as a profession and specifically in the area of social work education. The most complete work in the area of conceptualizing religion and spirituality in relationship to social work is presented by Canda and Furman (2010). When defining spirituality and religion Canda and Furman (2010) assert, “spirituality is the source of religion” and present spirituality as “including and transcending religion” (p. 77). Given this perspective Canda and Furman (2010) present “a holistic model of spirituality”. The model “depicts spirituality in relation to the bio-psycho-social model, using three metaphors: spirituality as the wholeness of the person, spirituality as the center of the person, and spirituality as the spiritual aspect of the person” (p. 87). While this model is helpful in an attempt to understand the relationship between spirituality, religion and social work the overall development of a theory or theoretical model for the

relationship of religion and spirituality to social work is still in process and is not definitively articulated in the literature.

There appears to be a disparity between the needs of practitioners and what social work programs teach. Practitioners are faced with addressing the religious and spiritual aspects of clients' lives; yet, according to the literature social work education at the graduate level does not appear to be preparing social workers to competently handle this component of clients' lives (Cascio, 1999; Derezotes, 1995; Derezotes & Evans, 1995; Joseph, 1988; Rizer & McColley, 1996; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999). The role of BSW education in preparing graduates to competently handle religious and spiritual issues in practice has been given limited attention in the literature. This research seeks to fill this gap by determining from the student's perspective if and how BSW programs address the issues of religion and spirituality in the curriculum and to develop an understanding of the attitudes and experiences of BSW students in relation to religion and spirituality both in social work practice and in their own lives.

#### *Importance of topic to social welfare*

According to the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics "the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 2008, p. 1). It can be argued that one of the "basic human needs" involves the realm of religion and spirituality. In Towle's (1987) "Common Human Needs," the author explicitly says that spiritual needs "must be seen as distinct needs and they must also be seen in relation to other human needs" (p. 9). In Maslow's (1987) theory on

motivation and personality one can implicitly make the connection between religion and spirituality and the “hierarchy of needs” model that is presented. Religion and spirituality are part of what Maslow (1971) calls the “value-life” or part of the “being values” and can be categorized primarily in the category of self-actualization in the hierarchy of needs model. “The spiritual life is then part of the human essence. It is a defining-characteristic of human nature, without which human nature is not full human nature” (Maslow, 1971, p. 325). The social work profession has prided itself as a helping profession that addresses social problems from a holistic perspective and one of the dominant paradigms from this holistic perspective is called the bio-psycho-social model (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 1998). In the past, the spiritual dimension was seen as a part of the “social” dimension even though some social workers argued for the spiritual dimension to be viewed as distinct from the social dimension (Spencer, 1961). Historically the social work profession has spent the majority of its energy and focus on the individual with what has come to be known as a focus on the whole person. One of the continuing debates around being a holistic profession is the use of the bio-psycho-social model and the person-in-environment concept. “In social work, we often say that we wish to understand the whole person-in-the-environment. It is necessary to learn about the roles of religion and spirituality if we are to have such an understanding” (Canda & Furman, 1999, p. xxv).

Social work researchers and theorists have begun to discuss the dimension of spirituality more openly (Canda, 1988, 1998; Cornett, 1992; Derezotes, 1995; Gotterer, 2001; Jacobs, 1997; Miller, 2001; O’Neill, 1999). Social work practitioners report that religion and spirituality are important aspects of practice with clients because of their

impact on cultural sensitivity, human behavior, coping strategies, and life-cycle issues (Derezotes, 1995; Derezotes, & Evans, 1995; Furman, 1994; Graham, Kaiser, & Garrett, 1998; Joseph, 1988; Sheridan, et.al., 1992; Tan, 2006; Vandsburger, Schneller & Murphy-Norris, 2006; Williams & Lindsey, 2005). Additionally practitioners report that religion and spirituality impact practice on multiple levels including macro-practice issues such as policy making decisions, allocation of resources to religiously affiliated agencies, cultural and ethnic diversity, self-awareness on the part of the practitioner, and overall support and resources for clients in times of illness and crisis.

One of the questions social work has tried to answer is: Where do the religious and spiritual aspects of human nature fit, in this holistic approach? Canda (1998) and Cascio (1999) have argued for innovation to include spirituality in practice, based on social work's commitment to diversity and self-determination. Cornett (1992) suggested social workers integrate the spiritual dimension into the person-in-environment concept. Dudley & Helfgott (1990) conducted a survey of social work faculty to explore their thoughts and ideas on including spirituality in social work curriculum. The results found overall support for including spirituality content in social work education. Religion and spirituality have been seen as potential strengths and barriers in the lives of clients; therefore, practitioners have suggested it be addressed in clinical practice (Gotterer, 2001; Graham, Kaiser & Garrett, 1998; Sermabeikian, 1994). Historical roots of the profession tie religion and spirituality to a community focus and issues of social justice (Holland, 1989; Johnson, 1997). It has been suggested that religion is important throughout different life-stages or developmental stages and therefore appropriate to include it in curriculum covering the life span (Joseph, 1988). The failure of social work education

specifically and the social work profession in general to adequately answer the question of where religion and spirituality fits has remained throughout most of the tenure of social work as a professional field. This does not mean there have not been attempts by both the profession in general and the educational programs responsible for preparing students for practice.

The history of the social work profession has swung back and forth between focusing on societal problems, with an emphasis on social reform, and individual problems. The primary reason people seek help from social workers is to address a problem, concern or issue that is interfering with their ability to function or to access the needed resources in daily living. If social problems are one of the main concerns of the social work profession then one can question what role religion and spirituality play when addressing social problems. According to Gallup and Lindsay (1999) religion and spirituality do have some role in how people cope with social problems.

The deeply spiritual or religiously committed among the American population have less stress and cope better with it. They have fewer drug and alcohol problems, less depression, and lower rates of suicide. They enjoy their lives and marriages more than do the less religious in society.

(p. 1)

Sixty-one percent of Americans “say religion can solve all or most of today’s problems” (Gallup and Jones, 2000, p. 178). On the surface it would appear that religion and spirituality do have a role to play when addressing social problems.

The topic of religion and spirituality in social work education is important because of the relationship of religion and spirituality in the lives of clients and the



increased interest by the social work profession in how religion and spirituality impact practice. Social work is especially known for supporting and valuing the idea of “starting where the client is” in the helping process. According to Gallup and Jones (2000) ninety-six percent of adults in America “believe in God or a universal spirit” (p. 177) and eighty-two percent “experience in their lives a need for spiritual growth”(p. 177). What do these numbers mean for social work practitioners and social work education? During times of crisis many people turn to religious and spiritual sources for answers and comfort. Individuals and communities seek to make sense out of their lives and the world events that influence and shape their lives. One of the primary ways many people seek and find meaning is through religion and through spiritual practices. Social workers need to be able to understand and communicate with clients about the role of religion and spiritual practices as coping mechanisms. “Because human life clearly has a spiritual and religious dimension, which is significantly interrelated with its other aspects, it is vitally important for social workers to know and to understand this dimension” (Hugen, 2001, p. 3).

The relationship between practice and education in social work is crucial to both students and to those served by the social work profession. Ideally the relationship between practice and education should be a reciprocal one in which they mutually inform each other on all aspects of social work. Practice has long recognized the religious and spiritual nature of those who are served by the profession (Canda & Furman, 2010), but this recognition has not always been met with the necessary knowledge, skills and values needed to effectively address the religious and spiritual concerns of clients. There are many examples in the literature to document the fact that social work practitioners have

struggled with and have been ill prepared on how to deal with clients who present issues around religion and spirituality (Cascio, 1999; Derezotes, 1995; Derezotes & Evans, 1995; Joseph, 1988; Sherwood, 1998). If practitioners are struggling and are ill prepared in this area, then clients will not be able to receive the best intervention available and will not receive holistic intervention to address their concerns in this area. If students are not educated and challenged to learn the knowledge, skills and values necessary to understand the religious and spiritual aspects of human beings, then they will become the next generation of practitioners who continue to struggle in practice when confronted with these issues. While there have been advances in addressing the topic of spirituality in social work curriculum, there are still many gaps in our knowledge about the extent of content on spirituality in social work programs (Canda, 2005; Canda, Nakashima, Burgess, Russel & Barfield, 2003).

#### *Focus on BSW Students*

The target population for this research is the baccalaureate level social work student. The CSWE reported 14,707 baccalaureate of social work degrees awarded by 426 social work programs that reported data for the 2007-2008 academic year (CSWE 2010, November). Over a thirty-two year period, from 1976-1977 through the 2007-2008 academic years, approximately 315,000 baccalaureate degrees were awarded (CSWE 2007b; CSWE, 2010, November). According to CSWE in the June 2009 “Commission on Accreditation Decisions” there are 468 accredited baccalaureate social work programs with another 18 programs in candidacy (CSWE, 2009). The trend shows a steady increase in the number of BSW graduates and BSW programs over a 25-year period (Schilling, Morrish & Liu, 2008). Additionally the number of states regulating practice at the BSW

level has grown. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) reports there are 39 states that currently license, certify or register BSW practitioners (ASWB, 2009). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2009) reports that approximately 595,000 social workers held jobs in 2006. From 2006-2016 the BLS is projecting employment for social workers to increase by 22%.

Undergraduate social work students are prepared as generalist practitioners ready for direct practice with clients upon graduation. Sheafor (2001) reviewed the job characteristics for the BSW graduates and reported that,

...BSWs are more likely to: (1) be engaged in direct practice than in administration, (2) be employed in family/child welfare and aging than in mental health and school social work, (3) work in more traditional social service agencies than in mental health centers or private practice, and (4) address the more basic and tangible needs of clients such as income, housing, and so on than to provide clinical services (p. 35).

The sheer volume of BSW social workers having direct contact with clients means one could reasonably assume that they will be presented with issues related to religion and spirituality. What is not known is whether or not BSW students are prepared to address these issues based on their education and experience. It is not known what, if any, content on religion and spirituality is being given to BSW students in their education.

Many studies and articles have documented the lack of training in master's level education in the area of religion and spirituality for social workers during their years in the academy (Cascio, 1999; Derezotes, 1995; Derezotes & Evans, 1995; Furman, 1994; Joseph, 1988; Rizer & McColley 1996; Russel, 1998; Sherwood, 1998). There is some

indication in the last decade that social work education is at least beginning to consider content on religion and spirituality in the curriculum, for example, Sheridan and Amato-von Hemert (1999) note a “resurgence in the interest in the role of religion and spirituality in both social work practice and education” (p. 125).

The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2003) called for attention to values, beliefs, and diversity that includes religious and spiritual aspects of human existence.

The purposes of social work education are to prepare competent and effective professionals, to develop social work knowledge, and to provide leadership in the development of service delivery systems. Social work education is grounded in the profession’s history, purposes, and philosophy and is based on a body of knowledge, values, and skills. Social work education enables students to integrate the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession for competent practice (p. 31).

The word religion is mentioned two times in the EPAS with reference to preparing social workers for engaging diversity and difference in practice (CSWE, 2008, pp. 5, 11). The word spiritual is referenced once in the section on applying knowledge about human behavior and the social environment (CSWE, 2008, p. 6). The accrediting standards historically acknowledge and call for knowledge and understanding of religion and spirituality in educating students. The interest of social work practitioners with religion and spirituality and the emphasis of the accrediting body for social work education on diversity issues that include religion and spirituality in the curriculum raise more questions around the topic of religion and spirituality in social work. Are social

workers prepared to address the religious and spiritual dimensions of clients' lives? Are schools of social work integrating content on religion and spirituality into existing courses of the social work curriculum? What is the relationship between religion and spirituality and the profession of social work? How do students, clinicians, faculty, and clients perceive the relationship between religiosity and spirituality in their own lives? Is there a theoretical foundation in social work for teaching the concepts of religion and spirituality?

*The study of religion and the problem of definitions*

The study of religion involves two central and specific issues: the perspective of study and the definition of terms. Scholars in the study of religion still have “no convincing general theory of religion” (Guthrie, 1996). Guthrie goes on to say, “writers in every discipline concerned with religion admit that even a definition of the term still eludes consensus” (p. 412). To study religion and religious content requires a careful decision not to privilege one set of beliefs or practices over any others and an objective recognition of possible bias or guiding perspectives. Braun (2000) says, “...the term ‘religion’ is as familiar as it is difficult to contain within a cogent, agreed-upon, manageable frame of reference” (p. 3). However, attempts have been made to provide a structure for the study of religion with all the challenges defining the concept brings to the social sciences (Braun & McCutcheon, 2000).

Arnal (2000) provides a useful perspective as he describes a functionalist or “culturalist” attempt to define religion. Culturalists or functionalists describe, “religion in terms of a particular cultural, social or psychological function,” and therefore, “culturalist definitions impute a distinctive practical significance (and hence, by extension, an

obvious intellectual significance) to the phenomenon they identify” (Arnal, p. 28). In defining religion, Guthrie (1996) concludes religion “is a concept stemming from a particular culture at a particular time” (p. 418). This does not mean one particular culture can or does define religion or spirituality for other cultures. It does challenge one to be aware of the assumptions brought to the research endeavor and make one more aware of how the concepts religion and spirituality may be defined and interpreted differently within a multicultural society such as the United States.

On a practical level religion plays an important role in the lives of social workers and the clients they serve. The current research study is not a study about religion per se, as much as it is an attempt to capture the perceptions and attitudes of social work students about religion and spirituality, as they understand it in relationship to social work education and practice. The purpose of this study is not to argue for the distinctions of the terms religion and spirituality so much as to present what is included in the domain. It is important to differentiate the terms when possible but it is also important to acknowledge the common themes in each as they overlap in the everyday lives of people. The definitions of religion and spirituality have been lumped together in much of the social work literature. Other professional fields such as medicine, nursing and psychology have also struggled to clearly separate the two concepts (Cohen & Koenig, 2003; Koenig, 2006; Miller, McConnell, & Klinger, 2007; Miller & Thoresen, 2003; Pesut, Fowler, Taylor, Reimer-Kirkham, & Sawatzky, 2008; Schlehofer, Omoto, & Adelman, 2008). Defining the concept “religion” in and of itself is problematic much less in conjunction with the concept of spirituality. However, in the social work literature, numerous authors have presented conceptualizations and definitions of religion and spirituality (Faiver,

Ingersoll, O'Brien & McNally, 2001; Canda & Furman, 1999; Ellor, Netting, & Thibault, 1999; Carroll, 1998; Russel, 1998; Sherwood, 1998; Bullis, 1996; Spencer, 1961). An attempt to define these two terms almost certainly brings some disagreement and debate about whether or not they can be separated or even operationalized. The concepts are complex and multidimensional (Hill, et al. 2000). One argument is that the two terms must be considered together (Moberg, 2005). In practical terms the concepts of religion and spirituality are often used interchangeably. In the field of social work, spirituality is used more broadly than the term religion and can be related to religion but can also exist outside of the context of religion. Russel (1998) defines spirituality "as an individual search for meaning, purpose and values" (p. 17). Sherwood (1998) defines 'spirituality' broadly as "the human sense of and search for transcendence, meaning, and connectedness beyond the self" (p. 83). Sherwood goes on to define 'religion' as referring "to a more formal organization and embodiment of spirituality into relatively specific belief systems, practices, and organizational structures" (p. 83). "Religion is viewed as the institutional context of spiritual beliefs; a social process having to do with shared rituals, beliefs and practice" (Russel, 1998, p. 17). Ellor, et al. (1999) defines 'religion' as "a social group or institution that ascribes meaning and value to individual life as well as to all creation" (p. 6).

There are common themes and concepts that run throughout many definitions for spirituality and religion. Definitions of religion focus on organization, institution, a social process, structure or outward form that gives expression to the spiritual. Spirituality focuses on meaning, purpose, values, beliefs, connectedness with the transcendent and wholeness. Another comparison or distinction of the two concepts is

that religion is seen as more of a corporate experience and spirituality as an individual experience. Religion can be viewed as the outward expression of one's beliefs often practiced in community. Spirituality is related to the inner person and is often viewed or practiced individually.

The concepts of religion and spirituality used in this research are the products of previous social work researchers' attempts to capture social work faculty, practitioners' and students' perceptions and experiences of religion and spirituality in education and practice. The definitions used in Sheridan's (2000) Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice (RRSP) scale are the definitions used for this current study. Spirituality is defined as "the human search for meaning, purpose, and connection with self, others, the universe, and ultimate reality, however one understands it. This may or may not be expressed through religious forms or institutions" and religion is defined "an organized and structured set of beliefs and practices shared by a community that is related to spirituality." (Sheridan 2000, p. 20). The definitions are limited by the standards of scholars in the study of religion field, but the definitions are practical for the purposes of comparative analyses with previous studies involving social work students. The use of these definitions allows for comparisons to multiple studies that have used the RRSP scale (Graff, 2007; Heyman, Buchanon, Musgrave & Menz, 2006; Sheridan, 2004; Sheridan, et al., 1992; Sheridan, et al., 1994; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999).

### *Statement of the Problem*

The Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy has called for social work programs to "integrate content that promotes understanding, affirmation, and respect for people from diverse backgrounds" (CSWE, 2003, p. 34) and for theories and



knowledge of “spiritual development across the life span” (CSWE, p. 35). An understanding of individual development and behavior within the context of social environment is required knowledge for BSW students and the topics of religion and spirituality fall under these sections of educational policy for accredited programs. The current literature around religion and spirituality as it relates to social work education and practice has focused on master’s level education and MSW practitioners, however research around religion and spirituality for social work programs at the undergraduate level needs to explore these topics in order to evaluate and refine program curriculum and to prepare BSW practitioners for competent practice in this area.

#### *Purpose of the Study/Research Question*

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the views and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as presented in the social work curriculum of undergraduate social work programs. The primary research question is as follows: What are the perceptions and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as experienced in social work education and practice? Additionally this research will seek to develop an understanding of the attitudes and experiences of BSW students about the inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work education and the role of religion and spirituality in their own lives. The research question implies needs for self-awareness and knowledge on the part of students about the roles of religion and spirituality in social work as well as how these concepts interconnect with both personal and professional values.

Additional areas that this research will explore include: (1) what are appropriate interventions around religious and spiritual practices that can be performed in providing

services to clients; (2) what do students report as having personally done with clients around religion and spirituality; and (3) what differences, if any, are there between the views and experiences of students according to the auspices (public, private, church-related) of the school in which the social work program is located.

### *Summary*

This chapter presented an overview of the historical relationship between religion and spirituality and the social work profession and the inclusion of religion and spirituality in the development of social work education. The importance of the topic to social work practice, definition of terms, a statement of the problem, as well as the purpose of this study, and the specific research questions were explicated to form the foundation for the direction of the literature review.

The next chapter explores the empirical literature covering studies with faculty, practitioners, and students in social work education and practice.

## **Literature Review**

This chapter links the main research question, what are the perceptions and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as experienced in social work education and practice, to the broader empirical literature that has explored the perceptions and experiences of social work faculty, practitioners, and social work students with religious and spiritual issues in practice and education.

A general limitation in the literature is the lack of empirical research focusing explicitly on clients' perspectives about religion and spirituality. There is research that addresses the general U.S. population with regard to religion and spirituality but there is limited literature available that specifically studies client populations' views about religion and spirituality in social work practice from the clients' perspective.

Empirical studies focusing on religion and spirituality in social work education fall into three broad categories: (1) studies with students, (2) studies with practitioners, and (3) studies with social work educators. Studies tend to focus primarily on one of these groups; however, there are a few that have a combination of the above groups as the units of interest. The review of empirical studies is organized around these three groups to show how key stakeholders in the social work profession view the concepts of religion and spirituality as it relates to the preparation of practitioners. The empirical studies section is divided into two time periods, 1988-1998 and 1999-2009.

### *Historical Overview of Empirical Studies: 1988-1998*

#### *Faculty-Focused Studies*

Empirical studies on religion and spirituality involving social work educators first begin to appear in the literature in the late 1980s. Studies focusing on faculty

perspectives about religion and spirituality in social work education have been scattered over the last twenty years (Canda, 1988; Dudley & Helfgott, 1990; Sheridan, Wilmer, & Atcheson, 1994; Derezotes 1995; and Russel 1998). The rationale for reviewing studies about social work faculty attitudes and perceptions about religion and spirituality in social work education is the relative influence they have on student attitudes and perceptions.

Dudley and Helfgott (1990) conducted an exploratory study that included 53 faculty from four schools located in two Eastern states. The sample of faculty came from two public universities and two nonsectarian private universities. The level of teaching in the sample included 33 participants teaching only in graduate schools, 17 teaching in both undergraduate and graduate schools and three teaching exclusively in undergraduate programs. The study used a survey/questionnaire design to gather information on respondents' professional, religious and spiritual backgrounds. The concept of spirituality was not explicitly defined other than to differentiate it from religion and to note that religion was encompassed within spirituality. The survey also solicited information on the participants' views on spirituality, the need for spirituality content in social work curriculum and whether there needed to be a spiritual component in social work practice.

The results of Dudley and Helfgott's (1990) study indicate that a large majority (75.5%) of the faculty surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that spirituality is a fundamental human aspect. About half (47.2%,  $n = 25$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that social workers should become more sophisticated in spiritual matters, while 14 (26.4%) had no opinion and 14 (26.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The

majority of respondents were in favor of a course on spirituality, thirty-two (60.4%) as an elective course and four (7.5%) as a required course. When participants were asked if social work practice that includes a spiritual component has a better chance of empowering clients than practice without spirituality the results are mixed. Seventeen (32.1%) had no opinion; twenty-two (41.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and fourteen (26.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that social work practice with a spiritual component did have a better chance of empowering clients.

Faculty were further asked if “the introduction of spirituality content would conflict with any of the following five areas: Social work’s mission, the NASW Code of Ethics, the Constitutional principle of separation of church and state, the clients’ beliefs, or the respondents’ beliefs” (p. 290). The one area that presented the greatest concern was conflict with the separation of church and state (25%,  $n = 13$ ).

There were two variables that were significant in relationship to support for a course on spirituality.

“Respondents who frequently attended religious services more than three times monthly were more likely to support a course ( $p < .001$ ) than were those who did not attend services. Likewise, those who thought that social workers should become more sophisticated in spiritual matters were more likely to support a spirituality course than those who did not see a need for increased sophistication ( $p < .05$ )” (Dudley & Helfgott, 1990, p. 290).

Additionally there were four variables significantly related to spirituality as an empowerment strategy in social work practice. “Higher frequency of attending religious services was a predictor of such a strategy ( $p < .001$ ). Religious affiliation also was a

predictor: Christian respondents were more favorable to using spirituality as an empowerment strategy than were Jewish respondents ( $p < .05$ )” (Dudley & Helfgott, p. 291). The last two variables that correlated significantly with an empowerment strategy were “those who had an absence of concern about separation of church and state ( $p < .01$ ), and an absence of concern about conflict with the Code of Ethics ( $p < .05$ )” (Dudley & Helfgott, p. 291) being more likely to support spirituality as an empowerment strategy.

The results of Dudley and Helfgott’s (1990) study suggests there was early support by faculty for introducing spirituality content into social work curriculum at these four schools. The small sample limited the study’s generalizability of results to the larger social work educational community. The results represent mixed views and suggest that opposing views need to be heard and understood as programs move forward to address issues of spirituality in social work curriculum.

Sheridan, Wilmer and Atcheson (1994) took this next step in a study that investigated the views of full-time social work educators about including content on religion and spirituality in social work programs. Using a sampling frame of 498 full-time social work educators from 25 schools of social work in 12 Southeastern states and Washington, DC, the study received 280 completed questionnaires addressing multiple issues related to religion and spirituality and social work education. The study used a cross-sectional, correlational design implemented through a mailed survey. The concepts of spirituality and religion were defined at the beginning of the questionnaire as follows:

“...spirituality was defined as ‘the human search for purpose and meaning of life experiences, which may or may not involve expressions within a formal religious institution.’ Religion was defined as ‘a systematic body

of beliefs and practices related to a spiritual search' (Sheridan, et al, 1994, p. 365).

The survey instrument drew some questions from Dudley and Helfgott's (1990) earlier study while developing other questions for this specific study. Sheridan, et al. (1994) used responses to 19 scaled items to assess faculty views on the role of religion and spirituality in practice. A 5-point Likert scale was utilized to rate faculty level of agreement with items in this scale. The results indicate a high mean on this scale, which indicates a "positive and accepting attitude towards the role of religion and spirituality in practice" (p. 367). This response is in contrast to almost 89% of the respondents reporting little or no graduate training in this area. Respondents endorsed two rationales for including content on religion and spirituality in social work education. The first rationale is based on the argument that religion and spirituality content should be included because it is relevant to multicultural diversity. An overwhelming majority of respondents (90.1%,  $n = 247$ ) indicated "agree" or "strongly agree" with this rationale. The second rationale argues that religion and spirituality are a part of human life that goes beyond the current bio-psycho-social model in understanding behavior; therefore, social work education needs to expand this model to include the spiritual aspect. Over sixty percent (61.3%,  $n = 169$ ) chose "agree" or "strongly agree" with this rationale.

Using guidelines from Canda's (1989) proposal for a comparative approach to presenting religion and spirituality content in social work education respondents in Sheridan, et al.'s (1994) study "indicated moderate to relatively high agreement with all seven guidelines" (p 368).

When responding to potential conflict of introducing content on religion and spirituality with social work's mission, the NASW's Code of Ethics, clients' beliefs, respondents' beliefs or the principle of separation of church and state "the majority of respondents identified no conflict" (Sheridan, et al. 1994, p. 369). A small percentage (10.4%,  $n = 29$ ) identified possible conflict with clients' beliefs. The area of separation of church and state had the highest percentage of respondents (19.4%,  $n = 54$ ) identifying this as a possible conflict.

In response to whether or not faculty would be in favor of a course on social work and religion and spirituality, respondents were overall supportive if offered as an elective (62.4%,  $n = 171$ ). Other responses included supporting a required course for all students (13.8%,  $n = 38$ ); support it only for clinical students (6.2%,  $n = 17$ ); opposed to such a course (16.1%,  $n = 44$ ); and preferred to see content infused in curriculum (1.5%,  $n = 4$ ). Significant predictors of whether or not faculty supported the inclusion of such a course were identified through a multivariate analysis of 22 variables. Faculty were categorized base on their views about offering a course on social work and religion and spirituality. The analysis revealed the following predictors of faculty views on offering a course on social work and religion and spirituality:

...Group 1 members ("Against Course") are generally satisfied with the amount of graduate training received in the area of religion and spirituality, perceived possible conflict with proposed course content in terms of both personal beliefs and clients' beliefs, and have taught more years at a university level than other respondents. Additionally, Group 1 members generally have less positive or accepting views of the role of



religion and spirituality in practice, attend religious services less often, have personal ideologies that do not include belief in a personal God, had little education on religion and spirituality in graduate school, and do not report current faith affiliations or orientations.

Conversely, Group 3 members (“Course as Required”) tend to have the opposite profile, while Group 2 members (“Course as Elective”) tend to hold a mid-position on these variables (Sheridan, et al. 1994, p. 371).

Overall respondents in this study (Sheridan, et al. 1994) articulated a belief that it is appropriate to give some attention to religious and spiritual issues in social work practice. As a group the respondents received very little graduate training about religion and spirituality. There is more support for a course on religion and spirituality and social work as an elective than in any other type of format (required, clinical only, opposed or infused). The rationale that this content is relevant to multicultural diversity received more support than a rationale for including the content in a human behavior framework. While the authors conclude there is support for such content they caution that there is no clear consensus on how this content should be taught and input from all faculty needs to be heard and understood. As key stakeholders in the preparation of social work practitioners the support of faculty for inclusion of religious and spiritual content is critical to students’ attitudes and perceptions about these issues.

In a study that focused directly on graduate social work education Russel (1998) explores the development of spirituality related courses in accredited MSW programs. The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved a questionnaire sent to 118 MSW program directors asking for “demographic information about the program and

about whether it offered a course on spirituality and/or religion as part of the graduate curriculum” (p. 20). A total of 114 programs completed surveys. If a school identified such a course the director was asked for the contact information of the faculty member teaching the course as well as a copy of the course syllabus. Seventeen programs identified such a course offering with sixteen submitting syllabi for content analysis. Content analysis was done to determine topics covered and texts used for courses. The topics and reading assignments varied greatly.

The topics most often found in the syllabi were: historical religious roots of the profession; the functional and dysfunctional aspects of clients’ religious and spiritual beliefs and experiences; feminist spiritual perspectives and women’s religious and spiritual issues; students’ personal, spiritual and professional growth; spiritually derived practice methods; understanding and respecting spiritual diversity; ethnic and minority issues; cooperation with religious and spiritual organizations; developmental theories of spiritual and religious growth; social action/social justice issues; and the impact of belief systems on individuals and organizations (Russel, p. 22).

The second stage of the study involved mailing a letter, to identified faculty teaching a course, explaining the purpose of the study and informing “them they would be contacted by telephone to be interviewed about this course” (Russel, 1998, p. 20). The impetus for most courses came from individual faculty members’ interest in the topic. The offering of these courses also presented challenges as reported by faculty teaching the courses. The challenges reported were “overcoming their faculty colleagues’

resistance and skepticism; narrowing the scope of the material covered; and finding appropriate text books” (Russel, p. 23). When it came to teaching the course, faculty reported, “a basic challenge involved defining spirituality and religion so that students could distinguish between these two separate, but related concepts” (Russel, p. 24).

At the time of Russel’s (1998) study only about 15% ( $n = 17$ ) of the accredited graduate social work programs reported offering a course on spirituality and social work. A more recent article (Miller, 2001) reports that there are at least 50 accredited programs offering courses on the topic of spirituality and social work.

While the studies about faculty perceptions are few, there is support that religion and spirituality as topics in social work education merits the profession’s attention and consideration in the curriculum. The “how” and “what” questions need to be given careful consideration as the discussion continues among faculty to include input from advocates and skeptics of such content and courses. Russel’s (1998) study begins to form a picture of what MSW programs and the faculty teaching religion and spirituality in these programs are doing to prepare students at the masters’ level. This is a good start in understanding what is being done in social work education but it does not give any information on what is being done in BSW programs.

#### *Practitioner-Focused Studies*

The second group of studies focuses primarily on the products of social work education—social work practitioners. Most educators were once or are currently involved in practice and as a result some of these studies do not always clearly delineate between these two roles in the research studies presented. The earliest studies with practitioners began in the late 1980s.

One of the first studies to include practitioner perspectives on religion and spirituality was conducted by Canda (1988). This author argues that interest among social workers in spiritual matters began to increase as evidenced by presentations at professional conferences and publications. Five perspectives that emerge from the literature at this time on religion and spirituality in social work are “Christian, existentialist, Jewish, shamanic, and Zen Buddhist” (p. 239). Canda (1988) conducted telephone “interviews with eighteen scholar/practitioners who have published or presented papers at national conferences on this topic...” (p. 239). Except for one participant the sample of respondents was all educators who were or had been engaged in social work practice. The study used a qualitative approach with open-ended questions focusing on beliefs, values and practice topics. In addition to all five perspectives being represented in the group of interviewees there was an atheist perspective from a few participants, which recognized the importance of religion and spirituality in social work practice.

In describing the professional helping relationship between practitioner and client respondents identified the following ideas and issues: “compassionate concern,” “client’s own needs and situation...paramount when designing a helping approach,” “client-centered helping relationship,” and “the primary purpose of the helping relationship is to enable the client to satisfy needs for subsistence, nurturing, and loving relationships as well as to discover meaning in life” (Canda, 1988, pp. 242-243). In relationship to the significance of spirituality in social work practice several topics were pointed out in interviews. These topics included the need for practitioners to “cultivate self-awareness in order to adequately respond to the spiritual needs of clients” (p. 243); “exploring the

meanings of life events for clients” (p. 244), recognizing the significance of a relationship with spiritual powers in the helping process, and utilizing “prayer, meditation, ritual, or scriptural study in practice, at least indirectly” (p. 244).

Canda’s (1988) study is one of the first that attempts to bring attention to practitioners’ perspectives as they confront religious and spiritual issues in the lives of clients. Clients’ needs were seen as paramount in the helping process with the need of practitioners being recognized as important if the helping relationship is to be effective. Practitioners start out as students therefore it is equally important to ask what is being done in the preparation of future social workers at both the MSW and BSW levels.

Joseph (1988) conducted an exploratory and descriptive study “to identify religious issues that emerge in clinical practice and to identify salient issues at various life phases” (p.443). A random sample of field instructors was drawn from “a church-related school of social work in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area” (p. 444). A questionnaire was mailed to 90 practitioners with an initial response rate of 67% (n = 61). Fifty-seven of the returned questionnaires were included in the analysis. All of the respondents had master’s degrees in social work. The questionnaire consisted of the following four sections: (1) demographic information; (2) “questions about religious issues in social work” (3) “practitioners experience in using religious/church-related resources in practice” and (4) an instrument developed to “identify the salient religious issues that surfaced in practice situations” (p. 445). The fourth section also included open-ended questions to allow respondents to identify religious and spiritual issues at specific stages in the life cycle.

When respondents were asked to indicate the importance placed on religious issues and the skills necessary to deal with such issues in their professional education the results reveal that only 16% report it was very important or important while the majority (59%) indicated it was slightly important or not at all important. A little over one third (36%) believed that more emphasis should be placed on this area in graduate education while only seven percent said this area should receive no emphasis in social work education. Although there is disagreement on how much emphasis should be given to religious content in social work curriculum the results from this study indicate that practitioners view religious issues in social work practice as important. Almost 80% of the respondents indicated it was important to focus attention on religion in social work practice but the frequency of dealing with religious issues in practice were reported at a much lesser degree. There is some discrepancy between what social work practitioners believe and what they practice. The responses show that only 19% reported dealing with religious issues very often or often while 52% responded that they rarely or never dealt with such issues in practice. Joseph (1988) concludes that these discrepancies reflect “ambivalence toward religious concerns” in the social work profession (p. 446).

When questioned about religion as a resource in social work, respondents indicated collaboration with religious resources was primarily in the form of concrete services and support systems with little focus on religious issues. Respondents’ perceptions were that clients generally had a positive view of God and that clients’ view of God “is often linked with parental images” (Joseph, 1988, p. 447). Social work practitioners also reported that there are dysfunctional views that clients deal with in their perceptions of God and religion. Clients’ perceptions of the role of God and religion, as

reported by social workers in this sample, suggest the need to prepare social workers with knowledge and skills to deal with religious issues. The role of religion and God takes even more prominence in clients' lives during times of illness and crises and supports the need for professional preparation of social workers to deal with these issues when they arise in practice.

Respondents were asked "whether values or moral issues related to religious beliefs created conflicts for their clients" (Joseph, 1988, p. 448). Forty-two percent of the participants "perceived these issues as salient client concerns and the same proportion viewed them as 'sometimes' important" (p. 449). The author concludes this is further indication of the need to prepare social workers around value and ethical issues in relationship to religious issues in practice.

When asked if they noticed any religious issues of clients associated with certain developmental stages in the life cycle 56% of the respondents indicated such issues. The study categorized comments from respondents "according to three perspectives: (1) religious and God issues commonly experienced at a particular stage; (2) unresolved issues of adults that stem from earlier life stages; (3) family life-cycle issues related to a particular stage" (Joseph, 1988, p. 449). These perspectives were viewed as having implications for social work practice and education. Joseph concludes, "the religious dimension of the person, particularly as it interacts with life-cycle and ecological concerns, has been muted in social work practice" (p. 452).

Practitioners in Joseph's (1988) study recognize the importance of religion and God in clients' lives but believe they were not prepared during their graduate education to address these issues. This study will examine the extent to which BSW students believe

they are prepared to address religious and spiritual issues with clients in practice situations.

Sheridan, Bullis, Adcock, Berlin, and Miller (1992) examined the personal and professional attitudes and behaviors related to religion and spirituality of three different groups of licensed clinical practitioners. The authors sent a total of 600 questionnaires to randomly selected licensed clinical practitioners in Virginia (licensed professional counselors, LPCs,  $n = 200$ ; licensed clinical social workers, LCSWs,  $n = 200$ ; and licensed clinical psychologists,  $n = 200$ ). The overall response rate was 59% ( $n = 328$ ). There were no significant differences in response rates between groups.

Using a survey method, a 67-item questionnaire was mailed to the selected sample. The survey instrument included:

- Demographic, clinical background items
- Ideological position question to measure degrees of belief in a personal God
- Scales to measure orientation toward religiousness
- Past and current religious or spiritual affiliation and involvement
- Assessment of attitudes toward religion and spirituality in clinical practice
  - Measurement of religious or spiritual interventions
  - Measurement of practitioner bias toward religious or spiritual clients using a case vignette
- Information about practitioners' education or training in religion and spirituality (Sheridan, et. al., 1992, p. 192).



In reference to the ideological position scale that asked respondents to pick a position that most reflected their own belief the majority of licensed clinical practitioners identified with some position that believed in a transcendent or divine dimension. The groups were significantly different in the positions they selected. Thirty-nine percent of LCSWs selected the position that “there is a transcendent or divine dimension found in all manifestations of nature” more than any other position. Forty-nine percent of LPCs and 34% of psychologists chose the position that “there is a personal God of transcendent existence and power whose purposes ultimately will be worked out in human history” above all other positions. Psychologists had the highest percentage (18%) of practitioners selecting the position that “the notions of God or the transcendent are illusionary products of human imagination; however, they are meaningful aspects of human existence” (Sheridan, et al., 1992, p. 193).

Results from the scales used to measure ways of being religious show that all three groups see religion and spirituality as meaningful but they differ in orientation and intensity. The LPCs had a more traditional orientation and higher percentages of respondents with a personal belief in God. They held a more positive view that religious and spiritual beliefs are desirable for people in general. Psychologists were least strong on these items and LCSWs held a middle position.

Almost all the respondents (97%) reported being raised in a religious tradition. Current religious or spiritual affiliations varied significantly among the three groups. The LPCs had the highest number of Protestant respondents and the lowest number of Jewish respondents. Psychologists had the highest number of “other” or no affiliation. The LCSWs fell in the middle of the other two groups in reference to these religious and

spiritual affiliations. Forty-four percent of the respondents reported they are no longer affiliated with the religion of their childhood. The primary shift was away from Protestantism and Roman Catholicism to either no specific affiliation or “other.” No significant differences were found among the groups on their current participation or involvement.

Overall the respondents had positive attitudes toward religion and spirituality. The only significant difference in the three groups was in regard to the relevance of spirituality to their personal lives. LPCs were highest in agreeing with this statement, psychologists lowest and LCSWs were in between.

In reference to professional education and training there was significant difference between the three groups. The LPCs reported the highest percentage (14%) of graduate training in the area of religion and spirituality while only four percent of LCSWs and psychologists reported having training in this area. Overall the majority of respondents (79%,  $n = 259$ ) indicated they received little training in this area. When asked about the level of satisfaction with their education and clinical training in this area LCSWs and LPCs were significantly less satisfied than psychologists. Respondents were asked to rate desirability for clinicians to receive formal education, supervision, and training in this area. The data shows all three groups support more formal education, clinical supervision, and training in the area of religion and spirituality. Significant differences were found between LPCs and psychologists on desirability for formal education in religion and spirituality with LPCs rating this higher. LCSWs fell in between these two groups. There were no significant differences between groups on desirability for clinical supervision or training in this area.

Respondents indicated a positive or accepting attitude toward religion and spirituality in clinical practice. The participants “recognized a religious/spiritual dimension in practice as a relevant and legitimate focus in working with clients” (Sheridan, et. al., 1992, pp. 198-199). Results indicate about one-third of the respondents’ clients presented issues with religious and spiritual dimensions. Respondents did not reveal any bias against religious or spiritual clients.

The three groups in this study followed a consistent pattern of response across variables. On a continuum the LPCs responded as having a “more traditional approach to religious or spiritual belief, the highest involvement and affiliation with organized religion, and the most evidence of a spiritual or religious orientation to practice” (Sheridan, et. al., 1992, p. 199). Social workers fell in the middle and psychologists were on the opposite end of the continuum. Psychologists were more satisfied with the level of clinical training and education they received on religious and spiritual issues than LCSWs and LPCs.

A significant limitation of this study is the fact that the sample is representative of licensed practitioners only in Virginia. The LPC group also had a higher number of respondents with degrees in religion or theology, which could account for this group emerging as more religious or spiritual. The findings do suggest an overall positive attitude toward issues of religion and spirituality in practice. The results also indicate a general lack of attention to religious or spiritual issues for the respondents in their graduate education and clinical training.

Sheridan et al. (1992) suggests several implications for social work practice and education. The first implication is the necessity for social workers to be self-aware

around their own religious and spiritual issues. The social work profession has emphasized the importance of self-examination around diversity in numerous areas but has not placed as much emphasis on personal beliefs, biases, or prejudices with regard to religion and spirituality. A second implication is knowing the religious and spiritual factors in clients' lives. This includes being able to take religious or spiritual histories, assessing possible religious or spiritual meaning associated with clients presenting problems, and being knowledgeable of diverse religious and spiritual groups to demonstrate respect toward clients.

Respondents indicated a need for more training in religious and spiritual issues. The authors suggest four areas be included in professional education of social workers. The areas are "(1) content on the religious/spiritual dimension of human behavior, (2) religious and spiritual diversity, (3) practice applications, and (4) the role of religious and spiritual groups in developing policy and providing services" (Sheridan, et. al., 1992, p. 201).

The authors conclude that findings from this study support "assertions by social work authors who have called for inclusion of the religious and spiritual dimension in social work practice and education" (Sheridan, et. al., 1992, p. 203). This is further evidence that masters' level social workers do not feel prepared to address the religious and spiritual issues of clients when presented in practice. The implications for practice at all levels of practice may be the same; however, because Sheridan et al.'s study does not focus on BSW practitioners it can not be concluded that BSW practitioners hold the same perceptions about religion and spirituality either in practice or in their educational preparation. Further research focusing on BSW students would be helpful in

understanding students' perceptions and experiences with religion and spirituality in their educational preparation and practice.

Derezotes' (1995) survey of students, practitioners, and educators is an exploratory study about spirituality, religiosity, and social work practice. The author asserts that spirituality and religiosity are neglected dimensions in social work. The initial population of this study is reported to be all members of the NASW in Utah, as well as students and faculty at two graduate programs, one in Utah ( $n = 208$ ), and one in Idaho ( $n = 60$ ). The response rate and results of the study appear to be only from the respondents of the NASW group. The author pilot-tested a written questionnaire with a small group of social workers ( $n = 21$ ). This instrument was designed to collect personal and professional demographics, information about spirituality and religiosity, respondents' definitions of spirituality and religiosity, and their rating of the roles spirituality and religion play in respondents' practice and lives (p. 3).

Derezotes (1995) found the top three influences on the spiritual development of the respondents were "life experiences" (34.4%), "parents" (22.1%), and "church" (15%). Responses indicate an overall belief that it is appropriate for social workers to inquire about clients' spiritual and religious issues while it is not appropriate to "direct clients to change their spirituality or religiosity" (p. 6). Derezotes' study does not clearly identify student responses and focuses on graduate level programs. While the study is consistent with several of the studies in this review it does not provide any information about BSW students or practitioners.

In a related study Derezotes and Evans (1995) use in-depth interviews to explore the attitudes of social work practitioners about religion and spirituality in practice.

Derezotes and Evans (1995) identify several emerging themes that are key for the profession. Respondents were asked 12 open-ended questions about religion and spirituality that related to social work practice, defining concepts, personal experience, and educational preparation. The participants ( $n = 56$ ) in this study were drawn from a larger group of social workers ( $n = 340$ ) that responded to a written questionnaire for a previous study (Derezotes, 1995). This smaller group indicated a willingness to participate in further interviews.

The majority of respondents (95%) indicated that religion and spirituality are distinctly different. The definitional differences “stressed that spirituality was a personal process where the individual was searching for meaning or a connection with something greater than ones self [and] ... defined religion as a group process, usually associated with formal institutional practices” (Derezotes & Evans, 1995, p. 46). A majority of respondents (59%) believed religion was more helpful than harmful. An overwhelming majority (89%) responded that spirituality is quite important as a part of social work practice. More than half of the respondents (57%) indicated that it would be appropriate to discuss religion with clients if the client brought it up, while 75% said that a specific religion should not be taught in practice. When asked if they had experiences where clients brought up the topic of religion or spirituality, 91% said “yes”, while almost half (46%) said that they had brought up the topic.

Most respondents (57%) indicated that their “own life process, spiritual growth and development made the most difference” (Derezotes & Evans, 1995, p. 49) in preparing them to deal with spiritual issues with clients. “Church or other religious” organizations was the second most helpful in preparation of practitioners (16%).

The participants in this study (Derezotes & Evans, 1995) supported educational programs or further training in knowledge of all religions, development of the practitioners own spirituality, working with clients' spiritual issues, and various other workshop topics addressing specific issues.

Derezotes and Evans (1995) caution how the results of this study should be interpreted based on limitations of the sample population, response rate, geographic restrictions and the dominance of LDS church in Utah. They do put forward several recommendations for social work education based on this study. Their recommendations are as follows:

1. Inclusion of content in social work education.
2. Inclusion of individual spiritual development in curriculum.
3. Development and inclusion of practice models.
4. Inclusion of new research goals and methods.
5. Horizontal and vertical integration of content on all educational levels.
6. Modeling development: Acting our way into new ways of thinking.

(Derezotes & Evans, 1995, pp. 51-54)

Derezotes and Evans' (1995) study provides support for further exploration of religion and spirituality in social work education. The results suggest practitioners would have liked more attention to the concepts of religion and spirituality in their social work education. This leads one to ask: Do BSW students want more attention given to the concepts of religion and spirituality in their social work education?

### *Student-Focused Studies*

There is only one study that focuses on students between 1988 and 1998. Rizer and McColley (1996) examine “attitudes about spirituality and religion and the degree to which these attitudes were incorporated into social work practice” (p. 53) by graduate social work students. Using a survey method Rizer and McColley distributed a 76-item instrument to 170 graduate social work students at a public midwestern university. The response rate was 72% ( $n = 123$ ). The survey was divided into four sections: (1) “attitudes toward spirituality related to personal and professional life”; (2) “attitudes toward religion in personal and professional realms”; (3) “integration of spiritual and religiously based techniques” in practice; and (4) demographics and information about “previous and current religious involvement” (p. 56).

Respondents indicated the number one influence on their spiritual development was “a spiritual experience of God” (26%). The second highest category was “life experiences” (23.6%) and then “my parents” (19.5%) (Rizer & McColley, 1996, p. 57). When asked to indicate an ideological orientation that “most closely matched their own belief system” (Rizer & McColley, p. 57) 95% of the respondents selected a position which indicated a belief in the divine or transcendent (Personal God, 56.1%; Transcendent Uninvolved, 2.4%; Divine in Self, 13%; and Divine in Nature, 23.6%).

Responses indicated that this sample of social work students consider personal spirituality to be very important. The use of spirituality in practice was also identified as being important. Three-fourths of the respondents did not agree with the statement “integrating spirituality and practice conflicts with my professional values/ethics” (Rizer & McColley, 1996, p. 60). The value of and attitude toward integration of spirituality



and practice was not consistent with actual application in practice. Sixty-four percent of respondents with clinical experience indicated they did not currently integrate spirituality into practice.

Respondents indicated they felt they lacked competence to address issues related to spirituality and religion. The majority (85.4%) said they had not “learned how to integrate religious issues into practice during their education” (Rizer & McColley, 1996, p. 61). There was overall dissatisfaction with the lack of training and content on religious and spiritual issues in their education. A majority (77.3%) of respondents supported programs offering a course on spirituality in graduate school.

Rizer and McColley’s (1996) study begins to provide a picture of graduate students’ attitudes and perceptions of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. While the sample limits the study’s generalizability, it begins to provide data from graduate social work students to compare with data from other studies involving social work practitioners’ and faculty attitudes and perceptions of religion and spirituality in practice and education. A more broadly defined sample drawn from different geographical areas would strengthen a study like this with students.

#### *Empirical Studies within the Last Decade: 1999-2009*

The next group of studies focuses on practitioners and students. There were no empirical studies focusing on faculty during this time period.

##### *Practitioner-Focused Studies*

Mattison, Jayaratne and Croxton (2000) explore social work practitioners’ religiosity and its impact on religious practice behavior. The study drew an initial random sample of direct practice social workers with MSWs who were NASW members.

An additional stratified sample of African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Hispanic/Latino members of NASW was drawn from the original sample frame that excluded those already selected in the initial sample. The final number of respondents totaled 1,283.

Mattison, et al.'s (2000) study is an exploratory/descriptive study. Participants were sent a 10-page questionnaire to complete for the study. The study used scales on "Religiosity" and "religion" and "Prayer in Practice" (p. 48) as well as items to collect demographic information on respondents. Results indicate that "African-American social workers scored significantly higher on Religiosity compared to other groups" and that "practitioners associated with sectarian agencies score significantly higher on Religiosity than their colleagues in non-sectarian agencies" (Mattison, et. al., 2000, p. 50).

Mattison, et al. (2000) examined what practitioners considered appropriate behavior with clients and what they report doing with clients around religious practices. The results indicate ambivalence toward religion and prayer in practice by social work practitioners. One example of this is the use of the "serenity prayer" in practice. One-third (34.3%) of the respondents consider this appropriate behavior, another third (33.4%) indicate they have used this prayer in practice and approximately one-third (30.9%) was unsure if it is appropriate to use in practice. Another example behavior is discussing one's own religious beliefs with clients. Almost half (44.7%) of the respondents indicated that they have engaged in this behavior while only 14.3% considered this behavior appropriate. Who initiates the behavior may influence the view of the worker around whether or not the behavior is appropriate (Mattison, et. al., 2000, p. 54).

When a series of regression analysis is performed the authors conclude that “regardless of other factors in the model, the more religious the worker, the more likely that worker is to view the conduct of religious and prayer activities in practice as appropriate professional behavior” (Mattison, et. al., 2000, p. 53).

Mattison, et al.’s (2000) study points to the need for social work practitioners to be aware of not only the clients’ religious orientations and behavior but also the practitioners’ own attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior around religious practices with clients. Failure to give appropriate attention to these issues can lead to “an inadequate or incomplete assessment and the loss of potentially useful intervention options” (p. 54). What practitioners communicate either directly or indirectly to clients about religion and spirituality can affect the helping relationship and the effectiveness of that relationship in the change process. Mattison, et al.’s study raises further questions for the social work profession. These questions focus on whether or not the profession is leading or following in this area; the discrepancy between what practitioners believe is appropriate and what they actually do; the level to which religion and spirituality should be incorporated into professional training; and ethical principles around boundaries and competence that guide practice.

In a qualitative study of practitioners who facilitate group work Gilbert (2000) uses a focus group format to examine the attitudes of clinicians about the inclusion of spirituality in group work. A purposive sample of 14 experienced clinicians, with a broad client base presenting a variety of problems, were selected to participate in this exploratory study of spirituality in group practice. The author facilitated two groups ( $n = 6$ ,  $n = 8$ ) using three questions to guide the discussion. The author did not include the

questions in the article. The focus groups lasted at least 90 minutes each and were audio taped. The tapes were transcribed and analyzed using a grounded theory approach to identify common themes.

Multiple themes were constructed from the analysis of data and presented to participants for validation and credibility. The themes included the following:

Include and validate the appropriateness of spiritual content in social group work practice; include spirituality in assessment; differentiate between disordered spirituality and a mental disorder; become self-aware of one's own spiritual beliefs; monitor for transference and counter transference issues; promote respect for spiritual diversity among group members; use self disclosure to enhance relationships and problem solving; create a safe environment within the group for the discussion of spirituality; use spirituality in the group to foster mutual aid; support the use of client's spirituality to cope with challenges; and collaborate with clergy and other spiritual leaders (Gilbert, 2000, p. 72-78).

The results of Gilbert's (2000) study report overall positive attitudes of practitioners toward spirituality, a dismal lack of preparation in the participants' social work education to address spirituality, and clients perceiving spirituality as a positive resource. Gilbert's study provides further support for the inclusion of spirituality content in social work education but it also continues a dilemma around being able to clearly delineate between the concepts of religion and spirituality. Early in the article the author points out the need for "clarification of the differences between religion and spirituality..." and that "these terms, which describe highly abstract and complex

phenomena, often are used interchangeably but have different meanings” (p. 68). However, the author goes on to say, “Because religion is encompassed by the concept of spirituality, the broader term of spirituality will be used for the remainder of this paper” (p. 68). Further research is needed to tease out the conceptual and practical differences between the terms.

Gilbert (2000) identifies spirituality as “a significant, sometimes central, dimension of an individual’s identity” (p. 82) that cannot be excluded from social group work practice and education. The author calls for continued research “to explore the attitudes of students, practitioners, clients, and academicians regarding this issue” (p. 82).

Hodge (2002) compares religious values of social workers with those of the general public by way of secondary data analysis of a nationally representative data set, the General Social Survey (GSS, 1972-1998). The sample of 38,116 was divided into three socioeconomic classes (lower,  $n = 1,873$ ; working,  $n = 16,568$ ; middle,  $n = 17,751$ ) as well as separating out social workers at the graduate level ( $n = 53$ ) and the bachelors level ( $n = 92$ ).

The results report significant differences in some of the demographic indicators between groups. Bachelor-level social workers were significantly younger than both the lower-class and middle-class but not the working-class or graduate-level social workers. When comparing race and gender Hodge (2002) also reports some significant differences. Graduate-level workers were similar to the working-class and middle-class while bachelor-level workers were similar to that of the lower-class with regards to race (p. 577). The factor of gender revealed the percentage of females in each group as follows:

graduate-level social workers, 76%; bachelor-level social workers, 67%; lower-class, 62%; middle-class, 56%; and working-class, 54%.

In regard to religious affiliation, social workers were more likely to be affiliated with the categories of Jewish and no religious tradition, while the three other groups were more likely to be affiliated with Protestant denominations. Catholic and “other” categories were consistent across all five groups.

Social workers are more likely to belong to denominations with liberal theological positions than the lower, working, or middle-class groups. Social workers are also more likely to be raised in a liberal denomination. Hodge (2002) bases the term “liberal denomination” on two macro-level theories, “new class theory” and “influential epistemological theory” (p. 574). “In short, both theories suggest that social workers will, in aggregate, hold more liberal religious beliefs and exhibit higher rates of nonbelief than the general public” (pp. 574-575). In comparison to the general population social workers were more likely to be “raised Jewish, and to some extent, Catholic, while being less likely to be raised Protestant” (Hodge, 2002, p. 577).

Another significant difference between social workers and the general population was the change in affiliation and denominational theology from the family of origin. Social workers at the graduate-level showed a “marked shift” to “none” or “other” in denominational affiliation as well as moving from conservative and moderate denominations to ones that were more liberal. The general population showed only a “marginal change in affiliation and essentially no change in theological orientation” (Hodge, 2002, p. 578).

The general population was less likely to approve of the Supreme Court decision to prohibit the “Lord’s Prayer” or Bible verses in public schools than social workers. Social workers expressed less confidence in organized religion and are less likely to believe the Bible to be the actual word of God than the general public. Graduate-level social workers were less likely to believe in life after death.

The overall findings of Hodge’s (2002) study suggest that social workers and the general public diverge on religious beliefs but not in religious practices. Graduate-level social workers differed most significantly with the lower and working classes on denominational theology and view of the Bible. Hodge concludes that,

differences in religious beliefs have significant ramifications for the delivery of services in two related areas. First, conflicting spiritual cosmologies may affect the ability of social workers to provide services to consumers who hold conservative views. Second, as social work seeks to reengage the spiritual and religious dimension in clinical settings, problems related to divergent religious worldviews may be exacerbated (Hodge, 2002, p. 579).

In conclusion, Hodge (2002) suggests that efforts to prepare social workers to be culturally competent and sensitive to the religious and spiritual needs of clients should receive attention. While attention to these topics is important, it is unclear what bachelor’s level social workers already receive by way of undergraduate education in regard to religion and spirituality.

Coholic (2003) conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 self-identified feminist social workers. The purpose of the study was to explore ideas of these social

workers “about spirituality and the influences (or not) of these understandings in their social work” (Coholic, p. 49) practice. In this study spirituality is defined as being “eclectic and transcend[ing] ideologies and institutions” (p. 49). Religion on the other hand is defined as “a construction of institutionalized worship that is dependent on a notion of God or godheads and is based on doctrine or system of organized beliefs and behaviors, usually shared by people” (p. 49).

Coholic’s (2003) study specifically explores spirituality from a feminist perspective “because feminist social work values, processes, and analyses are well suited to consider marginalized knowledges like spirituality by making room for the ‘others,’ valuing experiences and connections, grounding knowledge in practice, and emphasizing diversity” (p. 50).

Using a grounded-theory analysis of data to identify common themes around beliefs, values, and practices Coholic (2003) develops a set of practice principles for social work and spirituality that emerged from the interviews. Once themes were identified the author organized the eleven principles into three broad categories. Participants were invited to take part in focus groups and also provide written feedback on the initial principles that emerged from the interviews. The focus groups were done to check for accuracy with the practitioners’ perceptions.

The first category, “Understandings of spirituality and feminist social work,” included three practice principles and are summarized as (1) concepts of spirituality and religion are different but overlap and influence one another; (2) tension in practice results from a lack of theoretical framework and a cautiousness to incorporate spirituality in practice while identifying the need for greater awareness of spirituality and its influence



in life; and (3) the recognition that incorporation of spirituality supports holistic practice and is consistent with social work and feminist values and practices.

The second category, “Beliefs about the spiritual essence of human existence and spiritual development,” included two practice principles and is summarized as follows: The essence of human existence and experience is spiritual. Practitioners need to respect and understand where clients are in their own spiritual development or lack thereof and recognize the multidimensional influences that impact this spiritual development.

Category three, “Spiritually influenced practice processes,” encompassed the largest set of principles to emerge from the interviews. These six principles are summarized below. The use of generic language with a shift to accommodate clients’ language around spirituality helps to make the connections that facilitate effective social work processes. The practitioners’ “work contexts, client populations, and personal spiritual development influence the incorporation of spirituality in practice” (Coholic, 2003, p. 56). Helping relationships that encourage a more balanced power distribution between worker and client promote the inclusion of spirituality in practice. Helping clients to make meaning in all contexts can be spiritual in nature. Both connection and disconnection to the multiple systems in clients’ lives are important aspects for developing self-awareness and relationships. The helping relationship is important as it can help build meaning and it influences the effectiveness of the social work processes. Spiritual development can be linked to a “client’s ability to feel and experience trust, love, and respect for self and others” (Coholic, p. 56). Spiritual beliefs can influence clients’ “self perceptions and the interactions with others” (Coholic, p. 56)

The most notable thing about Coholic's (2003) study is the connection between feminist perspectives and its willingness to incorporate spirituality into practice. This is not an exclusive domain for feminist social workers but certainly one that seems to be embraced by practitioners from this perspective. This perspective makes room for marginalized groups and perspectives that are often overlooked in mainstream society or by more traditional social work approaches. Coholic's study highlights feminist approaches as being "well suited for the consideration of spirituality as an important emerging component in social work practice and knowledge development" (pp. 65-66). Coholic's work broadens the discussion about the inclusion of spirituality in social work but tends to focus more heavily on spirituality to the neglect of religion. It is important that Coholic's study focuses not only on sensitivity to where clients are but also on the self-awareness of the practitioner in the helping relationship. The feminist perspective may be helpful in allowing room for the inclusion of religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum of undergraduate social work programs.

In a study focusing on ethical concerns about religious and nonreligious spiritual issues in clinical practice, Canda, Nakashima, and Furman (2004) analyzed responses from a national survey of NASW practitioners to three open-ended questions about religion and spirituality. The three questions were part of a larger survey of quantitative items that raised issues around religion and spirituality in social work. The three questions allowed participants to comment on any issues raised from the quantitative items while asking "respondents to share views on (a) the relevancy of religious and spiritual issues of practice to education, (b) appropriate and inappropriate uses of religion and spirituality in social work practice, and (c) other issues related to the topic" (Canda,

et al., p. 28). Out of 2,069 returned surveys the following number of respondents answered the open-ended questions: Question 1,  $n = 1295$  (63%); Question 2,  $n = 1398$  (66%); and Question 3,  $n = 964$  (47%) (Canda et al., p. 29).

A majority of the respondents who commented on how spiritual issues should be addressed in social work education supported including religious and spiritual content in social work curriculum. The three top rationales for inclusion of this content in social work education were the need to understand religion and spirituality in the context of human diversity; knowledge of the positive and negative impacts of religion and spirituality on human behavior and coping; and the need for discussion of ethical issues in how to handle religious and spiritual issues in practice. Respondents indicated inadequate coverage of these topics in social work education either because of instructors' omission or negative attitudes about discussing these topics in the classroom. Respondents commented on the importance of practitioners to gain the skills, knowledge, and qualifications to provide spiritually sensitive practice as part of the profession's mandate for competence.

In reference to the use of religious or spiritual activities in practice, respondents indicated that it is appropriate to assess the clients' spiritual views. The Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008) provides the framework to guide practitioners' behaviors for spiritually oriented activities with clients. Ethical principles supporting this type of assessment include "starting where the client is, upholding the dignity of the person, cultural competence ..." (Canda, et al. 2004, p. 31). While support for many different helping activities that are spiritually oriented was indicated, respondents cautioned that these activities "should be used in consonance with clients' interests and goals" (Canda, et al.,

p. 31). The activity that was promoted the most was referral to or collaboration with clergy or “religious helping professionals” (Canda, et al. p. 31). The activities considered most controversial were the use of prayer, healing touch, and self-disclosure. All of these activities, however, received more support than opposition by respondents. Opinions varied widely on how and when these different activities should be used in practice. The data further indicates less than nine percent of respondents believed a conflict exists between the NASW’s Code of Ethics or the mission of social work and integrating religion and spirituality in practice.

Canda, et al.’s (2004) study suggests the possibility that practitioners may lack a systematic framework for ethical decision making about spiritual activities in practice. The quantitative portion of the study revealed that most of the respondents had little or no preparation to guide them in making ethical decisions around spiritually based practices. The majority of members in NASW are masters’ level social workers and as a result this study does not give a picture of BSW practitioners in relationship to religious and spiritual practices or the preparation of BSW practitioners to address these topics.

Furman, Benson, and Canda (2004) explore regional similarities and differences regarding the appropriate use of religion and spirituality in relation to practice issues, interventions, education, and professional ethics. Using a stratified random sampling method based on the four U.S. Census Bureau Regional Divisions, Furman et al. mailed surveys to 8,000 practicing social workers from the NASW membership list. The response rate was 26% ( $n = 2069$ ). The rate was roughly equivalent in all regions.

The survey included a combination of previously used items and scales along with newly developed items. The survey instrument included questions designed to gather

demographic information as well as past and current religious or spiritual affiliation and/or involvement, a scale to assess social workers' agreement with raising the topic of religion or spirituality. Religion and spirituality were defined for the respondents as follows:

“Religion was defined as ‘an organized structured set of beliefs and practices shared by a community related to spirituality,’ whereas Spirituality was defined as ‘involving the search for meaning, purpose, and morally fulfilling relation with self, other people, the encompassing universe, and ultimate reality, however a person understands it’ (Furman, et al. 2004, p. 274).

Furman, et al.'s study attempts to give a picture of social work practitioners' views on religion and spirituality in relation to direct practice and education on a national level.

According to data from Gallup and Lindsay (as cited in Furman, et al. 2004) the four regions in the U.S. exhibit differences in religious beliefs and practices. People in the South and Midwest tend to have higher levels of religiosity than people in the North and West. This pattern was also seen in many areas examined by Furman et al. One question that could be asked is whether the samples are comparable between the Gallup and Lindsay (1999) data and the Furman et al. study due to the significant female representation in the social work profession. Furman et al. predicted “that NASW social workers' responses would vary significantly from each other by region” (p. 291). Findings from this study indicate this is not the case. The authors suggest this may be due to the CSWE accreditation standards and policies. Although practitioner responses

did not vary by region in Furman's study an interesting follow up would be to compare BSW students' responses by geographic region.

Results from Furman et al.'s (2004) study indicates the majority of social workers do not feel that incorporating religion and spirituality into practice conflicts with the NASW's Code of Ethics or the principle of the separation of church and state. Social workers acknowledge the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of clients. As with previous studies involving practitioners' views about religion and spirituality in practice, Furman, et al.'s study finds support for inclusion of these topics in preparing social workers for practice.

In a study that includes 204 licensed clinical social workers Sheridan (2004) reports what practitioners say they actually do with clients when addressing religious and spiritual issues in practice and what influences the behaviors of practitioners using "spiritually-derived interventions." Using a cross-sectional survey design with a random sample of LCSWs in a mid-Atlantic state, Sheridan (2004) mailed self-administered questionnaires to 476 potential participants.

The questionnaire begins with definitions of spirituality and religion, which are consistent with previous studies conducted by Sheridan (Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999; Sheridan, et al., 1992; Sheridan, et al., 1994). The questionnaire also included the RRSP scale that measures practitioner attitudes toward religion and spirituality, a Spiritually-Derived Interventions Checklist (SDIC) that indicates practitioners' use of techniques or interventions with clients, demographic information about personal beliefs and experiences, and information on education and training.

The respondents in this study indicated “generally positive or accepting attitudes towards the role of religion and spirituality in practice” (Sheridan, 2004, p. 13). More than two-thirds of the respondents reported using “14 of the 24 religious or spiritually-oriented interventions with clients” and “over two-thirds endorsed 18 of the 24 interventions as appropriate for social work practice” (p. 14). While attitudes and behaviors of respondents were positive toward religion and spirituality, reports of the amount of content and training on these topics in their education were quite different. Responses indicate, “a substantial majority (84.3%,  $n = 172$ ) reported receiving little or no instruction in this area” (p. 14). When asked to select a belief orientation from six ideological positions, ninety-four percent selected one of four positions related to a belief in a transcendent or divine dimension. A total of five and a half percent of respondents saw the idea of God as illusory but meaningful (3.5%) or illusory and irrelevant (2.0%).

Sheridan (2004) also identified variables that influence the use of spiritually-derived interventions in this sample of social work practitioners.

Eight variables showed positive relationships with use of spiritually-derived interventions.... higher scores on the RRSP (more positive attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality in practice), higher percentages of clients presenting religious or spiritual issues, higher percentages of clients for whom *religion* plays a detrimental role in dealing with their problems, higher percentages of clients for whom *spirituality* plays a beneficial role in dealing with their problems, higher levels of current participation in communal religious or spiritual services, higher levels of current participation in private or personal religious or

spiritual practices, higher levels of religious or spiritual issues presented in their social work training, and higher number of clients seen each week. Conversely, a negative relationship was found between two variables and scores on the SDIC. Specifically, respondents reporting lower levels of satisfaction with their social work training in regards to content on religious or spiritual issues, and respondents reporting less years of social work practice experience, revealed higher use of spiritually-based practice interventions (Sheridan, 2004, pp. 17-18).

While these variables all were shown to have a significant relationship to the use of spiritually-derived interventions, there were four in particular that emerged through multiple regression analysis as the most predictive, and “accounting for almost 33% of the variance in the use of spiritually-derived interventions ( $R^2 = .327$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .308$ )” (Sheridan, 2004, p. 18). The RRSP accounted for the largest amount of variance in the final model at almost 21%.

Four variables comprised the final model, including scores on the RRSP, ....the percentage of clients presenting spiritual issues in practice; the level of current participation of the respondent in communal religious or spiritual services; and the percentage of clients for whom religion plays a detrimental role in dealing with their problems (p. 18).

Sheridan’s (2004) study, while limited in generalizability, provides further data on practitioner’s views and practices about religion and spirituality in social work practice as well as what might influence the use of spiritually-derived interventions in practice with clients. Practitioners in this study are using spiritually-derived interventions even without



formal training to address the topic. This sample was focused on practitioners with masters' level social work education. Sheridan (2004) concludes findings from this "study support a shift in focus from *whether* the topic should be included to *how* to integrate spirituality within the profession in an ethical, effective, and spiritually-sensitive manner" (p. 23).

Stewart, Koeske, and Koeske (2006) survey 221 social workers from the southeastern region of the United States to explore how personal religiosity and spirituality might be associated with practitioners' use of religious-based interventions. The participants were all NASW members. The survey mailed to social workers included demographic information, modified versions of the RRSP and the SDIC, and a modified version of the short form of the Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness Spirituality (MMRS) instrument, which assesses practitioners' religiosity and spirituality.

Practitioners favored incorporating religion in practice. The majority of respondents reported 11 out of 15 of the religious-based interventions as appropriate. Over 50% of the practitioners surveyed in this study reported using seven out of 15 of the interventions in practice. Further analyses of the data indicate, "religious group membership and scores on a measure of spirituality derived from the MMRS survey did significantly predict attitude and utilization of religious-based interventions" (Stewart, Koeske, & Koeske 2006, p. 81).

The study did not designate the educational level of the participants, however, the majority of the respondents would likely be social workers with masters of social work degrees since they were drawn from an NASW member list. NASW reports that 90% of its members hold master's degrees in social work (NASW, 2009). No data were reported

about the level of religious or spiritual content participants may have had during their education or any training they may have received post graduation on religion and spirituality in social work practice. This study contributes to the growing data about social workers' attitudes and behaviors with regard to the use of religious and spiritual interventions in practice with clients. While the term "religious-based intervention" is used in multiple places, this study continues using the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably when surveying social workers.

Heyman, Buchanan, Musgrave, and Menz (2006) specifically note studies that use the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably in previous research focusing on social work practice. As a result Heyman et al. specifically examine the use of "spiritual" intervention in social work practice and attempt to determine what factors might predict the use of spiritual interventions by social workers in direct practice. "For this study, the researchers wanted to know whether demographic variables, personal spiritual participation, general attitudes toward spirituality and religion, and spirituality course work predict use of spiritual interventions in practice" (Heyman, et al., p. 79).

Using a cross-sectional, correlational design Heyman et al. (2006) sent surveys to "400 randomly selected members of the New York State Chapter National Association of Social Workers (NYSNASW), excluding New York City" (p. 80). The final responses included 200 (50%) social workers that were currently in direct practice. The survey consisted of the RRSP, course work, personal spiritual participation, and demographics as independent variables and a modified version of the SDIC as a dependent variable. The SDIC was modified from a 24-item inventory to a list of nine interventions that were specified as spiritual only.

Heyman et al. (2006) developed three research hypotheses based on the literature:

- 1) Social workers who took courses in spirituality would be more likely to use spiritual interventions in their practice than would those who did not take spirituality courses.
- 2) There would be a positive correlation between personal spiritual participation and the use of spiritual interventions in practice.
- 3) There would be a positive correlation between attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice and the use of spiritual interventions in practice (Heyman et al., p80).

The results indicate support for all three hypotheses. Only about one third (34.2%) indicated they took a course on spirituality. “Social workers who took a spirituality course had a significantly higher use of spirituality interventions ( $M = 6.07$ ,  $SD = 2.23$ ) than those who did not take a course ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 2.56$ ),  $t(193) = -3.36$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ” (Heyman et al. 2006, p. 84). “There was also a statistically significant correlation between personal spiritual participation and the use of spiritual interventions, indicating that as social workers’ personal participation increases so does their use of spiritual interventions ( $r[177] = 0.42$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )” (Heyman et al., pp. 84-85). There was also a strong positive correlation ( $r[193] = .62$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) between the RRSP scores, which indicate attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality, and the use of spiritual interventions. Analyses of the data also indicate a statistically significant relationship between age and use of spiritual interventions ( $r[191] = 0.14$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). The use of spiritual interventions increased as the age of the practitioner increased. Additionally race was seen as statistically significant in use of spiritual interventions.

“White/Caucasian social workers had a higher use of spiritual interventions ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = 2.46$ ) than nonwhites ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 2.78$ ), indicating a statistically significant mean difference [ $t(187) = -2.43$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ]” (Heyman et al. p. 84).

Heyman et al. (2006) used a hierarchical multiple regression “to examine how well the measures predicted social workers’ use of spiritual interventions” (p. 85). In the first block results “indicated that age, race, and personal spiritual participation were significantly related to spiritual intervention practice” (p. 85). In the second block attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality and course work in spirituality were added to the first three variables. The attitudes (RRSP score) toward religion and spirituality were found to be statistically significant but course work was not significant in predicting the use of spiritual interventions.

Heyman et al.’s (2006) study takes an extra step in specifying only spiritual interventions when soliciting responses from participants but it does not clearly indicate that the practitioners make distinctions between the use of the terms religion and spirituality. The RRSP uses both “religious” and “spiritual” in surveying practitioner attitudes toward the topic. The exclusive use of spiritual is in reference to practice interventions. Since the terminology is used interchangeably in one section of the survey it is difficult to know whether practitioners interpret the terms as distinct concepts or if they see them as interchangeable when working with clients.

This study supports the overall belief that practitioners are addressing issues of spirituality in practice with clients. The majority of participants in this study report having little to no training in the area of spirituality. The sample in this study limits the generalizability of the results but it adds to the growing literature in the field about social

work practitioners' positive attitudes toward religion and spirituality in practice. The study takes a step forward in identifying variables that may be predictive in the use of spiritual interventions by social workers in direct practice.

What is not clear from studies involving practitioners is the numbers of bachelor's level social workers who were part of the samples. Throughout the studies that focus on practitioners, support for the inclusion of religion and spirituality is based on the importance of these concepts in the lives of clients. Practitioners also point out the lack of preparation to address these issues during their formal education. Social work faculty generally support the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in the curriculum. The next logical step would be to explore the perceptions and experiences of students about religion and spirituality in social work.

#### *Student-Focused Studies*

This final group of studies focuses on social work students in both undergraduate and graduate social work programs. These studies are presented in chronological order from the earliest to the most current with the exception being the last research study (Graff, 2002) presented in the literature review. The majority of studies focusing on this population have been done with master's level social work students.

Cascio (1999) conducted a two-phased study to examine graduate students' perceived needs for information in the area of religious and spiritual issues when working with clients. The first phase of the study recruited social work students through campus mail, using fliers. Students were allowed to participate in their choice of an in-depth interview, focus groups or both.

Using a grounded theory approach in the interviews and focus groups, students were asked to define religion and spirituality; identify experiences with religion and spirituality in field; and finally, questions were asked about the inclusion of religion and/or spirituality in social work curriculum. Data from the first phase was used to construct a questionnaire that would be given to a larger sample of students in the second phase of the study.

The sample for the first phase of the study included 20 MSW students and one doctoral student. In the second phase of the study 185 students returned questionnaires out of 341 questionnaires that were distributed by faculty in several courses.

The first phase of the study identified three main themes: (1) students are “presented with religious and spiritual matters in their field experiences”; (2) “they are uncertain how to handle” these issues when presented with them; and (3) participants wanted to learn about these topics in their masters program and suggested ways religion and spirituality could be incorporated in the curriculum (Cascio, 1999, p. 136).

Three primary issues emerged from students’ encounters with clients in the field. The first issue was client guilt related to their situation. Second, clients struggled with the existential questions related to a tragedy in their lives. The third theme was the clients’ recognition of religion and spirituality as strengths in their lives. Students particularly recognized religion and spirituality as a source of strength for minority clients.

How to handle the issues of religion and spirituality when presented by clients elicited a variety of responses and levels of comfort among study participants. Students in the first phase of the study, which used a qualitative methodology, indicated more

discomfort in handling religious and spiritual issues in practice than respondents in the second phase. Cascio (1999) speculates the difference may possibly be due to the participants in the first phase of the study being “more uneasy with the topic and, therefore, chose to volunteer for the project” (p. 139).

In relationship to the inclusion of spirituality and religion in the curriculum, all respondents in the qualitative phase of the study “expressed the desire to have information about religion and spirituality included in the social work curriculum” (Cascio, 1999, p. 140). The majority of students (97%) in the quantitative phase indicated they would benefit from having content on religious and spiritual issues in their MSW curriculum. The suggested methods for delivering the content varied among respondents.

Forty-six percent ( $n = 85$ ) believed that an elective on spirituality would be most appropriate. Twenty-seven students (15%) believed that a separate, required course would be the most appropriate venue, and 69 (37%) thought that this material should be incorporated into current required courses (Cascio, p.141).

Cascio (1999) acknowledges limitations to the study. Participation was voluntary and therefore students who had experiences with clients around religion and spirituality may have been more likely to volunteer for the study. It is possible that only those who felt strongly about the issues responded. The geographical location of the university is in what the author called the “Bible Belt.” This may have influenced students’ desire for more information on this topic. Further studies in different geographical regions would

give a more complete picture of students' perceptions and needs around religion and spirituality.

Cascio's (1999) study is important for several reasons. The first reason is the study's focus on students' experiences with religion and spirituality in practice (field). Second, the study identifies a level of unpreparedness in students to handle religious and spiritual issues when confronted with them by clients. Lastly, the study demonstrates student support for the inclusion of content on religion and spirituality in the MSW curriculum. The study's focus on graduate level social work students continues to leave open the need for further research at the undergraduate level around the perceptions and experiences of BSW students with religion and spirituality.

Kaplan and Dziegielewski (1999) investigated the "attitudes of MSW students about spirituality and religion and the degree to which these attitudes were incorporated into social work practice" (p. 25). Using a survey method the authors distributed surveys to 84 second-year graduate students in their last semester. The sample was drawn from a public university in the southeast United States. Sixty-two surveys were completed for a 74% response rate.

The three-fourths of participants reported being raised in Christian religious traditions (77.6%). Participants' current affiliation indicated that most respondents still identified with the same religious affiliation in which they were raised or they switched to another subgroup within the specific faith tradition. Respondents were asked to identify the three most important influences on their spiritual development from a list of 14 choices. The top choice was "parents" (35.5%). The second most frequent response was



a “spiritual experience of God” (27.4%), and the third most influential choice was “life experience” (19.4%).

In response to an “Ideological Orientation Scale,” participants overwhelmingly identified with some type of belief in the divine or transcendent (96.7%). Respondents further indicated strong beliefs in the importance of spiritual issues in their personal lives. These issues included a belief in “God or a Higher Power;” spirituality’s relevance to their personal lives; and the use of prayer or meditation in their lives (Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999, p. 33).

The participants made a connection between spirituality and daily living, identifying spirituality as an “integral aspect of human growth and development”; “relevant in their professional lives”; and influencing their choice of “social work as a career” (Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999, p. 33). The majority of respondents (74.2%) indicated, “that every person has a spiritual dimension that should be considered in practice” (Kaplan & Dziegielewski, p. 33). When it came to applying this belief to practice only 40.3% of the respondents indicated they integrate religious or spiritual issues when practicing with clients. The connection between the respondents’ attitudes and practice may suggest some tension for social work students in addressing religious and spiritual issues with clients.

Responses indicate that participants did not believe their formal education provided information “about how to integrate spiritual issues into practice” (Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999, p. 34). Approximately three-fourths (79%) of the respondents believed content about religion and spirituality should be incorporated into the social work curriculum.

The results of Kaplan and Dziegielewski's (1999) study are limited by both the sample size and the geographical focus. The results do however indicate graduate social work students in this sample recognize the importance of religion and spirituality in working with clients but they are unsure about how to integrate these concepts into practice. The authors suggest further research is needed to determine what content would be appropriate and what methods of delivery would be best to communicate this content in social work education.

Sheridan and Amato-von Hemert (1999) conducted a study to investigate the views and experiences of 208 MSW students around the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice and education. Using a cross-sectional, correlational design, the authors distributed a questionnaire to a sample of MSW students drawn from two large research institutions, one public and one private. One school was in the Midwest and the other in the mid-Atlantic region. The sample was evenly split between the schools.

The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents (89.4%) identified themselves as coming from faith affiliations (e.g. Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, etc.) as opposed to non-faith orientations (e.g. Atheist). When asked to select a belief orientation from an ideological orientation scale that reflected their own position, the majority (91.1%) identified with some type of belief in the divine or transcendent. When responding to questions about participation in formal religious services and personal religious or spiritual practices in the past (i.e. as children) and currently, the results show decreased attendance in formal religious services from the past to present. In contrast to decreased attendance in formal religious services respondents reported they currently participated in personal religious or spiritual practices daily (37.7%) and weekly (19.8%).

Responses to a “Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice” scale indicated “a generally positive or accepting attitude toward the role of religion and spirituality in practice” (Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999, p. 131). Participants were asked to respond to a variety of religious or spiritual practice intervention or techniques and identify which interventions or techniques they viewed as appropriate and which they had used with clients. Ten of the 14 interventions or techniques were viewed as appropriate by at least 60% of the respondents. In reference to using a particular intervention or technique only four of the 14 were used by at least 30% of the respondents. These interventions were “gathering information on clients’ religious or spiritual background; praying privately for clients; using religious or spiritual language or concepts; and recommending participation in religious or spiritual programs” (Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, p. 132). Two other interventions that were used by just under 30% of the respondents were helping “clients clarify their religious or spiritual values” (29.4%); and sharing their “own religious or spiritual beliefs or views” (28.9%) (Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, p. 132).

Despite the participants’ positive views of religion and spirituality in practice as well as viewing many interventions as appropriate, and using some of these techniques with clients, the majority (65.7%) reported little or no training in this area. Overall, the respondents reported a slight dissatisfaction with the amount of education and clinical training they received in the area of religion and spirituality.

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with two rationales for including religious and spiritual content in the social work curriculum. Responses indicated general agreement with both rationales. The first rationale,

“relevance to multicultural diversity,” was more strongly supported than the second rationale, “spirituality is an important dimension of human existence” (Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999, p.135).

Practice courses and human behavior courses were reported as courses which had some content on the topics of religion and spirituality as well as being identified as the courses that should include these topics. Two thirds (66.8%) of the students supported a course being offered as an elective. One fourth (25.4%) supported making a course required for all students, while about eight percent (7.8%) supported making a course required for only clinical students. Most respondents (82.9%) “reported an interest in taking a course focused on religion and spirituality and social work practice” (Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999, p. 135).

Sheridan and Amato-von Hemert (1999) compare the results of this study with graduate students with two previous studies, one with faculty (Sheridan, et al., 1992) and one with practitioners (Sheridan, et al., 1994). All three groups (students, faculty, and practitioners) reported a high percentage of faith affiliations versus non-faith affiliation (Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, p. 135). Students had the highest percentage (89.4%) followed by faculty (86.1%) and then practitioners (78.5%). There was a significant difference between the first two groups and the practitioners. A comparison of the ideological position of a “belief in a personal God” on the ideology scale revealed the same pattern with students (42.6%), educators (37.5%), and practitioners (29.5%). A different pattern emerges when looking at participation in organized religion or spiritual groups. Faculty reported the highest percentage of participation followed by practitioners and then students.

Responses to the role of religion and spirituality in practice revealed students and faculty having more positive attitudes than practitioners. Comparison of responses to the amount of education or training respondents received in the area of religion and spirituality revealed educators reporting the highest percentage (88%) of 'never' or 'rarely' being exposed to content, practitioners were next (82.4%), and then students (65.7%). Satisfaction ratings show practitioners being more dissatisfied than students or faculty with the amount of content on religion and spirituality in graduate education.

Student responses to rationales for including content on religion and spirituality were significantly higher than faculty responses in supporting the arguments for inclusion. A higher percentage of students supported requiring a course on religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum in contrast to faculty who had a higher percentage supporting such a course as an elective.

Sheridan and Amato-von Hemert (1999) provide a picture of attitudes and experiences of MSW students to religion and spirituality in social work practice and education with a comparison to two other important social work groups, educators and practitioners. Students in this study appear to have been exposed to more content on religion and spirituality when compared to faculty and practitioners. The limitations of this study are related to the sample and the generalizability of the results to the broader MSW population. However, the findings are consistent with other studies that focus on religion and spirituality in graduate social work education (Cascio, 1999; Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999; and Rizer & McColley, 1996). Further study is needed both at the graduate and undergraduate levels of social work education.

Sheridan and Amato-von Hemert's (1999) study will serve as a model for the research to be conducted in this dissertation. Specifically the "Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice" scale will be edited to address the BSW student population.

In one of the few studies that focus on BSW students, Staral (1999) presents findings from interviews with thirty undergraduate social work students. The sample included all senior ( $n = 16$ ) and junior ( $n = 14$ ) social work majors in a private Catholic university. Students were asked the following six questions:

1. How would you define the term 'religion' and the term 'spirituality'?
2. Do you think there is any connection between these two terms and your role as a social work major? If so, in what way?
3. Did your spiritual or religious beliefs affect your decision to pursue a social work major? If so, explain.
4. Did any of your theology classes help you to connect your social work major to religion or spirituality?
5. Are there ways that social work faculty could support/enhance this connection?
6. What other comments do you have about [t]his (sic) topic that you think are important to add? (Staral, pp. 102-103)

The purpose of Staral's (1999) study was to gain an understanding of students' concerns and needs around religion and spirituality in social work practice. Findings are presented using examples of student comments to each question.

Students' responses varied as they attempted to define the terms religion and spirituality. Some were able to make distinctions between the terms with religion being described as something that is done and spirituality being more of an internal function.

Students "overwhelming believed that their spiritual/religious beliefs coincided with the value base of social work..." (Staral, 1999, p. 104). When students responded to the question about spiritual or religious beliefs influencing their decision to major in social work the responses were evenly split. Twelve agreed that their decision to become a social work major was "influenced by their religious beliefs" (Staral, p. 104) and twelve disagreed. The six remaining students were not sure.

Several areas of concern emerged for students. Imposing personal values on clients was one reason students gave for not making a connection between religion and spirituality and social work practice. Issues of injustice and treating clients with dignity were an area of concern that students had observed and questioned from a religious or spiritual context. Students also expressed concern for not wanting faculty imposing religious or spiritual values on them. Views on discussing issues of religion and spirituality in class varied from "there shouldn't be discussions" (Staral, 1999, p. 106), to discussions being beneficial for self-understanding.

In addition to concerns and issues raised by students, Staral (1999) identifies other areas for consideration when addressing religion and spirituality in relationship to social work practice. These areas are competence of social workers to address religious and spiritual issues of clients; self-awareness of the influence of religious and spiritual factors on personal values and beliefs; the relationship between church and state; and the

development of resources to prepare faculty, students, and practitioners to competently handle religious and spiritual issues in social work.

Staral's (1999) study points out some of the ambiguity students struggle with around religion and spirituality as related to social work practice and education. The limited size of the sample prevents any generalizability of the study's results but it points out the need for further discussions and research about attitudes and perceptions of undergraduate social work students with regard to religion and spirituality in social work education and practice.

In a study that explored graduate social work students' attitudes about client religion and how it is incorporated into practice, DeCoster and Burcham (2002) used a convenience sample of students at a large mid-south university to complete a survey. The authors specifically focus on religion as opposed to spirituality. In previous studies the two concepts are often used interchangeably which can confuse these two related but separate concepts. DeCoster and Burcham look at a couple of other aspects of religion and social work not previously found in the literature. This study specifically explores students' beliefs about religion as oppressive or pathological, and tries to identify variables that shape the attitudes of students about religion.

Using a survey methodology, DeCoster and Burcham (2002) gathered data from 124 students. The survey included "demographic information, personal religious activity, [and] attitudes about religion and social work practice" (DeCoster & Burcham, p. 79). Results show "students had mixed feelings about religion and social work" (p. 81). While students indicated religion was important they only reported "moderate" comfort addressing religion in general terms with clients. Consistent with previous studies,



students reported they felt unprepared to assess the religious beliefs of clients. Religion was generally seen as strength for clients. Respondents disagreed with the idea “that strong religious convictions could decrease personal problems” (p. 82). Students acknowledged that some religious beliefs could be oppressive but they were not as sure if religious beliefs could be pathological. Female respondents agreed less with the idea that some religious beliefs were pathological than male respondents. When it came to students’ attitudes about professional involvement in clients’ religion the responses were mixed. Respondents indicated they would likely pray with clients, but they were uncertain about whether discussing their own beliefs, religion in general, or suggesting clients either stop or start attending religious services was appropriate or not.

Students in the second year of the MSW program “reported feeling somewhat more prepared at assessing client religion, comfortable discussing death, praying with clients, were more inclined to disagree that some beliefs are pathological and the inappropriateness of suggesting religious service attendance than first year students” (DeCoster & Burcham, 2002, p. 83)

The religious affiliation of students was found to have significant effects on several items. Students with Protestant affiliation were “more likely to pray with clients, had less disagreement that clients would have fewer problems if religious, and felt that it was inappropriate to suggest to a client that they stop attending a religious service than most other students” (DeCoster & Burcham, 2002, p. 83). When comparing students who reported active versus inactive religious activity the findings show “religiously active students were more comfortable discussing religion, life after death, and more likely to pray with a client and witness” (Decoster & Burcham, p. 87).

While DeCoster and Burcham (2002) specifically focus on the concept of religion, their findings are similar to other studies that address both religion and spirituality. Students recognize the importance of religion in the lives of clients and the need to include some assessment in social work practice; however, responses indicate an ambiguous stance about the specific role of religion in social work. The implications of this study are that students, as represented in this sample, are not sure what to do with the concept of religion as related to social work practice. The limited sample size makes it impossible to generalize to the larger MSW student population and also points to a need to look at BSW students' perceptions and experiences with regard to religion and spirituality in education and practice.

Ai, Moultime, Picciano, Nagda, and Thurman (2004) conducted a student-initiated program evaluation to determine student satisfaction with the integration of spirituality content in the social work curriculum. This study and curriculum evaluation was initiated as a result of a series of e-mail messages among faculty, students, and staff that raised concerns about an inadequacy of addressing spiritual and religious issues in the social work curriculum. Program evaluation surveys were administered in spring semesters of two consecutive years (1999 & 2000) to first year MSW students in a large public research university in the Pacific Northwest. The first cohort (S-99) included 66 respondents and the second cohort (S-00) had 91 students respond. One foundation course with integrated spirituality content (Diversity & Social Justice, S-99; Advanced HBSE, S-00) was selected from each year and several other foundation courses without integrated spirituality content (HBSE I & II, Intro to Practice, and Community Change,

S-99; HBSE 1 & II, Intro to Practice, and Diversity, S-00) were selected for the purposes of evaluating student satisfaction with spirituality content in the curriculum.

Significant differences between the two cohorts were found with regard to the importance of spirituality and religious practice. The mean spirituality score and religious practice score were both higher for the S-00 cohort. In S-99 a higher percentage of students reported inclusion of spirituality content and satisfaction with the amount of content in the “Diversity” course than in the other courses that did not specifically have integrated spirituality content. Similarly the S-00 cohort reported higher percentages of both inclusion and satisfaction in the course with integrated content than the courses without integrated content. The overall results indicate that where students perceived the inclusion of spirituality content in a specific course they were also more satisfied with this content.

The results of Ai, et al.’s (2004) study lends support to a general perception that students want more content on spirituality and religion in social work curriculum. The authors note several limitations to the study. This was a convenience sample, which limits its generalizability to students in other schools. The first cohort (S-99) could have been affected by the e-mail discussion prior to the research. The administration of the survey was different for each group as well as the number of items on each survey. Another potential concern was the somewhat confusing focus of the study. The concept spirituality is the initial stated focus of the study but students are given definitions of both religion and spirituality and appear to be rating the inclusion and satisfaction of both concepts in the curriculum. The primary strength of this research is the initiation and inclusion of students in the process of using research to address curriculum concerns and

bringing about change to include appropriate content on spirituality and religion in social work education. While more and more studies are providing the field of social work with snapshots of MSW students' attitudes around religion and spirituality they are limited in both sample size and geographical focus as well as a lack of attention to BSW students.

In another study focusing on spirituality Bethel (2004) outlines the process of developing and evaluating an elective course on spirituality for social work students at the graduate and undergraduate levels. "Content for the courses fell under four umbrellas: Theoretical frameworks, specific techniques for micro and macro practice, diversity among religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, and student self-awareness" (p. 29). The spiritual wellbeing of students was measured using a pre-test and post-test design method. The sample includes forty-six students ( $n = 42$ , MSWs;  $n = 4$ , BSWs) over a three-year period.

Bethel (2004) reports a significant increase in students' spiritual wellbeing after completion of the course. Students' spiritual wellbeing was measured using the Spiritual Wellness Inventory (SWI). The SWI was chosen because it measured spirituality without requiring a religious affiliation or a theistic belief system; it was constructed by a panel representing diverse spiritual traditions; and the ten dimensions were consistent with the content of the courses. The guiding research questions were, "Will students who take a course in spirituality experience increased spiritual wellness?" and "Will such growth, if evident, be significant?" (p. 36). Growth was seen on all ten dimensions of the subscale. Five out of ten variables (mystery, meaning, hope, divinity, and forgiveness) showed "significant growth or change" at the .05 level (p. 41). Two other variables (ritual and knowledge) were just above the .05 significance level (.064 and .063).

Bethel's (2004) study does not specifically address the topic of this dissertation but it provides a limited snapshot of the influence of spirituality in the preparation of social work students. Further research is necessary to determine if students who have taken such courses are satisfied with the level of content and their preparation to address issues of spirituality in practice.

Hodge and McGrew (2005) draw attention to the often confusing, sometimes contradictory and inconsistent definitions found in social work literature for the concepts religion and spirituality. The authors argue there is a need for conceptual clarity to better serve research, education, and practice in social work. Hodge and McGrew explore the perceptions of a national sample of MSW students. In addition to demographic data students were specifically asked to respond to three questions:

1. How would you define spirituality?
2. How would you define religion?
3. What, if any, relationship do you see between spirituality and religion?

Hodge and McGrew (2005) use a qualitative methodological approach to conduct telephone surveys of MSW students who are members of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) and attending publicly funded, non-faith based programs. Out of a group of 125 potential respondents, 88 agreed to participate in the study.

Nine distinct categories emerged in participants' responses to the first question, "how would you define spirituality?" The majority of responses defined spirituality as a belief in or connection with God (57%). Another 16% defined spirituality using terms related to belief in or connection with a higher power. The third category defined

spirituality as “personally constructed” (12%). This category did not include any references to the transcendent. “Something beyond the individual” was the fourth highest response (8%). Two percent of the respondents defined spirituality as the “application of religion.” The last four categories were all below two percent each.

Definitions of religion did not fit into distinct categories as easily as the definitions of spirituality. The responses revealed multiple themes. Twelve different themes were used to define religion with many of them being identical to the categories used to define spirituality. Respondents sometimes used two and three themes to define religion.

Approximately one third (36%) of the respondents defined religion using the theme “practice of spirituality/faith.” The emphasis was on “practice or doing.” One fourth of the responses used the theme “organized beliefs/doctrines.” Another 25% identified “belief in/connection with God” to define religion. Other themes identified in defining religion included “humanly constructed” (17%), “community” (11%), “belief in/connection with a Higher power” (10%), “institution” (7%), “culture” (4%), “personally constructed” (3%), “unclassifiable” (2%), “guidance—particularly for living” (1%), and “don’t know/no answer” (less than 1%) (Hodge & McGrew, 2005, p. 13).

When respondents answered the question “what, if any, relationship do you see between spirituality and religion?” sixty percent said “a relationship exists between spirituality and religion” (Hodge & McGrew, 2005, p. 14). Twenty-six percent said the concepts can be related but they are not necessarily related. Four percent said no relationship exists while two percent said the concepts were identical.

Hodge and McGrew (2005) compare the responses of North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) members with NASW student members to see if there are any significant differences between the two groups. The NASW sample is part of another study, which is in the review process. Significant differences were found between respondent's definitions of spirituality and religion but not in how they identified the relationship between spirituality and religion. Respondents from the NACSW sample were more likely to identify spirituality with a "belief in/connection with God" while the NASW respondents defined spirituality with the terms "belief in/connection with a Higher power," "personally constructed," and "don't know/no answer" (Hodge & McGrew, p. 15). With regard to how religion was defined, NACSW respondents were more likely to define religion with the themes "practice of spirituality/faith," "belief in/connection with God," and "humanly constructed" (Hodge & McGrew, p. 16). The "NASW respondents were significantly more likely to use the themes: Personally constructed, and Don't know/no answer" (Hodge & McGrew, p. 16). The authors note "these differences may reflect differing religious demographics between the NACSW and NASW samples" (Hodge & McGrew, p. 16).

Hodge and McGrew's (2005) study supports the idea that religion and spirituality are related but separate concepts, with spirituality being primarily defined in terms of a belief in or experience with the transcendent and religion primarily being the practice of spirituality associated with a community or relationship to others. The diversity of themes in defining these concepts are likely reflective of the general diversity of social workers but more study is needed to bring further clarity to how these terms are used in both social work practice and education. Asking BSW students to define the terms could

provide further clarity about the two concepts and a comparison of themes might help social work educators in understanding how undergraduate students perceive the terms.

Stewart and Koeske (2006) survey social work students at the BSW and MSW level at three universities located in different geographical settings (metropolitan, suburban, and rural) in the southeast region of the United States. “The purpose of this project was to further explore the relationship of social work students, their personal spiritual and religious views, and their attitudes toward the use of spiritual and religious interventions with clients” (p. 34).

Surveys were distributed during classes along with informed consent forms and students were instructed about the voluntary nature of participating in the research. The sample included second year MSW students ( $n = 217$ ) and BSW students ( $n = 168$ ) in their junior and senior years. The survey instrument included the Multidimensional Measure of Religiosity and Spirituality (MMRS), which measures religiosity and spirituality of the respondents, and a combination of the RRSP along with a 15-item list of religious and spiritual interventions. A factor analysis was conducted on the MMRS and the authors identified “five reliable empirically-derived dimensions of religiousness and spirituality” (Stewart & Koeske 2006, p. 38). The dimensions were labeled as following: “*Closeness to a Personal God*”; “*Meaning*”; “*Sense of God’s Grace*”; “*Religious Practices and Organized Religious Involvement*”; and “*Spiritual Harmony*” (pp. 38-39).

Stewart and Koeske (2006) report students tend to have a favorable attitude toward the use of religious-based practices ( $M = 3.67$ ) as measured by the RRSP using a 1-5 range scale. However, the cumulative scores of the RRSP, which range from 19-95



are not reported. When students are asked about the appropriateness of 15 interventions the mean number of “items endorsed was 7.66” (p. 37). Nine items were endorsed by at least 55% of the respondents. The variables that showed statistical significance in predicting students’ attitude toward the infusion of religion/spirituality in practice were the “RURAL” geographic setting, “having had formal religious training, ... and not being identified with a religious organization” (p. 40). The rural variable and the formal religious training variable were predictive of a “more favorable attitude toward religious practice in social work” (p. 40). Not being identified with a religious organization was predictive of a less favorable attitude toward religious practice in social work. The variables predicting views about appropriateness of religious-based interventions in practice were “RURAL”, not identifying as with a religious organization, the “Meaning” and “Personal God” subscales on the MMRS. The “RURAL” and “Meaning” variables indicated a higher level of perceived appropriateness toward the use of religious-based interventions and the “NORELIG” and “Personal God” variables were indicative of a lower level of perceived appropriateness of religious-based interventions in social work practice.

A bivariate examination of data revealed several significant differences in both RRSP mean scores and appropriateness of religious-based intervention scores. “...White respondents had a more favorable attitude toward infusion of religious practices than did Hispanic ( $p < .01$ ) or African American ( $p = .01$ ) respondents” (Stewart & Koeske 2006, p. 43). Students in the rural university settings “were significantly ( $p < .001$ ...) more favorable toward the use of religion-relevant practices than students in an urban setting”

(p. 43). Students identifying as Protestant had significantly higher mean scores on the “appropriateness” measure than Catholic respondents ( $p = .016$ ).

Stewart and Koeske’s (2006) research provides further evidence of students’ positive views toward religion and spirituality in social work practice. The identification of predictive variables with regard to student attitudes toward religion and spirituality and appropriate practice interventions begins to provide a limited picture of what influences students’ views. The results do not provide any comparative analyses between BSW and MSW students. The authors acknowledge the limitations of the sampling frame that focused on three schools in the southeastern United States.

In the largest study to date with undergraduate social work students around issues of religion and spirituality Graff (2002) explores the perceptions of BSW students on the role of religion and spirituality in social work. The purpose of Graff’s study was to “build upon current research and provide data about bachelor-level students beliefs to further inform the ongoing debate about inclusion of spiritual/religious content in social work education” (p. 12).

The sample for Graff’s (2002) study included seven CSWE accredited schools in southwest Texas. This was a purposively selected sample drawn from the August 1999 CSWE directory of accredited schools. There were four public universities and three faith-sponsored schools included in the study. The final sample included a total of 324 surveys completed by social work majors from the seven schools. The survey consisted of three sections: (1) “Personal Religious/Spiritual Beliefs; (2) “Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice” Scale (RRSP), developed by Sheridan (2000); and (3)

demographic information including religious or spiritual affiliation and frequency of the respondents' religious or spiritual practice.

Using the RRSP scale Graff (2002) reports that 85.5% of the respondents "agree or strongly agree that spirituality is a fundamental aspect of being human" (p. 190). Less than half (42.6%) agreed that social workers should know more about spiritual matters while 95.6% indicated they were in agreement that social workers should know more about different religions. Higher mean scores on the RRSP indicated student level in school (freshmen and sophomore), regional identification (Texans), racial identification (white Europeans), and current religious/spiritual practice (daily or weekly) were four variables that seem to significantly affect students' positive views for the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work practice. Overall, respondents view religious and spiritual concerns as pertinent to social work practice, requiring knowledge on behalf of the social worker, assessment of its influence in clients' lives, and relevant for providing a holistic approach to social work practice.

When it came to using spiritual or religious interventions in practice the responses indicated more ambiguity on the part of students. Examples of this ambiguity are illustrated by the following responses to various interventions in practice: using religious language, metaphors and concepts in practice with clients, 34.0% agreed or strongly agreed this was appropriate while 28.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed; in reference to the use of spiritual language, metaphors and concepts, 38.3% agreed or strongly agreed this was appropriate and 25.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed; use of scripture or religious text, 50.0% agreed or strongly agreed it was not appropriate but 17.9% agreed or strongly agreed it was appropriate. (Graff, 2002, pp. 190-191).

Graff's (2002) study is important in providing a broader view than previous studies about BSW students' perceptions on the role of religion and spirituality in social work. Graff points out the method of sampling; small numbers of students in some subgroups, geographic focus, and lack of generalization beyond accredited BSW programs in Texas as the primary limitations to the study. "Further research is needed in different geographical areas to provide data on BSW students from other parts of the country" (Graff, p. 198).

### *Summary*

The social work literature has focused on three distinct groups with regard to religion and spirituality in social work education: faculty, practitioners, and students. Faculty have been generally supportive of discussing the concepts but are also from a generation of social workers who received the least amount of education about the concepts while completing their social work education. While the research presents favorable attitudes and the majority of studies reviewed support inclusion of religion and spirituality in general, there is a minority voice that religion and spirituality should not be a part of the social work curriculum.

Research studies with practitioners tend to indicate general support for inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work education. Practitioners report the importance and prevalence of the concepts in their work with clients, although many respondents acknowledged ambivalence as to the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice. Social work practitioners also reported a general lack of preparation to deal with these issues because they were not included in the social work curriculum. The literature is unclear as to the percentage of bachelor's level social workers that are

included in the research about religion and spirituality but the majority of practitioners in the literature appear to be prepared at the masters' level.

The research literature focusing on students' perceptions and experiences have been primarily done with masters' level students. The results indicate overall positive attitudes toward religion and spirituality but a continued lack of knowledge and perceived lack of preparation to address these issues with clients.

Out of twelve studies that have focused on social work students' views of religion and spirituality only two were conducted at the BSW level exclusively (Graff, 2002; Staral 1999). Two other studies included BSW and MSW level students (Bethel, 2004; Stewart & Koeske, 2006). The eight other studies were almost exclusively MSW students (Ai, et al., 2004; Cascio, 1999; DeCoster & Burcham, 2002; Derezotes, 1995; Hodge & McGrew, 2005; Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999; Rizer & McColley, 1996; Sheridan & Amato von-Hemert, 1999). Not only are there a limited numbers of studies that have focused on this research topic, but also the studies provide a limited geographical focus as discussed in the literature review. A larger more geographically diverse sample of social work programs and students has the potential to provide a more complete picture about BSW students' perceptions and experiences with religion and spirituality in their social work education and practice.

Previous studies have called for inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work curriculum. Faculty, practitioners, and graduate students support the need for further training and education around religion and spirituality. Graff (2002) specifically calls for further research in the area of undergraduate social work education to "determine whether the beliefs of the students" (p. 219) in her study are similar to BSW

students in other parts of the country. The “further research” is the focus of this dissertation with the intent to build on previous research and draw a sample that includes a broader geographical area along with a larger sample of undergraduate social work programs. A larger sample would provide a fuller picture of the perceptions and experiences of BSW students with religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. It is the aim of this study to draw a broader sample from across the United States in order to get another snapshot of BSW students and their perceptions and experiences with religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum and in practice.

The overarching question for this study is as follows: (1) What are the perceptions and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as experienced in social work education and practice? This question crosses over several areas of students’ lives: educational, practice or professional, and personal. Several other questions have been formulated to investigate the perceptions and experiences of BSW students with religion and spirituality in their education, practice and personal lives.

Questions related directly to practice include the following: (2) What do BSW students report as appropriate religious and spiritual interventions to perform with clients? (3) What interventions do BSW students report as having personally done with clients?

The following questions cross over both educational and practice issues. (4) Do BSW students believe their social work education prepared them to address issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients? (5) Are BSW students satisfied with the attention given to religion and spirituality in their social work education? (6) Which rationale for the inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work curriculum do

BSW students tend to support: a) multi-cultural or; b) dimension of human existence? (7)

Do undergraduate social work programs offer specific courses on religion and/or spirituality in social work practice? (8) How do students' own personal religious or spiritual beliefs and practices correlate with their views about inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice? (9) Do students from different institutional auspices (i.e. public or church-related) view religious and spiritual issues differently in relationship to social work education or practice?

## **Methods**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the views and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as presented in the social work curriculum of undergraduate social work programs and in practice. This chapter describes the study design, setting, sampling, data collection procedures, survey instrument, protection of human subjects and data analysis plan.

### *Study Design*

The study was an exploratory descriptive study that used a cross-sectional survey design method to collect data via a web survey. Previous explorations on this topic have used cross-sectional designs to capture student attitudes and experiences related to religious and spiritual content and practices in social work education.

The knowledge-building continuum broadly classifies research designs into three categories, exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory, although in practice designs often overlap (Yegidis, Weinbach, & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1999). Exploratory research implies limited knowledge about the topic. The exploratory study seeks to find out “what is” out there (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). As noted at the end of the literature review only two studies addressing religion and spirituality have focused exclusively on BSW level students (Graff, 2002; Staral 1999). This study adds to the knowledge base through the use of a larger, more geographically diverse sample of social work programs and students than in previous studies of BSW students. This study provides a more complete picture about BSW students’ perceptions and experiences with religion and spirituality in their social work education and practice.

The descriptive label is also applicable to this study as the study describes the



characteristics of the population based on a sample of BSW students in relationship to select variables (Rubin & Babbie, 2007).

### *Setting*

The setting for this research was CSWE accredited BSW programs located in public/state institutions and private church-related institutions from across the United States with a focus on senior social work students in these programs. The majority of BSW programs are located in public/state (54.25%) and private church-related (38.30%) institutions. In addition to using CSWE statistics (CSWE, 2007a), the breakdown of accredited BSW programs by auspice (Table 1) was compiled through a review of information on each school's website. The auspice of the school was important for purposes of data analyses and comparing responses to the survey items.

The CSWE classifies schools by institutional auspice using four categories: public state, public other, private church-related, and private other. Table 1 shows the breakdown of BSW programs by institutional auspice. Not all schools submitted reports to CSWE, but the 350 BSW programs submitting data to CSWE in 2004 are reported in the second and third columns (CSWE, 2007a, p. 3). According to the Council on Social Work Education there were 470 accredited BSW programs as of February 2009 (<http://www.cswe.org/>). Information in columns four and five was collected from data available through online school websites. A comparison of the data from CSWE and the data collected directly from school websites shows a slightly different breakdown of institutional auspice than reported in annual statistics from CSWE (See Table 1). The percentage of public institutions remains relatively unchanged however the percentage of church-related schools increases from about 33% to almost forty percent (38.30%).

Table 1  
*Institutional Auspices of CSWE Accredited BSW Programs*

Institutional Auspices	BSW Programs Reporting to CSWE (2007)	%	All Accredited BSW Programs *	%
Public				
State	194	55.4%	255	54.25%
Other	7	2.0%	6	1.28%
Private				
Church-related	114	32.6%	180	38.30%
Other	34	9.7%	29	6.17%
Missing Auspice	1	0.3%	0	0.00%
Total	350	100%	470	100%

\* Data on BSW programs collected from college and university websites.

### *Sampling*

Previous studies with social work students were primarily focused on graduate level students (Ai, et al., 2004; Bethel, 2004; Cascio, 1999; DeCoster & Burcham, 2002; Hodge & McGrew, 2005; Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999; Rizer & McColley, 1996; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999) and most of these were limited geographically. The few studies that did have samples that included BSW students were also limited geographically. Staral's (1999) study had a sample of 30 BSW students from one church-related school. Graff's (2002) study had the largest sample of BSW students ( $n = 324$ ) but was limited geographically as it was drawn from seven schools in Texas. Bethel's (2004) study only had four BSW students out of 46 total students in the sample. The sample was from one school in the south. Stewart and Koeske (2006) surveyed 168 BSW students as part of a study in the southeast region of the United States.

This study addressed the limitations of previous studies' sampling methods by

using a multistage sampling procedure to recruit student participants and to collect data. The sample for this study was drawn from the 470 schools that were fully accredited by CSWE in February 2009. The unit of analysis for this study is the student. A stratified random sample of BSW programs within the four major census regions of the U. S. and divided into two categories by school auspice was drawn from CSWE accredited programs. Schools were identified by CSWE according to auspice. There are four categories (public/state, public other, private other, and private church-related). The categories of public other (1.28%) and private other (6.17%) are relatively small in number so these were collapsed into one group with public/state schools (54.25%). The private church-related auspice (38.30%) was the second category of schools for the purpose of this research. The primary reason for stratifying the sample was to make sure there were enough schools and students represented in each strata (region, auspice) category to make comparison's between schools on a number of variables (RRSP scores, SDIC score, Ideological Position scale, satisfaction with R & S content in social work curriculum, frequency of personal R/S practices). In an attempt to achieve a program response rate of at least 50% or better in program participation an oversampling by 50% was conducted. Once programs were randomly selected program directors were contacted to solicit their participation in this study.

The second stage of sampling involved the identification, recruitment and engagement of the target population of BSW students. Program directors or a designee were asked to send e-mail invitations to students in their programs who fit the following criteria:

- 1) Participants must be in their senior year of the social work program.

- 2) Participants must be able to read and write in English.
- 3) Participants must have access to a computer with Internet access.

The total number of senior social work students in accredited BSW programs is approximately 13,000 students given that CSWE reports 12,249 full-time seniors enrolled in 2008 with approximately 92% of accredited schools submitting reports (CSWE, 2010). In order to draw an appropriate sample size a power analysis was conducted. “Statistical power analysis exploits the relationship among four variables involved in statistical inference: sample size ( $N$ ), significance criterion ( $\alpha$ ), population effect size ( $ES$ ), and statistical power” (Cohen 1992, p. 156). The assumptions for determining sample size ( $N$ ) in this study were as follows: significance criterion ( $\alpha$ ) is set at .05, population effect size ( $ES$ ) is set at .50 (medium), and statistical power is set at .80. An *a priori* power analysis (Cohen, 1988) using “G\*Power 3”, a power analysis software application, (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang & Buchner, 2007) indicated there should be 64 participants in each of the eight categories (4 regional cells X 2 auspice cells). Based on the power analysis the desired minimum number of participants for this study is 512. Since an acceptable response rate should be at least 50% the strategy to accomplish an acceptable response rate was to oversample by 50%. Using this strategy the estimated sample size for this study will be about 1024 students. In a “Benchmark Report” prepared by the CSWE for this research the number of senior social work students enrolled by individual programs is reported to be approximately 12,250 for the 2009-2010 academic year (CSWE, 2010). Program directors or a designee from participating schools were asked to confirm the number of seniors expected to graduate in the 2009-2010 academic year and therefore eligible to participate in this research. The response rate was calculated based on the final

number of respondents compared to the total number of senior social work students from sampled programs (Fowler, 1993).

Participation in the study was voluntary and a statement on informed consent was provided both to program directors and to students who participated in the study. The rationale for limiting the sample to senior social work students was the likelihood that they would have completed more of their social work courses and field internships than those at earlier stages (freshmen, sophomore, or junior level) in the process of completing a BSW degree and therefore they would have more experience with social work curriculum and practice through field education.

#### *Data collection procedures*

Data were collected from students by means of a structured, in-depth, online survey instrument. The instrument was loaded on a secure website. Students received an e-mail message from the program director or a designee at their school inviting them to participate in the study and to read the informed consent document on-line. Participants accessed the survey through an online survey web-service. Students who chose to participate were provided with an informed consent statement (Appendix A) at the beginning of the survey. Their willingness to complete the survey indicated the acknowledgement of the informed consent and that participation was voluntary. The online survey was intended to be open for a three-week period. However, due to programs entering the study at different points in time the time period was extended.

Program directors or a designee were sent an email invitation (Appendix B) explaining the purpose of the study, how their program was selected, the proposed process of distributing the invitation to students and a request for a letter of cooperation.

Program directors of each program were initially contacted by email. If there was not a response within a week a second email invitation was sent and then a third email if no response was given by the second week. When email invitations failed to elicit a response telephone calls were made to the program directors in an attempt to secure a program's participation. Programs that chose to participate were sent an email with the invitation message to be distributed to students. A reminder email was sent two weeks after the initial invitation and then again at the end of the third week in an attempt to increase response rate from participating schools.

In order to meet research administration guidelines from the Institutional Review Board at Case Western Reserve University for the protection of human subjects each participating school was required to provide a letter of cooperation before the survey could be distributed. In addition to this requirement several schools required a separate IRB application be completed and submitted for approval by the participating institution in order for their students to participate in the study.

Data were collected using an online survey web-service with secure socket layers (SSL). Collected data was downloaded into a statistical software program (SPSS) for analysis. The data collection progress was monitored online through the use of online software. The dissertation chair person was kept informed through email or phone calls on a weekly basis about the progress of data collection.

#### *Justification for Online Survey and Data Collection*

While it has been suggested, "desired response rate tends to be entirely subjective" (Fink, 2006, p. 7), acceptable response rates are usually at fifty percent or higher (Babbie, 2001, p. 256). The higher the response rates the better. Response rate

studies have reported mixed results for web-based surveys (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant 2003; Umbach 2004). Regardless of the mode of administration response rates vary for both web-based and paper and pencil modes. Neither mode appears to have an advantage over the other with regard to response rate. However, some studies report advantages for the online surveys when it comes to completeness of survey answers (Kongsved, Basnov, Holm-Christensen & Hjollund, 2007; Wood, Nosko, Desmarais, Ross, & Irvine, 2006; Kiernan, Kiernan, Oyler, & Gilles, 2005). “Studies examining the response completeness and quality of Internet tool surveys have reported comparable or higher completeness and quality of responses when compared to paper and pencil surveys” (Truell, 2003, p. 36). There are many factors that can affect response rates to either web-based or mailed surveys. These factors include number of contacts with respondents, length of the survey, incentives, survey salience, confidentiality, wording of the cover letter as well as many other variables (Porter 2004). The survey instrument was constructed with these factors taken into consideration.

There are several reasons to administer an online survey for this research. These include cost, efficiency in data collection and data analyses, and the nature of the targeted sample population. A major consideration for administering an online survey is cost. Electronic survey methods have the potential to bring efficiency to survey methodology that would eliminate the cost of paper, postage and data entry costs (Dillman, 2000). A reduction in the time it takes to disperse surveys and collect data is another benefit of using electronic survey methods. Technology has made it possible to contact BSW programs and student participants through email at minimal expense along with providing access to the survey efficiently and in a communication mode that today’s

students are familiar with and comfortable using. A mailed survey would incur mailing costs as well as copying expenses to reproduce enough surveys to distribute to the selected programs. In addition to time and cost savings some studies suggest web-based surveys are especially popular and relatively easily administered among college student populations (Sax, et al. 2003; Van Selm, & Jankowski, 2006).

### *Measures/Instrumentation*

The instrument for this study, a six-part questionnaire (Appendix C), incorporates several scales and questions from previous studies and a demographic section. The first section (I) of the survey is a cover page and provides participants information about the background and purpose of the research, procedures, risks and benefits, compensation, confidentiality and privacy, the voluntary nature of the study, contact and questions information, and finally a statement of informed consent.

The second section (II) of the questionnaire is the “Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice” Scale (RRSP) developed by Sheridan (2000). The RRSP is designed “to measure professional attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice” (Sheridan, 2000, p. 2). The RRSP contains 18 Likert-type scaled items asking students’ views about the appropriate role of religion or spirituality in social work practice. “The possible range in scores is 18 through 90, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes towards the role of religion and spirituality in practice” (Sheridan, 2000, p. 20). The RRSP Scale has been used in previous studies with relatively high reliability and demonstrates internal consistency, with alpha coefficients ranging from .81 to .91 (Graff 2007; Heyman, et al., 2006; Kvarfordt & Sheridan, 2007; Sheridan, 2004; Sheridan, et al., 1999; Sheridan, et al., 1994; and Sheridan, et al., 1992).



The “scale possesses good face and content validity” as reported in Sheridan’s (2004) study with practitioners. Sheridan’s (2000) manual on the psychometric information and scoring instructions for the RRSP scale reports evidence of both convergent and divergent construct validity.

The third section (III) of the survey, the “Spiritually-Derived Interventions Checklist (SDIC) (Sheridan, 2004), contains 24 questions about practice interventions which asks students to indicate whether or not they have used any of the interventions and whether or not they believe the interventions are appropriate for social work practice. The SDIC scale is a list of items identified in several studies as being used by social work practitioners in relationship to techniques or behaviors used in working with clients around issues of religion and spirituality (Bullis 1996; Canda & Furman, 1999; and Sheridan 2004). Sheridan reports, “the scale reflects good face and content validity and achieved good estimates of internal reliability...(alpha = .88)” (2004, p. 11).

The fourth section (IV) modifies questions from previous studies (Sheridan et al., 1992; Sheridan et al., 1994; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999; and Sheridan, 2004) and asks students views about the inclusion of content on religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum, preparation to address religion and spirituality in practice with clients, and satisfaction with their education and training in social work with regard to religious and spiritual content. This section also asks students about courses in the social work curriculum where religious and spiritual material may have been presented and discussed or should be presented and discussed, if courses are offered, how they should be offered (elective or required), and if they would be interested in taking a course on religion and spirituality if it were offered.

Section five (V) includes an ideological position scale, which measures degrees of belief in a personal God (Lehman, 1974). The ideological position scale was originally developed by Lehman and Shriver (1968) in a study to determine whether academic discipline was predictive of faculty religiosity. The original scale had four ideological positions reflecting different ideologies in relationship to Judaeo-Christian tradition, “theological conservatism, liberalism, radicalism, and humanism” (Lehman & Shriver, p. 208). The ideological scale was adapted and expanded to six ideological positions to measure degrees of belief in a personal God in a study of clinical practitioners (Sheridan, et al., 1992). The adapted ideological position scale has been administered in several other studies with social work faculty, practitioners, and students (Sheridan, et al., 1994; Rizer & McColley, 1996; Kaplan & Dziegielewski, 1999; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999; and Sheridan, 2004). The ideological position scale will be used to compare students’ beliefs about a personal God with their perceptions about religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. There are three other questions in this section: (1) Do you consider yourself religious?; (2) Do you consider yourself spiritual?; and (3) Were religious or spiritual beliefs a factor in your choice of social work as a major?

The final section (VI), “demographic and background variables”, requests information about school attending (auspice), age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation or spiritual orientation, frequency of current and past participation in religious services, frequency of religious/spiritual practices, and a question on current relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group. Most of the demographic variables are standard variables used for statistical analysis in survey research; however, the frequency

of religious/spiritual practices variable has been used in one form or another in several studies related to social workers attitudes about religion and spirituality (Sheridan et al., 1992; Sheridan et al., 1994; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999; Sheridan, 2004; and Graff, 2007). Students' religious and spiritual practices will be compared with their attitudes about religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. The addition of the "current school attending" variable is to determine the auspice of the school for the purpose of comparing schools by auspice with responses on the RRSP, SDIC, and ideological position scales and other demographic variables.

#### *Human Subjects Protection*

Approval to conduct this study was granted by the Institutional Review Board of Human Investigation at Case Western Reserve University. Letters of cooperation and support were collected from programs participating in this study and submitted to the Case IRB for review and approval.

A copy of the informed consent document can be found in Appendix A. Participation was voluntary and participants remained anonymous. The voluntary nature of the survey allowed participants to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Collected data was not individually identifiable and kept confidential. The data was collected through an online survey web service with secure socket layers (SSL). Collected data was downloaded in a statistical software program for analysis. The data was stored on the researcher's work computer which is password protected and is used exclusively by the researcher. There were no reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences to participants in this research. Participants were given the opportunity to enter a random drawing for one of five \$25 gift certificates. There were no other direct

benefits to the participants of this research, but indirectly the findings will be useful to the social work profession's understanding of BSW students' views and experiences with religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. These benefits are associated with the reporting of findings to the broader social work community through conference presentations and submission of findings to professional journals for publication. The records of this research will be kept private. The following ensured privacy for participants: a) IP addresses were not collected by the researcher or online host; and b) secure socket layering (SSL) encryption was used for the survey link and survey pages during transmission. Survey results are presented in aggregate form and are not attached to any identifiers. No identifying information was collected that may link participants to individual responses.

#### *Data Analysis Plan*

The survey instrument was designed to collect quantitative data. Data analysis includes summary descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics of respondents (school auspice, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and religious and spiritual affiliation) as well as statistical analyses of the participants' responses on the survey instrument. Mean scores, *t*-tests, and ANOVAs were calculated and reported for the RRSP scale in relation to demographic variables. Frequencies, percentages and contingency coefficients were calculated for the SDIC in relation to demographic variables.

Frequencies and percentages were reported for responses to student preparation to address religious and spiritual issues in direct practice, perceived frequency of religious or spiritual content, student satisfaction with attention given to religious and spiritual content, rationales for inclusion of religion and spirituality, courses offered on religion

and spirituality in social work practice and the Ideological Position scale.

To determine how students' personal religious or spiritual beliefs and practices correlated with their views about the inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice ANOVAs were calculated to compare RRSP mean scores with responses on the Ideological Position scale, frequency of participation in religious services during elementary school years, current participation in religious services, current personal religious or spiritual practices and present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group. Independent samples *t*-tests were calculated to compare RRSP mean scores and students' responses to "do you consider yourself religious," "do you consider yourself spiritual," and "were religious or spiritual beliefs a factor in your choice of social work as a major."

To determine if there were any differences by institutional auspice an independent samples *t*-test was calculated to compare the mean scores on the RRSP in relation to auspice. The chi-square test of association was used to determine any significant differences between auspice and the rest of the variables addressing attitudes or experiences with religious and spiritual issues in social work education or practice.

## Results

### *Descriptive Statistics of the Sample*

A total of 123 schools (church-related,  $n = 63$ ; public/state,  $n = 60$ ) were invited to participate in this study. Sixty schools agreed to participate but only 56 (church-related,  $n = 37$ ; public/state,  $n = 19$ ) distributed the survey to students for an overall response rate of 46%. A total of 1,320 senior BSW students were reported enrolled in the 56 social work programs that chose to distribute the survey. A total of 495 students responded to the survey for a 37.5% response rate. After data were cleaned, 412 valid cases were included for analysis (31.2% response rate). Table 2 provides demographic characteristics of the 412 students included in this study. Of the 411 students who responded to gender, 36 (8.8%) were male and 375 (91.2%) were female. The respondents' ages ( $N = 410$ ) ranged from 19 to 60 years of age, with the average age of 26.66 years ( $SD = 8.92$ ). The median and mode were the same at 22 years of age. Of the 412 respondents, 204 (49.5%) attended church-related institutions and 208 (50.5%) attended public/state institutions. The largest number of respondents came from the Midwest region ( $n = 133$ , 32.3%) followed by the Southern region ( $n = 104$ , 25.2%), the Northeast region ( $n = 91$ , 22.1%) and the Western region ( $n = 84$ , 20.4%).

In response to the question about racial/ethnic background, 300 (72.8%) respondents identified as Caucasian/Anglo-American, 50 (12.1%) as Latino/Hispanic-American, 21 (5.1%) as African-American, 18 (4.4%), as Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 13 (3.2%) as Bi-racial/Multi-racial, and 10 (2.4%) as Native-American/Alaskan Native/First Nations. Of the 411 students who responded to "What is your current religious affiliation or spiritual orientation?" 225 (54.6%) identified as Protestant, 79

(19.2%) as Catholic, 43 (10.4%) indicated None, 21 (5.1%) as Agnostic, 19 (4.6%) as Other, 5 (1.2%) as Existentialist, 5 (1.2%) as Spiritist, 3 (0.7%) as Atheist, 3 (0.7%) as Jewish, 3 (0.7%) as Muslim, 2 (0.5%) as Buddhist, 2 (0.5%) as Mormon, and 1 (0.2%) as Hindu.

Table 2  
*Demographic Information*

Variable	Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Gender				
Male	36	8.7	8.8	8.8
Female	375	91.0	91.2	100.0
Not reported	1	.2		
Age				
18-22	218	52.9	53.2	53.2
23-27	91	22.1	22.2	75.4
28-32	29	7.0	7.1	82.4
33-37	14	3.4	3.4	85.9
38-42	15	3.6	3.7	89.5
43-47	22	5.3	5.4	94.9
48-52	11	2.7	2.7	97.6
53 +	10	2.4	2.4	100.0
Not reported	2	.5		
Type of school				
Church-related	204	49.5	49.5	49.5
Public/State	208	50.5	50.5	100.0
Census Region				
Mid-West Region	133	32.3	32.3	32.3
Northeast Region	91	22.1	22.1	54.4
Southern Region	104	25.2	25.2	79.6
Western Region	84	20.4	20.4	100.0
Racial/Ethnic Background				
African American	21	5.1	5.1	5.1
Asian American/Pacific Islander	18	4.4	4.4	9.5
Bi-racial/Multi-racial	13	3.2	3.2	12.6
Caucasian/Anglo American	300	72.8	72.8	85.4
Latino(a)/Hispanic American	50	12.1	12.1	97.6
Native American/Alaskan	10	2.4	2.4	100.0
Native/First Nations				

Table 2 continued  
*Demographic Information*

Variable	Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
<b>Religious/Spiritual Affiliation</b>				
Agnostic	21	5.1	5.1	5.1
Atheist	3	.7	.7	5.8
Buddhist	2	.5	.5	6.3
Catholic	79	19.2	19.2	25.5
Existentialist	5	1.2	1.2	26.8
Hindu	1	.2	.2	27.0
Jewish	3	.7	.7	27.7
Mormon (LDS)	2	.5	.5	28.3
Muslim	3	.7	.7	29.0
Protestant	225	54.6	54.7	83.7
Spiritist	5	1.2	1.2	84.9
None	43	10.4	10.5	95.4
Other	19	4.6	4.6	100.0
Not reported	1	.2		

### *Question 1*

What are the perceptions and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as experienced in social work education and practice?

### *Descriptive Statistics of the RRSP*

The “Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice” Scale (RRSP) is designed “to measure professional attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice” (Sheridan, 2000, p. 2). The RRSP contains 18 Likert-type scaled items asking students’ views about the appropriate role of religion or spirituality in social work practice. “The possible range in scores is 18 through 90, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes towards the role of religion and spirituality in practice” (Sheridan, 2000, p. 20). Respondents’ scores in this study ranged from 44-90 with a mean of 68.80 (SD=7.82). Reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach’s alpha. The scale demonstrated a relatively high internal consistency with an alpha = 0.81. The mean score for students in this study was in the top third and is comparable to previous studies using



the RRSP scale (Graff, 2007; Heyman, et al., 2006; Sheridan, 2004; Sheridan & Amato von-Hemert, 1999; and Sheridan, et al., 1994). The mean score indicates students in this study tended to have a positive attitude toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice

#### *Analyses of the RRSP and Relationships to Demographic Variables*

An independent-samples t test was calculated comparing the mean score of the RRSP by gender. No significant difference was found ( $t(409) = .950, p > .05$ ). The mean of male participants ( $m = 69.98, sd = 9.07$ ) was not significantly different from the mean of female participants ( $m = 68.69, sd = 7.70$ ).

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing RRSP scores of participants and age. No significant difference was found ( $F(7, 402) = 1.37, p > .05$ ).

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing RRSP scores of participants and racial/ethnic background. No significant difference was found ( $F(5, 406) = 2.09, p > .05$ ).

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing RRSP scores of participants and religious/spiritual affiliation or orientation. Participants were given 13 options to choose from for religious/spiritual affiliation or orientation. Items were collapsed into three main categories (monotheistic, non-theistic, and pantheistic) for the purpose of analysis. A significant difference was found among the religious/spiritual affiliation categories ( $F(4, 406) = 4.91, p = .001$ ). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of differences between religious/spiritual affiliation categories. The analysis revealed that students in the monotheistic category scored higher on the RRSP ( $m = 69.61, sd = 7.66$ ) than students in the nontheistic category ( $m = 63.67, sd = 7.36$ ).

### *Questions 2 and 3*

What do BSW students report as appropriate religious and spiritual intervention to perform with clients? What interventions do BSW students report as having personally done with clients?

The Spiritually-Derived Interventions Checklist (SDIC) contains 24 questions about practice interventions which asked students to indicate whether or not they had used any of the interventions and which interventions they believed were appropriate for social work practice. The SDIC scales demonstrated high internal consistency with an  $\alpha = .89$  for the SDIC Use Scale and an  $\alpha = .91$  for the SDIC Appropriate Scale.

Tables 3 and 4 show responses on use and views about spiritually-derived interventions. Students appeared to use a wide variety of spiritually-derived interventions in their practice. As shown in Table 3, each of the 24 interventions received a level of endorsement. Endorsements ranged from as few as 10 to as many as 175 students who said they had utilized the intervention. However, as could be expected, students at this level had limited practice experience so they did not report a high level of utilization of spiritually-derived interventions. The intervention that was used by the highest percentage of students (42.5%,  $n = 175$ ) was gathering “information on clients’ religious or spiritual background.” The percentage of students who used any of the remaining interventions was below 30%. Fourteen of the interventions were used by less than 10% of the students.

Table 3  
*Respondents' Use of Spiritually Derived Interventions*

Interventions	Have Utilized
Gather information on clients' religious or spiritual backgrounds	42.5%, <i>n</i> = 175
Pray privately for a client	29.1%, <i>n</i> = 120
Help clients reflect on beliefs about loss or other difficult life situations	20.4%, <i>n</i> = 84
Use religious or spiritual language or concept	17.7%, <i>n</i> = 73
Recommend participation in a religious or spiritual program	17.2%, <i>n</i> = 71
Refer clients to others for religious or spiritual counseling or direction	15.0%, <i>n</i> = 62
Help clients clarify their religious or spiritual values	14.1%, <i>n</i> = 58
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual support systems are helpful	13.8%, <i>n</i> = 57
Discuss role of religious or spiritual beliefs in relation to significant others	13.3%, <i>n</i> = 55
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual beliefs or practices are helpful	11.4%, <i>n</i> = 47
Help clients reflect on beliefs about what happens after death	9.2%, <i>n</i> = 38
Use or recommend religious or spiritual books or writing	9.0%, <i>n</i> = 37
Assist clients to critically reflect on religious or spiritual beliefs and practices	9.0%, <i>n</i> = 37
Pray or meditate with a client	8.7%, <i>n</i> = 36
Recommend regular religious or spiritual self-reflective diary/journal	8.5%, <i>n</i> = 35
Help clients consider spiritual meaning of current life situation	8.3%, <i>n</i> = 34
Recommend religious or spiritual forgiveness, penance, or amends	6.3%, <i>n</i> = 26
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual beliefs or practices are harmful	5.3%, <i>n</i> = 22
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual support systems are harmful	5.3%, <i>n</i> = 22
Touch client for "healing" purposes	4.1%, <i>n</i> = 17
Help clients develop religious/spiritual rituals as practice intervention	3.4%, <i>n</i> = 14
Help clients assess religious or spiritual meaning of dreams	3.2%, <i>n</i> = 13
Participate in clients' religious/spiritual rituals as practice intervention	2.4%, <i>n</i> = 10

More than 50% of the respondents endorsed 15 of the 24 interventions as appropriate for social work practice (Table 4). Almost four-fifths (79.1%) of the respondents considered gathering information on clients' religious or spiritual backgrounds as appropriate. Other interventions that had high rates of endorsement from students were "help clients reflect on beliefs about loss or other difficult life situations" (75.5%), "help clients consider ways religious/spiritual support systems are helpful" (71.1%), "refer clients to others for religious or spiritual counseling or direction" (64.8%), "help clients consider ways religious/spiritual beliefs or practices are helpful" (64.8%), "help clients clarify their religious or spiritual values" (62.6%), and "help clients reflect on beliefs about what happens after death" (61.9%).

The interventions that had the least support as appropriate for social work practice were, "touch client for 'healing' purposes" (16.7%), "participate in client's religious/spiritual rituals as practice intervention" (23.5%), "help clients assess religious or spiritual meaning of dreams" (25.5%), and "share your own religious or spiritual beliefs or views" (28.4%).

Table 4

*Respondents' Views on Appropriateness of Spiritually Derived Interventions*

Interventions	Considered Appropriate
Gather information on clients' religious or spiritual backgrounds	79.1%, <i>n</i> = 326
Help clients reflect on beliefs about loss or other difficult life situations	75.5%, <i>n</i> = 311
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual support systems are helpful	71.1%, <i>n</i> = 293
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual beliefs or practices are helpful	64.8%, <i>n</i> = 267
Refer clients to others for religious or spiritual counseling or direction	64.8%, <i>n</i> = 267
Help clients clarify their religious or spiritual values	62.6%, <i>n</i> = 258

Help clients reflect on beliefs about what happens after death	61.9%, <i>n</i> = 255
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual support systems are harmful	58.7%, <i>n</i> = 242
Discuss role of religious or spiritual beliefs in relation to significant others	58.5%, <i>n</i> = 241
Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual beliefs or practices are harmful	57.5%, <i>n</i> = 237
Recommend regular religious or spiritual self-reflective diary/journal	54.1%, <i>n</i> = 223
Assist clients to critically reflect on religious or spiritual beliefs and practices	54.1%, <i>n</i> = 223
Recommend participation in a religious or spiritual program	53.4%, <i>n</i> = 220
Help clients consider spiritual meaning of current life situation	51.5%, <i>n</i> = 212
Pray privately for a client	50.2%, <i>n</i> = 207
Use religious or spiritual language or concept	45.9%, <i>n</i> = 189
Pray or meditate with a client	44.2%, <i>n</i> = 182
Use or recommend religious or spiritual books or writing	41.5%, <i>n</i> = 171
Help clients develop religious/spiritual rituals as practice intervention	37.9%, <i>n</i> = 156
Recommend religious or spiritual forgiveness, penance, or amends	32.5%, <i>n</i> = 134
Share your own religious or spiritual beliefs or views	28.4%, <i>n</i> = 117
Help clients assess religious or spiritual meaning of dreams	25.5%, <i>n</i> = 105
Participate in clients' religious/spiritual rituals as practice intervention	23.5%, <i>n</i> = 97
Touch client for "healing" purposes	16.7%, <i>n</i> = 69

---

Contingency coefficients were calculated to determine if there were any statistically significant relationships between the items on the SDIC and any of the demographic variables used in this study. There were no significant differences found between the SDIC Appropriate or Use scales with the following variables: auspice,

census region, gender, race/ethnicity, present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group, religious or spiritual affiliation,

#### *Question 4*

Do BSW students believe they are prepared to address issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients?

One third ( $n = 136$ , 33%) of the respondents either disagreed ( $n = 103$ , 25%) or strongly disagreed ( $n = 33$ , 8%) with the statement “my social work education prepared me to address issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients.” One fourth ( $n = 105$ , 25.5%) indicated a neutral stance indicating neither agreement nor disagreement with the statement. The largest group ( $n = 171$ , 41.5%) agreed ( $n = 147$ , 35.7%) or strongly agreed ( $n = 24$ , 5.8%) that their social work education prepared them to address issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients. These results are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5  
*Preparation to address religion and spirituality*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	33	8.0	8.0	8.0
Disagree	103	25.0	25.0	33.0
Neutral	105	25.5	25.5	58.5
Agree	147	35.7	35.7	94.2
Strongly Agree	24	5.8	5.8	100.0
Total	412	100.0	100.0	

#### *Question 5*

Are BSW students satisfied with the attention given to religion and spirituality in their social work education?

In response to the frequency of religious or spiritual content or issues being discussed or presented in students' social work education the results (See Table 6) show less than one-fifth ( $n = 71$ , 17.2%) report the topics as being discussed or presented "often". The largest group of respondents ( $n = 188$ , 45.6%) said religious and spiritual topics were presented or discussed "sometimes", while a third of the students ( $n = 139$ , 33.7%) used the term "rarely" to describe their perception of religious and spiritual content in their social work education and a small percentage ( $n = 13$ , 3.2%) responded using the term "never".

Table 6  
*Student Perceptions on Frequency of R/S discussion in SW education*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	13	3.2	3.2	3.2
Rarely	139	33.7	33.8	37.0
Sometimes	188	45.6	45.7	82.7
Often	71	17.2	17.3	100.0
Total	411	99.8	100.0	
Not reported	1	.2		
Total	412	100.0		

When students were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the attention paid to religious and spiritual issues in their education the results leaned toward students being more satisfied than not (See Table 7). One-fourth of the respondents indicated a "neutral" position to their level of satisfaction ( $n = 102$ , 24.8%). Another fourth selected one of the dissatisfied categories and about 50% indicated a level of satisfaction with attention given

to the topics.

Table 7

*Satisfaction with Religious and Spiritual Content in Social Work Education*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	21	5.1	5.1	5.1
Somewhat Dissatisfied	80	19.4	19.6	24.8
Neutral	102	24.8	25.0	49.8
Somewhat Satisfied	144	35.0	35.3	85.0
Very Satisfied	61	14.8	15.0	100.0
Total	408	99.0	100.0	
Not reported	4	1.0		
Total	412	100.0		

*Question 6*

Which rationale for inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work curriculum do BSW students tend to support: a) mutli-cultural or; b) dimension of human existence?

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with two rationales given for including content on religion and spirituality in the curriculum of schools of social work. The first rationale, “religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are part of multicultural diversity and as such social workers should have knowledge and skills in this area in order to work effectively with diverse client groups,” received stronger support from students as indicated by responses in Table 8. Three hundred ninety-four students either strongly agreed ( $n = 234$ , 56.8%) or agreed ( $n = 160$ , 38.8%) with this rationale for inclusion of content on religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum. Only six (2.7%) students responded in the “disagree” categories while 12



(2.9%) gave a “neutral” response.

Table 8  
*Religious and Spiritual Beliefs and Practices are Part of Multicultural Diversity*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	1.2	1.2	1.2
Disagree	1	.2	.2	1.5
Neutral	12	2.9	2.9	4.4
Agree	160	38.8	38.8	43.2
Strongly Agree	234	56.8	56.8	100.0
Total	412	100.0	100.0	

The second rationale, “there is another dimension of human existence beyond the bio-psycho-social framework currently used to understand human behavior;” therefore, “social work education should expand this framework to include the spiritual dimension,” also received strong support but not to the same extent as the first rationale (See Table 9). Almost three quarters ( $n = 305$ , 74.4%) of the responses indicated agreement with this rationale. A third strongly agreed ( $n = 138$ , 33.7%) while two-fifths ( $n = 167$ , 40.7%) indicated they agreed with this rationale for inclusion of religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum. Only eight percent ( $n = 33$ ) indicated disagreement with this rationale while 72 (17.6%) chose a neutral stance.

Table 9  
*Religious and Spiritual are a Dimension of Human Existence*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	1.5	1.5	1.5
Disagree	27	6.6	6.6	8.0
Neutral	72	17.5	17.6	25.6
Agree	167	40.5	40.7	66.3
Strongly Agree	138	33.5	33.7	100.0
Total	410	99.5	100.0	
Not Reported	2	.5		
Total	412	100.0		

*Question 7*

Do undergraduate social work programs offer specific courses on religion and/or spirituality in social work practice?

Students were asked whether or not their social work program offered a course on religion and/or spirituality in social work. A total of 404 students answered the question with the majority indicating there was no such course offered ( $n = 338$ , 83.7%). Sixty-six students (16.3%) responded that a course on religion and/or spirituality was offered in their social work program. A more detailed review of the data revealed conflicting answers within some social work programs. Students responding to this question represented 55 schools with 23 of the schools having both “yes” and “no” answers. An online review of course offerings at the social work programs with mixed responses was conducted to determine the accuracy of student’s responses to this question. The results of this review allowed schools to be more accurately categorized as to whether or not

they offered a course on religion and/or spirituality in social work. Forty-seven (85.45%) of the schools did not offer a course on religion and/or spirituality in social work. Eight (14.55%) of the schools offered a course. The course was an elective in six schools and a requirement in two schools. Six church-related schools offered a course on religion and spirituality in social work practice. Two schools required a course and four schools offered a course as an elective. Two public/state schools offered a course as an elective.

#### *Question 8*

How do students' own personal religious or spiritual beliefs and practices correlate with their views about inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice?

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing students' RRSP mean scores with responses on the Ideological Position Scale. A significant difference was found among ideological positions ( $F(4, 403) = 11.94, p = .000$ ). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between ideological positions. This analysis revealed that students who chose the ideological position "Personal God/Transcendent Power whose purpose will be worked out in history" had a higher mean score ( $m = 70.81, sd = 7.62$ ) than students who chose the ideological positions "Transcendent Aspect/God not immanently involved" ( $m = 65.30, sd = 6.59$ ), "Transcendent/Divine Dimension Unique to Humans" ( $m = 67.67, sd = 6.54$ ), and "Illusionary/ Relevant & Irrelevant" ( $m = 62.95, sd = 7.40$ ). Students who chose the ideological position of a "Personal God/Transcendent Power whose purpose will be worked out in history" were not significantly different from students who chose the position of "Transcendent/Divine in all of Nature."

Additionally, students who chose the ideological position, "Illusionary/Relevant & Irrelevant" had lower mean scores ( $m = 62.95, sd = 7.40$ ) than students who chose the

ideological positions “Transcendent/Divine Dimension Unique to Humans” ( $m = 67.67$ ,  $sd = 6.54$ ), and “Transcendent/Divine in all of Nature” ( $m = 68.39$ ,  $sd = 8.13$ ). Students who chose the ideological position “Transcendent Aspect/God not immanently involved” ( $m = 65.30$ ,  $sd = 6.59$ ) were not significantly different than the students who chose the ideological position “Illusionary/Relevant & Irrelevant.”

An independent-samples t-test comparing the mean scores on the RRSP with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses to the question, “do you consider yourself religious” found a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(409) = 5.64$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = 0.56$ ). The mean of respondents who considered themselves religious was significantly higher ( $m = 70.69$ ,  $sd = 7.36$ ) than the mean of respondents who did not consider themselves religious ( $m = 66.49$ ,  $sd = 7.71$ ).

An independent-samples t-test comparing the mean scores on the RRSP with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses to the question, “do you consider yourself spiritual” found a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(407) = 5.61$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = 0.87$ ). The mean of respondents who considered themselves spiritual was significantly higher ( $m = 69.60$ ,  $sd = 7.63$ ) than the mean of respondents who did not considered themselves spiritual ( $m = 63.25$ ,  $sd = 6.92$ ).

An independent-samples t-test comparing the mean scores on the RRSP with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses to the question, “were religious or spiritual beliefs a factor in your choice of social work as a major,” found a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(409) = 7.80$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = 0.78$ ). The mean of respondents who said religious or spiritual beliefs were a factor in their choice of social work as a major was significantly higher ( $m = 72.06$ ,  $sd = 7.00$ ) than the mean of respondents who

said religious or spiritual beliefs were not a factor in their choice of social work as a major ( $m = 66.37, sd = 7.53$ ).

One-way ANOVAs were calculated comparing the RRSP mean scores of students with the frequency of participation in religious services during elementary school years, current participation in religious services, current personal religious or spiritual practices (e.g. meditation, reading scripture/spiritual texts, prayer), and present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group. For the purposes of analysis, categories were collapsed from nine categories to five categories. The categories of “daily” and “2-3 times a week” were combined to form a category labeled “more than once a week.” The “once a week” category remained unchanged. The categories of “2-3 times a month” and “once a month” were combined to form a category labeled “at least once a month.” The categories of “5-6 times a year”, “2-4 times a year”, and “once a year” were combined to form a category labeled “at least once a year.” The “not at all” category remained unchanged.

No significant differences were found ( $F(4, 406) = 0.79, p > .05$ ) in the students’ mean RRSP scores and the level of participation in religious services during elementary school years.

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing students’ RRSP mean scores with current levels of participation in religious services. A significant difference was found among current levels of participation ( $F(4, 403) = 12.61, p = .000$ ). Tukey’s HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between current levels of participation in religious services. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean RRSP score for students who participated in religious services more than once a week ( $m$

= 72.85,  $sd = 6.64$ ) was significantly different than students who participated at least once a month ( $m = 67.42$ ,  $sd = 7.96$ ), at least once a year ( $m = 66.42$ ,  $sd = 7.45$ ), and not at all ( $m = 66.99$ ,  $sd = 7.64$ ). However, students who participated in religious services once a week did not significantly differ from students who participated more than once a week in religious services. Further analysis revealed that RRSP scores for students who participated once a week in religious services ( $m = 71.62$ ,  $sd = 7.35$ ) were significantly different from students who participated in religious services at least once a month, at least once a year, or not at all. There were no significant differences in RRSP mean scores between students who participated at least once a month, at least once a year, or not at all in religious services.

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing students' RRSP mean scores with current levels of personal religious or spiritual practices. A significant difference was found among current levels of personal religious or spiritual practices ( $F(4, 406) = 19.21$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Tukey HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between current levels of personal religious or spiritual practices. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean RRSP score for students who currently participated in personal religious or spiritual practices more than once a week ( $m = 71.59$ ,  $sd = 7.38$ ) differed significantly from students who participated in personal religious or spiritual practices at least once a month ( $m = 66.26$ ,  $sd = 6.51$ ), at least once a year ( $m = 64.88$ ,  $sd = 7.58$ ), and not at all ( $m = 64.16$ ,  $sd = 7.82$ ). There was no significant difference between those students who participated more than once a week and students who participated in religious or spiritual practices once a week ( $m = 68.13$ ,  $sd = 5.90$ ).

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing students' RRSP mean scores with

their present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group. A significant difference was found among relationships to an organized religion or spiritual group ( $F(4, 403) = 18.11, p = .000$ ). Tukey HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean RRSP score for students who indicate active/high involvement ( $m = 74.00, sd = 6.86$ ) was significantly different than students who indicated regular/some involvement ( $m = 70.47, sd = 7.18$ ), identification very limited or no involvement ( $m = 67.65, sd = 7.39$ ), no identification, participation, or involvement ( $m = 65.97, sd = 7.46$ ), and disdain and negative reaction ( $m = 57.49, sd = 5.67$ ).

Further analyses revealed several more significant differences between RRSP mean scores and students' relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group. Students who indicated regular/some involvement ( $m = 70.47, sd = 7.18$ ) with organized religion or spiritual groups were significantly different from students in all other categories. Students who indicated their relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group as very limited or no involvement ( $m = 67.65, sd = 7.39$ ) had mean RRSP scores that were significantly different from all groups except students who indicated no identification, participation or involvement with religious or spiritual groups ( $m = 65.97, sd = 7.46$ ). Students who indicated their relationship as one of disdain and negative reaction to religion or spiritual traditions had mean RRSP scores that were significantly lower than all other groups.

#### *Question 9*

Do students from different institutional auspices (i.e. public or church-related) think about religious and spiritual issues differently in relationship to social work

education or practice?

#### *RRSP*

An independent-samples t-test comparing the mean scores on the RRSP of the church-related and the public/state schools found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(410) = 2.46, p < .05, d = 0.24$ ). The mean of the respondents from church-related institutions was significantly higher ( $m = 69.74, sd = 7.73$ ) than the mean of the respondents from public/state institutions ( $m = 67.86, sd = 7.80$ ).

#### *SDIC scales: Is there a difference in use or appropriate scales by auspice?*

Responses to the SDIC scales were analyzed using chi-square to determine if there were any differences by auspice. There was only one item (Item 3) on the SDIC Use scale that indicated significant difference by auspice. Students from church-related school were more likely to have prayed privately for clients than those from public/state schools,  $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 16.24, p = .000$ .

There were several items on the SDIC Appropriate scale that indicate significant difference between respondents by auspice. Students from church-related schools were more likely to view gathering information on clients' religious or spiritual background (item 1) as appropriate,  $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 7.88, p = .005$  than students from public/state schools. Students from church-related schools were more likely to view praying privately for clients (item 3) as appropriate,  $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 10.58, p = .001$  than students from public/state schools. Students from church-related schools were more likely to view the use of religious or spiritual language or concepts with clients (item 5) as appropriate,  $\chi^2(1, N = (412) = 4.24, p = .039$ ) than students from public state schools. Students from church-related schools were more likely to view assisting clients to critically reflect on



religious or spiritual beliefs or practices (item 12) as appropriate,  $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 5.25, p = .022$ ) than students from public/state schools. Students from church-related schools were more likely to view helping clients reflect on beliefs about loss or other difficult life situations (item 16) as appropriate,  $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 5.26, p = .022$ ) than students from public/state schools. Students from church-related schools were more likely to view sharing their own religious or spiritual beliefs or views (item 24) as appropriate,  $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 3.93, p = .048$ ).

### *Rationales*

Responses to the two rationales for including content on religion and spirituality within the curriculum revealed no significant difference by auspice. The majority of respondents in both church-related and public/state institutions supported both rationales.

### *Preparation*

When asked to rate their level of agreement on the statement “my social work education prepared me to address issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients,” respondents from church-related schools differed significantly,  $\chi^2(4, N = 412) = 29.02, p = .000$ , from respondents from public/state institutions in terms of agreeing with the statement. Respondents from church-related institutions tended to agree more with the statement than respondents from public/state institutions.

### *Content in Curriculum*

Participants were asked how often religious or spiritual content or issues were presented or discussed in their training as social workers. The responses were significantly different by auspice,  $\chi^2(3, N = 411) = 32.07, p = .000$ ). Respondents from church-related institutions indicated religious and spiritual content or issues were

presented or discussed at higher rates than respondents from public/state institutions (Table 10).

Table 10  
*Frequency of Religious and Spiritual Content in Curriculum*

	Auspice					
	Church-Related		Public/State		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Never	7	3.4%	6	2.9%	13	3.2%
Rarely	47	23.0%	92	44.4%	139	33.8%
Sometimes	97	47.5%	91	44.0%	188	45.7%
Often	53	26.0%	18	8.7%	71	17.3%
Total	204	100.0%	207	100.0%	411	100.0%

#### *Satisfaction*

Participants were asked how satisfied they were with their social work education in terms of attention paid to religious and spiritual issues. There was a significant difference between levels of satisfaction by auspice,  $\chi^2(4, N = 408) = 27.10, p = .000$ . Respondents from church-related schools indicated greater levels of satisfaction with the amount of attention paid to religious and spiritual issues in their social work education than did respondents from public/state institutions (See Table 11).

Table 11  
*Levels of Satisfaction by Auspice*

	Auspice					
	Church-Related		Public/State		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very Dissatisfied	8	3.9%	13	6.3%	21	5.1%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	26	12.8%	54	26.3%	80	19.6%
Neutral	44	21.7%	58	28.3%	102	25.0%

Somewhat Satisfied	81	39.9%	63	30.7%	144	35.3%
Very Satisfied	44	21.7%	17	8.3%	61	15.0%
Total	203	100.0%	205	100.0%	408	100.0%

*Courses where religion/spirituality presented & courses where religion/spirituality should be presented*

Respondents were asked to identify specific social work courses where religious or spiritual issues were presented and discussed. A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing reported religious and spiritual content in courses by auspice. There was no significant differences between respondents from church-related and public/state schools in reported religious and spiritual content for the following courses: social welfare policy ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = .628, p > .05$ ); diversity ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 2.71, p > .05$ ); and research ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 1.81, p > .05$ ). The majority of students within both auspices reported an absence of religious and spiritual content in social welfare policy ( $n = 355, 86\%$ ) and research ( $n = 368, 89\%$ ). While there was no significant difference on diversity courses, more than half of the students indicated the presence of religious and spiritual content in diversity courses ( $n = 246, 60\%$ ).

Courses where there were significant differences in reported religious and spiritual content by auspice included social work practice ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 14.73, p = .000$ ); human behavior and social environment ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 8.74, p = .003$ ); field seminar ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 16.78, p = .000$ ); and field practicum ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 7.15, p = .007$ ). Almost 60% ( $n = 117, 57.4\%$ ) of the respondents from church-related schools reported religious and spiritual content in social work practice courses compared to about 40% ( $n = 80, 38.5\%$ ) of respondents from public/state schools. The reported religious and

spiritual content in human behavior and social environment courses revealed results similar to social work practice courses (church-related,  $n = 117$ , 57.4%; public/state,  $n = 89$ , 42.8%). The presence of religious and spiritual content in field seminar courses was reported by one third ( $n = 69$ , 33.8%) of students in church-related schools and only 16.3% ( $n = 34$ ) of students in public/state schools. About one third ( $n = 67$ , 32.8%) of the students in church-related schools and about one fifth ( $n = 44$ , 21.2%) of students in public/state schools reported the presence of religious and spiritual content in field practicum.

Respondents were asked to indicate which courses should present material on religious and spiritual issues. A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing student responses by auspice on which courses should include religious and spiritual issues. There were no significant differences between respondents from church-related and public/state schools about where religious and spiritual issues should be presented for the following courses: social work practice ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 1.52, p > .05$ ); social welfare policy ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 3.13, p > .05$ ); diversity ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 2.67, p > .05$ ); research ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = .21, p > .05$ ); and field practicum ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 1.37, p > .05$ ). The majority of students within both auspices thought material on religious and spiritual issues should be presented in social work practice courses (church-related,  $n = 144$ , 70.6%; public/state,  $n = 135$ , 64.9%) and diversity courses (church-related,  $n = 161$ , 78.9%; public/state,  $n = 177$ , 85.1%). However, the majority of students within both auspices did not think material on religious and spiritual issues should be presented in social welfare policy courses (church-related,  $n = 139$ , 68.1%; public/state,  $n = 158$ , 76.0%); research courses (church-related,  $n = 154$ , 75.5%; public/state,  $n = 161$ , 77.4%);

or in field practicum (church-related,  $n = 121$ , 59.3%; public/state,  $n = 135$ , 64.9%).

Courses where students differed significantly by auspice on where religious and spiritual issues should be presented included human behavior and social environment ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 5.54, p = .019$ ) and field seminar ( $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 7.09, p = .008$ ). The majority of students from both church-related schools and public/state schools thought religious and spiritual issues should be presented in human behavior and social environment, but the students from church-related schools thought so at a higher rate (church-related,  $n = 134$ , 65.7%; public/state,  $n = 113$ , 54.3%). Students from church-related schools were almost evenly split on whether religious and spiritual issues should be presented in field seminar (Yes,  $n = 99$ , 48.5%; No,  $n = 105$ , 51.5%). Students from public/state schools were significantly less likely to think religious and spiritual issues should be presented in field seminar (Yes,  $n = 74$ , 35.6%; No,  $n = 134$ , 64.4%).

*If religion or spirituality course offered (elective/required)*

A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the responses of students by auspice on whether or not a course on religion and spirituality in social work practice, if offered, should be an elective or required course. No significant relationship was found ( $\chi^2(1, N = 402) = .219, p > .05$ ) between auspice and preference for elective or required course. More students supported a course as an elective ( $n = 224$ , 55.7%) than as a required course ( $n = 178$ , 44.3%).

*Interest in taking course on religion and spirituality in social work if offered*

A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the responses of students by auspice on their interest in taking a course on religion and spirituality in social work practice if offered at their school. No significant relationship was found ( $\chi^2(2,$

$N = 410$ ) = 4.588,  $p > .05$ ) between auspice and interest in taking a course. Students were given four response options (definitely yes, probably, probably not, definitely no). There were not enough responses in the last category so it was collapsed with the “probably not” category for the purpose of analysis.

The majority of students responded “definitely yes” or “probably” (Table 12) when asked if they would take a course on religion and spirituality in social work practice if offered at their school.

Table 12  
*Interest in Course on Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*

	Frequency	Percent
Definitely Yes	189	46.1
Probably	171	41.7
Probably Not	44	10.7
Definitely No	6	1.5
Total	410	100.0

#### *Ideological position scale*

Students were asked to choose one of six statements that came closest to their ideas on a religious ideological position scale. Over 90% of the respondents chose a position from 1 of 4 transcendent choices while less than ten percent choose a position from the 2 illusionary categories (See Table 13). The last category “Illusionary/Irrelevant” only had two responses in each cell and was combined with the “Illusionary/Relevant” category into a single category (Illusionary/Relevant & Irrelevant) for the purpose of analysis. A chi-square test of independence was calculated to examine the relation between student responses on the Ideological Position Scale and auspice. The relation between the variables was significant,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 408) = 13.84, p = .008$ .

Students from church-related schools chose the first ideological position at a higher rate than students from public/state schools. A higher percentage of public/state students chose an ideological position from an illusionary category.

Table 13  
*Ideological Position Scale by Auspice*

Ideological Type	Auspice	
	Church-Related	Public/State
Personal God/Transcendent Purpose Worked Out	29.9%, n = 122	22.8%, n = 93
Transcendent Aspect, God not immanently involved	3.4%, n = 14	3.9%, n = 16
Transcendent/Divine Dimension Unique to Human	7.1%, n = 29	7.8%, n = 32
Transcendent/Divine in all of Nature	7.1%, n = 29	8.3%, n = 34
Illusionary/Relevant & Irrelevant	2.5%, n = 10	7.1%, n = 29

*Consider self religious/spiritual and religious or spiritual beliefs a factor in choice of social work as major*

Students were asked a series of questions about religious and spiritual identification and whether or not religious or spiritual beliefs were a factor in their choice of social work as a major. Over half of the respondents considered themselves religious ( $n = 223$ , 54.3%). The vast majority considered themselves spiritual ( $n = 358$ , 87.5%). Just over two-fifths ( $n = 175$ , 42.6%) identified religious or spiritual beliefs as a factor in their choice to major in social work.

A chi-square test of independence was calculated to examine the relation between student responses to questions about identifying as either religious or spiritual and religious and spiritual beliefs being a factor in choice of major and auspice. The relation between “Do you consider yourself religious?” and auspice was significant,  $\chi^2(1, N =$

411) = 7.53,  $p = .006$ . Students from church-related schools were more likely to self-identify as religious than students from public/state schools. There was no significant difference between auspices in relation to the question “Do you consider yourself spiritual?” A high percentage of students in both auspice categories considered themselves spiritual (church-related,  $n = 182$ , 89.2%; public/state,  $n = 176$ , 85.9%). When it came to the relation between whether or not religious or spiritual beliefs were a factor in their choice of social work as a major and auspice there was a significant difference,  $\chi^2(1, N = 411) = 18.51, p = .000$ . Students from church-related schools were more likely to indicate religious or spiritual beliefs being a factor in their choice of social work as a major than students from public/state schools.

*Current participation and elementary years participation in religious services*

Students were asked to indicate how frequently they participate in religious services currently and how frequently they participated in religious services in elementary school years. A chi-square test of independence was calculated to examine the relation between frequency of current participation in religious services and auspice. The relation between these variables was significant,  $\chi^2(8, N = 408) = 30.73, p = .000$ . Students from church-related schools were more likely to report greater current participation in religious service than were students from public/state schools.

A chi-square test of independence was calculated to examine the relation between students' frequency of participation in religious services during elementary school years and auspice. No significant relationship was found,  $\chi^2(8, N = 411) = 10.58, p > .05$ .



*Frequency of current participation in personal religious or spiritual practices*

Students were asked to indicate current participation in personal religious or spiritual practice (e.g. meditation, reading scripture/spiritual texts, prayer, etc.). A chi-square test of independence was calculated to examine the relation between students' current participation in personal religious or spiritual practices and auspice. No significant relationship was found,  $\chi^2(8, N = 411) = 7.75, p > .05$ .

*Present relationship to organized religion or spiritual group*

Students indicated their present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group on a five-point scale from "active participation/high level of involvement" to "disdain and negative reaction to religion or spiritual tradition." A chi-square test of independence was calculated to examine the relation between students' present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group. The relation between the variables was significant,  $\chi^2(8, N = 408) = 15.39, p = .004$ . Students from church-related schools reported higher levels of involvement in organized religion or spiritual groups than students from public/state schools.

Power analyses were conducted on all statistically significant results using the observed sample sizes to determine the effect of the response rate. Results demonstrated sufficient power (.80 or above) for 21 out of the 30 statistically significant findings. The results that did not meet the power criteria of .80 or above were all within auspice comparisons. They included auspice and the RRSP (power = .68); SDIC appropriate, item 5 (power = .53), item 12 (power = .61), item 16 (power = .63), item 24 (power = .51); content present in field practicum (power = .76); content should be in HBSE (power = .65), field seminar (power = .76); and consider self religious (power = .78).

## **Discussion**

### *Overview of significant findings*

Building on research focusing primarily on master's level social work students, MSW practitioners, and faculty, this study explored the attitudes and experiences of undergraduate senior social work students in the United States with regards to religion and spirituality during their education and in practice. Further attention was given to the factor of school auspice to determine any differences between students who attended church-related schools and those who attended public/state schools.

Consistent with previous studies using the RRSP students in this sample tended to have a positive perspective toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice (Graff, 2007; Heyman, Buchanon, Musgrave & Menz, 2006; Sheridan, 2004; Sheridan & Amato von Hemert, 1999; and Sheridan, Wilmer, & Atcheson, 1994). There were no significant differences in students' attitudes by age, gender or race. Students who identified with faith traditions tended to be more positive toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice than were students who identified with non-faith groups (atheist or agnostic) or no religious affiliations.

Students at the BSW level of education generally have limited practice experience and therefore may not have had opportunities to use interventions from the Spiritually Derived Interventions Checklist (SDIC). This is supported by the responses students gave when asked to identify interventions they had used in practice. An example is the gathering of information on clients' religious or spiritual backgrounds. This particular activity is considered important to holistic practice (Canda & Furman 2010; and Kvarfordt & Sheridan, 2007), but only two-fifths (42.5 %) of the students reported doing

this in practice while almost 80% of students surveyed saw this as an appropriate practice intervention. While 50% or more of the students identified 15 of the 24 interventions as appropriate to use in social work practice the actual use of all the interventions were reported in much lower numbers. One possible explanation for this is that students were not given the opportunity to interact with clients in a way that would allow them to use the interventions directly with clients.

### *Preparation and satisfaction*

Over 50% of students did not agree they were prepared by their education to address the issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients. When it came to students' perceptions regarding their preparation they were either ambivalent about their preparation or disagreed that they were prepared to address these issues in practice. One-fourth (25.5%) of the students took a neutral position while one-third (33.0%) did not agree that their education prepared them to address religion and spirituality in practice. Just over two-fifths (41.5%) of students agreed their social work education prepared them to address the issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients.

Just over half the students expressed some level of satisfaction with the attention given to religious and spiritual issues in their education. About a third were "somewhat satisfied" and only 15% were "very satisfied." Half the students surveyed took a neutral to dissatisfied position. Twenty-five percent indicated dissatisfaction with the level of attention given to religion and spirituality while another 25% percent gave a neutral response to the question. This would indicate further investigation is needed about the nature of students' dissatisfaction with the amount of attention given to religious and

spiritual issues in their education.

These findings are consistent with responses about the frequency of religious and spiritual content presented and discussed in the curriculum. Thirty-seven percent of students said content was rarely or never presented or discussed. Almost 46% said content was only presented or discussed sometimes. Less than 20% (17.3%) indicated content was presented or discussed often. For the most part content about religion and spirituality did not appear to be presented and discussed in social work curriculum with much frequency and almost 60% of students did not believe they were prepared to address these issues in direct practice with clients.

#### *Rationale*

Students responded to the rationales for the inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work curriculum with positive support. Students almost unanimously (95.6%) agreed that religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are part of multicultural diversity and as such, social workers should have knowledge and skills in this area in order to work effectively with diverse client groups. A large portion (74%) of the respondents also supported a second rationale about content on religion and spirituality in social work curriculum; i.e. spirituality is another dimension of human existence beyond the bio-psycho-social framework predominantly used to understand human behavior and should be included in social work curriculum.

#### *Course offered*

Over 85% of schools ( $n = 47$ ) represented in this study did not offer a discrete course on religion and/or spirituality in social work practice at the time of this survey and overall content on religion and spirituality was not consistently presented in the social

work curriculum. However, 87.8% of students said they would be interested in taking a course on religion and spirituality in social work practice.

Although the topics of religion and spirituality did not appear to be discussed with much frequency in social work education at the baccalaureate level, students reported religious and spiritual content being included primarily in diversity and human behavior courses. Even greater numbers of students suggested including increased content on religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum. Students suggested that content should be included in all courses, but the following courses had more than 50% of students supporting inclusion of religion and spirituality: diversity, social work practice and human behavior courses. Students' responses indicated they would like more content on religious and spiritual issues in their social work curriculum for the purpose of better preparation for their profession.

These data provide support for undergraduate social work students wanting more content on religion and spirituality in their preparation for social work practice. Religion and especially spirituality are important in the lives of BSW students as evidenced by the data. As part of preparing competent social workers, the profession needs to address the religious and spiritual aspects of human existence in the context of a multicultural world.

*Personal beliefs and practices related to inclusion of religious and spiritual content*

Most students (90.4%) believed a transcendent or divine dimension exists. More than 50% believed in a personal god. Almost 82% ( $n = 336$ ) identified with a religious or spiritual belief system. Three-fourths ( $n = 304$ ) of the students identified with a Christian faith tradition. While the number of students who did not identify with a religious or spiritual tradition was about one fifth ( $n = 75$ , 18.2%) of the respondents, they are an

important minority to keep in mind when addressing the topics of religion and spirituality in social work education. Most students considered themselves to be spiritual (87.5%) and more than half (54.3%) considered themselves religious. Almost 60% ( $n = 236$ , 57.4%) said religious or spiritual beliefs were not a factor in their choice of social work as a major, but still a significant number ( $n = 175$ , 42.6%) of students said their religious or spiritual beliefs were a factor in choosing social work as a major.

Students' level of participation in religious services during their elementary school years was more frequent than during their college years. One possible explanation for this could be that, in general, as children, respondents are more likely to be taken to religious services by their parents; whereas, during their college years they are often free to choose their own level of participation in religious services. Even though the frequency of participation in religious services decreased in college, the level of participation in religious or spiritual practices remained relatively high. These findings about religious or spiritual practices are consistent with how students viewed themselves. They saw themselves as primarily spiritual with a belief in a personal god or at least a belief in a transcendent or divine dimension present in some form in the world. The identification with spirituality was further supported by students' indication that they were not highly involved in organized religion or spiritual groups. The lack of involvement with organized religion or spiritual groups is also consistent with the definitions of religion being more of a corporate or community experience and spirituality being more of an individual self-focused experience.

Students' personal religious and spiritual beliefs were reflected in their views about the inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice.

Students who held ideological positions of a personal God, divine in nature, and divine dimension unique to humans all had more positive views toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice than those student who did not see a transcendent or divine aspect immanently involved or who held an ideological position that notions of god or transcendent was illusionary.

Students who identified as religious, spiritual or saw their religious and spiritual beliefs as a factor in choosing social work as a major all had higher scores on the RRSP than those who did not. Students who participated more frequently in religious services, personal religious and spiritual practices and had more active involvement in an organized religion or spiritual group scored higher on the RRSP.

#### *Auspice Comparisons*

Overall, as indicated by RRSP scores, students in the undergraduate social work programs surveyed, had positive views about the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work education and practice. However there were some significant differences by institutional auspice (church-related and public/state) about religious and spiritual issues in social work education and practice. While students from both types of institutions had positive attitudes supporting the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work, students from church-related schools showed stronger support for the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work than students in public/state schools as indicated by higher RRSP scores. Students at church-related schools were more likely to believe in a personal god than students at public/state schools, but students at both types of institutions overwhelmingly identified with an ideological position that believes in a divine or transcendent existence. Public/state schools had a higher number

of students who identified with an ideological position that believes notions of God are illusionary.

Students from church-related schools were more likely to consider themselves religious than students from public/state schools; however, both groups considered themselves to be spiritual. For students attending church-related schools, religious and spiritual beliefs were much more likely to be a factor in students choosing social work as a major.

In reference to the use of spiritually-derived interventions, students from church-related schools were more likely to have prayed privately for clients than students from public/state schools. One might speculate that this may be related to a culture that supports prayer both corporately and individually at church-related schools.

Students from church-related schools were more likely than students from public or state schools to see the following items on the SDIC scale as appropriate: gathering information on clients' religious or spiritual background (item 1), praying privately for clients (item 3), the use of religious or spiritual language or concepts with clients (item 5), assisting clients to critically reflect on religious and spiritual beliefs or practices (item 12), helping clients reflect on beliefs about loss or other difficult life situations (item 16), and sharing their own religious or spiritual beliefs or views (item 24). One could argue that many if not all of the items on the SDIC are appropriate in social work practice with clients. Arguments for the use of any of the interventions would need to be viewed in the context of the application of professional ethical standards. It makes some sense that students from church-related schools would see these items as appropriate in practice at higher rates than students from public/state schools. The culture of many church-related



schools encourages students to develop the religious and spiritual aspects of their lives. One might assume that since students from church-related schools have more exposure to religious and spiritual content in both their social work curriculum and their general education then they might take for granted the presence of such in the lives of clients. Assumptions based on students' personal experience would need to be challenged in light of both evidence-based practice and the application of professional boundaries in practice with clients.

Religious and spiritual content was presented and discussed more often in the social work curriculum of church-related schools than in public/state schools. Students from church-related schools, when compared with those from public/state schools, were more likely to agree they were prepared to address issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients. Students at church-related schools were more satisfied than students at public/state schools with the attention given to religious and spiritual issues. This could indicate that students at public/state institutions want more material on religious and spiritual content in the curriculum or at least they were dissatisfied with the level of content in the curriculum.

Over half of the students (55.7%, n=224) thought a course on religion and spirituality in social work practice should be offered as an elective: however, a large percentage (44.7%, n=178) said if a course was added it should be required. Students were interested in taking a course on religion and spirituality in social work education regardless of auspice.

One explanation for students at church-related schools having significantly different perceptions and experiences with religion and spirituality in social work

education and practice is they are exposed to religion and spirituality in other courses and in the ongoing corporate and individual practices of the schools they attend. Many church-related institutions have missions that incorporate religious values into the educational experience. It is also possible that students are required to take a specified number of credit hours that focus on religion and spirituality.

The opposite is most likely true for public/state schools. Historically the relationship between the church (organized religion) and government has been interpreted to mean a complete separation. While organized religion or spiritual groups along with religious and spiritual practices are not necessarily discouraged at public/state institutions they most likely do not receive the attention or emphasis as on church-related campuses. Courses in religion, the Bible, or theology that are likely standard requirements on church-related campuses are not part of the required curriculum of public/state schools.

The religious and spiritual content reported in specific courses varied from where students believed the content should be presented. As reported in the results chapter, students from church-related schools consistently reported religious and spiritual content in all curricular areas at higher rates than students in public/state schools. A similar pattern can be seen in responses about where religious and spiritual content should be included in the social work curriculum, except for diversity courses where students in public/state schools were a higher percentage (Table 14). The data clearly allows one to identify statistically significant differences in content areas by auspice. The more difficult task is interpreting what students mean by saying certain curricular areas should have more or less religious and spiritual content presented.

Table 14

*Views about Religious or Spiritual Content in the Social Work Curriculum by Auspice*

Curricular Area	Courses Included Content		Courses Should Include Content	
	Church- related	Public/State	Church- related	Public/State
Practice Courses	57.4%*	38.5%	70.6%	64.9%
HBSE Courses	57.4%*	42.8%	65.7%*	54.3%
Policy Courses	15.2%	12.5%	31.9%	24.0%
Diversity Courses	63.7%	55.8%	78.9%	85.1%
Research Courses	12.7%	8.7%	24.5%	22.6%
Field Seminar	33.8%*	16.4%	48.5%*	35.6%
Field Practicum	32.8%*	21.2%	40.7%	35.1%

\*  $p < .05$ 

The curricular areas where one might expect to find support for including religious and spiritual content tend to be endorsed by students (i.e. practice, HBSE, and diversity courses). These courses seem like logical places given the emphases of the EPAS (CSWE, 2008). The two curricular areas where the inclusion of religious and spiritual content received the least support from students were policy and research. At first glance the lack of support for content in these curricular area may appear to be logical. Anecdotally these curricular areas tend to get negative reactions from many undergraduate students when they realize they are required to enroll in the courses. Research focuses heavily on applying scientific method, which historically has been interpreted to be at odds with religion. It may be that students find it hard to make the connection between religion and spirituality and the role of research in practice. With a

stronger emphasis on evidenced-based practice by the social work profession one could support an argument to apply research methods to exploring the role of religion and spirituality in many arenas important to social work education and practice (e.g., the affect of religious and spiritual beliefs of clients on service utilization).

The lower percentages of endorsement for including religious and spiritual content in the policy curricular area may be a general lack of understanding about the role religion has played in the history of social welfare and its continued role in influencing policy today. This may be indicative of a lack of general attention given to the role of religion in the historical development of the profession by undergraduate faculty.

#### *Consideration of Findings in Light of Existing Research Studies*

One previous study (Graff, 2002) used Sheridan's (2000) Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice scale and focused on BSW students' beliefs about the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work. Students in Graff's study had lower yet similar RRSP scores to the current study. The sample in Graff's study was limited to Texas schools and included students at all levels of education (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors). Graff did not find any significant relationship between RRSP scores and age, gender, religious or spiritual affiliation or type of school. Graff's study did find significant differences "between self-identified Latino/Hispanics (Mean RRSP Score = 64.1528) and self-identified Whites/Europeans (Mean = 67.5772)" (Graff, 2002, p. 110); whereas, the current study did not find any significant difference between RRSP scores and race or ethnicity. Graff's study had a higher percentage of Latino/Hispanics and a lower percentage of White/European students than the current study, which may be due to the geographic location (Texas) of Graff's sample. Another difference between the

two studies is that the current study did find a significant difference in RRSP scores by auspice whereas Graff's study did not.

Graff's (2002) study asked questions about levels of attendance at religious or spiritual meetings as a child and current attendance at religious or spiritual meetings in addition to the current frequency of prayer or meditation. She found significant differences on RRSP scores between students who currently pray or meditate more frequently than those who pray or meditate less frequently and also between students who currently attend religious or spiritual meetings more frequently and those with less frequent attendance. Although the levels of measured frequency are not the same in the current study, the findings are similar to Graff's. Students who indicated more frequent current participation in religious services had significantly higher RRSP scores than students who did not participate as frequently and students who participated more in personal religious or spiritual practices also had significantly higher RRSP scores.

Sheridan and Amato von Hemert (1999) conducted an earlier study with social work students that was a model for the current study. The major differences in the samples were the level of education and the geographic focus. Sheridan and Amato von Hemert focused on MSW students at two large research institutions, one public and the other a private nonsectarian university. One was "located in the Midwest and the other in a mid-Atlantic state" (p. 128).

There were many similarities in the findings of each study. The similarities included the following: attitudes toward the inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work practice; identification with a faith affiliation; ideological position; curriculum rationales; interest in taking a course on religion and spirituality in social work;

participation and involvement in organized religion or spiritual group; and current participation in personal religious or spiritual practices.

Respondents' attitudes toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice are positive in both studies. Sheridan and Amato von Hemert (1999) collapsed religious affiliation or spiritual orientation into "'non-faith' (atheist or agnostic) and 'faith' (all other responses)" (p. 130). When the religious affiliation and spiritual orientation options were collapsed in the current study the percentages of non-faith and faith categories were very similar to Sheridan and Amato von Hemert study (Table 15). Over ninety percent of the students in both studies identified a belief in the divine or transcendent with the largest category being a "belief in a personal God."

Table 15  
*Comparison of MSW and BSW Students on Religious and Spiritual Variables*

Variable	Sheridan & Amato von Hemert ( <i>N</i> = 208)	Current Study ( <i>N</i> = 412)
Faith Affiliation		
Yes	89.4%	83.7%
No	10.6%	16.3%
RRSP Scores	<i>M</i> = 71.77 <i>SD</i> = 7.93	<i>M</i> = 68.80 <i>SD</i> = 7.82
Ideology		
Personal God	42.6%	52.7%
Transcendent Aspect	7.4%	7.4%
Divine/Transcendent in Humans	14.9%	15.0%
Divine/Transcendent in Nature	26.2%	15.4%
Illusionary Relevant	7.9%	8.6%
Illusionary Irrelevant	1.0%	1.0%

Respondents in both studies supported both rationales for including religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum with the “multicultural diversity” rationale receiving more support than “spiritual dimension” rationale. Over 80% of the respondents in each study said they would be interested in taking a course on religion and spirituality in social work practice.

Current participation in personal religious and spiritual practices was also similar in both studies. About 60% of the respondents in each study reported participating in personal religious or spiritual practices once a week or more. Respondents’ relationship to organized religion or a spiritual group was very similarly aligned in both studies (Table 16).

Table 16  
*MSW and BSW Students Relationship to Organized Religion or Spiritual Group*

Participation & Involvement in Organized Religion/Spiritual Group	Sheridan & Amato von Hemert ( <i>N</i> = 208)	Current Study ( <i>N</i> = 412)
Active participation/ high involvement	15.5%	13.2%
Regular participation/ some involvement	23.2%	30.6%
Some identification/ limited or no involvement	37.7%	33.8%
No identification, participation or involvement	19.8%	20.1%
Disdain and negative reaction	3.9%	2.2%

There were also differences in several of the survey instrument items which included the following: the perceived frequency of religious and spiritual content presented and discussed in training; level of satisfaction with attention given to religious

and spiritual content; and current frequency of participation in religious services.

In the current study, higher percentages of students at the BSW level reported having content on religion and spirituality presented or discussed more often than the students at the MSW level (Sheridan & Amato von Hemert, 1999). The reported frequency in the current study is almost the reverse of what was reported in Sheridan and Amato von Hemert's study (Table 17). One possible explanation for the higher reported frequency of religion and spirituality being presented and discussed in social work curriculum is the increased attention to the topic in the professional literature.

Table 17  
*MSW and BSW Students Views on Religious and Spiritual Content in Curriculum*

Amount of Religious or Spiritual Content Presented or Discussed in Curriculum	Sheridan & Amato von Hemert (N = 208)	Current Study (N = 412)
Never	11.6%	3.2%
Rarely	54.1%	33.7%
Sometimes	31.9%	45.6%
Often	2.4%	17.2%

Students in the current study indicated more satisfaction with the amount of attention given to religious and spiritual issues than students in Sheridan and Amato von Hemert's (1999) study (Table 18).

Table 18  
*MSW and BSW Students Satisfaction with Religious or Spiritual Content in the Social Work Curriculum*

Satisfaction with Amount of Content Presented or Discussed in Curriculum	Sheridan & Amato von Hemert (N = 208)	Current Study (N = 412)
Very Dissatisfied	10.2%	5.1%



Somewhat dissatisfied	30.9%	19.6%
Neutral	30.4%	25.0%
Somewhat satisfied	21.7%	35.3%
Very satisfied	6.8%	15.0%

An interesting finding in comparing the two studies was students' report of which courses currently included religious and spiritual content and which courses should include religious and spiritual material. As can be seen in Table 19, there were mixed responses about where content was being covered and where it should be covered.

Table 19  
*MSW and BSW Students views about Religious or Spiritual Content in the Social Work Curriculum*

Curricular Area	Courses Included Content		Courses Should Include Content	
	MSW	BSW	MSW	BSW
Practice Courses	45.9%	47.8%	57.6%	67.7%
HBSE Courses	49.8%	50.0%	55.1%	60.0%
Policy Courses	2.0%	13.8%	7.3%	27.9%
Diversity Courses	27.3%	59.7%	53.2%	82.0%
Research Courses	2.0%	10.7%	5.4%	23.5%
Field Seminar	2.4%	25.0%	7.3%	42.0%
Field Practicum	14.1%	26.9%	14.6%	37.9%

Both MSW and BSW students consistently identified higher levels of content in practice, HBSE, and diversity courses more than any other curricular area. These same areas were also supported as courses that should include religious and spiritual content.

Additionally, in every curricular area, BSW students identified higher levels of religious and spiritual content already being included than did MSW students. This same pattern is repeated for curricular areas that should include religious and spiritual content. Possible explanations for these differences may be the lapse of time between studies combined with a renewed interest in the topics of religion and spirituality in social work as evidenced by an increase of articles in the professional literature over the last ten years.

### *Limitations of Study*

As discussed in the initial chapter, there continues a debate on the definition of the terms religion and spirituality. The instrument in this study did not permit a specific examination of separate constructs for religion and for spirituality, but combined the two in measure. Future research will benefit from additional development of terms, definitions and measures that capture the unique aspects of each of these two terms. Also, the definitions of religion and spirituality need to be more clearly defined and informed by a thorough review using research from the discipline of the study of religion and ongoing dialogue with religious studies scholars. A religious studies perspective allows one to explore and make explicit any and all assumptions that may be embedded.

Even though a stratified random sampling procedure was used to select schools, there is potential self-selection bias both in the schools that chose to participate and the students who chose to respond to the survey. Program directors who chose to distribute the invitation to students may have had a particular interest in religion and spirituality and students who responded to the survey may also have had a particular interest in the topics of religion and spirituality and therefore chose to participate. Another potential limitation to the study is the self-reporting nature of the data. The nature of an online voluntary

survey does help mitigate the likelihood of respondents providing false or misleading information. The degree to which questions may be considered sensitive or threatening (e.g. drug or alcohol use, criminal behavior or sexual activity) to an individual would likely increase the possibility of respondents not answering honestly, but given the nature of the questions and previous research on self-reporting in survey research it is more likely that respondents answered questions in this survey truthfully (Northrup, 1996).

The use of an online survey limited knowledge about non-responders and therefore limited the ability to compare responders with non-responders. However, multiple follow-up emails to program directors requesting they redistribute an email reminder to students may have minimized non-response error for the study (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2009)

The generalizability of the findings is limited to the participating schools due to a response rate lower than 50%. Even though the response rate was lower than desired a power analyses was performed using observed sample sizes on all statistical results. Sufficient power (.80 or above) was indicated for 21 out of 30 statistically significant findings. Areas that did not have sufficient power need to be interpreted with caution. Response rates may have been negatively affected due to data being collected late in the spring semester when senior social work students are under increased pressure to complete course work and participate in other events for graduation.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

This research helped fill some of the gap in knowledge about BSW students' perceptions and experiences with religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. Further research is needed in several areas to advance the professional

preparation of students to competently address the topics of religion and spirituality in practice. One area that needs further exploration is related to curriculum at the undergraduate level. Research from a programmatic perspective about the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work curriculum would provide more evidence as to the nature and extent of material currently included in social work programs. Focus groups with students would help in refining survey questions for future research that could provide a more complete picture about why students believe specific courses should have religious and spiritual content included and others should not. This could also be supplemented with a content analysis of specific courses (diversity, practice, human behavior and field seminars) identified by undergraduate students in this study. A more thorough review of whether undergraduate programs offer courses on religion and spirituality in social work practice would also be helpful in establishing how these topics are being addressed.

Another area of research that needs further study is the attitudes and perceptions of undergraduate faculty about the role of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. There are only a few previous studies in this area and they focus only on masters' level faculty and are all over ten years old (Derezotes, 1995; Dudley & Helfgott, 1990; Russel, 1998; and Sheridan, et al., 1994).

### *Implications for Practice*

The Council on Social Work Education has revised the Accreditation Standards (AS) with a focus on core competencies for practice (CSWE, 2008). An argument can be made that the topics of religion and spirituality fall under many if not all of the competency areas presented in the EPAS (e.g., EP 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, professional and

ethical behaviors; EP 2.1.4, engaging diversity and difference). If religion and spirituality content is infused into social work curriculum then attention needs to be given to the development of skills and specific competencies needed to engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate the use of religious and spiritual aspects of work with clients.

Further implications for practice come from two of social work's national organizations. Both the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), mandate attention is given to the topic of religion in social work education and practice. The EPAS (CSWE, 2008) specifically directs programs to address issues of diversity, which includes religion (EP 2.1.4, EP 3.1) and spirituality (EP 2.1.7). The NASW (2008) Code of Ethics addresses the topic of religion in several sections, which include "Cultural Competence and Social Diversity" (section 1.05c, p. 9), "Respect" (section 2.01b, p. 15), "Discrimination" (section 4.02, p. 22), and "Social and Political Action" (section 6.04d, p. 27). The NASW also emphasizes the need for social work practitioners to address both religion and spirituality in multiple practice settings such as child welfare (NASW, 2005a), health care (NASW, 2005b), care for older adults (NASW, 2010), and substance abuse (NASW, 2005c), in addition to being a part of the standards for cultural competence in social work practice (NASW, 2001). Although the Council on Social Work Education has historically included religion and spirituality in the Accreditation Standards (CSWE, 1994, 2003, & 2008), it appears BSW programs do not consistently include content on the topics as indicated by the data from this study.

Careful attention needs to be given to the ethical implications for using any of the spiritually-derived interventions in practice. Professional boundaries are key in how

interventions are applied. Students who may be more comfortable with religion and spirituality cannot make assumptions about clients' beliefs or practices with regard to religion or spirituality. Issues such as these around the topics of religion and spirituality need to be openly engaged in social work education at all levels if the profession hopes to prepare the next generation of social workers to competently serve clients. Consideration needs to be given to addressing these topics through the professional organizations (e.g., BPD, CSWE, IFSW, NASW, NACSW, SSWR) involved in sponsoring educational and professional conferences for social workers.

Social work education appears to be moving in the right direction by including more religious and spiritual content in the undergraduate curriculum. However, if social work programs either ignore or give inconsistent attention to issues of religion and spirituality in the preparation of social work practitioners, then in all likelihood it will be difficult for practitioners to work with clients competently when it comes to addressing these issues in practice.

## Appendices

## Appendix A: Informed Consent for Web Survey

### Perceptions and Experiences of BSW Students with Religion and Spirituality in Social Work Education and Practice

#### Background Information

This survey is being conducted to better understand students' views concerning the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice and education. You have been asked to participate because of your status as a senior social work student.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the views and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as presented in the social work curriculum of undergraduate social work programs. The research seeks to understand what students see as appropriate or inappropriate practice interventions with regard to religion and spirituality in social work. The role of religion and spirituality in their own lives is also explored.

#### Procedures

As participants in this survey you will be asked to complete a self-administered online questionnaire regarding your attitudes toward religion and spirituality in social work education as well as your experiences with religion and spirituality in social work practice. It should require no more than 25 minutes of your time.

#### Risks and Benefits

There are no foreseeable physical or emotional risks to you for participating in this survey.

There are no direct benefits to you. Your participation in this survey will aid our understanding of the attitudes and experiences of BSW students with religion and spirituality in social work education and practice.

#### Compensation

There will be no costs to you and no direct compensation for participating in this survey. Participants will be given the opportunity to enter a drawing for one (1) of five (5) twenty dollar (\$20) Amazon gift cards. The odds of winning will be approximately 1 in 100.

#### Confidentiality and Privacy

The records of this research will be kept private. No identifying information is collected that may link you to individual responses. Your privacy is ensured by the following: a) your IP address will not be collected by the researcher or online survey host; and b) SSL encryption is used for the survey link and survey pages during transmission. Survey results will be presented in aggregate form and not attached to any identifiers.

#### Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from this survey at any time prior to submitting your final survey. If while taking the survey you do not want to continue, you may quit at any point. If you do not want to answer any questions on the survey, you may



skip the question and move on to the next question. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this survey will not affect your relationship with your social work program. Results of your individual survey will not be shared with anyone.

#### Contacts or Questions

Further information with respect to survey procedures and your rights as a participant are available from Clifford J. Rosenbohm (crosenbo@georgefox.edu or 503-554-2748) or Kathleen Farkas, Chair of Dissertation Committee, (Kathleen.farkas@case.edu or 216-368-2276).

If you would like to talk with someone outside the doctoral program about concerns regarding this survey, research participants' rights, or other human subjects issues please contact the CWRU Office of Research Administration at 216 368 6925 or write: Case Western Reserve University; Institutional Review Board; 10900 Euclid Avenue; Cleveland, OH 44106-7230.

Thank you.

Clifford Rosenbohm, Ph. D. candidate

If you have read and understand the above statements, please click on the "Next" button below to indicate your consent to participate in this study.

## Appendix B: Email Letter of Invitation to Program Directors

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Clifford Rosenbohm, I am a faculty member at George Fox University and a doctoral student at Case Western Reserve University. I am in the process of collecting data about BSW students' perceptions and experiences with religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. Your program has been selected in a stratified random sample of accredited CSWE programs.

I am seeking your permission to send fulltime senior social work students in your program an invitation to participate in an online survey questionnaire. I would route the email information through you or a designated representative of your program. If you agree to this then I would need a letter of cooperation from you on school letterhead. This could be sent through fax or electronically. I would also need to know the number of senior social work students in your program to calculate response rates.

The survey takes 15-20 minutes on average to complete. Student responses are anonymous and confidential. The Institutional Review Board at Case Western Reserve University has approved my application pending letters of cooperation from participating programs.

I hope you will consider letting me invite your students to participate. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me either through email or I would be willing to contact you by phone.

Thank you  
Cliff

--

Clifford Rosenbohm, ACSW, LCSW  
Director of Social Work  
George Fox University  
414 N. Meridian St. Box 6091  
Newberg, Oregon 97132  
Work: 503 554-2748  
[crosenbo@georgefox.edu](mailto:crosenbo@georgefox.edu)

## Appendix C: Survey/Questionnaire

### I. Religious and Spiritual Issues in Social Work Practice and Education: A Survey of Student Views

**Background Information:** This survey is being conducted to better understand students' views concerning the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice and education. You have been asked to participate because of your status as a senior social work student.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the views and experiences of BSW students with regard to religion and spirituality as presented in the social work curriculum of undergraduate social work programs. The research seeks to understand what students see as appropriate or inappropriate practice interventions with regard to religion and spirituality in social work. The role of religion and spirituality in their own lives is also explored.

**Procedures:** As participants in this survey you will be asked to complete a self-administered online questionnaire regarding your attitudes toward religion and spirituality in social work education as well as your experiences with religion and spirituality in social work practice. It should require no more than 25 minutes of your time.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no foreseeable physical or emotional risks to you for participating in this survey. There are no direct benefits to you. Your participation in this survey will aid our understanding of the attitudes and experiences of BSW students with religion and spirituality in social work education and practice.

**Compensation:** There will be no costs to you and no direct compensation for participating in this survey. Participants will be given the opportunity to enter a drawing for one (1) of five (5) twenty dollar (\$20) Amazon gift cards. The odds of winning will be approximately 1 in 100.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:** The records of this research will be kept private. No identifying information is collected that may link you to individual responses. Your privacy is ensured by the following: a) your IP address will not be collected by the researcher or online survey host; and b) SSL encryption is used for the survey link and survey pages during transmission. Survey results will be presented in aggregate form and not attached to any identifiers.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from this survey at any time prior to submitting your final survey. If while taking the survey you do not want to continue, you may quit at any point. If you do not want to answer any questions on the survey, you may skip the question and move on to the next question. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this survey will not affect your relationship with your social work program. Results of your individual survey will not be shared with anyone.

Contacts or Questions: Further information with respect to survey procedures and your rights as a participant are available from Clifford J. Rosenbohm (crosenbo@georgefox.edu or 503-554-2748) or Kathleen Farkas, Chair of Dissertation Committee, (Kathleen.farkas@case.edu or 216-368-2276).

If you would like to talk with someone outside the doctoral program about concerns regarding this survey, research participants' rights, or other human subjects issues please contact the CWRU Office of Research Administration at 216 368 6925 or write: Case Western Reserve University; Institutional Review Board; 10900 Euclid Avenue; Cleveland, OH 44106-7230.

Thank you. Clifford Rosenbohm, Ph. D. candidate

If you have read and understand the above statements, please click on the "Next" button below to indicate your consent to participate in this study.

## II. Religion and Spirituality in Social Work

The following questions ask your views about the appropriate role of religion or spirituality in social work practice. To aid you in responding to these questions, the following definitions are provided below. You will note that, for the purposes of this study, spirituality is more broadly defined than religion.

Spirituality is defined as "the human search for meaning, purpose, and connection with self, others, the universe, and ultimate reality, however one understands it. This may or may not be expressed through religious forms or institutions."

Religion is defined as "an organized and structured set of beliefs and practices shared by a community that is related to spirituality."

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement by checking the one answer that best reflects your opinion on the 5-point scale.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Spirituality is a fundamental aspect of being human.					
2. Social workers should become more sophisticated than they are now in spiritual matters.					
3. It is important for social workers to have knowledge about different religious faiths and traditions.					
4. Religious concerns are outside of the scope of social work practice.					
5. Spiritual concerns are outside of the scope of social work practice.					
6. Social work practice with a spiritual component has a better chance to empower clients than practice without such a component.					
7. Knowledge of clients' religious or spiritual belief systems is important for effective social work practice.					
8. Social workers should be able to assess the positive or beneficial role of religious or spiritual beliefs and practices in clients' lives.					
9. Social workers should be able to assess the negative or harmful role of religious or spiritual beliefs and practices in clients' lives.					
10. The use of religious language, metaphors and concepts in social work practice is inappropriate.					
11. The religious backgrounds of clients do not particularly influence the course or outcome of social work practice.					
12. A social worker's use of scripture or other religious					

texts in practice is appropriate.					
13. It is against social work ethics to ever pray with a client.					
14. The use of spiritual language, metaphors and concepts in social work language is inappropriate.					
15. It is sometimes appropriate for a social worker to share his or her own religious or spiritual beliefs with a client.					
16. Addressing a client's religious or spiritual beliefs is necessary for holistic social work practice.					
17. Undergraduate social work education should include content on religious and spiritual diversity.					
18. Undergraduate social work education should include content on how to effectively deal with religious or spiritual issues in practice.					

### III. Practice Interventions

The following lists various interventions that could be performed in providing services to clients. Please indicate (by checking the box), for each behavior listed if: 1) the intervention is one that you yourself have done with clients; and 2) whether or not you believe the intervention to be appropriate for social work practice.

	Have personally done with client?	Is appropriate social work intervention?
1. Gather information on clients' religious or spiritual backgrounds.		
2. Use or recommend religious or spiritual books or writings.		
3. Pray privately for a client.		
4. Pray or meditate with a client.		
5. Use religious or spiritual language or concept.		
6. Help clients clarify their religious or spiritual values.		
7. Recommend participation in a religious or spiritual program.		
8. Refer clients to others for religious or spiritual counseling or direction.		
9. Recommend regular religious or spiritual self-reflective diary/journal.		
10. Recommend religious or spiritual forgiveness, penance, or amends.		
11. Discuss role of religious or spiritual beliefs in relation to significant others.		
12. Assist clients to critically reflect on religious or spiritual beliefs or practices.		
13. Help clients assess religious or spiritual meaning of dreams.		

14. Help clients consider spiritual meaning of current life situation.		
15. Help clients reflect on beliefs about what happens after death.		
16. Help clients reflect on beliefs about loss or other difficult life situations.		
17. Touch client for “healing” purposes.		
18. Help clients develop religious/spiritual rituals as practice intervention.		
19. Participate in client’s religious/spiritual rituals as practice intervention.		
20. Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual beliefs or practices are helpful.		
21. Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual beliefs or practices are harmful.		
22. Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual support systems are helpful.		
23. Help clients consider ways religious/spiritual support systems are harmful.		
24. Share your own religious or spiritual beliefs or views.		

IV. Views about inclusion of content on religion and spirituality in social work curriculum.

1. There are generally two rationales given for including content on religion and spirituality within the curriculum of schools of social work; these are listed below. Please indicate your level of agreement with each position by checking the one answer that best reflects your opinion on the 5-point scale.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A. Religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are part of multicultural diversity. As such, social workers should have knowledge and skills in this area in order to work effectively with diverse client groups.					
B. There is another dimension of human existence beyond the bio-psycho-social framework currently used to understand human behavior. Social work education should expand this framework to include the spiritual dimension.					

2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My social work education prepared me to address issues of religion and spirituality in direct practice with clients.					

3. In your training as a social worker, how often were religious or spiritual content or issues presented and discussed?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
In your training as a social worker, how often were religious or spiritual content or issues presented and discussed?				

4. How satisfied have you been with your social work education in terms of attention paid to religious and spiritual issues?

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
How satisfied have you been with your social work education in terms of attention paid to religious and spiritual issues?					

5. If religious or spiritual issues were presented and discussed in your training as a social worker, in what specific courses was this material included? (Check as many as applicable)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Work Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Field Practicum
<input type="checkbox"/>	HBSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Welfare Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Field Seminar	<input type="checkbox"/>	



6. In what courses, if any, do you think material on religious and spiritual issues should be presented in your training as a social worker? (Check as many as applicable)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Work Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Field Practicum
<input type="checkbox"/>	HBSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Welfare Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Field Seminar	<input type="checkbox"/>	

7. Does your social work program offer a course on religion and/or spirituality in social work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. If a specific course on religion and spirituality in social work practice was to be offered at your school, do you think it should be offered: (Choose one)

☐ As an elective only

☐ As a required course for all students

9. If a specific course on religion and spirituality in social work practice were offered at your school, would you be interested in taking it?

☐ Definitely Yes

☐ Probably

☐ Probably Not

☐ Definitely No

#### V. Ideological Position Scale

1. Please read the following six statements and choose the one that comes closest to your ideas.

- ☐ 1. There is a personal God or transcendent existence and power whose purpose will ultimately be worked out in history.
- ☐ 2. There is a transcendent aspect of human experience which some persons call God, but who is not immanently involved in the events of the world and human history.
- ☐ 3. There is a transcendent or divine dimension, which is unique and specific to the human self.
- ☐ 4. There is a transcendent or divine dimension found in all manifestations of nature.
- ☐ 5. Notions of God or the transcendent are illusionary products of human imagination; however, they are meaningful aspects of human existence.
- ☐ 6. Notions of God or the transcendent are illusionary products of human imagination; however, they are irrelevant to the real world.

2. Do you consider yourself religious?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Do you consider yourself spiritual?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Were religious or spiritual beliefs a factor in your choice of social work as a major?

☐ Yes

☐ No

#### VI. Demographic and background variables

The final section includes questions on demographic and background variables, including questions related to your own personal beliefs and experiences with religion or spirituality.

1. Please indicate the school you attend.

School (University or College)
School currently attending.

2. Age

What is your current age?

3. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other (please specify)

4. What is your racial/ethnic background?

☐ African-American

☐ Caucasian/Anglo-American

☐ Asian-American/Pacific Islander

☐ Latino(a)/Hispanic-American

☐ Bi-racial/Multi-racial

☐ Native-American/Alaskan Native/First Nations

☐ Other (please specify)

5. What is your current religious affiliation or spiritual orientation?

- |                                   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic | <input type="checkbox"/> Existentialist | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu          | <input type="checkbox"/> Protestant (e.g., Baptist, Episcopalian,<br>Lutheran, Methodist, Non-Denominational) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish         | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritist  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Mormon (LDS)   | <input type="checkbox"/> None   |

6. How frequently do you currently participate in religious services?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily             | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a week  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2-4 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a week       | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a year      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a month | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month      |   |

7. During your elementary school years, how often did you participate in religious services?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily             | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a week  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2-4 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a week       | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a year      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a month | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month      |   |

8. How frequently do you currently participate in personal religious or spiritual practices (e.g., meditation, reading scripture/spiritual texts, prayer, etc.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily             | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a week  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2-4 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a week       | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a year      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a month | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month      |   |

9. Indicate your present relationship to an organized religion or spiritual group.

- ☐ Active participation, high level of involvement.
- ☐ Regular participation, some involvement.
- ☐ Identification with religion or spiritual group, very limited or no involvement.
- ☐ No identification, participation, or involvement with religious or spiritual group.
- ☐ Disdain and negative reaction to religion or spiritual tradition.

Random Drawing for \$20 Amazon Gift Card.

Click the "Done" link below to enter a random drawing for a \$20 Amazon Gift Card.

After completing the survey please take a moment to enter a random drawing for one (1) of five (5) twenty dollar (\$20) Amazon gift cards. Chances for winning one of the giftcards is approximately 1 in 100.

Please submit your information for a chance to win a \$20 Amazon gift card.

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

## Reference List

- Ai, A. L., Moultime, K., Picciano, J. F., Nagda, B., & Thurman, L. H. (2004). Integrating spirituality into a social work curriculum: A student-initiated program. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 24 (1/2), 105-128.
- Arnal, W. E. (2000). Definition. In W. Braun & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.). *Guide to the study of religion* (pp. 21-34). New York, NY: Cassell.
- Association of Social Work Boards. (2009). *Social work laws & regulation database*. Retrieved from <http://www.aswb.org/>
- Babbie, E. (2001). *The practice of social research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Bethel, J. C. (2004). Impact of social work spirituality courses on student attitudes, values, and spiritual wellness. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*, 23(4), 27-45.
- Bowpitt, G. (1998). Evangelical Christianity, secular humanism, and the genesis of British social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 28, 675-693.
- Braun, W. (2000). Religion. In W. Braun & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.). *Guide to the study of religion* (pp. 3-18). New York, NY: Cassell.
- Braun, W., & McCutcheon, R. T. (Eds.). *Guide to the study of religion*. New York, NY: Cassell.
- Bullis, R. K. (1996). *Spirituality in social work practice*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2009). *Occupational outlook handbook* (2008-09 ed.). Retrieved September 7, 2009, from <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos060.htm>

- Canda, E. R. (1988). Spirituality, religious diversity, and social work practice. *Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work*, (April), 238-247.
- Canda, E. R. (1989). Religious content in social work education: A comparative approach. *Journal of Social Work Education* 25(1), 36-45.
- Canda, E. R. (1998). Afterword: Linking spirituality and social work: Five themes for innovation. *Social Thought*, 18, (2), 97-106.
- Canda, E. R., & Furman, L. D. (1999). *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping*. New York: The Free Press.
- Canda, E. R., & Furman, L. D. (2010). *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping*(2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Canda, E. R., Nakashima, M., Burgess, V. L., & Russel, R. (1999). *Spiritual diversity and social work: A comprehensive bibliography with annotations*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.
- Canda, E.R.; Nakashima, M., Burgess, V., Russel, R. & Barfield, S.T. (2003). *Spiritual diversity and social work: A comprehensive bibliography with annotations* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.
- Canda, E. R., Nakashima, M., & Furman, L. D. (2004). Ethical considerations about spirituality in social work: Insights from a national qualitative survey. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 85 (1), 27-35.
- Carroll, M. M. (1998). Social work's conceptualization of spirituality. In E. R. Canda (Ed.), *Spirituality in social work: New directions* (pp. 1-13). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Pastoral Press.

- Cascio, T. (1999). Religion and spirituality: Diversity issues for the future. *Journal of Multicultural Social Work*, 7 (3/4), 129-145.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.)*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Cohen, J. (1992). Quantitative methods in psychology: A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112 (1), 155-159.
- Cohen, A. B., & Koenig, H. G. (2003). Religion, religiosity and spirituality in the biopsychosocial model of health and ageing. *Ageing International*, 28 (3), 215-241.
- Coholic, D. (2003). Incorporating spirituality in feminist social work perspectives. *Affilia* 18 (1), 49-67.
- Coholic, D., Nichols, A. W., & Cadell, S. (2008). Section two: Spirituality and social work practice. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 27(1-2), 41-46.
- Cornett, C. (1992). Toward a more comprehensive personology: Integrating a spiritual perspective into social work practice. *Social Work*, 37 (2), 101-102.
- Council on Social Work Education. (1994). *Curriculum policy Statement*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2003). *Handbook of accreditation standards and procedures*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2007a). *Statistics on social work education in the United States: 2004*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2007b). *2006 statistics on social work education in*

- the United States: A summary.* Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2008). *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.* Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2009, June). *Commission on Accreditation Decisions.* Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/CSWE/accreditation/Accreditation+News+Reports+And+Archives/>
- Council on Social Work Education. (2010, January). *Benchmark Report: George Fox University.* Created on January 13, 2010.
- Council on Social Work Education (2010, November). 2008 statistics on social work education in the United States. Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/DataStatistics/ProgramData/44876.aspx>
- DeCoster, V. A., & Burcham, S. (2002). Graduate social work students' attitude about client religion. *Social Thought* 21(2), 75-97.
- Derezotes, D. A., & Evans, K. E. (1995). Spirituality and religiosity in practice: In-depth interviews of social work practitioners. *Social Thought*, 18 (1), 39-56.
- Derezotes, D. S. (1995). Spirituality and religiosity: Neglected factors in social work practice. *ARETE*, 20 (1), 1-15.
- Dillman, D. A. (2000). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method (2nd ed.)*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method (3rd ed.)*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.



- Dudley, J. R., & Helfgott, C. (1990). Exploring a place for spirituality in the social work curriculum. *Journal of Social Work Education* 26 (3), 287-294.
- Ellor, J. W., Netting, F. E., & Thibault, J. M. (1999). *Understanding religious and spiritual aspects of human service practice*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Faiver, C., Ingersoll, R. E., O'Brien, E., & McNally, C. (2001). *Explorations in counseling and spirituality: Philosophical, practical, and personal reflections*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A. G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G\*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods* 39(2), 175-191.
- Faver, C. A. (1987). Religious beliefs, professional values, and social work. *The Journal of Applied Social Sciences* 11 (2), 206-219.
- Fink, A. (2006). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fowler, F. J., Jr., (1993). *Survey research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Furman, L. E. (1994). Religion and spirituality in social work education: Preparing the culturally-sensitive practitioner for the future. *Social Work and Christianity*, 21(2), 103-117.
- Furman, L. D., Benson, P. W., & Canda, E. R. (2004). Religion, spirituality and geographic region in the USA: An examination of regional similarities and

- differences among social worker in direct practice. *Social Work & Christianity* 31 (3), 267-294.
- Gallup, G. Jr. & Lindsay, D. M. (1999). *Surveying the religious landscape: Trends in U.S. beliefs*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing.
- Gallup, G., Jr. & Jones, T. (2000). *The next American spirituality: Finding God in the twenty-first century*. Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books.
- Gilbert, M. C. (2000). Spirituality in social work groups: Practitioners speak out. *Social Work with Groups*, 30(4), 67-84.
- Gotterer, R. (2001). The spiritual dimension in clinical social work practice: A client perspective. *Families in Society; The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 82 (2), 87-193.
- Graff, D. L. (2002). Beliefs or not: A study of bachelor of social work students' beliefs about the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work. *Dissertation Abstracts*. (UMI No. 3099454).
- Graff, D. L. (2007). A study of baccalaureate social work students' belief about the inclusion of religious and spiritual content in social work. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 43(2) 243-256.
- Graham, M. A., Kaiser, T., & Garrett, K. J. (1998). Naming the spiritual: The hidden dimension of helping. *Social Thought*, 18 (4), 49-61.
- Guthrie, S. E. (1996). Religion: What is it? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35(4), 412-419.

- Heyman, J., Buchanan, R., Musgrave, B., & Menz, V. (2006). Social workers' attention to clients' spirituality: Use of spiritual interventions in practice. *Arete*, 30(1), 78-89.
- Hill, P. C., Pargament, K. I., Hood, R. W. Jr., McCullough, M. E., Swyers, J. P., Larson, D. B., & Zinnbauer, B. J. (2000). Conceptualizing religion and spirituality: Points of commonality, points of departure. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30 (1), 51-77.
- Hodge, D. R. (2002). Equally devout, but do they speak the same language? Comparing the religious beliefs and practices of social workers and the general public. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 83 (5/6), 573-584.
- Hodge, D. R., & McGrew, C. C. (2005). Clarifying the distinctions and connections between spirituality and religion. *Social Work & Christianity* 32 (1), 1-21.
- Holland, T. P. (1989). Values, faith and professional practice. *Social Thought*, 15 (1), 28-40.
- Hugen, B. (2001). Introduction. In M. Van Hook, B. Hugen, & M. Aguilar (Eds.), *Spirituality within religious traditions in social work practice* (pp. 1-8). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole
- Jacobs, C. (1997). Essay on spirituality and social work practice. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 67(2), 171-175.
- Johnson, S. K. (1997). Does spirituality have a place in rural social work? *Social Work and Christianity*, 24 (1), 58-66.

- Joseph, M. V. (1988). Religion and social work practice. *Social Casework*, 60(7), 443-452.
- Kaplan, A. J., & Dziegielewska, S. F. (1999). Graduate Social Work Students' Attitudes and Behaviors toward Spirituality and Religion: Issues for Education and Practice. *Social Work and Christianity*, 26(1), 25-39.
- Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. B. (2000). *Foundations of behavioral research*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Kiernan, N. E., Kiernan, M., Oyler, M. A., & Gilles, C. (2005). Is a web survey as effective as a mail survey? *American Journal of Evaluation*, 26(2), 245-252.
- Knapp, H., & Kirk, S. A. (2003). Using pencil and paper, Internet and touch-tone phones for self-administered surveys: Does methodology matter? *Computers in Human Behavior* 19, 117-134.
- Koenig, H. G. (2006). Religion, spirituality and aging. *Aging & Mental Health*, 10 (1), 1-3.
- Kongsved, S. M., Basnov, M., Holm-Christensen, K., & Hjollund, N. H. (2007). Response rate and completeness of questionnaires: A randomized study of internet versus paper-and-pencil versions. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. 9(3). doi: 10.2196/jmir.9.3.e25.
- Kreutziger, S. S. (2002). Social work's legacy: The Methodist settlement movement. In B. Hugen, & T. L. Scales, (Eds.), *Christianity and social work: Readings on the integration of Christian faith and social work practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 79-92). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work.
- Kvarfordt, C. L., & Sheridan, M. J. (2007). The role of religion and spirituality in

- working with children and adolescents: Results of a national survey. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*, 26(3), 1-23.
- Kypri, K., Gallagher, S. J., & Cashell-Smith, M. L. (2004). An internet-based survey method for college student drinking research. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 76(1), 45-53.
- Lehman, E. C., Jr. (1974). Academic discipline and faculty religiosity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 13(2), 205-220.
- Lehman, E. C., Jr., & Shriver, D.W. (1968). Academic discipline as predictive of faculty religiosity. *Social Forces* 42(December), 171-182.
- Lennon, T. M. (2005). *Statistics on social work education in the United States: 2003*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.
- Loewenberg, F. M. (1988). *Religion and social work practice in contemporary American society*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Marty, M. E. (1980). Social services: Godly and godless. *Social Service Review* 54 (40), 463-481.
- Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. New York: The Viking Press.
- Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (R. Frager, J. Fadiman, C. McReynolds, & R. Cox, Eds.). New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Mattison, D., Jayaratne, S., & Croxton, T. (2000). Social workers' religiosity and its impact on religious practice behaviors. *Advances in Social Work* 1(1), 43-59.
- Miller, D.W. (2001). Programs in social work embrace the teaching of spirituality. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* Vol. XLVII (36), A12-A13.

- Miller, J. F., McConnell, T. R., & Klinger, T. A., (2007). Religiosity and spirituality: Influence on quality of life and perceived patient self-efficacy among cardiac patients and their spouses. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 42(2), 299-313.
- Miller, W. R., & Thoresen, C. E. (2003). Spirituality, religion, and health: An emerging research field. *American Psychologist*, 58(1), 24-35.
- Moberg, D. O. (2005). Research in spirituality, religion, and aging. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 45(1/2), 11-40.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2001). *NASW standards for cultural competence in social work practice*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2005a). *NASW standards for social work practice in child welfare*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2005b). *NASW standards for social work practice in health care settings*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2005c). *NASW standards for social work practice with clients with substance use disorders*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Association of Social Workers (2008). *Code of Ethics*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2009). General facts sheet. Retrieved February 23, 2009, from <https://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/features/general/nasw.asp>.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2010). *NASW standards for social work practice with family caregivers of older adults*. Washington, DC: Author.

- Niebuhr, R. (1932). *The contribution of religion to social work*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Northrup, D. A. (1997). The problem of the self-report in survey research. *Institute for Social Research: Newsletter* 12(1).
- O'Neill, J. V. (1999, September). Social work turns back to the spiritual. *NASW News*, 44(8).
- Pesut, B., Fowler, M., Tayler, E. J., Reimer-Kirkham, S., & Sawatzky, R. (2008). Conceptualising spirituality and religion for healthcare. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 17, 2803-2810.
- Poppo, P. R. & Leighninger, L. (2002). *Social work, social welfare, and American society*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Porter, S. R. (2004). Raising response rates: What works? [Electronic Version]. *New Directions for Institutional Research* 2004(121), 5-21. Retrieved July 14, 2008.
- Richmond, M. E. (1930). *The long view: Papers and addresses by Mary E. Richmond*. New York: The Russell Sage Foundation.
- Rizer, J. M. & McColley, K. J. (1996). Attitudes and practices regarding spirituality and religion held by graduate social work students. *Social Work and Christianity*, 23 (1), 53-65.
- Robbins, S. P., Chatterjee, P., & Canda, E. R. (1998). *Contemporary human behavior theory: A critical perspective for social work*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2007). *Essential research methods for social work*. Belmont, CA: Thomson, Brooks/Cole.
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2008). *Research methods for social work*, (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont,

- CA: Thomson, Brooks/Cole.
- Russel, R. (1998). Spirituality and religion in graduate social work education. In E. R. Canda (Ed.), *Spirituality in social work: New directions* (pp. 15-29). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Pastoral Press.
- Sax, L. J., Gilmartin, S. K., & Bryant, A. N. (2003). Assessing response rates and nonresponse bias in web and paper surveys. [Electronic Version]. *Research in Higher Education* 44 (4), 409-432. Retrieved October 23, 2007.
- Schilling, R., Morrish, J. N., & Liu, G. (2008). Demographic trends in social work over a quarter-century in an increasingly female profession. *Social Work*, 53(2), 103-114.
- Schlehofer, M. M., Omoto, A. M., & Adelman, J. R. (2008). How do 'Religion' and 'Spirituality' differ? Lay definitions among older adults. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47(3), 411-425.
- Sermabeikian, P. (1994). Our clients, ourselves: The spiritual perspective and social work practice. *Social Work*, 39 (2), 178-183.
- Sheafor, B. W. (2001). Three decades of baccalaureate social work: A grade card on how the professionalization of the BSW has played out. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 6(2), 25-43.
- Sheridan, M. J. (2000). *The "Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice" (RRSP) scale: Psychometric information and scoring instructions* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Sheridan, M. J. (2004). Predicting the use of spiritually-derived interventions in social work practice: A survey of practitioners. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in*



*Social Work* 23(4), 5-25.

Sheridan, M. J., & Amato-von Hemert, K. (1999). The role of religion and spirituality in social work education and practice: A survey of student views and experiences.

*Journal of Social Work Education*, 35(1), 125-141.

Sheridan, M. J., Bullis, R.K., Adcock, C.R., Berlin, S.D., & Miller, P.C. (1992).

Practitioners' personal and professional attitudes and behaviors toward religion and spirituality: Issues for education and practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 28(2), 190-203.

Sheridan, M. J., Wilmer, C. M., & Atcheson, L. (1994). Inclusion of content on religion and spirituality in the social work curriculum: A study of faculty views. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 30(3), 363-376.

Sherwood, D. A. (1998). Spiritual assessment as a normal part of social work practice: Power to help and power to harm. *Social Work and Christianity*, 25(2), 80-99.

Sherwood, D. A. (2002). The relationship between beliefs and values in social work practice: Worldviews make a difference. In B. Hugen, & T. L. Scales, (Eds.), *Christianity and social work: Readings on the integration of Christian faith and social work practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 9-30). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work.

Spencer, S. (1956). Religion and social work. *Social Work* 1(3), 19-26.

Spencer, S. (1961). What place has religion in social work education. *Social Service Review*, 35(2), 161-170.

- Staral, J. M. (1999). Seeking religious and spiritual competence: The perceptions of BSW students at a private, Catholic university. *Social Work & Christianity* 26 (2), 101-111.
- Stewart, C., & Koeske, G. (2006). Social work students' attitudes concerning the use of religious and spiritual interventions in social work practice. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 26(1/2), 31-49.
- Stewart, C., Koeske, G. F., & Koeske, R. D. (2006). Personal religiosity and spirituality associated with social work practitioners' use of religious-based intervention practices. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*, 25(1), 69-85.
- Tan, P. P. (2006). Survivors of the Killing Fields: Spirituality and religious faith as protective factors against the impact of trauma. *Arete*, 30(1), 112-123.
- Thayne, T. R. (1997). Opening space for clients' religious and spiritual values in therapy: A social constructionist perspective. *Journal of Family Social Work* 2 (4), 13-23.
- Towle, C. (1987). *Common human needs*. (Rev. ed.). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of Social Workers.
- Trattner, W. I. (1994). *From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America*. (5th ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Truell, A. D. (2003). Use of internet tools for survey research. *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*, 21(1), 31-37.
- Umbach, P. D. (2004). Web surveys: Best practices. [Electronic Version]. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2004(121), 23-38. Retrieved July 20, 2008.
- Vandsburger, E., Schneller, D. P., & Murphy-Norris, C. (2006). Religiosity, altruism, and positive outlook: Three interrelated resiliency factors contributing to older adults'

- proactive approach to daily living. *Arete*, 30(1), 138-149.
- Van Selm, M., & Jankowski, N. W. (2006). Conducting online surveys. *Quality & Quantity* 40, 435-456.
- Williams, N. R., & Lindsey, E. (2005). Spirituality and religion in the lives of runaway and homeless youth: Coping with adversity. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality*, 24(4), 19-38.
- Wood, E., Nosko, A., Desmarais, S., Ross, C., & Irvine, C. (2006). Online and traditional paper-and-pencil survey administration: Examining experimenter presence, sensitive material and long surveys. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 15(3/4), 147-155.
- Yegidis, B. L., Weinbach, R. W., & Morrison-Rodriguez, B. (1999). *Research methods for social workers*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Zastrow, C. H. & Kirst-Ashman, K. K. (2004). *Understanding human behavior and the social environment*. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.