Teachers' approaches to, and experiences with, World Religions in the Grade 8 Social Studies curriculum

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Abstract

In 2006, the Government of Manitoba released a new social studies curriculum for Grade 8 that included for the first time a section on world religions. It was released during a time when reasonable accommodation was being widely debated in various parts of Canada and within the context of various challenges to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There was no explicit rationale for the inclusion of this subject matter or why the provincial government would choose Grade 8 social studies as the venue to explore it. This research explored the ways in which teachers in Manitoba public schools, specifically within the city of Winnipeg, dealt with the teaching of world religions within the climate of "reasonable accommodation" and charter challenges towards freedom of religion. A case study methodology was used in this qualitative research study. Semi-structured interviews with Grade 8 social studies teachers gathered information on their experiences and approaches to teaching about world religions. Results of this research indicated teachers who choose to teach about world religions require further information and feel there are personal, professional, and social factors that influence their ability to teach this subject as thoroughly as they would like. Implications for practice include: training and professional development in the area of world religions; providing resource materials to teachers; and government support in the teaching of this subject matter.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Researcher's positioning

In my first year as a teacher, I had the opportunity to teach Grade 8 social studies. I was very comfortable with the subject matter: ancient and medieval history. Having a double major in ancient and medieval history as well as religious studies, I was excited to teach about this expansive and important time period in human history.

During the first few classes we talked about what history is, the Neolithic and Paleolithic periods of prehistory and the beginnings of the development of human civilization. My students asked me how Adam and Eve fit with the dinosaurs and cave men and how this all was possible if the Earth was only 6000 years old. My major in religious studies prepared me to have thoughtful conversations about such questions, but I had to decide how I would approach the situation. I did what I think every new teacher does: I checked with my principal.

I was told I should avoid talking about religion in the classroom. As it was my first year teaching I did not want to "rock the boat" and took my administrator's advice. Whenever questions around religion came up, I told my students that while they posed interesting questions I was unsure how to answer them. After one such incident, two of my students who were very religious brought me some documentation at the end of class and told me I might find my answers there.

The following year I was given the opportunity to pilot the new social studies curriculum developed in 2006. To my surprise a section on world religions had been added, but without any explanation for its inclusion or a rationale for specifically targeting Grade 8 students. I can

surmise it was included because of the great importance religion played in the development of ancient and medieval societies and the huge role religions played in both everyday life and major events, such as the crusades. Still, based on my experience the previous year, I was surprised I was being asked by the province to teach about world religions when my principal had told me to avoid it.

Having a degree based on a thorough examination of world religions, I recognized the value and importance of this subject matter to my courses. I integrated discussions around the role and impact of religion into every aspect of our conversations about each new society. To me it is impossible to separate ancient and medieval civilizations from their religions, whether Norse Mythology or Islam, because of the large role faith played in both the distribution of power and the grind of daily life.

I became curious about how other teachers dealt with the same issues I faced. Not everyone has an undergraduate degree with a major in religious studies, and I thought there may be widely different experiences. I had always wanted to do further study in this area and decided to make this the focus of my Master's thesis.

During a course on qualitative research methods at the University of Manitoba we were asked to do a mini-research study, partly to get comfortable applying for ethics approval, partly to practice transcribing and analyzing research data. I decided I would speak with some teachers about their experiences with the Grade 8 world religions section of the social studies curriculum.

I was surprised by the anxious comments made by some teachers; one colleague said she/he "expected that section to be printed on red pages" and teaching it could have impact on their career. Such fears undoubtedly impacted the ways these teachers approached teaching about

world religions. Rather than deeply integrating it into the fabric of their classes' exploration of these societies, they would do small research projects that were typically student driven and presented with very little teacher involvement. This approach often seemed to me to be an attempt to stay at arms-length from the project.

This mini-project solidified my desire to research other teachers' experiences with and approaches to this section of the social studies curriculum. I believe there is a place for world religions in the classroom: it helps students grapple with a diverse and multi-cultural society where they will interact with people of different faiths and backgrounds. Having been told, on one hand, I should avoid talking about religion in the classroom, but then, on the other hand, being asked by a governmental document to do just that only strengthened my resolve to embark on this research.

Teachers are at the centre of the classroom. While governments and administrators help to manage and guide the assessment of education policies that inform what teachers teach, ultimately it is teachers who are responsible for what happens in class. It is important teachers be able to provide honest and collective feedback on curricula when it is implemented and be able talk about their experiences and any challenges that arise. For me, education about religion is important as it provides tools that help students understand one another in their current contexts while also preparing them for life in a global society. Teaching about religion deserves excellence, with factual, relevant information that will help students better understand the religious beliefs of others. In this shrinking global village where we will daily face more diversity, teachers need to feel comfortable and confident in discussing all aspects of their curriculum.

To begin this research, I believe it is important to explore the background and the climate in which this study is taking place. The debate around reasonable accommodation in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, the challenges made to Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the development of the charter of values in Quebec compound the already stressful feelings that come from having an authority figure tell you to avoid even discussing religion. This research will begin by laying out the background, proposing specific research questions, and explore in more detail the climate in which this research took place.

Background

Since the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 the concept of multiculturalism and the value of differences in Canada have distinguished our country from the United States, which broadly views itself as a "melting pot" in which everyone is seen as an American. While Canada's laws emphasize the value of cultural diversity, it is up to us as a society to decide how great that value is and to what lengths we will go to protect it.

Canadian multiculturalism has continued to diversify as immigration and refugee policies increase the cultural diversity of our population (Statistics Canada, 2013). Immigration and associated demographic changes have influenced the public school system, prompting the increase in supports in certain areas, such as accommodations for student for whom English is an additional language. While there is a promotion of multiculturalism and diversity within Canada there has also been an aversion to the utilization of the word "religion" (Guo, 2011). School curriculums were developed by following what was happening in the broader public context of separating religion from state. At the same time public education in Canada follows a "fundamentalist Christian curriculum" with the school calendar specifically designed to fit the

needs of Christians as well as further Christian influences seen in the Canadian national anthem, currency, and statutory holidays (Guo, 2011). In some cases, religious education was called 'indoctrination' (Rosenblith, 2008). In this case, indoctrination is understood to mean that in order to teach students appropriate measures of morality, it must be taught as it relates to religion. Valk (2007) discussed how the morality of education and religion, specifically Christianity, was used as the moral worldview in the Manitoban/Canadian public education system for a long time. The removal of this view of morality was due to the desire to separate religion and state. This meant religion was removed from the school system and replaced with citizenship as the means of teaching moral lessons to students about what is right and wrong and how to behave appropriately in society, which Valk (2007) believes holds an inherent risk of implementing a form of political or ideological indoctrination.

Even with this movement to remove explicit uses of religion from public schools, it is not a subject matter that goes untouched or unquestioned. Teachers in Manitoba are expected to teach about world religions in the context of their Grade 8 social studies curriculum. This research examined how teachers navigate issues related to religion as it relates to their own experiences with this curriculum in Manitoba. To begin, religion is defined as part of the glossary of terms. Two key drivers of the research are the separation between religion and state in Canada, namely the separation outlined in the Charter of Rights, and the clash over what is reasonable accommodation. The introduction concludes with outlining the structure of the research that was carried out.

Charter of Rights and Freedoms

With the passing of the Constitution Act in 1982 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Canada adopted the Charter of Rights of Freedoms into its constitutional framework. The Charter specified rights and freedoms inherent to all citizens of Canada that cannot be taken away. As the focus of this research is the exploration of teacher experiences with world religions, the two most pertinent charter rights are Articles 2(a): Freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b): freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.

Even though these rights are universally held by citizens of Canada, it is important to know that are limitations placed upon them. These limitations are described in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as "subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society" (Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982). As such there have been many court cases that have helped to define these limitations. Clarke (2013) explores these cases in his article "Religion, Public Education and the Charter." In this article, Clarke quotes the judgment of R v. Big M Drug Mart Ltd (1985) in which the Supreme Court of Canada defined freedom of religion as follows:

> The essence of the concept of freedom of religion is the right to entertain such religious beliefs as a person chooses, the right to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal, and the right to manifest religious belief by worship and practice or by teaching and dissemination (R v. Big M Drug Mart Ltd. 1985, ¶ 94).

The Court continued:

> Viewed in this context, the purpose of freedom of conscience and religion becomes clear. The values that underlie our political and philosophic traditions demand that every individual be free to hold and to manifest whatever beliefs and opinions his or her conscience dictates, provided *inter alia* only that such manifestations do not injure his or her neighbours or their parallel rights to hold and manifest beliefs and opinions of their own (R v. Big M Drug Mart Ltd. 1985, ¶ 123).

Even though the right to freedom of religion is guaranteed, there must be a balance between one's freedom of religion and the rights of others to have their own opinions. Freedom of religion does not allow for one to oppress or overrule another's freedoms. As such there are a variety of legitimate reasons for excluding and including religious education in the public school system. These reasons are discussed later in this research. For now, it is important to note that while someone may have the freedom to their own religion, that freedom does not allow them to remove the same freedom from another person.

By means of example, one only has to look at the court case of R v. Keegstra in the Supreme Court of Canada to see one overstepping their religious freedoms. Mr. Keegstra was a social studies teacher in Alberta who expressed his views in class that there was a "Jewish conspiracy to undermine Christianity and western civilization" and held the holocaust never actually occurred (Clarke, 2005). As a result of this, he was summarily released from his duties as a teacher. Even though his values were held in a deep religious belief, they overstepped the boundaries laid out by the Supreme Court and attempted to sway the students in his classroom to his way of thinking.

In Quebec, concerns around the reasonable accommodation of religious differences led to the creation of a province-wide commission examining the issue. This commission released a report outlining various recommendations, one of which was the creation of a mandatory Ethics and Religions course for public schools (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). After the report by Taylor and Bouchard resulted in the creation of this mandatory course, a group of Roman Catholic parents filed a constitutional challenge under section 2(a) against the course and demanded a reasonable accommodation of an exemption of their children from having to take the class. The Court unanimously dismissed the case citing that the parents had not shown the program had interfered with their ability to impart their religious teachings onto their children (Choudry, 2013). When another constitutional challenge comes, Choudry believes it will be from religious parents citing that the mandatory course is "too" secular.

In 2013, the Quebec the government proposed a Charter of Secular Values that proposed, among other things, banning the wearing of overt religious symbols by employees of the government or government agencies (CBC, Quebec Charter of Values (Various)). When the Marois government that had been proposing this charter was defeated in the April 7, 2014 election in Quebec, this proposal suffered an abrupt end. Had it passed into law, it likely would have resulted in a charter challenge under Section 2(a). It would have been an interesting court case to follow and to know what the Supreme Court of Canada would have decided given they had already upheld in various instances the right of students and teachers to identify religiously (Clarke, 2005).

The biggest impact from all this is the change to the Manitoba social studies curriculum in 2006. Much of this social studies curriculum is based on building "good citizens." Active democratic citizenship is in fact one of the main skill outcomes all students are evaluated on. As

part of this curriculum, there is a large emphasis put on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This means any exploration of world religions that takes place in the context of social studies will occur against a backdrop of a solid understanding of both of these documents (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). As this research is based in the Manitoba Context as well as the social studies curriculum, it is necessary to conduct a cursory investigation into the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and ascertain how it may impact this research.

This raises two questions that have been discussed in the popular media and elsewhere in Canada (especially Quebec) as well as other parts of the world: To what extent should a society go to allow for the religious freedom of others? Is there a level of what many have called "Reasonable Accommodation?"

Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation is a term found under most human rights legislation and refers to the duty of an employer or government to accommodate a person or persons based on protected rights (Reasonable Accommodation, 2010). With the increase in immigration throughout Canada from other parts of the world, there comes an increase in differing religious values held by those who are immigrating. One only has to look at the most recent census to see there has been a significant growth in religious diversity between 2001 and 2011. "In 2011, about 2,373,700 people, or 7.2% of Canada's population, reported affiliation with one of these religions. This was up from 4.9% a decade earlier, as recorded in the 2001 Census." (Statistics Canada, 2013, p. 2). As such, it is not surprising the issue of reasonable accommodation of religious rights has also become a topic of discussion.

Reasonable accommodation has come to the forefront of the Canadian conversation since the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms into the constitution in 1982, and, it has continued to grow in the conversation due to the increase of immigration from non-Christian countries to Canada. Quebec is one place where there has been a significant change in the cultural landscape. Rymarz (2012) notes there has been a seismic change since the middle of the 20th Century. The key aspect, according to Rymarz (2012), was the sudden decline in the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Along with this collapse of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church came the rise of a more secular mentality as well as an influx of peoples with a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. Quebec has become home to a large number of new immigrants who do not necessarily have a link with the province's religious history (Gagnon 2008). According to Bibby (2009), many of the new immigrants arriving in major cities such as Montreal, are Muslim, orthodox Jews, as well as an increasing number of people from south Asian communities who identify as Hindu or Sikh. In their 2008 report on cultural and religious accommodation, Taylor and Bouchard acknowledged these ever-growing religious communities in the increasingly secular province of Quebec can lead to a great deal of tension (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008).

This tension burst with the passing of two policies in the town of Herouxville, a predominately white and francophone community, where Mayor André Drouin put in place a code of conduct banning the stoning of women and covering faces. These policies were stated by Drouin to be "preventative" of honour killings or stoning. Given the actions these types of policies were meant to prevent are already found in the law under the criminal code of Canada as murder, it was seen as offensive and demeaning to the Muslim population (CBC, Quebec's Culture Clash, 2008). It was this specific instance that led to the formation of the Bouchard and

Taylor Commission into reasonable accommodation. This clash spread further as the immigration minister of Quebec proposed a law that would prohibit Islamic women who work at front-line government agency jobs from wearing the niqab (the full cloth covering of a woman that shows only the eyes) (CBC, Reasonable accommodation bill polarizes opinion, 2013).

A key question that arises from these actions is: What role does government have in religious rights and freedoms? It seems clear the federal government of Canada as well as provincial governments should have legislative powers to dictate certain rules for those who are in their employ, but does it not exceed their power to remove the rights of another person? Based on their actions in implementing specific legislation it appeared the immigration ministers in both Quebec and Canada believed that they could. Jason Kenney, immigration minister for Canada (2013-2015), was the first to support a national bill that mirrored the one proposed in Quebec. In 2011, the Government of Canada passed into law a ban on women wearing the niqab while taking the oath of citizenship. This ban, which cost the government over $420,000 in legal fees, was overturned in 2015 (CBC, Niqab ban legal battle cost federal government more than $420K, 2015). Yet the tensions and debate surrounding the wearing of the niqab have not diminished. Leading up to the most recent election, Statistics Canada reported 83 per cent of Canadians support forcing Muslim woman to remove the niqab to take part in the oath of citizenship (CBC, Charter of Rights and the niqab collide in views on 'Canadian Values', 2015). So, then, if it is acceptable for the government to limit individuals' religious rights, what role should schools play in acknowledging and teaching about these rights and infringements to them?

More recently the Government of Quebec has taken direct action in schools' interaction with peoples and their faiths. The "Quebec Charter of Values" polarized the landscape in

Quebec by recommending the ban of all overt religious symbols worn by those in the public sector. This move mirrors the constitutional policy of laicité in France - the separation of religion and state - but it goes counter to the typical understanding of Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CBC, Quebec Charter of Values (Various)). Interestingly, a disproportionate number of cases that deal with reasonable accommodation and the Charter have come from Quebec and often are dealt with using the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Choudry, 2013). If it had become law, the Quebec Charter of Values would have had a significant impact on future cases dealing with religious freedom.

Schools have a direct role in the shaping of citizens through education. Rosenblith and Bailey (2007) argued religion plays a major role in defining the identity of peoples of other cultures, and one way to help achieve this goal is to have students understand the religious differences of others. Yet teaching religion has become contentious in public schools and elsewhere (Rosenblith et al., 2007). This religious-cultural clash is amply evident in newspaper reports, whether it is the conflict between evolution and creationism in schools from the southern United States (Rosenblith et al., 2007) or the harsh and strict laws towards Muslim women in France (CBC, Quebec's culture clash, 2008). Such examples establish clear reasons why we must learn about religion.

Yet these arguments for teaching about religion must be balanced against instances that contravene the Charter rights of others. As we saw above, there are serious legal and moral challenges when teachers who have strong religious values express them in the classroom.

Significance of study

To date most studies on teaching about religion have come from Europe and have focused on the perspectives of students. This study will contribute to the literature by providing a unique Manitoban perspective on the issue. It will add to the research on this topic undertaken in Europe by providing a Canadian example that focuses on teachers' experiences more so than on students' perceptions. Furthermore, this research provides deeper exploration of the personal, professional, and social factors that influence education about religion in the Manitoban context.

This research contributes to the literature by exploring how teachers experience and approach the teaching of world religions when they are required to do so. The research allows for teachers in the study to have a better understanding of their own approaches to teaching about world religions, and allows for a discussion surrounding the positive and negative experiences teachers have had with the subject matter. The findings will be useful for other teachers struggling to teach about world religions in specific school contexts that are secular.

Defining Key Terms

The first key term to define is "world religions." There are hundreds of religions and sects in the world. For their class on world religions, Lester and Roberts (2009) included major traditions like "Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam." Six of these religious traditions (Sikhism is not included) are found within the Grade 8 social studies curriculum in Manitoba and these six religions will serve as the definition for the term "world religions" for this research (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006).

Two key terms relating to the teaching of world religions are: religious education (RE), which denotes religious education, and education about religion (EAR). Anderson (2013) has

defined RE as referring to denominationally affiliated schools that explore religions from within a particular religion, for example a Catholic private school. By contrast, he defines EAR as referring to an academically accountable course that promotes critical thought and eschews indoctrination by providing a balanced and scientific approach to teaching about religions (Anderson, 2013). Anderson argues it is important to explore religions through a neutral perspective and provide students with the facts. This is what he means by "Education **about** religion" as opposed to "Religious education." (2013) What is important to note is while Anderson's definitions seem clear and scholarly, some of the literature referring to teaching about world religions tends to use the term RE. To side with Anderson's more accurate phrasing, this thesis will use EAR.

Another key term is religion. In his paper presented to the Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education conference in Winnipeg, Anderson defined religion as "an umbrella term which includes closely related terms like "personal belief," "spirituality" and "faith" (2013). As Anderson's definition provides a broad and flexible understanding of the term "religion" it is the one which will be used for the purpose of this research.

Purpose and Research Questions

This thesis seeks to explore the approaches, perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of Junior/Middle School teachers (Grade 8) with respect to teaching about religion in the Manitoba classroom. The specific research questions that will guide this study are:

1. What are the foundations and basis of the current debate, practice, and approach to education and religion in Canada? (International comparisons will be drawn to give

perspective to the variety of mandatory religious education approaches that can be taken.)

2. To what extent do personal, social and professional factors play a role, either positive or negative, in teachers' experiences and approaches to the Grade 8 social studies curriculum pertaining to religion?

3. What are teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the teaching of world religions, and to what extent have their beliefs, attitudes, and pedagogical approaches shifted or evolved since the implementation of the 2006 Grade 8 social studies curriculum, specifically the section on world religions?

There are some important contextual components that need to be explored in order to frame this research. The foundations and basis for the debate surrounding education and religion in Canada is an important contextual piece that will provide a framework and background into the reasons why religion in public schools can often be seen as controversial. To look at the past actions taken by the government in Quebec in respect to their Charter of Values, a document that was being developed to provide a mandate for religious neutrality including not wearing overt religious symbols by government employees and having one's face uncovered while receiving public services, it is clear such actions would have had a huge impact on the jobs and experiences of teachers when they were no longer able to identify themselves religiously, or when they were no longer allowed to accommodate their students by providing Halal or Kosher foods (National Post, 2013). To comprehend the significance of this impact and thus explore ways of addressing it, it is helpful to include international perspectives that show a variety of

different approaches that have been undertaken by jurisdictions to implementing mandatory religious components in their education systems.

Secondly, there are personal, professional, and social factors that often play a role in how teachers choose to approach the teaching of a certain subject. It is important to examine this secondary piece to broaden the context of the third research question. For this, personal factors will refer to one's own personal upbringing, religious background, social background, education, experience with religion, and other personal aspects such as race and gender. Social factors refer to those aspects that will impact teachers' approaches or experiences, such as teacher involvement, diversity of students, and political climate towards the particular topic. Professional factors include the curriculum documents, professional experience, knowledge of the subject matter, and administration and community supports.

The third important factor to explore when dealing with these specific research questions has to do with the new Grade 8 Manitoba social studies curriculum that was released in 2006. Teachers have only been using this curriculum widely since 2007 as it was piloted in 2006. This is the first time that world religions in any context have been mandated as part of a wide-spread curriculum in Manitoba. Exploring this timeframe will help to determine whether or not teachers have shifted their beliefs about whether religion belongs in the classroom, their attitudes towards teaching world religions, and their approaches towards the integration of this subject into their lessons since working with this new curriculum.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The following literature review includes primarily peer-reviewed journal articles, curriculum documents, and newspaper articles that addressed the political climate surrounding reasonable accommodation, teaching about religion, and specific educational situations. The journal articles focused on the Canadian and international context from 1970 to 2013, with the majority generated between 2009 and 2011. They explored specific EAR programs at the national and international levels that criticize Education about Religion research, provide insight into the cultural clash surrounding "reasonable accommodation" in Canada and France, and provide a multitude of reasons why religion should and should not be taught at school. This literature review also attempts to get at the important contextual pieces that play roles in developing teachers' approaches and informing their experiences with world religions, the professional factors that relate to reasons for including and excluding religion, and personal factors, such as a teacher's beliefs. The review identifies gaps in the current literature.

Education about religion in Manitoba and other jurisdictions

Education about Religion

There are a variety of places around the world that include Education about Religion (EAR) as either a mandatory course or as a part of another course. To show how EAR can differ from country to country, three examples from Canada are provided – one from Manitoba, one from Newfoundland and Labrador, and another from Quebec – and three examples from Europe: England, The Netherlands, and Norway. It is important to expand this examination to a more global context. With the world becoming smaller through technology, there is greater interaction

between people from around the globe with various beliefs and cultural practices. As students increasingly communicate with people from around the world with relative ease, we see a matching globalization of our curriculums. While there are other areas in Canada where there is religious education in the public schools, such education is not mandatory and so is excluded from this analysis.

Manitoba

In Canada every province is given jurisdiction over its educational programming. In Manitoba, six religious traditions, Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, are found within the Grade 8 social studies curriculum (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). As well, there are many instances in which latitude is given to communities to develop "school-initiated courses" in order to meet specific needs. These courses need to be approved by the administration and the school board (Public Schools Act, 2015).

The curriculum document gives teachers basic information around the religions. It gives teachers specific resources, black line masters to use when teaching the lessons on world religions. First is a note-taking frame that indicates to teachers the information they are to provide students on each of the religions. Specifically, teachers are asked to explore the following questions about religion with their students:

- When/how did it begin?
- With whom did it begin?
- What is the name of its sacred writings?
- What are its central teachings?

The second resource is a two-page document that contains quotes from important texts from each of the religions presented. These quotes are selected to give students a small sample of the teachings of these religions found within their important texts. Teachers are also provided with the answers to the 4 questions they are to ask students; alternatively, they can have students research the answers to these questions using the web and other sources (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). A vocabulary circle is provided to teachers to help them explore key terms when discussing Islam as well as a timeline of important events during the rise of Islam. (See Appendix 2 for these documents)

The Government of Manitoba will release a document in 2016 which deals with basic religious information for teachers in respect to accommodation. This document will provide teachers with important details about the religions they may encounter in their classrooms with an express focus on helping them accommodate students with respect to specific religious requests. It is important to note this draft document does not provide resources for teaching nor does it provide advice for how to approach teaching the subject matter (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015). Rather, this document is part of a broader approach to supporting diversity in classrooms. The Government of Manitoba is also currently in the process of developing an optional Grade 12 course on world religions. This course is in the early stages of development but indicates the province is recognizing the importance of not only having teachers be aware of diverse religions within their classroom but also the importance of teaching about religions. (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2012).

Newfoundland and Labrador

In 1997 the Newfoundland government transitioned from church-run religious education to secular education. This was challenged in 2000 by the Roman Catholic Church and went to the Supreme Court of Canada where the challenge was denied, solidifying the legality of the change (Ferrin, Gibb, Randall and Stucki, 2001). The Newfoundland government has a quasi-mandatory (parents can opt students out) provincial RE curriculum which begins in Kindergarten and runs through to Grade 9 with option courses in Grades 10 to 12. Prayer is included in the courses and they are taught with representatives of clergy. While students are able to opt out of these courses at parental request, the government has stated that the schools are required to offer the courses as well as observe all Christian and non-Christian holidays, at parental request (Ferrin et al., 2001). The express purpose of the curriculum is to help students grow religiously, spiritually, and morally, becoming informed about the various religions in society so they be contributing members. It explores the similarities and differences among religions and faith communities as well as the unique qualities of the living faith communities and the followers of the religions (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [NLDE], 2016).

The curriculum explores religions using three specific strands. Historical perspectives are used to give students a picture of how these religions developed in the historical context, similar to how world religions are approached in Manitoba. Second, individuals' perspectives are explored to help give students an appreciation for personal meaning and an exploration of the meaning of life. It is also meant to give students the opportunity to grapple with moral and ethical issues and teachings. Finally, community and environment perspectives are explored to give students an appreciation of all creation, as well as help students see the link between

religion and science, exploring how religions influence contemporary issues and events (NLDE, 2016).

The Newfoundland and Labrador course is the only example in Canada of a K-9 mandatory exploration of religions. Because of this length and depth, students are able to explore various aspects of world religions and delve deeper into each of the faiths. These courses explore traditions and practices in Aboriginal Spirituality (Innu, Inuit, Mi'kmaq), Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism until they arrive at Grade 9. Once students are in high school, religious education is no longer mandatory (Hoven, 2013). If students do decide to continue they will find in Grade 12 there is an option to take either World Religions 3101, which delves into more religions, or 3106 which further explores the previously taught religions. World Religions 3101 includes: Aboriginal Spirituality, Buddhism, Early Religions (Confucianism, Jainism, Taoism, Shintoism, and Zoroastrianism), Hinduism, and Buddhism (NLDE, 2016).

While this course is a unique example of education about religion within Canada it does raise some concerns. First, this course is taught by designated teachers within the districts who are assigned to teach the courses with representatives of the clergy. By doing so, this makes this course more of a religious education (RE) experience than education about religion (EAR). A second concern is the inclusion of prayer in these classes – a practice at the very least open to misunderstanding by students who do not practice the given faith. Finally, students are able to opt out, resulting in an unevenly educated student population. While Newfoundland and Labrador has taken some very positive steps by including such a deep exploration of world religions beginning in Kindergarten, the concerns raised above are aspects that weaken its effectiveness.

Quebec

In their final report on reasonable accommodation in Quebec, Bouchard and Taylor indicated the Quebec government should vigorously promote the new ethics and religious cultures course (2008). The Quebec government accepted this recommendation and created a mandatory EAR course for students in Grades 10 to 12. It is the only one of its kind in Canada. While there are other examples of RE courses taught at the high school level in Canada, they do not take the same neutral approach nor are they mandatory. In Quebec's program the teacher is seen to be an impartial and critically engaged mentor. They are asked to assist students in their inquiries and to set the stage for them by providing factual information about specific religion or beliefs, providing a classroom context where students are encouraged to be engaged in the material and reflective of what they learn (Rymarz, 2012). Teachers are also expressly instructed not to share their own beliefs or opinions.

The religions students study within this program are Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Native Spirituality, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, as well as any other religion at the discretion of the teacher. Weight within this program is still given to Christianity; religions are not treated equally even within this government-mandated program. Within this program, religious culture is broken down into sub-categories: sacred text; beliefs; teachings; rituals; ceremonies; rules of conduct; places of worship; works of art; practices, institutions and types of organizations (QEPSC, 2008).

England

In England EAR is a prescribed national curriculum that runs from Kindergarten to Grade 12. At each level students are exposed to a scaffolding of concepts in an attempt to build

understanding of world religions. It is a non-confessional subject that does not seek to nurture students in a religious faith; rather, it is a compulsory subject that attempts to help students understand a variety of world religions they may encounter (Everington et al., 2011).

Part of the role of EAR in England is to close the distance between students and their communities. The 'distance' is described by Miller and McKenna (2011) as including ethnicity, religion, language, social class and economic status. According to the 2011 census data from England, the religions present in the nation are: Christianity (59.3%), Buddhism (0.4%), Hinduism (1.5%), Judaism (0.5%), Sikh (0.8%) and Muslim (4.8%) (Office of National Statistics, 2011). These faiths are all represented in the national curriculum but are weighted by the length of time given to exploration.

According to the curriculum support document, EAR in England has a focus on Christianity while providing an overview and insight into other world religions. To quote the department of education:

> Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It can develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, of other principal religions, other religious traditions and worldviews that offer answers to questions such as these (UK Department of Education, 2010).

The Netherlands

The Netherlands presents a significantly different approach to EAR. While Catholic and Protestant faith-based schools may be familiar in Canada, the Netherlands employs a practice

known as pillarization (Leeman, 2008). EAR is based not on a national or regional curriculum but is developed and shaped by each school. These schools, while entirely publicly funded, are considered to be 'pillars.' The same policies that apply for the creation of Catholic and Protestant schools also apply to the formation of Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim schools (Everington et al, 2011). Rather than integrating, each religious community is able to segregate itself through the creation of its own schools (Leeman, 2008). As of 2008, the schools represented were 30% Catholic, 30% Protestant, and 30% secular. This leaves approximately 10% of schools that are based on other faiths (Leeman, 2008).

Despite the fact schools are able to segregate based on religious belief, they are still required by law to teach a course on intercultural education. Based on research, however, the majority of schools that actually teach this class are secular schools with an ethnically diverse population. Generally, school heads tend to avoid this obligation or deal with it so superficially they have little or no effect on the students or the situation (Leeman, 2008).

Norway

EAR in Norway is a prescribed national curriculum, one that does not include any sort of religious practice. Interestingly, Norwegian EAR is set against the backdrop of state-sanctioned Lutheran Christianity. The second article of the Norwegian constitution states:

> "All inhabitants of the Realm shall have the right to free exercise of their religion. The Evangelical-Lutheran religion shall remain the official religion of the State. The inhabitants professing it are bound to bring up their children in the same." (Skeie, 2006, p. 21)

It should not come as a surprise that in Norway EAR Christianity is allocated the majority of the time for the class. Christianity is prescribed approximately 55 per cent of class time. The remaining time is split between non-Christian religions and worldviews at 25 per cent, and ethics and philosophy at 20 per cent (Skeie, 2006). The EAR curriculum in Norway recognizes it is important for students to be exposed to other religious traditions while maintaining the strong Christian heritage of Norway. This curriculum also recognizes that students of various faiths should explore these religions together, not separated as in the Netherlands (Skeie, 2006).

These examples were chosen because each region has some level of mandatory education about religion. Each takes its own approach in respect to depth, content, and focus and each has their own challenges in terms of equality, effectiveness and the rights of the students. While these approaches each have their strengths as well as weaknesses, it is important to explore the reasons in the literature for including education about religion as well as for excluding it from the classroom so we can have a fuller picture of this landscape. The selected EAR curriculums have a different focus than the one found here in Manitoba. While these courses are meant to explore religions in a way which builds understanding and capacity about the religions and those who practice them, the Manitoba curriculum's main focus is to provide the historical context and importance of these religions. Secondary to this is a basic understanding of the religion itself.

Professional Factors – Reasons for including and excluding world religions

Positive Experiences and Arguments for Including Education about Religion

There is no simple reason to teach about religion. From examining the literature, there are four reoccurring themes: culture, education and culture, knowledge and citizenship, and religious

illiteracy, which will be discussed in this order. Each of these themes draws from the idea of cultural identity and the ability of students to connect themselves with other people in their communities. In order to do this, it is essential all students have an understanding of the religions practiced by others. In other words, they must have some level of religious literacy.

Culture

The culture in which a person is raised can have a direct influence on their relationship to those in their cultural group and the dominant culture around them. Being able to explore differences and find similarities contributes to a general understanding and helps students to articulate their own identities as well as understand the positioning and identity of others (Rosenblith and Bailey 2007). Students need to gain fluency in talking about religion in the public sector so they can talk across religious and ethical differences. It does not do well for students to have not only unclear ideas of their own identities but also to be unable to communicate with those of other faiths (Kunzman, 2012).

Adler (1971) expanded on the concept of cultural identity and explains it as being both a person's understanding of their own culture as well as their relationship to those cultures around them. Adler believes this understanding is a fundamental aspect of a person's existence. Teaching about world religions in public schools encourages those of the dominant culture to connect with those of minority cultures and allows for both to acknowledge themselves within a multicultural society. One's cultural identity is formed through an understanding of one's own existence, their values and beliefs, and their ability to place these ideas within the dominant culture (Adler 1971).

Education and Culture

Kunzman (2012) argues students need to gain fluency in talking about religion so they may understand its role in their societies. If they are able to recognize the role religion plays, they will be able to talk across religious and other ethical differences as they navigate their public lives. Kunzman calls this idea *civic multilingualism* while Rosenblith and Bailey call it *religious literacy* (Kunzman, 2012; Rosenblith and Bailey, 2008). Whatever one chooses to call it, Kunzman, Rosenblith and Bailey agree religion is likely one of the greatest social challenges students will face in the 21st Century at home or abroad. Kunzman argues schools need to step in and not sidestep the influence religion has in society (2012).

In the late 1990s in Modesto California, a predominately white community began to see an influx of Latin American Catholics, European Jews, Asian Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, as well as Arab and non-Arab Muslims. After the arrival of this diverse population, this community began to face struggles between the now religiously diverse communities within their town. The result of the tensions was the formation of a committee of community leaders from a variety of different groups and stakeholders that ultimately led to the creation of a school course on world religions, the first of its kind in the district (Lester and Roberts, 2009).

James Banks, a well-known scholar on multicultural education, lays out specific guidelines to help inform schools on the importance of teaching about cultures. Banks (2001) believes it is necessary for ethnic and cultural diversity to permeate throughout the entire school culture and not just to be a small part of what is happening in individual classrooms. Schools need to recognize and respect cultural diversity and promote cohesiveness. Teachers should not be afraid to talk about their own cultural and religious experiences when teaching students, and

they should not have to be afraid of any sort of retribution or discipline for doing so. Banks agrees with Adler (1971) that students should be able to see themselves in the greater cultural norm that exists in the school. Banks goes on to say teachers should not be homogeneous. Rather there should be a good representation of different cultures and ethnicity within a school's teaching staff. Overall, Banks argues for greater inclusion of cultural diversity within the school environment and to eliminate the "hidden curricula" – the part of the curricula that is not formally taught but which communicates to students the school's view on a variety of issues including multicultural education (Banks, 2001). Religious education encourages students to develop their own sense of cultural identity in relationship with those of their classmates.

Knowledge and Citizenship

Schools have a role in making a citizen. Rosenblith et al. (2007) argued religion plays a major role in defining the identity of peoples of other cultures, and improving students' religious literacy helps achieve this goal. Yet teaching religion has become contentious in public schools and elsewhere (Rosenblith et al., 2007). Cultural contention is evident in newspapers, whether it is conflict between evolution and creationism in American schools (Rosenblith et al., 2007) or the "harsh and strict" laws towards Muslim women in France (CBC, Quebec's culture clash, 2008). There are more and more reasons why we must learn about religion in order to be able to better understand those people who live within our communities, locally and nationally.

Haynes stated public schools have far more religious expression and study about religion than they did at any time in the last 100 years; the problem is they are not getting it right (2011). Getting it right, according to Haynes, matters because religion and religious liberty matter to a well-lived life. It is even more important because religious illiteracy may be a contributing factor

to rising intolerance in the world. If we hope to reduce this intolerance, schools need to take religion seriously. Schools are not just to focus on learning about religion as an issue of religious literacy but also as a fundamental and inalienable right for every person (Lester & Roberts, 2009). Once these students understand diverse points of view they will be better prepared to explore ways to compromise with others and maybe even find common ground (Kunzman, 2012).

Rosenblith (2008) and Valk (2007) argued teaching about religion in the public school system will not only close the gap in religious knowledge, improve relations with communities, and build a capacity for tolerance, but it will also create citizens who are more likely to recognize the place of the individual within the greater society while also being more likely to take part in civic actions. Kunzman (2012) agrees with this assessment when he said "Simply put, anyone who seeks to engage thoughtfully and critically with the ideals and realities of democratic citizenship must have an appreciation for the role that religions play in citizens' lives" (p. 44). In particular, schools can contribute to creating citizens who are willing to accept the differences of others through respect and understanding, and who are willing to take a stand for individuals' civic and national rights.

How can schools properly educate students about important historical events like the Crusades, the attacks on the USA on September 11,2001, the conflicts in the Middle East or even the debate on reasonable accommodation and the Quebec charter of values without understanding religion? (Choudry, 2013) Further, if we help our students better understand religions and their place in history and current affairs, will they be any worse for wear?

Religious Illiteracy

With the advancements in technologies such as Skype, Google hangouts, and the spread of broadband Internet, it is easier than ever for us to communicate with others no matter where on the globe we live. More than any time in the past, we depend on people whom we have never seen, and they too depend on us (Nussbaum, 2010). Part of being a global citizen is being aware of the differences that exist in people from around the world. The most pressing problems humanity faces - global warming, economic downturns, and political strife - are global in nature. They have an effect on everyone, not just one nation's citizens (Nussbaum, 2010). There is a multitude of issues facing people around the world, such as the drug trade, sex trafficking, and the threat of nuclear proliferation that can only be dealt with at the multinational level.

Imagine what the United Nations would be like if ambassadors were unable to recognize the differences that exist with the other ambassadors with whom they interact (Nussbaum, 2010). Knowledge is no guarantee of good behaviour, but ignorance is almost an assurance of poor behaviour.

Students need opportunities to come to terms with the differences that make understanding one another so difficult. Religion and culture are complex topics requiring patience and respect to be able to teach and to understand. Teachers need to take the time to wrestle with these controversies with students in a safe space (Rosenblith and Bailey, 2008). This is a necessity for young people as they grow up in this ever-growing global village so they will be able to work together and strive towards solving the problems our species faces (Nussbaum, 2010).

Negative Experiences and arguments for Excluding Religion from Public Education

There are a variety of reasons to exclude teaching religion in public schools. The reasons for exclusion come directly from charter challenges in the Supreme Court of Canada. When one takes their right to freedom too far and begins to impose their beliefs to the detriment of other groups, the courts often determine that they have overstepped their bounds.

Paul Clarke (2012) discusses a variety of court cases in his book *Understanding curricular control* and in his article *Religion, public education and the charter*, both of which reinforce two reasons religion should be excluded from school – indoctrination and violating the rights of others.

Indoctrination

Indoctrination can take many different forms. It could be a blatant attempt to push one's faith onto another by putting down and marginalizing other faiths; it could be as subtle as simply giving more attention and praise to one religion over others (Clarke, 2005).

The court case involving James Keegstra (Clarke, 2005) presents a clear example of a teacher attempting to indoctrinate his students into a specific way of thinking. Keegstra focused his attention during his history classes to promoting the idea that the Jews were responsible for an international conspiracy that was undermining Christianity and western civilization (Clarke, 2005). This is a very obvious example of attempted indoctrination, but the risk of indoctrination runs through all forms of EAR.

In Manitoba there are only two pages of documentation to help teachers understand the religions they are expected to cover. As stated earlier, teachers are provided with four questions

they can either ask students or have them research the answers using the Internet (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). The questions are as follows:

1. When/how did the religion begin?
2. With whom did the religion begin?
3. What is the name of its sacred writings?
4. What are its central teachings?

These questions may sound innocuous, but when there is little curricular guidance the door is left open for teachers to influence the direction classes take and to decide how much focus each faith gets. It provides an opportunity for a teacher who may be so inclined to use this as an opportunity to expose students to beliefs and values which may border or even cross into indoctrination.

In Quebec, teachers are expressly instructed, within the curriculum document, not to share their own beliefs or opinions when teaching the EAR course mandated by the government (Rymarz, 2012). While this is an important direction to give to teachers, weight within this program is still given to Christianity by devoting 60 per cent of the curriculum to Christian faiths, with the other 40 per cent devoted to other religions (Rymarz, 2012). The other religions are not treated equally even within this government-mandated program that expresses direction to limit teacher opinions (QEPSC, 2008). While it is true the majority of religious practitioners in Canada are Christian (Statistics Canada, 2013), there has been growth in religions other than Christianity, as well as in the non-religious population since the 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Whenever there is more weight given to one religion over others, the risk of indoctrination is present. Anderson (2013) states, in a presentation to the Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education, that the curriculum in most Canadian schools, if it continues on its current path, is under-inclusive at best and indoctrinating at worst. He continues by describing an indoctrinating classroom as one precluding questioning, precluding "otherness" and precluding grappling with ambiguity.

Internationally, human rights also come into play when debate rises over whether religious freedom outweighs the risk of indoctrination. "Freedom of religion" is used by both pro- and anti-education advocates to argue for religions' curricular inclusion or exclusion. While on one hand parents of religious students argue their children are being overlooked and alienated by school curricula, non-religious parents, on the other hand, fear including religious beliefs will not only run the risk of indoctrination, but it will also break down the walls between secular and non-sectarian education, thus limiting tolerance for diversity, rational and critical thinking, and individual autonomy, which is widely considered an essential part of a secular, liberal society (Evans, 2008). Teachers with strong personal beliefs need to be very careful they are not imposing, intentionally or unintentionally, their own beliefs and values on the students in their classroom (Skeie, 2006).

Overall, there is a significant risk of indoctrination when including any sort of religious education within the classroom. On top of this, indoctrination comes hand-and-hand with the potential for violating charter rights.

Violating the Rights of Others

According to the Supreme Court of Canada, the freedom to religion is subject to limitations necessary to protect others, including the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. Clarke (2005) believes any sort of religious expression that could potentially undermine the rights of others, specifically minorities, has no place in the classroom. The question then is what sort of religious expression could potentially do this?

There are both explicit and subtle forms of indoctrination. In the case of Ross v. New Brunswick, we find a subtler case that ultimately involved a teacher violating the rights of others through his actions outside of the classroom.

Ross, an elementary teacher, was disciplined and removed from the classroom for writing articles, books, and editorials stating, like Keegstra, that western civilizations were being undermined by an international Jewish conspiracy. What is clear from this case is that even outside of the classroom, teachers are held to a higher standard than the general populace in that they are expected to express views that promote equality and preserve the rights of others. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld the disciplinary action despite arguments from Ross that his writings were protected by his freedom of religion. They stated in their 1996 decision that

> In relation to freedom of religion, any religious belief that denigrates and defames the religious beliefs of others erodes the very basis of the guarantee in s. 2(a) – a basis that guarantees that every individual is free to hold and to manifest the beliefs dictated by one's conscience. The respondent's religious views serve to deny Jews respect for dignity and equality said to be among the fundamental guiding values of a court undertaking a [section] 1 analysis (Clarke, 2005, p. 356).

At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that teachers inherently put themselves at risk of disciplinary action by including any sort of religious expression in their classroom. If they are not careful and stray into the realm of promoting one set of values over another they run the very real risk of stepping, perhaps even unintentionally, into the realm of denigrating or defaming the beliefs of another religion.

Personal Factors – Teacher belief

Knowledge and Belief

Distinguishing belief from knowledge is an important, but daunting undertaking according to Pajares (1992). There are varying ways of defining what it means to believe something and what it means to know something. "Knowing" a student is a troublemaker is different from knowing the square root of 36 is 6. Pajares, drawing on Nespor (1987), differentiates the two concepts stating "belief" is viewed as knowledge of a sort where that knowledge is a system of semantically stored information, but beliefs reside in episodic memory with material drawn from experience or from cultural sources (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs cannot be fully understood or observed. They must be inferred from what people say, intend and do. Ultimately, all teachers hold beliefs about their work and their approach to teaching, however it is defined, which influences their work, their attitudes, and how they approach teaching their students (Pajares, 1992).

Personal Beliefs and Perceptions

A teacher's personal beliefs have an impact on the way in which they approach the teaching of a subject to their classroom. Ernest (1989) determined that while two teachers may have similar knowledge of a subject matter, in his example mathematics, they could still teach it

in a different way. He suggested a teacher's beliefs are important in their decision-making process and in the way they teach their students. This is an important factor to consider when we talk about teaching world religions.

It is even more important to keep teacher's beliefs in mind because of the role they play in structuring the environment in which they teach their students. The classroom, school, and community all play an important role in students' abilities to learn (Hachfield, A. Hahn, A. Schroeder, S. Anders, Y. Stanat, P. & Kunter, M. 2011). In fact, Hachfeld et al. state, "a large body of evidence from various countries shows that teachers' beliefs significantly influence how they plan, organize, and implement their lessons and how responsive they are to their students" (2011, p. 987). The personal beliefs held by a teacher could therefore impact not only the approach they take in teaching about world religions but also the value and importance they place on cultural diversity.

While teachers may feel strongly about their beliefs, it is important they do not use their position of power and authority to impose their religious beliefs and values, either intentionally or unintentionally, on their students (Skeie, 2006). Teachers in all of the countries interviewed by Everington et al. (2011) believed their own personal beliefs and values definitely impact their diversity related perceptions and their strategies when educating about religion. For example, teachers involved in education about religion generally felt their own personal upbringing and family background played an important role in their development as teachers and impacted their perceptions and beliefs when it comes to education (Everington et al. 2011). One Estonian teacher, for example, whose parents were not really involved in her life as a child and who felt she needed to hide her Jewish identity from the other students at her school has now grown up to

become a teacher who places strong value on religious identity and the differences between her students (Everington et al. 2011).

This assertion is supported by research done into teacher beliefs and worldviews (Pajares, 1992, Rajuan & Bekerman, 2011). In fact, those teachers who held strong religious beliefs emphasized to their students the importance of religious diversity and respect to their students. Also, all made sure to say they would never impose their own views on their students nor would they reveal their strongly held beliefs to their students (Everington et al. 2011).

How teachers perceive and value religious education both factor into the success and support that a program will receive. In the Netherlands, for example, Leeman (2008) shows there can be wildly different beliefs held by school leaders in the same community. When interviewing principals to find out how they approached the implementation of the mandatory Citizenship Education programme from the government, which includes education about religion, their responses were totally different. While one held that religion is most certainly a topic to be dealt with in the classroom, he was unwilling to include it because of the potential conflict from the community. On the other hand, a principal in the same community but a different school believed that equality was paramount to success in this program and that teaching about religious diversity and the personal beliefs of students would be a hindrance (Leeman, 2008).

James A. Banks, in his book *Cultural Diversity in Education* (2001), lays out some guidelines to teaching about culture (which invariably includes religion). He argues it is important for teachers who have strongly held ethnic or cultural backgrounds that they should talk about them openly with their students to engage them in dialogue and to promote a more open community of diversity in the classroom and school as a whole.

Since teacher beliefs can play such a major role, either as baggage or boon, to teaching about world religions, it is important they be discussed and explored openly. Hachfeld et al. (2011) identified two major approaches that teachers can take in respect to their beliefs and discuss how they might impact the classroom in respect to cultural and ethnic diversity.

First, a teacher could be an egalitarian. Egalitarians place significant importance on treating all people equally and tend to identify themselves as "colour blind." Egalitarians emphasize finding similarities and common ground between students of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and avoid focusing on or discussing broad differences (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).

The second role a teacher could take is as a Multiculturalist (Hachfeld et al., 2011). Multiculturalists tend to recognize that those with diverse backgrounds have legitimately different perspectives and beliefs and these differences are important and impossible to ignore (Park & Judd, 2005).

These two types of approaches to diversity of belief can have an obvious impact on an educator's approach to teaching about world religions. Egalitarian teachers are much more likely to stick with the standard curriculum as presented by the government and will not make attempts to modify their lessons or the curriculum based on the cultural backgrounds of the students in their class (Hachfeld et al. 2011). A Multiculturalist, on the other hand, is typically more willing to alter and modify curriculum based on the diverse nature of the students in their classroom (Hachfeld et al. 2011).

In the end, a teacher's own personally held beliefs do invariably influence the way in which they approach their teaching, and therefore it is important for teachers to be aware of this

when they are teaching their students about religion, staying aware of both what they teach and how they teach it. (Parajes, 1992; Rajuan & Bekerman, 2011)

Gaps

Focus on student perspectives

One obvious gap in the literature is that while teachers are at the center of education in respect to EAR, their perspectives are left out more often than not in the research. In the research exploring local and international mandatory EAR programs we find a focus on student engagement as well as student perspective (Everington et al, 2011).

Looking internationally as well as within Canada at EAR programs, the literature is consistent on this point. While there is a sincere effort to speak with teachers, the focus remains on the needs, experiences, and perceptions of students.

In Quebec, for example, teachers are asked to assist students in their enquiry and set the stage for them to be engaged and reflective in the study of religion (Rymarz, 2012). Yet these same teachers are also expressly instructed not to share their own beliefs or opinions. Teachers are seen as role models by students and while examining the various religions, they could inadvertently influence students through the sharing of their personal beliefs. The curriculum document itself explains

> "Forms of religious expression must also be handled with tact in order to respect the freedom of conscience and of religion of each person. In this context, it is important that teachers maintain a critical distance regarding their own world-views especially with respect to their convictions, values and beliefs." (QEPSC, 2008, p. 12)

In England the focus is on how teachers responded to perceptions of their students in the classroom. It found English teachers focused initially on socio-economic differences between their students rather than ethnic or religious differences. All of the teachers wished to avoid drawing attention to students' religious affiliations and the difference between them as they wished to treat all students equally. There was some concern expressed that students might feel embarrassed if their religious affiliations were known (Everington et al. 2011). As well, Miller and McKenna noted the majority of teachers involved in RE in England are non-practising, Christian-heritage, and middle class (2011). Even though this literature asked questions of the teachers, touching on their own perspectives, the focus was on students rather than the overall experiences, positive or negative, of the teachers.

While teachers are interviewed and even asked to give their perceptions in a variety of research studies (Everington et al. 2011; Leeman, 2008; Bender-Szymanski, 2012; Skeie, 2006) the emphasis of these studies is on teacher perceptions towards their students rather than their own experiences.

Everington et al., for example, took a look at 6 different countries and 36 different teachers. They created personal and professional biographies of each of the teachers and then explored their perceptions and attitudes towards teaching about world religions. Teachers were asked questions that related to their students specifically. For example, the researchers asked "How would you describe the students in your school?" or "Thinking about the groups that you teach, are the students generally similar to each other or are there differences between them?" (Everington et al. 2011) The research did provide an examination of the teachers' personal beliefs towards religion and their pre-service training, though the largest section of this short report on findings was focused on students. Everington et al. drew connections between a

teacher's personal beliefs and the way in which they viewed the students in their classrooms. As this study involved 36 teachers from 6 different countries, Everington et al. only drew one conclusion and then indicated this could be a starting point for further research. The one result mentioned from their research was that the social context and personal beliefs of a teacher did play a role in the way they viewed their students and the involvement of religious discourse in the classroom (Everington et al. 2011).

Leeman (2008) explored the social and political context of the education program in the Netherlands in reference to the government's policy of "Freedom of Education" and how it has related to education about religions. Within the Dutch system of pillarization, it was possible for groups to present themselves as "special" to gain status under the law and be able to teach within the public school system as a religious school. Numerous reports in the media regarding Islamic schools as sites of abuse, specifically referencing segregation of sexes, led recently to extremely thorough inspections of existing Islamic religious schools. Under current immigration policies as well as the recent privatization of the pillarization model, new restrictions have made it more challenging for the creation of Islamic schools (Leeman, 2008). Ultimately though, Leeman concludes that preparing students to live in an ethnically diverse country must be an aim of schools. Teachers, based on their closely held beliefs, may differ in attitude on this subject, but if schools are meant to be public places that represent the society in which they exist, Leeman believes that schools should prepare students for the reality they will enter after school ends (Leeman, 2008). Teachers were interviewed and asked questions about policy and how it impacts their teaching. Again, the focus of the small section was less on teachers' own experiences and more on the experience of the teachers in relation to how they see their students. The emphasis on the study was whether or not public schools are an appropriate place to address issues of

religion and diversity; it does not delve into teacher experiences or approach to education about religion.

Skeie (2006) also focuses on the social and political climate and its relation to religious education. She explores how the fundamental Christian infrastructure impacts the implementation and debate surrounding education about religion. She provides a comparison of the approaches taken by the French, the British and the Norwegian and compares these to their societal norms and approaches to religion and state. She concludes that while the approaches and social policies are different in each country, they all recognize the importance of social cohesion. Skeie ends by concluding that dealing with religious education on a political level is inevitable and will be dealt with in numerous ways. Skeie suggests the emphasis be placed on the individual child and the context in which that child lives, with a plan to give opportunities to exchange thoughts and ideas in a safe place (Skeie, 2006). The examination of teachers' perspectives is almost non-existent and refers only to the impact and effect on students' experience.

All of these research studies attempt to speak with teachers and get their perceptions and attitudes but invariably they are student-centric. It will be important during this research to focus on teacher experiences and approaches while recognizing that teacher experience is invariably tied to the experiences and response of the students in their classroom.

Filling the Gaps

Exploring the literature on EAR in Canada and other jurisdictions in which a religious curriculum is mandated, it becomes obvious the focus is on student experiences rather than on teachers' experiences and approaches.

Lester and Roberts's 2009 article: *How teaching world religions brought a truce to the culture wars in Modesto, California* provided an exploration of a course that was initiated with the express goal of bringing the community of Modesto together through greater understanding.

Lester and Roberts focus their attention on how students developed through the course and the impact it had on their active democratic citizenship. There is at no point in their research a discussion of teacher experiences with students from the class nor is there an exploration of how the course might impact teachers as a whole (2009).

In England the EAR program study explored how teachers responded to perceptions of their students in the classroom (Everington et al. 2011). There, teachers focused initially on socio-economic differences between their students rather than ethnic or religious differences. Teachers wished to avoid drawing attention to students' religious affiliations and the difference between them, as they wished to treat all students equally. There was some concern expressed students might feel embarrassed if their religious affiliations were known (Everington et al. 2011). As well, Miller and McKenna noted the majority of teachers involved in EAR in England are mainly non-practising, Christian-heritage, and middle class (2011).

While the research into this EAR program does include teacher perspectives, the focus is directed toward students rather than the teachers themselves. Everington et al. do take an opportunity to begin exploring teacher experience but again the focus is directed toward how it affects their presentation of EAR curriculum to students rather than how they themselves experience EAR (2011).

What becomes clear from the above literature review is a knowledge gap. Even though there is occasional reference to teacher experiences, the focus for much of the literature is

directed toward the effect these experiences had on students. What is lacking is an attempt to determine the teachers' experience when teaching EAR, which could include how teachers present the course to their students and the reasons they take this approach. My research is intended to fill some of this gap relating to the teaching experience. James Banks' theoretical framework for integrating multicultural concepts in school curriculum is used to examine and interpret teachers' experiences with world religions.

Banks' Theoretical Framework for this research

James A. Banks is a renowned researcher in the area of multicultural education and cultural diversity. His initial research into Multi-ethnic education began with a Spencer Fellowship and has led to the present where he sits as the Kerry and Linda Kellinger Professor for Diversity Studies and is currently the Director of the Centre for Multicultural Education. In his book "Cultural Diversity and Education" (2001) Banks explained teachers are socialized within ethnic, racial, and cultural communities. From these communities, teachers have developed a certain set of values, beliefs and ways of knowing that come from within their cultural communities. These experiences he found ultimately defined how a teacher approaches educating students, including multicultural education. His approach includes education about religion.

Banks' research included exploring how teachers integrated and explored multiple cultures within the context of a public school curriculum. His research led to proposing a developmental model for teachers as they integrate multicultural education into their curriculum. He posits that teachers integrate various aspects of multicultural education through multiple phases. The context of multicultural education changed for Banks when the Black civil rights

movement began in the 1960s. This led to the creation of more multiethnic courses as more ethnic groups demanding separate studies, which prompted a broader multiethnic education as these courses became more widespread and globalized, adopted by more and more American teachers, finally culminating in multicultural education (Banks, 2001).

Banks' research into the historical and present practice of multicultural education discovered a variety of approaches of integrating multicultural education into the classroom. He considered these approaches to be hierarchical, based on the level to which teachers' integrated multicultural aspects across more and more of their classes and practices. In addition, for some teachers his multicultural education approach was not evident. Teachers who have negative attitudes towards multicultural education or who do not believe it is a valuable or necessary endeavour have actually been found to be ineffective in their teaching strategies and, in some cases, harmful in relation to integrating multicultural education (Banks, 2001).

Banks described four approaches, each with higher levels of integration of multicultural education and practices, but he notes moving through the approaches is a slow process. Banks also suggests the ultimate integration moves beyond the individual teacher and their classroom to include multicultural education that permeates the curriculum and the education environment as a whole. The integration of multicultural concepts into the everyday teaching in the classroom is necessary, in Banks' opinion, for success of students who are not part of the cultural mainstream. This is a reconceptualization of history – a radical shift in practice to integrate aspects from the multiple cultures who make up a classroom into its teaching rather than the Anglo-white middle-class centric approach many schools follow (Banks, 2001).

The four approaches/levels of multicultural teaching Banks described begin at the contribution approach, ethnic additive approach, transformation approach, and decision-making and social action approach. Each is described below.

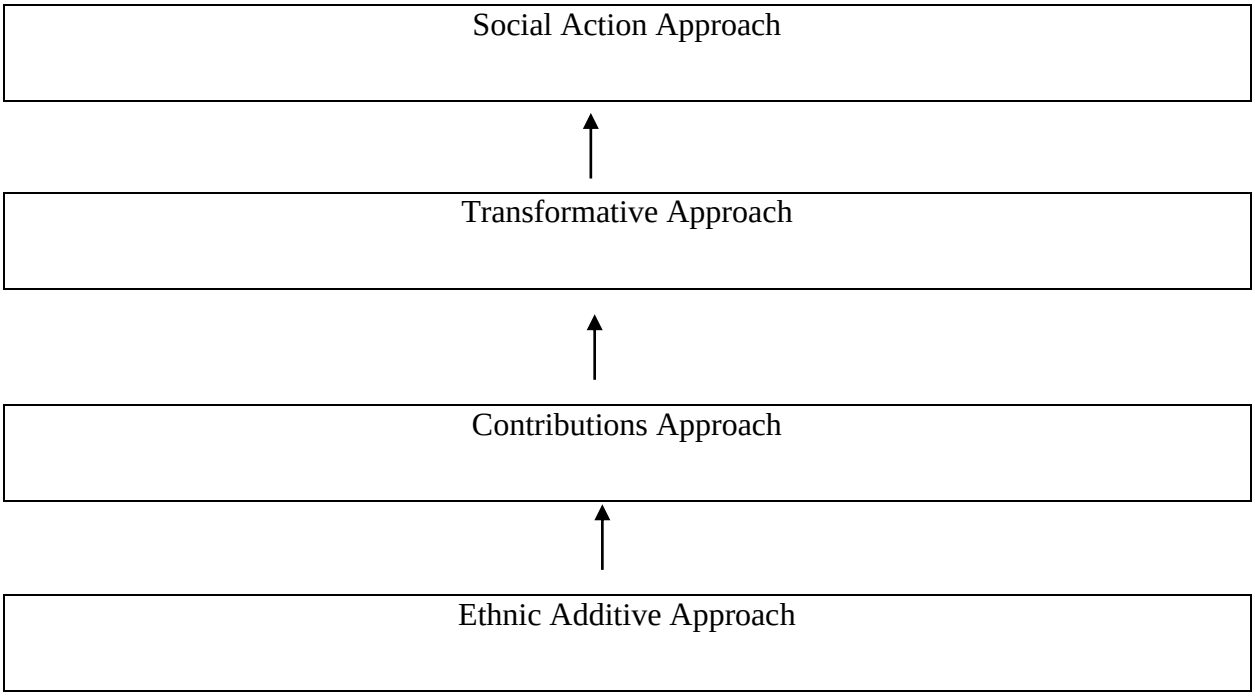

Figure 1. Banks' Four Approaches

The Contributions Approach

The contributions approach is the most frequently used within the public education system. This approach is characterized by the addition of ethnic heroes, such as Martin Luther King Jr. or the Dalai Lama, into the curriculum. The curriculum remains unchanged and it is only made more cultural by including references to heroes of other cultures.

A variant to this approach is called the heroes and holidays approach but it ultimately falls along the same line and under the same umbrella. This variant tends to only be connected with important days within certain cultures, such as Cinco de Mayo, Martin Luther King's

birthday and African American History month. During these occasions teachers will involve students in lessons, activities, projects that are related to the ethnic group being recognized.

Banks found this approach was the easiest one for teachers to integrate some multicultural content into their curriculums. This approach involves teachers adding or appending multicultural comments to the main historical and societal story featured in the curriculum. Teaching in this way glossed over the important concepts of victimization, oppression, struggles for equality as well as issues over racism and poverty.

According to Banks, this approach tends to result in the trivialization of ethnic cultures. The teacher presents them as strange and exotic, which can reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions. It focused on one-off contributions and unique aspects rather than helping students understand these cultures as complete and dynamic wholes (Banks, 2001).

The Ethnic Additive Approach

The next level/approach, according to Banks's hierarchy of multicultural integration is to take themes, topics, or concepts and include them as part of the curriculum. This is typically done through the inclusion of a book, the creation of a unit, or of adding a course to the curriculum without changing it substantially.

This approach allows the teacher to put multicultural content into the curriculum without restructuring it, which is a more time-consuming effort. While this approach reveals that a teacher was taking steps to deliberately integrate some material, it shares many of the same concerns as the contributions approach, including being limited in depth toward multicultural concepts (Banks 2001).

The largest shortcoming Banks found with this approach was that the multicultural components were typically viewed through the lens of mainstream historians, writers, artists and scientists rather than taking the ideal next step and finding sources of information that were not mainstream-centric. For example, if the teacher was doing a unit on how the crusades affected life in the Middle Ages, they may integrate into the unit a lesson or two on how Christianity and Islam influenced the wars, including the religious reasons behind it. Even though this unit would look at the life and the contributions of the Christians and Muslims, it would be doing so through the context of the mainstream-centric history of the West rather than exploring each culture on their own merits.

The Ethnic Additive approach, according to Banks' research, does not allow for students to come to an understanding of the importance of the multicultural contributions to our country nor to our nation's diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious groups, and how all histories are interwoven.

The Transformation Approach

The Transformation Approach, as described by Banks, included definitive and deliberate efforts of the teacher to move into the realm of integration. Rather than including a long list of contributions, heroes, and holidays, this approach includes changes to curriculum that allow students to view lessons from a variety of cultural perspectives, including source material and "voices" from different cultures. Applied to a Grade 8 social studies class, this approach would have a teacher consistently refer back to the impact and the role that religions played in the development of ancient and medieval civilizations.

Rather than taking one small unit to speak on impact, or talking about the particular heroes or holidays that have emerged because of religious impact, the teacher would be framing the exploration of the time period within the context of the role of religion. The approach focuses on how specific medieval empires emerged and thrived/fell not due to individual actions but due to the social context and the diverse groups of people trying to co-exist at the time (Banks, 2001).

The concern with the Transformation Approach is whether the teacher is capable of fully integrating topics into the curriculum. It takes a great deal of knowledge in the area as well as intensive research to be able to fully present the perspective of the Muslims during the crusades rather than solely focusing on the European-centric crusaders. There is also the potential a teacher might overlook certain areas of knowledge because they do not fit with that teacher's own perspectives – or they may be viewed as too difficult or time consuming to include.

The Decision-Making and Social Action Approach

The Decision-Making Approach includes all the elements of the Transformation Approach but adds some components students may need to make decisions and take actions related to the concepts being studied. If religious intolerance or oppression is the focus of conversation as it relates to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, students might want to explore how they can reduce religious intolerance or oppression that exists in the world today. They would gather data, analyze their values and beliefs and identify courses of action that may be taken before finally deciding if they will in fact take action. This approach is meant to empower students to not only understand subject matter from different perspectives (as in the Transformation Approach) but also to be willing and capable of taking action (Banks, 2001).

This approach is by far the most complex and work-intensive for the teacher. It requires a great deal of time and effort and I expect will be undertaken by the least amount of teachers during this research. This approach requires the teacher to not only have the knowledge to fully integrate subject matter into their everyday teaching but also the drive and willingness to help students deal with difficult questions and decisions as they arise.

This approach also relies heavily on the students; it is their uptake of concepts and their seeing value in change that will ultimately drive the decisions and actions that define this approach.

Mixing and blending approaches

Banks (2001) recognizes this hierarchy of approaches will take a lot of time and effort on behalf of the teacher to move up the steps. As such, he concludes these approaches can be mixed and blended as a teacher moves from one to the next. These approaches can be used as methods of stepping outside of one's comfort zone in order to begin the path towards the next approach. It is not realistic to expect a teacher to be able to leap instantly from the first level/approach to the final level/approach – the progression will rather be gradual and cumulative. Banks does not make any reference to time frame nor to process in respect to progressing through the different approaches. Banks also recognizes moving through the levels/approaches requires teachers not only become more confident and knowledgeable in their subject areas, but is directly tied to the value they place upon integrating multicultural content and perspectives.

In order to move from one approach to another a teacher will need to take steps as they feel comfortable. It is absolutely necessary that a teacher have the support of their community and the administration team of the school in which they work to be able to undertake a drastic

change to the curriculum and their teaching practice. Administrators are responsible for assessment and discipline at the school level. As such, they have a great deal of say in the approaches taken by teachers in the classroom. Ultimately, without their support it is unlikely teachers will move beyond the additive or contributions approach even if they feel desire to do so.

Discussion and implication for proposed study

Bank's model of integrating multicultural education into the classroom offers a theoretical framework that is relevant to my research question related to teaching world religions. The first two approaches are similar to one another as are the last two. There are at least three main reasons this framework is relevant. First and foremost, Banks' framework enables an exploration, analysis and interpretation of the experiences of teachers, with an ability to categorize their level of integration of religions. Second, Banks' multicultural framework included world religions, which is the specific topic of this research. Third, Banks' work is still well recognized, which is important since this proposed research is intended to study current experiences of teachers.

There are several interesting notions that Banks raises in his overview of his four approaches. During the analysis of my research I will be keeping a close eye on some of these notions to see whether I can answer some lingering questions I have. Central to Banks' framework is the fundamental notion that teachers develop sequentially, from low to increasingly high levels of integration of a multicultural education. What is not known is whether all teachers go through all levels and whether they step back to a lower level at times. My research will

examine the dynamics of Banks' hierarchy as if all teachers progress through the levels of integration.

Another question that arises from Banks' framework relates to the approaches being sequential, from low to high levels of integration, with the potential for blending between one and another. My research will establish and analyze the teachers' chronology on integrating world religions over their careers to better understand the sequential nature of Banks' approaches.

Another important question pertains to the composition of the students. If the classroom is more ethnically diverse, does that create a context for teachers to move to a higher level of integration? Although Banks' did not address this consideration directly, it could be a factor. This research intends to examine teachers in ethnically diverse areas of Winnipeg and this necessitates an effort to factor in different degrees of ethnic diversity in the classroom. To answer these questions will require specific responses in the research method and overall research design.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Conceptual framework

This research will be conducted using case study methodology. When exploring case study methodology there are two authors who appear the most frequently in the literature: Stake and his book *The Art of the Case Study* (1995), and K Yin, specifically his book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2013 is the edition I used). As these two authors are the most prevalent in exploring the use of case study methodology, they are the ones who have informed the perspective taken and the design of this research as a case study.

Yin explains that many earlier social science textbooks failed to consider the case study as a formal research method at all. It was often considered to be the exploratory stage of some other research method or it was confused with ethnographies or participant-observation. Case study design and methodology begins with the logic of the design. Yin (2013) says this starts with the scope of the case study:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
    a. Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
    b. The boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

He goes on to explain a case study would be used because one wants to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth, but such understanding has some important contextual conditions that need to be considered in interpreting the phenomenon. This is done by not only binding the data

through the use of boundaries and criteria to limit the possibility of a "data explosion" but also by gathering data not only from interviews but also possibly documents and artifacts (curriculum documents, for example). Yin also states case studies are useful in answering "how" and "why" questions in this context. An example given in his book is that a case study could be used when trying to answer, "How and why a high school principal has done a good job" (Yin, 2013).

While Yin takes this very detailed approach to laying out the design and research methodology of case study, Robert Stake, who is widely cited, places the emphasis on the object of a case study by writing that the focus of case study methodology is defined more by a phenomena of interest in the individual case rather than the method of inquiry (Stake, 1995). What both Yin and Stake can agree on is case study methodology involves the examination of a phenomenon within a particular context that uses data triangulation as a means of ensuring validity of the research. Data triangulation often means the same point or theme is repeated from different sources. Equally important is when these different sources differ on an important point; this, too, can lead to insights.

My choice to use a case study for this research comes from my examination of the literature and consideration of the research question. Stake describes multiple types of case studies that can be used including "intrinsic," when something observed by a researcher which sparks interest, and "instrumental," where a researcher has a specific research question, a need for general understanding, and a belief they may be able to get the needed insight through using case study methodology (Stake 1995). For the purposes of this research, the type of study that fits best is an intrinsic case study. This type is typically used when the study is something that interests the researcher. Whether it was something the researcher observed in his or her own classroom or something they learned about through conversation with colleagues, it is a case that

has a particular intrinsic interest for the researcher (Stake 1995). Yin writes that a case study is a rigorous qualitative research method that allows for the opportunity to explore or describe a phenomenon in context. It allows for the researcher to explore individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs (Yin, 2013).

Using a case study helps me place boundaries on the exploration of my research questions and allows me to direct my research in an effort to avoid an explosion of data from occurring. Both Yin (2013) and Stake (1995) suggest binding by determining boundaries to be important since it eliminates the possibility of having a question that is too broad with too many objectives for one study. As such, it is important to determine the case study and the focus.

A case study research method was used in my research to frame the overall research design of this project. The case study has been defined with specific criteria while the sample of participants and their recruitment has been described. Personal interviews are the primary data source and thematic analyses are used to generate findings. Each aspect of the method is described below.

This research took the intrinsic case of teachers' experiences with world religions and explored it within the context of the Grade 8 social studies curriculum. This afforded an in-depth exploration of the specific case by gathering data from interviews, literature review, and curriculum documents used by teachers to attempt to paint a picture of the experiences teachers have within this particular context.

Methods

Determining a case study

This research examined teachers' experiences with world religions. Case studies can be used to examine phenomena, such as teacher experiences, within their real life context (Yin, 2013). Criteria are essential to a case study since they differentiate the case to be studied from everyday activities. Three criteria defined this case:

1. Grade 8 social studies: This curriculum in Manitoba includes world religions.
2. Currently teaching: Of particular interest to this research are those who are currently teaching Grade 8 curriculum, since there have been changes in the past few years to include the section on world religions.
3. Ethnically diverse. The highest likelihood of detecting Banks' four multi-cultural approaches is in a context with high ethnic diversity. A context with different ethnicities is where teachers will likely be questioned by students and will have reasons to further adapt and develop their own teaching experiences with world religions.

In Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg celebrates a huge cultural diversity; such diversity is particularly evident in inner city schools. As such, the case study is defined within the City of Winnipeg, specifically with Grade 8 social studies teachers. Taking the boundary of the city ensures there are sufficient teachers to draw a sample.

Determining and recruiting a sample

A purposeful sample was used to determine the sample size of Grade 8 teachers in Winnipeg. Instead of seeking a random sample of all Grade 8 teachers in Winnipeg or a full

census of them, the approach taken was intended to meet the minimum requirement of a sample suggested by Yin at 3 to 5 teachers.

Recruiting the sample of participants was bound by the case study criteria and based on availability and willingness of the teachers to participate in the study.

- After ethics approval from the University of Manitoba (see appendix 3), the Winnipeg School Division chief superintendent was asked to grant approval for this research. The approval was done through the Winnipeg School Division research ethics board. Participants were not allowed to be contacted directly and so the approval allowed for contact through the school principals and divisional consultant for social studies. There are approximately 300 such teachers in this division.
- Secondly, the first 5 teachers meeting the specific criteria of this case study who responded expressing interest were invited to participate in this study. The teachers selected to participate in this study were not from the same schools. All participants were from schools in areas with high levels of diversity but not all schools were located in the city centre. One of the schools was a dual-track French immersion school.
- Third, upon acceptance, a mutually agreed location was selected and I met each participating teacher and provided a consent letter. An interview which ranged from 40 minutes to one and a half hours was scheduled with each participant.

Gathering data with interviews

Personal interviews were with participants at their convenience. Time and date were mutually agreed upon and location was one in which there was a relative assumption of privacy from their supervisor. The interview began with participants reading through the consent form

and signing it. Each participant was assigned a specific pseudonym, which was recorded separately for confidentiality.

The interview was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide with questions designed to gather information in the following areas (see Appendix #1 for the specific questions):

- Gather background information about the teacher e.g. length of teaching career, length of teaching the social studies curriculum in Manitoba, value placed on multicultural education, personal beliefs, connection with a religious identity, why they became a teacher, what keeps them teaching, and level of knowledge with respect to world religions.
- Categorize teacher's approach of education about religion based on Banks' model. Determine if the teacher's development has been slow or fast, e.g. # of years
- Determine extent of teacher's development with integrating education about religion over their teaching career

The interviews were recorded on a passcode-protected iPhone and then transcribed; I used the transcripts for analysis. Participants were also invited to review a summary of findings once completed.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used for this study. The initial themes reflected the personal, professional and social factors, and were used to further form subthemes for each set of questions (Boyatzis, 1998). The second prong of this analysis used Banks' theoretical framework to explore how the teachers approached the Grade 8 social studies curriculum in relation to world

religions. The third prong of the analysis is centred on Banks understanding that the four approaches are a hierarchy through which teachers can progress through over time. Through a set of questions, I explored how their approach has progressed over three time periods; in their first use of the curriculum, in their current practice, and in their trajectory toward the future. The unit of analysis places the teachers within each of Banks' four approaches. Curriculum documents from the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Quebec were used as sources of information when exploring how teachers are asked to teach about world religions. These documents were read for information and notes were taken. Having taught the Grade 8 social studies curriculum for 6 years, I was already familiar with the content.

Accuracy and Validity

Accuracy (Stake, 1995) of the data I collected was made clear by using a consistent data collection process with semi-structured interview questions to ensure the same process was followed for each individual to the extent necessary. This allowed for the participants to have the opportunity to answer the same questions as the others while at the same time allowing for me as the researcher to explore other avenues of questioning as they arose. The choice of using a semi-structured interview process ensured all participants were asked questions to collect data in the same areas while at the same time providing sufficient flexibility to have a personalized approach with each participant. Interviews were recorded in order to ensure accuracy of the collected data, with each recording labelled with pseudonym and date.

Internal validity is assured by allowing the sample to review the findings of this study, confirming their anonymity is not revealed (Creswell, 2007). By using pseudonyms for the participants as well as the schools and neighborhoods in which they teach, participants are less

likely to feel as though they will be identified by what they say. This allows for a greater validity of the information shared by the participants, which was further confirmed through a saturation of data from the participants.

Researchers Bias and Positioning

It is important for me to bring to light any potential bias I may have within this study. As a graduate of a university program in religious studies and ancient and medieval history, I believe there is an inherent value in having a clear understanding of the religions of others in a multicultural and ethnically diverse country. I also think it is impossible to separate the role of religion from ancient and medieval civilizations. As such, I am of the mind that a course in world religions would be beneficial in preparing students for the eventuality of interacting with others from diverse backgrounds as well as including it as an important part of the Grade 8 social studies curriculum.

Even so, my first task in this study is to present this research in a way that is as unbiased as possible, sharing the approaches and experiences of teachers as they presented them to me. I recognize my bias in this matter and, having recognized it, I am certain it did not impact my judgment in the analysis of the data collected. In conducting this research, each of the participants were given the opportunity to share in-depth stories of themselves, their teaching approach to world religions and their classrooms. As the interviews continued, I began to see data saturation in the responses of my participants, which informed me that the data I had collected were represented by more than one participant and that my bias had remained in check.

It is also important for me to note that I work in a position which represents teachers. I am the vice-president of my teachers' association, specifically the bargaining agent for that

association. This position offers many opportunities to work with teachers in difficult situations and has influenced my perspective on issues facing teachers in the workplace. This position has also informed me as to what challenges teachers might face should they be involved in a situation that could result in discipline for their actions inside and outside of the classroom. Rather than a concern, my work experiences are of value to this research as they provide a deeper understanding of process and challenges faced by teachers in the classroom, especially in situations of discipline and the way in which the media approaches teachers' actions.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Introduction

To gather the data used for this research I had to find participants who not only fit the criteria for the research but were also interested. However, to gather participants I first had to pass ethics at both the university and divisional level. Ethics approval at the divisional level proved challenging as it had to go through a variety of processes before being signed off by the superintendent, resulting in an unanticipated delay. Each time I contacted the divisional ethics chair asking for an update, I was asked to resend my application. After a lengthy process the application was eventually sent to the chief superintendent for signing. At the same time my application was being considered there was a divisional concern over the practice of religion in schools as well as the divisional budget. I can only assume these items contributed to the delay.

Once I received ethics approval, I contacted every Grade 8 social studies teacher who fit the criteria through the principals at their schools as well as the divisional social studies consultant. It proved more difficult than expected to find teachers interested in participating in the research. I believe this is due to the increased workload teachers have been facing over recent years. This study was seen as “just another thing to do” and only those teachers who felt they could manage the time responded positively. I also believe being required to contact teachers through the principal and divisional consultant may have resulted in a lower-than-anticipated sample size. If I had been allowed to speak directly with teachers, there may have been more interest.

The final result was of the search was a sample size of five participants. This sample proved to be an excellent source of information. After interviewing the five participants, I started

to notice data saturation and I was able to get in-depth stories from all of the participants which provided a wealth of data to analyze. The data used in this analysis was collected through a semi-structured interview process.

The interviews were held at a location that was mutually agreed upon and gave us a reasonable expectation of privacy. The interviews were amicable and participants, in most cases, were very eager to share their experiences and answer my research questions. In one instance the participant gave short answers and I had to draw information by digging deeper with questions, but there was never a time when a participant was uncomfortable answering a question. Their honesty and willingness to share was very helpful. Each interview took between 40 minutes and one hour and 20 minutes and were recorded and transcribed by myself.

After the transcriptions were finished, I listened to the interviews one more time while reading the transcriptions to ensure accuracy before printing the transcriptions.

I read through each transcription and coded answers based on recurring themes and elements in relation to the questions I had asked. My questions were designed to delve into areas relevant to my specific research questions, and the themes that arose from this analysis were expected. Comments were classified into seven main themes: personal factors, curriculum, knowledge, student diversity, teaching approach, development of teaching approaches, and experiences with world religions.

No unexpected themes arose; participants' answers consistently in fell into these thematic areas. While participants inevitably had different comments to make in relation to questions, the themes held true. Within each of these specific themes, sub-thematic elements emerged that are outlined and examined in more detail.

Personal Factors

A profile of each participant was prepared based on interview data. These profiles delve into personal factors that may impact the way they approach the teaching of world religions in their classrooms. The personal profiles of each participant also allow for a separation of personalities when reading through the responses and will provide a deeper understanding of the data as a whole. The personal factors explored in the profile were:

Teaching – Why they became a teacher, what keeps them in the teaching profession, and what they would change about teaching

Religiosity – Are they religious, were they raised in a religious family, what were their experiences growing up, and is religion a big part of their identity

Experience – How many times have they taught the Grade 8 social studies curriculum, what other subjects have they taught and whether they would classify their overall experiences with world religions as positive or negative

As well as these main themes, the subtheme of values was explored through the sharing of their personal beliefs.

Carla

Carla is a teacher in Winnipeg who came into the profession after a degree in theology. She describes it as being "40 per cent practicality and 60 per cent natural inclination." (Carla, line 3) Coming from a family of doctors and nurses, she felt she needed to go another route. She initially did a degree in theology but came to believe this degree was not applicable to the real world. After considering her options, Carla decided teaching was the way to go. She said she

decided to become a teacher "probably around my second or third job" (Carla, line 8). As someone who always liked sharing ideas she felt education and teaching was a good place to start. "I had a conflicted education experience but I guess that certain teachers, typically English teachers… I really connected with and really made me feel like I was understanding my place in the world… I wanted to extend that to others." (Carla, lines 9-12)

Having come to teaching in an indirect route and not being "one of those people that knew it from when [she] was small" (Carla, line 12-13) she has stayed in teaching because of the students and the level at which she teaches. "If I had to teach elementary or Grade 7, I would probably not stay in the profession very long, but moving into Grade 8 and being able to engage higher ideas and seeing some of those higher ideas start to gel… is really, really gratifying…building a more holistic body of knowledge rather than just feeling you are imparting trivia all the time. I find [it] really satisfying" (Carla, lines 16-22).

Still there are always aspects about a job one would like to change. Carla explained, "I struggle greatly with assessment. Buying into models and having it feel authentic to the learning experiences, I still haven't got into my system and I'm still working on that." (Carla, lines 24-26)

Carla was raised in a religious family in a Mennonite farming community. She grew up "understanding that what I actually believed and I was being told to believe were different things and I was raised in an environment where questions were not welcome." (Carla, lines 33-36) Carla found being raised in this environment difficult, "I struggled with that my whole growing up." (Carla, lines 36-37) It was one of the aspects that contributed to her leaving the church as soon as she had any say in the matter. It was not the primary reason she left, however – that was

her belief she "didn't fully understand because [she] had no place to explore it." (Carla, lines 37-38)

When Carla graduated from high school, it was her parents who helped her leave the community and finally "get [her] out of Dodge, so to speak." (Carla, lined 42-43) While at college she had the opportunity to "come to a much more extensive understanding of [her] conflicts, the historical premise for those conflicts and the implications of those conflicts." (Carla lines 45-46) This experience helped Carla as she "came to a deeper appreciation of [her] cultural heritage of [her] roots and the social justice aspect of it while further casting away the dogma and doctrine that came with it." (Carla, lines 51-53) Despite all of this, Carla still says religion is a big part of her identity. (Carla, line 55)

Carla began her teaching after travelling abroad to teach English in Japan. Upon returning to Canada she has had the opportunity to teach English language arts and social studies in both Grades 7 and 8. She had no experience with older social studies curricula since she began teaching in 2008. Carla has taught the section on world religions in the Grade 8 curriculum three times (Carla, line 106) and would describe the majority of her experiences with this section as "positive, absolutely positive." (Carla, line 134)

Emily

Emily is a teacher in Winnipeg who came into teaching after doing a degree in anthropology and world religions at university. "I didn't really have any set direction…then I moved to Venezuela and I taught English there and then I thought maybe I should teach because it seems like a pretty solid job." (Emily, lines 5-8) Emily's motivations for wanting to be a teacher are not typical; "I didn't really plan on having a family so I wanted to just travel and it

just seemed like a good job to have if you wanted to travel…essentially I just wanted a job that I could have some flexibility and time to travel." (Emily, lines 8-11)

Life had different plans for Emily; she became pregnant in her last year of education. Raising a child as a single mother set her life on a different course. Like Carla, Emily didn't really ever recall wanting to be a teacher when she was a child. Rather, it was a job that she fell into (Emily, lines 13-16). Emily stays in the teaching profession out of practicality: "I didn't really have a whole lot of choice because I was a single mom so I guess it was financially the best thing for me to do was to keep the job and I had time to be with her and I have the same holidays." (Emily, lines 24-26)

Emily does have some concerns with the teaching profession and would certainly like to see some things changed. "I guess sometimes the standardized testing is, I find it really an inaccurate way to evaluate students." (Emily, lines 36-37) Emily is also considering getting more involved in her local teaching association but until this point has been focusing on surviving the teaching profession and making sure life is structured for her child. (Emily, lines 39-42)

Emily was raised in a Catholic family and went to church until she was old enough that her parents let her opt out of it. They weren't the type of family that prayed every night but they did go to church on the major holidays. Even Emily's parents weren't necessarily sure they believed in God and Emily feels it was more of a social and community aspect for them than a religious or spiritual endeavour. (Emily, lines 55-60)

Today, Emily says she doesn't think religion is a big part of her identity, but in our conversation she indicated to me that she feels religion is "an extremely important thing to learn

about and [she] thinks it's a very important part of all culture whether it's organized or not… belief is what drives everybody." (Emily, lines 64-66)

Emily has taught the Grade 8 social studies curriculum five times (Emily, line 108) since starting teaching in 2006 and has no real experience with the curriculum before it included the section on world religions. She has only taught French and social studies since working in Manitoba (Emily, lines 170-181). With her background in world religions, Emily feels very confident talking about world religions in the classroom and believes this is part of the reason why her experiences in the classroom have been overly positive.

> Well, I love teaching it and my experience for the most part has been it's been extremely positive and that the students have, you know, year after year always said that was their favorite unit, maybe because I love teaching it and I do it well (Emily, lines 114-116).

Jane

Jane is a teacher in Winnipeg who comes with a wealth of experience, having taught for a number of years outside of Manitoba before moving here and taking up her current role. Still, like the previous two participants, teaching wasn't Jane's first choice.

> I was doing my experimental child psychology degree and doing a lot of TA work in the stats courses and could not conceive that people couldn't find averages… so I wanted to study educational or school psychology programs I was interested in required the psychology degree, education degree and two or three years of teaching experience, so I did the education degree, started teaching and decided I didn't need to go anywhere else, that's what I wanted to be: a teacher. So I didn't intend to be a teacher but I loved it once I got into the classroom (Jane, lines 5-11).

Still, teaching was always plan B for Jane: “I can remember in Grade 4 I wanted to be an Egyptologist and if that didn’t work I would be a teacher.” (Jane, lines 15-16) Jane loves teaching and finds every new day brings a challenge with it: “I think the variety…every day is different. No two days are the same. Most kids aren’t the same. Most mornings and afternoons there is a lot of variety… I’ve never taught the same way twice.” (Jane, lines 21-24)

Despite this love for the classroom, there are some things Jane would change.

> Since I’ve moved here they haven’t changed any of the curriculums. I guess social studies changed as I moved here, but I remember teaching in my home province the first few years everything was changing… it doesn’t really evolve to meet the needs of the people you are teaching (Jane, lines 28-31).

She also has some out of the box ideas for teaching that have come from some current research into middle school education, “I might even consider making middle school same gender only because the research would suggest that girls have such a hard time in Grade 7 and 8 with boys in the room that would be a really cool thing to play around with (Jane, lines 33-36).

Jane still attends church today and still has faith. In fact, Jane’s daughter attends a Christian school because in the public school system they “don’t address religions at all or anything, it’s swept under the rug as though it doesn’t exist and you can’t say you’re Christian in public [school] except Grade 8.” (Jane, lines 43-46) Jane was raised in a family that attended church every Sunday. While they did pray before bed as children, it was something that drifted off as they got older. Jane feels church was more of a community of friends for her and her family because they were newcomers to Canada and it provided an “extended family.” (Jane, lines 51-54)

> It really was important for us not having family in Canada to have the church and to have the youth groups and the swim team, too, because it provided those extended family members that we didn't have (Jane, lines 58-60.)

Jane initially told me she did not feel religion is a big part of her identity, but when she thought about it, she realized that it's not "until someone doesn't have religion then I realize how big it is. To me, I just take it for granted. It's part of who I am. I don't think it makes me special or different until I am talking to kids who say I don't believe in anything. I'm like, hmm, I guess it's bigger than I want to acknowledge." (Jane, lines 65-67)

As I stated previously, Jane has a lot of experience teaching: "Well, because I spent the first 10 years in elementary school, [I've taught] everything, and then when I came to Manitoba and started working in Middle School, it's been primarily language arts, social studies, and math at the Grade 7/8 level." (Jane, Lines 161-163)

Jane has taught the Grade 8 social studies course eight times but has only taught the section on world religions three or four times. This means that there are four times she did not teach that section. "It's one of many outcomes, so initially, really, that was not encouraged at all. It wasn't until a group of us decided that we would do it together, not on our own, because it's not a big section if you look at the clusters." (Jane, lines 104-106)

Unlike the other participants, Jane describes her experiences as varying depending on the class: "There's a group who just have no time for religion, but this is the 13-year-old we're talking about that doesn't have time for things outside their own world…Others who were really appreciative of understanding, especially during the Arab spring or now with ISIS, like, why are they doing that if it's a religion of peace?" (Jane lines 138-142)

Everett

Everett is a middle school teacher in a metro division in Winnipeg. He teaches in the immersion program at his school and even spent some time in France before deciding teaching was the profession for him. “I spent a year in France after my arts degree and I was actually teaching English there and I realized that, you know, it’s a career that I wanted to go into and work with kids and people” (Everett, lines 5-6.)

Everett made the decision at a young age and had the opportunity to go into education after his first degree without taking too much time in between. “[I knew I wanted to be a teacher] after coming back from France, so [I] would have been… 23 when I started” (Everett, lines 10-11).

Everett has some concerns with the teaching profession and feels that “there’s a lot of pressures and demands on teachers, more so now, I’d probably change some of that and put it back to just teaching.” (Everett, lines 20-21) In my role as a vice-president of my teachers’ association, I certainly have heard from my members there are many time-consuming initiatives and projects – many wish they had more time to just focus on teaching; something Everett obviously connects with.

Everett does not consider himself to be a religious person. His family wasn’t necessarily religious either, from his perspective, though they did attend church; “I was raised in a Roman Catholic household. I was baptized, and followed many of the sacraments that any good Christian is supposed to learn” (Everett, lines 34-35).

As Everett got older his experiences started to make him question some of his upbringing:

> I started to do more travelling and met great friends who were of other faiths. Then I started questioning some of my own upbringing and what I have seen from the places I have been and from my friends… I also started to see the chaos that many fundamental beliefs in religion can bring, so I started to move away from organized religion and started to reflect on my own beliefs and would consider myself more spiritual now than religious. (Everett, lines 35-40)

Even with this shift, Everett is still happy he was raised with an understanding of some kind of faith. "I'm glad I was raised with an understanding of some kind of faith… [With all my experiences,] I am able to appreciate the importance of religion in people's lives. Also, any of my understanding of other religions is usually compared to the lessons I learned in catechism. It gave me a basic understanding of how various religions organize themselves." (Everett, lines 49-57)

Everett has been teaching Grade 8 social studies for three years now and has taught the section on world religions every year. His experiences teaching the material have been fairly neutral. "I haven't had any positive or negative issues with it" (Everett, line 62) but when pressed on the matter a bit Everett said he feels the majority of his direct experiences with the section on world religions have been "… positive. I haven't [had] any backlash or questions asked." (Everett, line 74)

Besides teaching Grade 8 social studies, Everett also has experience teaching Grade 7 social studies and visual arts, Grade 5 and Grade 6. He hasn't had any experience working with the previous Grade 8 social studies curriculum (Everett, lines 99-104).

James

James is a teacher in the city of Winnipeg. James wasn't always a teacher and had a fairly circuitous route before he arrived at his current career.

> [Well] I've dropped out of university three times and then I was working at MTS and I was being moved into management and I looked down the road and I wasn't happy so [it] took me eight years to go back to university and then when I completed my BA I was really on the fence between law or education and I sided with education so I guess I really knew about six years ago (James, lines 8-11).

Despite having come to the teaching profession later in his life he still feels as though it was the right choice for him. "[It's] something I always wanted to do: I think it played to my strengths; it's a lot of fun; and I enjoy working with kids. I feel like it's worthwhile work." (James, lines 3-4). James stays in the profession for some of these same reasons, "It's very challenging, it's very engaging and its fun. I have a lot of fun at work and that's a big part." (James, line 15)

James sees technology as one place the education system could use improvement, based on his experience working in a technology-heavy environment at MTS. "If I had my way, a couple of things I would like to see is more technology and use it in not a token way but in an actual beneficial way." (James, lines 19-20) James also seems to have picked up an opinion I hear very often in my role as vice-president of my association, "I would love to have smaller

classes, too. I find that 29 kids, it's hard to make a really good relationship with every kid in every class and a smaller class would be great." (James, lines 20-21)

While James does not consider himself to be a religious person he was raised in a rather religious household. "I was raised in a Mormon family. My family's very devoutly Mormon. They actually trace their family back to the founding of that church so I've read diary entries and journals from people that were there at the very founding of Mormonism…but when I was around 18, 19, I decided that just wasn't for me." (James, lines 29-32) After leaving the church, James' religious identity shifted a few times before finally arriving at where he is today. "I became an atheist for quite a while and now I'm very much a confirmed agnostic, I don't know but I do enjoy studying religions, I think there is a lot of beauty and a lot of wisdom and if you just take them, take the supernatural out of it, there is a lot of beauty in them" (James, lines 32-35.) James also admits that religion is still a big part of his identity, saying: "Absolutely, absolutely. You can leave the Mormon [church] but a lot of those values, a lot of that worldview it's gonna stick with you." (James, lines 39-40)

James has taught the section on world religions twice (James, line 67). He was surprised by the way his class reacted to the section when he first taught it: "I was surprised by the instant buy in…it was just a natural thing that they genuinely wanted to know." (James, lines 71 and 76) Overall, James would describe the majority of his classroom experiences as being positive (James, line 80). As well as teaching Grade 8 social studies, James has also taught English at the Grade 7 and 8 level. At the time of our interview, he was teaching science and social studies to Grades 7 and 8. He had no experience working with the old curriculum. (James, lines 104 and 112)

Summary

Each of the participants interviewed had varied experiences. In order to draw comparisons between the participants for themes and shared background I created the following table as a means of visualizing the participants and the personal factors that will provide some insight into their entering the profession and their personal background with religion. For four of the five participants teaching was not their first choice. None of the participants consider themselves to be overly religious today but all of them had elements of religion in their family life growing up. All of the participants have taught about world religions more than once, and four of the five participants had overall positive experiences with world religions in their classroom. Everett was the only participant who chose teaching as a first profession and is also the only participant who doesn't feel that religion is a big part of his identity today. Jane was the only participant who felt her experiences with world religions depended on the classroom and all five of the participants had different aspects of the teaching profession that they would change.

Personal Factor Participant	Teaching a first choice	What Keeps them in teaching	Things they would change about?	Religious today?	Family life Religious?	Religion a part of their identity?	# of time they taught the WR section of Grade 8 Social Studies	Experiences overall positive or negative
Carla	No	Seeing students develop.	Assessment, make it more authentic.	No.	Yes.	Yes as it has provided deeper appreciation of her cultural heritage.	3	Positive.
Emily	No	Financial Stability.	Standardized testing, not a good mechanism for assessment.	No.	Yes.	No, but feels it is extremely important to learn about.	5	Positive.
Jane	No	Every day is different.	Update curriculums, look at research for best practices.	No.	Yes.	Yes, more so than she likes to admit.	4 of 8 times teaching the curriculum	Varied. Depends on the class.

Personal Factor Participant	Teaching a first choice	What Keeps them in teaching	Things they would change about?	Religious today?	Family life Religious?	Religion a part of their identity?	# of time they taught the WR section of Grade 8 Social Studies	Experiences overall positive or negative
Everett	Yes	Every day is different.	Reduce the demands placed on teachers.	No.	Yes.	No, is thankful for having grown up in a religious family but is more spiritual now.	3	Positive.
James	No	Challenging, engaging and fun.	Use technology more and reduce class sizes.	No.	Yes.	Yes, the values he learned growing up still influence him today.	2	Positive.

Figure 2. Summary of Personal Profiles

Thematic Analysis

Besides the personal factors that were asked in order to create a profile of each participant, I asked questions that looked at three key areas and each consisted of two sub themes, based on the responses from the participants:

Professional Factors

- *Curriculum lacks depth*
- *Personal knowledge and beliefs impact teaching style*

Social Factors

- *Making sense of what multiculturalism means*
- *Expression of cultural diversity by students in the classroom*

Teaching Approach in relation to Banks' Four approaches

- *My knowledge impacts my approach to teaching world religions*
- *Knowledge and comfort about world religions impact approach over time*

I will explore each of these areas with special focus on their respective subthemes. The participants speak for themselves in relation to my analysis of their responses.

These three themes play a role in what the teachers' experiences have been in the classroom. As a final part of the analysis section it is important to take a look at the experiences each of the participants had with world religions in their classrooms.

Professional Factors

There is a variety of professional factors that come into play when teaching about world religions to a Grade 8 classroom. These factors range from curriculum, teacher knowledge, support

of administration and parents as well as access to suitable information. From the participants' transcriptions, the factors that related to their work as professionals within the classroom was generally related to two specific topics, the curriculum and their personal knowledge of the subject matter.

The Curriculum lacks depth

The participants used the curriculum to varying degrees. All agreed the information and materials provided within the Grade 8 social studies curriculum as it relates to teaching about world religions lacks depth. Everett, for example, relies heavily on the content of the curriculum "just because… in case anything happens that's what you fall back on." (Everett, lines 109-110) At the same time Everett believes that the curriculum doesn't have enough depth, saying both "it wouldn't go as in depth, like, the kids would still have questions on a lot of these things" (Everett, lines 119-120) and "I kind of see where it's lacking then I go deeper into those things [using other sources]" (Everett, lines 150-151).

The other four participants did not rely as heavily on the curriculum; in fact, Emily (lines 188-189) outright doesn't use it. "Very little" (James, line 117), "I don't" (Carla, line 201), "A little bit, I mean I use the annexes" (Emily, line 188-189), "No, it's too superficial" (Jane, line 178).

In the classroom, these five participants use information from a variety of other sources not relying on the information that is provided in the curriculum except for the knowledge outcomes. "I used a lot of the crash course in history stuff as well as those video clips, which I found really good…I didn't actually know that there were materials. Are there divisional materials that we could be using because I'm not aware of them at all?" (James, lines 120-122) "I try to go to sites

that are put out by people who you know practice the religions. I have books at home and the students themselves ... something called crash course on YouTube." (Carla, lines 206-209) "I use some of the information from what I had learned in university and my notes and … the books that I have in my house and from the Internet and from the curriculum" (Emily, lines 196-198). "Well, I have an American textbook that has a little more in depth it's still superficial, use that and John Greene [crash course] videos, BBC documentaries, [and] trade books we pick up from McNally on various religions from around the world" (Jane, lines 182-188). "I'll go online and I'll look there … mainly on there and videos, like discover education Canada" (Everett, lines 155-156).

Overall, the participants found the information they were able to find in the curriculum was shallow and didn't provide enough depth for them to engage their students. They needed to find more information elsewhere. Even so, all of the participants follow the curriculum itself fairly closely in terms of skill and knowledge outcomes. "I do [follow the curriculum pretty closely.] I do think it's important … my first job is to teach the curriculum" (James, line 270), "I know the outcomes in terms of the supplementary stuff for that particular unit" (Carla, line 218), "I do follow the curriculum very closely and I make sure that on all their booklets that I give them, all the outcomes are on the front page. So by the end of this unit you should be able to do all of these things." (Emily, line 380-381)

Since four of the five participants found the curriculum itself was lacking and they need to get their information from other sources, they were asked what else they feel they would need in order to feel well prepared, with enough support to teach this section on world religions. James believes it would be beneficial "if we had actual members of those faiths coming into and speaking with the class" (James, line 138). He felt it would be very helpful to have a consultant who would be able to bring faith representatives into the classroom (James, lines 139-141). Jane agreed with

James that it would be beneficial to have religious speakers who would help students get a better idea of the content of their faith. “If there is a series of an ecumenical group that has speakers that will come in… people that live the faith or have an understanding of how it fits into the global picture would be great, kids listen better to presenters than reading out of books” (Jane, lines 204-209).

Carla felt as though she had a really good understanding of the world religions: “with my background…I feel confident in our ability to teach it” (Carla, lines 222-224). She recognized that not every teacher is going to have a background in theology that will give them knowledge about these religions and said “I think a lot of people are not prepared to teach the material… So, I don’t feel I need anything else, but yes I think more could probably be available to those who don’t have that background” (Carla, lines 225-228). Everett agreed with this line of thinking, believing that there should be more teacher training and more focus given to teaching about world religions (Everett, lines 416-417).

From speaking with participants it became clear the curriculum is only one part of the concern for teaching this section. The curriculum itself provides the outline for teaching Grade 8 social studies, but it was insufficient. While it does provide information and advice on where to look for information, all participants rely on their own personal knowledge and sources to inform their teaching. When knowledge is lacking in certain areas, such as world religions, participants took action and sought out better information and training.

Personal Knowledge and Beliefs impact teaching style

When discussing with the participants their reliance on the curriculum as well as their approach, one factor came through as being important and having a major impact not only on the

way that participants taught the material, but also their comfort. Knowledge of the material was something all five participants raised as being an influencing factor in how they teach world religions. While each of the participants had varying levels of knowledge, they all indicated they needed to go to other sources to provide the lacking knowledge to the students.

Each of the participants had varying levels of knowledge in respect to the materials. Everett felt that "In general [My knowledge is] pretty good. [I am] pretty comfortable [with world religions]" (Everett, lines 61-65). Teaching about world religions was not something that concerned him. Still, he does find himself needing to find information online or ask students in his class, agreeing that his level of knowledge affects the way he teaches the material, "Oh yeah, yeah for sure." (Everett, lines 312-314). James was another participant who said a teacher's level of knowledge could have a huge impact on the way they teach about world religions, "I can see in particular if you really didn't have an idea, it would be very daunting 'cause, again, it's the kind of thing that if you screw up, someone could be very, very offended" (James, lines 317-318).

James and Emily said their backgrounds in university had prepared them to be able to talk about religions: "I think because of my background I've got a pretty eclectic view on religion and on religious people" (James, lines 44-45) and, "I'm comfortable with talking about religion, yup" (Emily, line 73). Despite feeling very confident in her knowledge, Emily admitted she comfortably admits when she doesn't know the answer: "Even if I don't know how to answer it, I feel more confident in being, like, 'I don't know how to answer that, that's a great question, let's ask google or look it up.'" (Emily, lines 449-450) On the other hand, when asked how comfortable he was with other world religions, James admitted "I think I've got a good basic understanding of a lot of the religions but in particular things like Buddhism, uh, Hinduism that are more foreign to me [and] Islam as well, uh I, it's sketchier." (James, lines 52-56)

Jane and Carla said while they are comfortable in certain areas of religions, their knowledge in other areas is severely lacking: "…[I'm] not entirely [comfortable], I mean I've taken the 101 course and most of what I know is from a Christian perspective…my knowledge about every other religion other than Christianity is surface level…although I did spend two years in Japan, so I am pretty confident to some degree with Buddhism…there is only so much that I [know], my knowledge is also limited." (Carla, lines 63-74). Carla also felt really challenged when it came to Confucianism: "When I went into Confucianism this year I absolutely didn't feel like I knew much…Confucianism is the one I know the least about. I have no interest on this one. I've never been to China. I don't know anyone who has followed Confucianism…" (Carla, lines 423-428). Jane told me she was "fine with the Abrahamic faiths, that I can handle because I have, I can understand them. I get really nervous when I have to do the eastern religions because I have very little experience with them" (Jane, lines 71-72). James said it would be good to have "the point of view of people who are actually practicing that faith" (James, lines 297-298) and "it seems to me having more of a Canadian approach to it and particularly Manitoban approach because we are so multicultural…" (James, lines 303-304) but in the interim he's "fallen back on using this American textbook" (James, line 302-303).

The level of knowledge of the participants also plays a role in the way that they approach the material. All of the participants had the students work in groups during some aspect of the unit, but only Emily, who during the interview process, seemed the most comfortable and confident with her knowledge about world religions, allowed for open-ended discussions (Emily, line 247). The other participants felt there were challenges and concerns with allowing open-ended conversations and opted for teacher-guided discussions. "Some students need more guidance and some students need more open-ended. Usually it tends to be more guided because it's such a

complex topic for them" (Everett, lines 188-189). James said he did not "totally trust [himself] with the material yet and making sure that it's a very safe place because it is the kind of discussion where it can go sideways on you pretty [badly] if you don't have a very clear understanding of what was done both for the religions and for the other people in the room" (James, lines 170-173).

With these varying levels of knowledge in respect to world religions, all five of the participants felt they needed to turn to other sources for information at various times. In fact, they said they could use some support in the forms of professional development opportunities, training, textbooks, materials, or speakers to compliment the curriculum and their own personal knowledge. One of the concerns with having teachers responsible for adding content is the risk of a teacher being seen as putting one faith or one practice above another. We have seen in the past with Keegstra (Clarke, 2005) that when a teacher is left to determine what is important to share, there is a risk. Having clear guidelines, access to information and resources is one way to ensure not only that each faith is being treated fairly and accurately, but that all teachers are providing the same message.

Social Factors

While personal knowledge will certainly impact on a teachers' style and approach to world religions, there are also factors which exist outside of the teachers' control. Social factors, such as the political context, the community view, and the students in the classroom will all play roles in the way teachers talk about religion. These social factors impact the way a teacher may approach the teaching of world religions within their classroom. In talking with the participants about the varying factors that influence their approach and teaching about world religions, two key social factors were identified.

First, I asked teachers to comment directly on their perspective of multiculturalism. As Canada is a nation that prides itself on diversity, I felt having an understanding of the participants' perspective on this would help to inform their response on the second factor, student diversity. The diversity of a teacher's classroom can have a major impact on the way one chooses to teach about world religions. The participants gave some insight into the ways in which the diversity of their classroom plays a role in their approach to teaching about world religions.

Making sense of what Multiculturalism means

In order to get an understanding of why a teacher might approach world religions in a particular way, it was important to find out their views on diversity. In Canada, multiculturalism is a well-known concept that describes how Canadians view and value diversity. Before discussing the diversity of their students with the participants, it is important to find out how they make sense of what that diversity. While multiculturalism is a major factor of the Canadian landscape and something that influences many official stances, from our immigration policies to our foreign aid policies, each of the participants had a very different view on multiculturalism.

When the participants were asked about their views on multiculturalism, they left it up to me as an interviewer to explain to them what I meant. My response was as simple as possible, as I wanted to draw from the participants their own construction of a multicultural definition. I told them I was interested in what they thought about diversity in Canada in comparison to the approach of the United States, which is viewed as more of a melting pot than a multicultural society. It was on this basis the participants responded with their personal definitions.

Everett, whose thoughts on multiculturalism are influenced by his specialization in the area of multicultural education, eloquently summed some of the concerns with multiculturalism after he came to a realization that

> [As] Canadians we tend to think that we are a welcoming society since we welcome people from various countries and from various backgrounds. However, when they come here, it isn't as easy to become "Canadian" as we think. There is still systemic racism in many facets of our society and "white privilege" is still inherent in a lot of social situations, like school and work places…We have many barriers that we put up for other people. One example that comes to mind is the temporary foreign workers visa where we bring them in for the jobs that Canadians don't want and then when we don't need them anymore they can go back to their country (Everett, lines 80-93).

Emily, whose university background is in world religions, raised some concerns with multiculturalism stating that "I think that Canadians would like to believe that they are more embracing of multiculturalism and I think we are, but I don't think that it's that different than the US and I would say that…it was kind of a fashionable thing to say as a Canadian…but as soon as technology and the Internet arrived I think we've become less tolerant of differences even though we still talk about always tolerating and we always talk about, you know, embracing other cultures and ideas and beliefs" (Emily, lines 86-104).

Jane had a unique perspective on multiculturalism. Jane's mother immigrated to Canada from Germany and Jane herself had spent some time living in Germany before arriving in Canada permanently. This impacted her treatment at school as a child and coloured her opinion of Multiculturalism. Jane explained: "… I don't know how many awards my Grade 1 teacher

[received] for really promoting multiculturalism… [but my heritage] made me a huge target of bullying and targeting because my mom is German, so I know when I came back from Germany at the end of Grade 3 and all through Grade 4 that I was always excluded because I was the German girl and I was a Nazi and all sorts of hateful horrible things." Even with this perspective she does see there is value in multiculturalism that likely came from her time involved in an international organization with a focus on cultural education. "Now that I am older I see that there is so much wealth in diversity and I really appreciate that and love working with the newcomers who are mostly coming from north Africa and Middle-Eastern countries and just how they have a unique perspective different than one that Canadians who have been here for generations" (Jane, lines 84-95).

Carla and James said that multiculturalism was fantastic and one of the things that Canada has going for it that is really valuable and important. "I think it's great, I think it's here to stay except it's really happening, people have to adjust to it. I'd say we're more multicultural than even when I was a kid and I think it's fantastic and it's good for Canada…" (James, lines 60-63). "I think it's extremely valuable and I see more and more in the classrooms with each year that I teach. We have more kids coming from various parts of the world. I think it's extremely valuable for kids to learn it's not just something that is happening out there. We have students that are sitting right here" (Carla, lines 98-101).

After speaking to all the participants about how they contextualize and make sense of multiculturalism it was clear there were diverse views. There was no clear definition among the participants of what multiculturalism might be. Everyone seemed to have the same understanding of multiculturalism from the perspective of the Canadian constitution and their conversations and

comments were based on this “standard” definition of multiculturalism being an embracing of diverse cultures.

If we use this definition of multiculturalism as our common starting point, Everett says Canada and Canadians aren’t doing enough to welcome newcomers, while Emily says the official stance on multiculturalism actually masks reduced tolerance. Jane had a negative experience as a newcomer but still finds the value in official support of multiculturalism while James and Carla state multiculturalism was an important factor in the Canadian landscape. Despite a share definition of the concept, each participant had a slightly different view on how multiculturalism relates to the Canadian landscape.

Four of the five participants commented on the value of diversity within the Canadian context. This sentiment is of importance given the growing diversity of Canada’s classrooms. While four of the five participants felt that multiculturalism and the diversity of their classroom was of value for the Canadian context, this is not always the case. There has been a lot of conversation in respect to reasonable accommodation and how far the government should go to meet the needs and wishes of newcomers. When the 2015 escalation of fighting in Syria prompted many thousands of refugees to seeking asylum, we initially witnessed a Canadian government respond with a less than enthusiastic aid. After the election on October 19, 2015, a new Liberal administration changed the federal government’s tone, with an initial commitment to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada (CBC, Canada's Syrian refugee plan: What we know and don't know, 2015). Nevertheless, some Canadians share the previous Conservative administration’s reticence to welcome thousands of primarily Muslim refugees to the country.

The teachers in this study, however, respect and encourage diverse perspectives and place a value on the diversity of their students. They have already witnessed the growth of immigration in the diversity of the students in their classroom.

Sharing of student diversity in the classroom

One of the limiting criteria for this research project was to interview participants in schools with diverse populations in respect to religion. While interviewing the participants, it became clear the diversity in the school neighbourhood impacts the diversity in the classroom and this diversity then impacts the teaching of world religions.

Four of five participants made specific reference to the diversity in their classroom, saying things such as "I would say it's stayed fairly diverse" (Everett, line 362) and "It's been pretty consistent…I had a particular point of view where I thought I'd get a pretty homogenous classroom but it's been the complete opposite. You name the demographic and we've got a couple. It's always been very diverse" (James, lines 379-381). Carla made an interesting comment in respect to the diversity of her classroom. She said her classroom was "becoming more diverse already in my first year but that was a recent shift at that time. I wouldn't say it is any more diverse now than it was then, but we have become more comfortable with the diversity since I started" (Carla, lines 541-543). This comment shows the difference between teachers who have started in the last decade compared to those who have been teaching longer. It is interesting that diversity is now viewed as common place when an educator who was teaching 30 years ago may have a different perspective.

Jane said her class was diverse "but [it's] a typical Canadian class. I would think there is definitely a mix, a little bit less than it was a few years ago but still very diverse" (Jane, lines 481-

483). The only participant who did not make specific reference to the diversity in her classroom was Emily, who said the diversity in her classroom had not changed much since she started teaching five years ago. (Emily, line 500).

With this diversity in the classroom and with all participants teaching about world religions, I asked about how willing the students are to share their own personal religious backgrounds and differences within the class and what were the participants' experiences when the students have been allowed to do so.

Four of the five participants felt it was important to allow students to share their cultural and religious differences in the classrooms. Everett took a very direct line and said, "I think it's highly important, oh yeah, it's absolutely important." (Everett, line 390). Carla agreed saying "I think that's really important" (Carla line 567). Carla also added an interesting comment in respect to how she has seen others deal with diversity, saying "I think there was a trend for a while in trying to, how do I say this, homogenize everybody or sort of. We are all special. We are all the same. We are colour blind, this sort of thing. I think there is a lot lost in that approach" (Carla, lines 567-571). James and Jane also said having the opportunity to share and talk about diversity in the classroom was a valuable endeavour and they each gave time during their day and made an effort to encourage this type of sharing (James, lines 401-403 and Jane, lines 535-537).

Emily was the only participant who wasn't as sure as the others in respect to expressing cultural and religious values in class. She explains: "Well that's tricky. On one hand, I kind of have a bit of a French approach, like France's approach to, like, don't wear religious symbolism to work or to school and then on the other hand I'm, like, well, why not…I'm certainly not bothered by someone wearing like a religious symbol or a piece of their jewellery, but I don't want, I

wouldn't want to see it be, like, where one is made to look superior to another" (Emily, lines 537-544). Emily did add to this response later on in the interview saying that "I'm not sure what the question before meant, I suppose, yes, I think it is important that they can express who they are. I think that creates more tolerance especially if it's in an environment where that's loved. But I don't want anybody coming in being, like, we're better you know" (Emily, lines 553-555). Even with the initial comment, Emily seemed sincere in her willingness to create a safe and supportive environment for her students.

All five of the participants said they make a special effort for their students to be able to share their cultural or religious differences in the classroom. Each participant has a different method of allowing this sharing to occur. Emily's "cultural cook" concept engaged students to make a meal that is common to their heritage to bring and discuss its cultural importance. There are also curricular activities engaging students' in exploring their worldviews and values, which are shared with the entire class. All five participants agreed allowing the students to discuss and share their cultural and religious differences was, overall, a positive experience. James and Carla summed the feelings up: "I'd say they're positive, they're positive. Nobody is taking offense, nobody is leaving those discussions angry" (James, line 236-237), and "It's been positive, absolutely positive. I haven't had a single negative experience." (Carla, line 358)

Despite feeling the experiences are positive overall, some of the participants would stop their students from sharing their religious or cultural differences in certain circumstances. Everett said he would only stop a student "if it's, like, out of the safety for other kids, but other than that, no" (Everett, line 398). James said "it would depend, for example, if say, like, the Israel/Palestine divide, that's come up before and that was very tricky…it's very divisive, strong feelings on both sides…so I wouldn't say I'd stop it, but would definitely be very wary of it and if need be, pull it

aside and shelf this conversation for another time" (James, lines 418-422). Emily indicated she would stop students, saying, "[Only] if it was discriminatory against somebody else, then yes. It depends, like, it can't be offensive, right?" (Emily, line 559). Jane had the most pragmatic response stating, "It's Grade 8, and … they're never allowed to have full freedom of choice because in Canada we have those laws that govern hateful statements and non-respectful things…" (Jane, lines 551-552).

All of the participants saw value in the diversity of students in their classrooms. While they may have different opinions on how much should be shared and when to stop the sharing among their students, all participants still make a special effort to allow students to express their differences. With the diversity of the Canadian classroom growing through immigration, more and more teachers will come into contact with diverse cultures. Allowing students to express their cultural and religious differences, especially in a class where world religions in a subject, will have an impact on the participants' experiences.

Banks' Approach to multicultural education

Part of the framework for exploring this research is based on James Banks' four approaches to multicultural education as adapted to fit the religious context. All of the participants were asked to speak directly to the way they approach teaching about world religions and related reasons. The professional and social factors discussed above also played a role in the way a teacher might choose to approach the section on world religions.

When looking through the responses in the transcript and based on Banks' approaches, there were two main areas of importance. First is the actual approach teachers take and the second is how this approach has developed over time.

Banks' four approaches are designed to look at the level of integration of world religions in the curriculum as a whole. With the most basic approach, the contribution is to have only a mention of important figures and then to move up to a full integration as a thread that runs through the entire curriculum, which essentially changes the approach to the curriculum in order to include world religions to a greater degree. Specific questions were asked of each teacher in order to label their approach under one of Banks' four categories as well as to see if there is any movement through these approaches.

For this section of the analysis I will explore how the participants described their teaching approach. I will also delve deeper into their approach by looking at how deeply the participants allowed students to participate in the subject matter, specifically whether it is related to other topics in the curriculum, whether they have ever included the discussion in other subject areas, and whether they have restructured the curriculum to include world religions at a broader level. At the end of this exploration of each participant's approach, my analysis will determine which of Banks' hierarchy of four approaches the participants fall into. Finally, I will explore how each of the participants' approaches has developed over time.

My knowledge impacts my approach to teaching world religions

To clearly identify the approaches of each of the participants and link them to one of Banks' four approaches, it was necessary to develop an operational definition that outlines the specific criteria for each approach as described by Banks. Once this is in place, participants' specific placement within the approaches will be clearer. It is also important to remember Banks considers these approaches to be a hierarchy as well as a spectrum. Participants can blend and mix as they progress through the approaches (Banks, 2001).

Approach	*Criteria*
Contributions Approach	- Addition of ethnic or religious heroes - Curriculum remains unchanged other than mention of these heroes.
Ethnic Additive Approach	- Includes themes, topics or concepts. - Typically done through the inclusion of a book, the creation of a unit, or adding to the curriculum without substantial change. - Adds multicultural content without restructuring the curriculum.
Transformative Approach	- Definitive and deliberate efforts to consistently integrate material, including other subjects. - Curriculum is changed to allow for lessons from a variety of perspectives. - Teaching about religion through the context of the curriculum. A thread running through the entire year. - The focus is on how the specific medieval empires emerged and thrived/fell not due to individual actions but due to the social context and the diverse groups of people trying to co-exist at this time.
Social Action Approach	- Takes all the elements of the transformation approach but adds to it some components that students may need in order to make decisions and to take actions related to the concept that is being studied. - Involves students being presented a situation, researching and gathering data and determining a possible action that could be taken.

Figure 3. Criteria of Banks' Four Approaches

Everett described his teaching approach as follows: “I teach [about the world religions] in the historical context that it came about so that when we’re doing ancient world, we talk about how, you know, it was like their ancient religion and then all of a sudden Christianity or, well, how Christianity started to come about at that time and then you can switch into it is what I would say,

so yeah, how when you look at Hinduism or Buddhism you start to look at what was happening at that time for it to start to come about, so I'd tie it into the historical context and I like it because it shows what's going on in the world at that time" (Everett, lines 170-175).

While Everett tends to guide the discussion in respect to world religions when it comes up, he tries to allow students to come to their own understanding of world religions by having students process the material through discussions and reflecting on their own personal worldviews. "… a lot of it is through discussions and then reflecting on their own and how it ties into what we're studying" (Everett, lines 177-186). Everett is not always successful in getting students to where he thinks they should be. He has the students explore the concepts surrounding world religions in a group setting and Everett says they are "not as in depth as I usually want them. It's like they just look at the facts and stuff like that. Yeah, I don't think they understand the impact of the religion on their lives and on history" (Everett, lines 193-194).

Everett explores world religions with his students at other points of the curriculum, not just during the section specifically devoted to world religions; it is usually tied to class lessons around the various ancient civilizations. He has even included discussions about world religions in other subjects he teaches. "So in Grade 7 they look at current events and, like, quality of life and stuff…so we looked at the Nepal earthquake and just the other day I talked about Nepal, when I was there, with the kids and why it's such an important place and we started talking about Buddhism and stuff like that" (Everett, lines 210-213). Everett has never restructured subjects, including Grade 8 social studies, to specifically include world religions doing it only "… whenever it feels right" (Everett, line 218).

While Everett does try to tie world religions into the conversation surrounding civilizations, he does not describe his approach as being something that occurs throughout the course of the year as a general conversation. He includes it "whenever it feels right" (Everett, line 218). The Ethnic Additive approach is described as including a book, creating a unit, or adding to the course without significantly changing it and through the conversation with Everett, learning how he approaches teaching about world religions, it is clear he falls within this category of Banks' approach.

James describes his teaching approach as follows: "What we did this time was we did a different religion each day… first we read about it, we discussed the texts. There were some notes that they would take about particular core teachings and then we watched the crash course in history [video] usually having to do with that particular faith and then in the end, that was it. We did one faith a day and they were told the entire time to consider their own world-view. And if we look at world religion or different faiths, as speaking to larger moral codes in the world, why do you behave the way you do? Why do you believe what you do? And get some different ideas on that. Some involve [the] supernatural and the afterlife and some of them don't. And in the end they have to write [an essay]. There is a test that is kind of on the nuts and bolts of it, and the better thing we did was they had to write an essay that was almost like writing their own personal moral code and I found some of those were really, really very interesting" (James, lines 154-163).

James takes the approach of guided discussion in the class. He said "it is the kind of discussion where it can go sideways on you pretty bad if you don't have a very clear understanding of what was done both for the religions and for other people in the room" (James, lines 171-173). James also didn't feel there was enough time in the class to do a lot of group work. He did admit that "if I was to do it again I would have it more splitting them off into groups and then maybe researching particular founders of religions and things like that and maybe come up with a type of

script or cartoon that details how this religion came about maybe take the timeline or something like that" (James, lines 178-182).

While the majority of the Grade 8 social sciences curriculum material is covered during James' unit on world religions, he said that they will explore world religions in relation to other topics as well. "[We will explore them] as they start to pop up again. So in other words, in the middle ages Catholicism is very big and then we are talking about how that split apart, the schism, and what have you, as well as the rise of Islam would be very big and one of the tricky things that I've been having to do is walk that tightrope between when Islam was a very scientific progressive religion and then what if there has been a change or what change there might [have] been in more recent times and how there could be some misunderstandings there" (James, lines 186-191). James only includes religion in other parts of the course "just as they come in naturally" (James, line 194). So, for example, "when we talk about ancient China we can touch on Confucianism and where that came in. Advances in the Middle-East, for sure in the middle ages, for sure, Islam will be very big…" (James, lines 198-201).

James has also included some conversation around religion in other subjects that he teaches. "We've talked about it in science and when you're looking at a firm scientific [concepts], like, what is a test, what questions, and in that case religion has come up. Theories of the universe and how it began has come up and what we would count as science and what we don't." (James, lines 205-207) When these types of conversations arise, James is always "very careful. I have managed to offend my first kid with talks about evolution but I guess that's a rite of passage for science teachers…" (James, lines 412-413). James makes every effort to include talking about world religions but may think his level of knowledge and confidence in talking about the world religions prevents him from moving to the next step in the transformative approach. James feels

most comfortable including further exploration “only if it just kind of organically happens…” (James, line 221).

Given these comments and the approach James takes to teaching about world religions it is clear he mostly deals with the material during the unit on world religions. While James does make an effort to bring conversations into other classes as they arise, given all the indicators, he would best fit within the Ethnic Additive approach of Banks’ hierarchy of approaches.

Carla describes her approach to teaching about world religions as follows: “so basically it’s a lot of discussion [and] conversation the way that I teach it so we do a combination of, you know, what do you already know, why do you think we are learning about this in particular. Generally, the background knowledge is very minimal, and then I ended up using those 12 minute YouTube clips as a spring board and so we took notes from those and then we would pause while we were watching them. Those 12 minute YouTube videos have so much information jammed in that we would just pause every few seconds and, okay, who was this Abraham guy, and what is a covenant anyway and, you know, the kids would come to realize that they actually had more understanding than they thought they had, or they were able to slot in their knowledge, oh right, that Moses guy. That was the baby in the reeds right, so they were able to access at points in the story. Interesting, I also have two Jehovah’s Witness students in my class who both were actually more uncomfortable with the early people unit than they were with the world religions unit and were able to speak quite extensively about their background and how their history fits into our timeline … so using the internal experts, taking notes as we go and then building a body of knowledge. So it really was a lot of note taking and discussion, which is different from how I teach most subjects, but I found it was easier in that in most other topics I’m really asking kids to think about their beliefs. In this particular unit other than letting us know what you know in order to

further your understanding, I had kids reflect less on their own opinions and more on what is the doctrine? Where did this come from and why and how did it affect other people in this time period? We did a lot of work with worldview and personal view and person bias earlier in the year. Now we are trying to get away from that and really just focus on the historical significance of the belief systems developing…" (Carla, lines 233-253).

Carla believes the entire Grade 8 curriculum allows for opportunities to discuss and explore the importance of world religions through a variety of means: "Worldviews come up over and over and over again. All of Grade 8 is about worldview, so yes, they have had that opportunity throughout the year and they continue to have that opportunity" (Carla, lines 258-260). At the same time though during the world religions unit Carla said that "we talk about why we are learning it and then it is really a lot of direct teaching but with a lot of opportunity for questions and discussion. When it comes down to the test, and most of my tests don't work this way, we are looking at the doctrine…" (Carla, lines 261-263).

Carla tends to guide the discussion in the class but explains "if students derail with a question that's a good question certainly we'll take that path, and a lot of those sorts of questions especially in this class that tends to spin out of control, they had a lot of really good relevant highly philosophical questions and there was time for exploration of those questions absolutely" (Carla, lines 271-274). While the direct conversation is guided for the most part by Carla, she does have the students explore religions in group work (Carla, line 278). When they work in the group setting Carla has found that "the kids who come from a religious background regardless of what it was became very empowered in those conversations… I encourage them to talk to one another, and in that two period timeframe a lot of conversations [had] kids exploring their own ideas and sharing what they knew. And then when we came back to talk as a group and watch the videos and take

the more directed notes they were able to say "Oh yeah right I read that in that article" or "yeah so-and-so told me that their family has been to Mecca," for example, that kind of thing" (Carla, lines 282-289).

While Carla does have a specific unit in respect to world religions, she does explore religion during other parts of the curriculum. "Definitely [I] relate it to other topics, I mean every world religion that we discuss came out of a political context… so we aren't talking about religions being good or bad just that they are a fact – kind of a scientific historical approach I guess" (Carla, lines 293-301). She also told me that, "I mean we go into Greece, we go into Rome. We talk about early people, it comes up: beliefs and values are core to our study of history and even talking about historical bias and the beliefs and value of the teller, so not even necessarily just religious but also political, absolutely it comes up all the time" (Carla, lines 305-308). Carla goes so far as to include this conversation in her English class saying, "In English basically my entire year, it's the underlying theme. We are doing a unit on residential schools right now and religion keeps coming up for obvious reasons. Beliefs and values, conflict between beliefs and values, cultureless understanding, how cultures are valued based on how much your beliefs and values are supported by the majority…" (Carla, lines 315-318).

Delving deeper into the role that religion plays within the context of the entire year, Carla stated religion is not something that comes up only during her unit on world religions. She also raised a concern with using the term "world religions" saying "that word religion keeps coming up, beliefs and values right, and religion falls under that so I extend that to atheism, strong political stance on something. I have vegans in my class and we'll talk about so really any belief any core belief you are willing to, your hill to die on. Basically, I put all that under the same umbrella, but yes we talk about that" (Carla, lines 312-315). Even with this perspective on the role beliefs and

values play in her classroom, Carla said "I find the more comfortable I get with teaching and the more comfortable we get with engaging each other on a real level, the more that it just naturally comes up. It seems to be an authentic place to speak from when we are talking about who we are and again core beliefs and values, and when it comes right down to it is going to come up for some people more than others" (Carla, lines 328-331).

With the depth and level to which she tries to include religion not only in the context of her social studies class but also within other subjects, Carla could be including some aspects of the transformative approach, especially if these pieces were done intentionally. Given that Carla teaches about world religions specifically in the context of the curriculum and as they arise in other courses, Carla fits within the Ethnic Additive approach of Banks' four approaches. Given the opportunity of greater confidence in delving deeper into world religions and support from the community and school, Carla could be blending pieces of the Transformative and Ethnic Additive approach. She could even, given her current approach, begin moving toward fully falling into the Transformative approach.

Emily described her approach on teaching about world religions as follows: "I have a very detailed PowerPoint that I had created when I taught Grade 12 history and I use that one still to go in detail about … Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. So I use those PowerPoints and I don't get them to write notes. I just go through the PowerPoints and a lot of them are just images or small videos or clips, and I feel comfortable enough talking about what all those mean, anyways, and then after that I do and I'll go through creation stories of those religions and worldviews and beliefs … in life after death or reincarnation. We'll go through those terms and we'll do a good list of vocabulary throughout each of those religions, you know, with words that pertain to those faiths and that they might hear or might see when they're around that.

They can now identify what that word means or that symbol means and then I do a more basic PowerPoint with the notes from the curriculum that they are supposed to plug into that table … and then we watch some videos or some clips of videos and do discussions. They usually just guide themselves. If there is a question that arises it usually just leads into a whole other, you know, we've spent periods, whole periods talking about what does it mean to believe in reincarnation when you don't believe that there is a soul like how is that possible" (Emily, lines 221-238).

While Emily does teach about world religions in a specific unit she also finds it fits within the entire Grade 8 curriculum and she makes an effort to include it in as many aspects of that curriculum as possible. "… I find that once I do the unit it really ties in a lot of course. We start the unit with worldview, right, and then kind of in the middle of it there is this kind of early civilization and then there is this unit on religion and I kind of wish that the unit on religion, and I guess you can teach it wherever you want anyways, but it should have been at the beginning but I don't know if their minds are ready at the beginning of the year in Grade 8…At that point they are able to kind of tie in to everything and when we talk about just the way that people work with their lives and then we go into Greece and Rome, which is very much religion, is very much a part of everyday life and then we haven't gotten to the middle ages but definitely there and then you really can tie in Christianity and Islam into the middle ages and it's so important for them to have a good understanding of what those core beliefs are to understand what was happening" (Emily, lines 290-301).

Emily also said she was comfortable enough with the material to have an open ended discussion with the students (Emily, line 247). Emily does vary the way she approaches the dissemination of information from year to year. Sometimes she has the students do group work where other years she is the main source of information, "I have [had students explore religions in

groups], I didn't do that this year … I pretty much taught them. You know, I mean, I give them the info and then there have been other years where there has been interest in going out on their own and I have done that where they've actually picked other religions that we weren't covering and did projects on those and then brought those forward. We just didn't have time this year so I went through it and basically most of what they did was their own group discussions…" (Emily, lines 251-255). When the students are working in their groups Emily has found that they are very respectful and when she provides them with the necessary tools, such as vocabulary, she finds that "out of all my units, it's the most engaging one" (Emily, lines 261-264).

Emily teaches both social studies and Français and has included examples of world religions in her other subject. "Well, we are reading a book right now and it is on First Nations people[s] so it has a lot of, you know, First Nations belief intertwined into that story and, yeah, we definitely discuss that. Yeah, it was something that we discussed as well, I started the unit on Shamanism and as being, like, probably the most core part of every ancient society and then we kind of moved into more organized, so yeah, yep, definitely" (Emily, lines 306-310).

While Emily believes she has religion running as a thread throughout the entire year, it is done within the context of the curriculum. While some of what Emily is doing in the classroom could be considered part of the Transformative approach, if done of her own volition and not in the context of the curriculum, Emily is firmly grounded in the Ethnic Additive approach. Based on all of these factors and considering the operational definitions of Banks' approaches, Emily is approaching, but not quite reaching, the Transformative approach. Emily is considering how she can change the curriculum in order to make including world religions more impactful and include discussion around religion in topics other than social studies in a variety of aspects. Taking into consideration all of the ways Emily described her teaching approach, Emily, given the appropriate

supports and circumstances, will likely reach the Transformative approach. At this point and based on her comments and current approach, Emily is centred within the ethnic additive approach.

Jane described her approach to teaching about world religions as follows, "I think that it really starts with the creation stories, so I want them to understand that there have always been, since we've had written language and before, but definitely since we've had written language so that the records survive, there have been religious faiths. They may have been as simple as to explain nature and what's going on in your environment but there is that long tradition as long as humans have been conscious. So it starts at the beginning of the year. We look at what we know about the Neanderthals and cave men … early homo sapiens and what their religious beliefs were and then keep their religion a focus as we go through the Mesopotamians and the Greeks to look on how that helps guide and develop their values so when we get to looking at the Abrahamic faiths, it's just an extension of that. It's not like, oh I'm going to drop religion on you now, but religion is woven through it. We haven't done the eastern religions yet this year, simply because my student teacher arrived and he had to start teaching, so eastern religions come at the end" (Jane, lines 214-224).

Jane has also made a sincere effort to have world religions seem as though it is something that is part of the year and not something that is seen as out of place: "Well, I think that in the last few years I've really made an effort so that the world religions unit doesn't look like it's something that we just throw in. [I want] to keep the idea that the values and the structures of society, religion have been so important and that when you look at Mesopotamia and [how] the servants willingly drink the poison to die with their ruler that challenges our modern understanding of, you know, control over your own life, but that was an honour. We look at those things and think that the values are different and we shouldn't judge so…" (Jane, lines 295-300). She also finds it difficult

to separate religion out of some of the topics: “How can you [do] Egypt and not talk about all those gods or if you go to the museum they just want to show you all the things about the religious beliefs and the afterlife” (Jane, lines 262-263), also adding “There’s no civilization other than maybe now in the post-Christian era that religion isn’t that emphasized, because it’s so important or it’s what survived, too” (Jane, lines 268-269). At the same time, Jane has not made any other efforts to restructure the courses she teaches specifically to include religions, “… other than that I haven’t done anything intentionally to teach religion” (Jane, lines 300-301).

Jane says her students don’t have enough background to handle open-ended conversations around world religions in the classroom and finds when she tries “many of them just shut down” (Jane, line 229). Because of this, she likes to keep things more teacher centred. “I think I hang onto that one a little more teacher oriented than the other units because they are still living faiths, and there are a lot of bad websites out there whereas if they get a bad website about ancient Greece that’s not going to offend too many people but if they get a bad site about Islam, oh dear. So, yes, I tend to be a little more controlling that way as to what they have in front of them” (Jane, lines 244-247).

Jane also teaches Grade 7 social studies as well as Grade 8 English language arts and includes conversations around religion in that subject when it fits. “Well Grade 7 social studies is really kind of current events, life around the world, so you can’t talk about the Middle East and not talk about Islam, when they do their tourist travel brochures invariably they talk about some, not invariably depending on the country. They often bring in a temple especially [since] they’re impressed by big buildings so we can talk about places of worship and how do you talk about [that without religion]” (Jane, lines 273-276). “We’re reading a book now called *Walking Home* by Eric Walters in language arts and it’s set in Kenya in 2007 and the different tribes and the main

character's faith is Christian and that's really [made] my kids uncomfortable because it's not often that we have a book where the character talks so much about how church is important. Earlier in the year we read *No Safe Place* by Deborah Allice and one of the characters is Muslim and the others are European without faith, and he mentions his faith from time to time…so yes, religion does come up, not necessarily deliberately…" (Jane, lines 276-282).

While Jane exhibits many aspects that, if done of her own volition and in an attempt to look at differing perspectives, would represent much of the Transformative approach, Jane is centred within the Ethnic Additive approach. Jane does begin with world religions in mind and has it run as a thread throughout the curriculum so when she does talk about world religions, it is not a surprise or something that seems out of place. Given the appropriate supports, Jane, who already borders on the Transformative approach, could over time move up Banks' hierarchy. At this point, based on the way Jane described her teaching approach, she still falls within the Ethnic Additive approach.

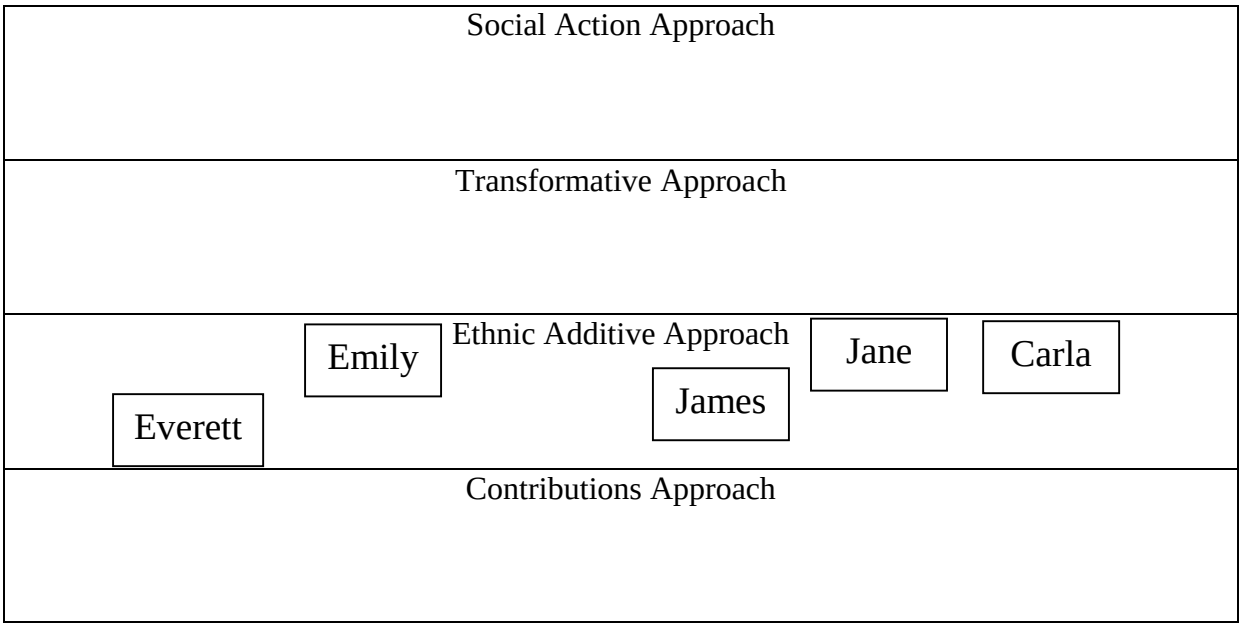

Figure 4. Participants' Approaches

Knowledge and comfort impact approach over time

All five participants have developed in their approach to teaching about world religions over their careers. All participants felt their development was consistent, but the way they described the rate of their development as well as the factors they felt contributed to their development varied.

Emily, Jane and Carla felt certain aspects of their development in relation to teaching the section on world religions were both gradual and quick. “Yes, absolutely it has been noticeable, night and day. Both a gradual and a quick change, is that possible?” (Carla, line 491). They felt their development had been noticeable and that in working with religions their approach has improved exponential. These three found the more often they taught the subject matter the easier it was for them to delve deeper. Still, there were some factors which could offset their approach including the students in the classroom: “My first loop Grade 7/8 we had one of the most challenging classes come through that school…” (Carla, line 493). The amount of time teaching played a role in the development of the participants’ approaches as did familiarity with subject matter. Jane, who has been teaching for a number of years, summed this up in saying: “I think that it’s a constant evolution ... from elementary to Grade 8 that was a big jump but after that learning curve was steep for those first few years but since then it’s been gradual” (Jane, lines 426 and 432-433).

James said that in respect to “that particular section, it was more of a leap. We definitely pushed them harder than we had in the past and I had higher expectations” (James, lines 347-348) but continued to say “well as far as my whole teaching as a career, year upon year [it] has definitely been gradual, but if I was to compare the way we taught it two years ago to the way we taught it this year it was a big leap, a lot more comfortable” (James, lines 353-355). Everett was the only

participant who felt that his development was consistently gradual: “I’d say gradual, yeah” (Everett, line 330).

The factors that contributed to development through Banks’ approaches were different for the participants. Everyone had their own motivating factors that helped them feel more comfortable and confident with teaching in the classroom. The most consistent response that came from three of the participants was confidence.

Jane, Emily and Carla all said that experience and confidence with the material were the key factors that helped them develop their approach. “Being more comfortable in the classroom, being more comfortable interacting with students on a deeper level, having the classroom management skills down so you can actually have a conversation and having a clearer head so that I’m able to make those bigger connections often on the spot…” (Carla, lines 506-508).

James felt “positive feedback and just being [less] paranoid” were some of the factors that contributed to his development. He also stated that “a permanent contract helps” (James, line 359). Everett said a factor was “how well the kids understood it…like the essential knowledge that they need to know is what caused that change” (Everett, lines 334-336).

Throughout my conversations with the participants it was clear Carla, James, Everett and Jane began teaching the section on world religions at a more basic level without trying to integrate it as much as they are at present. Carla summed up her feelings on this by saying, “I think I’m actually teaching something worthwhile now. It’s more integrated into the overall, I’m doing much more big picture teaching now whereas my first year really I was just surviving. I was doing a lot more of the trivia stuff…” (Carla, lines 407-409). Each of the participants shared a similar

sentiment and felt that the more comfortable they became with the materials and the more knowledgeable they felt the deeper and better they felt their approach.

Emily felt she has developed but more in relation to how she presents the material than in respect to her teaching approach. She says that "I'm probably a lot more careful now about being very clear that everybody's faith and ideas are accepted and that I'm in no way at all propagating any of these ideas but that they, I'm going to teach them what they are and they don't need to believe any of it…" (Emily, lines 403-405).

Each of the participants has experienced growth with their approach to teaching about world religions whether in their confidence and experience or in their ability to present the materials in a more neutral way. Each of the participants has shown a development to some extent in their teaching through their placement in Banks' approaches. Each was also able to recognize that development when reflecting on their teaching practice.

Experiences with world religions

Each of the above factors influenced how the participants approach and teach world religions in their classroom and determines what aspects of their personal, professional and social environments influence this approach. So what have the participants' experiences with world religions in their classroom been like? I asked each participant about their experiences in the classroom, whether they would describe them as positive or negative and to give me an example. I also asked the participants how supported they felt by their school and their community in teaching about world religions as this may play a role in their experiences as well.

Four of the participants were quite emphatic that all of their experiences in the classroom had been positive. Everett said, "The majority have been positive…" (Everett, line 115). He gave

me the example that "it opens kids up to thinking about how religion impacted our history and how events happened because of religion. There's that and the fact that kids are aware of like how different religions started to work and things like that" (Everett, lines 119-121). Carla described her experiences as "Positive, absolutely positive…" and went on to explain that, "…the buy in is huge, especially in an urban school…" (Carla, lines 134). She was excited to share a positive experience she had: "I have one kid very bright…the child I'm thinking about now is from the Middle East. Anyway, he's Muslim and very outspoken, very proud, almost defensive, but also he's a leader in the class and his best friend is Mennonite in background, also very outspoken, and they both have high potential to derail. They tend to get in trouble quite a bit, those kind of characters…I had walked out of the room, I had got up to check some kids outside of the room. I had come back to see him sitting with another kid who just really didn't know anything but was quite interested in learning for learning's sake, having a very intimate conversation where he was explaining about the five pillars of Islam and how they are different from Christianity in terms of the prophet Mohammed. To walk into the room to see that particular child sitting with a Caucasian Canadian…was extremely gratifying for me" (Carla, lines 147-171).

James described his experiences as "positive, absolutely positive" and gave me an example: "I was chatting with kids about Buddhism and the idea of attachment and selflessness and suffering, and it was pretty hilarious by the end of [where] we started. I had them write an essay and half the kids think they are Buddhist now…but their ability to kind of genuflect on themselves and their own identity and what they value. I found that was [something that] just naturally came out when we were studying religion…" (James, lines 80-87). James also said how he "was surprised at the instant buy in" (James, line 71). Emily as well said her experiences were "totally positive" and gave an example: "the discussions that we have in class, like the openness and the

curiosity that it, it, it inspires in the students and they're, you know, it's a time where their critical mind is really just developing…I think that the most positive thing is the discussions that we have" (Emily, lines 133-145).

The only participant who shared some concern in respect to her experiences in the classroom was Jane. She described a feeling of not being encouraged to teach about world religions, saying that "…I hadn't taught Grade 8 before and no one, the other teachers at [my school] were not doing religion to the best of my knowledge. It wasn't, simply because you can get in trouble so quickly. You can say something that might offend a student or parent. You might look as though you're proselytizing…" (Jane, lines 117-120). This may have influenced her perspective on her experiences, which she says, "varies with the class. There's a group who just have no time for religion, but this is the 13-year-old we're talking about that doesn't have time for things outside their own world…others were really appreciative of understanding especially during the Arab spring or now with ISIS, like, why are they doing that if it's a religion of peace…" (Jane, lines 138-142). She gave me an example of an experience in her class: "The first time we mentioned creation stories which is at the beginning of Grade 8 every class without fail says 'you can't talk about religion, that's against the law' and then I pull out the document and it says that I will discuss creation stories with you and you will be aware that there is a variety around the world… No, no one said I couldn't talk about it. I just didn't talk about, so every year there is pushback from kids" (Jane, lines 129-134).

While four out of five of the participants said their experiences within the classroom were for the most part positive, some said they didn't have the support of their principal, whereas others just didn't know. Support from administration can be incredibly important when difficult times arise for a teacher. Not having support can make a trying time all the more challenging.

Jane and Carla felt they clearly didn't have the support of their current principals. Jane said she felt she had the support of her former principal but that her new principal keeps saying: "You're going to get in trouble, I can't believe you guys are willing to talk about religion. I can't believe parents don't complain. You talk about religion… but it's in the document, we don't have a choice" (Jane, lines 149-150). While Carla said, "I don't have support, but she has said that she kind of can't believe we do it and she wouldn't touch it herself in the classroom, so… No? I mean I'm on my own so… yeah" (Jane, lines 176-178).

James and Everett were more undecided, not really knowing for sure if they had the support of their administration. Everett said "I would say so, I've never [needed] his support to back me up with it…" (Everett, line 126). James said, "Yes, well I don't [know. It's] neither here nor there. Yeah, it's not frowned upon but I wouldn't say that they go out of their way to send us to PDs or something like that" (James, lines 94-95). Emily was the only participant who felt she did have the support of her administration saying simply "Yep, I do." (Emily, line 150).

When it came to how the participants felt about support from the parental community three of them felt that they had support by omission. "By Grade 8 I don't think they really are too concerned about what we teach them… So I'm not sure they really care what we do to them" (Jane, lines 155-157). "I have not ever gotten anything back about that … so … support by omission" (Carla, line 183). "I think so, I would say so, yeah" (Everett, line 130).

Emily had one concern raised by a parent earlier in her teaching career. She described the experience to me saying, "… I remember one child saying the Bible and somebody else said something along the lines of well the Bible isn't the only source of accurate information about religion and history, and I think I said something along the lines of 'right, so what are some of the

other sources from which you can get information.' Then that child went home and told her father and then her father wrote a very worded letter to my principal and me about [how] I guess he felt that I discredited the Bible as being an [inaccurate] source of information about history …" (Emily, lines 120-125). When asked about how things are now, Emily fell into the same category as Carla, Jane and Everett saying "I haven't heard anything since that parent, yeah, so I think so" (Emily, line 156).

James was the only participant who had a clear feeling about his support from the parental community saying "Yep, again I've got a good relationship with my parents especially this go around but I've never once had any negative questions or anything like that" (James, lines 99-100).

In my experience in my role as vice-president of a teachers' association, teachers aren't always sure if they will have the support of their administration until they actually need it. While four of the five participants had positive experiences in their classroom so far, there were also two who weren't really sure whether they had the support of their principal. The one who did have negative experiences at some point in their career was also the one who was able to answer more definitively as to how she currently felt about the support of their administration.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

At the beginning of this study I started with three research questions: I wanted to explore the foundations and basis of the current debate, practice and approach to education about religion in Canada; explore how personal, professional and social factors impact teachers' experiences; and examine how beliefs and attitudes have shifted in respect to the pedagogical approach to teaching about world religions since the implementation of Manitoba's new curriculum in 2006 using Banks' approaches as a framework. Within this discussion section I will explore these three questions in relation to the data in an effort to move toward answers.

Foundations

1. What are the foundations and basis of the current debate, practice, and approach to education and religion in Canada? (International comparisons will be drawn to give perspective to the variety of mandatory religious education approaches that can be taken.)

In respect to this research, the term "foundations" relates to the climate in which we teach about world religions. We have to take into consideration all the various factors that come into play. From the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the court cases that arise out of challenges to the Charter, media representations of religion and its place in the classroom or the continuing debate surrounding reasonable accommodation, these factors all have an impact on how teachers teach about world religions. The most influential "climate changer" to consider is the way our governments asks teachers to approach teaching certain subjects. The curriculum and related support documents are the way in which the government tells teachers what they are expected to teach. The curriculum also gives teachers the framework and guidelines on how to teach about a

particular subject. It is up to teachers to make value judgments about how much time they will spend on the subject as well as how deep they will delve into the topic. The Grade 8 social studies curriculum is incredibly broad, ranging from pre-history to the industrial revolution, or as Jane says "the Grade 8 social studies is monstrous, nobody finishes it …" (Jane, lines 32-33).

What is apparent from talking to participants is they all value teaching about world religions. They want to teach it and think it is important. With the curriculum document being so broad, but at the same time too superficial when it comes to world religions, the participants found there to be a knowledge gap. The teachers who want to teach this subject matter are required to make judgement calls, to find more information, and to determine how they themselves can delve deeper into the subject without substantial guidance and without getting into trouble.

All of the participants were required to go to other sources for information to teach about world religions because they felt what was provided did not have enough detail on the particular religions. If these five participants are going to outside sources, what does this say about the curriculum itself? When speaking with the participants, each used the curriculum as a guide as to what they are supposed to teach about, but none was able to get enough information in order to present a clear picture to their students. When speaking with the participants, each said they needed to go to other resources in order to complete their task. Based on this data collected from the participants, it's apparent the document is inadequate to teach about world religions on its own. While it does provide a framework and a guide as to what the province expects teachers to cover, it does not provide the information required in order to do so to the level my participants wish. While my five participants may not be indicative of the entire Grade 8 social studies teacher population, they all said that they need more information and actually teach with more depth than the curriculum suggests.

My conversations with the participants raised a concern. The curriculum document is how teachers understand what they are to teach about particular subjects, but when it comes to religion, subject matter is not as simple as 2+2. If we look at this in the broader context of teachers across Manitoba, this leaves it up to them to decide how and what they will teach in respect to world religions; whether they will include it at all or whether they may focus heavily on one religion because their knowledge lies there. There are serious concerns about possible indoctrination and, when we consider the worst-case scenarios, such as James Keegstra (Clarke, 2005), there's a risk a teacher may purposefully or inadvertently cross a line. We saw this type of concern in the data when James said "it is the kind of discussion where it can go sideways on you pretty bad if you don't have a very clear understanding of what was done both for the religions and for the other people in the room" (James, lines 170-173). The concern is expressed by Anderson (2013) when he discussed that teaching about world religions carries a risk whenever more weight is given to one religion: the risk of indoctrination.

Teachers rely on their personal knowledge in a lot of situations in the classroom. They also rely heavily on the curriculum document for their subject as it provides the knowledge outcomes and guidelines on what to teach. The five participants interviewed for this research indicated they needed to go to other sources in order to compensate for their lack of personal knowledge and the lack of information in the curriculum. Unlike math, science, or social studies, religion is not a subject that is required either in public school (except in the Grade 8 social studies curriculum), at the pre-service level for teachers, nor is it a major considered a teachable in public schools. Yet religion carries a risk with it no other subject matter does. When we look back to the examples of EAR in other jurisdictions, it has been successful when teachers are given the information they need as well as the support of their government. In England, it is a mandatory K-

12 program and in Quebec the government has mandated it be taken – a move upheld by the courts. If we expect teachers to talk about religion in the classroom, it is necessary to provide them with the knowledge to do so and the support they need to feel confident.

Throughout this process I learned the participants want to teach about world religions but they don't get enough information from the curriculum or even the textbook available for classroom use. Teachers who participated in this study all placed enough value on teaching about world religions that they made an effort to seek out more information to fill knowledge gaps. Whether that information is accurate, good, or even appropriate is up for question. It's incumbent on the government to take the opportunity to develop resources and supports for teachers so that they can feel confident and comfortable with the subject matter.

The literature talks about religious illiteracy as being one of the greatest social challenges students will face in the 21st century at home or abroad (Kunzman, 2012; Rosenblith and Bailey, 2008) and, given this sentiment, the approach taken by the Government of Manitoba to include a conversation around religion is a small move toward making Manitoban students more religiously literate. The teachers who participated in this research have shown a desire to expand and teach about this topic as they feel it has importance and value. Each of these participants dedicates time in their classroom each year to teaching about world religions. The same cannot be said for every teacher in Manitoba. In my own teaching experience at a school alongside multiple Grade 8 teachers, I was the only one who taught about world religions. Each participant has also expressed their desire to do more if only they had access to the resources they need to do so. Rosenblith and Bailey (2008) have said teachers need to wrestle with the controversies that permeate world religions in a safe space so students can become familiar with the subject before they step out into the real world. Given that we live in an ever-growing global village where students will rely on

people from various cultures to help solve global problems (Nussbaum, 2010) the time, effort, and desire to do better, as the participants of this study have shown, is heartening.

Personal, Social and Professional Factors

2. To what extent do personal, social and professional factors play a role, either positive or negative, in teachers' experiences with and approach to the Grade 8 curriculum pertaining to religion?

Besides the external environmental factors that influence the public perspective on teaching about world religions, there are also internal factors that directly influence each particular participant and their approach to teaching about world religions. There are a number of these factors and I think many of them play a role in how the participants valued, approached, and taught about world religions.

Personal Factors

Each of the participants grew up in religious households and all of them said that they were not overly religious today. They each experienced their maturing personal values diverging from the professed beliefs of their religious communities. Still, four of the five participants feel that religion is a big part of their identity today, while all said they believe teaching about world religions is important and something that should be included in the classroom. The personal lives of these participants have a variety of aspects in common when it comes to their experiences with religions, and these experiences have had an influence on the value they place in their students learning about world religions.

The most significant personal factor that influenced the way in which the participants approached teaching about world religions was their personal knowledge. If we look to some of the most famous court cases surrounding religion in the classroom (Clarke, 2005), personal knowledge about religion, and personal opinions about various religions, can have a negative impact on the way a teacher approaches teaching about world religions (Ernest, 1989). A teacher's personal beliefs, knowledge, and comfort will impact the way they plan and teach that subject matter (Hachfeld et al. 2011). If a personal religious background exists, as we saw with four of the participants, then the level of knowledge in respect to those religions may be stronger than those with which they are not familiar, and their personally held beliefs will impact their perceptions when it comes to education (Everington et al, 2011). Only two of the participants felt confident enough in their knowledge of world religions to say they felt completely comfortable in the classroom, while each felt the need to go to other sources of information in order to help teach about word religions.

Throughout the interviews and analysis, the participants said they wanted to have access to the best possible knowledge and resources to teach about world religions. Lacking this, they altered the way they approached teaching world religions. My research showed not everyone is comfortable with every aspect of world religions and that they were looking for more training for themselves. Connecting with Ernest (1989) and Everington et al. (2011), this data showed more than any other factors, personal background, belief, and knowledge and student diversity had an impact on how they taught. This raises a concern about what message is being spread across the province in respect to this subject matter. Teachers who are left to determine how to approach this subject will make judgment calls and use their personal values, belief and knowledge to influence their choices (Pajares, 1992).

Social Factors

There has been a shift in recent years in how religious freedoms are viewed. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been challenged a number of times in respect to what religious freedom actually means. What has become more and more clear from court cases is that teaching about religion does not violate the religious freedoms of others in the eyes of the law. What is of concern is when one faith is promoted over others; this needs to be considered strongly when teaching about world religions.

As previously mentioned, this data showed that more than any other factors, personal background, belief, and knowledge and student diversity had an impact on how the participants taught about world religions. This raises a concern about what message is being spread across the province in respect to this subject matter. Teachers who are left to determine how to approach this subject will make judgment calls and use their personal values, belief and knowledge to influence their choices (Pajares, 1992). In simply being perceived as giving more attention or praise to one religion over another, teachers run the very real risk of finding themselves crossing a line, intentionally or not, into promoting one religion over another (Clarke, 2005). With an inconsistent message, teachers are left to determine what is important, what should be taught, and how it should be taught. When Islam is taught in the context of the Middle Ages, a teacher has a choice to either focus on the development of Islam as a religion or on the Islam vs. Christianity narrative found in the Crusades. When making this decision, it is important teachers consider their personal beliefs so they do not use their position of power to intentionally or unintentionally impose their beliefs and values on their students (Skeie, 2006). What is clear from looking at Charter cases in Clarke (2005), is when it comes to teaching about world religions, a common, accurate and knowledgeable message is important.

The impact of student diversity on the approach the participants took to teaching about world religions was evident in the data. Carla talked about how she will use the internal experts in her class to share about Islam and Jehovah's Witnesses, while James talked about having "some rather militant Muslim kids in the classroom and there were a couple of them that were looking to get offended and so I had to be careful about how I approached it …" (James, lines 72-72). If a teacher is not comfortable with a certain aspect of what he or she is teaching, and there are students in their classroom who know quite a lot about the subject, this will certainly impact the way teachers decide to approach it. Everington et al. found the personal beliefs and values of teachers they interviewed had an impact on how they viewed diversity and their strategies when educating about religion. The participants' personal knowledge plays a big role in how comfortable they are with certain aspects of their approach and the data shows the diversity of the students in the classroom can have an impact, both positively and negatively, on how the participants might choose to approach the subject matter.

Student diversity is not something that is going to diminish. Immigration is a major contributor to Canadian population growth and is only likely to continue to grow in importance. With 258,953 new permanent residents added in 2013, of which 13,100 were in Manitoba, (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014) the diversity of our classrooms continues to climb – and with it the religious diversity of students. If teachers are not confident in their knowledge of faiths, especially those represented in these increasingly diverse classrooms, then drawing on their own personal knowledge will become increasingly inadequate, leading to situations that could be perceived as giving more attention and praise to one religion over another to the point of being considered indoctrination (Clarke, 2005).

Professional Factors

Teachers' knowledge gaps on world faiths impacts their comfort level in the classroom and has a huge impact on the way they approach teaching about world religions. The concept of personal background influencing teachers' approach to planning and teaching connects directly with the literature. Hachfeld et al. state, "A large body of evidence from various countries shows that teachers' beliefs significantly influence how they plan, organize, and implement their lessons and how responsive they are to their students" (2011, p. 987). All of this is increasingly important as religious literacy rises in value. Every day, technological advances make the world smaller and bring people from around the planet closer together. Google has a translator that can take one's voice, convert it to text and then translate it into numerous languages while Skype is working on a real-time translation feature for video conferencing. As Nussbaum (2010) points out, we rely more than ever on people we have never met or seen – and the problems we face as a society are global in nature. Giving teachers the ability to help students work with complex ideas, such as those found in world religions, in a safe space for all parties is important (Rosenblith and Bailey, 2008). Interestingly, four out of five of the participants said they could use both more teacher training in how to teach about world religions and access to people who actively practice different world faiths to bring that knowledge into their classrooms. Both of these solutions would provide teachers with the knowledge they need to feel confident and to provide a consistent message. This does not deal with the feeling of support that has been evident in other jurisdictions with EAR programs.

Interestingly, the majority of participants characterized their experiences with teaching about world religions as positive. Some of the participants did give examples of negative experiences and indicated some of their concerns with teaching about world religions, but overall

the participants described them as positive. With their diverse backgrounds it seems the personal, social and professional factors did not detract from their experiences in the classroom to the point of discouragement.

What is clear is that personal, social and professional factors played a significant role, both positive and negative, in teachers' experiences with and approach to teaching about world religions. These aspects all intersect as social factors influence the makeup of the classroom and personal factors impact the approach taken within the professional context. The data shows that the knowledge the participants have from their personal backgrounds directly influenced their comfort level and confidence with the materials in the classroom. This had a direct impact on their approach to teaching about world religions. The two aspects that had the greatest impact were the participants' personal knowledge and the diversity of the classroom. Both of these factors not only influenced how participants approached the section on world religions, but also how they approached teaching about world religions in their classrooms.

Teacher approach and development

3. What are teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the teaching of world religions, and to what extent have their beliefs, attitudes, and pedagogical approaches shifted or evolved since the implementation of the 2006 Grade 8 curriculum, specifically the section on world religions?

Using Banks hierarchy as a theoretical framework was an incredibly valuable choice when assessing teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Being able to examine interview transcripts with this framework in mind also helped to clarify the data in relation to the other questions. All of the aspects that have been discussed previously filter down into the way a teacher decides to approach teaching world religions in their classroom.

Banks had described his four approaches as a hierarchy that teachers are able to move through as they become more comfortable with integrating (in his case) multicultural concepts into the courses teachers teach. This data shows these approaches can be used to categorize the way in which teachers integrate world religions into their lessons in the Grade 8 social studies curriculum.

Emily, Jane and Carla said their approach to teaching about world religions had developed in a noticeable way. The more often they had the chance to work with the material the easier they found it to integrate the concepts of world religions into other aspects of the curriculum. While they said the learning curve was initially steep, after working with the material they now find they are continuing to develop gradually as they have more opportunities to teach about world religions.

Everett said as though he developed gradually in his approach. Everett said that the more he worked with the curriculum and materials the more comfortable he became with adapting his approach to explore it in a way that was meaningful for the students in his classroom. James said that his development was more of a leap and he had pushed further than he had expected into the material. His familiarity and comfort level with the material and with teaching influenced the development of his approach.

There were two outliers in Everett and Emily who did not describe their development as being related to their teaching of world religions but more in relation to how they present the knowledge to their students. Analysis shows this may be because they did not completely understand the question, although Emily was the most confident and comfortable with teaching and it is possible she has maintained the same approach and did not develop as she had initially thought.

Being able to see Banks' approaches in practice provided me with a valuable insight into how various aspects of the participants' lives can influence the way they approach teaching world religions. This data also showed all of the participants enjoy teaching about world religions and if they were provided more training and resources their development and approach may continue further.

All of the participants felt teaching about world religions was incredibly important and made an effort to include it to a deeper degree in their classrooms than the curriculum suggests. As none of these participants had much experience with the curriculum prior to 2006, there was no data to determine whether their beliefs and attitudes had shifted since then. What was apparent was that the participants' pedagogical approaches, using Banks' hierarchy as a framework, not only developed from the first time they taught about world religions, but also fell within this framework. There was evidence of development through the approaches and clear examples of specific approaches.

Overall, there are numerous aspects of teaching about world religions that can have an impact on the approach an individual teacher takes – and the experiences they have. In connecting with what Ernest (1989) and Hachfield et al. (2011) found, one of the foremost factors that influenced a teachers' approach and experiences was their personal beliefs. Analysis also found having access to accurate information, the diversity of their classrooms, and whether the participants felt supported in the classroom influenced not only how a teacher approaches world religions but also what material they chose to teach.

The participants in this research raised a number of specific points about how they teach about world religions that could be grouped under broad themes. Each participant shared his and

her experience within the classroom, the challenges s/he needed to face and each gave his and her opinion on what was needed and what was lacking. There were two key areas that require further exploration in relation to the data: the first of these areas is knowledge and beliefs and the second is the classification of the participants in Banks' hierarchy.

Knowledge and Beliefs

Developing knowledge for a teacher is based on his or her expertise as well as personal backgrounds. Teachers are often expected to be experts in all areas of education yet are only required to have one teachable major and minor subject in order to graduate. This becomes challenging when the subject matter of an assigned class falls outside of the teacher's realm of knowledge. Medieval history is wildly different from modern Canadian history, but both are taught in the social studies curriculum – material about which a teacher is expected to be an expert. Unsurprisingly, we often find, especially at the middle school level, that what one teacher presents can change from year to year. Teachers are expected to be able to pick up whatever subject they are assigned, work within the curriculum and provide excellent classroom experiences for their students. This is not an easy task when one's knowledge of the subject matter may be limited. What compounds the challenge of teaching social studies is that a lot of the subject matter has a very strong connection to one's values and beliefs. Teaching about religion will invariably draw on the teachers' values and they must be careful about how they present the material. Clarke (2005) highlights many of the ramifications a teacher might find if they are unable to recognize their bias and unintentionally delve into the realm of indoctrination.

While each of the participants in this study has a diverse background in education, ranging from English to French and science to religion, all are asked to teach the same subject

matter in the Grade 8 social studies curriculum. These diverse teachers are expected to come to a similar level of knowledge on the subject matter. The difficulty for these participants is that only one of them, Emily, had any advanced education in world religions from university, and even she found the need to draw on other sources to help construct her knowledge on the subject.

Beliefs will invariably find their way into the conversation about religion, especially if they are deeply held beliefs. Distinguishing between one's beliefs and one's knowledge is a necessary but incredibly difficult task (Pajares, 1992). It is commonplace for a person to use his or her own personal knowledge to inform the way he or she teaches. If one has an expertise in a particular area, then one will be much more comfortable in discussing that subject matter. Personal beliefs inform not only one's values, but also one's knowledge (Pajares, 1992). In the case of this research all of the participants grew up with religion being a part of their lives. Four of the five participants said religion was still a large part of their identity today and even if it was not, these types of core beliefs can impact the way that a teacher teaches. Ernest (1989) was able to make this determination and found that even if a teacher is teaching the same subject matter as another, their beliefs will impact the way they teach. In the case of religion, it can be very difficult to separate one's knowledge from one's belief, but in order to negate the risks associated with teaching about religion it is important a teacher is not seen as favouring one religion over another lest they be accused of indoctrination.

In particular, when talking about religion it is far too easy to use one's personal knowledge of a faith in which they were raised or very familiar as a teaching guide. When talking with the participants of this study they indicated they had certain areas of religion in which they were comfortable. Jane was more comfortable with the Abrahamic faiths because of her upbringing in a Christian church and her familiarity with them. James was raised in a

Mormon household and, even though he is no longer a part of that church, the values instilled while a member continue to influence him today. James also indicated he was more comfortable with Christianity and Judaism and took great care when talking about Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism as his knowledge in respect to those religion was lacking. Even Emily who has quite extensive background knowledge in religions from university was uncomfortable talking about Confucianism because she was unfamiliar with it. This was a common thread in this research where participants felt more comfortable with the faiths with which they are familiar and less comfort in talking about those in which they had limited knowledge. This is in line with Hachfield (2011), who found beliefs can significantly impact the way a teacher plans, organizes and implements their lessons surrounding religion.

Differing beliefs and personal knowledge can be helpful especially when talking about religion so long as each religion is dealt with fairly. The research points to different ways of approaching teaching about world religions. Each of these recognizes that the beliefs of a teacher can have an impact on the presentation of the material. In Quebec, for example, education about religion programming instructs teachers not to bring their own beliefs into the classroom (QESC, 2012). This is done in order to treat the multitude of religious perspectives fairly but, given that, in respect to religion, it can be incredibly difficult to separate belief from knowledge, I do not know how teachers could remove their personal biases from the classroom.

On the other hand, Banks (2001) argues it is important for teachers who have culturally diverse backgrounds to speak openly with their students to start engaging them in the difficult conversations that need to take place. Not only teachers but, as Kunzman (2012) argues, students need to gain fluency in religion so that they are better able to navigate the religious and ethical differences that exist between diverse populations. These two approaches recognize that teachers

have their own beliefs and that these will influence the classroom. Rather than worrying about it, Kunzman and Banks argue it should be celebrated and expressed openly so it can be a part of the conversation around diversity in religion.

Yet at the same time using one's own personal beliefs to inform the way in which subject material is taught is concerning when it comes to teaching about religion. Religion is deeply personal and people can easily take offense when discussing it. Without having a common message, the participants of this research were left to use their own research skills to supplement their knowledge and their beliefs to develop their plan to teach. This raises many risks for the teacher as they may use a website with improper information, they could be seen as promoting one faith over another simply because of the time they spend speaking on it, or they could decide they don't want to teach about religion altogether because it is far too risky.

In their research, conducted on a broad number of teachers from across Europe, Everington et al. (2011) found participants who had strong religious beliefs were more likely to promote religious diversity to their students while at the same time working hard to not impose their beliefs on their students. While this is supported by other research (Banks, 2001, Hachfeld et al, 2011), all of the situations in which this research took place occurred under a broad-based national strategy on educating about religion rather than the approach in Manitoba where it is only dealt with during Grade 8 and with very limited support materials.

This research demonstrated that teachers who are left without the knowledge or the resources required will seek out information elsewhere. While there are certainly positives and negatives to relying on personal belief to inform knowledge when it comes to religion, having a consistent message that is able to be shared by knowledgeable teachers who can engage in

difficult conversations will ultimately better prepare students to participate in the current global society. As Kunzman highlights, more and more we are relying on people we have never met or never seen from diverse populations around the world. We need to know how to navigate their diverse beliefs in order to be successful.

Not only can one's beliefs have an impact on one's knowledge and approach to teaching subject matter, but also on how one sees the diversity of one's classroom. In this research participants were asked to talk about multiculturalism to give an understanding as to how they understand this term and what impact it might have on the view of the diversity in their classroom. As religion is based in culture and the framework for approaches is based on Banks' approaches to multicultural education, having a clear understanding of how the participants make sense of multiculturalism and how they approach the diversity of the students in their classroom is important for determining their approach. Two of the five participants had a view of multiculturalism that focused on the standard definition laid out in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 which states in part:

> **3.** (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to
>
> (*a*) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;
>
> (*b*) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, s 3).

These two participants expressed that multiculturalism was incredibly important, valuable and one of the things that makes Canada unique. They had the basic understanding that multiculturalism celebrates diversity but did not delve deeper into the challenges facing multiculturalism in our society: the fact that white privilege, racism and cultural appropriation are still evident, for example. Jane did believe multiculturalism was important, but her experience was coloured by her own background as an immigrant. Emily said that, while it is important to share diversity in the classroom, multiculturalism in Canada has made us less tolerant of difference. There was only one participant, Everett, who had a very deep opinion and provided a lengthy response about the challenges for non-whites in Canada. This response likely comes from the fact that he has a specialization in the area of multiculturalism, but his response also shows a different view on multiculturalism in Canada that is not often shared and was not held by any of the other participants. Interestingly, despite his firmly held belief in the value of doing more to represent minority groups in Canada, his approach to teaching about world religions did not demonstrate this. Everett's approach to world religions in the classroom was to teach what was in the curriculum and, if students felt they wanted to share their perspectives, he would let them do so but not draw it out. Everett did not make any extra efforts to delve deeper into the diversity of his classroom or engage in the conversations I would have expected given his view on multiculturalism. This data shows that a participants' view on multiculturalism may not translate into a different approach in teaching about world religions nor how they approach the diversity of the classroom. Everett had a very deep understanding of multiculturalism and expressed his concerns that not enough is being done for newcomers nor is enough being done in acceptance of diverse cultures. This view did not translate into actions in his approach to

teaching about world religions nor in his approach to the sharing of diversity of his students in the classroom.

When it comes to culture and diversity, there was a lot of support for expression of differences in the classrooms by the participants in this research. These participants said they saw opportunities to allow expression of culture and diversity. Notably, what was lacking was diversity in the population of teachers. Banks (2001) expresses that it is important for teachers with strongly held ethnic and cultural backgrounds to engage in dialogue with students in the classroom to promote the awareness and value of diversity. In my experience in this research, the majority of participants were raised in Christian households; while they had various backgrounds growing up they lacked the ethnic and cultural diversity and knowledge necessary to be able to engage in some meaningful discussions around world religions.

This hints at a larger lack of cultural diversity in our teaching population in Manitoba. The University of Manitoba has identified this as a challenge and organized a panel discussion to look at the various ways in which we can work to increase the cultural diversity of the teaching force ("University panel looks at diversity in teaching", n.d.). This is an important issue. As diversity of the student population continues to grow, the representation of the teaching population does not reflect demographics and the realities of the students they teach. Further, Banks (2001) and Adler (1971) argued that one's own personal culture is partially defined by how one sees oneself represented in the dominant culture. Banks specifically said students should be able to see themselves in the greater cultural norm that exists in schools. As Rosenblith and Bailey (2007) argued, being able to explore differences and find similarities will help students articulate their own identities as well understand how they relate to others. It is clear there is a value to having cultural diversity in the schools to allow for students to be able to

engage in meaningful dialogue surrounding their differences and their similarities, but beyond that it is important they see themselves represented so that they may connect with the dominant culture and feel that their personal beliefs and identity are not "wrong" (Adler, 1971). Having a more diverse teaching force will bring this diversity into the classroom in a more meaningful way and allow for students to not just engage in the conversations in the classroom but also to actually see that the teachers in front of them represent them.

This point deserves further emphasis: it is important to bring diverse perspectives into the classroom. Having only white Christians talk about religion in the classroom means the entire school system runs the risk of being swamped by one type of personal beliefs, however supplemented they may be by whatever resources they are able to find. If those resources are not adequate or accurate, teachers will run a risk of passing on inaccurate information to students, which could have negative ramifications.

The diversity of our classrooms in Manitoba and in Canada will continue to grow. As more immigrants and refugees seek entrance to Canada, the diverse backgrounds, needs and beliefs of the students in our classrooms will expand. There is still much work to be done at the pre-service and professional development level to help prepare teachers for the reality of the modern classroom; giving them the tools and the supports they need while developing a clear strategy to grow the diversity of the teaching population will allow for the students in our classrooms to be best served. Multiculturalism is enshrined within the Multiculturalism Act with diverse aspects of culture enshrined within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is much work to be done so that these cultures will be represented as part of the dominant culture and not added as societal footnotes.

Banks' hierarchy

The framework this research used to classify the approach the participants took to teaching about world religions was drawn from James Banks' four approaches to multicultural education (Banks, 2001). He lays out what is clearly a hierarchy of approaches to integrating multicultural education into the regular classroom. This hierarchy was applied to my research in respect to religion, and what approaches teachers found the most conducive when teaching this challenging subject matter. From talking with the participants it became clear all fell within the second of the four approaches: Ethnic Additive. The question that naturally comes from this, given the various personalities and backgrounds of the participants, is what factors influence the way in which these participants choose to approach teaching about world religions.

The key factor for Banks (2001) to move from the Ethnic Additive approach to the Transformative approach is changing the curriculum to view content from diverse perspectives. This does not necessarily mean completely altering what knowledge is taught but instead altering the approach one has to the curriculum. It may be taking the material within the curriculum and approaching the lessons from a variety of perspectives. Doing so with the intention of including diverse viewpoints with multiple cultures and religions involved so that students' perspectives may shift from a euro-centric to a more global worldview. This is not always an easy task to accomplish. There are two main factors that may have prevented any of the participants from being comfortable enough to alter the way they taught the Grade 8 social studies in order to include religion at a deeper level. The first of these is knowledge of world religions while the second is how religious topics are represented in the news media.

The previous discussion focused on bringing beliefs and knowledge into the conversation around religion. This conversation is more concrete surrounding the participants' working knowledge of the time period that is studied in Grade 8 social studies. The curriculum is vast and covers a long time period, from pre-history to the industrial revolution, and can be daunting if one is not familiar with the time periods covered. While the unit on world religions only covers six identified religions in this time span, the ancient civilizations of China, South America, Europe and the Middle East all carry their own particular faiths and beliefs that are important to cover as well. In order to have religion be a part of the daily conversation in the classroom, teachers will need to be comfortable with the faiths of all the different civilizations they will explore with their students. The participants in this research showed varying levels of knowledge in the area of social studies and many of them were not experts on this subject matter. This was a subject they were learning with their students; while they may have taught it in the past, they did not have a background in the material beyond what they learned teaching it. Given this lack of depth in their knowledge, it is understandable they would not necessarily be comfortable with delving deeper into the area of religion.

Even though participants may not be comfortable in talking about world religions, this does not diminish the importance for teachers to talk about the place of religion in history. It is impossible to have a conversation around the crusades in the Middle Ages without drawing on religion and it is important teachers are knowledgeable enough to delve into the role of faith in this series of conflicts (Choudry, 2013). According to Lester and Roberts (2009), religious illiteracy is one of the contributing factors to religious intolerance and teaching students about world religions can help correct this, helping them find common ground between faiths. Haynes

(2011) argues the importance of sharing accurate information when talking about religion: even if many of these religions are no longer living, it is important for teachers to get it right.

An underlying attitudinal shift will help schools get it right: taking learning about religion seriously in the public school system. Each of the participants in this research said that it was important to teach students about religion but each was uncomfortable with certain religions and relied on external sources of information. James, for example, indicated he was worried about saying something wrong when it came to Islam and this impacted the way he chose to approach teaching about religions in his class. While all of the participants found value in teaching about religion, they were prevented from integrating it into their curriculum by their own lack of knowledge.

The second factor that plays a role in how teachers choose to approach teaching about religions is its presentation in modern media. With the media outlets consistently covering stories on students and education-related charter challenges, including religion, it is understandable teachers might be concerned. The question of reasonable accommodation surrounding religion has been present in the Canadian landscape since 1982 when the Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrined the freedom to religion and conscience. It's a discussion that has only continued to grow as immigration has brought more non-Christians to the country (Statistics Canada, 2013). One only has to look to R v. Big Drug Mart in 1982 to see that questions surrounding how far organizations have to go to accommodate religion have been around for quite some time. R v Big Drug Mart in 1982 was the first Supreme Court case to deal with freedom of religion and conscience after it was enshrined in the Charter of the Rights and Freedoms. From this case emerged two key points. First, the decision stated that freedom of religion was the right to choose a religion and to declare and express that religion openly and

without fear. Secondly, it also said that freedom of religion is allowed as long as it doesn't interfere with or affect the rights of another person to hold similar beliefs and opinions. Essentially this case said one is allowed to practice and believe in whatever one wants so long as that belief does not impact or infringe the beliefs of another person.

While the debate itself surrounding reasonable accommodation is enough to cause concern, the way media outlets cover these stories and the impact news coverage may have on the teachers involved is deeply concerning. We have seen many examples of teachers who say things in the classroom and get penalized for their words. Two prime examples come from Ross v. New Brunswick and R v. Keegstra (Clarke, 2005), where we see that whether comments are made in or outside the classroom they can have an impact on the teachers' career.

In this social media age with the potential for instant global transmission of words, teachers need to be careful what they say. The Manitoba Teachers' Society, which is the union representing all of the teachers of Manitoba, has a brochure for teachers to help them understand what is okay to do on the Internet and what is not. It asks them to Google themselves regularly to see what their online profile is and to only make comments they would be okay seeing on the front page of a newspaper. (Manitoba Teachers Society, 2013).

The participants of this study commented on their concerns in teaching about world religions in the context of this concern. James indicated teachers need to be very careful in what they say around religion because it is something that can "go sideways very quickly" (James, lines 170-173). Carla said "a lot [students] … have strong opinions about the negative aspects of religion … they feel that religions aren't worth it and are just a waste of time and create barriers" (Carla, lines 295-297) Emily finds she is "probably a lot more careful now about being very clear

that everybody's faith and ideas are accepted … that I'm in no way at all propagating any of these ideas…I'll usually stress it throughout …" (Emily, lines 404-411).

Teachers are held to a higher standard of behaviour than people in many other professions. There are many examples of a teacher's words and actions resulting in disastrous consequences for that teacher. In 2015, a teacher in Winnipeg made comments on Facebook in relation to Indigenous peoples (CBC, Brad Badiuk, Winnipeg teacher, on leave after controversial Facebook posts on aboriginals) – comments that were picked up by the media and became part of the news cycle. There is the high profile example of the "striptease" teachers from Churchill high school who found themselves in hot water after their actions ended up on social media (CBC, Lap-dance teachers now unemployed, 2010). With concrete examples of teachers finding themselves punished in the court of public opinion – and professionally – the way the media picks up what teachers say and do is a real concern. What is clear is teachers are held to a higher standard and their actions are often judged in the media when made public. The participants' concern around talking about religion in the classroom is well-founded since making an inappropriate comment, however innocent its intent, can result in serious trouble.

Beyond the media, the community where the school is located could influence teachers' approaches to teaching about world religions. While the Public Schools Act in Manitoba does provide a provision for religious instruction (RE not EAR), it requires a petition from the parents of the community and approval by the board of trustees. In one instance, Emily found herself in a situation with a parent who was upset with something she had said in class (Emily, line 120-125). These factors almost certainly can contribute to the feelings of insecurity when teaching about world religions and tie in with the approach the media takes when teachers do make a mistake in their professional lives.

These factors highlight areas of concern for the participants in this study and contribute to the explanation of why they might not be able to move beyond the Ethnic Additive approach. Moving into the Transformative approach requires confidence not only in one's knowledge but also in one's actions. The participants in this study were neither completely confident with their knowledge nor were they completely confident in teaching about world religions in the classroom. With the perceived risks associated with talking about religion in the classroom without getting into trouble, the ramifications of a participant saying something and having it "go sideways," backed up by concrete examples of negative experiences of teachers in news media, it is understandable that these participants may not feel ready or able to make the step and changing their approach to the curriculum.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Implications for Practice

At the outset of this research I sought to explore three research questions in an effort to determine how teachers approach and experience world religions in the Grade 8 social studies classroom. I was looking to explore how teachers navigate the various factors which influence the teaching of world religions and use Banks' theoretical framework to determine which of his four approaches best described the level of integration the participants felt comfortable undertaking. There were two main conclusions that came out of this research. First, the teachers in this study want to teach about world religions but do not feel comfortable or confident to teach at the full depth they desire. Secondly, James Banks' four approaches are evident in the practice of the teachers in this study but there are factors that limit their development.

Each of my research questions allowed me to delve into different aspects of teaching about world religions. The foundational aspects defined in the charter, the political climate surrounding world religions, the personal, professional and social factors that influence the teachers approach and an exploration of the specific approach used by the teacher and the development of this approach.

1. What are the foundations and basis of the current debate, practice, and approach to education and religion in Canada?

In the case of the first research question, dealing with the foundations and basis for teaching about world religions, the most significant challenge for teachers was the curriculum document itself. The participants of this study said the curriculum document did not provide enough detail in the area of world religions and left too much up to the teacher. While part of the professional job of a teacher to go beyond the framework laid out in the curriculum, the participants wanted to

be sure the information they used was accurate, fairly presented and appropriate. Unlike many other subjects, religion carries with it certain risks when presenting inaccurate information including the possibility of indoctrination. Religion, even in the historical context, is not a simple topic and, while a teachers' professional judgement is often enough, the participants of this study said they needed more.

2. To what extent do personal, social and professional factors play a role, either positive or negative, in teachers' experiences and approaches to the Grade 8 curriculum pertaining to religion?

While exploring the personal, social and professional factors that influenced the participants' approaches to teaching about world religions, the desire for more was reiterated. The need for more training in how to teach about world religions, access to professional development to increase personal knowledge, access to accurate and fair resources, such as books or practitioners, were all raised as tools the participants felt they could use. Teacher beliefs influence the way teachers approach teaching particular subjects (Hachfield et al., 2011) and, without guidance, teachers are likely to draw on their personal knowledge. Beyond the personal knowledge of participants, one major social factor that influenced teacher approach was the diversity of the students in their classrooms. The majority of the participants had a standard Canadian view of multiculturalism as defined in the multiculturalism act; they all felt that valuing the differences of the students in their classroom was important. All the participants made efforts to allow students to share their cultural backgrounds and differences and encouraged them to talk openly about their personal worldviews. Even so, the diversity of their students did impact the participants' approaches to teaching about world religions both positively, by providing internal experts upon which they could draw during their conversations,

and negatively, worrying about the potential for offense through the sharing of inaccurate information when they taught a particular religion.

3. What are teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the teaching of world religions, and to what extent have their beliefs, attitudes, and pedagogical approaches shifted or evolved since the implementation of the 2006 Grade 8 curriculum, specifically the section on world religions?

While all of the participants made an effort to go beyond the curriculum in teaching about world religions within the historical context, none of the participants moved beyond Banks' second approach, the Ethnic Additive approach. Even while there were participants who were making efforts to include religious perspectives within the broader Grade 8 social studies curriculum, it was typically done ad hoc rather than of their volition.

In exploring the data, it was possible to determine that along with the factors mentioned above, there were two areas which influenced this ceiling. The first of these was their personal knowledge of the subject matter, which is something the participants felt they needed more support on. The second factor was the way in which the media approaches religion in education and teacher mistakes in general.

By examining the data that I gathered from my participants, exploring the various factors that influence their teaching and analyzing the data into specific themes, I have answered my three research questions. It is certain there is still an ongoing debate surrounding the place of religion in the public sphere. Education certainly falls into this debate. Most teachers' gaps of personal knowledge have major impacts on how comfortable teachers are with the subject matter; the lack of support from the government through the curriculum document compounds this challenging subject. The teachers I interviewed, even without access to the appropriate

training and resources, said teaching about world religions is incredibly important and something worth doing. They said having access to appropriate materials would make teaching about world religions more consistent, allowing for a common education to be shared across the province on this subject. The data collected, analysis, discussion and conclusions frame the implications for practice.

For this research, I sought to use Banks' four approaches to multicultural education as a framework not to only classify the participants' approaches but also to better understand how this framework may look in practice. After examining the data gathered from the participants and considering Banks' approaches in connection with the data, I am no longer of the opinion it should be viewed as a hierarchy. Rather than viewing each approach as being better than the previous, it seems Banks' approaches are not only scaffolding, building upon one another, but also fluid. In some instances, it may not be practical or even advisable to include the various perspectives to the extent Banks' describes. Moreover, while participants may have described their practice as being within the Ethnic Additive approach, this does not mean it defines their approach to their students, actions in the classroom, or overall teaching practice.

While initially I had been of the opinion, like Banks, that these approaches represent a hierarchy, I now see them as being compliments to one another as well as being fluid. One may find themselves in one approach for one aspect of practice and in a completely different approach for another aspect. If I were to reconsider Banks' approaches I would now consider them more cyclical in nature, or even simply, four ways one could approach a particular subject. What is clear to me after conducting this research is that viewing these approaches as a hierarchy is not an adequate way of describing how teachers approach various aspects of their practice.

Implications for Practice

Given the data that has been gathered and based on analysis there are two areas in which practice should be altered. First, access to trustworthy, accurate information is important to providing a consistent message, giving teachers the confidence they need to approach this subject comfortably. There must be a balance between the risks and benefits of teaching about religion and the best way to do this is to have informed, confident and comfortable teachers who are able to provide a consistent message that develops their students' understanding of faiths, particularly their importance in the historical context. There is no other time in the K-12 curriculum in Manitoba where it is mandatory to talk about religion. It is important, then, to provide those teachers tasked with covering this material the resources they need to do so to the best of their abilities. Teachers have access to the curriculum document but this source of information does not delve deeply enough into the religions teachers are asked to cover. Having governmentally approved and created resources for teaching about religions that provide in-depth details, black line masters, and lesson ideas would start moving Manitoba classrooms toward a consistent message. Having this supplemented by training for teachers who will be covering world religions will fill remaining knowledge gaps. While religion is taught in the context of the ancient and medieval eras of history, there are religions that are represented in our classrooms' populations that are not represented in the materials. The Government of Manitoba should also explore whether the current placement of teaching about world religions within the Grade 8 curriculum is adequate. What is clear is that a teacher's personal knowledge is not enough to rely on when it comes to a topic that is close to so many people's hearts: there needs to be a consistent message.

Given all the above it is imperative teachers be given the resources and supports they need to provide this clear and consistent message. The government, school boards and faculties of education all have a role to play and should take the opportunity to examine how world religions are taught within our public system. The following four recommendations are aimed at helping to gather more data and exploring opportunities to improve how world religions are taught in Manitoba.

1. The Government of Manitoba, school boards and higher education institutions should work together to explore ways to recruit more diversity into the teaching workforce. With diversity comes a better representation of the student population. While immigration continues to bring more diverse students into our schools, those standing at the front of the classroom are predominately white. In order for students to feel as though they are represented in the dominant culture it is important they see themselves represented not only in the material in the classroom but also in those who are teaching at the school. As Hachfield et al. (2011) have said, a teacher's beliefs and values directly impact how they approach planning, organizing and teaching lessons to their students. Given the cultural connections of world religions, the more diverse a teaching population we have, the more opportunities there are for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and diverse perspectives to be represented when teaching about world religions. Just as diverse classrooms provide internal experts, a diverse teaching population will increase awareness and representation of the world religions they are expected to teach. While there are no guarantees culturally diverse teachers will bring with them diverse religious perspectives and backgrounds the diversity of the teachers will bring with it a more representative teaching population. As Adler (1971) and Banks (2006) have said, being able to see oneself represented in the dominant culture will help to improve the feeling of belonging for students in the classroom.

2. The personal knowledge and beliefs of the teachers in this study are not enough for them to talk about the diverse and complex natures of world religions. Given the importance that religion can have in the hearts of many students, teachers must be able to give a clear, consistent and accurate message. The Government of Manitoba is in the process of developing a document that will help support teacher understanding of students' religious diversity in the classroom, taking the further step and including black line masters to assist in teaching about the religions, lesson ideas and external resources, such as presenters, that teachers may be able to access. With a document like this, vetted and approved by the minister, teachers will be able to supplement their knowledge with fair, accurate and useful information. This important step will help to ensure the teachers can be confident in the information they are sharing and will reduce the risk of teachers being seen as favouring one religion over another.

3. As the Government of Manitoba has begun to recognize there is importance in teaching about world religions and understanding the diversity of religions in the classroom, faculties of education should explore the ways in which pre-service teachers are given opportunities to learn about world religions before they enter the classroom. Whether this would happen through the already existing "culture in education" courses, a new course teaching about world religions, or through professional development opportunities in partnership with school divisions is open for discussion. With the growth in diversity of the student population, religious diversity will only continue to grow. As well, school divisions should work at providing teacher training to those in the classroom by bringing in experts in various religions to provide teachers with the knowledge and confidence they need to talk about this material. These experts should be accessible to teachers in the same way as there are Indigenous elders who can be brought in to speak on the Indigenous

perspective. We must provide religious experts to help make sense of the complex nature of many of these faiths.

4. This final recommendation is the most important. The teachers in this research feel they are putting themselves at risk when they talk about religions in the classroom. In order for teachers to feel comfortable, the Government, school divisions and Faculties of Education must explore ways to buttress confidence. A message from the Minister of Education saying that learning about religions within the Grade 8 social studies curriculum is mandatory, important, and necessary to the development of good global citizens is one step that could be taken. Along with this message, divisions and Faculties of Education must provide the proper training and resources so pre-service teachers and classroom teachers have adequate information and knowledge to teach about world religions in a consistent way.

As well, if teachers find themselves in a situation where an allegation has been brought against them, school divisions and government should ensure the teachers are treated fairly and there are appropriate processes in place so teachers who present on world religions consistent with the government curriculum will not be convicted of indoctrinating students in the court of public opinion. Should an allegation be brought forward, school divisions should investigate to determine whether there has been any wrongdoing according to their complaint procedures, ensuring that frivolous complaints are treated seriously and the teacher is supported every step of the way. Taking these steps to ensure teachers feel confident when talking about religion and giving them access to resources and training as outlined in recommendations two and three, our educators will be well prepared and well supported in teaching about this subject.

Even though this case study was not meant to draw broad generalities, the saturation of data and repetition of similar concerns from participants have helped to develop these four recommendations. These recommendations will allow for the participants of this study as well as other teachers to not only have access to good and accurate information but also to have opportunities for professional growth and a sense that what they are teaching is not insignificant or taboo but of importance.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of case study methodology is not to be able to draw broad generalizations but to explore a phenomenon within the bounds of a specific case (Stake, 1995). Given that, the sample size of this research does not provide a broad look at how teachers across the province experience and approach world religions. This study does not provide insight at the provincial level. Given the inherent limitation of a case study, there is room for broader, comprehensive research into this area.

A further limitation of this study is the lack of observation of participants' classrooms while world religions are being discussed. Teachers tend to teach this subject at different times of the year over a scattering of days. It would have been very difficult to attend classes during the specific time the participants would be teaching this subject. Still, having the opportunity to observe the teaching practices of the participants would have added another source of data with which to draw conclusions and is therefore a limitation of this study.

Conclusion and Areas for Further Research

Through this research I have explored the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the various approaches to educating about religion used in various jurisdictions, reasons to teach and not to

teach about religions in the public school system and the debate surrounding reasonable accommodation. This exploration set the framework for this research and helped to paint a picture of the world in which the participants in this research are asked to teach about religion.

After all of the research was compiled, two key themes helped to explain the challenges these participants face in the classroom. A lack of knowledge and access to good resources stunted the confidence of the participants and impacted the way they decided to approach teaching about world religions. The world in which they teach did the rest, bringing to light the ramifications for a misstep and the need to be cautious.

If the Government of Manitoba wishes education about religion – at any level – to be mandatory, it is imperative it provide teachers with resources, such as supplementary curriculum documents outlining detailed information about the religions, training with experts in the area of religious education to talk about the best approaches and strategies to engaging the class on these important topics, support in the form of Government statements, principal support, and access to experts. All of this should be at no expense to the teacher as it is in relation to their teaching assignment. Further, it is imperative Manitoba explore ways to bring more diversity to the teaching population so teachers can have access to internal experts as well as external resources to help supplement their own personal knowledge in teaching about world religions.

At the end of all this, the participants had one clear message. They want to teach about world religions but they don't have adequate resources or training to do the job to the level of competency they feel it deserves. This study is not representative of the entire province of teachers and, as such, there should be action taken at a variety of different levels to determine the extent to which these recommendations should be implemented. School divisions should form a task force

to explore how teachers are dealing with religions in the classroom so they can provide better training to their employees. The Government of Manitoba (who has developed this curriculum) should take a look at how to provide more details and supplementary information for teachers to go along with divisional training, and faculties of education should explore ways in which they can help teachers prepare for a religiously and culturally diverse classroom where they may be asked to teach about world religions. If these three educational partners take the recommendations in this paper, teachers will feel more comfortable, confident, and equipped to teach about world religions.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as the Multicultural Act make up two important pieces of Canadian identity. If there are two things we as Canadians point to as a source of pride, it is our freedoms and our respect for diversity. With the growing strife and oppression in the world, these policies are even more important now. With the needs of refugees growing with increased fighting in Syria and other parts of the world, framed against the backdrop of the US congress requiring the FBI director sign off on all new refugees (Wall Street Journal, 2015), the terror attacks in Paris and the killing of our soldiers on guard here at home, it is important Canada remember these values. The Manitoba government has indicated through the social studies curriculums there is an importance to cultural education, which includes exploring world religions. Understanding and respecting other cultural beliefs and practices is a critical part in helping us build new citizens who will be living in an even greater multicultural future. The global barriers are coming down and more and more we are relying on others. Yet this step alone, while important, is insufficient. Realistically, the success of building strong, diverse and understanding citizens hinges on the strength of the curriculum and those teaching it. It is because of all this, as well as the data collected from the participants, that this research suggests finding ways to strengthen both

teachers' knowledge as well as capacity and the resources they will use to support it and their students.

Areas for further research

While this research was done in the confines of a particular case and not designed to draw broad generalities, there are some areas that arose that could provide avenues for further research. One such area was the impact of diversity on the way teachers approached the subject matter. The participants I interviewed had changed the way they teach – either in a positive way, making use of the internal experts in their classroom to build on the class's overall knowledge, or in a negative way, worrying about the potential for offense when they taught a particular religion. As this study had a sample size of five participants and was done in schools where diversity in the classroom was high, it would be interesting to study how more teachers or teachers in homogenous classrooms may adopt different approaches.

This research also explored how teachers approach teaching about world religions using James Banks' four approaches as a theoretical framework. While this research was able to determine where the participants fell within these approaches and determined factors that influenced their approaches, it did not explore how teachers being aware of their particular approach may influence its development. Making teachers aware of their particular approach, and then examining whether this knowledge has any impact on their approach over time, is open for further research.

Finally, there were no teachers in this study who had experience teaching with the Grade 8 social studies curriculum prior to 2006. Given this, there is room for further research into the

development of teacher approach and experiences with world religions including teachers who taught the pre-2006 curriculum.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

About you

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
    a. When did you know you wanted to be a teacher?
2. What is it about teaching that keeps you in the profession?
    a. Is there anything about teaching that would change?
3. Would you consider yourself to be a religious person?
4. Were you raised in a religious family?
    a. What were your experiences?
    b. Do you feel that religion is a big part of your identity?
5. How comfortable are you in talking about religion in general?
6. Do you feel confident in your knowledge about other world religions?
7. What is your perspective on multiculturalism in Canada?
8. How many times have you taught the section on World Religions in the curriculum?
    a. What have been your experiences with this section in the classroom?
    b. Would you describe the majority of your experiences as positive or negative?
        i. Can you give me an example?
9. Do you feel that you have the support of your administration to teach the section on world religions?
    a. Do you feel you have the support of your parents to teach about world religions?
10. What other subjects have you taught over your teaching career?
11. How much experience do you have with teaching the curriculum before it was revamped in 2006?

About your teaching approach for EAR

1. Describe the extent to which you rely on the information about World Religions provided in the curriculum
    a. Do you get information from any other sources?
    b. Is the information the curriculum clear enough?
    c. Is there anything else that you feel you need?
2. Describe how you teach the world religions unit in social studies and your reasons for teaching/approaching it this way.
3. Do you allow students to come to their own understanding of importance of world religions with activities, projects, discussion, etc…?
    a. Do you guide the discussion around religion or is it more open ended?
    b. Do students explore religions on their own or in groups?
    c. If they work in a group how are their conversations?
4. Do you explore religions on their own merits or do you relate it to other topics?
5. Do you ever include religion in any other parts of the course?
    a. Do you talk about religion during your conversations about civilizations?
    b. Is religion something you only talk about in the unit on religions?
    c. Is there a reason why you do/do not talk about religion while teaching about the civilizations?
6. Have you ever included religious examples in any of your other subjects?

    a. Why have you/have you not included talking about religion in any other subjects?
7. Have you re-structured other subjects to include World Religions?
    a. If yes: What have been your experiences with this?
        i. Did it go over well with students?
8. To what extent do you encourage students to discuss their religious differences
    a. Do you find that allowing/disallowing them talking about their differences has been a positive or negative experience?
    b. Do the students seem interested in talking about their religious differences?
    c. When does this type of discussions arise?
    d. How do you feel when the conversation turns towards religion?

About your overall development

1. Since you started teaching, do you feel you have become more comfortable with making the curriculum your own?
    a. Do you create more personal lesson plans?
    b. Do you tend to follow the curriculum pretty closely?
    c. Do you tend to do the same thing from one year to the next or do you change?
2. In relation to teaching the section on world religions in the curriculum, how have you developed from the first time you taught it?
    a. Have you found it easier or more difficult?
    b. Do you feel you know enough about the World religions to teach this section?
        i. If no, what would you need?
        ii. Does your level of knowledge affect the way you teach about World Religions?
    c. Have you changed the way you teach this section?
3. How has your own understanding of world religions developed and grown since you started teaching the subject?
    a. Do you feel more confident in answering questions?
    b. Where did you go to get the information you needed?
4. If your development was noticeable, has it been gradual and consistent or more incremental – quick change (based on your increased understanding of world religions) then stable then quick change?
    a. What factors contribute to your development?

Value Questions

1. Do you believe that it is important to include learning about world religions in class?
    a. Why/Why not?
    b. Has the diversity of your classroom changed since you started teaching?
    c. Do you feel there is more/less support for teaching about world religions?
2. How would you feel if there was a mandatory education about religion in Manitoba at a broader level?
3. How important is it for students to be able to express their cultural and religious values in class?
    a. Do you make any special effort to allow them to do so?
    b. Would you stop a student from doing so?
    c. Do you find students are willing to do so?

4. Do you think that the section in the grade 8 curriculum is enough to deal with World Religions?
    a. If yes, why?
    b. If no, what do you think is needed to do so?

Rubric for Questions about Approach (Used by researcher)

Integration of WR	Banks approaches				Not applicable
	Contribution	Ethnic	Transformation	Social action	
Describe the extent to which you rely on the information provided in the curriculum	Just what is provided in the curriculum. I discuss the contributions on special occasion to celebrate, nothing before or after.	May add themes or perspectives without changing the structure of the curriculum.	May add multiple examples of diverse perspectives. Curriculum structure is changed by adding missing perspectives.	Not only are missing perspectives added to the curriculum, students are encouraged to take action, participate in social criticism, and work to effect change.	NA
Do you ever include religion in any other parts of the course?	I only talk about what is provided in the curriculum and the contributions on special occasions, nothing before or after.	When possible I included the perspectives of religions in our classroom conversation without modifying the structure of the curriculum.	I add discussions around religion frequently to several units/subjects by modifying the curriculum to include missing perspectives.	I add religion to every/most units/subjects and encourage students to engage in the diverse perspectives and to take social action for change.	NA
Have you ever included religious examples in any of your	No, I have not.	Only a small amount when practical but	I add discussions around religion frequently to several	I add religion to every/most units/subjects and encourage	NA

other subjects?		not consistently.	units/subjects by modifying the curriculum to include missing perspectives.	students to engage in the diverse perspectives and to take social action for change.	
To what extent do you encourage students to discuss their religious differences	I don't encourage them to discuss their differences.	Only during the unit on World Religions if students bring it up.	In many units. Units are often restructured to be able to include this discussion and exploration.	Always during unit on world religions and in most other units/subjects to engage students in the diverse perspectives and to work with them to effect social change.	NA
I allow students to come to their own understanding of importance of world religions with activities, projects, discussion, etc…	During the section on world religions students do only what is outlined in the curriculum.	Only during the unit on world religions	In many units. Even where it does not fit the goal is diverse perspectives and the curriculum is restructured to include them.	Always during unit on world religions and in most other units/subjects to engage students in the diverse perspectives and to work with them to effect social change.	NA
We explore religions on their own merits	We only discuss religions during the section on world religions.	Only during the world religions unit and whenever practical at other points	In many units. Even where it does not fit the goal is diverse perspectives and the curriculum is	Always during unit on world religions and in most other units/subjects to engage	NA

		during the year.	restructured to include them.	students in the diverse perspectives and to work with them to effect social change.	
Describe how you teach the world religions unit in social studies	I Only use what is provided in the curriculum document	Include small examples beyond the curriculum document	Some re-structuring to make it my own and to include diverse perspectives that would otherwise be missing.	Significant re-structuring to feature world religions in the unit and throughout so that students can engage in social criticism and work to effect social change.	
I have re-structured other subjects to include World Religions	I have not.	I've tried once or twice but without changing the curriculum.	Plenty. My goal is to restructure the curriculum to include the missing perspectives.	I usually find a way to include religious examples in my other subjects for the same purpose of engaging the students in social criticism and finding ways to effect change.	

Appendix 2 – Relevant Sections of Grade 8 Social Studies Curriculum

8.3.1 Overview of Antiquity

Assessment	Outcomes	Strategies
		Acquire *(continued)*
		or
Appendix A Skill 11a	KI-017 KG-039 VI-006	Using print and electronic resources, students gather information about the defining characteristics of world religions that emerged in antiquity (e.g., Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism…). Students may use the provided note-taking frame to gather, organize, and record their notes. Students share their information in collaborative groups, helping one another to revise and refine their notes. In a guided plenary discussion, students may wish to consider what they have found that religions have in common, or to discuss reasons why religion, like culture and language, has often been a source of misunderstanding or conflict throughout history. NOTE: Hinduism in India and Judaism in the Middle East originated much earlier (around 2000 BCE); however, during this period religions began to spread across societies. Additionally, as individuals from different religions came into contact with one another, they often influenced each other's religious beliefs and practices. Buddhism emerged during this period as an offshoot of Hinduism in India, with Siddhartha Gautama (b. 563 BCE). Confucianism originated with Kung Fu Tsu in China in about 500 BCE, but did not gain in popularity until the Han Dynasty around 100 BCE. Christianity emerged during this period and spread very rapidly to become the major religion of the later Roman Empire. Supporting websites can be found at <www4.edu.gov.mb.ca/sslinks/LELIst> 8.3.1 i BLM: Note-Taking Frame: World Religions (2 pages)
		Apply
Appendix A Skill 11g	KI-017 KG-039 VI-006	Using the images of primary sources selected in the Acquiring phase of this learning experience, collaborative groups of students design and present a multimedia presentation of their selected images. As part of their presentation, students identify the source of each image, and provide an oral account of the historical importance of each image. Following the presentations, the class discusses similarities they have observed among these civilizations of antiquity.
		(continued)
		Teacher Reflections

Note-Taking Frame: World Religions

8.3.1 i

Religion	When/how did it begin?	With whom did it begin?	What is the name of its sacred writings?	What are its central teachings?
Hinduism 				
Confucianism 				

Note-Taking Frame: World Religions

8.3.1
i

Buddhism 				
Judaism 				
Christianity 				

Note: Another of the world's major religions, Islam, originated with the teacher Mohammed (also spelled "Muhammad"), who lived from 570 CE to 632 CE. The rise and spread of this religion will be studied in Cluster 4.

Thoughts from World Religions

8.3.1 j

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. For this is the law and the prophets.
– Matthew 7:12 (Christianity)

This is the sum of all true righteousness: deal with others as thou wouldst thyself be dealt by. Do nothing to thy neighbour which thou wouldst not have him do to thee after.
– The Mahabbarata (Hinduism)

The good man ought to pity the malignant tendencies of others; to rejoice over their excellence; to help them in their straits; to regard their gains as if they were his own, and their losses in the same way.
– The Thai-Shang, 3 (Taoism)

Surely it is the maxim of loving kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.
– Analects, XV, 23 (Confucianism)

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.
– Udana-Varga, 5:18 (Buddhism)

What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire law, all the rest is commentary.
– The Talmud, Shabbat, 31a (Judaism)

As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.
– Luke 6:31, Christianity

Chuang Tzu put on cotton clothes with patches in them, and arranging his girdle and tying on his shoes, (to keep them from falling off) went to see the prince of Wei. "How miserable you look, Sir!" cried the prince. "It is poverty, not misery", replied Chuang Tzu. "A man who has TAO cannot be miserable. Ragged clothes and old boots make poverty, not misery.
– Chuang Tzu (Taoism)

He that does everything for Me, whose supreme object I am, who worships Me, being free from attachment and without hatred to any creature, this man, Arjuna!, comes to Me.
– Bhagavad Gita (Hinduism)

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.
– Solomon, Old Testament (Judaism, Christianity)

Would you become a pilgrim on the road of love? The first condition is that you make yourself humble as dust and ashes.
– Ansari of Heart (Islam)

Thoughts from World Religions

8.3.1 j

Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth! Speak the truth, do not yield to anger; give, if thou art asked for little; by these three steps thou wilt go near the gods.
– Dhammapada (Buddhism)

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
– Colossians 2:8 (Christianity)

Wise people, after they have listened to the laws, become serene, like a deep, smooth still lake.
– Dhammapada V. 82 (Buddhism)

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.
– 1 John 4:7-8 (Christianity)

Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
– Book of Proverbs 28:6 (Judaism, Christianity)

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.
– Book of Proverbs 3:5-8 (Judaism, Christianity)

He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle, and weak, Mara (the Tempter) will certainly overthrow him, as the wind throws down a weak tree. He who lives without looking for pleasures, his senses well controlled, moderate in his food, faithful and strong, him Mara will certainly not overthrow, any more than the wind throws down a strong mountain.
– Dhammapada V. 7-8 (Buddhism)

He who hates no single being, is friendly and compassionate, free from self-regard and vanity, the same in good and evil, patient; Contented, ever devout, subdued in soul, firm in purpose, fixed on Me in heart and mind, and who worships Me, is dear to Me.
– Bhagavad Gita 12:13-14 (Hinduism)

Quotations selected from these two sources:
Comparative Religion Studies, Quotations:
<www.age-of-the-sage.org/mysticism.html#Comparative_Religion_studies_quotations>
Saskatchewan Education, Cultural Quotes, Grade 8 Social Studies Student Handout:
<www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/midlsoc/gr8/81handouts.html#P1671_82049>

8.4.3 The Rise of Islam and the Ottoman Empire

Assessment	Outcomes	Strategies
		Apply *(continued)*
		or
	KI-018 KG-041 KP-049 KP-053	Students complete the provided Vocabulary Circle to explain basic principles of religious beliefs of Islam. Students share their Vocabulary Circles with a partner. Students may wish to note some of the similarities between Islam and Christianity (e.g., monotheism, obedience, sacred writings and sacred places, pilgrimages, prayer, emphasis on rewards in the afterlife, founded on the life and teachings of one recognized prophet...), as well as some of the differences between the two (e.g., Church structure of Christianity, use of priests as intermediaries, holy days and celebrations, forms of prayer, Ten Commandments vs. Five Pillars...). Supporting websites can be found at <www4.edu.gov.mb.ca/sslinks/LEList>  BLM: Vocabulary Circle: Religion of Islam
		or
 	KI-018 KG-041 KP-049 KP-053	Collaborative groups of students design a symbol to represent the Muslim Empire in the Middle Ages. The groups' symbols are presented to the class, and the class collectively decides on the most historically appropriate symbol. This symbol is reproduced by the students and used to identify all the regions on the world wall map that came under Muslim influence during the Middle Ages.

Teacher Reflections

Timeline: Islam in the Middle Ages

8.4.3 b

c. 570	Birth of Muhammad (Mohammed) in Mecca
622	The Hijrah (Hegira) or "Flight": Muhammad flees to Medina because of opposition in Mecca (first year of the Muslim calendar).
630	Muhammad returns to Mecca and conquers the city. Mecca becomes the centre of Islam.
632	Muhammad dies; by this time most of Arabia has become Muslim.
632–650	This is the period of the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" or successors to Muhammad as rulers of the Arab empire, centred in Mecca and Medina. During this time the official text of the Koran is established in Arabic.
636	Muslims conquer Syria (under Omar, the second caliph).
637	Muslims conquer Persia and Jerusalem (under Omar, the second caliph).
641	Muslims conquer Alexandria (Egypt) (under Omar, the second caliph).
661–750	The Omayyad caliphs rule the Muslim empire, centred in Damascus.
711	Arab Muslims conquer Spain.
717–718	Muslims attempt to conquer Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire. They also advance in western Europe as far as France (Franks stop their advance).
750	Abbasids become rulers of Muslim Empire with Baghdad as centre; the Golden Age of Islam begins. Under the Abbasid caliphates, the Muslims build the first astronomical observatory, translate ancient Greek texts into Arabic, perfect and spread the Arabic alphabet and Arab numerals, develop the astrolabe for navigation, develop a body of Arabic literature and history, make advances in agriculture, improve water distribution, make advances in medicine and health care, develop agriculture and livestock breeding, spread cotton from east to west. The Abbasids, although Muslim, allow freedom of religion in areas under their control.
751	Arab Empire attacks China: Arabs learn papermaking from Chinese prisoners of war. Papermaking helps advance learning throughout the Arab world through books.

Timeline: Islam in the Middle Ages

8.4.3 b

765	A school of medicine is established in Baghdad.
c. 800–1100	Arabs establish regular trade caravans from across northern Africa; they gradually extend routes across the Sahara desert into the West African kingdoms of Mali and Ghana for the gold and salt trade. Arab trade network becomes very prosperous and facilitates the exchange of ideas and technologies among societies with which they trade.
1055	Seljuk Turks, who are Muslim converts living in Central Asia, begin to move into territories of the Byzantine Empire. Conflicts and hostilities erupt between Christians and Muslims.
1096	Crusades begin: Pope Urban II of Rome calls for all Christians to expel Muslims from Jerusalem and its surrounding region (considered Holy Land as it was the area in which Jesus Christ lived) and from the Byzantine Empire.
1258	Mongols sack Baghdad, killing the caliph and many Muslims: end of the Abbasid caliphs.
1299	The Ottoman dynasty is founded under Osman I in Asia Minor (Turkey). Osman rules until 1326.
1291	End of Crusades: Muslims defeat Christians and remain in Holy Lands.
1453	Ottoman Turks conquer Constantinople under the rule of Muhammad II, ending the Byzantine Empire. The city is renamed Istanbul, and becomes the capital of the Ottoman Empire.
1520–1566	Suleyman the Magnificent rules as Sultan of the Ottoman empire and increases its territory. The Empire reaches its peak in culture, art, literature, architecture, and laws. The Ottoman empire exists until the end of World War I (1918).

Vocabulary Circle: Religion of Islam

8.4.3 c

submission Allah
five pillars pilgrimage
charity Mecca
Muhammad
fasting faith

Koran (Qu'ran)
prayer Imam
sacred writings
paradise mosque
prophet recite
sacred texts

1. *Select nine of the words listed above and write one in each oval. Make sure that each word is logically connected to the next.*
2. *Write brief notes between the ovals to indicate how each word links to the next one.*

Your finished Vocabulary Circle should explain the basic religious beliefs of Islam and show that you understand the meaning of each word.

Appendix 3 – Ethics Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

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APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

November 7, 2014

TO: **Timothy Breen** (Advisor N. Piquemal)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Lorna Guse, Chair**
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: **Protocol #E2014:095**
Teachers' approach to and Experience with World Religions in the Grade 8 classroom"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). **This approval is valid for one year only**.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- **If you have funds pending human ethics approval, please mail/e-mail/fax (261-0325) a copy of this Approval (identifying the related UM Project Number) to the Research Grants Officer in ORS in order to initiate fund setup. (How to find your UM Project Number: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/mrt-faq.html#pr0)**

- **if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.**

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) **in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**