Science versus religion: Protestant dominance and cultural discrimination in public schools

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Science versus Religion: Protestant Dominance and Cultural Discrimination in Public Schools

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Science versus Religion: Protestant Dominance and Cultural Discrimination in Public Schools

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THESIS

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Abstract

This research offers a critical analysis of the current controversy concerning religion. The study explores the establishment of the public school system under Protestant dominance and use of this dominance to assert authority over minority groups. Legislation and court action have created a position of opposing policy; placing science as the opposite of religion, and Atheists and Christian activists are using curriculum as an ideological battle field. Currently, since 9/11, religious discrimination and hate crimes are on the rise. In order to investigate this controversy, this study explores literature, published surveys, and government documents. The American public school systems are victim of cultural discrimination in respect to religion, and school reform is necessary to allow dialectic pedagogy to combat religious marginalization.
Introduction

The current controversy concerning prayer in public schools is a topic with frequent coverage in media outlets. As a country that prides itself on the separation of church and state, the principle of religious freedom is regarded as fundamental. As a child, I believed that this practice was set in place in order to allow individual rights. However, following 9/11, I watched with the rest of the world as “racial profiling” became an accepted policy of the United States Government. I watched with the rest of the world as Muslim Americans became targets of hate crimes, and I wondered. Surely the majority of Americans did not believe that all Muslims are terrorists or did they?

I realized that biased media outlets and family enculturation were the main sources from which people received their information concerning religion. Schools are not an open forum for talks of faith; this includes historical aspects, social stratification, or culture relevance and I reflected on the importance of multicultural education. Many scholars (Oppenheimer, Philip, Gollnick, Chin) discuss religion and culture and state the obvious link of the two. The goal of
multicultural education is to promote understanding; as I have continued to witness America’s depiction of Muslims, I understood that bias was the reason American Muslims had their homes vandalize and their character questioned; media is bias in their presentation of “them”; and “them” is not exclusive to Muslims.

Let us take a look at Justin. In the rolling hills of California, about forty five minutes south of Sacramento, a young American boy is starting his freshman year at Amador High School. He’s a hometown boy, with roots in the community, and the son of an Amador native. Justin is an average teenage boy, dealing with parents, changes, puberty... and freshman year. Justin, having the beautiful curiosity of a child, probably envisioned and anticipated many scenarios for his freshman year; but it can be assured that the events of that year and the years that followed were nothing close to what Justin had imagined.

Amador is one of the original counties in California featuring rolling hills and a mystique charm often associated with old towns. Justin’s father, Jason, was an Amador High School graduate and there is no doubt that this eased and comforted young Justin as he entered high school.
Justin became a member of the football team and was a kid trying to find himself and his spot in this new chapter.

Justin made many trips to his football locker, but none like the one that day, and never would any trip be the same after. This day didn’t seem different, but as Justin approached his locker, the words “Burn Jew Burn” greeted him. Justin Zysman came from a Jewish American family. His grandmother had survived the holocaust and had come to America because of the principles of freedom. Ashamed of the incident and not wanting to concern his parents, Justin said nothing. He assumed that a member of staff would see the words and remove them. Three weeks went by and the words haunted him with each passing day. He finally had to take the incident to his parents who immediately met with the principle and demanded that the words were painted over. The principal promised that the hate would be dealt with immediately.

Two weeks passed and the words remained. Justin’s mother returned to the school and was assured again that the problem would be handled... the words lingered on Justin’s locker for a year. This incident was not the end of Justin’s abuse... not even close. Many children would imitate the hail Hitler gesture when Justin passed. One
day after gym, Justin returned to the boy’s locker room to find that his clothes had been urinated on. Extremely upset, Justin went to the coach for assistance. Instead of support, Justin was humiliated when the Coach made Justin clean up the urine; to add insult to injury, the coach did not even offer him gloves. When someone urinated on Justin’s clothes a second time, the assistant principle told Justin he would need to pay for another replacement uniform. The principle admits that he knew of the incidents and miscommunication between staff was the culprit of inadequate action. Justin’s parents demanded justice and support from the school board, but the school board stated that the incidents should have been reported to them within twenty days of the occurrences and the statute of limitations had expired.

The Zysmans, Justin’s parents, disagreed and are taking the matter to court. The first incident occurred in 2007 and the harassment has continued for the last two years. This is not a story from early America, but a story featured in the Ledger-Dispatch, a California newspaper, Friday, July 3, 2009; and it is a tragedy that anti-Semitism remains in American schools.
It is not only Jewish children suffering religious intolerance; Hindu, Muslims, and Atheists are some groups discriminated against. In a post 9/11 world, it is especially important that students are exposed to religions and their roles in culture, the world, and society. The United States has not presented a curriculum inclusive of theories representative of world culture despite Supreme Court rulings advocating for an encompassing curriculum. Many sociologist believe that people are often socialized to a certain religion, and depending on this socialization, people form their moral grounding (Kendall, 2007). Understanding this socialization and the impact of religion on culture, institutions, and nations, helps build a bridge of understanding.

The United States Education System has been historically linked to the Christian faith, despite Thomas Jefferson’s interpretation of separation of Church and State. Within the last century, legislation has attempted to form a neutrality position in respect to religion. John Dewey (Schultz, 2007) argued that education systems that maintain a neutral stance in response to social issues only create ignorant students. Furthermore, historiography presents a culture battle where Protestant Christian
dominated curriculum contributes to marginalization and is not representative of a diverse population.

Examples of Protestant Christian dominance in American Public Schools are wide and abundant. Unfortunately, scholars and educators alike are only beginning to acknowledge that traditional notions of student development are obsolete in these contemporary times. While some still hold fast to theories based on the "dominant" class-white, male Protestants, it is crucial to evaluate how and why some historical beliefs about students contradict various cultures and ideologies. This research will attempt to do just that, expose a hidden curriculum that advocates a Christian dominance, further the existence of a Christian Hierarchy that fuels cultural racism in public schools. Finally, dialogical pedagogy, not neutrality, would improve multi-cultural education and address Cultural Racism in American public schools.

Justin has been removed from Amador High School, despite the schools insistence to provide a safe environment. Jason Zysman stated "In order for us to bring him back, they [Amador High School] would have to make an effort to figure out who wrote that on his locker, and they would have to take some ownership of their mistakes,
provide some diversity training in the curriculum and start holding kids accountable to the code of conduct they preach."
Statement of Problem

The FBI Hate Crime Statistics for 2007 state that there were 1,477 hate crimes that were based on religious bias. It is understood that the United States has a separation of church and state. However, the constitution states that no religion should be inhibited. However, public school curriculum offers no diversity training, or open discussions in reference to religion. The United States Justice Department Civil Rights Division (2009) declares that there have been over 800 hate crimes against Muslim Citizens since September 11, 2001. 481 of such crimes were committed from the year 2001-2002.

This is an increase of 1600% from the 28 cases reported to the F.B.I. in 2000. The 800 cases include discrimination by educational institutions. In March 2005, the Civil Rights Division reached a settlement in regards to a Delaware student. A teacher publicly ridiculed a Muslim Fourth grader because of his faith. This sparked peer harassment and the student missed several days of school because of emotional distress. Oklahoma School board members were challenged after a school had told a Muslim girl that her headdress was in violation of the dress code. In 2004, the district was ordered to change their dress
code. If teachers and School Boards are stereotyping students, one can only imagine the perspective of students.

John Dewey (Schultz, 2007) argued that education must address the social issues of society. He states, “Our public school system was founded in the name of equality of opportunity for all, independent of birth, economic status, race, creed, or color.” Although, these attributes may have been the foundation of public schools, the progress of implementing these variables has been slow and difficult. Schools have sometimes used a hidden curriculum in order to promote a dominant ideology. Historically, the United States has been guilty of this endeavor on several occasions. The red scare is the most comparable to the social issues facing modern American Muslims. John Dewey would argue that this social issue should be discussed in the classroom, by not addressing the issue, students are only offered Media’s perception there is no responsible guide for critical thought.

Many sociologists have studied religion and the impact that socialization has on a person’s belief system. Marie Cornwall (1989) conducted a study that explored the role of community and socializations relationship to peoples religious world view. Through an empirical study, she
found that “Personal Community relationships indirectly influence religious behavior by helping individuals maintain a religious world view and commitment to the norms and expectations of the religious group.” (p.572) Himmelfarb (1979) performed a study on religious socialization of the Jewish, and Cornwall (1988) studied religious socialization among Mormons, both men came to the same conclusion. Religious socialization plays a role in peoples’ world view; also it assigns individuals personal communities which reinforce community, norms, morals and ethics.
Need For Study

Many studies have explored the institutions of religion and their correlation with Society. Other studies have explored biological discrimination in education and the effects of ascribed status. However, very few studies mean to reveal themes of cultural discrimination as a base for public school religious bias; there is a need for critical analyses of religious policy in Education. The incidents following 9/11 and the increase in hate crimes linked with the current prayer debates concerning public schools suggest that an underlying problem exists and research is necessary to explore educations foundation of protestant dominance, results of this dominance, and whether these results contribute to religious bias and discrimination.
Purpose of Study

Thus, this study undertakes the challenge to understand the history of public schools and religious debate. The study will examine the often controversial relationship that exists between public schools and religious studies. Through this exploration, the concept of cultural dominance will parallel the historiography of a dominant protestant religion. The study will also examine legislation meant to keep religion out of schools and the effect of this legislation on the current controversy. Finally, the study will examine if the current conflict of ideologies contributes to religious ignorance or religious tolerance in reference to a student's ability to critically think. One of the most fundamental virtues of America must be our understanding and respect of diversity, this study means to examine the probability of public schools having the ability to produce critical thinkers in respect to religion; as religion, and or lack of, is an important, identifying feature in many cultures.
Literature Review

Cultural Racism is a recent term used to describe the theory of European superiority. James Blaut wrote *The Theory of Cultural Racism* in 1992. This theory explains that non-European descendants are culturally inferior to European descendants. This conclusion is justified by the “modernization” and prosperity of European descendants. Blaut argues that academics have abandoned religious and biological racism and substituted Cultural Racism as a congruent alternative. He claims that first, the United States practiced religious, and then biological racism. When such a blatant approach became unacceptable in the evolution of society, the new cultural racism replaced prior approaches to reach the same result.

Halstead (1988) comments that Cultural Racism does not believe that people are biologically inferior, rather culturally inferior, he states: “On the contrary, change is exactly what is sought. Minorities are encouraged to turn their back on their own culture and to become absorbed by the majority culture.” (p. 142). This approach is dehumanizing to minority cultures and is an unacceptable approach in a nation of many cultures.
Rebecca Powell (2000) discussed cultural racism in education as it relates to biological racism. She explains that a discussion of “whiteness” is important in order to combat racism. She claims that this is an essential step in educators' stride towards diverse education. However, Religion is not a color, but it is a defining aspect of many cultures.

Scholars have studied Religion and Education. Religion in Multi-cultural Education was edited by Salili and Hoosain (2007). This compilation was constructed by educators and explores the institutional practice of not discussing religion in school. There are several different scholars who offer their opinion on religion and its benefit or obsoleteness in multi-cultural education. One scholar, H.S. Wilson, explores how “conventional” religions all cling to a “do on to others” philosophy. Many scholars disagree with this position.

Instead, Elaine Hampton and Cesar Rossatto assert that religion has been used to “induce fear of the other to promote their own faith” (Salili and Hoosain, 2007, p.121). This is a more appropriate assessment of cultural racism in America. Many of the scholars agree that theology is a crucial part of identity. According to the department of
Education in the State of Maine, Multi-cultural education is defined as a course design principle based on the idea that cultural differences have consequences in the classroom that some differences are privileged over others, and that educational reform is necessary to bring equity into education.

Joseph R. Barndt further explored cultural racism as it relates to the Jewish race. He states that Jewish Americans have been included in to the white race category, but as second class white people. He explains that “it is possible to be more white (Christian, Anglo, German) and less white (Jewish, Italian, or non-Christian).” (Barndt, p. 212) Further, he explains that these less white races have not been included in residential integration or University quotas. Barndt explains that everyone loses with cultural racism, including white people. It is expected for society to assimilate in a certain way representative of the dominant Protestant Anglo; this decreases individualism, expression, and culture ties.

Barndt (1991) explains that we must dismantle racism. He claims that we must take an anti-racist position and this requires dialogue. Barndt explains, the state of affairs in Americas is a prison to both whites and people
of color. He claims that the way out of this prison is through education and dialogue.

Robert Jackson wrote *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in diversity and pedagogy* (2004). This book was written in Europe and dialectic pedagogy was used in schools in order to reverse a historical Christian dominance. The author was able to conclude that by just allowing students to discuss religion, stereotypes of religion, or even the lack of religion brought understanding and respect of groups that had been marginalized. He argues that dialectic pedagogy is appropriate to religious ignorance in school systems.

Although the prior scholars use the word “cultural racism”, it may be hard for some to relate race and religion. However, the concepts are similar. The scholars have argued that cultural dominance is responsible for marginalization. Later, this study will examine literature which reveals that cultural dominance has a history in public schools, and that this history contributes to the current controversy.
Research Questions

What is the history of protestant dominance in American public school systems and how does this element play a role in cultural discrimination?

What effect has religious legislation had on the current relationship of public schools and “discussions” of religion?

Are there consequences to students’ ability to critically think and evaluate religious diversity as a result of current policy?
Methodology

To answer these questions, this research utilizes a critical analysis of the historiography of Protestant dominance. This historiography was gathered from several sources including primary sources (oral reports, newspaper articles, and government documents), and secondary sources.

This study also uses several secondary surveys to explore whether the United States is predominantly protestant. It analyses surveys to explore legislation and public opinion in response to religious bias. Then, State legislation and public school curriculums are evaluated to determine the state of the current relationship between public schools and religion.

Finally, the study offers literature to suggest that cultural dominance in respect to religion is a barrier to multi-cultural education and prevents dialectic pedagogy.
Critical Analyses

The Rise of Dominant Culture

The Christian religion has served as justification for the marginalization of many people; whether the variable is religion, race, ideology or gender. This history is as old as the Christian religion and is well documented. Critical thought in respect to religion can lead to links between culture and the history of marginalization. (Hughes, 1991) For example, the link between racial categorization and marginalization can find its roots in actions taken by the Christian Church. The rise of the west or whiteness can be traced through The March of the Titans: A History of the White Race (Kemp, 2001), this book helps paint the beginning of the rise of the white race. In 1095, Caucasian Christians attempted to capture the holy land of Jerusalem. But soon their attacks became focused against all the dark-skinned, non-Christian, Middle-Easterners. The church backed these attacks and it was referred to as a crusade; there were seven series of crusades.

Races became a physical trait of distinction. This phenomenon reached further during colonization and the rise of the west. Native Americans were victims of a Caucasian
conqueror who waged war and pushed their religion and morals on to those they perceived as “savages”. With colonization, came the rise of the West. Industrialization in the north and the slave empire in the south further fueled the fire of a white feeling of being the chosen ones or assumed superiority.

During the 17th and 18th century, racial classifications began through taxonomy systems. During this time, races were presented in a pyramid; God was on top and whites where right below him. Indigenous and blacks were on the bottom of the pyramid. There was literature that featured this taxonomy. The first publication was printed in the 1700’s; *Systema Naturae* was a respected academic work. Charles Darwin was another contributor in the race sciences. His practices of Eugenics further fueled the fire of presuming whites superior. Nation-States encouraged racial classification, with the United States being a prime example. Protestant Christians planted the seed of white dominance in the early colonies.

Through the Christian church, science, and nation state, whites were able to take position as the dominant group. It was not until 1942, with Ashley Montagu’s book *The Most Dangerous Myth*, that people challenged a natural
white superiority. The book used non-Eurocentric perspectives to refute the race classification systems.

The 1950’s and 1960’s produced social movements demanding the elimination of racial classifications and a merit dependent system with no preconceived notions. This era evolved into the civil rights movement. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was quoted by Todd Oppeinheimer (2004):

“When we ask Negroes to abide by the law, let us also declare that the white man does not abide by law in the ghettos. Day in and day out he violates welfare laws to deprive the poor of their meager allotments; he flagrantly violates building codes and regulations; his police make a mockery of law; he violates laws on equal employment and education and the provisions of civil services. The slums are the handiwork of a vicious system of the white society; Negroes live in them, but they do not make them, any more than a prisoner makes a prison.” (p. 4)

The History of Protestant Dominance in Schools

The first public schools in early America were referred to as common schools. According to historian Carl Kaestle, “eventual acceptance of state common school systems was based upon American’s commitment to republican government, the dominance of native Protestant culture, and the development of capitalism.” (Kaestle, 1973, p.38) Catholic immigrants felt Protestant bias in early common
schools. As a result, the parochial school was constructed. The Protestant curriculum was supported to encourage socialization of cultures viewed as the “other” by dominant American society.

Like many early American institutions, the schools were modeled after European systems, more frequently English Institutions. The School systems resembled the colonist and immigrants of early America. Curriculum resembled the teachings of the Christian faith. The first sorts of textbook usually used by Common Schools were the McGuffey readers. (McGuffey, 1836) McGuffey is most famous for completing a series of textbooks that became the standardized reading text for most schools across the United States during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The McGuffey Reader was published in 1836 and sold more than 100 million copies up to 1890. The reader had several volumes for the six levels of difficulty covered. (Hunter, 2000) The Mcguffey’s Reader used religious message and attempted to instill moral teachings through the Bible. Almost every student who went through public schools in America during the second half of the century used McGuffey’s reader (Hunter, 2000).
From the early 1700’s-1850’s public education was something for white Americans. However, schools started emerging for African America’s in the 1800’s. (Hayes, 2002) A slave’s education in concern to Christianity began long before this. Some scholars state that many slaves were monotheistic when arriving to America, practicing an Islamic religion. Other plantation accounts claim that the slaves practiced a “voodoo” magic. Whatever the case, colonist where in consensus that slaves needed to be Christianized. Once this faith was adapted, the Bible was used as justification for the treatment of slaves as well as a way to control African Americans. A former slave tells the story of Noah, not Noah’s ark but the story that follows. Gus "Jabbo" Rogers stated:

"God gave religion to Adam. Took it away from Adam. Gave it to Noah. Noah had three sons. Noah got drunk on wine. One of his sons laughed at him, and the other two took a sheet, walked backwards and threw it over Noah. Noah told the one who laughed, 'Your children will be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the other two children, and they will be known by their hair, and their skin being dark.' There we are. That is the way God meant for us to be. We always have to follow the white folks and do what we saw them do, and that is all there is to it. You can't get away from what the Lord said" (Hayes, 2002).

Christianity would later be used as justification for segregation (Feldmeth, 1998). The bible is open to
interpretation, as all religions are and what education is for, some examples of common versus of the bible used to justify segregation can be found by doing a simple search on “Bible justification for segregation”.

EXODUS 33:16 "So shall we be separated, I and all of Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

LEVITICUS 20:24 "I am the Lord thy God, which have separated you from other people."

JOSHUA 23:12-13 "if ye do in any wise go back and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriage with them and go in unto them and they unto you: know for a certainty that they shall be snares and traps unto you and scourges in your sides and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish off from this good land which the Lord your God has given you."

The first product of Protestant domestication through religion is the original inhabitants of United States territory. After Native Americans were removed from their land and placed in to concentration camps, a commander of the 10th cavalry wanted to conduct an experiment on Native American Children. Richard Pratt wanted to extract the children from the reservations and send them to boarding schools that would “civilize” the children. After their Christian education, the children would not return home but instead they would go to work for white families. Pratt was
the “school father” of Carlisle Indian Industrial. There were several boarding schools in the United States and they all were concerned with the three C’s. Darlene Watt talks of her personal experiences in an oral interview performed by Ferguson, stating:

"With the three C's, you can easily look at Conquering, Civilizing, and Christianizing. It changes a people! I think the Bureau (of Indian Affairs) schools did just that! They totally changed a people in just a real short period of time. I'm not saying that we didn't need schools, the need was there. I needed a roof over my head. I needed an education. There were many children in my family at that time - with my mother working at ninety-cents and hour to feed me and my brothers and sisters and to provide for us and our needs. The Bureau Schools did that but it's all the other things that they did was so devastating and so traumatic. There was no need to put our people through all the abuses that they put us through. Other than having the philosophy that their way was better than ours. They could have accomplished the best of both worlds. They could have provided the Indian way and provided us with more education without putting us through traumatic differences." (Ferguson, 1997)

Native Americans and African Americans are just examples of America using public schools to assimilate the “other”. The issue or debate of a Christian God or a Muslim God, Hindu beliefs and atheism, such talk would have been absurd in public education systems prior to the 1930’s and 40’s.
A great example of Christian dominance and its effects can be in the court case sometimes referred to as “the monkey trial.” Because of Christian dominance, many bias educational laws have been put in to place, those will be explored in another chapter, however one must discuss the Butler Act of 1925 that was passed in Tennessee, it stated that educators must restrain from, “any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible," along with the teaching that "man descended from a lower order of animals." (Smout, 1998) Christianity is the history of early American educations. It was used as a tool to control and assimilate the other.

On May 5, 1925, a Dayton, Tennessee high school teacher purposely violated the Butler Act. John Scopes presented the ideas of evolution from On the Origin of Species, a book written by Charles Darwin. Scopes had purposely violated the Butler Act in order to instigate a test case for the ACLU, or American Civil Liberties Union. In the local court, he was found guilty almost immediately and the judge ordered him to pay a 100 dollar fine. The court was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. The circuit court was reversed, but not because the Butler Act was unconstitutional, but because the fine was over 50
dollars, and in the state of Tennessee only the Jury can fine a person a fee over 50 dollars. The Butler Act was not repealed until 1967 (Larson, 1998). This historic trial contributed to the Science versus Religion.

_Curriculums of Christianity_

There have been many recent decisions made by the Texas State School Board. On March 27, 2009, The State School board made a decision regarding science. In regards to the instruction of evolution, science teachers must discuss creationism as an alternative, Governor Rick Perry recently appointed Don McElroy to chair the school board. McElroy believes that the world is six thousand years old and is a creationist.

In order to save face, the state senate denied the appointment, but the rulings made in March still stand. Although this approach offers an alternative perspective to evolution and a variety of perspectives are essential to quality education, the framework of curriculum contributes to the polar appearance of Religion vs. Science instead of a non-biased, inclusive approach that recognizes all theories of existence without preference.
The previous section outlined past curriculum that was obviously Christian based and Protestant founded. However, modern times are full of curriculums that resemble Protestant tradition; the curriculums are just hidden behind alternate titles. Texas is not alone; in 2005 both the Kansas Board of education as well as the Dover, Pennsylvania School Board adopted curriculums that have mandatory discussions of artificial intelligence before lessons of evolution. Although these educators call the theory “Artificial Intelligence”, the fact that the members of both councils are Protestant Christians is too much to be a coincidence. (Slattery, 1995)

There are several different religions that feature a creation story. However, the artificial design disclosure represents the Christian creation story. The Protestant dominance of the Public School system continues. These school systems are also contributing to the idea that religion and science are opposites. Not all religions believe that, but by drawing this conclusion school boards are flexing their Protestant muscles.

There are several authors who would agree with this analysis. Itzhak Bentov (1988) explores the mechanics of consciousness. He explains that the scientific world has
used the scientific method in very unique ways in order to improve human development. There have been great strides in human understanding as a result of the scientific method. But like Freire approach to consciousness in the cultural aspect, Bentov believes that human consciousness in science is also evolving. He argues that the scientific method cannot be utilized to predict all of reality. The Scientific Method has demonstrated a physical connectedness among human kind. It does not address the Laws of Nature or the consciousness of human beings.

Lynne McTaggert (1987) builds on a more spiritual approach to science. She discusses that scientist have discovered that the elemental make up of human beings is not a chemical reaction but an energetic charge. The scientific method has often been used to breakdown and explain chemical reactions but has had no success in producing a sustainable theory for the energetic charge. She goes on to explain that there is one underlying energy field to which the entire universe is formed and connected. This field that she discusses is what Einstein referred to as “the only reality”. Scientist have been unable to study this field through scientific method in order to determine,
where did we come from, why do we exist, and what happens to the conscience after death.

John C. Polkinghorne (2007) believes that the next step to discovery and understanding in quantum’s or physics is an exploration of the interaction of science and theology. He states “beside the insights of science, expressible in the quantative language of mathematics, there are equally necessary insights of religion expressible in the qualitative language of symbols.” (p.8). He believes in order for there to be true understanding, his one world, we must partner science and theology together, “…theology explaining the source of rational order and structure which science both assumes and confirms in its investigation of the world.”

The current social issue of education and religion reveals that religion and culture have a historic bond. It is important that students discuss issues that pertain to world religion. The United States has pushed for education to be scientific in respect to research. However, the scientific method is not always applicable to culture and heritage. (Kelley, 1972) To truly understand the world and the culture of people, students must investigate the religious variable of global networks. This exploration
can not only be fed through media but the educational institution and teacher must act as a guide on a student’s quest for understanding.

**Silencing the Schools**

There is a historic principle in the United States that is formatted on the foundation of representation. This principle is often utilized in judicial hearings in order to create justice. Case law and precedence reveal an American society with a check and balance system. This system was used during the era of abolitionist, the Civil Rights Movement, Women’s rights, issues of sexual orientation, and religion. There has been an implementation of legislation forbidding discrimination based on the above virtues. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, later modified in 1968, states:

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TITLE II--INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION
SEC. 201.
(a) All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, and privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation, as defined in this section, without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin.
```
School Systems throughout the United States interpret this act differently. Many people who felt discrimination or isolation based on religion in Public Schools have filed lawsuits. Most have not been filed by followers of “conventional” religions; rather suits are usually filed by atheist. Later, a number of surveys will be examined to provide proof of a majority American’s dislike of atheist and the result this has had on education. But what is atheism?

A known figure in Religious rights is Madalyn Murray (later O'Hair), who wrote a document used in the court case Murray v. Curlett, 1961-APR-27. It reads, in part:

"An Atheist loves himself and his fellow man instead of a god. An Atheist knows that heaven is something for which we should work now - here on earth - for all men together to enjoy. An Atheist thinks that he can get no help through prayer but that he must find in himself the inner conviction and strength to meet life, to grapple with it, to subdue, and enjoy it. An Atheist thinks that only in a knowledge of himself and a knowledge of his fellow man can he find the understanding that will help to a life of fulfillment. Therefore, he seeks to know himself and his fellow man rather than to know a god. An Atheist knows that a hospital should be built instead of a church. An Atheist knows that a deed must be done instead of a prayer said. An Atheist strives for involvement in life and not escape into death. He wants disease conquered, poverty vanquished, war eliminated. He wants man to understand and love man. He wants an ethical way of life. He knows that we cannot rely on a god nor channel action into prayer nor hope for an end
to troubles in the hereafter. He knows that we are our brother's keeper and keepers of our lives; that we are responsible persons, that the job is here and the time is now."

The comment was in response to the popular social belief that atheists lack morality. Atheists became leaders in school reform and Madalyn became one of the most hated women in America.

Madalyn Murray was born in 1919. She was raised in a Protestant Christian family that struggled with money and basic needs. Madalyn did not question her religion until she was a teenager. It was at this time that she read the complete bible and decided that she was an atheist. Madalyn first became a public figure when she challenged the mandatory prayer required by her son William’s school claiming it was unconstitutional. The case, Murray v. Curlett, first went to court in 1960; it would travel up the circuit ladder and eventually reached the Supreme Court in 1963. Murray won by a decision of 8-1. Obligatory school prayer and mandatory Bible readings were banned in the Public Schools.

Madalyn took her second husband’s name, O’Hair, and became somewhat of a fundamentalist in concern to Atheist
and the First Amendment. She formed the “American Atheist” organization. This group was instrumental in many legal battles concerning the federal government and religion. The group had success in winning the first federal lawsuit challenging direct funding by the government of a faith-based agency, overturning a state Good Friday holiday, winning a lawsuit barring direct taxpayer subsidy of religious schools, removing Ten Commandments monuments and crosses from public land, halting the Post Office from issuing religious cancellations and ending 51 years of illegal bible instruction in public schools (Copan, 2009)

These decisions are important because they have helped shape our current public school system. It could be suggested that there is an Atheist versus Christian legal war over school systems. There have been several recent polls that explore views of Atheism. What is suggested is a population that does not understand one another, and this ignorance could be cured through knowledge.

A study was put out by the University of Minnesota. It claims that Atheists are the most despised minority group. The Study “Atheists as “Other”: Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society” (Edgell,
Gerteis, Hartmann, 2006) discusses a strong division between “believers” and “non-believers”. Minnesota scholars contend that social rejection is worse for atheist than any race, ethnicity, or culture. The study agrees that the United States is a highly-diverse country with a good level of positive pluralism. However, the authors believe the distrust of atheist is symbolic in nature and thus more withstanding of the change in time.

If the study is correct, this means that 26 million Americans are hated not because of what they believe, but what they do not believe. (Angier, 2001) According to the United States Census Bureau, there are over 300 million people in the United States. Why than does the Atheist analyses have any bearing on the current Protestant Dominance in the United States? The answer is that Atheists have been effective in using legislation to block common Protestant traditions in school systems. The problem with this is some States are just rebelling outright and clinging to their faith in a way that is unconstitutional, the second is an education censored for any religious reference. Both approaches are inappropriate in Education.
The Protestant control of curriculum was already discussed in prior chapters; but the imprint of dominance reaches beyond curriculum. There are several states that have laws against Atheism. These laws can be found in a number of constitutions (Clifton, 2005):

Arkansas State Constitution, Article 19 Section 1

No person who denies the being of a God shall hold any office in the civil departments of this State, nor be competent to testify as a witness in any court.

Maryland's Declaration of Rights: Article 36

"That as it is the duty of every man to worship God in such manner as he thinks most acceptable to Him, all persons are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty; wherefore, no person ought by any law to be molested in his person or estate, on account of his religious persuasion, or profession, or for his religious practice, unless, under the color of religion, he shall disturb the good order, peace or safety of the State, or shall infringe the laws of morality, or injure others in their natural, civil or religious rights; nor ought any person to be compelled to frequent, or maintain, or contribute, unless on contract, to maintain, any place of worship, or any ministry; nor shall any person, otherwise competent, be deemed incompetent as a witness, or juror, on account of his religious belief; provided, he believes in the existence of God, and that under His dispensation such person will be held morally accountable for his acts, and be rewarded or punished therefore either in this world or in the world to come."
Article 37
"That no religious test ought ever to be required as a qualification for any office of profit or trust in this State, other than a declaration of belief in the existence of God;"

Massachusetts' State Constitution, Article 3

"Any every denomination of Christians, demeaning themselves peaceably, and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law: and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law."
Comment: Apparently non-Christians are not "equally under the protection of the law".

Mississippi State Constitution. Article 14 ("General Provisions"), Section 265

"No person who denies the existence of a Supreme Being shall hold any office in this state."

North Carolina's State Constitution, Article 6 Section 8

"Disqualifications of office. The following persons shall be disqualified for office: First, any person who shall deny the being of Almighty God."

Pennsylvania's State Constitution, Article 1 Section 4

"No person who acknowledges the being of a God and a future state of rewards and punishments shall, on account of his religious sentiments, be disqualified to hold any office or place of trust or profit under this Commonwealth."
South Carolina's State Constitution, Article 4 Section 2

"No person shall be eligible to the office of Governor who denies the existence of the Supreme Being; ..."
Note: If you continue reading you will find that (in Section 8) the Lieutenant Governor must also meet the same qualifications as the Governor.

Tennessee's State Constitution, Article 9 Section 2

"No person who denies the being of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments, shall hold any office in the civil department of this state."

Texas' State Constitution, Article 1 Section 4

"No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office, or public trust, in this State; nor shall any one be excluded from holding office on account of his religious sentiments, provided he acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being."

It is obvious that there is an American fear of Atheists. Although Atheists have made legal strides in a plea for understanding, it is as the Minnesota study stated; they are the most hated minority in Americans. It is true that Atheists are a minority in America, but it should not be assumed that Protestants are an overwhelming majority. In fact, the statistics present an entirely different result.
Is the American Population Predominately Protestant?

The answer in short is no. There are many different surveys that measure the religious affiliation of the American population. ARIS, or the American Religious Identification Survey, report that non-Catholic Christians make up a little over 50% of the nation. (Kosmin, Keyser, 2008) There are studies that carry this breakdown to the next level, “Faith in Flux Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.” was a survey independently performed by the Pew Forum in April, 2009. This study also quotes that non-Catholic Christians make up about 50% of the population. See the chart below for the exact breakdown of the surveys.

The question was written:

“As far as your present religion, what denomination or church, if any, do you identify with most closely? Just stop me when I get to the right one. Are you (READ) Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Church of Christ, or Disciples of Christ, Congregational or United Church of Christ, Holiness, Reformed, Church of God, Nondenominational or Independent Church, Something else or none in particular?” (Faith in Flux, 2009)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah Witness</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Figure 1

Utilizing both surveys it can be concluded that America is not dominated by Protestants rather the United States is a pluralistic Nation and the perspectives of other religions are silenced in America because of the power struggle of Protestant educators. The answer to a Protestant pull should not be theological ignorance, especially not in an institution whose identity should be defined by knowledge.

Many may say that this controversy is not damaging to the child, or that students are not hurt by excluding religion so as not to offend. However, it could be argued
that it is the exclusion and censorship of religious
studies that lead to discrimination, prejudgment, and hate.
Just as African-American, Women, or Chicano, studies have
contributed to the academia, so will studies of theology.
It is crucial to understand people to understand the world,
and as the Minnesota study inferred, the symbolism put
forth by religions is too strong to be ignored.
Summary

Both the primary and secondary sources of the historiography reveal blatant protestant dominance in the structure of American public school Systems. This dominance was intentional and was composed to limit diversity.

The surveys reveal that Protestant dominance is not reflective of the American population; on the contrary the United States is quite diverse in religion and/or the lack of one. The surveys also revealed an abundant distaste of atheists by most, but a review of legislation demonstrates the success of atheists in court cases that concern public schools and religion. State legislation and state curriculum reveal a push of cultural racism in several states in respect to anti-atheist laws or creationism vs. evolution debates.
Conclusion

Thesis: The American public school systems are victim of cultural discrimination in respect to religion, and school reform is necessary to allow dialectic pedagogy to combat religious marginalization. 9/11 is the most recent social issue that has brought up discussions of religion; however, it only offers one aspect of a very dynamic investigation. Multi-cultural education has proven to be an effective approach to developing a student centered classroom. It has been a pleasant alternative to the previous Eurocentric curriculum. Paulo Freire, Todd Oppenheimer, and other great minds (King, Anthony, and Thoreau) have pushed for a multi-cultural approach to the world.

Freire (1970) stresses the importance of consciousness. In order for students to understand social issues, they must first become conscience of the issue. The classroom should be a community of support and discussion. This will allow the student to transfer knowledge from the educational institution and implement these lessons in social situations. Religion is a major contributor to world cultures. Freire argues that students should be armed with critical thought abilities. Freire’s
arguments of critical consciousness are applicable and should be considered.

The fact is that religion, different branches and at different times, has contributed in either negative or positive ways to every single discipline discussed in any curriculum. Students should not be fed a filtered education; because the filtering will always be subjective. In order to establish a transformational education, (Kea, Cambell, Richards, 2007) students must be exposed to circumstances and perspectives that may offer cognitive dissonance.

All of the major religions have made contributions to an array of disciplines. Cultural Anthropology, Art, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Philosophy are just some of the main disciplines where religion has played some sort of a role. Multi-cultural education would benefit by the presentation of these contributions. Not only will students outside the dominant religion benefit, but those who are a member of the dominant culture are offered alternatives for their indoctrinated beliefs. If the goal of education is the production of students who critical think and are conscious citizens, than students must be given the big picture.
Students must be armed with a complete knowledge when they venture into the world. Most of the world cultures value religion, and those cultures that do not, value the absence. Students in a post 9/11 world must be armed with knowledge so that they are not socialized to religious bias or ignorance. It is understood that Thomas Jefferson and the founding fathers insisted on a separation of church and state. However, I believe it could be argued that their intention was not a censored education, but rather a context of dialogue for knowledge sake, with no dominant imposing religion. This is not the current situation, and history clearly reveals a Protestant dominance in schools.

It is important that religious bias, just like racial bias, has a platform for confrontation in public school systems. The current controversies prevent such dialectic pedagogy, and dialectic pedagogy is a crucial element of critical thought, consciousness', and multicultural education. Diversity should be respected. Since Thomas Jefferson has been so misinterpreted in the religion education debate, let us explore him:

"The objects of... primary education [which] determine its character and limits [are]: To give to every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business; to enable him to calculate for himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his
contracts and accounts in writing; to improve, by reading, his morals and faculties; to understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either; to know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains, to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor and judgment; and in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed." --Thomas Jefferson: Report for University of Virginia, 1818.

Thomas Jefferson, the father of separation of church and state, is insisting that it is the role of education and educators to spread knowledge. He discusses preservation of free thought, gaining knowledge, understanding social relations; and although Thomas Jefferson’s America is of different interpretation and application, I believe that Education has the fundamental responsibility of preservation of free thought, acquiring knowledge and understanding the social world. I believe it is no mistake that these values should be the bases of education, because critical thought is imperative in the education of a student.

Unfortunately, fundamentalists usually hold the microphone when it comes to social issues and public opinion. In the case of American schools, instead of students openly discussing opinions and views on existence,
creation, being; they are told to put their Star of David necklace under their shirt, remove the head dress, and let’s rename prayer a “moment of silence”, this is unacceptable. It is important for students to understand the universal networks of the world. I set out to explore the impact of Protestant culture on education in order to establish a causal relationship with the lack of discussion concerning existence in education. I discovered that, like with most social issues, only two approaches are being applied. Either school is a “No Religion” zone, or the Curriculum reflects religious bias.

I can not imagine that there is a person in the world who has not for a second contemplated his existence. Some people believe that the Universe is a chemical reaction and when you die, it is final. Others refer to institutions for guidance, or to Nature. The answer to the question of existence is subjective and thus, this answer plays a different role depending on the culture of differing societies. Dialectic pedagogy offers students the ability to explore the unknown and discuss social matters so that they are rounded citizens; there should never be censorship in schools. As educators, we have a responsibility to
explore our own biases and allow our students to challenge theirs, to initiate controversial conversations and encourage thought. The United States is not a Christian Country, it is not an Atheists society; but school policy only reflects those positions.

Students should not be socialized in to believing that they have to make a choice between faith and science, or that they must have faith at all. This approach only allows media and stereotypes as sources of input on religious controversy. As the world becomes more interconnected through technology, it is essential that students understand culture, have different perspectives of the same theme, and are able to synergize that information. In the beginning of this study, I told you the story of Justin. I believe that Justin was jolted because of the current battle of legislation between faiths. Instead of removing the Christmas tree in December, discuss all religious holidays and their histories. Knowledge is not a secret, it is a tool of empowerment, it should not be censored, and it should be celebrated.
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Curriculum Vitae

I received my Bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at El Paso where I majored in Political Science and had a History minor. I previously worked as an Americorps volunteer and at the University of Texas at El Paso as an athletic academic tutor for all social study disciplines. This thesis was written and accepted as partial fulfillment of a Master of Arts degree in Education. I emphasized my studies on History and Sociology. Currently, I teach elementary social studies education at the University of Texas at El Paso, and am in the Teaching, Learning, and Culture Ph.D. program.