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A qualitative investigation of religion and spirituality: Implications for social scientists and psychotherapists

Charles Jordan Joanides

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A qualitative investigation of religion and spirituality:
Implications for social scientists and psychotherapists

by

Charles Jordan Joanides

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Human Development and Family Studies (Marriage and Family Therapy)

Major Professor: Harvey Joanning

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
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Charles Jordan Joanides

has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University

Signature was redacted for privacy.

Major Professor

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Major Program

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Graduate College
To my loving wife

and two children
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ABSTRACT

Religion and spirituality have recently become topics of discussion within the social sciences and among psychotherapists. This study has attempted to contribute to the ongoing discussion and research that has been conducted in this area by presenting descriptions and interpretations from a qualitative study involving two Christian denominations, i.e., Lutherans and Eastern Orthodox. From these observations and interpretations, the researcher has constructed a thick, rich description of religious people’s perceptions of the terms religion and spirituality that has implications for social scientists and psychotherapists who have an interest in religion and spirituality. To be more specific, this research project (a) has served to reinforce the renewed interest that social scientists and psychotherapists have in the role religion and spirituality play in religious individuals’ and families’ lives, (b) has served to explicate how certain salient contextual information is often missed when social scientists and psychotherapists fail to understand the full meaning of the terms religion and spirituality from religious people’s perspectives, (c) has served to further clarify how certain salient contextual information can be missed when therapists fail to address religion and spirituality with religious individuals, couples, and family systems, (d) has served to further conceptualize the interrelationship that exists between the terms religion and spirituality as perceived by religious people, (e) has served to stimulate
further research that could lead toward a verification of the descriptions generated in this research, and (f) may facilitate future research with probability samples.
CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Generalizing from a recent survey of 113,000 U. S. citizens conducted at City University of New York, an estimated 175 million people describe themselves as religious (Kosmin & Lachman, 1995). Moreover, among this number nearly 160 million people identified themselves as Christian (Kosmin & Lachman, 1995). A number of other polls appear to confirm this information and illustrate the extent of religious belief in our country. For example, recently the Des Moines Register polled 802 people across Iowa and discovered that 90% of their respondents indicated that religion is important in their lives (Simbro, 1996). In an article that appeared in USA Weekend (Castelli, 1994), this article stated that Gallup polls consistently show that over 90 percent of Americans pray and 75% pray daily. Gallup Polls conducted by Princeton Religious Center (1976; 1982; 1985) and by Gallup & Bezella (1994) also indicate that religion appears to be important to people’s well being and their view of life. Given these and other similar statistics, a growing number of social scientists and psychotherapists have become interested in how religion and spirituality impacts individuals, families, and society.

As a result, in this study I will seek to contribute to the present conversation occurring in the literature regarding religion and spirituality. I hope to do this by providing a thick, rich description of these terms from 10 religious respondents, and by generating theory that will assist future researchers in their efforts to conceptualize how these terms are viewed by religious people. In effect, my hope is that respondents’ observations and interpretations will serve to produce a clearer picture,
(a) of the perceived roles that religion and spirituality play in religious people's lived experience, (b) of the relationship that exists between religion and spirituality as perceived by religious people, (c) make the discussion that exists in the current literature to a higher level of sophistication, and (d) generate new ideas and interrelated positions that might lead to new theoretical conceptualizations of religious people.

**Dissertation Organization**

It seems to me that any examination of religion and spirituality from a social science perspective must include a concise overview of the key figures and theoretical propositions that have served to influence how contemporary social scientists and psychotherapists typically view religion. Therefore, in Chapters Two, Three and Four of this research study, my main objective will be to offer just such an analysis by reviewing what certain key figures in the fields of philosophy, psychology, and sociology have postulated about this topic.

To that end, in Chapter Two I will endeavor to summarize the chief philosophical notions presented by (a) thinkers who have been influenced by revealed theology, (b) theologians/philosophers who have ascribed to a natural theological approach, (c) theists and atheists who have adopted a metaphysical approach to the study of religion, and (d) philosophers who rejected the notion of God as entirely untenable and illogical.

In Chapter Three I will seek to distill the thoughts and opinions regarding religion and spirituality of certain prominent figures in the fields of psychology and sociology.
As such, this chapter will seek to summarize the ideas of the following researchers, theorists, and clinicians: August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Sir Edward Taylor, Sir James Frazer, R. R. Marrett, Branislaw Malinowski, Sigmund Freud, Karl Jung, William James, Eric Fromm, Abraham Maslow, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Clifford Geertz. Chapter Three will also provide a brief synopsis of some of the important assertions that are influencing how many contemporary social scientists and psychotherapists view and investigate religious and spiritual phenomena.

After completing this rudimentary task, Chapter Four will briefly examine how family scholars have tended to view the connection between religion and the family. This chapter will also feature a review of what psychotherapists and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) have written about religion and spirituality.

On the basis of the literature reviewed in Chapters Two, Three and Four, Chapter Five will then proceed to introduce my research project. In this chapter I will seek to provide justification for the research included in this dissertation project, and outline the methodology that I have utilized to investigate this question.

Chapter Six will subsequently offer an analysis of the semi-structured ethnographic interviews that were conducted to assist me in generating religious people's perceptions and lived experiences of the terms religion and spirituality. In an effort to accomplish this task, this chapter will contain four subcategories, as well as a discussion of each subcategory's properties and dimensions. This chapter will also contain an analysis of a collateral subcategory labeled "Implications for Psychotherapists," whose purpose will be to ascertain if religious participants in this
study perceive any relevant connection(s) between religion and spirituality and the practice of psychotherapy.

Chapter Seven will present a thick rich description of my participant’s observations and interpretations. This chapter will thus seek to assist the reader in comprehending how religious people in this study viewed and experienced religion and spirituality and if their lived religious and spiritual experiences and perceptions might have anything salient to say to psychotherapists.

On the basis of what is generated in Chapters Six and Seven, Chapter Eight will subsequently attempt to expound upon the perceived benefits of this study. As such, this chapter will be devoted to providing a tentative appraisal of the value that this research project may have for social scientists and psychotherapists who are interested in investigating how religion and spirituality impacts individuals, couples, families, and society.

And finally, Chapter Nine will offer some concluding remarks and provide some suggestions for future research on this topic.

My Personal Lens

Before embarking upon an examination of any one given researcher’s, theorist’s and clinicians’ ideas, I have determined to make the reader aware of certain collateral, but in my opinion, pertinent information. First and foremost, I would like my readers to be aware that I have been a Greek Orthodox priest for 17 years. I thus view myself as a religious person whose religious orientation profoundly influences the manner in which I view the world. I also believe that religion and spirituality tends to impact
religious people’s lives in relation to their personal religious and spiritual development. To be more specific, in my opinion, people who view themselves as moderately to highly religious and spiritual would generally tend to be impacted by religion and spirituality to a greater degree than those who consider themselves nominally religious and spiritual. I further believe that one’s religious tradition has an exceedingly acute impact on one’s spirituality and vice versa. I also suppose that there is a synergistic relationship that exists between religious people’s religious and spiritual experiences that functions to deepen religious people’s spiritual development while enhancing the manner in which they view religion, and more specifically, their respective religious tradition. I do not, therefore, view or approach religion and spirituality as if these two phenomena are entirely separate and unrelated spheres of experience, nor do I believe that religion and spirituality function independently of one another in religious people’s lives. Furthermore, as a marriage and family therapist of some six years, I tend to believe that religious client systems’ religious and spiritual experiences should not be ignored during the psychotherapeutic process. Specifically, I believe that when therapists are disinterested in their religious clients’ religiosity and spirituality, such an approach could negatively impact therapy with religious client systems.

On the basis of these above assumptions, it may be that some people reading the ideas and conclusions generated by this study might be tempted to presume that the observations and interpretations included below may be basically flawed because of my personal perspectives of religion and spirituality. In an effort to arrest these potential concerns, I would like my readers to know that, in principle, I agree with the following
position that a number of respected contemporary researchers, theorists and clinicians hold who are involved in a study of religion and spirituality (Kelly, 1995; Bergin, 1980; Randour, 1993; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). Specifically, in this study I essentially have adopted a postmodern approach to research, and would argue that all research is driven by theoretical presuppositions and assumptions (Alston, 1991; Audi, 1997; Doherty, Boss, Larossa, Schumm & Steinmetz, 1993; Kuhn, 1970; Suppe, 1977; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Thomas & Wilcox, 1987). Moreover, on the basis of this latter conviction, I would further argue that both religious and non-religious researchers should be conducting research in this area, with one important proviso, i.e., that researchers identify their religious or non-religious biases within the body of their text as I will attempt to do throughout this paper (McNamara, 1988; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990).

Second, to assist the reader even further in discerning the lens which I have utilized to conduct the research proposed in this paper, I have also determined to include the following personal observations. As I reviewed the writings of the key researchers, theorists, and clinicians who appear to have impacted the manner in which social scientists and psychotherapists view religious behavior, I drew certain impressions of their often disparate, contradictory assertions and theoretical positions, and essentially interpreted the research and theory I reviewed as either possessing a fundamentally negative view of religion or an essentially positive view of religion. For example, from my perspective researchers, theorists, and clinicians presenting an essentially negative perspective of religion generally tended to conceptualize religion
and religious behavior in one or more of the following ways: (a) as an anachronism that is linked to an infantile stage in humankind's development that prevents human progress, (b) as a human construction that is illusory and irrational in character and leads to self-deprecation, self-deception, and escapism, (c) as oppressive and exploitive in character, (d) as a force that contributes to individual pathology, and (e) as a social construction that negatively impacts social well being.

It should also be pointed out that many of these thinkers (though not all) also tended to be influenced by modernistic, positivistic and evolutionary theory (Bergin, 1980; Eliade, 1969; Randour, 1993; Thomas & Henry, 1985; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas & March, 1995) which implies that their ideas were likely limited by the theoretical lenses which they utilized to examine religious and spiritual behavior (Bergin, 1980; McNamara, 1988; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & March, 1995). And finally, it should also be noted here that many of these same thinkers also tended to conceptualize spirituality in largely pejorative terms, i.e., similarly to how they tended to view religious behavior (Bergin, 1980; Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1991; Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Wilber, 1983; Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986).

Conversely, theorists adopting a more positive view of religion (in my opinion) have inherently tended to view religion in one or more of the following ways: (a) as a human construction that serves to meet certain cognitive and emotional needs, (b) as a human construction that is cathartic in nature and serves to mitigate certain primordial emotions and tensions, (c) as a human construction that functions to address certain
puzzling and disturbing phenomena, (d) as a socially constructed force that regulates individual behavior and teaches moral behavior, (e) as a socially generated phenomena that functions to provide solidarity and stability to society, (f) as a social phenomena that meets certain unmet needs that other human exchanges can not provide, and (g) as a profoundly significant transpersonal, meta-empirical experience that tends to meet certain psychological or personality needs. Additionally, though admittedly these thinkers’ work has tended to be characterized by a more flexible and congenial attitude toward religion, their work is also not beyond reproach when examined by a religious person (Bergin, 1980; Eliade, 1969; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). On the contrary, their observations regarding religious and spiritual behavior often have a tendency to miss the target, and are subject to some of the following shortcomings. First, they tend to generally think of religion and spirituality in dichotomous terms (Eliade, 1969; Kelly, 1995). Second, they superimpose their own perceptions and values on those whom they are studying (Bergin, 1980; Donahue, 1989; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). Third, they generally (with very few exceptions) tend to dismiss any notions of a meta-empirical reality or transcendent being, i.e. like God, Allah, Yahweh... (Bergin, 1980; Garrett, 1974; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Fourth, they are often guided by modernistic, positivistic perceptions of the world (Bergin, 1980; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). As such, the consequences of these perceived assumptions tend to leave much of their work open to criticism when viewed from a religious person’s perspective. To be even
more specific, though many researchers and theorists assume a fundamentally positive perspective of religion and spirituality, they tend to be handicapped by their values and presuppositions about religion (Thomas & Marsh, 1995) and consequently, they tend to ultimately produce assertions that may be skewed and incomplete (Bergin, 1980; Donahue, 1989; Gartner, Larson & Allen, 1991; Thomas & Henry, 1988; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990).

And finally, though it is encouraging to note that many contemporary thinkers and researchers investigating religious and spiritual phenomena are beginning to draw these same conclusions, and are searching for new ways to examine religion and spirituality (Bergin, 1980; Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1989; Kelly, 1995; McNamara, 1988; Randour, 1993; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas, & March, 1995; Wilber, 1983; Wilber et. al., 1986), the ideas generated by these contemporary writers are (in the main) not the ideas that are currently influencing the manner in which many social scientists and psychotherapists think about religion and spirituality (Thomas & Marsh, 1995). All of which suggests that though the future of religious and spiritual research looks brighter within the social sciences and among psychotherapists, there is much that remains to be done to redress, correct, and add to the information that currently guides the manner in which social scientists think about religious and spiritual phenomena.

The Elusive Nature of Religious Research

Religion and spirituality are broad, complex topics that have yet to be thoroughly understood by social scientists and psychotherapists. Indeed, even a general consensus
of what the terms mean has essentially alluded social scientists and psychotherapists (Hamilton, 1995; James, 1961; Robertson, 1970), though admittedly many have attempted to construct definitions that they hoped would have universal application (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995). Additionally, some researchers, theorists and clinicians investigating religious phenomena have also pointed to the issue of transcendence, and thus argued that the preponderance of religious behavior may be outside the purview of science (Eliade, 1969; Florovsky, 1976; Lossky, 1976). Many of these writers have tended to suggest a phenomenological approach to the study of religion, i.e., advocating that religion is a phenomena that is understandable only on its own terms: that it is a phenomena which is "sui-generis" (Dawson, 1987; Eliade, 1969; Kerrr & Hardin, 1984; Morris, 1987; Towler, 1974). Others have sought to argue for the study of observable and measurable religious phenomena. These writers have proposed and defended a reductionistic approach to the study of religion (Cavanaugh, 1982; Segal & Wiebe, 1989). And finally, others have also suggested that religious studies have been limited by biased generalizations and naive, incomplete theoretical conceptualizations (Brodbar-Nemzer, 1988; D’Antonio, 1988; Donahue, 1989; Gartner et al., 1991; Heaton, 1988; Hood, 1983; Hood et al., 1986; Kelly, 1995; Scanzoni, 1988; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Many of these thinkers have maintained that research (to date) examining the affect of religion on individuals, families, and society has generally lacked theoretical grounding (Berenson, 1990; Bergin, 1980; Brodbar-Nemzer, 1988; D’Antonio, 1988; Donahue, 1989; Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1991; Gartner et al., 1991; Heaton, 1988; Hood, 1983;
Hood et al., 1986; Kelly, 1995; McNamara, 1988; Scanzoni, 1988; Thomas, 1988;
Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990). In these instances, many of
these theorists have alluded to certain perceived deficiencies in the present literature
and made some remedial suggestions. For example, reflecting on the research that
family scholars have generated during the 1980s, Thomas and Cornwall (1990)
concluded:

The research we reviewed often lacks creativity in concept and method. The
multidimensional nature of religiosity, for example, is rarely considered,
particularly in studies where religiosity is the independent variable. It is generally
measured by affiliation or frequency of church attendance. While methodological
limitations sometimes flow from general research constraints, they also result
from not giving careful attention to how the connection between religion and
family is or ought to be conceptualized. It is clear from our review that while
religious and family variables are included in the research effort, they are
frequently of secondary importance. For example, religious preference or church
attendance may be 'thrown in' to the analysis simply because the research has
shown that one cannot ignore the impact of religion. But there is little discussion
at the theoretical level that might suggest why these variables are important. (p.
986)

Despite all of these obstacles, however, researchers, theorists, and clinicians have
increasingly begun to agree that religious phenomena deserve the same kind of
respectful consideration as other human behavior (Bergin, 1980; Kelly, 1995; Thomas
& Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Weaver et al., 1997). As a result, more
and more researchers examining religious behavior have argued for the value and need
of additional work in this area on the grounds that this work has the potential to
expand social sciences' understanding of the human condition (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989;
Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Stander et al., 1994; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Marsh,

My Research Question

I would agree with those who have recently argued that religious studies have the
potential to increase social scientists' knowledge of humanity. Moreover, while there
are many apparent formidable obstacles facing researchers who are interested in
examining religious phenomena, I am also optimistic that many (but perhaps, not all)
of these current methodological and theoretical quandaries challenging contemporary
researchers will be resolved. All of which leads me to the primary focus of this paper.

After reviewing the literature outlined in Chapters Two, Three and Four I am
inclined to strongly agree with those researchers and theorists who have argued for
additional theoretical grounding within this body of research. To that end, therefore, I
have determined to conduct the following the study. It is my impression that
researchers, theorists, and clinicians have yet to carefully delineate and understand
religious peoples' lived experience of the terms religion and spirituality. Moreover,
though there have been some collateral efforts made in this direction, to my knowledge
these efforts have not directly focused on examining and comprehending the
relationship between the terms religion and spirituality from religious peoples'
perspectives, e. g., Allport (1950) has sought to draw distinctions between intrinsic
and extrinsic religious behavior; James (1961) has written eloquently on the
interrelationship of religion and spirituality; and Puyser (1968, 1991) has written
extensively on the psychological persuasiveness of religion and spirituality in religious
people's lives. I have thus resolved to utilize a qualitative methodological approach,
together with a grounded theory approach as delineated by Glaser and Strauss (1965,
1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), to examine how religious people view the terms
religion and spirituality.

To be even more specific, I examine the interrelatedness of the terms religion and
spirituality as they are perceived by two separate groups of religious Christians:
Lutherans and Orthodox Christians. Moreover, by proceeding in this manner, it was
my expectation that such an investigation would, not merely serve to create a keener
understanding of how religious people understand the terms religion and spirituality,
but would also serve to inform future research with religious people through the
generation of what I (and others) have perceived to be sorely needed theory in social
science's efforts to better understand religious phenomena. Finally, in an effort to
accomplish these objectives, I have also determined to utilize the following two part
research question to guide my efforts: Do Christians view the terms religion and
spirituality as belonging to, two unrelated and separate spheres of experience? If
Christians do not necessarily compartmentalize and dichotomize these two
experiences, then how do they perceive these experiences, and what are the
ramifications of religious people's observations and interpretations for social scientists and psychotherapists interested in religious and spiritual matters?
CHAPTER TWO. A LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES OF GOD

Revealed Theology: From a Largely Christian Perspective

Revealed theology (first and foremost) is based on the premise that the Transcendent is known and experienced by human beings through Divine revelation (Audi, 1997). Since my study has considered two separate denominations of Christians, I have chosen to begin this chapter by outlining what revealed theologians postulate about God from both an inclusive perspective and the more exclusive perspective proposed by Christian revealed theologians. By proceeding in this manner, it is my hope that the reader will be better informed of the unique subtleties that characterize this approach to comprehending religion and the Divine.

Mystics and theologians (Buber, 1970; Florovsky, 1976; James, 1961; Kadloubovsky & Palmer, 1975; Lossky, 1976; Maloney, 1974; Meyendorff, 1974; Palamas, 1988; Payne, 1980; Quasten, 1975; Stavropoulos, 1976; Ware, 1979) who have written from a revealed theological perspective have long since made the following assertions. In each instance these thinkers have affirmed the existence of a benevolent, omnipotent, omniscient, Transcendent Being. Beyond this primary assertion, these theologians also believe that humankind’s finite mind cannot fully understand God’s nature, and that Divine nature is forever shrouded in darkness and mystery i.e., is forever incomprehensible and inaccessible to humanity. They have further posited that much of humankind’s experience of the Divine can only be articulated and experienced through a mystical relationship with the Divine that is
facilitated by metaphor, symbols and (in some instances) a sacramental existence. To that end, some revealed theologians have also posited that God can best be understood though the things that we do not know about God, as opposed to the things that we know about God. In this case, this type of approach has at times been labeled as an “apophatic” theological approach (Lossky, 1976; Ware, 1979). Discussing this type of approach to knowing and experiencing God, Ware (1976, p. 72) states:

One can discern two trends in... mystical theology, not exactly opposed, but certainly at first sight inconsistent: the ‘way of negation’ and the ‘way of union’. The way of negation- apophatic theology, as it is often called- speaks of God in negative terms. God cannot be properly apprehended by man’s mind; human language, when applied to Him, is always inexact. It is therefore less misleading to use negative language about God rather than positive- to refuse to say what God is, and to state simply what He is not. As Gregory of Nyssa [third century theologian] put it: “The true knowledge and vision of God consists of this- in seeing that He is invisible, because what we seek lies beyond all knowledge, being wholly separated by the darkness of incomprehensibility.”

As such, revealed theologians would argue that though they know God is love, God is more than the concept of love as humans would conceptualize this term. Furthermore, though God is merciful, powerful, wise,... God’s mercy, power, wisdom... is far beyond anything that humankind can comprehend. As such, much of humankind’s experience with the Divine remains forever shrouded within darkness and mystery.
Conversely, though God's nature remains inaccessible and incomprehensible, there is nonetheless a part of God (sometimes referred to as God's energies or attributes) which is accessible, comprehensible, and immanently available to humankind. Moreover, it is this part of God that the Divine has chosen to reveal to humankind. Furthermore, revealed theologians would also state that those who desire to enter into a personal relationship with the Divine must begin by embracing what God has revealed. This means that the believer must strive to accept by faith what God has revealed by love. To be more specific, revealed theologians believe that one must struggle to surrender one's will to God, embrace and believe in God's revealed way, and choose to live within certain Divinely revealed boundaries.

Natural Theology and Metaphysics

Natural theologians and those thinkers and philosophers influenced by metaphysics utilized rational and logical philosophical approaches in their efforts to understand the Divine, and deliberately avoided concepts like "Divine revelation" and "Divine inspiration" to explain and justify their assertions of the Divine. Furthermore, some of the key figures who sought to utilize a naturalistic/metaphysical approach in understanding and justifying religious behavior were: Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant and Leibniz (Audi 1997; Flew, 1994; Hick, 1970; Plantinga, 1974). The following material summarizes the key ideas that these types of thinkers embraced.

Beginning with Augustine in the third century (Forovsky, 1976; Lossky, 1976), thinkers who fancied themselves as both theists and philosophers, sought to use
rational/logical proofs to confirm the existence of God, and the coherence of religious thought. Moreover, though these rational proofs have produced a mind boggling complexity of fascinating ideas and arguments, most of these ideas and arguments can be typologized under four main subcategories: ontological arguments, cosmological arguments, teleological arguments, and moral arguments (Audi 1997; Flew, 1994; Hick, 1970; Plantinga, 1974). Let us briefly examine each of these typologies.

Anselm of Catebury, a Benedictine monk, is best know for his ontological argument and is often cited by philosophers of religion (Audi 1997; Flew, 1994; Hick, 1970; Plantinga, 1974). Briefly, this Christian Platonist (Flew, 1994) attempted to develop a philosophical proof of God's existence through value theory (Audi, 1997). Quoting from Audi (1997, p. 26) regarding Anselm's ideas, Audi writes: "Anselm begins with his conception of a being a greater than that which cannot be conceived, and mounts his ontological argument that a being greater than which cannot be conceived exists in the intellect." Elsewhere Audi (1997, p. 608) seeks to elaborate upon this statement and also adds the following to summarize Anselm's argument:

Because we have this concept [in our minds], God at least exists in our minds as an object of understanding. Either God exists in our mind alone, or God exists both in the mind and as an extramental reality. But if God existed in the mind alone, then we could conceive of a being greater than that than which nothing greater can be conceived, namely, one that also existed in extramental reality. Since the concept of a being greater than that than which nothing greater can be
conceived is incoherent, God cannot exist in the mind alone. Hence God exists not only in the mind but also in extramental reality.

Cosmological arguments of the type that Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) postulated, have also been utilized to logically explain the existence of God, and offer some justification and coherence of a belief in a Supreme Being. Furthermore, these types of arguments are largely based upon certain general statements about the world (Audi 1997; Pantinga, 1974). To be more specific, these types of arguments “begin with the notion that there are the things that there are” (Flew, 1994, p. 200), and that these things are the result of God. These types of arguments might thus refer to a Divine “first cause,” and subsequently postulate how this Divine first cause has functioned to ultimately cause everything else to come into being (Audi, 1997; Plantinga, 1974). These types of arguments might also tend to talk about humankind (as well as all of biological life) as “contingent beings” who depend on a Divine or Necessary Being for their existence (Audi, 1997; Flew, 1994; Plantinga, 1974). Furthermore, these types of arguments might also allude to a “First Mover” and reason that this First Mover has Created all that exists (Audi, 1997; Hick, 1970; Flew, 1994).

Teleological arguments of the type that Aristotle first posited would also make a profound impact on succeeding generations of natural philosophers: especially upon many natural theologians and metaphysical thinkers. To be more specific, Aristotle’s observation that all things (both those that lack intelligence, as well as things that have intelligence) appeared “to act for an end so as to achieve the best result” (Audi 1997, p. 609).
As a result of being heavily influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, Thomas Aquinas (the most notable natural theologian to posit a teleological argument) would adopt these Aristotelian notions, incorporate them into his theistic lens, and credit the orderliness that appeared to be superimposed upon the entire cosmos to a beneficent, omniscient, all-powerful God (Audi, 1997; Plantinga, 1974). He would further argue that all of creation has been infused with a God-given tendency to fulfill its own God-given nature (Audi, 1997; Plantinga, 1974).

Moral arguments have been utilized to prove that God exists. These arguments look to humankind's proclivity to live a moral existence and attempt to rationally decipher what has caused this type of behavior. In these instances natural theologians (as well as those influenced by metaphysics) have generally purported that humankind's moral behavior provides direct evidence of a Moral God. Among those who have posited such arguments, Kant's assertions afford us with one of the best examples of these types of rational arguments (Audi, 1997; Flew, 1994; Plantinga, 1974). Reflecting upon Kant assertions about morality, Audi (1997, p. 610) states,

According to Kant, the complete good consists of perfect virtue rewarded with perfect happiness, and virtue deserves to be rewarded with proportional happiness because it makes one worthy to be happy. If morality is to command the allegiance of reason, the complete good must be a real possibility.

To summarize, though some have suggested that natural theological and metaphysical arguments (when considered cumulatively) serve to make the existence of God more persuasive and probable (Audi 1997; Flew, 1994), perhaps the most
important point that can be made about these types of arguments is that they do not prove God's existence, nor do they successfully function to superimpose a sense of logical coherency on one's belief in the Divine (Audi 1997; Flew, 1994). Second, others have thus argued that with the advent of this type of approach to understanding God (Buber, 1970; Florovsky, 1976; James, 1961; Kadloubovsky & Palmer, 1975; Lossky, 1976; Maloney, 1974; Meyendorff, 1974; Palamas, 1988; Payne, 1980; Quasten, 1975; Stavropoulos, 1976; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Ware, 1979), a perceivable philosophical shift occurred which at once tended to reject an experience with the Divine that is based on revealed truth and a mystical experience, and narrowly advocated and argued for an approach to an understanding of the Divine that is almost exclusively and narrowly based on reason (Alston, 1991; Plantinga, 1974). These same critics would also infer that the ultimate consequences of such an approach was to invite subsequent generations of philosophers to postulate that a belief in God is totally untenable and illogical. Three such philosophers to advocate such assertions were David Hume and Friedrich Wilhelm Neitzsche, Bertrand Russell.

God and Religion as Illogical and Untenable Concepts

David Hume

Though Hume was not the first philosopher to deny the existence of a Transcendent Being, and argue against the value of religion, he succeeded in defending his positions as effectively as anyone else, and so I have chosen to include some of his ideas here as a way to represent a different view of reality (an atheistic vis-à-vis an theistic view) than that which has been posited above. Briefly, after examining most of
the writings (from a natural, metaphysical perspective) that defended the existence of God, Hume concluded that religion was oppressive, religious behavior illogical, and the concept of God untenable. He stated that the origins of religion were based on humankind's primordial fears, and our need to assuage our fears with a concept of a Higher power who could function to ameliorate our fears and anxieties. He argued that monotheism (as compared to polytheism) tended to be a more zealous and intolerant form of religion, seemed to encourage debasement of others, and was a danger to society because it instigated violence and immorality. Hume thus favored a more humanistic approach to existence and believed that as humankind shed their religious trappings, so also would the human species gravitate toward a higher social structure that would function to benefit both individuals and society.

**Friedrich Wilhelm Neitzsche**

Neitzsche is perhaps best known for his "God is dead" pronouncement. What many people do not know about him is that he lived at a time when traditional philosophical paradigms were diminishing in Germany. Specifically, while traditional religious and metaphysical ways of thinking were on the wane, this ideological, transitional change was leaving a void (in his mind) that modern science could not fill (Audi 1997). Furthermore, this void was perceived as endangering the health of civilization. As such, Neitzsche's primary concern was to discover some life-affirming alternative to the pessimistic and nihilistic views that were beginning to pervade German society.
In his efforts to arrive at an alternative philosophical interpretation, he became convinced of the untenability of the “God hypothesis.” Moreover, this prompted him to reject all religious and metaphysical interpretations of the world and humankind. He adamantly argued that religion, and any notions of a Divine Being were “fictions” (Audi 1997), and adopted a “naturalistic” (Audi 1997) view of existence which applauded art, nature, and a higher notion of humanity. His writings also exhorted his fellow citizens to strive to reach their fullest potentials through a love of art and a celebration and justification of life for its own sake.

Bertrand Russell

Russell was to emerge as another important figure in the ongoing philosophical debate regarding God’s existence. Since he espoused analytic philosophy, and extreme realism, he tenaciously argued for the implausibility and untenability of a Transcendent Being. He held that “knowledge is based on direct acquaintance with sense-data” (Audi 1997, p. 701), thus rejecting all other forms of experience as fictitious and illusory if they could not be proven through analytic prepositional arguments.

To illustrate his philosophical approach, Hick (1970) cites some of his remarks from a debate on the existence of God that was broadcast in 1948 on the British Broadcasting Corporation. Addressing himself to the question “Does a cause of the world exist?”, he stated:

Well certainly the question ‘Does the cause of the world exist?’ is a question that has meaning. But if you say ‘Yes, God is the cause of the world’ you’re using God as a proper name; then ‘God exists’ will not be a statement that has meaning,
that is the position that I am maintaining. Because, therefore, it will follow that it cannot be an analytic proposition ever to say that this or that exists.

As a way to conclude this section, I feel that it is not unreasonable to suggest that the philosophy of religion contains numerous conceptions of the Transcendent which range from a theistic perspective, to an agnostic perspective to an atheistic perspective. To that end, some thinkers based all that they know and understand about God on the concept of Divine revelation. Others sought to discuss and argue God’s existence by rejecting Divine revelation and proceeding to understand God from a purely logical and rationalistic approach. While others (on the strength of what proceeded before them) have alleged that the concept of God is both untenable and illogical, and sought to argue against God’s existence. Additionally, despite these variations in thought and opinion, what also appears to have resulted (at least within intellectual circles) is a subtle, yet perceivable shift from a predominately theistic perception of the world to a predominately agnostic/atheistic view of the world.
19th Century Intellectualist Psychological Perceptions of Religion

August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Sir Edward Taylor and Sir James Frazer are four important theorists whose conceptions about religion would function to influence subsequent generations of thinkers on this subject (Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Hamilton, 1995). Briefly, these men postulated that religious phenomena emerged from metaphysical and theological paradigms that emphasized a naive knowing which was essentially based upon “supernaturalism” or the belief in a Transcendent force outside of nature, and “irrationality” or the commitment to assumptions about the world that can not be verified scientifically (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987).

Influenced by positivism and evolutionary theory these men postulated that religion is reflective of a primitive stage in humankind’s development (Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Hamilton, 1995; Hinkle, 1980): a stage that they assumed the human race would inevitably outgrow. These thinkers tended to view religion as a natural phenomena that could essentially be studied scientifically and objectively similarly to other natural phenomena (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Hamilton, 1995; Martindale, 1962; Morris, 1987). These men tended to maintain that religion is founded on certain illusory, irrational beliefs that appear to meet certain cognitive needs by allowing humans to explain and understand their world (Hamilton, 1995; Martindale, 1962; Morris, 1987). They maintained that science would eventually predominate religious thinking and replace
what they termed “supernaturalism” and “irrationality” with superior scientific explanations (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987).

20th Century Emotionalist-Psychological Perceptions of Religion

Rather than placing an emphasis on humankind’s cognitions, emotionalists have tended to evaluate religious behavior by examining how humankind’s emotional needs and desires are connected to religious behavior (Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995). For example, R. R. Marrett (1914) and Branislaw Malinowski (1974) both understood and explained religious phenomena as purely emotional in nature (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). To be more specific, both of these theorists posited that an understanding of ritual action is fundamental to any explanation of religion and religious behavior (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Through the study of primitive religious cultures these theorists/researchers concluded that rituals are cathartic in nature, and tended to mitigate the tension and anxiety felt by primitive people who existed in a precarious and unpredictable world (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Religion from these two theorist’s perspective, therefore, functioned to provide an emotional-psychological release for individuals and society by offering answers to certain ultimate questions such as death, illness and misfortune (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987).

Writing from a psychoanalytic perspective, Sigmund Freud could also be classified as an emotionalist (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Hamilton, 1995). Like other thinkers before him, Freud posited that religious behavior is reflective of humankind’s infantile stage of development (Andrews, 1979; Eliade,
1969; Freud, 1961; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Morris, 1987; Phillips, 1976; Randour, 1993; Wulff, 1991), and that humankind would inevitably evolve to a higher emotional and cognitive level (Eliade, 1969; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Randour, 1993). Like others before him, Freud thus argued that humans would inevitably shed their illusory and irrational religious notions of the world in favor of superior, empirical, scientific explanations (Andrew, 1979; Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Freud, 1961; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Randour, 1993; Wulff, 1985, 1991). Beyond this latter point, what makes Freud’s theory about religion unique is his insistence on the notion that religion is like a comforting illusion that functions to assuage an individual’s neurotic feelings and thoughts by giving him/her the misimpression that the world is an orderly place where nothing is arbitrary and accidental (Andrew, 1979; Freud, 1961; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Phillips, 1976; Wulff, 1985, 1991). According to Freud, religion is like a double edged sword: it functions to meet the most urgent wishes of humankind, but accomplishes this to the detriment of humankind’s efforts to attain a higher level of psychological development (Andrew, 1979; Eliade, 1969; Freud, 1961; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Phillips, 1976; Wulff, 1985, 1991).

**Personal, Psychological Perspectives of Religion**

A number of theorists have also examined religion from what Kelly (1995) and others have termed a personal, psychological perspective. Perhaps the most prominent among their number were William James and Karl Jung (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Wiber, 1983). In succinct terms, each of these men adopt a definition of religion that is more akin to a definition of spirituality rather than
a definition of religion. To be more specific, (a) they conceive of religion as a set of personal belief experiences that tend to link all humans to a more spiritual conception of the universe (Kelly, 1995), (b) they tend to focus much of their attention on the psychological dimensions of religion (Beit-Hamlahti, 1989; Kelly, 1995), and distance themselves from any discussion of institutionalized and denominational religion and (Kelly, 1995), (c) they tend to talk about the persuasiveness of religious experiences and religion's impact on all aspects of a person's existence (Beit-Hamlahti, 1989; Kelly, 1995).

These men held a positive perspective of religion that was juxtaposed to Freudian conceptions of religion (Eliade, 1969; Kelly, 1995; Wilber, 1983; Wulff, 1985, 1991). Though each appears to acknowledge the psychologically damaging dimension of religion, they also argue that religion can potentially have a profoundly positive psychological impact on human subjects and the society in which they exist (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Kelly, 1995; Morris, 1987; Randour, 1993; 1983; Wulff, 1985, 1991). Each appears to argue that many of humankind's neuroses are caused primarily by people's blindness to their religious promptings (Kelly, 1995; Randour, 1993). Furthermore, each of these thinkers appears to argue that religion serves to give human subjects meaning, while also allowing human subjects to cope with adversity, hunger, war, disease, old age and death (Kelly, 1995; Morris, 1987).

**Humanistic-Psychological Perceptions of Religion**

Eric Fromm and Abraham Maslow have proffered an essentially humanistic, psychological conception of religion (Kelly, 1995; Wulff, 1985, 1991). Both of these
theorists provide an analysis of religion that discerns how religion, (a) assists human subjects to reach their potential and self-actualize, and (b) contributes to the ennobling of individuals and society (Kelly, 1995; Wulff, 1985, 1991). In both instances each theorist contrasts their perceptions of religion from that of institutional and denominational religion. Furthermore, they both tend to argue that institutional and denominational religion with its creeds, theologies and authoritarian structures often functions to inhibit the process of self-actualization through the surrender of human potential to an outside force or entity. Both thus talk about “positive” religion, which is ultimately not linked to a belief in a Meta-empirical, Transcendent Being, but in a devotion that is focused on enhancing personal and societal development (Kelly, 1995; Wulff, 1991).

**Contemporary Psychoanalytic Impressions of Religion and Spirituality**

Some new and promising work has recently been produced by contemporary psychoanalysts who have advocated the integration of religious and spiritual concerns into the process of psychoanalysis. For example, McDougall (1985) has begun to consider the significance of religious concerns and their power to shape the personality. Randour & Bondanza (1987) have examined how people’s experiences with God can affect other significant relationships. In this case, these theorists/clinicians have utilized object relations theory to assist them in their investigation of religious and spiritual experiences (Randour, 1993). Meissner (1984) sought to integrate psychoanalytic and religious concepts. Specifically, Meissner (1984) grappled with the inherent tensions that exist between these two competing
disciplines, and in so doing, conceptualized a space where people dialectically live within that tension. Spero (1985; 1990) argued that social scientists should not, and can not, ignore the possibility of a Meta-empirical, Transcendent Being. His work examined how representations of the Transcendent enter into people’s lives, and have a profound impact on their emotional and psychological development. And finally, Rizzuto’s (1976, 1979) work profoundly influenced psychotherapists who have been interested in incorporating religion and spirituality into their work. Briefly, she has proffered a developmental and clinical psychoanalytic theory that includes religious experience.

Spirituality, Religion and Human Development

As a way to conclude the first half of this chapter, I feel that it is of some value to allude to certain contemporary theorists/researchers who have written about religion and spirituality from a human development perspective. I will not, however, detail their work since to date, it is my opinion their work does not appear to have significantly impacted upon social science’s perspective of religion. Nonetheless, their ideas deserve some mention here, since their work is reflective of certain conceptual leaps that are occurring in the study of religion and spirituality.

Robert Coles (1990) has recently studied the connection between children’s emotional struggles to cognitively formulate conceptions of God and an understanding of the world. Wilber et al., (1986) have also proffered a theoretical model of human development and growth from a religious and spiritual perspective that appears to have some heuristic value (Kelly, 1995). James Fowler (1991) has also begun
exploring faith development, and has provided a stage model that contains six qualitatively different stages of faith development. Fritz Oser's (1991) work has also identified five invariant, hierarchically structured stages that attempt to describe how people conceive of an “Ultimate Being.” And finally, though space does not allow for a thorough examination of the work that a number of other psychotherapists are presently doing with religion and spiritual concerns, the following list will (at minimum) exemplify the growing interest that contemporary psychotherapists have shown in religious and spiritual phenomena: Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Benner, 1988, 1991; Bergin, 1991; Berliner, 1992; Chandler, Holden & Kolander, 1992; DiBlasio & Benda, 1992; Ellison, 1994; Genia, in press; Grace & Poelstra, 1995; Julian, 1992; Kelly, 1995; Liebert, 1989; Lovinger, 1990; Malony, 1988; Payne & Bergin, 1992; Peteet, 1994; Sims, 1994; Worthington & Scott, 1993.

A Review of Representative Empirical Findings

Empirical studies investigating the relationship between religion and mental health appear to have produced contradictory results (Bergin, 1980, 1983, 1991; Kelly, 1995). Some studies appear to suggest that religion is linked with emotionally and mentally unhealthy characteristics (Bergin, 1980, 1983, 1991; Kelly, 1995). Conversely, other studies have shown substantially positive associations between religion and mental health (Bergin, 1980, 1983, 1991; Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). In an effort to understand these contradictory results, some researchers have reviewed previous empirical research and have shown how researchers’ value assumptions may potentially bias a researcher’s efforts to discern

Furthermore, a clear distinction between the terms religion and spirituality does not appear to exist in the empirical research conducted to date (Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Specifically, some researchers appear to make a distinction between these two phenomena, while others do not make a distinction between religion and spirituality (Kelly, 1995). Moreover, though researchers have attempted to define these two experiences (Allport, 1950; Fowler, 1991; Oser, 1991). There appears to be no clear consensus among researchers regarding the manner in which these terms are conceptualized and utilized within the empirical research that has investigated religion and spiritual phenomena (Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Additionally, my readings have also suggested to me that researchers (a) tend to view these experiences in dichotomous and reductionistic terms, and (b) appear to have failed (to date) to discern how these two experiences are interrelated and interdependent upon one another.

Sociological Interpretations of Religion

Karl Marx

Karl Marx’s observations regarding religion can loosely be categorized sociological (Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Hamilton, 1995). His ideas regarding religion should not be ignored, however, since they have impacted the manner in which many social scientists have thought about religion (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). As a result, I offer them here in this chapter.
Just as several others before him asserted, Marx conceptualized religion as a compensating and comforting illusion that would eventually be dispensed with as humans lost their needs for illusions and embraced scientific explanations about the world (Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 1985; Morris, 1987). Unlike most sociological explanations of religion, however, Marx does not view religion as an integral part of society (Hamilton, 1995). Marx conceives of religion as an ideological force that functions to alienate and oppress humans (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Marx believes that humans created God, and then allowed this human construct to create them (Hamilton, 1995).

Marx believes that religion does not provide real solutions, promotes resignation, and inhibits humanity's efforts to search for meaningful ways of changing their world (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Marx argues that religion does not really provide stability, constrains progress, and is an illusory happiness that has prevented people from obtaining real happiness (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Marx also argues that religion alienates humanity from finding true purpose, direction and significance (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Marx concludes that religion functions to legitimize the status quo: to the detriment of all humanity (Hamilton, 1995). Specifically, Marx hypothesizes that religion invariably functions to make the lower class submissive while lending credence to the decisions and actions of the upper class (Hamilton, 1995). And finally, Marx employed a number of disparaging metaphorical examples that typified his opinion of religion. In one well known example he likens religion to
opium (Hamilton, 1995), and argues that like opium, religion makes people feel better, but its effects are only temporary (Hamilton, 1995).

**Emile Durkheim**

Any sociological interpretation of religion could not be complete without including Emile Durkheim's ideas about religion. Durkheim might best be described as a functionalist who strongly rejected the evolutionary interpretations of religion that came before him (Garrett, 1974; Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). His work is clearly opposed to the view that argues that religion does not spring from within the individual, but emerges chiefly from within the social context in which the individual is embedded (Garrett, 1974; Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 1985; Morris, 1987; Phillips, 1976). Durkheim challenges the notion that religion is false and illusory (Hamilton, 1995). In Durkheim's opinion, "...there are no religions that are false. All are true in their own fashion" (Durkheim, 1915, p. 3). He approaches the study of religion by looking for that which is constant and unvarying in religion i.e., or its essential features (Hamilton, 1995). With this end in mind, therefore, Durkheim determines to avoid an examination of the world's major religions, and instead chooses to evaluate a less complicated religious tradition. Moreover, his search for such a religious tradition inevitably leads him to a study of Australian aboriginal religious practices which he would later term "totemism" (Garrett, 1974; Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). In essence, Durkheim reasons that an investigation of a reasonably uncomplicated religion will assist him in disentangling and isolating the essential features of religion (Hamilton, 1995).
The end result of Dirkhiem’s research prompts him to conclude that totemism is fundamentally, (a) responsible for the regulation of individual behavior among the aborigines (Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 1985), (b) is necessary for the well working of the moral life in aborigine culture (Hamilton, 1995), (c) provides a feeling of unity within aboriginal community life (Hamilton, 1995), and (d) is necessary to the solidarity and cohesion that exists within this society (Garrett, 1974; Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 1976; Morris, 1987). Durkheim extends this research and asserts, that like the religious practices of the aborigines whom he has investigated, all religions function in a similar manner. To be more specific, he argues that religion is like the cement that holds society together (Garrett, 1974; Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 1985; Morris, 1987; Phillips, 1976). He posits that religion facilitates the gathering together of individuals through rites and ceremonies (Hamilton, 1995; Phillips, 1976). In Durkheim’s own words, “The essential thing is that men are assembled, that sentiments are felt in common and expressed in common acts; but the particular nature of these sentiments and acts is something secondary and contingent” (1915, p. 386). Additionally, Durkheim asserts that this gathering together serves to provide individuals with the experience of something greater then themselves i.e. what he appears to describe as the power of the collective or society (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). And finally, Durkheim advocates that a participation in religion functions to define society’s moral boundaries (Hamilton, 1995; Phillips, 1976).
Max Weber

Weber sets out both a psychological and sociological approach to religion (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). From a psychological perspective (like the intellectualist and emotionalist theorists before him) Weber maintains that religion and religious behavior can be understood as a response to the injustices and iniquities of life (Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 1985; Morris, 1987). To be more specific, from his observations be reasons that people conceive of life in two ways i.e., how life ought to be and how life is. He also hypothesizes that this discrepancy concerning how life is, as opposed to how people feel life ought to be, creates a tension that generates a religious outlook (Hamilton, 1995). As a result, Weber speculates that people afflicted with injustice and inequality turn to religious mediation with the Supernatural to explain the how’s and why’s of their ill fate; people who experience good fortune also find a way of explaining their successes through religion. According to Weberian theory, therefore, religion provides psychological and emotional consolation to people by permitting people a way of explaining the disparate good and bad fortunes that they experience (Hamilton, 1995; Hill, 1985; Morris, 1987). Coupled with this, Weber’s work also contains a sociological component (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Weber asserts that one’s vocation and social position ultimately influence one’s religiosity. As such, this latter claim prompts Weber to analyze, describe and differentiate individuals’ religious perceptions on the basis of their social position and vocational status (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Weber’s sociology of religion, therefore, is
fundamentally the study of the relationship between religious ideas and social groups (Hamilton, 1995).

**Geertz and Berger**

Clifford Geertz and Peter Berger are two other important theorists who attempt to synthesize a number of sociological and psychological conceptions about religion (Hamilton, 1995; Morris, 1987). Since their work appears to have provided some additional insights to the study of religion from a sociological perspective they are thus summarized below.

**Clifford Geertz**

Geertz attempts to synthesize many of the insights that have been previously discussed about religion (Hamilton, 1995). Geertz is opposed to those theorists who have psychologized people's religious conceptions. He presents a view of religion that is culturally transmitted through symbols (Geertz, 1966). To be more specific, Geertz maintains that religion is passed on from generation to generation through a set of symbols that either stand for something, represent or express something, or function to provide an instructional framework from which to guide actions (Hamilton, 1995). Geertz conceives of religion as assisting people in forming concepts that help them see the world as an orderly and meaningful place (Hamilton, 1995).

Geertz presupposes that people can not tolerate the notion that life is inherently chaotic and devoid of meaning and significance. According to Geertz, religion is fundamentally concerned with addressing bafflement, suffering and evil: three experiences that he believes threaten to reduce the world into a meaningless and
chaotic place (Hamilton, 1995). Greetz speculates that religion helps make certain unusual and anomalous events understandable and tolerable; he argues that religion assists people in their efforts at accepting their suffering by helping them either cope with their suffering or by making suffering, more sufferable (Hamilton, 1995). He further argues that religion provides answers to why the good sometimes suffer while the wicked prosper (Hamilton, 1995). And finally, he purports that religion achieves these ends because it attempts to make moral sense of people’s experience of inequality and injustice by providing them with a wider lens from which to see how things fit together (Hamilton, 1995). Greetz also argues that though bafflement, suffering and evil drive people to be religious, these experiences are not the real catalysts that compel people to be religious. Greetz suggests that people are religious as a result of authority and tradition (Hamilton, 1995). Greetz also maintains that religion is founded on a conviction in something that is true beyond doubt or evidence (Hamilton, 1995). He further maintains that the two mechanisms that function to reinforce and drive this process are faith and a participation in ritual. Greetz thus holds that religion provides a unique way of viewing the world that is unequivocally practical and sensible to the adherent, but may also be thoroughly unintelligible to those outside of a given religious experience or tradition (Hamilton, 1995).

Peter Berger

Berger’s (1973) view of religion provides an ingenious synthesis of Durkheimian, Weberian and Marxist insights (Hamilton, 1995). Berger hypothesizes that humankind inherently requires a conception of the universe that is at once meaningful, structured
and ordered. Without this vision, Berger maintains that humankind is threatened by meaninglessness and chaos. Because of this latter fundamental need, therefore, humankind has co-structured and co-evolved an orderly vision of the world. Berger maintains that this orderly vision transcends human will and has functioned to somehow take on a sacred quality. He postulates that this transcendent and sacred quality is also somehow extended to the universe, and thus provides humans with both a sacred conception of the world and the cosmos in which the world is embedded. Berger also claims that religion is the mechanism that ensures the preservation of this orderly vision of the cosmos for both present and future generations. Finally, Berger believes that religion buffers humankind from feeling alienated from the world in which we live. He speculates religions achieve this by providing humankind with both stability and continuity in a tenuous and potentially alienating existence.

Stark & Bainbridge's Exchange Theory of Religion

One of the most systematic recent attempts to explain religion and religious behavior from a sociological perspective has been produced by Stark and Bainbridge (1980, 1985, 1987). In succinct terms, these two thinkers conceptualize religious behavior by utilizing exchange theory. Briefly, they posit that religion and religious behavior can generally be explained as an attempt by people to secure rewards. Accordingly when humans are unable to satisfy all their desires through their exchanges with one another. They invented a means whereby certain unmet needs could be satisfied i.e., unmet needs like immortality. Humans thus invented the notion of a supernatural force that could potentially satisfy certain unmet needs and desires.
which lie beyond the scope of human relationships. Stark and Bainbridge also posit that with the advent of greater social complexity, it was necessary for religious specialists and organizations to emerge to steward over the exchanges between humans and the supernatural: hence the slow development of the various religions infrastructures as we know them.

Why The Recent Renaissance in Religious Research?

Coupled with what has been stated above, the following salient points may be a good way to conclude this chapter. During the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century social scientists exhibited a fair amount of interest in religions phenomena. Due in part to the influences of positivism and evolutionary theory (Hinkle, 1980; Thomas & Wilcox, 1987; Marsden, 1994; Thomas & Marsh, 1995), research interests in religion waned during the 20s and up through the 50s (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Henry, 1985). With the advent of postmodernism, however, a renewed appeal in the study of religion has re-emerged within the social sciences (Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Moreover, theorists and researchers who have attempted to understand this resurgent interest in religion have made the following observations. First, some theorists/researchers have suggested that postmodernism (as compared to modernistic views of the world) has provided researchers and theorists a more user friendly lens from which to investigate religious phenomena (McNamara, 1988; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990). These thinkers have suggested that a rejection of modernism and a shift to postmodernism has allowed researchers to think about religious behavior from a number of new and different
ways: generating a renewed interest in the study of religion among social scientists. Second, some psychologists have begun to discern psychology's inability to provide substantive answers for the human condition. These thinkers have thus sought to cross-fertilize religion with psychology in an effort to broaden their scope and effectiveness (Andrews, 1979; Bergin, 1980; Donahue, 1989; Goldsmith, 1989; Hertel, 1989; Weaver, Koenig & Larson, 1997). Third, theorists/researchers have also begun to discern and investigate the healthy dimensions of religion as compared to the pathological dimensions of religion (Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Bergin, 1980, 1983; 1989; Kelly, 1995). These thinkers have begun to develop psychometric instruments to assist them in measuring religious and spiritual maturity (Beit-Hallahmi- 1989; Kelly, 1995). Fourth, others have also suggested that recent societal structural changes have created a general crisis of community in our country which has motivated large sectors of our population to turn to religion for answers (Robbins & Anthony, 1979). Moreover, some of these theorists/researchers have thus sought to investigate how religion's compensatory nature seems to have assisted people in mediating these changes (Robbins & Anthony, 1979; Heaton, 1988; Hayes, 1988; Weaver et al., 1997). Fifth, others have indicated that religion appears to meet certain emotional, moral and cognitive needs for vast sectors of society, whereas other competing systems have repeatedly failed to be as effective in meetings many of these needs (Warner, 1979; Thomas & Henry, 1985; Weaver et al., 1997). As such, some social scientists have sought to investigate how religion serves to meet these basic needs (Cockran, Beeghley & Bock, 1992; Cochran & Beeghley, 1991; Ellison & Skerkat, 1993;
Ferraro & Albrecht-Jensen, 1991; Fischer, 1992; Gartner et al., 1991; Jenkins & Pargament, 1995; Mookherjee, 1994; Nathanson, 1995; Pargament, Olsen, Reilly & Falgout, 1992; Rasmussen & Johnson, 1994; Stack & Wasserman, 1992). Sixth, other social scientists have also pointed out that society's confidence in science appears to have diminished (Bergin, 1980). These scholars have suggested that though a strong belief in science persists, numerous ecological, social and political consequences have functioned to reveal sciences' inability to resolve all of humanity's problems.

Moreover, the consequences of this has been a slight weakening of trust among the population in scientific authority and an increase in religious behavior (Bergin, 1980; Schlegel, 1982). Seventh, other social scientists have also pointed to the remarkable staying power of religion, and observed that the "earlier dire predictions of the demise of... religion... have now been shown to be false"(Thomas & Henry, 1988, p. 5). In this instance, these theorists have argued that it is now time to consider how religion serves to effect individuals, families and society (Hadden & Shupe, 1986; Hout & Greeley, 1987; Thomas & Henry, 1988; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Thomas & Rohgaar, 1990; Weaver et al., 1997). Eighth, others have also argued that (a) since polls suggest that our population is decidedly religious and spiritual (Abbott, Berry & Meredith, 1990; Gallup, 1993; Kosmin & Lachman, 1995; Simbro, 1996), and (b) since we exist in a multi-disciplinary environment, a cross-fertilization of social science and religion might prove effectual in more adequately addressing religious and spiritual people's needs (Abbott et al., 1990; Marsh & Thomas, 1995; Weaver et al., 1997).
CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEMPORARY FAMILY SCHOLARS AND MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

Religion and Family Scholarship

Just as religion has recently become a topic of interest among social scientists, so too has there been a noticeable increase in interest among social scientists who are investigating the interface between religion and the family (D’Antonio & Aldous, 1983; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas & Henry, 1985, 1988). Furthermore, a recent representative sampling of twenty-one established social science journals lends credence to this latter observation (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Thomas and Cornwall (1990) conclude that “the study of religion and the family [during the 80s] is the focus of increasing attention in the social sciences” (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990, p. 983). Elsewhere Thomas (1988), Thomas & Henry (1985, 1988) and Thomas & Summefeldt, (1984) have also suggested that an investigation in the interface between religion and the family has the potential to further illuminate our understanding of the human condition. Thomas (1988) has also asserted that a more careful examination of the connection between religion and the family can serve to (a) “Increase our understanding of the role of religion and the family in social change” (Thomas, 1988, p. 359), (b) help social scientists to “Better understand these two institutional influences on personal well-being” (Thomas, 1988, p. 359), (c) “Encourage more social-psychological studies of religion as opposed to institutional analysis” (Thomas, 1988, p. 359), (d) “Encourage a greater appreciation for the role of spiritual influences in the lives of people” (Thomas, 1988, p. 359), and
(e) "Encourage a discussion of the role of presuppositions in social scientist's work" (Thomas, 1988, p. 359).

**Shortcomings in the Present Literature**

Despite the increase in research examining religion and the family, it should also be noted that a number of researchers have pointed to certain theoretical and methodological shortcoming that exist within this body of research (Anderson, 1988; D'Antonio, Newman & Wright, 1982; Donahue, 1988; Gartner et al., 1991; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Henry, 1985, 1988; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990). For example, Thomas and Marsh (1995) have argued that our present theories within the physical and social sciences essentially ignore religion or provide a distorted lens from which to view religious experience. Furthermore, Thomas and Marsh (1995) exemplify this latter point with many illustrations. Among the many illustrations that they chose to employ to make their argument, however, perhaps the following bares noting in this section. In an effort to exemplify the lack of attention that religion has received among family scholars, Thomas and March (1995) point to Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm and Steinmetz's (1993) recent Sourcebook of Family Theories and indicate that the subjects of religion and spirituality were excluded from consideration in this important work i.e., with only one oblique reference to religion appearing in the index. Other interested writers have also elaborated upon this latter claim by pointing to certain biased and skewed conclusions within the literature investigating (a) religion, and (b) religion and the family (Donahue, 1988; Gartner et al., 1991; Goldsmith, 1989; Hertel, 1989; Hood, Morris
and Watson, 1986; Jelen, 1984; Kelly, 1995; McNamara, 1988). These scholars have also suggested that researcher's failure to understand the subtle complexities of a given religious group's theology have resulted in biased results and analyses (Donahue, 1988), and in incomplete descriptions and interpretations of certain religions groups (Gartner et al., 1991; Goldsmith, 1989; Hertel, 1989; Hood et al., 1986; Jelen, 1984; Kelly, 1995; McNamara, 1988).

Furthermore, Thomas and Cornwall (1990) also suggest that "it is clear from our review [of the social science literature] that while religious variables are included... there is little discussion at the theoretical level that might suggest why these variables are important" (Thomas & Cornwall, p. 986). They suggest that researchers must strive to provide a clearer conceptualization of the manner in which they are using religion and spirituality.

Finally, Thomas and Roghaar (1990) and Bahr & Bahr (1996) also point to some of the theoretical discrepancies within the present body of literature investigating the interface between religion and the family. Both Thomas and Roghaar (1990) and Bahr & Bahr (1996) also provide two separate working theoretical models that researchers and family scholars might utilize when investigating religion and the family. Both articles also remind us that there is much additional work that needs to be done at the theoretical level before the major theories that are utilized by family scholars begin to reflect an understanding of the role that religion plays within families.
Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs)

A small but growing number of MFTs have recently begun to discern the affect that religion and spirituality has on individuals, couples and families (Anderson & Worthen, 1997; Becvar, 1994; Berenson, 1990; Boszormenyi-Nagy, Grunebaum & Ulrich, 1991; Butler, 1988; Coleman & Kaplan, 1986; Dan, 1990; Friedman, 1985; Goldberg, 1994; Griffith, 1986; Joanides, 1996; Krone, 1983; Kudlac, 1991; Prest & Keller, 1994; Ross, 1994; Stander, Piercy, Mackinnion & Helmeke, 1994; Stewart & Gale, 1994; Weaver et al., 1997; Whipple, 1987). Despite the relative newness of this literature, many convincing arguments have been generated that both encourage and justify the inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns during therapy. The following are some of the typical reasons given. First, when religious and spiritual concerns appear to be apart of the presenting problem(s), an examination of these two dimensions of the client system can be beneficial to the therapeutic process (Anderson & Worthen, 1997; Becvar, 1994; Berenson, 1990; Boszormenyi-Nagy et al., 1991; Butler, 1988; Coleman & Kaplan, 1986; Dan, 1990; Friedman, 1985; Goldberg, 1994; Griffith, 1986; Joanides, 1996; Krone, 1983; Kudlac, 1991; Moore, 1994; Prest & Keller, 1994; Ross, 1994; Stander et al., 1994; Stewart & Gale, 1994; Whipple, 1987). Second, MFTs who choose to explore religious and spiritual concerns may be perceived as culturally sensitive by both religious and non-religious clients (Butler, 1988; Griffith, 1986; Stander et al., 1994; Stewart & Gale, 1994; Whipple, 1987). Third, religious and spiritual concerns deserve the same type of respectful, ethical and skillful attention as other potentially problematic issues that arise during therapy.
Fourth, religion and spiritual issues can impact individual, couple and family development (Stander et al., 1994). Respectfully encouraging a client system to investigate religion’s affect on individual, couple and family develop can be potentially profitable to therapy (Joanides, 1996; Stander et al., 1994; Stewart & Gale, 1994). Fifth, religion affects many family’s constructed reality of the world. When therapists either deliberately dismiss religion’s potentially influential impact on people’s perception of the world, or undervalue the role that religion plays in individuals, couples, and family’s perceptions of the world, they may be inhibiting or excluding pertinent information from entering the therapeutic process (Griffith, 1986; Joanides, 1996; Kudlac, 1991; Stander et al., 1994; Whipple, 1987). Sixth, conceptions of God can sometimes affect client systems much like other members of a given client system. As a result, a careful examination of God’s role in a given client system may be of primary importance to the success of therapy. Excluding a consideration of how God impacts families may be detrimental to the success of therapy (Berenson, 1990; Joanides, 1996; Griffith, 1986; Stander et al., 1994; Whipple, 1987). Seventh, shared and unshared religious experiences can profoundly affect client systems. For instance, when members of a client system ascribe to different religious traditions or possess varying degrees of interest in the same religious tradition, such differences can negatively impact client systems, as well as the therapeutic process (Patterson, 1994; Prest and Keller, 1994; Stander et al., 1994). Eighth, therapists’ own religiosity and spirituality can potentially impact the
therapeutic process in a positive manner. Specifically, therapists who intentionally encourage and introduce religious and spiritual concerns into therapy with client systems who share similar religious and spiritual assumptions may be in a unique position to assist religious and spiritual minded client systems by helping them explore untapped sources for growth and healing (Anderson & Worthen, 1997; Joanides, 1996; Moore, 1994).

Some Perceived Weaknesses in the MFT Literature

As this conversation has evolved and developed in sophistication, several rather inconspicuous, yet significant deficiencies appear to exist within this present body of literature. To be more specific, a careful review of a representative sample of this literature has suggested the following to me. First, MFTs presently arguing for the inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns in therapy have generally tended to refer to religion and spirituality as if these experiences are somehow connected to one another, but do not tend to elaborate upon their interconnectedness. The consequences of this is that MFTs may not comprehend the extent to which these experiences are connected to one another and, how these terms are perceived and experienced by religious people. Second, as a result of the complex and diverse numbers of religions and denominations, and their differing theological orientations, some MFTs have tended to circumvent religious concerns, and have preferred to focus most of their attention on spiritual concerns. Third, since spiritual concerns tend to be very esoteric in nature, theologically based, and do not readily fit with certain MFT modalities, other MFTs appear to have focused attention on religious/cultural issues, and have tended to
de-emphasize an examination of the client system's spiritual experience(s). These two latter approaches may be limiting, however, when it comes to working with religious people, since both approaches may be disregarding an integral role that both religion and spirituality play in religious people's lives.

Some Final Observations With Regards to the Literature Reviewed

As Chapter Three indicated, there has been a gradual philosophical shift that has occurred regarding the manner that philosophers have viewed religious and spiritual phenomena over the past twenty centuries i.e., from an exclusively theistic approach to an agnostic/atheistic approach. Moreover, as Chapters Three and Four have asserted this philosophical shift appears to have profoundly affected the manner in which religion has been viewed by social scientists and psychotherapists. Furthermore, not only have these philosophical shifts affected the manner in which social scientists and psychotherapists have tended to view religion and spirituality, these philosophical and paradigmatic shifts have created an adversarial relationship between (a) philosophers and theologians, and (b) more recently between social scientists/psychotherapists and theologians, whose ultimate consequence has often precluded meaningful collaboration between these disciplines.

With the advent of postmodernism and postpositivism, some of the walls inhibiting and stifling collaboration have begun to come down and some philosophers, social scientists, psychotherapists and theologians have begun to enter into a more respectful, cooperative relationship: a point that will be elaborated further in preceding chapters. Coupled with this, numerous social scientists and psychotherapists
possessing a religious and spiritual orientation such as myself have recently chosen to attempt to cross-fertilize social science investigative techniques and theology/hemeneutics in an effort to address previous perceived blind spots within the social science literature: reasoning that such a lens might provide new and unique perspectives of religion and spirituality to social scientists and psychotherapists who are interested in examining these phenomena.

During my efforts to review the literature, therefore, I have cited a number of deficiencies that have characterized how social scientists and psychotherapists have viewed religion. Among the numerous observations that have been mentioned in Chapters Two, Three and Four, it has become increasingly more apparent to me that one glaring blind spot is the dichotomous and reductionistic manner in which religion and spirituality have been studied. Specifically, my personal experiences and my readings of the present social science and psychotherapeutic literature have led me to conclude that this reductionistic approach may not necessarily be the way that religious people experience the terms religion and spirituality. Furthermore, though many theologians and religious commentators have tended to describe a more holistic and synergistic relationship existing between religion and spirituality, this information has largely been presented in anecdotal form.

That being the case, I have determined to utilize a scientific approach that will be decidedly influenced by my religious presuppositions to study the relationship that may or may not exist between religion and spirituality as perceived by religious people. By adopting a scientific approach that cross fertilizes religious presuppositions with social
science techniques, it is anticipated that such an approach might (a) lend credence to what some theologians have been suggesting about the relationship between religion and spirituality, (b) assist future researchers in their efforts to discern how religion and spirituality interconnect and are interdependent, and (c) enhance the manner that social scientists and psychotherapists view religious and spiritual phenomena.
CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

Why A Qualitative Approach?

I have decided to adopt and employ a qualitative research methodology in this research project. Some of the salient reasons that have compelled me to make this decision are as follows. First and foremost, social scientists have successfully used a qualitative research approach for several decades to help them study and understand the human condition (Cox-Dzurec & Abraham, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Second, qualitative research is emergent and discovery oriented, and has been deemed well suited to study complex human phenomena that are typically not well understood by social scientists (Brink, 1995; Cox-Dzurec & Abraham, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Joanning, Newfield & Quinn, 1987; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle, 1990; Newfield, Kuehl, Joanning & Quinn, 1990; Piercy, Moon & Bischof, 1994; Sells, Smith, Coe, Yoshioka & Robbins, 1994; Sells, Smith & Clevenger, 1994; Sells, Smith & Sprenkle, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). To be more specific, qualitative research permits the examination of large amounts of diverse, seemingly unrelated information (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). All of which also suggests that new interpretations and connections are discovered between the various disparate pieces of information that emerge during the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989;
Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Third, qualitative researchers do not typically assume an expert's role, but instead prefer to cultivate a collaborative research approach with those whom they are investigating (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). By adopting such an approach, qualitative researchers encourage a shared construction of reality to emerge (Brandley, 1993). Fourth, qualitative researchers also seek to provide thick, rich descriptions of their respondent's lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Sixth, consumers of qualitative research vicariously participate in respondents' lived experiences (Brink, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Seventh, qualitative research tends to be heuristic in character. This means that qualitative research functions to reduce the range of possible solutions to a problem or the number of possible answers to a question (Brink, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Eighth, qualitative research permits researchers to generate interrelated propositions and new theoretical conceptions of a given problem area or question (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Finally, since the purpose of my study was to generate a thick rich description of religious people's experiences of the terms religion and spirituality, and by extension,
new ideas that can potentially assist future researchers in their efforts to further conceptualize the subtle interface between religion, individuals, couples, families, and society, a qualitative approach appeared to be an appropriate choice.

Why a Grounded Theory Approach?

There are a number of methodological approaches available to qualitative researchers (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Moreover, each approach is uniquely suited to the research question being considered (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1995). Since I was interested in generating descriptions and interpretations from religious respondents that would ultimately assist me in constructing a thick and rich description of religious people's perceptions of the terms religion and spirituality, a grounded theory approach was selected and was utilized as the method of choice for this research project. Specifically, grounded theory is not simply interested in generating descriptions and interpretations about a given phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1994). Researchers adopting a grounded theory approach are also interested in systematically piecing together their respondent's general themes and descriptions in an effort to develop a conceptual scheme or theoretical understanding of a given phenomenon. As such, grounded theory "is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23) hence, the name grounded theory, since the theory is grounded in the data being collected. The theory is thus derived from a given substantive area of interest and carefully extrapolated from diverse data to fit this same substantive area of interest (Glaser & Strauss, 1967;
Corbin & Strauss, 1990; 1994). Furthermore, since it is derived from a given area of interest, it should also represent that reality, and be comprehensible to those persons who were interviewed, as well as other similar persons or populations of people (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The theory should also be abstract and conceptually broad enough so as to include sufficient variation so that it is applicable in a variety of contexts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1994).

In short then, grounded theory seeks to generate a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1994). Moreover, as applied to my topic of interest, I have utilized this approach in an effort to generate sufficient descriptions and interpretations of the terms religion and spirituality from religious people's lived experiences so as help me discover and create (a) a thick and rich description that is conceptually grounded in the interviews conducted, and (b) a thick, rich description that will allow me in the future to generate a theory that might be relevant to those who were interviewed, as well as other religious people.

Description of My Sampling Technique

As indicated above, since I determined to use a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1994) to investigate how religious people view the terms religion and spirituality, I chose to interview two separate religious groups: one which was comprised of Orthodox Christians, and the other which was comprised of Lutheran Christians. Furthermore, it should also be noted that according to Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967) this methodological approach would
allow me to draw constant comparisons between these two groups, as well as help me avoid drawing any interpretations that may be idiosyncratic to any one particular religious group. I also determined to select two Christian denominations with similar, but different religious traditions (Rice, 1977). My reasoning in making this selection was guided by some of the recent suggestions made in the literature (Bergin, 1980; Donahue, 1989; Gartner et al., 1991; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Specifically, theorists and researchers have of late been arguing that previous researchers’ tendency to lump a number of different religious respondents together may be contributing to over generalized conclusions and misinterpretations of (a) the negative impact that religion has on human behavior, and (b) on the disparaging characterization of certain religious groups. These researchers have thus suggested that samples be more homogeneous in nature to avoid these pitfalls (Brodbar-Nemzer, 1988; D’Antonio, 1988; Donahue, 1989; Gartner et al., 1991; Heaton, 1988; Hood, 1983; Hood et al., 1986; Kelly, 1995; Scanzoni, 1988; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990).

I also decided to select Orthodox participants for this study by soliciting names from fellow Orthodox priests and colleagues and, by approaching potential respondents with whom I have had previous networking experience. Coupled with this, in an effort to acquire Lutheran participants for this study, I solicited names from local Lutheran pastors and colleagues. Additionally, it should be noted here that this type of convenience sampling has proven to be sufficient when researchers seek to document beliefs and behavior patterns that occur within social settings (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Liebow, 1967; Newfield et. al. 1990; Radway, 1991; Rubin, 1994;
Strauss & Corbin, 1994), and when researchers seek to generate new ideas that are intended to lead to theory construction and theory verification (Glazer & Strauss, 1965; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994; Sells et. al., 1994; Sell et. al., 1995). Furthermore, qualitative researchers who utilize a convenience sampling technique posit that this sampling approach allows researchers the needed latitude to deliberately select respondents whom they judge will have relevance on a given research study (Patton, 1990, pp. 169-86; Sells et. al., 1995).

Description of Respondents

I purposively selected respondents for this study on the basis of their, (a) leadership role as a clergyperson, parish council member, and officer of an auxiliary church group, (b) active participation in their respective church community, (c) the frequency of their church attendance, and (d) my perception of each individual’s ability to expound upon the terms religion and spirituality. My rationale for employing these particular criteria to select respondents for this study was connected to previous research conducted by social scientists who have been interested in studying religion. To be more specific, two of the main criteria utilized by family scholars to select respondents when conducting research in this area is to refer to a subject/respondent’s frequency of church attendance, as well as a subject/respondent’s involvement in their faith community (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Additionally, other criteria that were utilized to select respondents for this study were driven by the logic that qualitative researchers use when selecting convenience samples, i.e., respondents were selected
on the basis of their ability to expound upon their religious and spiritual experiences

Ten respondents ultimately participated in this study i.e., with five of the ten being
Lutheran, and five identifying themselves as Orthodox. The reason why ten
respondents were included in this study was intimately linked to the information that I
was receiving toward the latter part of the data collection process. To be more
specific, at or around the eighth interview I began receiving redundant information,
and thus deemed that I was reaching a saturation point: a point where I was not
gathering any substantially new information during data collection (Bradley, 1993;
Joanides, in press; Sells et. al., 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The last two interviews
were thus conducted to fill in certain blind spots in my developing theory, and assure
myself that I had not failed to miss any salient components that should be included in
this developing theory.

Eight participants in this study reported that they were cradle
Orthodox/Lutherans, while three stated that they were converts from another Christian
denominations. Respondents’ ages ranged from 35-67, with an average age of 43 with
two being in their thirties, four in their forties, two in their fifties, and two in their
sixties. Of the ten participants in this study, five were females and five were males. All
respondents in this study also had some college education, with several holding
advanced degrees. Two respondents stated that they were educators, two reported
being business people, two worked in administrative positions, two considered
themselves homemakers, and three were involved in Church related work.
Respondents in this study also stated that they generally attended church weekly. All respondents also indicated that they were moderately to highly involved in their respective church community. Some of the typical positions that these respondents held were as follows: clergyperson, choir member, chanter, board member, parish council member, leader of an auxiliary church group, youth director, and Sunday school teacher. Additionally, in my efforts to better describe the participants in this study, and by extension, assist the reader in determining this study’s applicability to other religious people, I also decided to include the following two questions during the interview process. First, I resolved to ask each respondent to evaluate their religiosity by posing the following question: On a scale of one to ten, with one representing “I do not view myself as a religious person” and ten representing “I view myself as a very religious person” where would you place yourself? Second, in an effort to assist my readers in discerning my respondents’ level of spirituality, I also asked each respondent this question: On a scale of one to ten, with one representing “I do not view myself as a spiritual person,” and ten representing, ”I view myself as a very spiritual person,” where would you place yourself? Briefly, when asked to rate their religiosity, respondents answers ranged from 5-10 with an average response of eight; when asked to rate their level of spirituality, respondents answers ranged from 5-10 with an average response of eight. Furthermore, each respondent’s answers to these two questions did not vary appreciable, i.e., there was a variance of 1.5 or less. This suggests that respondents’ perceived level or religiosity and spirituality were generally similar.
It should also be noted here that a few (3) respondents felt a sense of discomfort with these two questions. When these respondents were asked to elaborate upon their perceived discomfort with these questions, one participant stated that she felt that her religiosity and her spirituality had been adversely affected recently by certain church related controversies. In this case, this respondent rated herself with a five on both scales, but also felt that this rating would change as the Easter Lenten season was approaching "and I will have more time to devote to religious and spiritual concerns." Another respondent stated that he felt uneasy assessing his religiosity and spirituality. In this case, this respondent indicated that such questions carried with them "a presumption of arrogance." As such, these two questions felt awkward to him when he attempted to answer them. And finally, another participant initially had difficulty making distinctions between the terms religion and spirituality, hedged in offering a response to these questions, but eventually offered answers to these questions. As the interview with this participant progressed, however, he began discerning some differences between these two terms, acknowledged the value of these two questions, and inevitably affirmed his earlier responses with more conviction.

Ten respondents also reported being married and having children, while one respondent stated being single. Respondents also resided in the following states: one lived in Colorado, five lived in Iowa, two lived in Massachusetts, and three lived in Minnesota.
Description of my Interviewing Techniques

Prior to beginning the interview process, it should be noted here that I obtained approval to conduct this research from the Human Subjects Committee at ISU. Furthermore, once the interview process began, I was also cognizant of the potentially complicating affects that my dual roles as (a) an interviewer/researcher, and (b) an Orthodox priest, might have on the quality of information gathered during this proposed investigation. Specifically, in an effort to control for the tendency among my respondents to offer socially desirable information, I initially made the following statement at the outset of each interview:

I am interested in looking at the terms religion and spirituality. I was hoping that you would agree to answer some questions regarding these two terms from your religious tradition. I also recognize that my role as a Greek Orthodox priest/colleague and researcher might influence your answers. Please try to remember, therefore, that there are no correct answers, and that I am specifically interested in what you think about these terms. If you choose to participate in this study, I hope your answers reflect your opinions about these terms and are not influenced by my role as a priest, friend, or colleague. (see Appendix A).

I also sought to track the contents of each interview in an effort to discern if my respondents were feeling comfortable with the interview process. Moreover, I felt that my training and experience as a therapist would assist me in this endeavor, as well as helping me discern if the information being gathered was somehow being contaminated by my roles as a pastor, interviewer, and researcher. Furthermore, if during the
interview process I suspected that respondents were offering information that did not reflect their perceptions and lived experiences, I was quick to make my covert suspicions overt by respectfully reiterating the above statement in summary form. For example, two typical statements that I generally made during most of the interviews that I conducted were: “Now I don’t want you to think how I might answer, or your pastor might answer, or whoever might answer this question... I want your view,... I want your lived experiences.” Elsewhere when I wanted to probe further in a given area of interest, I might also have said, “Now then, I don’t want to put words in your mouth,... I really want your perspective, so what do you think about so and so.” By proceeding in this manner, (a) I hoped to reduce any latent, confounding affects that my role as priest, interviewer, and researcher might have on the interviewing process, and (b) encourage my respondents to assume a higher level of participation in this research project, i.e., a level of participation that allowed them to assume the role of co-creators and co-constructors of this research.

In an effort to generate descriptions and interpretations for this study that allowed me to begin developing a thick and rich description that will eventually allow me to generate a grounded theory of how religion and spirituality are experienced by religious Orthodox and Lutheran Christians, I conducted ten face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews, i.e., with each interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. The salient reasons guiding the use of these two interviewing techniques were as follows: (a) the central questions guiding this research were philosophical in nature and were judged to be appropriately suited to both telephone and face-to-face
interviewing techniques (Joanides, in press; Frey & Oishi, 1995), (b) the research design called for selecting knowledgeable respondents whose interpretations would provide this study with thick, rich descriptions that could then be utilized to develop a thick, rich conceptualization of religious people's lived experiences of the terms religion and spirituality, (c) this approach was judged to be an acceptable, practical and efficient method to obtain knowledgeable respondents (Joanides, in press). A conscious tracking process was also adopted to ensure that the quality of information generated during this study would not be compromised by either of these two interviewing techniques. Additionally, while it may be true that telephone interviews exclude valuable information such as body language and facial expressions, on the basis of my previous research experience with telephone interviews it is my opinion that the use of an auditory medium in this research project served to, (a) enrich the process of data collection by offering a different interview context from which to investigate this topic of concern (Joanides, in press), and (b) proved to be less inhibiting, and more conducive to providing respondents room for introspection (Joanides, in press). It should also be pointed out here that therapists have endorsed the value and use of the telephone during therapy and intake sessions (Hines, 1994; Selvini, Boscolo, Cecchin & Prata, 1978; Springer, 1991). These therapists attest to the effectiveness of an auditory medium in their efforts, to gather information and include key members into the therapeutic process when distance prohibits them from being in the therapy room.
All initial interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Permission to record my respondents was obtained in writing. Informed consent forms (see Appendix D) were sent out prior to each telephone interview. I also refrained from conducting telephone interviews before I had each form in hand; informed consent forms were likewise signed prior to each face-to-face interview.

Finally, after each interview was conducted, transcribed and analyzed, ten follow-up telephone interviews (each lasting approximately 30 minutes) were conducted. During these follow up interviews, I sought to (a) conduct member checks by reading my analysis of each interview to the respective respondent, and (b) solicit comments and suggestions to assist me with any future interviews that might be included in this study.

Types of Questions Utilized

Since I had previously conducted related research in this area of interest (Joanides, in press), I felt that I knew some of the central questions that needed to be asked. As a result, semi-structured sequential interviews were utilized, and (b) a semi-structured questionnaire was also employed (See Appendices A and B). Furthermore, I should also stress here that the interview and analysis process was incremental, iterative, and recursive in nature. Specifically, I began by interviewing one Orthodox Christian and one Lutheran Christian. After these interviews were completed, I then conducted debriefings with each participant, generated transcripts and analyzed this set of interviews. Furthermore, while following this procedure, I began developing slightly new areas of interest, and thus tended to modify the semi-structured
questionnaire before proceeding to conduct the next series of interviews. Furthermore, this process was followed five times (since I conducted 11 interviews in total) before the interview process was complete. The value of following this research protocol was as follows: (a) this process allowed the questions and answers to build and unfold incrementally, thereby avoiding any predetermined presuppositions on the part of the researcher from guiding this research (Sells et al., 1994, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), (b) this process allowed respondent’s to assume the role of teacher, co-researcher, and co-collaborator (Sells et al., 1994, 1995), and (c) this process allowed for the shared constructions of the respondents and researcher to co-evolve (Sells et al., 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This interview process facilitated my efforts to generate a thick, rich theoretical description (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It should be stressed here that this approach is not unusual, and has been used by other qualitative researchers (Fontana & Frey, 1995; McCracken, 1988; McMillan & Schumacher, 1989; Sells et al., 1994, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Before each interview, respondents were given a brief explanation regarding the purpose of this research. Close-ended questions were subsequently utilized to obtain some demographic information about each respondent. Semi-structured, open-ended questions (that changed as the process unfolded) were used to elicit as much information as possible from the respondents’ perspectives without intentionally influencing their observations. For example, I asked, “What is your definition of religion”? If the respondent was able to answer this question, I simply listened attentively and empathetically while being careful not to lead the respondent. If the
respondent was unable to answer the question, I either proceeded to the next question or modified the question so as to receive some feedback. After I completed each interview, debriefing (see Appendix C) and member checks were conducted and will be explained in more detail below.

Other Techniques Used to Ensure Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers employ a variety of research techniques and data sources to achieve trustworthiness (Bradley, 1993; Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacker, 1989; McPatton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This is done to cross check data and interpretations so as to ensure that the conclusions of a given study adequately represent respondents’ constructions as well as the complexity of the given culture under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989). To that end, the following additional research decisions were made to assist me in attaining the stated objectives delineated above.

To begin, I chose to audio tape and transcribe all face-to-face interviews. This decision was made to allow me an opportunity to retain good eye contact with respondents during each face-to-face interview. Conversely, since good eye contact was not be of concern during the telephone interviews I conducted, in addition to audio taping all these interviews, I also chose to keep field notes during these interviews. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the field notes taken during the telephone interviews would allow for the creation of additional questions and insights, as well as functioning to enhance the emergence of (a) a thicker, richer description of
my respondents’ observations and interpretations of the terms religion and spirituality, and (b) a thicker, richer conceptualization of the manner that religious people view the terms religion and spirituality. Field notes also were reflective in nature, and tended to function to help me record my growing speculations, feelings, ideas, hunches and other impressions as the research unfolded (McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Field notes were kept concurrent with all interviews conducted by phone and subsequently incorporated into my code notes; field notes were generated after each face to face interview and included retrospectively into my code notes.

Together with the audio tapes, transcriptions, and the field notes that were generated during these interviews, member checks and debriefing were also conducted after each interview. Member checks required me to go back to respondent(s) when I had any questions regarding the information received during the initial interview. Member checks were also employed after each interview by telephone to ensure that I had accurately captured the essence of each respondents’ descriptions and interpretations. During member checks, I essentially read the contents of my analysis to each respondent, and requested clarification when something had been unclear, asked for any corrections or additions to ensure that my analysis reflected their perspective correctly, and verified that I had accurately interpreted each respondent’s observations.

Debriefing was utilized in an effort to improve upon the interview process. It functioned to feed back information from the respondent’s perspective to the interviewer/ethnographer regarding the interview process (Joanides, Brigham,
Joanning, in press). By utilizing this technique, the interviewer's style, together with the content of the questions being asked, could be co-structured and co-improved as the research process evolved and emerged. Furthermore, it should also be pointed out here that both of these techniques have been successfully used in other research studies to bolster the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Brigham, 1995; Joanides et al., in press; Kuehl, Newfield & Joanning, 1990; Lashley, 1993).

A diary was also kept to help me, (a) review and summarize each respondent's answers, (b) generate some initial impressions from each respondent's interpretations, and (c) facilitate member checks and the peer debriefing process. Additionally, it should also be noted that diaries assist ethnographers in their efforts to critique themselves as interviewers and researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; McMillian & Schumacker, 1989). To be more specific, my diary consisted of memos and diagrams that were labeled code notes, theoretical notes, and operational notes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Since I was striving, to not only generate rich descriptions and interpretations of my respondent's lived experiences of religion and spirituality, but was also concerned with developing some of the fundamental components of a grounded theory of how religious people view the terms religion and spirituality, the memos and diagrams included in my diary facilitated the formulation of theory (Sells et al., 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Briefly, code notes were designed to assist me in generating conceptual labels, categories, properties, and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990): which would ultimately function to form the essential features of the thick rich descriptions proposed in this paper. Theoretical notes were
used to assist me in my efforts to begin (a) conceptualizing and formulating the potentially relevant subcategories, their properties, dimensions, (b) assist me in discerning the given relationships that existed between the subcategories, properties, and dimensions, and (c) help me in my efforts to discover some of the essential features of the grounded theory that would ultimately be generated through this and other future (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). And finally, operational notes would be comprised of memos that would provide me with direction regarding sampling, questions, and the possible comparisons that I should follow up as the research process continued (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Since this investigation was conducted to fulfill a degree requirement, it was also anticipated that my dissertation committee would be utilized as peer debriefers, and that an external reviewer would be utilized in an effort to provide an external audit. Peer debriefers would essentially review the research design and contribute to the investigator's growing insights through their suggestions and questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The external auditor (see Appendix E) reviewed the research protocol, field notes, dairy, and conclusions and confirmed that the interpretations reached were consistent with the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

It should also be noted that the research techniques described above would serve to ensure that credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) issues were considered and satisfied. To be more specific, the use of member checks, triangulation, peer debriefing, and persistent observation would serve to ensure credibility issues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of purposive sampling
and my efforts to seek a thick, rich description of respondent's perceptions would serve to satisfy transferability issues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of overlapping methods, and an audit trail would serve to meet dependability issues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of an external auditor and my efforts at practicing reflexivity would serve to meet confirmability issues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Description of my Role as Researcher**

Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers do not attempt to interpose a layer of instrumentation between themselves and their respondents. Instead, qualitative researchers use themselves as the instrument and tend to ascribe to a hermeneutic approach which asserts, (a) that complete objectivity and an atheoretical approach is an impossibility when conducting research (Howe, 1985; 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), (b) research is self-reflexive in nature and will undoubtedly involve the researcher's biases (Blee & Billings, 1986; Cox-Dzurec, 1993; Gergen, Hepburn & Fisher, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and (c) the researcher and culture interact with one another in a manner that serves to impact both the researcher and research (Blee & Billings, 1986; Bradley, 1993; Cox-Dzurec, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To that end, since I have certain clear assumptions that have been enumerated in an earlier section regarding religion and spirituality, the role of religion and spirituality in self-described religious people's lives, as well as the need for psychotherapists to acknowledge religion's role in a religious client system's phenomenological perspective lives (please refer to Chapter One under the section My Personal Lens), I utilized the techniques outlined above to assist me in my efforts to
distinguish between my biases and my respondents’ emerging observations and interpretations of religion and therapy. Additionally since my personal biases would likely influence the quality of information generated (Blue & Billings, 1986; Bradley, 1993), the methodological techniques mentioned above would also help me discern the extent to which I was influencing and was being influenced by the culture under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Analysis: Coding Procedures and Techniques Utilized**

A grounded theory approach as defined by Glaser & Strauss (1965, 1967) and Strauss & Corbin (1990; 1994), was utilized during the collection and analysis of data in this investigation. Analysis also proceeded in three stages (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)

In the first stage, typically termed “open coding,” I attempted to open the data up in an effort to begin building a grounded theory. According to Strauss and Corbin, (1990), during this process:

the data are broken down into discrete parts [termed subcategories, properties and dimensions], closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data. Through this process, one’s own and others’ assumptions about phenomena are questioned or explored, leading to new discoveries (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62).

This process (as the label “open coding” suggests) also (a) allowed me to tentatively begin grouping concepts together and collapsing them under cover terms that are called categories and subcategories, (b) assisted me in tentatively identifying
different attributes and characteristics of each category called properties, and (c) allowed me to begin dimensionalizing each given property.

The second stage in the analysis process that I utilized is termed “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During this stage I was seeking to piece together the data that had been taken apart during the first stage of analysis. To be more specific, Strauss and Corbin state (1990) the following:

The actual process of axial coding... is quite complex. It is complex because the analysis is, in fact, performing four distinct steps almost simultaneously. These are: (a) the hypothetical relating of subcategories to a category by means of statements denoting the nature of the relationships between them and the phenomenon;... (b) the verification of those hypotheses against actual data; (c) the continued search for the properties of categories and subcategories, and the dimensional locations of data... indicative of them; (d) the beginning exploration of variation in phenomena, by comparing each category and its subcategories for different patterns discovered by comparing dimensional locations of instances in the data. (p.107)

Axial coding would thus serve to assist me in my efforts to begin putting my respondent’s descriptions and interpretations of their religious and spiritual lived experiences back together in a systematic form: a form that would attempt to contain variation, and depth, as well as the main components of a developing grounded theory. It should also be noted here that though there are “four distinct steps” included in this
second stage of analysis, the steps were interactive and recursive in nature, and required me to be able to move between inductive and deductive thinking constantly.

The third stage in this analysis process is termed “selective coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During this stage the researcher is typically involved in the following five steps:

The first step involves explicating the story line. The second consists of relating subsidiary categories around the core category.... The third involves relating categories at the dimensional level. The fourth entails validating those relationships against data. The fifth and final step consists of filling in categories that may need further refinement and/or development. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 117-118)

Along with these above steps, this process required me to, not only analytically explicate and identify a story line, but also move from description to conceptualization by systematically grounding the theory in the data collected.

Finally, it was hoped that data analysis, (a) would generate a conceptually dense, rich theory of the role that religion and spirituality plays in religious people’s lives, (b) would serve to reinforce the growing positive perceptions that social scientists and psychotherapists have regarding the influential role religious and spiritual concerns have on a religious individual’s and family’s lived experience, (c) would serve to explicate how certain salient information may be missed when psychotherapists fail to address religious and spiritual factors, (d) would serve to assist social scientists and psychotherapists in further conceptualizing the interrelationship that exists between the
terms religion and spirituality, (e) would serve to provide an impetus for future theorists who wish to continue developing theory in this topic area, (f) would serve to stimulate qualitative/quantitative research which would then lead toward a verification of the descriptions generated in this research, (g) would facilitate future research with probability samples.
CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS

This section will provide the reader with an analysis of respondents' descriptions and interpretations of their religious and spiritual lived experiences. To aid me in accomplishing this task, I have chosen to utilize Glaser and Strauss' (1965, 1967) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach. To be more specific, these researchers have developed an analysis approach which serves to assist qualitative investigators in generating conceptually thick grounded theories: theories that are principally grounded upon respondents' written and verbal descriptions and interpretations of a given phenomena or research interest (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990) also propose that researchers achieve this end by (a) initially identifying key concepts, (b) grouping these key concepts together to form what they would term subcategories, (c) distinguishing and classifying the attributes and characteristics of each subcategory, and (d) developing a "story line" or "core category" around which the subcategories will orbit and inevitably function to advance a grounded theory.

Given the fact that my analysis has been directly influenced by Glaser and Strauss' (1965, 1967) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) procedures and techniques, therefore, this section will be organized in the following manner. The reader will initially be introduced to a visual breakdown of each subcategory. Second, an analysis and discussion of the salient properties and dimensions of each subcategory (four subcategories in total) will then be presented. Third, an analysis of a collateral subcategory labeled "Implications for Psychotherapists" will also be provided.
Specifically, this subcategory has been included in this study in an effort to ascertain if religious participants in this study perceive any relevant connection(s) between religion and spirituality and the practice of psychotherapy.

Fourth, a thick rich description of how religious people perceive the terms religion and spirituality will be presented Chapter Seven. In addition, it should also be noted that I have determined to quantify some of the information under each subcategory by tracking the number of respondents who have offered similar descriptions or observations of religion and spirituality. As such, the reader should be aware that properties and dimensions (of a particular subcategory) cited by all participants involved in this study will be labeled with “all (10),” statements that reflect seven, eight or nine participants’ observations will be labeled with the terms “most” and “many” and have a (7), (8), or (9) next to these terms. For example, the statement “most (7)” or “many (7)” means that seven of ten respondents in this study reflected a given statement under consideration during the interview process. Likewise, statements reflective of six respondents’ observations will be labeled with the terms “a number of” or “others” and have a numeric count next to them of (6); statements that reflect four or five respondents’ observations will be labeled with the term “some” and have a numeric count or (4) or (5) attached to them; statements reflective of two or three participants in this study will be proceeded with the terms “a few” or “several” and have either (2) or (3) next to them. By tracking the number of respondents who have offered similar comments, and providing this information to the reader, it is hoped that this information will assist the reader in determining the extent to which a
given observation and description was valued and perceived important to those who participated in this study.

The reader should be aware that in some instances respondents’ first names were rather unique. As such, I resolved to change some of the names included in this section to protect my respondents’ anonymity. Additionally, I have chosen to include bracketed information in some of the quotes that will appear below. The information within these brackets are not direct quotes, but efforts on my part to enhance the clarity and meaning of the information in this chapter.

Subcategory #1: Religious and Spiritual Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 nature of religious development (10)</td>
<td>a process (10)</td>
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<td>a road (4)</td>
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<td>#2 baptism (10)</td>
<td>entry point (4)</td>
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<td>adoption (4)</td>
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<td>God’s child (3)</td>
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<td>connection (9)</td>
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<td>God’s love (7)</td>
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<td>loved ones (6)</td>
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<td>grandparents (4)</td>
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<td>corporate worship (10)</td>
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#6 religious education (10)  Bible study (6)  
  Bible stories (3)  
  church history (7)  
  the saints (3)  
  adult religious education (6)  

#7 time and commitment (7)  regular participation (7)  
  personal commitment (4)  
  chosen lifestyle (5)  
  discipline (6)  
  consistency (7)  

#8 God's Grace (5)  Divine energy (5)  
  Divine love (5)  
  God's life (5)  
  God's light (5)  
  searching (7)  

#9 cohort effects (3)  Great Depression (1)  
  child of sixties (2)  
  WW II (1)  

#10 negative religious experiences  oppressive hierarchy (3)  
  manipulation (3)  
  abusive religious figure (4)  
  dogma (4)  

**Property #1 and Dimensions: Nature of Religious Development**

According to all (10) respondents who participated in this study, religious people's religious and spiritual experiences are not static in character, but are instead distinctly dynamic and developmental in character. To illustrate this latter point, the following observations are indicative of comments made to this effect. Reflecting on her religious and spiritual development one respondent stated:
I see it [religion and spirituality] as a process, and in my life I'm continuing on the road, and sometimes I'm doing very well and walking very quickly along the path; and other times I'm slowly crawling, but I'm still on the road. (Maria, p. 24)

Furthermore, this developmental process appeared to be influenced by a number of different, yet interrelated factors such as baptism, significant others, personal tragedy, death, the church community, religious education, corporate worship, personal participation, and personal commitment: as will be exemplified below.

Property #2 and Dimensions: Baptism

Without exception all respondents (10) in this study viewed baptism as an important life experience which served to mark the beginning of their religious and spiritual development. Two typical responses to express this point are provided below:

I usually compare it to like an adoption, you know it is not that God didn't love me before that point, but that is when the official documents were signed, sealed and delivered. And God said OK, this is my kid and I am going to be with this person all the rest of her life. (Jane, p. 2)

Similarly, in his efforts to describe his commitment to Lutheranism/Christianity another respondent stated, "...a decision was made to commit myself to Christ, and baptism followed shortly after that, and so I began a [religious and spiritual] journey then" (Bill, p. 3). Most respondents (9) also indicated that they received baptism as infants, and felt that a conscious decision and a daily recommitment was necessary in adulthood to affirm what was received at infancy during baptism. Of the ten respondents who participated in this study, only one respondent stated that he had
waited until adolescence "to commit himself to the Lord" (Bill p. 3). Furthermore, in his case he indicated that his parents were not especially religious and had not encouraged either him or his siblings to develop a religious life. Additionally, all those who participated in this study (10) tended to state that baptism was instituted by Jesus Christ, inspired by God, performed within a corporate church setting, and was essentially a personal experience. All respondents (10) also referred to baptism as a "sacrament," while some (5) also referred to baptism as one of the church's rituals. When respondents asked to elaborate upon these two descriptors, some (5) stated that baptism was like a point of entry whereby someone enters into the church community and begins his/her religious life. As a result, some respondents (4) also stated that this experience could be compared to an "initiation process" or "initiation rite." Most respondent's (7) also indicated that baptism functions to connect the baptized person to something greater than the self, i.e., the church community, one's neighbors, God, or all three. A few respondents (3) also described baptism as "a gift from God." In these instances these respondents stated that this ritual was the direct result of God's love, and people's desire to connect with "the Creator."

**Property #3 And Dimensions: Significant Others**

All respondents (10) in this study also indicated that significant others were intimately involved in their religious and spiritual development. The following comments from two participants in this study will serve to exemplify this point. Reflecting on his experiences while growing up in Greece as a child, Paul stated:
And sometimes I wonder myself how I decided to go to the seminary, how I became spiritual, how this,... and how that,... and somehow I put some credit to [my brother’s example] when I was just a little kid watching my brother go to church. (Paul, p. 6)

Elsewhere reflecting on her parents’ religious example’s, Donna stated, “My parents.... I mean, they had many failings too, but I’m just saying that I think they showed [me] how you could embody those [Christian/Lutheran] beliefs in what you do” (Donna, p. 15). A number of respondents (6) directly associated a parent’s involvement and example with their own current level of religious commitment and religious and spiritual development. Some respondents (4) cited a grandparent’s example as being of pivotal consequence in their religious and spiritual development. Several respondents (3) also alluded to the strong influence that clergy, Sunday School teachers, religious counselors, and other key religious people had on their religious and spiritual development. Additionally, a number of respondent’s (6) tended to identify only one or two specific people whom they judged as key figures in their religious development, while a few (3) appeared to identify an assortment of significant others who had, had a positive cumulative affect on their religious and spiritual development. Those citing the influences of only one or two persons generally tended to mention persons who were members of their nuclear or extended family. Conversely, those who cited a larger number of religious people were more likely to mention significant others who were from outside of their nuclear or extended families, and, whose positive influences tended to be more spread out over the life cycle.
Property #4 and Dimensions: Death and Tragedy

A number of respondent's (6) also indicated that "the death of a loved one" had also contributed to their religious and spiritual development. To be more specific, these respondents mentioned how a parent's death, a spouse's death, and a cousin's impending death had served to influence his/her religious and spiritual development. Nancy's comments regarding this latter point will serve to illustrate statements to this effect. While considering her father's death when she was a child, Nancy's comments, which are offered below, appear to be describing how her father's death facilitated her religious developmental process:

And then I also think that when my father died, that was such a trauma, and even in my own childish way I reached out inside of myself for God's comfort....” I can remember being confused, but I can also remember praying to God to try to help me understand, not that I ever really got close... I can just remember, I can remember the crucifix on my wall, and I can remember praying to that crucifix and just trying to,... reaching out to God to try to make sense of what had happened. And I'm not saying I ever got real close.... But there was something there, there was something that kept me,... there was some comfort there.... And I think also knowing that my father was with God, because that's what I was taught. He was still there. And then I could in my own childish way even talk to him — he was still there.... Yeah. So there was comfort there. There was comfort knowing that [he was with God] and believing that he was with God. I didn't
know why he was with Him, why he had been taken, but I knew he was there.

(Nancy pp. 13-14)

Other's (6) also talked about how knowledge of their own mortality had impacted their religious and spiritual development. In this latter case, respondents in this study who were around fifty years old were more inclined to consider their own "finiteness," and how the passing of time has increased their religious participation and development. For example, reflecting on his morality, Bill stated: "Maybe it's because I see life changing, and priorities change, values change; and so it's sort of a natural thing to do [or be religious] for me" (Bill p. 6). Conversely, Tim while describing a more youthful perspective of life stated:

I'm chronologically 37 — I'm emotionally younger, only because in my twenties I had a lot of family issues I was dealing with. So it's really only been in my thirties that I have had the flexibility and freedom to kind of reach the place that most people reach in their twenties.... The whole premise of the Christian faith (about salvation and all that stuff) has never been the motivator for me that it's laid out to be. I think the issue of religion and faith being a way to live with one another is probably a more stronger motivation that would make me feel obligated to being religious.... (pp. 12-13)

Property #5 and Dimensions: Church Community

Along with the impact that significant others appeared to have on respondent's religious development, all (10) participants in this study also consistently referred to the primary importance that their church community had (and continued to have) on
their religious and spiritual development. The following two examples are indicative of this latter point. Reflecting on the positive affect that her participation in a church community had, had on her formative religious and spiritual development as a child Elaine stated:

We were, well, we were learning about our faith, we were learning positive social things, mission out reach you know... we were learning about the Bible, we were learning about our background as far as [being] Lutherans. You learned about the '95 complaints' and what a good man Martin Luther was. It was just positive. (Elaine, p. 8)

In another interview Donna also reflected on her childhood and attributed the following positive impact that her church community had on her religious and spiritual development: "...the community and the church and so on.... That was a pretty big part of [my religious development]" (Donna, p. 16). To be more specific, most respondents (9) stated that community support was indispensable to their religious and spiritual development for the following reasons. Religious community support was judged to be (a) helpful to one's formative and adolescent development, (b) was nurturing and comforting during times of crisis, and (c) provided one with a kind of prefabricated social network. Beyond these observations, all respondents (10) also alluded to the value of corporate worship and the "liturgical" and "sacramental life" of their respective faith communities. They generally tended to believe that corporate prayer life provided them with a "framework" that enhanced their religious and spiritual development. A number of (6) respondents also stated that their efforts to develop a
deeper more personal understanding of their church’s corporate worship positively affected the manner in which they have come to discern and value religion and spirituality. In these instances these respondents appeared to be suggesting that a consciously deliberate, active, integrative approach to religion had functioned to positively impact their personal estimation of religion, and their religious and spiritual development. To illustrate this latter point I refer the reader to Nick’s succinct comments:

I think we miss the point of doing something even when you don't feel like it. So you set yourself up in a routine that forces you to do what you know you should do, even though you don't feel like doing it... because it helps. (Nick, p. 7)

A number of respondents (6) also alluded to the benefits of belonging to a Bible Study group, and how participation in such a group has served to strengthen their religious and spiritual development. Some (5) also indicated that a participation in the annual cycle of religious holidays such as Easter and Christmas has also served to enhance his/her religious and spiritual development. A few (3) respondents stated that the hymnology and other liturgical books had enriched their religious and spiritual development.

Property #6 and Dimensions: Religious Education

Catechetical training of the type that one received in Sunday School was also mentioned as an important component in many (8) of these respondent’s efforts to develop a religious and spiritual life. Several of these respondents (3) also stated that Bible Stories were immensely helpful in their formative years, while a few others (3)
also indicated that stories about faithful historical figures from church history ("the saints") had inspired them as children, and thus impacted their personal religious and spiritual development. A number of respondents (6) also indicated that their participation in philanthropic endeavors, fellowship groups, and adult religious education classes have served to positively impact their religious and spiritual development.

Property #7 and Dimensions: Time and Commitment

Several other important contributing factors that were also seemingly interrelated, and were consistently mentioned, also deserve mention here. For example, most respondents (7) pointed to the significance of offering a specific time commitment to a religious community. These respondents tended to highlight the positive impact that meaningful participation in a religious community can have on a person’s religious and spiritual development. For example, while alluding to the perceived value of belonging to a religious community and committing his time to a given church, Tim stated the following:

I think first and foremost [there] is the responsibility and the obligation I feel in terms of my position [as cantor], that I’ve taken on this role and that I need to uphold that. I mean, I certainly have the days like everybody else where I maybe would rather just roll over or it’s been a crazy week, and who needs the [service of the Saturday of the Souls] when I want to sleep late that Saturday. But I feel that I’ve made this commitment. Well, even more than that, because I kind of feel like this is part of what I’m called to do — this is my ministry, the way in which I
serve. And so there’s good days and bad days, but this is what I’ve taken on. And
I’ve done this, as you know, since I was 12 years old, so I don’t even really think
about that part of it much. It’s just part of who I am. (p. 5)

Elsewhere Paul also indicated similar sentiments when he stated:

I have come to learn and believe that we need to do certain things in our lives
everyday: spiritual or otherwise. It eventually pays off for our peace of mind…I
need to do them in order that [my spirituality will] be what it is supposed to be.
So it might sound selfish that I do these [church related activities] for a personal
need, but I do it because I know it is the only way I should go through life. (Paul,
p. 2)

Some respondents (5) also referred to the importance of integrating religious
beliefs and practices into one’s lifestyle. A few respondents (4) also emphasized the
essential nature of a personal commitment to Lutheranism or Orthodoxy, and how
“discipline,” “consistency,” and “regular commitment” were absolutely necessary to
their efforts to develop a meaningful religious and spiritual life.

**Property # 8 and dimensions: God’s Grace**

Some respondents (5) also repeatedly mentioned “God’s grace” (Bill, p. 19), and
also stated that “Divine energy” (Jane, p. 5) and “Divine love” (Jane, p. 9) “God’s life
changing light and life” (Nancy, p. 15) was of central importance to their efforts to
become religious and spiritual. In these instances it appeared that all (10) respondents
credited this developmental process to their own personal efforts, but especially to the
Divine. For example, In an effort to describe God’s role in this process Nick stated:
...we all have this capacity of... longing for God, but it would never develop into a sense of the Triune God, a sense of God incarnate,... all of these other sorts of things, were it not for the fact that God had revealed Himself to us. And so the good news is that God reveals Himself to Abraham, reveals Himself to Moses etc., and finally reveals Himself in Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. And so you kind of hear this sort of... In reading the Scripture, you feel a sigh of relief that we finally know what we've been looking for. We've been searching and searching, and so God finally reveals Himself, and now our search kind of is complete. You know, it makes sense. So there's this part of it as well, is the part of it that we're searching, but the other part that's equally as important is that God is in a sense searching for us as well, is looking for us. So there's the two pieces of it. (p. 16)

Property #9 and dimensions: Cohort Effects

A few respondents (3) also referred to certain historical events that they felt had made profound impacts on their religious and spiritual development. For example, in his efforts to describe how he had become religious and why other people are not necessarily religious Bill (p. 9) stated that he supposed that the "Great Depression" and "World War II" had compelled him to seek out the consolation and stability that an organized religion offered. In another instance, Donna (p. 18) also judged that her attitude toward religion had been impacted by the fact that she was "a child of the sixties." In this case, she appeared to suggest that certain cohort effects that had
effected her generation's attitude regarding organized religion had functioned to affect
the manner in which she viewed religion and, by extension, her Lutheran faith.

Property #10 and Dimensions: Negative Religious Experiences

Finally, though most religious experiences mentioned during these interviews
were essentially positive in nature, some respondents (5) also referred to a number of
negative religious experiences that had initially impacted their religious and spiritual
development in negative ways, but were now (in retrospect) perceived as positively
impacting their religious and spiritual development. To be more specific, some
respondents (4) stated that Divine consolation and guidance had either assisted them in
changing their perception of these negative experiences, or helped them reduce their
negative affects. For example, a few respondents (3) alluded to various types of church
politics that were perceived as abusive and disillusioning in character. In these cases
respondents stated that these experiences had served to temporarily stifle their
religious and spiritual development. The negative residual effects engendered by
experiences did not last, however, due largely to what they defined as Divine
intervention and Divine guidance. In succinct terms, these respondents were able to
circumvent these negative experiences and understand them in a different manner as
they continued to develop religiously and spiritually. Several others (3) also alluded to
the oppressive nature of organized religion, and its tendency to smother personal
choice and independent thinking. In these cases, these respondents also appeared to
adopt a different perception of religion as time passed, (a) either by discerning and
accepting religion's limitations, and recognizing that religion may not always have "all
the answers” or (b) by viewing the potentially oppressive nature of religion in a
different light, and coming to somehow understand that religion can also be liberating
in nature rather than simply authoritative and oppressive. The following observations
offered by one respondent serve to exemplify how several respondents understood
organized religion’s value and limitations. During Nancy’s efforts to describe some
perceived limitations of her religion, she stated:

when it comes to my own religion — I don’t agree with everything that the Church
tells me.... Well, I don’t agree that the Orthodox Church is the only church that
can help someone find God. I don’t agree with a lot of the rules and regulations
that often are talked about in regards to fasting and things like that. I’ve never
found those things real useful in my own life — that’s probably my own fault — but
things like that. But when it comes to the major beliefs, I don’t have any qualms
at all. It’s some of the other things (Nancy, p. 15).

Subcategory #2: Lived Religious Experiences

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During my efforts to gather information from those who participated in this study, I was continually interested in my respondent’s personal, daily, lived perceptions and experiences of religion. As such, the second category to surface as this study unfolded was termed “religions lived experiences.” Specifically, this category documents (a) the various observations and interpretations of religion as reported by those who participated in this study, and (b) distills these observations and interpretations into eight distinct properties/dimensions of these participant’s religious lived experiences.
Before delineating my respondents’ perceptions and lived experiences of religion, however, I would like to offer the following two personal observations. First, despite the fact that all (10) of my respondent’s considered themselves religious, each respondent nonetheless appeared to struggle in his/her efforts to address my questions about religion. Moreover, though their struggles may have something to do with the obtuse and philosophical nature of the questions that were asked, I suspect much of their difficulty was also linked to the abstract and complex nature of the term religion. Furthermore, such statements as, “these are difficult questions” and “these are deep and complicated concerns” and “I really need to stop and think about that” may attest to the convoluted and complex character of religion. Second, though each respondent appeared to experience a moderate to high difficulty in his/her efforts to define religion and describe his/her lived religious experiences and perceptions, an analysis of the transcripts produced surprisingly similar concepts and statements from all participants in this study. The following dimensions and properties appear to be part and parcel of my respondent’s perceptions and lived experiences of religion.

**Property #1 and Dimensions: Corporate/Social Character of Religion**

All (10) of my respondents described religion as a corporate experience. Many respondents (7) also alluded to religion as a social institution. Some (4) also described religion as an “organized” activity, while several (3) used the catch phrase “social experience” to describe the corporate nature of this experience. As such, the very first observation that repeatedly surfaced during this part of the study is that each respondent’s lived experiences of religion were closely associated with a “social”
experience or \textit{"aggregate"} experience. Additionally, when participants in this study attempted to describe their experiences in more detailed terms, they tended to refer to a corporate experience that was at once held together by common beliefs, common rituals, common history, and common goals and objectives. To be more specific, a number of (6) respondents alluded to a certain body of religious "tenets," "commandments," "canons," "rules," etc. that each religious groups held in common. Most (9) also referred to terms like "corporate prayer," "liturgy," "services," and "sacraments" to refer to certain common ritualized activities that religious people engaged in with other members of their faith community. Some (5) also referred to a common historical context which appeared to provide them with a common identity, a common purpose, and common objectives. The following two statements are indicative of comments that were made when respondents attempted to describe the corporate/social/aggregate nature of religion. While offering observations and interpretations of the term religion, Nancy stated,

\begin{quote}
[faith communities are comprised of] people who believe [the same things]... and have that as an important part of their lives... tend to see a lot of things, not everything, but tend to see a lot of things in the same light. (p. 6)
\end{quote}

Elsewhere, Elaine also attempted to describe the corporate nature of religion by affirming the corporate/social nature of religion with the following statement:

\begin{quote}
...through the various ways that we worship together, and one being singing, one being the liturgy, one being the communing together, the communion. The physical presence of each other in the building. The working together in outreach...." (p. 8)
\end{quote}
Property #2 and Dimensions: Framework and Structure

Religion was also repeatedly described as a “framework” and a “structure.” In these instances all respondents (10) viewed religion as providing them with the “framework” or “structure” that facilitated their personal efforts to “draw closer to the Transcendent” (Tim, p. 10). Additionally, most (9) respondents also tended to refer to a collection of distinct, yet interdependent religious “forms” that were essential components of what they perceived as their religious framework or structure. To be more specific, a number of participants (6) spent time discussing and describing these various “external,” “observable,” and “tangible” forms. In these instances these respondents alluded to a number of religious “forms” such as “icons,” “the Bible,” “the liturgy,” “incense,” “candles,” “sacraments,” such as “the Eucharist” and “baptism,” “church committees,” “hymnology,” “the clergy,” etc. Furthermore, they also stated that these “forms” served to assist religious people in their efforts to communicate with the Divine. A few (3) respondents also alluded to a “growing appreciation” for these various forms/rituals/symbols, and suggested that as they developed a keener understanding of these forms, so also did the church’s structure appear more “wonderful” and take on “more importance” in their lives. The following two statements are indicative of statements made that repeatedly were made alluding to a structure or framework that contained a number of distinct, interrelated components. During Nick’s efforts to describe how Orthodox Christians communicate with the Divine, he stated:
We are Orthodox, and we go in for icons, smells and bells, we do liturgy, particular chant; and so that becomes our response to the experience of the Divine. Roman Catholics do it differently, Protestants do it differently, Buddhists do it differently.... And so you have a particular form, a particular way of responding to the sense of the Divine, the Transcendent (p. 13).

In another interview Bill stated his appreciation for his church's structure and forms by stating,

I have a growing appreciation for the structured church as I see it and as I sense it. And now of course I'm defining it somewhat narrowly within the Lutheran scope. But obviously as we talk with Episcopalians and as we see others in the Roman Catholic faith, we see a lot of similarities, so I have a growing appreciation for the structure of the church and the structure of religion. (p. 6)

**Property #3 and Dimensions: Perceived Origins of Religion**

When respondent's in this study were asked to discuss their perceptions of the origins of religion, all respondents (10) tended to respond synonymously. To be more specific, all respondents viewed their religion as a human experience that was Divinely inspired and has co-evolved through a process of human cooperation and Divine inspiration. In these instances, a few respondents (2) referred to God's role in this process as "a guiding force," a few others (3) also utilized the terms "Holy Spirit" and "Jesus Christ" to describe the Transcendent's role in this process. A number of (6) also alluded to God's "central role" in the co-construction of their religious tradition. Others (6) also mentioned the "crucial role" that faithful people have played in the co-
construction of their religious tradition. The following observation is indicative of how respondents in this study conceptualized the manner in which their religion had evolved and developed. While discussing God's role in her religion's development, Donna emphatically stated, "I think God is the leader. I wouldn't say that we're [the faithful] on equal footing there,... I think He's the guiding force (Donna, p. 13). A number of (6) respondents also stated that their religious response was innate in character. In these instances, respondents appeared to insist that religious activity was less the result of a human construction, and more the result of a "God-given" inherent drive. Two typical responses that illustrate this latter point are as follows:

Where did it come from? I think religion was born within man. And here I'm putting the spirituality into it too, because I'm leaving it together at this point. But basically I think that it's innate, that God created us and we are in His image and thus that aspect of being religious people, spiritual people, is there. And then we struggle with it, with our free will, whether to choose to follow or to choose to fall away. (Maria, p. 10)

While discussing the same issue, Nick also stated the following:

Religion is our natural response — I mean, if I want to be, if I want to take it out of kind of a particular theology, if that's possible — religion is the natural human response to the sense of the Transcendent, that there is something beyond ourselves, and we try to respond and commune with that, understand it, respond to it and commune with it.... there's this basic human instinct, this drive, that says that there is something beyond us, and we have this basic intuition. So you have
all kinds of religion from the beginning of time, all kinds of religion and religious
ritual and whatever else. But it's all directed in this way.... (p. 9)

Property #4 and Dimensions: Moral Development

All respondents (10) in this study also agreed that religion was "absolutely
crucial" and "central" to religious people’s moral and ethical development. In these
instances many respondents used the terms “canons,” “commandments,” “moral
precepts,” and ethical values,” to refer to the various rules and regulations that
provided them with a moral and ethical undergridding. All respondents (10) also
indicated that either all or part of these rules and regulations had been inspired by God,
and as such, were viewed in absolute terms vis-à-vis relative terms. When asked where
these moral absolutes could be found, most (7) respondents referred to the Bible and
to other sources of church authority such as previous "Ecumenical Councils" and
"synods," which a number of (6) respondents understood to have universal authority
within their particular faith tradition. Some (5) respondents also viewed these moral
guidelines as, (a) “transformative” in character and as such they tended to believe that
these moral guidelines possessed the ability to impact the manner in which religious
people view life, (b) “relevant to religious people’s struggles,” (c) God’s attempt to
communicate “Divine goodness” to humankind, and (d) God’s way of assisting
“people to value one another.” Some typical comments made regarding the role of
religion in religious people’s moral development are as follows. During Jane’s efforts
to describe God’s role in her moral development she stated:
He is there and so He is watching over what we do... redeeming those things.
Is... guiding us, guiding me. Trying to push me sometimes into going with God's energy. Rather than working against God’s energy. So for the good, for the right.... (p. 5)

Elsewhere, Peter (p. 17) would also state, “I think God develops us... [if] we are willing to allow him to do that. As we are open to it. I think He in a sense shapes our morals and our values.”

**Property #5 and Dimensions: Impact on World View**

All respondents (10) in this study also judged that their religious orientation profoundly impacted the manner in which they viewed both the world and their neighbor. All (10) respondents also repeatedly perceived religion as having a primary impact on their view of the world, and as such, referred to religion as “a world view,” a “lens,” and as a “lifestyle.” In these instances it appeared that their religious view of the world functioned to profoundly impact how they viewed the world. Tim’s comments clearly illustrate this latter point: “It plays a major role in that I have somewhat lived a life that is essentially structured by the church....” (p. 17)

During this session of our conversation some respondents (4) juxtaposed society’s perception of neighbor with “Christ’s” or “God’s” perception of neighbor. In these instances these respondents stated that our materialistic culture tended to function in a manner that encouraged “independence,” “competition,” and an individualistic ethic and discouraged “relationships.” Conversely, most (7) also stated that “Christ’s” view of neighbor was founded on the “golden rule” which stated that
we must consider our “neighbor’s needs” as well as “our own needs” when acting. A few (4) also stated that their religion tended to emphasize “servanthood” or the act of caring for the sick and indigent. A few (4) also tended to describe a view of the world that was founded on a constant struggle to cultivate “relationships” or make connections with those around him/her, both within and outside their church family. Several others (3) also described a perception of the world around them that seemed to emphasize “connections” with “all of creation” and was essentially guided by “a God’s eye view” of the entire universe. In these instances, respondents remarks were similar to the following three comments. In attempting to describe how religion affects her attitude to others around her Maria related the following short story:

I have a sweet little Baptist neighbor. She's in her 80's, and her example has just kind of touched me. When she first moved [into the neighborhood].... She came over... with a bag of flour and a little bag of sugar and a couple of little things, and welcomed me to the neighborhood. And I was very moved by that, and I hope that — I know that's a little kind of insignificant, but for me it was very significant because it was a reminder that as a Christian, that's what I need to be doing. Maybe not taking the bag of sugar, but constantly aware of the needs of people.... (p. 12)

Elsewhere in an effort to describe his growing emphasis on philanthropy, and how his religious orientation has impacted and changed his perceptions Bill stated the following:
Somehow, you know, even you and I in the midst of this brief interview, are establishing some sort of relationship. And I see an interest on the part of the church to serve people in education, to serve them perhaps through our food pantry, to serve a number of their needs. And out of this comes a relationship that I am beginning to be more comfortable with than I have ever been before, because I'm giving it a new weight, a new value, if you please, at this point. And I would hope for many people that they might find that, but depending upon the perspective from which they came, they may very legitimately ask, 'Why? Why the church?' Some may say, 'I see it focused toward kind of that well-off group that attend Bethesda, so if I'm not in that category, why should I try to relate myself to them?' But I'm seeing that it goes beyond mere wealth. I think it concerns not only the soul but the physical well-being — food, health, housing, this sort of thing. So I think it's important to me because -- and I'm rambling too much -- but it's very important to me as I see these relationships that we try to address many aspects of the lives of people. And it seems then if we are successful in doing that, we will have served them well and perhaps even served God. (p. 10)

And finally, while talking about the impact that her religious orientation has had on her perception of the world Nancy (p. 4) succinctly stated: "[religion] is a framework that helps you see the world and see life..."
Property #6 and Dimensions: Personal Stability, Meaning and Security

Religion was also viewed a stabilizing force which offered all respondent's (10) in this study a sense of meaning, and answers to seemingly unanswerable questions on troublesome topics such as "death," "tragedy," and "sickness." For example, Donna's (p. 22) observations regarding religious' ability to provide answers to difficult questions were typical of what others also stated: "it [religion] answers questions or at least helps you live with the situation at times when it seems that you can't.... it's like a comfort blanket." Additionally, another function or property of religion which many (7) of these respondents also spoke of repeatedly was religion's ability to provide the believer with a sense of security in an unpredictable, precarious existence. In this instance, Nancy's succinct remarks are indicative of what some (5) stated about religion:

...it [religion] gives you a certain sense of security, even though you may be struggling.... I think it's supposed to do that. It's done that throughout the ages - - and not that people always listen, but I think that religion should be doing that for people. (p. 8)

Closely associated with the comfort and stability afforded religious people in this study, a few (3) respondent's in this study also alluded to religion's uncanny ability to link them with the past, as well as the consolation that such a connection offered them. For example, the following responses from Jane were typical of other comments made regarding this dimension of religion.
Because religion has to do with relationships and connectedness throughout the generations and throughout the universe, so that through religion I am not only connected with God and, I am not only connected with my family, but I am connected with the people that I go to church with, and I am connected with people who are worshipping all over the world and all the people who have ever worshipped God all over the world. And all the people who ever will worship God. So that is what religion is really about... is connectedness to those layers of meaning and of history. (p. 14)

Property #7 and Dimensions: Political Nature of Religion

Some (4) respondents also alluded to the political nature of religion. In these instances, these participants tended to view politics as an unfortunate residual effect of humankind’s inability to grasp the “substance behind the forms.” Specifically, these respondents essentially viewed the political nature of religion as potentially “pathological,” and as “destructive behavior” which was more the result of humankind’s inability to misunderstand and misinterpret the quintessential purpose of religion and less about the real value and purpose of religion. Two comments made that are indicative of these latter points are as follows. During Nick’s efforts to describe the value of incorporating religion into therapy, he stated:

And what we've come to see is that religion is probably the most political and divisive force out there, and no one has ever talked about it. And I think that same thing is true internally or personally, that it's an incredibly important piece. And most psychotherapists are theologically illiterate.... (p. 20)
Elsewhere while trying to understand some of the internal politics that have affected her church recently Maria also stated:

But I also see the reality of parishioners wanting to control their clergy.... Or from the hierarchy-- things that are done that really aren't [Christ-like].... They may be in the best interests [of some], but they may not be done in the most loving way.... (p. 9)

*Property #8 and Dimensions: Enhancing a Dialogue with the Divine*

And finally, all (10) respondents generally agreed that religion enhances religious people's dialogue with the Divine and assists religious people in their search for God. To illustrate these points the following quotes are offered below. First, with regards to how religion enhances our dialogue with God, Jane stated:

It has to do with worship- and in my case worshipping God. The sense of awe- or in the sense of relationship to a much greater power. An ultimate power. It has to do with prayer, so a specific linking up with that God and being in a relationship. It has to do with silence... and silence on my part... so that I can hear God speaking.... (p. 21)

Elsewhere, Nick (p. 17) also stated the following with regards to religion's role in assisting people in their personal search to connect with "the Transcendent." "religion is that thing that we put into place which is a search for the Divine...."

*Subcategory #3: Lived Spiritual Experiences*

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<tr>
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<th>Dimensions</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>love (9)</td>
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<td>God's presence (10)</td>
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After analyzing and distilling the comments made about spirituality by those respondents who participated in this study, it quickly became clear to me that there was a dimension of this experience that defied "logic" and "description." To be more specific, during certain sections of the interview process all (10) respondents in this study appeared to be alluding to a part of their spiritual experience with the Transcendent that appeared to both challenge their efforts to articulate and describe this experience, as well as defy any presumed attempts at thoroughly defining this experience. Nick’s (p. 13) succinct statement illustrates this latter point: “God is at once accessible and inaccessible... comprehensible and incomprehensible... so that can be a problem here.” Nonetheless, despite this limitation, respondents in this study

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<td>world (7)</td>
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<td>daily devotions (5)</td>
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clearly and repeatedly (a) believed in a Transcendent Being, (b) believed that the Divine makes “Himself” accessible to humankind in a personal way, (c) alluded to certain explicit “spiritual exercises” and devotional processes that were routinely performed to facilitate a relationship with the Divine, and (c) described a synergistic process between the individual and God, whose ultimate effects were transformative in character or served to profoundly impact each respondent’s perception of themselves, their neighbor and the world around them. Furthermore, it could also be stated that during these interviews a kind of unfolding from the general to the specific occurred in each participant’s efforts to define and describe their personal lived spiritual experiences. As such, I have chosen to summarize this session by mirroring my respondent’s approach by beginning with certain seemingly general, amorphous comments that my respondents made regarding spirituality, and then subsequently moving toward the more tangible and specific dimensions of this experience.

**Property #1 and Dimensions: A Personal, Esoteric Connection with God**

When respondents in this study were asked to offer their lived experiences and interpretations of the term spirituality, all (10) respondents in this study initially stated that their perception of this term was founded on an “internal experience” or “internal connection” with the Divine. The following quotation is typical of statements made to this effect: "Spirituality is to really turn yourself over to God and allow him to come into your heart and to be united with him and He... with you. To be aware of His presence in your life, in your heart, around you, every moment of your life” (Paul, p. 8). Elsewhere Bill would also succinctly state: “…yes, I think there’s a real connection
[in my perception of the term spirituality], a connectedness, if I may use that term, that does very much involve the Divine (p. 12)."

Additionally, some (5) respondents employed additional descriptors such as "God’s peace" to describe this connection with God’s presence; others (6) utilized the terms "Divine joy" to qualify this experience; a few (3) utilized the terms "God’s touch," "God’s power," "God’s energy," and "God’s grace" to assist them in explaining and defining this experience. A few others utilized the following catch phrases to define this experience: spirituality is "something that is beyond Lutheranism" (Bill p. 7), "spirituality is an awareness of another realm of life" (Nancy, p. 11), spirituality is "being aware of Christ in my heart" (Jane, p. 12), spirituality is like a "ladder to God" (Tim, p. 16). Together with these rather amorphous descriptors and constructs, some (5) also used the terms "mystical," "mystery," "holiness," and "others" to describe this experience, while concurrently maintaining that there was a part of this experience that could not be explained nor defined because of the Transcendent’s inaccessible and inexplicable nature. Other’s (6) also suggested that this experience could be compared to "a blessing," or a "gift from God," which was "generously" given to them because of the Creator’s loving, merciful, and forgiving nature, and humankind’s need for God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness.

When respondents in this study were subsequently asked to elaborate upon these basic statements, all (10) remarked that this connection with the Divine was more of a "personal search" which led to a "personal" experience with God, as compared to their religious lived experiences which were essentially framed within a
corporate/social experience. The following brief statement made by Elaine (p. 15) illustrates this latter point nicely: "The religion is more the formal structure of it all. The spirituality is my own personal direct line." A few (2) respondents also stated that though spirituality was essentially a personal experience, their was also a dimension of this experience that contained an aggregate quality. In this instance, Nick's observations exemplify this latter point. In his attempt to describe this dimension of his spirituality Nick stated:

...it isn't personal in the sense that it's only something that I can understand as opposed to you, so my experience is different than your experience.... You know, you and I have a relationship. I experience you in a particular way. You and your wife have a relationship that's very different than the relationship you and I have, and so she experiences you in a different way, and you experience her in a different way... But we're both experiencing you. So is it totally individual, subjective, unverifiable... No. Is it unique in the sense that every encounter between yourself and another person is unique.... But at the same time, it isn't a totally different experience. We're not experiencing another person.... And that's the way it is with God. (p. 14)

**Property #2 and Dimensions: A Relationship with the Divine**

As these interviews proceeded most (7) respondents in this study also alluded to another dimension of their relationship with the Divine. Specifically, respondent's compared their spiritual connection to God with "a relationship" and generally tended to utilize this metaphor to further describe their spirituality. The following statement
made by Nick (p. 12) illustrates this point: "there needs to be a continuing kind of communication in [this] relationship. And so a person's spirituality is to be constantly aware of God's presence and be responding to that." Elsewhere Jane's statement is also indicative of how these respondent's tended to utilize the metaphor of relationship to describe their spirituality. Jane (p. 6) stated, "...the sense of relationship to a much greater power. An ultimate power.... so a specific linking up with... God and being in a relationship." Furthermore, some (5) respondent's stated that this relationship was like a "gift" from a "loving, merciful, forgiving Father." Others also referred to a "prayerful dialogue" that they engaged in with God that they compared to the "communication" that takes place within other relationships.

**Property # 3 and Dimensions: A Transformative Experience**

Most (9) also stated that this experience was pervasive and transformative in nature: meaning that their experience of the Divine tended to profoundly impact the manner in which these respondent's "viewed themselves," "their neighbor," and "all of creation." Specifically, most respondents stated that their spiritual experiences with the Divine had (a) functioned to increase their awareness of life around them from "a self-centered perspective" to a more "holistic perspective," (b) strengthened their connection with their neighbor and assisted them in discerning how a relationship with neighbor is crucial to assisting them "in becoming all that they were created to be" (Maria, p. 21), and (c) sensitized and broadened their perception "of the holiness of all of creation" (Bill, p.17) and their respective place in the universe. For example, while offering his interpretations of the term spirituality Peter stated:
my core experience... and my core belief ... would simply be that I have experience [of God], and I believe that God changes... changes a person.... He in His mysterious way changes people, and I don’t have an explanation for that. I feel that on my part. (p. 11)

Elsewhere Bill would also state:

But at the same time, yes, I think there's a real connection, a connectedness, if I may use that term, that does very much involve the Divine, but it involves my growth, my response to needs and opportunities as I see.... I see this on a very long spectrum here, and I think that's a changing spectrum. My response to the stimuli that I see around me is a changing response. And I hope -- and this is a hope -- that it's getting to hearing the world's needs and somehow responding to them; because then I would consider that as some sort of reasonable interpretation of the Gospel, to go and serve. (p. 17)

In succinct terms then, descriptors and catch phrases such as “increased awareness,” “empathy for neighbor,” “man’s quest for wholeness,” “having my eyes opened,” and “acquiring a God’s eye view of the world” all serve to reinforce the above quotes and attest to the pervasive and transformative nature of this spiritual relationship that the respondents in this study were describing.

**Property #4 and Dimensions: One’s Personal Role in this Process**

Most respondents (8) also described (a) the part they personally felt they played within this process, and (b) the role that certain predicted and unpredicted circumstances serve to play in their efforts to become spiritual. Specifically, remarks
made to describe the role that these respondent’s perceived they had in this relationship included descriptors such as “personal discipline,” “faith,” “daily devotions,” “practicing prayer,” “continual response,” “persistence,” “priorities,” etc. In each of these instances, when respondents utilized these terms they appeared to be trying to accentuate and describe the importance of being committed and faithful to “a specific process” or “specific spiritual exercises” or specific “God given doctrines” that are embodied in their Orthodox and Lutheran Christian traditions and appeared to facilitate their spirituality. The following statement made to this effect by Paul will function to illustrate this point. While talking about being disciplined and committed to certain spiritual exercises and devotions from his religious and spiritual tradition Paul stated:

I have come to learn and believe that we need to do certain things in our lives every day. Spiritual or otherwise. It eventually pays off for our peace of mind.... I know I need to do them in order that [my spirituality will] be what it is supposed to be. (p. 2)

Elsewhere others (6) also tended to refer to (a) significant other’s spiritual examples, (b) certain uncanny experiences “or life changing revelations” that they had, had during a crisis, (c) specific cohort experiences such as World War II and the Great Depression and how these affected their spirituality, (d) the existential realization of their own morality, and how that knowledge has affected their spirituality, and (e) the death of loved one and how the loss of a particularly close relative had affected their spirituality. The following example, though not inclusive of all the points made above,
will hopefully serve to illustrate how life’s predictable and unpredictable circumstances seemed to impact the spirituality of those who participated in this study.

I thought and still do feel God’s love. And I feel that it is really powerful love that is with me beyond everything including the grave. And I have always had a fascination for death too. So the two are kind of linked, and I really believe passionately in eternal life. Whatever that is.... That God loves us beyond the grave. And it is not that I had any trauma as a child or anything like that. My grandmother died when I was five and that was a formative experience even though I didn’t go to the funeral or anything. It happened in Germany. It was very important to me to know, and to feel that there is a power beyond the grave, and there is life everlasting. There is life beyond this life. And that tragedies, even tragedies can be redeemed and are redeemed. (Jane, p. 9)

Subcategory #4: Religion and Spirituality: Their Interconnectedness

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<td>overlap</td>
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synergy (10)

they function holistically (10)
assist in incorporating the mundane into the spiritual (8)
both create structure (10)
commitment to forms lead to Divine (10)

spirituality develops
religious framework (10)
dialectic (10)

similarities (10)
both lead to God (10)
both create structure and a relationship with the Divine (10)
both involve the senses (10)
both provide a response to life (10)
both help one serve neighbor (10)
both help a religious person communicate with God (10)
both assist in helping one look at life through God’s eyes (10)

Properties #1/#2 and Dimensions: Differences in Religion and Spirituality

Generally speaking, most (8) respondents in this study viewed religion and spirituality as two distinct experiences. For example, as indicated in category two termed “Religious Lived Experiences” most respondents viewed religion as (a) providing a tangible, external structure which was replete with numerous rituals and doctrines, and (b) an experience that is inherently corporate and social in character.
Conversely, as suggested in category three termed “Lived Experience of the Term Spirituality,” spirituality typically was described with less tangible, more nebulous, metaphors and terminology which generally described a more esoteric, personal experience with the Divine. Does this mean, therefore, that we should conclude that respondents in this study inherently viewed these two experiences in dichotomous terms? According to the descriptions and interpretations offered by those who participated in this study, the answer to this question is an emphatic and unequivocal, no.

**Property #3 and Dimensions: Interconnectedness/Interdependence**

During my interviews with those who participated in this study it became increasingly apparent that these religious people did not view the terms religion and spirituality in dichotomies terms, but instead perceived these two experiences as being intrinsically ”interconnected” and “interdependent” with one another. Tim’s (p. 17) succinct statement is typical of what all respondents stated regarding this latter point: “I wouldn't say [these terms are] synonymous. I would say that they are interdependent and interconnected.” This section will thus attempt to (a) describe this interconnectedness as perceived by the respondents who participated in this study, and (b) offer examples to illustrate how these respondents tended to conceptualize the manner in which these two terms functioned to facilitate a personal connection with the Divine.
Properties #4/#5 and Dimensions: A Synergy/Dialectic

All (10) respondents in this study agreed that religion and spirituality “work together” and are “interrelated” (Elaine, p. 18). Observations and descriptions such as “they go hand in hand” (Maria, p. 17), “there is a distinction, but there is also an overlap” (Jane, p.4), “they are interconnected and interrelated” (Nancy, p. 19), “they are intertwined” (Donna, p. 19), and “there is a dialectic [between these experiences]” (Nick, p. 30) were repeatedly utilized to assist these respondents in their efforts to describe and conceptualize the manner in which these terms are both viewed and experienced. To be even more specific, these and other similar descriptions and observations indicate, that respondents in this study were inclined to perceive an “interconnectedness” and “interdependence” between these two experiences which was also often couched in synergistic terms. Moreover, it was this synergistic dynamic between these two experiences that invariably facilitated a connection with the Transcendent. Maria’s comments (characteristic of numerous other comments) at this juncture serve to illustrate the perceived synergistic relationship between these two experiences. While discussing her religious and spiritual experiences Maria stated:

Yes. As an Orthodox Christian, I think all of the [religious] structure... the liturgical life, the cycle [of services and religious feast and fast days]... affect [my spirituality]. Now we’re going to be entering into a fasting season. It does affect... I find that now I’ll probably ‘become a little more spiritual, a little more religious,’ because the Church is providing me an opportunity to attend those services, to hear more of those beautiful prayers to kind of call me on, call me
back. So [my religious orientation] does affect my spirituality and [both lead me to a relationship with God]. (p. 13)

Property #7 and Dimensions: Similarities Between Religion and Spirituality

In addition to the “interconnectedness,” “interdependence,” and synergistic relationship that these respondents perceived between these two terms, when given the opportunity to discuss the similarities between these two experiences most (9) respondents appeared to suggest that these two experiences were more alike than dissimilar. For example, when asked to describe the extent that these two experiences were similar, Jane succinctly stated: “I would say 80-90 percent.” Elsewhere Bill also employed the following example to make a similar point:

...if you could visualize two circles that are overlapping up here on the wall, if I draw two imaginary circles on the wall and they're overlapping quite extensively - one circle I'd call "religion," and the other I would call "spirituality," ... a great overlap [would exist between the two]. (p. 23)

Furthermore, these two responses were typical of what most (8) respondents stated.

Coupled with these latter points, it should also be stated that a few (2) respondents appeared to perceive these two experiences as being purely synonymous in nature, and thus found several of my questions (that discussed the terms religion and spirituality separately) somewhat irrelevant to their lived experiences. For example, during my interview with Nick (p. 17) he begrudgingly offered the following information as I probed to discern if he perceived any differences or similarities between the terms religion and spirituality:
...if we wanted to bifurcate, religion is that thing that we put into place which is a search for the Divine, and spirituality is that we finally come across it and we're responding. But I wouldn't [necessarily express myself in these terms].

Elsewhere Peter also seemed to find some of my questions (that tended to dichotomize religion and spirituality) inappropriate and inapplicable to his lived experiences of these terms. As such, at a certain juncture during our interview he stated the following: "Well, once again I would have to say I view it [spirituality] as sort of synonymous with the word religion. I don't try to make a distinction between the two [i.e., religion and spirituality].... I wouldn't compartmentalize [them] (p. 9)...."

As the interview process progressed, it should also be noted that I probed subsequent respondents to explore this apparent anomaly. Moreover, a few (3) subsequent respondents also made similar observations and preferred to view these terms synonymously. When probed further, however, these same respondents appeared to suggest that religion and spirituality are synonymous experiences when they lead a religious person to "a connection with the Transcendent." Conversely, when religious behavior is more concerned with the "mundane" and "political," it is at these times when the terms can and are construed as different. In this instant Maria's (p. 19) observations serve to illustrate some of these latter points: "in the sense where they start worshipping the externals of the faith... instead of the spiritual, deep understanding [of the faith]." Elsewhere Jane's comments also serve to reinforce some of these latter points:
... there is a lot of mundane things that I need to pay attention to and take care of. I know that a lot of my ... a serious chunk of my time is spent not in spiritual realm, but in the practical and physical realm. And while I can still think of those things as being religious, I don't think of those things as being spiritual. I am thinking of child care.... Child care and the house work... and thinking about decorating the house and money matters and all that kind of stuff which they are religious issues but they are not... spiritual issues. (p. 3)

Subcategory #5: Implications for Psychotherapists

All (10) respondents in this study felt that the inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns in the therapeutic process was essential. Additionally, all respondents stated that they would look for a therapist who was favorably inclined to including and respecting religious and spiritual concerns. Some (4) respondents also suggested that a religiously oriented therapist might be better suited to meeting their therapeutic needs for the following reasons. First, several (3) respondents speculated that there might be a better fit between themselves and a religious therapist who was familiar with their background. In these instances respondents essentially felt that the quality of therapy would be positively impacted by a therapist with a similar religious and spiritual perspective. Elaine's comment in this regard is indicative of these type of observations. While discussing her preference for a therapist with a religious background she made the following observation, "Because... there is more depth, there is more meaning, otherwise things get pretty superficial if you are relying on just a human view point (p. 20)." Several (2) others also felt that therapists without a religious and spiritual
orientation might be more prone (a) to disrespect a religious person's religious and spiritual orientation, and (b) inadvertently impose their views on the client system.

Nick's concerns and observations regarding this potential threat exemplifies this latter point:

So the mind, the soul, is like a vacuum, and it abhors emptiness; and so something is going to get sucked in to fill that void. And oftentimes I think... there's no thought given about what you're going to replace it with. And I understand the ethical problems for psychotherapists, because the temptation, of course, [is to fill this void with a therapist's views]. (p 23)

Another reason cited to explain why religious people might seek out a religiously oriented therapist was connected to their concern that therapy with a "secular therapist" might only provide "temporary relief" (Paul p. 23). To be more specific, a few (2) participants stated that solutions made during therapy which do not include Divine intercession and Divine input might be "incomplete and temporary in nature" (Elaine, 20). And finally, another reason given by these respondents to justify their preference for a religious oriented therapist was connected to a belief that religious oriented therapists might be of more assistance to them in their efforts to reconnect with God's grace. Elaine's comment regarding this latter point is indicative of this perception:

because I would hope that they [psychotherapists] could help me draw on something [i.e., my sense of spirituality] if I am at a loss.... Because that is the way I grew up. Because then there is something beyond all of this nonsense
today, you know there has to be something beyond that... and if that will help me cope... and I believe it will, and it is real, then why not have that kind of assistance? (pp. 21-22)

Though a few (3) respondents indicated that they would prefer religiously oriented therapists, most (7) were not as concerned with their therapist’s religious orientations, as they were with his/her respect for a client system’s religiosity and spirituality. Moreover, some (3) respondents even suggested that they were leery of those therapist’s who identified themselves as “Christian Counselors.” The following comments made by Jane serve to illustrate this latter concern:

If the person [therapist] is not a believer [it does not make a difference], as long as they have a respect for [religion and spirituality].... That is kind of interesting because there are these Christian therapists which I probably [would] actually stay away from. Why would I stay away from them? Because I see someone who labels themselves as a ‘Christian therapist’ as more on a religion side and... maybe not wanting to ask every single question that could be asked. (p. 18)

Respondents (7) who desired that their therapist include religious and spiritual concerns into the therapeutic process offered the following additional observations. First, all (10) respondents felt that the inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns (where applicable) into the therapeutic process would assist therapists in their efforts to comprehend a client’s world view. The following two quotations illustrate this latter point. Commenting on the importance of including religion and spirituality in therapy, Peter stated:
If I were to come to you for therapy and if you wanted to know me then you would have to know these things that you have already asked [or how I feel about religion and spirituality]. Because they are who I am. Obviously you would need to know much more, but you would need to know these things [also]. (p. 14)

Elsewhere Nancy also stated:

I think that if a person comes to a therapist with problems... it would seem to me that the therapist needs to know as much about that person as possible. I know that therapists go into the family of origin and then the marital status and all those different components of a person's life that make up his person, and what's happening now, or what the problem is. I would think that a therapist needs to know if this person is a person of faith and how this person views the world. (p. 20)

Second, some (5) respondents in this study also theorized that if therapists included religious and spiritual concerns into therapy with religious client systems, then these types of therapists would also likely be more capable of assisting religious people in their efforts to reconnect with family and society. For example, when Bill was asked how he perceived therapy could help religious people he made the following comment:

I want my life to have meaning in terms of others. I think that's part of my mission. And I just think that out of that religious spiritual environment comes an understanding of people's needs.... Then the challenge [during therapy] is,... how do I respond? (p. 28)
In this case, Bill was alluding to certain positive impacts that his religion and spirituality have on his perspective of family and neighbor. Elsewhere, Jane also made a similar observation:

I think therapy is about helping people to reestablish some of those connections. In families and with society... and I believe that God is the author of connections and so, in an alternate sense, God is on the side of therapy- of good therapy... because it is God's will that families function as families,... and that society functions as a society and takes care of the broken... and creates new things. (pp. 16-17)

Third, most (7) respondents in this study also felt as if they might be “more respected” by therapists who chose to include religious and spiritual concerns into the therapeutic process. These respondents tended to firmly believe that religion and spirituality functioned to profoundly influence who they were as people. As such, if their religiosity and spirituality were disregarded they imagined that they might feel “disrespected.” Fourth, some (5) respondents in this study also supposed that therapists who were inclined to include religious and spiritual concerns during therapy might (a) facilitate the joining process with religious clients, and (b) acquire more confidence in their therapist as a result of his/her receptivity to this dimension of their lives. For example, while commenting on therapists disinterest in religious and spiritual concerns, Peter stated:

I would think that... my confidence in him would not be as great because I wouldn’t feel that he had done a complete job... trying to understand who I was.
I would feel a little bit uneasy about his diagnosis maybe... or his whatever procedure he would try to give to me. Or even if it involved medication,... I would feel a little bit reluctant that he had the complete picture. (p. 14)

Fifth, some (5) respondents also felt that therapists who failed to include religious and spiritual concerns into therapy “might miss some great opportunity for counseling” (Bill, p.32). Sixth, a few (3) also supposed that a therapists’ curiosity in how religion and spirituality impact a given client’s distress might serve to “enrich” his/her questions. Seventh, others (6) also postulated that therapists who were interested in religion and spirituality might inadvertently assist religious persons in their efforts to utilize all their available resources during a particular stressful time. Maria’s following observations illustrate this latter point.

...for me, [my] understanding [of how religion and spirituality can help is essential], whether I’m having marital problems or whatever, being in touch with that part of me will probably have a tremendous influence in what's going to transpire in my marriage or in my coming to terms with whatever the problems are. (p. 22)

Eighth, some (4) also pointed out that therapist’s working with individuals, marriages and families might assist their clients in their efforts to resolve systemic conflict. Nancy’s comments serve to exemplify this latter point.

It's an assistance to the person. It's a major strength. If [religion and spirituality is] an important component in a person's life or in a family's life, it's a major
strength that could be tapped into to help that person heal or that situation heal, whatever. (p. 21)

Ninth, several (3) respondents also stated that the inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns might also function to enrich therapy by including a dimension of many people's lived experiences that is often ignored. In this instance, Nick's following comments illustrate this latter point:

I think that therapy has come a long way in the past even ten years... so a lot of what I say is dated. So there is a fundamental, at the very least agnostic if not downright atheistic, vent to psychotherapy, and to even a lot of the social scientific stuff. And it's kind of funny. Even in, let's say, the...political science stuff, religion was not treated at all. And what we've come to see is that religion is probably the most political and divisive force out there, and no one has ever talked about it. And I think that same thing is true internally or personally, that it's an incredibly important piece. And most psychotherapists are theologically illiterate.... (p. 20)

Finally, all (10) respondents in this study stated that therapy that did not include a religious client’s religiosity and spirituality would likely be tantamount to “bad therapy” for all the reasons mentioned above.
CHAPTER SEVEN. A RICH DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANT'S PERCEPTIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Religious participants perceptions and lived experiences of the terms religion and spirituality were similarly impacted by their Lutheran or Orthodox Christian religious tradition. Moreover, when they attempted to discuss religion and spirituality in generic terms, they often either became frustrated or unable to offer detailed information. Furthermore, throughout these interviews respondents in this study described their religious and spiritual lived experiences and perceptions in dynamic, developmental terms. They further stated that their baptism, significant others, personal tragedy, death, the church community, religious education, corporate worship, personal participation and personal commitment all appeared to influence this developmental process.

When asked to define the term religion, respondent’s observations and interpretations appeared to be as follows. First, religious behavior is “innate” and was frequently compared to a natural [biological] response. Second, this innate, religious response was also likened to a gift from a loving God. Third, religion functions to connect the individual to something bigger than himself, be that God, church, society or the universe. Fourth, respondents also stated that everyone has a capacity to be religious, but that some people are manifestly more religious than others. Fifth, religion also impacts moral development, and by extension, religious people’s behavior. Sixth, religion also functions to facilitate a dialogue with the Divine whose
consequences (a) facilitates a religious person’s search for God, and (b) profoundly influences religious people’s relationship with the Divine. Seventh, religion is transformative in nature or functions to change the manner in which religious people view both themselves and the world around them. Eighth, religion can not truly be understood unless one is religious. There is thus a part of religion that is esoteric in nature, is shrouded in mystery, and is an experience that is largely unavailable to the nonbeliever. Ninth, being truly religious implies doing more than practicing the forms in a perfunctory manner. A truly religious person seeks to experience the “spirit and truth” behind the forms. As such, truly religious people are constantly struggling to discover and experience the substance that is embodied within/behind the forms. When asked to define what these respondents meant by “substance,” respondents stated that the substance behind the forms was not easily defined. Beyond this initial statement they also stated, that substance was related to the quintessential essence behind religion, that being communication with the Divine. Tenth, religion also was defined as providing structure to one’s existence as well as superimposing structure on one’s efforts to become spiritual. Tenth, religion was also perceived as a means that greatly assists religious people in their efforts to commune with the Divine, and by extension, live out God-centered existences.

Spirituality was described as an awareness of God’s presence or a personal experience of God’s presence. Additionally, respondent’s perception of spirituality was also perceived as being highly dependent upon God’s love and religious peoples’ efforts to continually respond to God’s presence. Spirituality was also likened to a
relationship. Furthermore, like all healthy relationships this spiritual relationship in question was generally perceived as being highly dependent upon a reciprocal dialogue which was often referred to as one's "personal prayer life." Spirituality was also defined as an internal process which is both personal and shared in character. Specifically, spirituality was perceived as being private and personal in nature to the extent that it occurs between a believer and a personal God; it is shared to the extent that other believers also experience the same God and share a similar relationship with Him. It is also personal because of Christ's role: Christ personifies God and functions like a bridge to God that makes the Divine accessible.

Another dimension of this spiritual relationship is the act of searching. To be more specific, respondents in this study described a continual search that appeared to be taking place between themselves and God. In these instances it appeared that respondents were referring to a dynamic, developmental process that continues to grow in depth and density as both God and believer continue this search. Respondents in this study also appeared to state that this spiritual experience with the Divine has functioned to profoundly affect the manner in which they viewed themselves, and the world around them. Spirituality was also described as positively and inextricably affecting their relationship with their neighbor. In succinct terms, respondents' spirituality appeared to alter their tendency to view their neighbor as an object or thing that can be controlled and manipulated for their own self interest; spirituality was described as functioning to transform their view of neighbor from that of an
impersonal object to that of a child of God and a means through which they could know God and communicate with the Divine.

A commitment to religious structures, as well as a commitment to practicing one's Orthodox Faith or Lutheran Faith also appeared to facilitate participants' spirituality. Specifically, respondents appeared to suggest that in their efforts to live a religious lifestyle (one which they were constantly involved in an effort to integrate form with substance) these religious strivings functioned to enhance and intensify their spirituality. To be even more specific, respondents appeared to suggest that within the nexus where one is being religious, or seeking to understand the substance behind the forms, one experiences the presence of God, communes with the Divine, is touched by God's grace and is changed into that which he/she was created to be i.e., Christ like or god like. Spirituality was thus understood as an experience that flows directly from God's love as well as humankind's innate desire to commune with God. There was also a profound synergy perceived between a religious persons' religious participation and his/her spirituality. Furthermore, to discuss one experience in isolation of the other was viewed as a reductionistic approach that would likely lead to an incomplete understanding of a religious person's lived experiences of the concepts religion and spirituality.

As applied to therapy, the following observations and interpretations were offered. First, it is a great mistake for therapists to discount the spiritual aspect of a person's life when seeking to work with religious people. Moreover such an approach was likened to bad therapy. Second, because of the political nature of religion, religion
may well be connected to pathological behavior by many social scientists and psychotherapists. Third, dismissing religion and spirituality during therapy is tantamount to ignoring certain central contextual cues in religious people's lives. Fourth, an exclusion of religious and spiritual concerns can also affect the manner in which a therapist views religious people in general terms and religious individual, couple, or family problems. Fifth, therapists who tend to exclude religious and spiritual concerns from the therapeutic process may be more likely to impose their own values and view of life on religious clients and client systems.
CHAPTER EIGHT. DISCUSSION

Before entering into a discussion of some of the relevant findings of this study, I feel it may be useful to my readers if I couch the perceived contributions of this study in an historical and philosophical backdrop. What follows is a brief historical overview of God and religion. It is hoped that a review, and amplification, of some of the historical points and philosophical assertions that were presented in my literature review will facilitate the reader’s efforts to follow what I have perceived to be this study’s salient findings.

A Brief Historical Overview of God and Religion

Scholars’ perceptions and attitudes toward religion and God have generally fluctuated over the centuries (Audi, 1997; Flew, 1994; Hamilton, 1995; Plantinga, 1974; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). Furthermore, at the risk of over-generalizing these variations in perception, my readings have led me to conclude that most of these changes can be linked to the paradigmatic shifts that have emerged, evolved and impacted the intellectual community over time (Audi, 1997; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Vandenberg, 1992).

If one were to acquaint oneself with the subfield of philosophy generally identified as the philosophy of religion (Audi, 1997), one would quickly discern that scholars’ perspectives of God and religion have tended to shift from a predominately theistic/theological conception of the world, to a essentially metaphysical perspective, to a scientific/positivistic view of the world, to a more postpositivistic and postmodern view of the world (Audi, 1997; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Vandenberg, 1992). Before
engaging myself directly in a discussion of what I presume to be some of the salient contributions of this study, therefore, I have determined to briefly summarize these changes, since it is my opinion that these philosophical shifts have served to profoundly retard the study of religion and social scientists' conception of God and are of salient importance to the reader in his/her efforts to understand and appreciate a discussion of my research findings.

**Theistic Stage**

With the advent of Neoplatonic thinkers/theologians such as Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas, theists/natural theologians began adopting rationalistic approaches to the study of religion and God (Alston, 1991; Audi, 1997; Flew, 1994; Florovsky, 1976; Lossky, 1976; Plantinga, 1974). Briefly, these theologians assumed God’s existence, and generally contended that because God had gifted humankind with the ability to reason, humans could utilize this God-given ability and endeavor to prove God’s existence (Audi, 1997; Flew, 1994; Hick, 1970; Plantinga, 1974). As such, numerous ontological, cosmological, teleological and moral theories were forged to legitimize God’s existence and add coherence to religious belief systems (Audi, 1997; Plantinga, 1974).

**Metaphysics**

Stimulated and inspired in part by natural theology (Audi, 1997; Plantinga, 1974), successive scholars began to evolve and develop a new lens from which to evaluate the world i.e., a metaphysical lens. Such notable thinkers as Descartes, Hume, Kant and Leibniz began to evaluate the assertions made by previous generations of natural
theologians (Audi, 1997). Moreover, some of these metaphysical thinkers (e.g.,
Decartes and Leibniz) noted inconsistencies among the earlier assertions and
arguments constructed by natural theologians, began to refine earlier arguments, and
create new arguments in an effort to further legitimize religious behavior and God's
existence (Audi, 1997; Plantinga, 1974). Others tended to question and reject natural
theologians' theories (e.g., Kant) as implausible and logically untenable, and sought to
generate new theories to justify and prove the existence of God (Audi, 1997;
Plantinga, 1974), while others (e.g., Hume) thoroughly rejected the notion of God as
untenable and illogical and condemned all religious behavior as anachronistic and
regressive in nature (Audi, 1997; Plantinga, 1974).

Science/Positivism

As theological and metaphysical world views came under increasing attack and
began to wane, a curious melding of nihilism, Darwinism, modernism, empiricism and
verificationism began to capture intellectuals' attention (Audi, 1997). Moreover, out
of this complex mix emerged a new movement known as logical positivism (Audi,
1997; Doherty et al., 1993; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). Briefly, this perspective was
based on the assertion that empiricism and objectivity were the chief means of
advancing knowledge, and "(1) that the only sound knowledge [was] grounded in
scientific observation; (2) that an idea is meaningful only if it can be verified; and (3)
that science progresses by inducing laws from observation and experimentation"
(Doherty et al., 1993, p. 5). This paradigmatic shift led to additional theories that
further argued against the implausibility of God by such notable figures as Nietzsche
and Russell (Audi, 1997; Flew, 1994; Hick 1970). Moreover, many of these assertions appear to have profoundly impacted the manner in which human scientists viewed religion and the concept of a Transcendent Being.

**Postpositivism/Postmodernism**

Recently some philosophers influenced by postmodernism have begun to re-argue the existence of God from a phenomenological and epistemological perspective (e.g., Alston, 1991; Eliade, 1969). One such philosopher of religion is William Alston (1991). In succinct terms, Alston (1991) utilizes an epistemological and phenomenological philosophical approach in his efforts to present and defend a theistic conception of the Transcendent. He asserts that a “putative direct awareness of God can provide justification for certain kinds of beliefs about God” (Alston, 1991, p. 9). He also utilizes awareness theory and argues that a component of awareness is experiential in character, and can function to explicate and justify a belief in a Transcendent Being. And finally, though postmodern philosophers like Alston (1991) have had some impact on intellectuals’ perceptions about the Transcendent, his ideas have not impacted scholars’ perceptions of God to the same degree that previous generations of philosophers of religion appear to have affected the intellectual community’s view of God and religion.

**The Consequences of This Historical Process**

Despite some recent challenges to the “God is dead” hypothesis over the past two decades, therefore, I think it is fair to suggest that certain assertions made by rationalists and positivists during the 19th and early 20th centuries regarding the
sacred (i.e., that the concept of a Transcendent Being is essentially untenable and illogical) have profoundly affected the manner in which the human sciences have perceived and investigated religion and spirituality. The following examples are indicative of this latter point.

To begin, one consequence of this historical/developmental process appears to be the increased marginalization and trivialization of religion's sacred experiences, and the clear enthronement of reason and the scientific approach as the only justifiable approach to acquiring knowledge, and an accurate view of the world (Alston, 1991; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Vandenberg, 1992). A second consequence is explicated in the following statement made by Thomas and Marsh (1995, p. 4). While discussing the manner in which contemporary social scientists tend to interpret intellectual progress and human development Thomas and Marsh (1995) state:

The reigning paradigm in the social sciences has been depicted as 'evolutionary naturalism', denoting a developmental or progressive process in which individuals and societies naturally evolve to a better state. This inherent progress is unaided by God and his Divine influence.

A third consequence may be that religions beliefs and behaviors appeared to be increasingly viewed in pejorative terms during the 19th and 20th century by intellectuals, or as throwbacks to another age that essentially functioned to constrain human progress and development (Alston, 1991; Hamilton, 1995; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Vandenberg, 1992). A fourth consequence was that any conceptions of religion and the Divine were effectively divorced from scientific inquiry on the grounds that
religious beliefs and behaviors appeared to defy verification and were interpreted as illogical and untenable (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). A fifth result was that religious behaviors were frequently connected with human atrocities and human pathology, and deemed to be contributing factors to human suffering (Alston, 1991; Audi, 1997; Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). In succinct terms then, an antagonistic relationship developed between theologians and philosophers/human scientists, the remnants of which can still be clearly discerned today (Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Marsh, 1995).

From Positivism to Postpositivism/Postmodernism in the Human Sciences

As this paper has repeatedly indicated, many contemporary theorists and researchers would agree that the influence and use of a positivistic framework has been waning over the past several decades within the human sciences (Alston, 1991; Audi, 1997; Doherty et al., 1993; Kuhn, 1970; Suppe, 1977; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Thomas & Wilcox, 1987). Additionally, these same thinkers have also observed that a postpositivistic, postmodern lens appears to be replacing positivism/modernism (Alston, 1991; Audi, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Doherty et al., 1993; Kuhn, 1970; Suppe, 1977; Thomas & Marsh, 1995; Thomas & Wilcox, 1987). To be more specific, many social science researchers and theorists are now arguing that "theory precedes observation,... [and] there are no facts without theories, and that all theories are socially constructed" (Doherty et al., 1993, p. 5). Furthermore, these same thinkers have also posited that theories are not validated as a result of some appeal to an objective truth (Audi, 1997; et al., 1993; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990), but are instead
the result of a social consensus among scientists. To that end, postmodern thinkers are arguing that objectivity is seriously limited by "the social context of science, and scientific 'truth' refers to intersubjective agreement among scientists at a particular time in history" (Doherty et al., 1993, p. 5). All of which also asserts that theory and knowledge from a postmodern social science perspective is limited to the extent that it cannot be fully understood (a) outside of a given sociocultural context, (b) outside of a given value system from which it has originated, and (c) because it is self-referential in character. Additionally, another key component that is considered salient from this perspective is linked to the "discourse" that might occur within the social scientific community at any given time. Specifically, in addition to traditional scientific verification and explanation, "discourse seeks persuasion through argument rather than prediction. Its persuasiveness is based on such qualities as logical coherence, expansiveness of scope, interpretive insight, value relevance, rhetorical force, beauty, and texture of argument" (Alexander, 1988, p. 80). Thus social science conundrums and disagreements are not necessarily resolved by simply appealing to the data as positivism asserts. On the contrary, from a postmodern social science perspective there is always an appeal to what the collective thinks about nonempirical issues (Doherty et al., 1993), as well as an element of the subjective, and that both the collective and subjective are interposed within the process of theory development and any advancement of knowledge (Doherty et al., 1993).

In consequence to this postpositivitic/postmodern shift, many contemporary theorists influenced by these changes in perception have postulated that postmodern
assertions (and feminist theory) have given social scientists license to investigate human phenomena that were previously considered outside of the purview of social science: the study of religion being one such example (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Rogharr, 1990; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). Moreover, some social scientists are now pointing to a revival in religious studies in the human sciences (Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Cornwell, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990).

Is Religion a Researchable Topic?

As has thus far been stated, until recently religious phenomena were considered illogical, untenable, and nonresearchable topics precisely because religion (at least as applied to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) was based on a “God hypothesis” (to use Nietzsche’s phrase) which was considered rationally and scientifically unverifiable from a positivistic perspective. Moreover, though I would in part agree that the “God hypothesis” is a concept that is outside the scope of scientific inquiry because of its intrinsic unverifiable nature. This does not, and should not, preclude an investigation of religious behaviors and beliefs. For as statistics suggest, a decisive majority (over 70%) of our population reports engaging in religious and spiritual behavior (Kosmin & Lachman, 1995), while over 90-95% of our population consistently state that they believe in a Transcendent Being (Kosmin & Lachman, 1995; Simbro, 1996). Furthermore, statistics also indicate that religion and spirituality play an important role in how religious people view themselves, their neighbor and the world around them (Abbott, Berry & Meridith, 1990; Hansen, 1992).
Given religions' impact on religious people, therefore, I would agree with those who are arguing that the answer is not to ignore this sphere of human experience (D’Antonio & Aldous, 1983; Kelly, 1995; Randour, 1993; Thomas, 1988; Wilber, 1983), but to discern what philosophical and methodological limitations exist in human scientists' efforts to research this phenomena (Bahr & Bahr, 1996; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Sommerfeld, 1984; Thomas & Henry, 1985; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990), and to seek new ways of improving the manner in which social scientists investigate religious and spiritual behavior (Bahr & Bahr, 1996; Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Sommerfeld, 1984; Thomas & Henry, 1985; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990). For in point of fact, whether one is investigating religious behavior or some other type of human behavior, there will always be certain anomalies that will stretch and challenge human science, and human science’s theories (Thomas & Marsh, 1995). Furthermore, others have also hypothesized that there will also be that part of the human experience that may best be loosely described as spiritual in nature, and beyond the boundaries and scope of traditional scientific inquiry (Bahr & Bahr, 1996; Falhberg & Falhberg, 1991; Garrett, 1974; Pals, 1987). So it is that many contemporary thinkers are lamenting our technological society’s predilections to disregard and the subordinate those human experiences that are somehow outside of the scope of traditional positivistic inquiry (Thomas & Marsh, 1995), and are exhorting the social science community to consider ways of investigating, and better understanding, certain spheres of human experience that have previously been dismissed and ignored.
This study has been influenced by such writers and has sought to contribute to the renewed interest that some social scientists have shown in the areas of religion and spirituality. By adopting a grounded theory approach which was strongly influenced by postmodern philosophical assertions and perceptions to research, I have sought to define how religious people perceive and experience the terms religion and spirituality. In doing so it was my hope that such an approach would function to (a) assist future researchers in their efforts to investigate religious and spiritual behavior, and (b) serve to also positively inform the work that therapists do with religious client systems. Having offered all of this information by way of introduction, therefore, I feel that I am now prepared to expound upon what I perceive to be some of this study’s contributions.

**This Study’s Perceived Contributions for the Study of Religion**

**The Complex Nature of the Terms Religion and Spirituality**

The first valuable benefit of this research may be in its efforts to illustrate the complexity of the terms religion and spirituality. Specifically, on the strength of respondent’s lived experiences, this study generated some of the components of a grounded theory of religious people’s perceptions of the terms religion and spirituality which included four interrelated subcategories, 27 interrelated properties or attributes of the four subcategories in this study, and 167 interrelated dimensions or attributes of the 27 properties that were also brought to light in this study. All of which suggests that researchers who investigate religious populations or choose to include religious variables in their study should be aware of the multifaceted character of these two
concepts, and not include them as variables until they have carefully operationalized the manner in which they are using these terms.

**Respondent’s Lived Experiences of Religion**

Second, respondent’s descriptions and interpretations pointed to a dimension of their religious lived experiences and perceptions that had a definite developmental character. Specifically, this study functioned to support what other researchers and theorists have observed regarding the lack of attention given to respondents’ level of religious development, age affects, cohort affects, and the consequences of these omissions.

With regards to respondents’ level of religious development, researchers have recently suggested that subject’s/respondent’s level of religiosity can be conceptualized on a continuum that varies from low to high (Donahue, 1989; Thomas, 1988). As such, when selecting religious respondents for a given study, researchers should seek to discern the level of their subject’s/respondent’s religiosity. Moreover, failure to account for this type of variability will affect a study’s trustworthiness (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). To illustrate this point, I firmly believe that if I had not purposively selected respondent’s for this study who considered themselves to have a moderate to high level of religiosity and spirituality, and had selected respondents with self-described low to moderate levels of religiosity and spirituality, my results would have been moderately to greatly different.

With regards to age and cohort affects, this study also reaffirmed what other researchers have tended to state about age and cohort affects (Thomas, 1988), and
how these factors tend to play a prominent role in the manner in which religious
people experience the terms religion and spirituality (Koenig, Moberg & Kvale, 1988;
Thomas, 1988). For example, respondent’s in this study who were between 30–40
years of age were less likely to be affected by the knowledge that they will die one day.
As such, these respondents did not generally tend to utilize religion as a way to assist
them in processing this fact, but utilized religion in slightly different ways. Conversely,
respondent’s located in the later stages of the life cycle (45–70 years of age) tended to
be more cognizant of life’s finite nature, and generally reported utilizing religion to
help them process and accept their death. Additionally, older respondents identified the
Great Depression and World War II as two chief historical factors that had
contributed to their religious development, while younger respondents pointed to Viet
Nam and the cultural revolution during the sixties. In each of these two cases,
respondents view of religion appeared to be affected in a slightly different manner as a
result of these and other dissimilar cohort affects. For instance, respondents who were
children of the sixties tended to feel freer to question their church’s positions on some
ethical issues, whereas older respondent’s appeared to be less inclined to consider this
as an option.

To summarize, on the basis of the developmental nature of religion (as reported
by respondent’s in this study) it would seem that researchers interested in including
religious variables in their studies must be cognizant of the developmental nature of
this experience and take it into account when drawing conclusions from their findings.
To be more specific, by not controlling for level of religiosity, age, and cohort affects a
research study's trustworthiness could be called into question. Additionally, researchers utilizing assessment tools that tend to ignore the developmental character of religious peoples' religious and spiritual experiences, may be utilizing insufficient instruments to measure their subject's/respondent's level of religiosity and the affect that religion has on their respondents' behavior.

**Religious People's Perceptions of Religion vis-à-vis Human Scientists**

**Perceptions**

Perhaps the next salient point that could be made as a result of the information gleaned from this study is that religious people's lived experiences of religion were not radically different from what social scientists have posed about religion, but were nonetheless sufficiently different to warrant some attention and comparison. What follows are some of the juxtapositions that appeared to exist between my respondent's perceptions of religion and what many social scientists have generally stated about religion over the past hundred years.

As Chapters Two, Three and Four indicated, many prominent social scientists have tended to suggest that religious behavior is essentially a social construction (Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Thomas & Marsh, 1995). Regarding this point, those who participated in this study held a different position. Specifically, though respondent's in this study adhered to the notion that religion was a social construction, they also strongly argued that religion is the result of Divine Revelation and Divine inspiration.
Religion's origins and development was not exclusively traced back to humankind's creativity and consensual proclivities. Religious participants in this study stated that religion is as much a product of humanity's innate need to communicate with the Divine, as it is the result of human construction. Furthermore, as respondents offered additional insights and observations, they tended to describe this construction process in synergistic terms, where both a Transcendent, benevolent Entity, and people's innate need for a connection with this Transcendent Entity, have functioned to co-create their religious traditions.

Many prominent social scientists have also tended to view religion as having a decidedly social/corporate nature (Hamilton, 1995). They have also argued that this corporate experience tended to function as a kind of bonding agent to keep "the group" together (Hamilton, 1995). Though respondents in this study did not necessarily disagree with this latter observation, a number of respondents also pointed to a religious experience that had an inherently individualistic dimension. To be more specific, many respondents in this study tended to state that though religious rituals and rites were inherently corporate, there was also a part of their participation in these religious corporate experiences that was inherently individual in character by virtue of each individual's response to the rituals, rites, symbols, sacraments, sermons, etc. that were being personally experienced at a given time during the calendar year. Many respondents in this study, thus, stated that though they believed that corporate religious worship functioned to keep families, church communities, and society together, they also tended to emphasize how corporate worship, not only molded an
aggregate's conscious, but also facilitated each individual's religious and spiritual
development by facilitating an individual connection/communion with God.

Many social scientists have also observed that religious behavior tends to impact
their adherents' moral development (Hamilton, 1995). What social scientists have,
however, not necessarily agreed upon is how and why this occurs. Some theorists
have, for example, hypothesized that social pressure, guilt, and the immanent threat of
being ostracized from the group have functioned to ensure that adherent's ascribe to a
certain moral code (Hamilton, 1995). While others have suggested that the groups'
concept of an all powerful Divine Entity (who was quick to seek retribution for
adherent's sins) has also contributed to adherent's willingness to embrace a certain
code of ethics and a moral standard (Hamilton, 1995).

Once again, though respondents in this study did not necessarily disagree with
these latter points, respondents in this study tended to essentially describe and interpret
their moral development in different terms. Specifically, respondents did not view
moral adherence, and their moral development in legalistic, punitive terms, but instead
tended to perceive their moral development as being profoundly connected to a loving
"Father" who had graciously personified (through Jesus Christ, the prophets, saints,
etc.) and revealed (through the Jesus Christ, the prophets, saints etc.) a set of
definitive moral standards to humankind. As a result, respondent's in this study did not
generally describe or perceive their moral development as something that had been
thrust upon them by social coercion or Divine threat; respondents observations and
interpretations of their moral development were essentially connected to a loving Deity
who cared about individuals and society. Respondents also stated that as much and as far as they embraced these God-given ethical and moral standards in the spirit described above, so also would they and society generally benefit and prosper.

Social scientists have also posited that religion affects people’s perception of the world (Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995). Moreover, though social scientists have tended to speak in both positive and negative terms about religion’s impact on individuals perception and, by extension, on society’s perceptions, many have also concluded that theistic and religious world views are responsible for creating violence and harm, as well as peace and harmony (Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995).

With regards to this latter point, respondents in this study generally disagreed with this latter statement and tended to understand the atrocities that have been historically connected with religious behavior as being overgeneralized and unfairly labeled “religious.” To be more specific, several respondents implied that many people have acted under the guise of religion, but were in fact using religion as a subterfuge to disseminate their politics. They further asserted that though religious people may be directly responsible for committing many heinous crimes, these crimes were primarily the result of religious peoples’ failure to comprehend the quintessence of their religious faith, and not the direct result of religion.

Many social scientists have also observed that religion provides religious people with stability, security, and meaning (Hamilton, 1995; Kelly, 1995). Moreover, many of these same thinkers have also tended to state that because life is unpredictable and precarious, people have constructed religious belief systems to help them reduce their
collective and individual anxiety, and assist them in superimposing a sense of meaning, security, and stability upon their lives (Hamilton 1995; Kelly, 1995).

Respondents in this study did not necessarily tend to offer these type of interpretations and observations. Specifically, respondents’ comments generally related back to a loving, merciful, forgiving Deity who had Divinely revealed and inspired the main components of their religious tradition. They also tended to state that one of the residual effects of being religious is that a religious adherent will be given access to Divine truth, and by extension, to Divine purpose and direction. From the comments made by respondents in this study, therefore, it appears that these religious people were not religious in an effort to acquire direction, meaning, and emotional stability. Instead, these respondents tended to view the meaning, stability, and direction received through their religious participation as a residual effect, rather than as ends in themselves.

**Respondent’s Lived Spiritual Experiences**

Because of the esoteric nature of spirituality, as well as social sciences’ inability to measure and verify this experience, social scientists have (with some notable exceptions, e.g., Jung, James) been content to either discount or ignore spiritual experiences. With the advent of postmodern thinking, however, some social scientists have begun exploring and conceptualizing ways to study this phenomena (Bahr, & Bahr, 1996; Bergin, 1980; Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1991; Goldsmith, 1989; Randour, 1993; Schlegel, 1982; Thomas & Roghaar, 1990). Furthermore, though many of these same thinkers have posited that it may be impossible to quantify this experience
because of its esoteric nature, some theorists have proposed some tentative ways of examining this experience. One example proposed is to utilize a epistemological and phenomenological approach (Alston, 1991; Eliade, 1969; Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1991).

Briefly, this approach has been influenced by transcendental philosophy and “consists in an analysis and description of consciousness... [and is] the study of essences” (Audi, 1997, p. 578). Further this approach purports “to place essences back into existence” (Audi, 1997, p. 578). Phenomenology is also an attempt “to give a direct description to our experience as it is in itself without taking into account its psychological origin and its causal explanation” (Audi, 1997, p. 578). Given these above assertions, I utilized this approach as a way to explore this experience, as well as the interrelationships that might exist between religion and spirituality.

A Personal and Esoteric Experience

First and foremost, respondent’s in this study described their spiritual experiences in personal, esoteric terms. They further stated that in its essence spirituality from a Lutheran and Orthodox Christian perspective was essentially perceived as a personal experience with the Divine. Respondents in this study also tended to have difficulty articulating this experience, and often sought to explicate their difficulties by alluding to the intrinsic transcendental nature of this experience. Moreover, the use of concepts such as “invisible,... inaccessible to analytic exposition,... internal,... eternal,... and mystery” etc. served to assist them in their efforts to define this experience. To be more specific, these concepts functioned to help them move their story forward, and reduce some of their frustration as they attempted to add clarity and coherence to
what they were describing and experienced. Several also stated that they believed that
their efforts to define and explain this experience might be especially difficult if they
were attempting to explicate this experience to a non-believer. In succinct terms,
several respondents stated that they did not believe that this experience could be
thoroughly comprehended by those who were not God-fearing. Moreover, several
respondents stated that when they had previously attempted to explain this experience
to non-believers they had experienced a great deal of distress and difficulty.

Respondents also tended to liken their spiritual experience with God in relational
terms. To be more specific, respondents tended to utilize such terms and concepts as
"personal, dialogue with God, Father, personal God" etc. in their efforts to define and
clarify their spiritual experiences. It could thus be stated that this familiar relational
metaphor allowed these respondents to describe and comprehend an experience that is
otherwise very much inaccessible and, perhaps incomprehensible to the outsider. It
could also be posited that this metaphor permitted these respondents to encounter
"The Transcendent" in familiar, healthy, self-satisfying terms.

As respondents articulated their spiritual experiences, all respondents in this study
stated that their experiences with the Transcendent tended to also be transformative in
nature. Specifically, respondents stated that their experiences with God had functioned
to provide them with a broader perspective of their relationship with both the world
and others. They also stated that their spirituality had influenced them to reject
selfishness and many of the self-centered attitudes that pervade much of society, and to
adopt a more "God's eye view" of the world that emphasized interrelatedness and
interdependence. In these instances respondents described a view of themselves that was intimately connected to neighbor and was motivated by "the golden rule" which teaches that believers should be concerned with self and neighbor simultaneously before acting. As a result, respondents during this part of the interview process also spent time specifying how their spirituality had served as a kind of catalyst to motivate them to reach out to neighbor, and be more aware and sensitive to others needs i.e., especially the sick, indigent and helpless.

Respondents also took time to describe both God's role and their role in this process. While most described God's role as primary, they also stated that their efforts were essential to this process. Moreover, in an effort to define what their efforts looked like, many initially referred back to humankind's need to connect with God, and stated that spirituality was the act of attempting to connect with something that is greater then themselves i.e., God, neighbor and the cosmos. To that end, they also tended to utilize such terms as commitment, discipline and persistence to qualify what their role was in this process: stating repeatedly that in their efforts to become spiritual, both their part and God's part was crucial. When asked to describe what their role was in more specific terms, all respondents stated that their daily devotions, prayer life and a participation in the sacraments and other religious rituals were pivotal in their efforts to connect with God. Others also described a continuous search that takes place within their prayer life: a search that was at once typically characterized as a process of maturity whereby one experiences God to a greater and greater degree as one searches, is persistent, disciplined, and grows into an understanding of prayer.
Others also described how service to their neighbor was pivotal in their efforts to understand and experience a connection with God. In these cases these respondents tended to describe and compare service to others to personified prayer and a connection with God.

**An Interconnectedness Between These Two Experiences**

Though theorists and researchers have attempted to distinguish between the terms religion and spirituality (Bergin & Jensen, 1990; Ingersoll, 1994; Shafranke & Gorsuch, 1984), to my knowledge researchers do not appear to have examined if religion and spirituality are interdependent and interconnected experiences. This research has attempted to accomplish this objective. Specifically, religious participants in this study consistently stated that their religious experiences were profoundly tied to their spiritual experiences with God. Furthermore, participants stated that though these experiences (religious and spiritual experiences) were considered separate spheres of experience, they were not perceived as being entirely disassociated with one another. On the contrary, participants in this study repeatedly stated that these experiences were “interrelated” and “interdependent” and attested to a synergistic relationship between these two experiences.

What this observation invariably implies, therefore, is that researchers studying religious phenomena must be careful not to approach these two experiences in a totally reductionistic manner. Furthermore, despite the temptation to do so, this study appears to suggest that religious people may be experiencing religion and spirituality holistically, and any attempts to omit one or the other from consideration during a
study considering religiosity and spirituality may result in skewed and overgeneralized interpretations and findings.

**This Study’s Salient Observations**

Though naturalistic research of the type conducted in this study does not purport to discover absolute truth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), is founded on the assumption that research is self referential (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and is limited by how the reader (not the researcher) perceives the research to be useful, the following salient observations nonetheless deserve mention.

(a) This research described the multifaceted character of the terms religion and spirituality, and has argued that researchers who choose to include variables in their research that are intended to measure the affects of religiosity on human behavior should carefully operationalize the manner in which they conceptualize religious variables.

(b) Researchers interested in including religious variables in their studies should be cognizant of the developmental nature of this experience and take steps to account for the respondents’ level of religious develop, age, and cohort affects, before drawing conclusions from their findings.

(c) Researchers utilizing assessment tools that tend to ignore the developmental character of religious peoples’ religious and spiritual experiences and, the properties and dimensions of this developmental experience, may be utilizing insufficient instruments.
(d) Many social scientists have traditionally evaluated religious behavior from a “God is dead” or “God is irrelevant” perspective. To that end, when comparing what many social scientists have posited about religion with how religious people both perceive and experience religion, subtle, yet fundamental differences exist. For example, whereas many social scientists posit that religion is a human construction that serves to assuage anxiety, enhance society’s cohesiveness and facilitate moral behavior, religious people appear to believe that religion is essentially the result of a co-construction process that has occurred between God and humanity, meets humanity’s innate need to connect with the Divine, and is largely the result of God’s love for humankind.

(e) It may well be that certain theoretical lenses influenced by modernism and positivism may be inadequate in capturing the subtitles that exist within religious people’s lived experiences of religion and spirituality. Moreover, it may also be that postmodern approaches may be more conducive to assisting human scientists in their efforts to investigate religious and spiritual phenomena.

(f) According to the results of this study, researchers who choose to investigate religiosity should take care not to interpret their data through their own lens, irrespective of religious people’s lived experiences and perceptions. Otherwise what might likely occur is that religious behavior might be misinterpreted and misrepresented.

(g) Non-religious researchers who include religious variables in their study might also be aware that certain questions may not necessarily fit within a theistic paradigm,
and be somehow inapplicable to religious populations because of a given researcher's atheistic/agnostic, reductionistic approach to an investigation of religious respondents.

(h) Religious people may also be experiencing religion and spirituality in a holistic manner. Thus, any attempts by researchers to omit either religion or spirituality from consideration in some studies may result in skewed and overgeneralized interpretations.

(i) Because religion and spiritual experiences appear to be interdependent and interconnected to one another, a thorough understanding of sacred experiences appears to exceed the limitations of traditional methods of analyses which tend to be reductionistic in character, depend on observation, insist that it is not possible to go beyond the objective world, and seek verification.

(k) Respondent's descriptions concerning religion and spirituality appear to suggest that religion was perceived as more than a set of external rules and regulations. Religion was described as an experience that embodied both a mystical component as well as theological and canonical boundaries. Moreover, though rules and regulations certainly were important components of each respondent's religious lived experience, religion was also likened to "a bonding agent" that connected them to God, their neighbor (neighbor referring to people in their social network) and their cultural and ancestral past.
Implications for Psychotherapists

Results from this study strongly suggested that the inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns in therapy could potentially be very beneficial to the therapeutic process with religious people. The following reasons represent this study's contributions regarding religion, spirituality and therapy.

First, recently therapists have become keenly aware of the subtle, yet important role that gender, ethnicity, race, and other ecological and idiosyncratic individual and family variables exert on human development and family relations. An increased sensitivity of these and other factors has arguably functioned to make therapy a more pertinent and respectful process. Similarly, results from this study suggest that therapists who work with religious clients and families should seek to discern the role that both religion and spirituality play in these clients' lives.

Second, respondents' observations and interpretations in this study also clearly indicated that religion occupied a fundamentally central role in their efforts to make sense of the world around them. An analysis of the data suggested that respondents' Lutheran and Orthodox Christian epistemology was inextricably tied to the manner in which they interpreted the world. All of which presumes that therapists who include religious and spiritual concerns (where applicable) into the therapeutic process will likely develop a deeper understanding of the religious client systems that they may have occasion to treat.

Third, results from this study suggested that religious people may generally search for a therapist who (a) is receptive to including religious and spiritual concerns in
therapy, and (b) tends to respect this important dimension of religious people’s lives. Additionally, results also suggest that therapists who do not take the time to include religious clients’ religiosity and spirituality into the therapeutic process may likely be perceived as utilizing an incomplete and inadequate therapeutic lens from which to work with religious people.

Fourth, results from this study also indicated that therapists who are inclined to include religious and spiritual concerns during therapy might facilitate the joining process with religious clients. To be more specific, numerous clinicians, writers and theorists have asserted that when therapists utilize and incorporate a client system’s language, opinions and world views into therapy, this strategy serves to facilitate a joining process between therapists and the client system. Conversely, failure in accomplishing this initial objective appears to negatively affect both the duration and quality of therapy. As such, results from this study appear to indicate that when therapists allow time for the exploration of a religious client system’s religiosity and spirituality, and seek to understand and utilize religious and spiritual concepts, (a) these approaches may prove to assist therapists in their efforts to form a more productive working relationship with religious client systems, and (b) may be more efficient and cost effective way of working with this population of people.

Fifth, it is also important to note that a few respondents in this study also reasoned that a religiously oriented therapist might be better suited to meeting their therapeutic needs. These respondents also supposed that non-religious oriented therapists might be more inclined to ignore their religious and spiritual perspective.
They further speculated that therapists without a religious and spiritual orientation might be prone to disrespect religious clients' religious and spiritual orientation and, in consequence, inadvertently impose their non-religious views and values on the client system. And finally, these respondents adhered to the notion that a religious-oriented therapist might be in a better position (by virtue of his/her religious background) to help them reconnect with God's grace: a profound source of comfort and strength for religious people.

Given these observations, one inference that might be made is that some religious people may be leery of psychotherapy, and perceive psychotherapy as being innately insensitive to religious peoples' perceptions of the world. Therapists who work with religious people might thus consider this latter assertion, and seek to explore the extent to which this might be a factor when working with religious client systems. Additionally, therapists might also evaluate the extent of their personal level of religious sensitivity to determine the extent to which they may be inadvertently insensitive to these types of client systems. Therapists might also consider how they evaluate their clients' religiosity and spirituality. Moreover, therapists who do not currently assess their client's level of religiosity and spirituality should likely consider how this omission might be impacting their work with religious people.

Results also indicated that therapists working with religious people might consider ways of respectfully investigating issues that appear to be directly or indirectly interconnected with a religious client systems' perceptions of the world. In succinct terms, results from this study appear to suggest that religious clients might
desire a form of therapy that seeks to respectfully investigate how God and religion can benefit religious people in crisis. To that end, a consideration of how religion, and the concept of a Transcendent Being, might be helpful to religious people in crisis. Furthermore, results also suggest that questions designed to discern how religion and God are potential resources to religious client systems may be welcomed by religious client systems. Finally, much of this work could be done very efficiently during an intake by utilizing questions such as the following four:

1. On a scale of one to ten, with one representing "I do not view myself as a religious person" and ten representing "I view myself as a very religious person" where would you place yourself?
2. How does religion help you?
3. On a scale of one to ten, with one representing "I do not view myself as a spiritual person," and ten representing, "I view myself as a very spiritual person," where would you place yourself?
4. How does your spirituality help you?

Additional questions such as the following few listed below could also be incorporated at other junctures in therapy: How does a belief in God help you? and How can God help you work through your problems? In each case taking a "one down position" and a "curious, not knowing" approach, that allow the client system to teach the therapist, have proven to be useful tools when working with religious client systems (Joanides, 1996; Kudlac, 1991).
Sixth, though a few respondents in this study indicated that they would prefer a religiously oriented therapist, results from this study also indicated that most religious people may not be as concerned with their therapist’s religious orientation, as much as they are with their therapist’s respect for a client system’s religiosity and spirituality. Therapists working with religious people should thus be aware that in most instances religious people may not necessarily evaluate a therapist from his/her religious orientation (though this may prove to be an important issue for discussion during an intake session with some religious clients), but will likely be evaluating their therapist on the basis of his/her level of respect for religious and spiritual belief systems.

Additionally, in close relation to this latter point, it should also be pointed out that results from this study also suggested that some religious people may be equally leery of therapist’s who identify themselves as “Christian Counselors” or “spiritual counselors,” as they are of therapists who are disinterested in a client system’s religious and spiritual concerns. In these instances, results from this study appeared to suggest that therapists who identify themselves as “Christian counselors” or “spiritual counselors” might be viewed as utilizing a narrow, myopic approach i.e., one which some religious people may discern as limited in scope and less effective.

As a result, therapists who have determined to specialize their efforts, and focus their work on religious populations, should be aware that some religious clients may initially take a negative view of psychotherapists who advertise themselves as “Christian Counselors” and “spiritual counselors” etc. On the basis of remarks made during this study, psychotherapists utilizing these and other similar identifiers, are
advise. They should spend a few moments during intake sessions addressing religious client systems' concerns about their expertise and approach. Psychotherapists who take the time to define their approach with religious client systems may arrest any latent concerns that some religious people harbor regarding "Christian Counselors' skills and therapeutic approaches.

Seventh, therapists who include religious and spiritual concerns in therapy with religious client systems might also discover that this approach might assist religious people in their efforts to reconnect with family and other social systems. Specifically, respondents who participated in this study repeatedly indicated that their religious and spiritual experiences functioned to assist them in developing a view of life that tended to value and promote an interconnectedness with their neighbor and their social environment. To that end, it could be argued that religion and spirituality are two potentially powerful resources that could assist religious people in their efforts to repair interpersonal breaches. As such, therapists who are sensitive to the potentially beneficial impact that religion and God can have on religious people's interpersonal transactions, could be helpful to religious client systems by helping them become reacquainted with the potentially positive mediating function that religion and God appear to have on interpersonal problems and interpersonal relationships.

Eighth, results from this study appear to indicate that therapists who work with self-described religious clients and families should consider a holistic approach when attempting to incorporate religion and spirituality into the therapeutic process rather than a reductionistic approach that tends to either dichotomize these terms or exclude
one or the other. A holistic approach to religion and spirituality would recognize that religious people may perceive a definite connection between these two experiences, and that religious people's spirituality may tend to flow directly from their religious commitment. Such an approach would also tend to emphasize the systemic and recursive nature between these two related experiences, as well as the impact that both experiences have on a given religious client or family's lived experience. Such an approach would allow the client and family to broach necessary religious and spiritual issues as they felt they were important to the therapeutic process. Furthermore, by adopting a more holistic approach to the terms religion and spirituality, therapists might be perceived as more respectful, therapists might obtain a broader more systemic and recursive perspective. The therapeutic conversation might also be enriched with more information, and a more accurate picture of a family's lived experience might be given the opportunity to emerge.

Ninth, results from this study also suggest that therapists who adopt an integrative or holistic view of religion and spirituality vis-à-vis a reductionistic approach, might be less apt to misdiagnose and pathologize certain behavior and behavioral patterns. By including both religious and spiritual concerns in therapy with religious clients, clinical decisions and judgments would be better informed through a broader understanding of this populations' lived experience.
CHAPTER NINE. CONCLUSIONS

My chief objective in conducting this study was to investigate the terms religion and spirituality from religious people’s lived experiences and perceptions. By adopting a qualitative methodology which emphasized Glaser and Strauss (1965) and Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) grounded theory approach, I was able to generate a thick rich description of how two groups of religious people view the terms religion and spirituality. To that end, I also sought to contribute to (a) the recent growing body of social science research that is investigating religious and spiritual phenomena, and (b) the work that some psychotherapists are doing with religious individuals and client systems.

Implications for Social Science Research

Results from this study indicated that the terms religion and spirituality are multifaceted in character. Specifically, an analysis of respondents’ observations and interpretations of the terms religion and spirituality revealed four interrelated subcategories, 27 interrelated properties or attributes of the four subcategories in this study, and 167 interrelated dimensions or attributes of the 27 properties.

Results also pointed to the developmental character of these two spheres of experience. To be more specific, results suggested that researchers should carefully scrutinize the manner in which they operational and conceptualize religious variables in their respective studies. Results also suggested that researchers must be cognizant of their respondents’ age, level of religiosity, and cohort affects. Research that is not reflective of the developmental character of religion and spirituality is likely to produce
incomplete and skewed results. To that end, researchers investigating religion and spirituality may consider if religion and spirituality are perceived and utilized differently by the elderly than by people who are located at other earlier nodal stages in the life cycle. Furthermore, if elderly do utilize religion differently than younger people, have cohort affects impacted their view and use of religion and spirituality vis-à-vis younger people. Results also suggested that researchers utilizing assessment tools should ensure that their instruments account for the multifaceted and developmental nature of the terms religion and spirituality.

Results also juxtaposed the manner in which religious people and social scientists view religion and spirituality. When comparing how 19th and 20th century social scientists have largely tended to view religion and spirituality, with how participants in this study perceived the terms, there appeared to be some subtle, yet fundamental differences. Specifically, results from this study suggest that religious people may tend to embrace theistic paradigms to assist them in observing and interpreting the world, as compared to social scientists’ who tend to utilize atheistic based paradigms that have been largely influenced by natural, evolutionary, positivistic, modernistic assertions. In consequence, it was maintained that these differences have compelled social scientists to both ignore and misinterpret religious and spiritual phenomena. It was further argued that postmodern, postpositivistic approaches that view knowledge and theory as being largely consensual, context bound and self referential may be key to assisting social scientists in their efforts to examine certain human experiences that have heretofore been considered outside of the traditional paradigmatic purview of
human science, religion and spirituality being indicative of two spheres of human experience that have essentially been ignored.

This research also served to suggest that religious people appear to experience religion and spirituality in more holistic terms. On the basis of these latter observations perhaps another fruitful place of inquiry for future researchers may be as follows: Do moderately to highly religious people perceive a more interdependent relationship between religion and spirituality than do nominally religious people? Moreover, if this is the case, does this interdependent relationship between religion and spirituality positively impact moderately to highly religious peoples' relationship with the Transcendent as compared to nominally religious people?

It was maintained that research methodologies attempting to investigate religion and spirituality that tend to be innately reductionistic in character may (on their own) be inadvertently disrespectful and wholly inadequate approaches. This research also suggested that a thorough understanding of religious phenomena may stand outside of the boundaries of scientific research simply because of social sciences' inability to verify certain sacred experiences, such as God's existence and religious people's belief in a Transcendent Being.

Additionally, results from this study also suggested that religious phenomena was viewed as being more than a set of external rules and regulations. Participant's religious experiences appeared to be embodied within a mystical experience with a Transcendent Being: one that profoundly impacted that manner in which respondents
in this study observed and interpreted themselves, their neighbor, the world around them, and their ancestral past.

**Implications for Psychotherapy**

When considering how results in this study may inform the work that psychotherapists do with religious individuals and client systems, this study generated the following observations. First, psychotherapists have recently become increasingly sensitive to how gender, ethnicity, race, and other ecological and idiosyncratic variables influence human development and family relations. Similarly, results from this study strongly suggest that religion and spirituality appear to profoundly impact religious individuals and family systems. It was thus maintained that an investigation of the manner in which religion and spirituality affects religious people might thus prove to be beneficial to the psychotherapeutic process. To that end, future researchers interested in how religion and spirituality impacts religious client systems might consider investigating the following concern: When religious issues appear to be salient to a given clinical situation, does the introduction of religious issues during therapy positively effect religious client system’s problem solving abilities?

Second, respondents observations and interpretations also suggested that their Lutheran and Orthodox Christian epistemology was inextricably tied to the manner in which they viewed the world. As such, it was posited that therapists who are receptive to including religious and spiritual concerns (where applicable) into the therapeutic process will likely develop a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of the religious
client systems when they choose to include religious and spiritual concerns in the therapeutic process.

Third, an analysis of results also suggested that the inclusion of religion and spiritual concerns in therapy might function to facilitate the joining process with religious clients. Additionally, it was also maintained that when therapists utilize and incorporate a client system’s language, opinions and world views into therapy, this strategy serves to facilitate a healthy working relationship between therapists and the client system whose ultimate affects might be to enhance the quality of therapy and, by extension, make the process more efficient and cost effective.

Fourth, results also suggested that religious people appear to select therapists who are respectful of religious people’s religious perspectives, and are favorably disposed to including religious and spiritual concerns into therapy. Some caveats were also provided to therapists on this latter point. Specifically, results indicated that some religious people may believe that non-religious oriented therapists may be disrespectful to religious people’s theistic view of the world. It was thus recommended that therapists should consider evaluating their personal level of religious sensitivity, as well as regarding how they evaluate their client’s level of religiosity and spirituality. It was further posited that therapists failing to assess their client’s religiosity and spirituality may inadvertently be metacommunicating disrespect for religious client’s religious/theistic perspectives.

Conversely, results also suggested that therapists who identify themselves as “Christian counselors” (or with some other similar identifier) may be perceived by
other types religious people with some suspicion. To be more specific, results from this study appear to suggest that some religious people may view "Christian counselors" as possessing a narrow, myopic therapeutic lens i.e., one which some religious people may discern as limited in scope and less effective. As such, results suggest that therapists who have determined to specialize their efforts, and focus their work on religious populations, should spend a few moments during intake sessions addressing religious client systems' concerns about their expertise and approach.

Fifth, therapists choosing to include religious and spiritual concerns in therapy with religious client systems might also discover that this approach might assist religious people in their efforts to reconnect with family and other social systems. Specifically, results from this study appear to suggest religious and spiritual experiences facilitate and promote an interconnectedness between religious people and their social environment, and that religion and spirituality are two potentially powerful resources that could assist religious people in their efforts to repair interpersonal conflict.

Sixth, results from this study appear to indicate that therapists who work with self-described religious clients and families should consider religion and spirituality holistically rather than dichotomizing these two spheres of experience. Specifically, such an approach would tend to emphasize the systemic and recursive nature between these two related experiences, and the impact that both experiences have on a given religious client or family's lived experience. Such an approach would also tend to enrich the therapeutic conversation, and allow for the emergence of a more accurate
picture of a religious client system’s lived experience. And finally, therapists adopting an more integrative or holistic view of religion and spirituality vis-à-vis a reductionistic approach, might also be less inclined to misdiagnose and pathologize certain religious behavior and behavioral patterns.

**Implications for Future Research**

Further research is needed to determine if the observations offered in this study hold true for other religious denominations or faith traditions. Juxtaposing religious people with nominally religious people in a similar qualitative study may also prove invaluable to social scientists and psychotherapists’ efforts to understand the role that religion and spirituality play in religious people’s lives. In a similar manner, investigating a clinical sample of religious people’s perceptions may also provide useful insights for psychotherapists who choose to include religious and spiritual concerns into the therapeutic process. Furthermore, increasing our understanding of the role that religion and spirituality have of religious people’s lived experience should not only assist social scientists in their efforts to understand this otherwise ignored dimension of religious people’s lives, but may also broaden and stretch the manner in which social science views the human condition. And finally, as psychotherapists develop a more sophisticated understanding of the role that religion and spirituality plays in religious people’s lives, this effort will likely provide a stronger theoretical undergirding for the work that they do with religious people, and lead toward a more effectual delivery of their services.
Finally, on the basis of what was discovered during this research effort the following hypotheses might also be considered fruitful avenues for further inquiry.

First, this research indicated that moderately to highly religious people view a synergistic relationship between religion and spiritual. If that is the case, it is my contention that moderately to highly religious people view a more profound synergistic relationship existing between the terms religion and spirituality than do nominally religious and spiritual people? Furthermore, if moderately to highly religious people experience a stronger connection between religion and spirituality, does this connection impact their relationship with the Divine as compared to nominally religious people?

Second, researchers investigating religion and spirituality may consider if religion and spirituality are perceived and utilized differently by the elderly than by people who are located at other earlier nodal stages in the life cycle. If elderly do utilize religion differently than younger people, do cohort affects impact their view and use of religion and spirituality vis-à-vis younger people.

Third, respondents in this study also suggested that the inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns during therapy was considered important because they believed that their religiosity and spirituality would likely contribute to problem solving. As such, investigators might consider the following hypothesis: When religious concerns are salient to a given clinical issue, does the broaching of these issues during therapy positively impact problem solving?
APPENDIX A. FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction:

I am interested in looking at the terms religion and spirituality. I was hoping that you would agree to answer some questions regarding these two terms from your religious tradition. I also recognize that my role as a Greek Orthodox priest/colleague and researcher might influence your answers. Please try to remember, therefore, that there are no correct answers, and that I am specifically interested in what you think about these terms. If you choose to participate in this study I hope your answers reflect your opinions about these terms and are not influenced by my role as a priest, friend or colleague.

Occupation:

Marital Status:

Children:

City, State:

How long have you been an Orthodox Christian or Lutheran Christian?

What activities do you participate in at your Church?

How often do you attend Church Services?

Tell me about your life in the Church?

1. On a scale of one to ten, with one representing “I do not view myself as a religious person” and ten representing “I view myself as a very religious” where would you place yourself?
2. On a Scale of one to ten, with one representing “I do not view myself as a spiritual person,” and ten representing, “I view myself as a very spiritual person,” where would you place yourself?

3. What is religion?

   (a) What role did religion play in your life as you were growing up?

   (b) What other factors contributed to your formation or development?

4. What role does religion presently play in your life?

5. What is your definition of religion?

6. What does the term “spirituality” mean to you?

   (a) What role does Orthodox spirituality play in your life?

7. What is the difference between the terms religion and spirituality?

8. How do you see these terms as being similar?

9. Do you think that what has been discussed thus far has any relevance to therapists and the therapeutic process? If so, why?

10. What else can you tell me about religion and spirituality in your life that will help me understand what these two phenomena mean to you?

11. If you were in my place what other questions would you like to know the answer to relating to religion and spirituality?
APPENDIX B. SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction:

I am interested in looking at the terms religion and spirituality. I was hoping that you would agree to answer some questions regarding these two terms from your religious tradition. I also recognize that my role as a Greek Orthodox priest/colleague and researcher might influence your answers. Please try to remember, therefore, that there are no correct answers, and that I am specifically interested in what you think about these terms. If you choose to participate in this study I hope your answers reflect your opinions about these terms and are not influenced by my role as a priest, friend or colleague.

Part I

Occupation:

Marital Status:

Children:

City, State:

1. How long have you been an Orthodox Christian or Lutheran Christian?

2. What activities do you participate in at your Church?

3. How often do you attend Church Services?

4. Why do you attend Church Services?

5. Tell me about your life in the Church?
6. On a scale of one to ten, with one representing “I do not view myself as a religious person” and ten representing “I view myself as a very religious person” where would you place yourself?

(a) Why are you religious?

7. On a Scale of one to ten, with one representing “I do not view myself as a spiritual person,” and ten representing, “I view myself as a very spiritual person.” where would you place yourself?

(a) Why the difference between the two scores?

Part II

1. What is religion?

(a) What role did religion play in your life as you were growing up?

(b) What factors contributed to your religious formation?

2. What role does religion presently play in your life?

3. What is your definition of religion?

(a) What are some of the important and tangible components of your religion? For example, some Christians might say something like sacraments, icons, Bible.... What would you identify as some of the important components of your religious experience?

(b) What role do these play in your religious life?

(c) Where did religion come from? Is it a purely human construction?

(d) Does religion affect your sense of right and wrong?
(e) What does it mean to be Christian rather than a member of some other religion?

(f) Do your religious experiences affect your relationship with others? The world around you?

(g) Do your religious experiences affect your spirituality?

4. What does the term “spirituality” mean to you?

(a) What role does Orthodox/Lutheran spirituality play in your life?

(b) Does religion facilitate spirituality?

(c) What important components make up Christian spirituality?

5. What is the difference between the terms religion and spirituality?

(a) Can one discuss these terms/experiences separately? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

(b) From your perspective would it be more profitable to discuss these terms separately?

6. How do you see these terms as being similar?

7. Do you think that what has been discussed thus far has any relevance to therapists and the therapeutic process? If so, why?

(a) is it appropriate for therapists to choose to ask questions about a person’s religious orientation, but not about a person’s spirituality and vice versa?

8. What else can you tell me about religion and spirituality in your life that will help me understand what these two phenomena mean to you?
9. If you were in my place what other questions would you like to know the answer to relating to religion and spirituality?
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What was your experience of the interview process?

(If necessary I will also be prepared to ask the following questions)

1. What would you change about the interview process?

2. What did you like about the interview process?

3. What would you change about the researcher's interviewing style?

4. What did you like about the researcher's interviewing style?
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT

Charles Joanides is a doctoral student studying Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. Under the supervision of Dr. Harvey Joanning (his major professor), Charles will be conducting open-ended ethnographic interviews to assist him in his efforts to complete his dissertation.

The risks to those respondents involved in this study will be minimal, with no foreseeable, lasting discomforts expected. The benefits from the information gathered during this study will hopefully extend MFTs knowledge of how religious people perceive and experience the terms religion and spirituality. This information will also hopefully function to assist therapists who work with religious individuals and families.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Respondents have the right to ask questions about any of the procedures during this study. Each respondent also has the right to withdraw at any time from this study without incurring any penalty.

All information from this study will be treated with strict confidentiality, and anonymity is insured to each participant.

Additionally, after the data from this study has been analyzed, the researcher would like the respondent’s permission to use this information in any future journal articles.

It should be noted that all written and audio taped data will be destroyed upon completion of the researcher’s dissertation (approximately 5/97).

Finally, the researcher would be pleased to provide participants with a copy of the results from this study.

_________________________________________  _________________________
Department Chairperson (HDFS)                        Date

I agree to participate in this study and understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may stop the interview at any time.

Respondent’s participation approval is indicated by his/her signature.

_________________________________________  _________________________
Signature                        Date
June 2, 1997

Dissertation Committee for
Charles Joanides,

Members of the Committee:

This letter is a summary of my process audit of Mr. Joanides' dissertation. I carefully reviewed the methods and results section of his document. The following is a summary of my observations.

Mr. Joanides provides a rationale for the use of qualitative methods well documented with relevant literature. He appears to be well informed regarding both the theory and methods commonly employed by researchers exploring human perceptions of important life experiences. His choice of grounded theory appears appropriate given the limited amount of literature which focuses on the theme of the dissertation. Grounded theory allows for the development of theory where limited theory presently exists.

The sampling technique employed, purposive sampling using a priori criteria, helps to define the nature of the study and clarify its goal. More specifically, the nature of the sample chosen enhances the probability that "...the interrelatedness of the terms religion and spirituality as they are perceived by two separate religious Christians..." was achieved. The sample indeed appears to be religious. The inclusion of two different Christian traditions allow for comparison and contrast that would not be possible with a more homogeneous sample.

The overall structure of the interviews used in the study appears appropriate. The use of individual ethnographic interviews is clearly more appropriate than focus groups due to the highly personal nature of the questions asked. In turn the opening statement given to informants and the semi-structured sequential interview employed were appropriate given that Mr. Joanides has conducted similar interviews in a previous study. Consequently, his questions were chosen based on prior knowledge of what questions would be relevant in the present study.
I agree with Mr. Joanides' comments regarding his role as researcher. I think it would be helpful for him to add a paragraph or two to the document describing his "...clear assumptions regarding the role of religion and spirituality in self-described religious people's lives..." Such information would assist the reader in understanding Mr. Joanides as the instrument used to analyze the data.

The analysis used is consistent with the grounded theory method used throughout the study. The coding system employed is sufficiently described so that another researcher familiar with the work of Glaser, Corbin, and Strauss could replicate the study. Trustworthiness was enhanced by following the recommendation of Lincoln, Guba, and other researchers who are cited in the manuscript.

The analysis leads clearly and logically to the results cited. I found it particularly helpful to know how many informants shared each particular perception. This information allows the reader to judge how pervasive or idiosyncratic each finding is in regard to the overall sample. The findings are presented clearly and are well documented with relevant quotes.

In reviewing the document, I made some editorial comments and corrections directly on the copy of the document. Editorial corrections were primarily to change wording from future tense to past tense and to eliminate or reduce the level of tentativeness. Wordiness was noted and edited to make a statement clearer, more concise and less tentative.

In closing, I believe Mr. Joanides has conducted a competent study which has led to interesting findings. My interactions with Mr. Joanides have been both professional and enjoyable.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Patricia Keoughan, Ph.D., LMFT
President
REFERENCES


