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Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public High Schools in the Pioneer Valley: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses

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EXPERIENCES OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE
PIONEER VALLEY: THE CASE OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES:

A master's Project

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to explore the perceptions of adult Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) about the ways in which JWs balance the tension between their religious beliefs and public school activities in the Pioneer Valley.

The researcher collected data from seven in-depth interviews with one teacher, five witness former students and one adult, one focus group discussion with six mothers, participant observation and document reviews. Data collection (with interviews lasting from 50-70 minutes) took place during the summer of 2015 in Amherst.

Familial socialization, church-based dramas and speeches and bible studies prepare Witnesses children on how to behave or respond to daily questions, discussions or other public high school activities in the Pioneer Valley. For example, witnesses' children are required to memorize responses on why they: believe in creation rather than evolution, and do not observe and/or celebrate birthdays, Easter and Christmas holidays. While the church seems optimistic about their high school children behaving according to this socialization, this study finds some of the children simultaneously using dominant and non-dominant cultural capitals following pressure by their peers and teachers. For example, some Witnesses students reported intentionally hiding and/or discrediting their beliefs at school. After returning home, some witnesses' children adjust back to the approved behavior. The study illuminates the various ways in which the students adjust according to their environment.

Key words: Religious Minority Experiences, Dominant and Non-dominant Cultural Capitals, Jehovah's Witness Students, Public High Schools in Pioneer Valley.

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EXPERIENCES OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE PIONEER VALLEY: THE CASE OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The primary aim of this study was to investigate ways children of Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) navigate tension between their religious beliefs and public school experiences. In the first place, it should be noted that any denying on public high schools' ability to increase children's life chances, among many other importance, could lead to a highly contended debate (Lampl, 2012). Nevertheless, public schools being social and political institutions, may explicitly and implicitly maintain the interests and values of the majority and dominant groups in the society (Levinson, et al., 2011). Little wonder, then that the survey by U.S. Education Department (2010-201) is but just a few among a huge mountain of scholarship highlighting how, on account of one's race, gender and sexuality, a public school student could get a worse punishment than another. Any one more critical than myself, reading this paper could not be punished if s/he deduces that public school population of minority students in the U.S is likely going to be lower than their counterparts. Like them, I would use my high school teaching anecdotes to support the deduction above due to the delegitimizing impact; punishment mostly has on norms of non-dominant students. We could not until we could appreciate, among other works, Maxwell's (2014) projection, [that based on their "oscillating population in the U.S public schools, minority students are like to be 50.3% of the total students by 2050" (para. 2-3)], which could force us repent of our conviction.

In the interest of this paper, it remains worth noting De Sous' (2007) work, which besides race and gender, uses religion as a category that specifically adds Witnesses' children to the list of discriminated minorities in the U.S public schools. As I will discuss in the literature review later, more than other Christians, JW have been the worst victims of medical and legal persecution in the U.S. Similar trends have characterized experiences of witnesses' children in public schools in some American states (De sous, 2007). Unlike their parents outside the school environment,

experiences of Jehovah's Witness students are not documented district by district or state by state. Neither are children's experiences within school documented state by state. This lack of research might lead to one wondering the extent to which the power of religious beliefs backed by gendered socialization in church members' families (as evident in the literature review chapter) could likely discourage JW children from taking part in such school activities as plays, dances, etc. (De Sous, 2007: 19) and also limit their (children's) education performances. Supporting this argument are Rees (2014) and Klein (2014) whose focus is on public school exposes teachers who treat religious minorities as a threat to the larger political and social ideologies, something to be feared. As Dianda, (2008) and Maxwell (2014) agree, the problem is that any discriminatory practice coupled with shortcomings of decades of legal, cultural and political moves to ensure equal rights to education lower the academic performance for minority students. It is even worse, how, from psychological perspective, these shortcomings would increase the probability of Witnesses children of dropping out of school.

When all is said, it is difficult to avoid explaining the puzzle, why despite discriminatory practices in schools, some studies project a higher enrollment of minority students which may include JW children? A number of reasons might be put forward to help address the existing contradictory literature. First, religious minorities in general and witnesses' children in particular participate in public schools probably in an attempt to have an upward social mobility (Lampl, 2012). Such oscillating high school attendance might result from consciousness through studies which have shown strong correlation between poor education and high crime rates, and drug and substance abuse (Lampl, 2012). Warning signals sent by such studies might as well clearly encourage minority students including those of Jehovah's Witnesses church to pass through unfavorable learning conditions. What is not clear in the literature are ways or strategies JW children employ to balance their religious beliefs and school activities. As I illuminate in the next section, all this is the more reason why one reading this paper needs to continue to understanding the issue in question.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this paper is to understand the challenges facing JW students in school. However, the study was undertaken to explore ways, from the adults' perception, how JW children balance the tension (if any) between their religious beliefs and the public school activities in the Pioneer Valley. With witnesses' students in Pioneer Valley as a case in point, the study will lead to the synthesis of literature. In this paper public school is, in the researcher's informed conviction, a state machinery through which the state socializes its citizenry (Levinson, et al., 2011).

Significance of the Study

In line with the legal and cultural barriers discussed in the next chapter (background information), all the studies focusing on the public school activities that exclude religious minorities in general and witnesses' children in particular, underscores the contribution of this study in many ways.

Firstly, many practitioners (educators, civil rights activists) who have been strong voices for children from different religious backgrounds facing numerous challenges in the U.S. public school system require informed research on these challenges. Yet there are limited studies, which specifically discuss the challenges experienced by such children, especially the school-going JW children. For example, Rong and Brown (2002) stress that the inquiries specifically intended to talk about the public schooling or learning of religious minority students are tokens and very limited. Likewise, Ntiri (2001) reports that investigations intended for barriers facing minority learners focus largely on class, race or ethnicity and gender, but disregard and overlook the equally voiceless religious minorities. Therefore, this study will be helpful in providing information to the minority voices in general and to the schoolchildren of JW in particular.

Secondly, other studies have also shown that the cultural difference gap between the U.S. current student body and teachers in the public schools continues to widen. For example, Sleeter (2001) stated, "It is widely recognized that the cultural gap between the minority children and the public school activities is large and has grown" (p. 94). These differences might present obstacles to

learning, especially for witnesses' children in the U.S. school system, to the extent that some students who fail to conform get dismissed from school (Sleeter, 2001). Caligiuri, Lepak, and Bonacha (2010) emphasize that applying cultural differences in a professional situation is more complicated than seeing or noting it. Through reported challenging cases, this study will serve as a warning to policy makers and educational rights movements to redouble their efforts towards elimination of school activities that support dominant religions or values and those which limit access to education based on religious beliefs of minority students.

Thirdly, this study will keep educationalists in the U.S in general and Pioneer Valley in particular, abreast of some strides that have been made in reducing and/or calling off unfair recruitment and assortment of teachers based on their (teachers) races and multicultural competencies. Thus, this paper will serve as a window through which one would be able to see how the education department has infused or integrated various racial, ethnic, gender perspectives into high school curriculum for a more inclusive and culturally responsive education.

In addition, this study will add new knowledge to the general populace or will be a vital framework for understanding obstacles other religious minorities experience in public schools in the pluralistic U.S. Lastly, the vitality of this paper lies in providing evidence for researchers who desire to conduct further investigations on experiences of other religious minorities other than witnesses' children.

Research Questions

This project aims at making contributions highlighted above, generally, by exploring ways from the adults' perception, how JW children manage to go through tension between their religious beliefs and the public school activities in the Pioneer Valley. Specifically, the following questions have guided this research:

- Are there public school activities, which make JW children in the Pioneer Valley feel excluded, and if any, to what extent do such children feel excluded?
- How do public high school activities restrain or promote learning and adjustment of witnesses' students in the Pioneer Valley?
- What are some of the strategies with which witnesses children balance their religious beliefs with education values and/or activities in the public school in Pioneer Valley?

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

This section seeks to highlight some areas in which witnesses' way of life is manifested in order to bring the research issue in context.



Source: Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (2016)

Figure 1: Map Showing Parts of the Study Area: Pioneer Valley

Organization of the Church

I learned much about Jehovah’s Witnesses’ way of life through the interview with James and Hastings (pseudo names), who has been to Pioneer Valley high schools and a key informant, respectively. Being a member of Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hastings explained their way of life.

According to him, Jehovah's beliefs, values or practices in the world should be similar because they are determined by a single main Governing body from the Watch Tower Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. According to Penton, (1997), with the help of other helpers, the Governing Body is split into six committees to carry out different administrative functions like publication, assembly programs and evangelizing activity. The Governing Body and the six committees supervise 100 branch offices worldwide one of which branch controls Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts. "The Governing Body appoints the branch committees to supervise congregations in their jurisdiction" (Hastings, February 4, 2016). I also learnt that congregations in Pioneer valley are further grouped into 20 congregations each called circuits. James says elders are responsible for congregational governance, "pastoral work, setting meeting times, conducting meetings, directing the public preaching work, and forming judicial committees to investigate and decide disciplinary action in cases where members are believed to have committed serious sins" (James, February 5th, 2016). As I finished analyzed the data, I noted strong emphasis of discipline being socialized on to the students of witnesses.

Demography

Jehovah's Witnesses estimated to number over six million in 235 countries and territories, and about one million of these are said to be in the USA (Penton, 1977). I failed to get exact figures of the church members specifically in Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts. Using existing literature, I have however managed to account for the rapid growth of Jehovah's Witnesses church in general. As discussed in the literature review, its growth is partially attributed to the members' way of life at micro level (familial socialization).

Family Life

While most schools and some societies in Massachusetts do not have students' training biased towards patriarchal family, witnesses' socialization is, at all ages, skewed towards patriarchy (Hastings, February 4, 2016). As the head of the family, the husband is expected to have the final say on the family decisions. Only monogamous marriages are allowed (Penton, 1977). It is worth noting that Jehovah's Witnesses parents are not supposed to discipline their children in a harsh or cruel way and that level of resistance is low since James reports that children are strictly encouraged to follow the advice of their parents.

The Church and Ordination

In this church, ministers are adherents who have been formally approved to evangelize. Like everywhere in the world, not every witness can evangelize until they get ordained through baptism (The Watch Tower, 2008). After reviewing literature of this church, which is published by The Watch Tower only, I had a feeling that baptism serves no more or less than a symbolic value, signing graduation of the baptized from a series of structured church-based and familial training or schools through which the baptized might have been socialized. Furthermore, leadership positions like elders and ministers (or deacons) go to males only. In not so usual cases (church areas where no male exists), female Witnesses may lead congregational prayers while wearing a head cover. According to The Watch Tower, (1996), female minister is also required to cover her head during home-based religious teaching/learning session, especially when the husband delegates his leading roles to her (in the presence of other familial members like children). Male-centered ordination like this could probably characterize a feminist as being critical of this less egalitarian Jehovah's Witness' church in Pioneer Valley. Since Witnesses' teachings are determined by one Watchtower Society, it could be a little exaggeration to suggest that terms like 'feminism' may exist in every Witness' vocabulary but just a long the list of words that could concisely delineate bad world or life. This is because feminism and the reasons for its support are what Jehovah's Witnesses condemn.

Moral Values

Like elsewhere, Jehovah's Witnesses in Pioneer Valley demand high observance of morality. I learnt more about witnesses' understanding of morality from the dramas and various speeches, which members performed during the 2015 annual convention concerned. Participating actors and speakers (some of were high-school students) took turns encouraging children to desist from what Witnesses perceive as 'serious sins.' I themed some of the witnesses' immoral acts into disrespecting elders including teachers, drunkenness, deliberately terminating human pregnancy, trans gendering, premarital and extramarital sex, smoking, drug and substance use and abuse,

gambling, donating blood¹, to name but a few. While Witnesses church prohibits drunkenness among its members, it allows alcohol among its members in moderation (The Watchtower, February 15, 1976, 1993). Additionally, members including high school students are urged to keep watch against such forms of grooming which can stumble the consciences of other people as use of beards, long hair, men's earrings, etc., (Hastings, February 4, 2016).

All these perspectives echoed the earlier interviews I had with students and mothers who seemed to converge on the stand point that they (Jehovah's Witnesses) are encouraged to remain 'separate from the world'. Watch Tower publications characterizes the *world* as "the mass of mankind apart from Jehovah's approved servants" (JW.org) and teaches that the world is dangerously and immorally ruled by Satan (Holden, (2002). When I wondered how witnesses could separate themselves from the very world they inhabit, Hastings reported that witnesses' parents and their children are required to separate themselves from this world in the following ways. They observe neutrality in politics, do not seek public office, and observe some distance from those who are not members of the church (The Watchtower, November 1, 1999) and other practices, which I have discussed in the next section, literature review.

The question of whether or not these moral values, and the ways through which they are manifested, are correct deserves some attention. However, such question lies beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the ability of witnesses' students to balance their religious-based values that could potentially separate them from *world*² of public school activities makes the question for this study worth asking so as to understand how witnesses' children adjust and navigate in the high schools.

¹ In order to triangulate the information which I had observed about moral values, I used FGD with the mothers concerned. True to the power of witnesses' socialization, the document review I conducted also revealed that the dramas and speeches I observed during the annual convention were prescribed in Watchtower publications like Awake (July 22, 2004: pp. 12-14; February 15, 1976, 1993). One mother said the Watch Tower is required to prescribe and distribute published literature on the moral values so that witnesses' families and churches find the same literature as a rehearsing tool for the socializing dramas. Another reason, mothers agreed, is to cultivate and sustain uniform values among all witnesses in the world.

² Note the definition of the concept 'world' from witnesses' perspective above.

Witnesses' Children, School and Education

Witnesses' children in Pioneer Valley attend public high schools since like other children; they also appreciate the value of education. Matters of education are a personal decision among Jehovah's Witnesses, but they generally recognize the thinking ability and other social skills that come with education (Awake, September 2008). Far from being a threat, mixing with a variety of people in public school communities, Hastings (February 5, 2016) maintains, gives them (Witnesses' students) an opportunity to tell others about their good values, to practice and assess themselves on previously trained strategies of converting non-witnesses. As such, few would dispute why Pew Survey found that Jehovah's Witnesses is among few religions in the world with the highest percentage of high school graduates (Lipka, July 27, 2015). Lipka's assertion helps further validate the question guiding this paper, however, while JW's children are encouraged to take their education seriously, they are also encouraged to prioritize spiritual at the expense of materialistic goals like education (Awake, September 2008). Such emphasis on spirituality does not go without challenges as discussed in the next section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section seeks to critically review the existing literature on the theoretical and methodological issues relevant to the topic under study. I review literature from books and e-books, academic journals and articles, magazines, newspapers, statistics, internet sites and documents produced by the church to which the children under study belong. During the review, I was inspired by a number of studies which have made tremendous contributions in many but areas related to experiences of minority students in high schools. Such areas include the nature and role of school and religion as a system of culture (Levinson, Gross, Hanks, Dadds, Kumasi, Link, Metro-Roland, 2011; Leary, 2010). I also looked into studies focusing on the theories or implications of the interplay between children's values, beliefs, symbols and norms socialized in homes on one hand and schools, state and churches on the other (Bourdieu, and Passeron. 1977; Basset, 2005; Antonio Gramsci). In addition, I was also informed by the studies emphasizing the intersection of minority students' gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion and sexuality in restraining or promoting children's participation in schools and their education performance (Saha, 2011).

It should be emphasized that I did not review above issues in equal measures. I somewhat slightly if not completely derailed away from the literature on some of the above issues more/less than on others. I did that way to ensure that my review was contributing towards addressing the problem for which I undertook the research. Apart from the general areas, highlighted above, I specifically got interested in literature exposing the disparities between students from majority and minority religions in the U.S public schools. I did focus my review on the religious minority students in general and on the JW children in public school in the Pioneer Valley. Moreover, I did not intend to review literature about the persecutory practices on the witnesses outside schooling. Nevertheless, I partially reviewed literature on the same to construct knowledge on these minorities from Foucault's lineage perspective (Levinson et al., 2011). As Foucault illustrates, "knowledge is a genealogy of concepts" (Levinson et al., 2011: pp. 147-151), and highlighting the experiences of Jehovah's witnesses both within and outside the school might help the reader understand the genealogical basis of the preconceived attitudes that teachers and other peers construct towards witnesses children within the school environment. Similar to Foucault's lineage perspective, Polletta (2009) argues that,

...an analysis critically framed becomes more dynamic when it is complemented by historical studies of the political processes by which texts were created, interpreted and used as resources for mobilization. (p. 89).

Polletta's (2009) concept, text (89), is in the context of this study referring to the experiences of minority, Jehovah's Witnesses in general and witnesses' students in particular. In line with Polletta (2009), therefore, it is worth understanding the brief historical process which led to the establishment of Jehovah's Witnesses church in the U.S and Pioneer Valley, to which I next take the leader.

BRIEF HISTORY

Tracing the history of Jehovah's Witnesses sect, Heather and Gary's (1984) study emphasizes greatly on the works of the first founding presidents: Charles Russell (1852-1916) and Joseph Rutherford (1869-1942), arguing that producers of historical knowledge about Jehovah's

Witnesses can hardly ignore them since history can hardly exist separately from individuals who make it. Like Heather & Gary (1984), Cronn-Mills (1994); Lawson (1995); Bergman (1995) and Cloud (2002), focus on Russell's early life, his contacts with or membership as a Presbyterian; Congregationalist and an Adventist before forming his sect which Rutherford later named Jehovah's Witnesses. Nevertheless, unlike Heather & Gary (1984) whose writings concentrate on the presidents' activities towards the birth of the church in question, the other authors move a step further to provide us with the general experiences of the sect as well as its rise or development and most importantly, the cases of social conflict in the U.S.

GROWTH AND INTEGRATION MODEL

As David (2011: 1278-1290) wonders, such numerous social controversies against Jehovah's Witnesses as shall be discussed later, might be enough grounds for one to project little or no growth at all, of this religious group. However, as Stark and Iannaccone (1997) agrees with Franz (2007), the church of Jehovah's Witnesses spread more rapidly from the time of its inception than other established Christian churches (like the Roman Catholic) in the United States. Stark & Iannaccone (1997) like Franz (2007) argues that this rapid growth can best be explained by the use of unique strategies, including but not restricted to, the members' zeal for witnessing and strong conviction that the end of the world is very near, which church members employ to win converts. The works Franz (2007) and Stark & Iannaccone (1997) are not without dissimilarities. The former does not only appreciate the rapid recruitment and integration of converts but also goes on to offer some critical lens against members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Further than this, Franz partially sides with David (2011) by criticizing the society conversion and integration model. Both of them discredit one of the recruitment strategies of the religious group concerned owing to the inconveniences that the church members may create through their preaching missions. In other words, both Franz (2007) and David (2011) cite cases where the people (converts), Jehovah's witnesses target in their conversion (preaching) missions, might feel inconvenienced as the targeted people might be rushing for other time-sensitive appointments. For instance, people almost once in a while need to hurry up for equally important and life-sustaining issues like hospital visits, which equally need time.

Despite scholars grappling in order to put the growth of this church into theoretical perspective, they all seem to invite consensus by emphasizing on the conversion and integration as the model that explains why the witnesses' religious group is generally one of the fastest growing religions in the world and United States in particular. As I will illuminate later, one would be wrong to assume that due to the rapid growth of their religious society, witnesses' children are well received in public schools by teachers and their peers. Comparably, based on their religious beliefs in relation to other wider social values, experiences of witnesses' schoolchildren are an addition on the cases of discriminated minorities. Again, from the church members' well documented numerical growth, one could wonder if the conversion model significantly reflects the same prevailing trends of the witnesses' population in the U.S public school communities. That is, how many Jehovah's Witnesses children are there in U.S public schools compared to other minority and/or majority students?

My efforts to find any comprehensive state-by-state quantitative study on the population of witnesses children in public schools in the U.S ended in total futility. However, as already discussed above, the general literature on the minority vis-a-vis majority population is not sparse. For instance, the U.S Department of Education shows the reduced number of white kids (enrolled in U.S. public schools) from pre-kindergarten up to 12th grade and it projects the same trend to continue in the next decades to come (Rees, 2014 and Klein, 2014). I could find incontrovertible, the value of statistical parameter (if any was empirically made available) regarding the growth of witnesses' high school children in Pioneer Valley. The actual figures of the rising numbers of witnesses' students in Pioneer Valley could surely help demonstrate the scope of effectiveness of all interventions stakeholders have been designing and carrying out to promote minority education in the USA. However, such quantitative data could somewhat be less valuable in addressing this paper's questions than the qualitatively generated social and political controversies, the chronicle of which is my next focus.

CONTROVERSIES

Another reason, why the Witnesses' theory of growth has been at the center of an academic stir, is that the effectiveness of its growth theory (in the United States) has juxtaposed with the

persecution Jehovah's Witnesses have faced owing to their beliefs (David, 2011). The general reasons for these controversies are widely covered in literature, and these have historically included the church members' refusal to: obtain the proper permits for selling their literature, to salute or say a pledge of allegiance to any flag or symbol, to participate in the draft, voting, and to accept blood transfusions (David, 2011, Peters, 2000). Therefore, I now turn to thoroughly detail these legal, cultural, health and various other social controversies, not from the perspective of all minorities, but specifically against Jehovah's Witnesses only in the U.S.

Legal controversies

It is important to appreciate the work of Peters (2000) who illuminates that, *the society members have had more cases go to the Supreme Court than any other group and are the leaders in challenging violations of the First Amendment "freedom of religion,"* (p.186) clause. Supporting Peters (2000) are various studies like those of Stevens (1973), Holden (2002) and Tharpe (2005), who widely and deeply discuss the two legally controversial issues: draft and flag controversies. First, the above studies agreeably afford us voluminous literature on, for instance, the witnesses' refusal to serve in the armed forces during war which ended with many Witnesses in state federal prisons, including, remarkably, *the president of the witnesses' society in 1917* (De Souse, 2007:23).

Second, Tharpe (2005) and Nussbaum's (2011) studies cover the flag controversy at length. Tharpe's (2005) statistical focus on the witnesses' global legal cases separates his work from Nussbaum's (2011) who dwells mainly on the United States. The former focuses primarily on the 1930s and 1940s and follows sparingly the flag salute issue through the U.S. courts. The latter, though locally focused, extensively affords us the two critical flag-salute cases within public schooling presented before the U.S. Supreme court, *Minersville School District Vs Gobitis* and *West Virginia Board of Education Vs Barnette*. Both scholars dwell on worshiping idols as the reason why Witness' doctrine prohibits a child from saluting a flag in high school. What is invisible in the works of both Tharpe (2005) and Nussbaum (2011) are voices about discrimination of the schoolchildren concerned. As I discuss in the next sub-section, (other than the medical issues), more research has pointed to the weaknesses of the legal movements and

cultural assortment as historically structured and structuring issues behind the biased education system against the racial and religious minorities in the U.S (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran 2004; Gay, 2000; Barnes, 2006; Ware, 2006).

Freedom and Rights in High Schools

Various research show public schools often as the battleground between the principle of church-state separation and religious freedom. Scholars argue that conflicts usually result from the desire of religious minority students to express their faith and school authorities who try to socialize students from holding dissenting norms and values. All this has been taking place within the context of the right to freedom of religion, which has been guaranteed to U.S. citizens since 1791 through the two First Amendment clauses, the establishment clause and the free exercise clause (Dunklee & Shoop, 2006). This legal provision protects the rights of U.S. citizens and Dunklee & Shoop (2006) further argue that this legal protection is not limited to the public school minority students who are reported to be losing constitutional rights when they are in the school community. This is the more reason why from its inception in 1913, the Anti-Defamation League (the Civil Rights Division), has been fighting against discriminatory practices, and ensuring that religious minority students and all other U.S citizens do not limited access to their rights and liberties. One would not be punished to believe that public schools' outward picture of not promoting hostility towards any religion, really manifests somewhat tremendous respect for religious freedom and an appreciation of not so ordinary diversity of religions as represented by students in the multicultural U.S.A schools. However, such a stand point could not be completely credible without considering Dunklee and Shoop' (2006) two legal principles to which Hudson (2002) agree by accentuating on how public schools restrain students' exercise of First Amendment rights.

The first legal principle is what Hudson (2002) describes as the more powerful position in which the government situates itself to impose rules and regulations. In education, Hudson (2002) asserts that the government imposes policies when it plays its roles as educators like teachers or employer (the department or ministry of education). Hudson (2002) exemplifies the case of government authority through a school principal who limits students from pouring malediction to

a teacher in a learning climate. It remains worth noting some of the reasons, suggesting why the U.S legal system has hardly balanced the concerns of high school authorities against First Amendment rights of high school students. Hudson (2002) observes that these collisions on one hand can be attributed to U.S courts' attempt to protect the First Amendment Act and on the other, the public schools' regulations following the school shootings. Similarly, following the terrorist attacks 9/11 attacks public schools' role as a state machinery became even more evident. What concerns multicultural sociologists and educationalists probably is not the government use of public schools to cultivate and legitimize patriotic attitudes, rather is the fact that public schools implemented this national campaign at the expense of students' religious beliefs. For example, after the attacks, "school officials in Georgia suspended two high school students for failing to stand during the Pledge of Allegiance. A bill was introduced in Colorado that would have required all public school students to recite the pledge" (Hudson, 2002, par. 40-48).

It could be incontrovertible, based on the documented attacks in the U.S and the resultant public schools' regulations to instill patriotism among American children as some government officials supported. However, the historic 1943 Supreme Court decision (many years prior to 9/11) of the *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette* (Warren, 2003, pp. 100 - 115); characterizes the school's regulation as somewhat contradictory and contentious. Here, a West Virginia law penalized students and their parents if the former *failed to salute the flag and recite the pledge* (Warren, 2003, pp. 100 - 115). Later, a group of Jehovah's Witnesses who denied to comply, challenged the law. Much to the delight of the appellants, the Supreme Court argued that:

The school boards must engage in "scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual ... [so as] ... not to strangle the free mind at its source and teach youth to discount important principles of our government as mere platitudes (Hudson, 2002, par. 40-48).

Thus, the court reasoned in favor of the Jehovah's Witnesses arguing that the First Amendment free-speech clause did not exclude the right to speak. Besides the prior court ruling itself, Hudson (2002) observes that public school officials themselves are expected to act as arms of the government and so the question hard to ignore is, how can teachers "teach the importance of the First Amendment" (par. 5) while not following it. I have never been an expert in law, neither have I have ever seen myself in a mind battle trying to shift from my current indefatigable

interest in social justice in society and education to law. Probably, someone even less exposed to the law field could hardly peruse this paper without noticing the legal contradiction in question. As such, for the sake of explaining the teacher's somewhat contradictory approach towards the First Amendment, I find Polletta's (2009) stand point on law as quite illuminating towards the collision (contradiction) concerned. In her words,

...rather than by a disciplinary canon, the framework for political debate is given by authoritative texts (law). Such texts never speak for themselves but need to be interpreted, implemented, and enforced. Texts offer a discursive structure – an institutionalized framework of connections made among people, concepts, events – that shapes the opportunities of political actors by making some sorts of connections appear inevitable and making others conspicuously uncertain and so especially inviting for debate (Polletta, 2009, p. 89).

By authoritative text, Polletta (2009) makes reference to law and that any discursive analysis of this authoritative text could help explain why a law ought not to be treated/perceived as an objective structure. Thus, the above legal cases vis-à-vis school members of Jehovah's Witnesses church, holds support of Polletta's (2009) delineation of law as an area of dispute since as she puts it, "being imbued with power, law is discursively open to interpretation... and..., not just something that exists passively as texts on paper" (p. 89).

Even if Hudson (2002), argues that the power of the teacher to control the student rights is limited when children move away from the school community, this should not make one think that the exercise of rights by these minority children is only and/or more undermined at macro level (school) than is at micro (homes). As the second legal issue, "children as minors do not possess the same level of constitutional rights as adults" (Hudson, 200, par. 2-3). This explains why (backed by constitution and/or religious socialization), full enjoyment of schoolchildren's rights could be a near impossibility. All this plus the first legal issue of the First Amendment rights colliding with the rules of the public school authorities are sparsely documented especially with regard to the witnesses' school children in Pioneer Valley. Clearly, traversing amid this coercive pressure of trying to conform to values socialized by their parents (at home) and religion, and teachers and/or peers (at school) is not easy. Therefore, this study solves the puzzle

concerned, by contributing a valuable understanding on how minority students (from the adult perspective) keep going with public schooling.

Cultural Controversies

Apart from the structural legal issues, there is voluminous literature on the lack of multiculturalism in teacher education programs. While there has been a demographic increase of the minority students, Futrell, Gomez and Bedden, (2003) agrees with Futrell, (1999) that the majority of public school teachers graduate from non-diverse teacher education programs. Cornbleth (2008) affirms by taking us back to the history of teacher education programs in the U.S, where cultural difference and diversity are nowhere near supported. In addition, Lucas (2011) proclaims that most of the teacher education programs do not train teachers to educate students whose cultural background is not consensual to the dominant racial and religious groups like the whites and Catholics respectively. Consequently, this compounds the problem of cultural difference (which may or may not include religion) between teachers and minority students, and has been recognized as a challenge in the classroom. What is more is that this systemic reproduction of teacher education programs has a telling weakening impact. Such teachers are not able to better serve students within a multicultural school climate, the extent of which is not specifically known in the Pioneer Valley schools.

Medical controversies

Besides the legal and cultural issues, are medical controversies, which center on Jehovah's Witnesses refusal to accept blood transfusion (Baron, 2011 and Hardart, 2011). Singelenberg (1990) like Agarwal, et al., (2013) provides reference to scriptural passages (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:14 and Acts 15:20, 29, 21:25) on which the society members base their doctrine. Agarwal, et al (2013) observes that based on these scriptural passages Jehovah's Witnesses bar members from blood transfusion for two interrelated reasons. Firstly, transfusions symbolizes bodily consumption of blood, a practice specifically banned in the above passages (Agarwal, et al (2013). Secondly, blood is equated to a soul of one's living thing. The consumption of this blood places someone else's soul in another's possession (Agarwal, et al (2013). In other words, members believe that the possession and retrieval of blood is reserved for God. By contrast,

Singlenberg (1990) provides a thorough account of the origins and function of the Witnesses' doctrine, while Agarwal, et al (2013) explores the problems the doctrine generates for the medical community (specifically for the medical ethics committee) and for the school children (below the age of 18) whose decisions on blood are made by their parents. In other words, it is worthy asking how the combination of Witnesses' doctrine and the children's legal status on blood transfusion (coupled with cultural issues in teacher education program) promote or limit the ability of witnesses' children from doing well especially in public schools of Pioneer Valley.

GLOBAL PERSECUTION

It has to be noted that the persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses is not limited to the United States only. The church members in Europe and Africa as well have gone down in history as equally religious victims of hostile political and religious attitudes.

In Europe

For instance, in the reports by the Religious Freedom Concerns in Russia, the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses (Sept-Oct 2014) illuminates incidents of legal proceedings which are misapplied against Jehovah's Witnesses on the charge of engaging in "extremist activity merely for possessing religious material, attending religious services and talking to others about their faith" (Sept-Oct 2014, par. 1-3). In addition, Lautmann (1990) compares the persecution of homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and the political prisoners in Nazi camps. Lautmann (1990) suggests that homosexuals, political prisoners and Jehovah's Witnesses "were supposed to merely renounce their particular orientation" (P. 71), as this was the only possible way to avert persecution.

In Africa

Similarly, Hodges (1976) and Jubber (1977) address the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in central and southern Africa. Hodges (1976) covers witnesses' activities in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique and argue that persecution is part of governmental plans to install one-party dictatorial regimes. Jubber (1977) describes Witnesses' persecution in Southern Africa and he concludes that the violence stems from the incompatibility between government and Witnesses'

goals. However, most of these international literature, as is the case in Pioneer Valley, do sparsely document experiences of school children.

From the international research works like the ones I have reviewed above, few would dispute against Jubber (1977) and Penton (1979) whose works afford us such a crucial understanding that Jehovah's Witnesses are not just one of the persecuted groups of Christians. Most importantly, that there is no any religious faction that was persecuted in the twentieth century more than Jehovah's Witnesses. It makes sense then to subscribe to Whalen's (1962) somewhat powerful assertion that "the only religious faction to have suffered more are the Jews and the Jewish persecution is more localized than the global treatment directed towards the Jehovah's Witnesses" (P. 18). Moreover, though sparse, literature has shown strong connection of the social controversies above to the discriminatory practices suffered by the witnesses' students in public school. One wonders if this correlation is due to the attitude which people from the (majority) religions transfer from Jehovah's witnesses' adults to Witness' children who are minority students in public high schools in the US. Whether or not that is true, remains part of the questions this study seeks to address by focusing on Pioneer Valley of the Massachusetts.

Invisible Minorities

Arguably, this paper has extensively covered some literature on minority experiences in public school in the U.S in general. What is no longer a secret in this paper are not only the discriminatory practices, immediately important are so much not equalizing effects, such unequal treatment might have between white students and their black counterparts (Rees, 2014 & Klein, 2014). Regular surveys by U.S. Education Department as did the 2010-2011, reveal that though minority students are overtaking the whites' in numbers, the same trend does not apply to public school teachers. The department suggests tough discipline against students of color and the resultant poor performance might be attributed to the point that teaching profession continues to be racist (2010-2011).

Apart from race, class, gender, sexuality and other variables, it is reasonable for one to expect equally abundant studies exploring discriminatory practices on students whose minority status is in the U.S public schools, is based on religious beliefs. This lack of literature should be a concern not only because Jehovah's Witnesses have been widely persecuted, but also that together with Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormonism); Christian Science and Seventh Day Adventism, they are considered to be the only four major American-based religions (Hoekema: 1963). This is why, I have not yet found any study disputing Penton's (1985) earlier observation that "research on the witnesses society is difficult to locate since scholarly studies on Jehovah's Witnesses is extremely limited" (P. 361). He further explain in two ways why literature concerning experiences of these minorities is difficult to come by. First, he argues,

While the organization is often mentioned in passing in articles and books, in-depth research into the Kingdom Halls congregations on a local or national level is infrequent. Secondly, the majority of material concerning Jehovah's Witnesses is authored by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania and is co-published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York and International Bible Student Association. All three are national clearing houses for Jehovah's Witnesses publications (Pp. 360-362).

This explains why the most recent materials about Jehovah's Witnesses are probably written and published by Jehovah's Witnesses themselves. One would therefore not be wrong to consider the publications distributed by The Watch Tower Society with much suspect for providing critical insight into the Watch Tower Society and the Witnesses experiences in U.S public schooling.

Finally, what would have been the comprehensive studies on witnesses' experiences in public schooling were those undertaken by De souse (2007) and Anderson (2007). However, Anderson's (2007) study is not only a review of literature but also that he sparingly analyses the Witnesses' education attitude on education institutions. Again as discussed above, De souse's (2007) work highlights in passing the experiences of witnesses' children in the U.S public schools. None of them dwells on how these religious-based minority students sail through the majority-controlled school climate in a single area or state like Pioneer in Massachusetts.

SUMMARY

As discussed above, it is clear that there is broad diversity of writings on discriminatory practices on minority experiences in general in the U.S public schools. As a minority religious group, Jehovah's Witnesses society and its history and growth have been reviewed and documented to some length. Also covered in literature are the legal, cultural and medical controversies, as has done this paper. However, lived experiences of public school children of the Jehovah's witnesses in the U.S is sparse. In this paper, to understand (from the adults' perception) how the minority children of Jehovah's Witnesses experience teaching and learning activities and/or materials in public schools, I have narrowed the study's scope to the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts. I arrived at the choice of Pioneer Valley in the interest of convenience since this is the area within which am currently studying my master's and for which degree, the paper will serve as a partial requirement for my graduation.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Overview

This chapter forms the basis on why and how the deep sociological imagination, I have so far acquired through structural functional, conflict/Marxist and interactional perspectives intrigued my passion for minorities. As I understood them in my *Social Theory* courses and equally from the internet sites, most modern and postmodern theorists trace these theoretical perspectives originally to the works of Karl Marx, Marx Weber and Emily Durkheim. Their theories have similar and different views on social institutions like school, family, church, etc., and on how these institutions structure, restructure and get structured by the behaviors of social actors including minority students. In the researcher's knowledge, structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism and conflict (Marxist) did not completely help to make sense of the research data I collected and analyzed. However, their theoretical contribution to the study's and related matters can hardly be ignored.

Structural Functionalism

First, from the functionalist perspective, Emile Durkheim argued that social institutions like schools ensure social stability by performing the following “manifest functions together: socialization, social integration, social placement, and social and cultural innovation” (Collins, 1979, p. 27). Like Collins, (1979), Balkan, (2015) Shepard, (2010) later discussed ‘latent functions of school’ (p. 22) which include caring, relationship development of children, and reducing unemployment as students labor time is delayed in schools; minority students are socialized before the school later allocate them into positions which increases their life chances. All these functions could explain why despite the reported discrimination against minorities, their population is projected to be on the rise.

Conflict (Marxism) Perspective

Like functionalism, conflict theories are used in relation to macro level issues (Balkan, 2015). By contrast, Max Weber’s conflict theory maintains that tracking and standardized testing and the impact of educational hidden curriculum promote limited social equality (Balkan, 2015). According to the conflict theorists unequal distribution of resources like funds, type of teachers and other learning conditions lead to learning disparities that reinforce social inequality (Balkan, 2015; Collins, (1979, 1994). As reviewed above, many neo-Marxists argue for structural social changes like training of teachers from minority population that will have equalizing impact in schools and society at large (Shepard, 2010; Levinson, et al., 2011). Therefore, this perspective has informed much on the data and the analysis of it, especially on how the public school activities restrain or promote minority students’ participation and performance.

Neo-Marxists and Hegemony

Neo-Marxists, Antonio Gramsci and his hegemonic theory has informed this paper much on interpretation of education in public schools is further than Max Weber above. Burke (1999, 2005) maintains that “by hegemony Gramsci meant the permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations” (par. 10-11). As earlier discussed the pledge of allegiance and flag salute in this sense might be forms of socialization to internalize prevailing consciousness on morality of the dominant group so they become to naturally look like the normal ways of life (common

sense) into the daily living of minority students and those of Jehovah's Witnesses in particular. From the capitalist view, Althusser (1971) like Gramsci's hegemony argue that by socializing minority students into dominant ideology, schools help to maintain the status of the ruling class and normalize the place of minorities in society so that there is order to the structured and restructuring class structure (Levinson, et al., 2011). Worse still Gramsci notes how not so much easy, changing the structure is because "schools are controlled by those who control the dominant ideology..." (Saha, 2008, p. 30) In this respect, English and Bolton (2015) characterize school as a structured institution which "represents a form of symbolic violence" (p. 54). To Gramsci, the subordinate classes might improve their class in the social structure by acquiring the same knowledge as the hegemonic class. While unfair dismissal or punishment to the minorities (discussed above) might limit Gramsci's piece of advice, it remains to be seen (in the analysis) the extent to which data shows ability of Witnesses' students to obtain same knowledge as that of majority students.

Until during the first interview I had during data collection, and based on the literature I earlier reviewed, I thought I could use Gramsci's hegemonic theory to make sense of the whole data. Probably, because I went out of my graduate *Social Theory* courses (at UMass Amherst) with a strong command of neo-Marxist Gramsci's ideas. What I realized in the aftermath was that the data I had collected showed different epistemological patterns. Therefore, I have partially used Gramsci's theory of hegemony to make sense of behaviors of authorities and teachers, organic intellectuals/ organizing element, so named because they act to legitimize behavior codes of, and for the benefit of the ruling class, their institutions and/or authorities (Burke, 1999, 2005, par 22-23). Another type of teachers, "traditional intellectuals, who are independent of the dominant social group" (p.23). Probably, these are the teachers who can help break the cycle of inequality.

Symbolic interaction theory

Furthermore, apart from the subjects' church, the public schools and teachers therein, another institution (now at micro level) on which the study partially focused is the subjects' private places, homes. Though the study was designed to mainly focus on schools, attention to minorities' families became necessary since during data collection respondents based and made

reference of their understanding of social world to their private homes. This underscored the practical implication of symbolic interaction theory, which at micro level (family) focuses on “how the actions and interactions between people are the result of the meanings that people attribute to objects and to other people’s actions” (Saha, 2008, chapter 1.3). This case of private life or interaction influencing and/or being influenced by public interaction confirms recommendations by various studies in the world. The findings of these studies have shown that a thorough understanding of any social issue is dependent on the researcher’s focus on the interplay of micro and macro level contexts, variables or characteristics both at perspectives of the issue (Hook 2006; Lachance-Grzela, & Bouchard, 2010). Clearly, understanding of Witnesses’ children in schools independent of their families could make my analysis less thorough. As I have argued in the methodology chapter, the data collection instrument, focus group discussion with the mother, further holds support of symbolic interaction theory.

The last variable, yet hard to be ignored in this study is religion of the minority students. Besides being used as strata, region in this paper has been used very similar to Geertz’s (1973) understanding, “religion as a cultural system” (pp. 87-125). As such, as I will discuss in the analysis chapter, I have used religion in line with Swidler’s (1986) conceptual framework of culture as tool kit to understand subjects’ use of culture as toolbox from which strategies, social actors (minorities) draw for use in social fields. Therefore, the main interpretive frameworks in this study comes from Bourdieu’s (1984) and/or Carter’s (2003) Dominant and Non-dominant capitals.

Dominant and Non-Dominant Capitals: Theoretical Approaches

Witnesses’ students use religion as toolbox from which they are socialized to draw strategies to navigate their daily familial and public school experiences. This paper, therefore, approached religion as a vital cultural system with which the church believes to structure its children’s habitus within the non-Witnesses’ high school community. Probably, someone reading the next findings-section with a more critical mind than I would deduce how (other than Jehovah’s Witnesses values) social actors in the school community implicitly and explicitly restructure the structured habitus of witnesses students. This could be due to the tendency of public school and

other institutions in using behavior normalized by the students belonging to dominant groups and the use of the same behavioral codes to predict and determine or measure students' life chances. Consequently, crediting of dominant values pressures witnesses' students who are sometimes left with little choice but to demonstrate normalized habitus even if they know such behavior is condemned by their religion. Similarly, the interviews I had with the mothers and my observation of the dramas and speeches (during the church convention) revealed that witnesses' mothers expect their children to copy school and behavioral activities by non-Witnesses students and teachers that can help promote knowledge and skills which can also help witnesses students to better and easily understand their church teachings.

Cynical of some activities and materials in high schools and other social spaces, the church concerned has socializing agents and structures, bible-based teaching by parents at home and weekly schools or training sessions at the church, all of which I observed during the dramas. Over the years church has been very optimistic of their children behavior in high schools, being no less than what Witnesses' children are encultured at home and in training sessions at church. By contrast, some of their kids reported falling victims to pressures by their peer and teacher to dress or accept values, which could likely be deemed bad by the church. After returning home from school, some of the witnesses' children are able to quickly adjust to the minority behavioral codes and parents are mostly not in the know of the behavioral adjustments by their high school children. Therefore, to guide myself in the analysis process, I sieved the collected data into dominant and non-dominant capitals, the main theoretical approaches of this paper.

What are dominant and non-dominant capitals?

From Bourdieu's (1984) work, a social actor like students is said to have dominant cultural capital after internalizing and applying hegemonic and high-status beliefs, attributes, values, symbols and codes. According to Carter (2003), Non-dominant cultural capital embodies "a set of tastes, or schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that include preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles" (p. 138).

Few would demean the vitality of both dominant and non-dominant cultural capitals because they are “tool kits” (Swidler, 1986) from which social actors draw techniques, which actors use to adapt and adjust to create and maintain life chances in dissimilar social spaces. I have used dominant cultural capital in this paper to describe those peer and teacher induced practices (like dating and immoderate dressing) which some witnesses’ students instrumentally use to for academic and social mobility. Again, I have used non-dominant cultural capital in this paper to describe the strategies Witnesses students apply to retain cultural status or values when they (students) move from school to their private homes (families). For example, in their homes and worship centers, Witnesses students reported to have made use of their non-dominant cultural capital (like moderate dressing and bad attitude towards dating) to demonstrate their belongingness to the church.

Some scholars have found that dominant and non-dominant cultural capitals play instrumental (or rational) and expressive roles, respectively, for minority students. Some Witnesses students instrumentally used immoderate dressing to attract fellow students of opposite sex. However, the findings in this paper further holds support of Carter’s (2003) work, in that the paper also finds “conceivable that dominant cultural capital may be used for expressive purposes and non-dominant cultural capital may be used for instrumental purposes” (p. 138). Given the high value which law, school and other superstructures assign to order and structured relationships of people in most societies; lawyer and most importantly, principals often expressively apply dominant practices which spontaneously legitimize norms and values of students belonging to the elite class. From the interviews, teachers expect all students to stay away from school during such holidays like Christmas, again, powerful members of the society and teachers determine the normal dress code for students. Even if school uniform is required as dressing code, different schools are likely to have different school uniforms that considers dominant values. Clearly, teachers and principals reinforce observance of holidays and legitimate dressing styles for no individual gain, rather to expressively distance themselves from minority’s stand point and/or to signal respectability (in-house affiliation) to the dominant culture. Similarly, Witness students, whose behavior at school deviates from their religious believes, would instrumentally use non-dominant cultural capital at home to get accepted by parents. One may argue, therefore, that

students' instrumental use of dominant capital (covering up of some of their preferred attitudes against pre-marital sex through dating) is what Carter (2003) describes as "the process of cultural status positioning" (p. 139). Cultural status positioning is not always easy and this explains why some students reported how taxing it is to continuously observe whether they are at home, church or school to help display acceptable behavior.

In a nutshell, both dominant and non-dominant cultural capitals (as used in this paper) show how an understanding of children's experiences in high school (from the adult perspective) can hardly be separated from an understanding of socialization processes children undergo in their private institutions (families). This is one of the reasons why it could be a little exaggeration to borrow Peet and Hartwick's (2015) description of a family as the nucleus of the society. I can safely say that even if literature on minority Witnesses and their instrumental and expressive application of non-dominant cultural capital, were not in their infancy stage, uncommon application of these theories, arguably, gives the reader the more reason to continue reading.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides a description of the process. These include but not restricted to the following: the research design, the process of choosing the participants, data collection instruments and procedures, validity of the study findings, ethical considerations, researcher's positionality, limitations and constraints as well as plan for data analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study sought to provide a rich exploration (from the adult perspective) of the experiences of religious minorities in public high schools. To ensure in-depth understanding of the experiences, I specifically used a case study of JW children in public schools in Pioneer Valley. It should be noted, as Willig (2008) maintains, using case study to collect data, helped me (as a researcher) to focus my data analysis on a particular unit, the Jehovah's witnesses in the Pioneer Valley. Furthermore, by narrowing the study to a small sample, case study, it helped me to ably employ a qualitative approach, which has been crucial in the whole research process. The study benefited

in many ways from the holistic nature, where aspects of case were viewed in the context of the whole case, and (without holding prior assumptions) I concentrated on every voice and made use of the verbatim quotes as the participants narrated their public school experiences (Ragin, 2011). This is why Creswell (2009) delineates qualitative research as:

A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.... data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (p. 4).

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participants and Sampling Strategies

To recruit participants, I used purposive, snowball sampling because as Morgan and Scannell (1998) argues, this technique allowed me to recruit participants who are more likely to generate insightful data than a random sample might. Snowballing is the process where one subject recommends that a researcher talks to another subject (Morgan and Scannell, 1998). So this chain sampling fitted my status well since as a sojourner, studying at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst, I have little command of the knowledge about the actual context of the participants' and their culture.

For the purpose of triangulation, I snowballed additional participants to the main ones, witnesses' children. To ensure that potential informants are not excluded during the process of expanding the sample frame, I categorized my sample description into what Crossman calls "quotas" (para.1-2), placing recruited informants into groups or levels depending on homogenous variables, which in this study are, age; marital status; profession and religious status. In the interest of this study, I made sure that each of the sampled categories had one or more of the following characteristics (from which the names of the quotas were drawn): students, witnesses' mothers and a teacher all aged eighteen and above. Table 2 below describes the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria for the participant samples, which, in the writer's opinion, served a crucial step towards the collection of credible data.

Table 1: Quotas of the Sample Population and the Sampling Criteria

SAMPLE QUOTA & SIZE	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS
<p>2- key informants (The first)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first one is an international doctoral student at UMass, originally from Africa. • He is not only a member of the church, but he has also been attending the Jehovah’s Witness services in Pioneer Valley since he came to the U.S. • He introduced me to some of the church leaders, mothers and other young adults who have been students to the high schools in Pioneer Valley. • He did not do his high school here in the U.S and this status excluded him from the sample frame (or quota) of students (as interviewees). • Does not currently stay with parents, from whom he was acculturated about Jehovah’s Witnesses church. He last lived with his parents, who are currently in Africa, when he was in sophomore.
<p>(The second)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The second one, an American doctoral student at UMass Amherst, introduced me to public school teachers. • He volunteered (through UMass IPO) to be my mentor so he could help me (as an international student) adjust and adapt to the University. • He is not a member of JW church; neither does he claim to have had any classmate belonging to Jehovah’s Witnesses’ church. • He once taught in one of the Amherst high schools but having not taught any witnesses’ children, excluded him from the sampling frame (or quota) of teachers (as interviewee).
<p>5 Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have been bona fide member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses church before and after their high school. • Have studied in one or more public high schools located in the Pioneer Valley only, the target area. • Have already graduated from public high school, to help provide rich and intense schooling experiences. • Not more than four years from graduation time, to ensure easy recall of their valid experiences. • Are not minors, are at least 18 years old to be able to independently offer informed consent without parents/guardians.
<p>6 Mothers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All are members of the Jehovah’s Witness’s church in the Pioneer Valley. • Have and/or have had their children learning in public high schools in Pioneer Valley. • All have children, belonging to their church and this helped assure that their socialization perspectives (as parents) on their children experiences are based on their very same common religious beliefs.
<p>1 Teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been teaching in more than one public high schools in Pioneer Valley. • Has had witnesses’ child/ren as some of the student(s) in his/her class for at least a term. • Not a member of Jehovah’s witnesses, and this helped to establish systemic patterns of the teacher’s treatment or behavior towards their religious minority students.

Key Informants and the gate keepers

Any understanding of my population sample and its sampling strategy could be incomplete without properly appreciating the critical component with which I established effective relationship with the interviewees, gatekeepers and participants of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). As Polkinghorne (1983) warns us, “professional distance and an expressed lack of interest in any specific subject expressed by an interviewee only leads to skewed information that has been filtered through roles or expectations;” (p. 268). As an interviewer, I needed to establish relationship with the persons within the sampling frame in order to obtain their consent before I could get any revelatory and detailed information from them. In accordance to Polkinghorne’s (1983) suggestion, I began recruiting participants through my network with fellow graduate students at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst.

The first network, Hastings (pseudo name), was an international doctoral student (during the time of this study) who despite his two-year worshipping with witnesses members here in Amherst, was still excluded from other three quotas because he first came here for graduate studies, as he had already graduated from high school and undergraduate studies in Africa. More also, Hastings was and is still neither a mother nor a teacher in Pioneer Valley. Still, the crucial contribution of Hastings towards this study are through the two alternatives he offered to me. First, to introduce me to the congregation overseer (the term which Hastings described as the congregational leader of Jehovah’s witnesses) to one of the nearest Kingdom Halls (the name given to the worshipping centers of the church); and/or at the district convention of the Jehovah’s witnesses which took place in July and August 2015 at UMass Amherst. With the guidance of my academic supervisor, I settled on getting connected to the witnesses’ overseers at UMass Amherst during the Witnesses’ 2015 annual convention. This place was conveniently cost effective for me since I was doing my graduate studies right at the same university. Another advantage for targeting data collection at the place of annual convention was the probable ability of convention itself in pulling together almost all the sample quotas (students, mothers and teachers) for this study.

Initially, I wanted to recruit at least an overseer into the student and/or mother quotas. However, the overall criteria I framed for sampling participants argued against such a choice because of the following conditions: To begin with, the usual male gender of overseers excluded them from the mother's quota. It has to be reminded that the context background above has already shown James (February 5, 2016) lending support to Penton's (2002) study which accentuates that Jehovah's witnesses community does condemn putting females in positions of power unless the congregation population is all-female. Since almost all informants reported me that there is no Kingdom Hall in Pioneer Valley which is all-female, therefore, there is no getting around the fact that I could not recruit an overseer into mother's quota from within the Pioneer Valley. Additionally, being old enough, married and other criteria for appointing overseer explains why he could not be included in the student quota either since most of those high school graduates are young adults.

One would not be punished to deduce (from above) that I am trying to invalidate any crucial role, overseers might have played towards this study's success. Far from that, I have a number of points to support what Hastings (one of the key informants) did by connecting me (as a researcher) to the overseers. Ethically, seeking permission from the institutional leader before seeking informed consent from potential participants belonging to the institution under the overseer, increases trustworthiness of the findings (Belmont Report, 1979). What is more is that the role of these overseers (or congregational leaders) holds much in common with what Siegle, (2002) terms as "gate keeper" (para 2). According to Siegle (2002), overseers demonstrated their gate-keeping role when they helped me gain access to the mothers (or female guardians) about which information I wanted to make sense of students' experiences in high schools. Thus, I first had to lay bare, to the overseer, all my study's intentions before discussing the issue of seeking informed consent with his church members, mothers and/or students.

The second network, John (pseudo name) is a non-witness American, who was formally made to be my student mentor by the UMass Amherst International Programs Office (IPO), an initiative which is meant to help us (incoming international students) in transitioning to a new academic space. Because both networks, Hastings and John, did not qualify to be part of any of the main

three sample quotas, I used them as what Morgan and Scannell (1998) terms as “key informants” (p. 87). Morgan and Scannell (1998) as well as Siegle (2002) define key informant as the person who knows the inside scoop and can guide you (researcher) to prospective subjects who command some information crucial to the study. In line with Siegle (2002), my student mentor (John) had ability to point me (as an outsider) to potential informants because before enrolling for his current doctoral studies, he had been studying in Massachusetts public schools and other community colleges.

Unlike Hastings, John has never been a member of the Jehovah’s Witness’s church. As a key informant, John connected me to public high school teachers in the Pioneer Valley. Connecting me to the teachers concerned was easier than would otherwise have been, due to the fact that some of the high school teachers he approached were his colleagues at the time when he was serving as a teachers in the same Pioneer Valley. Since June 2015, when the Institutional Review Board (IRB) had approved this project’s proposal, John started introducing me to the teachers concerned and would thereafter leave me with the teachers so I could discuss the process of seeking informed consent [see appendix A. 2. (a)]. By not influencing the process of seeking informed consent, John also helped me to ensure that I selected a teachers who met the study’s criteria only.

Students

I recruited JW children, who have graduated from such public high schools as Amherst Regional High, Greenfield High, West Springfield High, Northampton High Schools, etc., as the main subjects. I was, however, mindful (as indicated under problem section above) that discriminatory experience of some religious minorities could result from their (minorities’) class; gender; or race/ethnicity. For example, I have reviewed above that some public school students have fallen victims to their teachers’ punitive actions because of their (students’) black color as compared to their teachers’ white, or because of their female gender. Thus, to avoid snowballing too homogeneous sample quotas, I ensured that gender; class and race were represented in each of the purposefully sampled students and mothers’ quotas. Manipulating such variables as color and gender was crucial in many ways. Having only students of color, for instance (as subjects), could

increase the probability of generating highly skewed responses. Therefore, as shown in the table 2 below, I used religion (in this study) as the main (or independent) variable and I purposefully added other variables like gender and/or race) to make the student and mother quotas heterogeneous. Some sociologists have shown that gender-based and other discriminatory experiences are mostly relational to such other social locations as race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, (Ferree, 2009) etc. So apart from avoiding skewed data, I also wanted data from the heterogeneous sample to check for any influence of intersectionality of gender and race (for example) on the religious-based experiences of witnesses' high school students.

Table 2: Breakdown of participants' Variables.

SAMPLE QUOTA & SIZE	RACE		GENDER		RELIGION		HIGH SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITY FOR KEY INFORMANTS-STUDENTS-TEACHER AND MOTHERS' RESIDENCIAL AREA
	BLACK ▼	WHITE ▼	MALE ▼	FEMALE ▼	J.W. C ▼	OTHER ▼	
1 Key Informant	1	0	1	0	1	0	UMass Amherst
5 Students	3	2	3	2	5	0	Amherst Regional High, Greenfield High, West Springfield High, and Northampton High Schools.
1 Teacher	0	1	0	1	0	1	
6 Mothers	2	4	N/A	6	6	0	Within Pioneer Valley

Table key:

J. W. C. = Jehovah's Witnesses Church.

Others = Christian religion other than J.W

Mothers

Besides the student sample, sampling of mothers or guardians was also not without reasons. Penton's (1977) patriarchal delineation of the witnesses' families concludes by asserting that child rearing is primarily given to mothers among the Jehovah's witnesses. This secondary care-giving witnesses' fathers have on their children relative to mothers' closer contact with their student children, gave me the feeling that students' reporting of high school experiences obeys

the same logic. Thus, their children (high school students) are likely to narrate their high school experiences to their mothers (as are closely available for primary care giving) more detailed and immediate than do to their fathers. My perspective was validated during the focus group discussion with mothers who helped put to a rest, a number of similar questions about which responses I struggled with the students' interviewees. From Penton's (1977) and other researchers who have covered on Jehovah's Witnesses from the feminist stand point, I wondered if parents contribute to the problem this project seeks to study. If yes how, and what role (if any) do parents play towards the children's strategies in navigating the public school community in the Pioneer Valley? Therefore, much as I am an egalitarian, being a purposeful sampling process, I had to reason whom, between the mother and the father can possibly provide intensive information more than the other.

Teacher

Furthermore, I initially proposed to include a sample of three or more teachers to help explore for any systemic factors influencing the experiences of the witnesses' children in public school. However, I did not successfully recruit them by that number as most of those I approached either treated me with much suspect (despite the consent forms) and/or denied having had any student belonging to the Jehovah's Witnesses church. Either some teachers demanded incentives in cash or in kind, which if I accepted could be against the ethical conditions under which the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the proposal for this study. Instead, (as indicated in the tables 1 and 2 above), I managed to get the informed consent of one teacher about whose data has equally helped address the study's questions.

Sample Size

Except with the focus group discussion during which I had six mothers, the total number of research subjects I sampled was largely dependent on what Siegle (2002) terms as "data saturation point" (para 1). According to Siegle (2002), "data saturation occurs when researcher no longer...hears or sees...new information....Unlike quantitative researchers who wait for the end of the study before they start analyzing their data, qualitative researchers can analyze the data throughout their study" (par. 1-3). This way of determining participants' quantity is in line

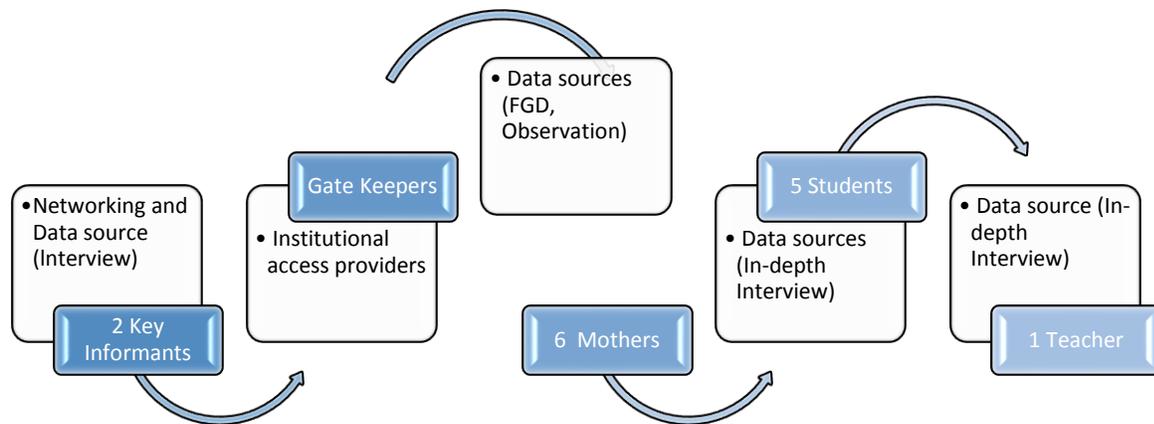
with the rich-thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) that my study's problem was questioning. However, the empirical question that was difficult to avoid asking is does this mean I would still stop collecting data at the second interview if the interviewee's responses happen to be a repeat of those by the first interviewee, even if not all research questions are addressed? Completely relying on Siegle's (2002) data saturation point could surely pose a threat to the trustworthiness of the study's findings if data was collected from too smaller sample than the population to which the findings ought to be transferable. In that event, I planned to ignore such saturation until I collect quality information enough to explain the study's problem. This is why instead of originally proposed twelve interviewees, this study still benefited from the data from seven of them (5 students, a teacher and 1 key informant). The information I gathered through the 6-mother FGD, participant observation and document analysis proved to be vital benchmarks with which I confirmed the saturation concerned.

DATA INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURE

I conducted in depth interviews on children, a teacher three-group sample and a one Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as tools for collecting data. Empirical understanding of the ways religious minority students balance the tension between their religious viewpoint and public schooling requires careful choice of techniques for gathering detailed data which rest around reflections, experiences, feelings, and attitudes. My choice of instruments are supported by Silverman (2001) who illuminates that collection of information such as this study was designed for, is possible if there is safe space for self-expressions and conversation between the interviewer and interviewee. In addition, I used instruments like audio tapes to record and protect authentic facts from the subjects. The taped recorded information guaranteed me that the participants' responses would accurately be conserved for analysis (Silverman, 2001).

It is worth noting that besides the interviews and FGD which I had initially proposed, I ended up developing additional data collection instruments, participant observation and document analysis. The diagram below displays the participants and the collection instruments of data I used, the details of which follow in the next section.

Figure 2: Diagram Showing Participants, Data Instruments and Data Collection Steps



In-depth Interview

I conducted in-depth interviews in three stages, with the five students; with one of the key informants, Hastings, and with the public school teacher. I used in-depth interview as the main technique for gathering information.

Steps Used During the Interviews

In the first step, one of my key informants (Hastings) helped me establish contacts with the gatekeeper (the congregation leaders of the local Kingdom Halls (the worshipping centers). Hastings also connected me to some Witnesses children who have been high school students within the study area, Pioneer Valley. Hastings started connecting me with those potential students, mothers and gatekeepers from July to August 2015; the same period when Jehovah’s Witnesses held their annual district convention at Mullins Center of the UMass Amherst. Further than that, in February 2016, I conducted phone interview with Hastings to learn about how he understands morality and organization structure within the context of the church concerned. This interview was necessary since I did not find sufficient literature on the background context.

In the second step, I discussed with one of the gatekeepers, during the convention, on permission to seek informed consent from students who had come conveniently to participate in the convention. I approached the students concerned with the consent forms [see appendix A. I. (a)] to seek their voluntary informed consent so that they could participate in this study. Because I was guided by saturation of data, I approached ten students but only six consented before two of them later withdrew, citing lack of experiences and/or time for my study. Third, I consulted each of the four consenting students about the location, date, time, whether face-to-face or phone type of interview that each would prefer. Before the scheduled interview dates and times, I was sending reminder emails just to confirm (see appendix B for interview reminder script).

All but two interviews were face-to-face, and happened at UMass Amherst. While I wrote down points during one-on-one interview, I used note taking as data collection tool in addition to phone recording. During the other, two phone interviews, I never agreed on where the respondent would be, except the date and time. During the phone interview, I could request the knowledge of the interviewee just to know whether their place of interview would affect their responses to me. Both interviewees reported home as their whereabouts at the time of interview. I started interviews immediately after the convention concerned on July 30 to August 15, 2015, and each of which took no more than 50 minutes. Additionally, I also conducted follow-up interviews with one student (James) and key informant (Hastings) by phone and took place in February 2016. Follow-up interviews addressed knowledge gaps and helped to probe for more information on issues, which emerged during the first interviews.

Furthermore, as I have explained in the students' interview guide [appendices A. 1. (b)], at the end of each interview, I requested the respondent to connect me to the next potential respondent. I got three more potential subjects, out of which I only interviewed one who brought the number of students interviewed to five. I did not interview the other two because at the fifth interview, the study's data seemed to have saturated already. This could be due to the fact that students' interview followed that of mothers who had earlier shared adequate perspectives on the research

questions. It should be noted that the lists of questions I used during the in-depth interviews can be found in appendices A. 1. (b). Finally, I had asked many questions during each interview but the three central questions, which guided this research, are worth repeating:

- a. Are there public school activities which make children of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Pioneer Valley feel excluded, and if any, to what extent do such children feel excluded??
- b. How do public high school activities, values and materials restrain or promote learning and adjustment of witnesses' students in the Pioneer Valley?
- c. What are some of the strategies with which witnesses children balance their religious beliefs with unfavorable education values and/or activities in the public school in Pioneer Valley?

Apart from the interviews with key informant and students, I also conducted in-depth interview with one teacher, Anastasia (not real name). The second key informant, my American mentor (whom I recognize in this paper as John), also used June through August, 2015, linking me up with the some public school teachers in the Pioneer Valley. Unlike with students, I almost failed sampling a teachers, majority of whom either denied for no reason. Some cited, having not taught a witnesses' student, teaching obligations, time, lack of knowledge on the study's subject, to name but a few. Moreover, despite explaining the study's purpose, some teachers seemed to be cynical of my study, yet other wondered how they could spend their time on my study for no financial or material gain. This explains why only one consented to participate in my study in October, 2015. However, this should not set any alarm bells since by then data had already saturated and the teacher's perspectives helped no more than triangulating the data.

When John (key informant) had connected me to some teachers, I repeated the same steps to every teacher, like I did with students' respondents. Thus, I also approached teachers again with consent forms to seek their informed voluntary participation in this study [see appendix A. 2. (a)]. During the consent seeking process for teachers, I presented my research purpose and objectives of the study. With teacher Anastasia, I first failed to do the interview in August at her

preferred apartment due to lack of transport. Public buses to her route were on reduced schedules. I probably needed a car, the possession of which remains a game to a rich man's kid, playing of which demands bottom-less pockets. As I kept on pondering on a tax, she told me that we to meet for the interview at her mum's place, around UMass Amherst, in October, 2015. Like with other in-depth interviews, I interviewed the teacher using English language, took some notes and the minimum and maximum times I took conducting each interview were 40 and 50 minutes respectively.

Generally, I spent the first minutes of each and every interview by going through the process of reconfirming the consent of the key informant, students and the teacher (see Appendices section for consent forms for details). During the interview, probing questions followed each main question in order to enhance the clarity of issues being pursued. Examples of probing questions were, *could you elaborate on this point?* Alternatively, *then what followed later?* [See Appendices A. 1. (b). and A. 2. (b) for detailed list of questions]. At the end of the interview, I thanked the interviewee and promised them that I would be in touch as I progress with my study on these matters. I also asked the interviewee to connect me to a potential informant falling within their quota.

Literature is not silent on the vitality of the in-depth interview. For instance, Ezzy (2002) points out that in-depth interview is a kind of dialogue or channel of communication in qualitative inquiry engaging the researcher in curiosity to comprehend unknown individual's tales and experiences by asking and listening. The interviews were thus an opportunity for me to address necessary issues while providing opportunity for asking probing questions to further explore the interviewee's perspective regarding the problem in this study. Further than that, As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) purports that an in-depth interview allowed me to grasp the complications of students and teacher's sentiments, judgments, and awareness of the issue under study. Affirming this view, The Center for Strategy Research (CSR) emphasizes that the inquiry of in person questions, whether it is excellent or awful thoughts from an individual participant can remain its personal judgment on a particular concern. In more detail, organization for the Center for Strategy Research (CSR, 2010) argues that in-depth interviews are intended to reveal or unearth

important information and allow investigators to locate the factual tale from those who are knowledgeable. Therefore, in-depth interview not only gave me (as a researcher) freedom of exploration but also provided the quality of information that has credibly addressed the questions (from the participants' perspectives) for which this study was developed to address.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Generally, the steps I had taken during this FGD were not very dissimilar to those procedures I had employed during students-teacher interviews. After the access to the annual district convention through Hastings and later through the overseers as gate keepers, I engaged in discussion with the mothers for informed consent [see Appendix C. 1. (a)]. Of note is that during the FGD I utilized the interview guide [see Appendix C. 1. (b)]. I purposefully used interview guide to have direction so I could avoid trial-and-error FGD process. As Patton (1990) puts it, FGD offered me as a researcher the flexibility to deviate from the line of questioning in order to explore a potentially fruitful area of discussion brought up during the interview. This is why the discussions of some issues in this paper takes the setting not of the school but the participants' homes and worship centers.

My main role during this focus group was that of the facilitator [as indicated in the FGD guide in Appendix C. 1. (b)]. As an interviewer, it was vital to actively in guide participating mothers and guardians during the interview process so they could easily recupereate the memories of their children experiences at the same time not influencing the answers that were being given, by not asking leading questions. I actively listened and got important points. Because I had no research assistant, I phone-recorded conversations. This ensure that nothing of the more important information would miss out for later transcription and analysis. As Polkinghorne (1983) notes, interview transcriptions and the reading of it provided me the opportunity to engage in an as if state of being present.

A lot more women were reluctant to participate in my study citing time and lack of information as some of the reasons. Nevertheless, after five days of my participation during the convention, I

managed to get consent from six mothers/guardians. I then followed up by sending reminder emails to those mothers who had consented, asking them about their preferred date, time and venue. Contrary to my prior expectation, I did not have to trouble in deciding for a more convenient common place since almost all participants had asked that the FGD be conducted at the convention center, UMass Amherst on July 29, 2015 during lunch break or after the day's convention activities. I went by majority decision which preferred lunch break to after convention activities.

It should be underscored that the participants' number, six, finds support from Rabiee's (2004) study who suggested that a number of participants, six to ten maximum, is a small group enough to reveal a superior perspective. The size of the group was thus administratively suitable for a range of ideas and sufficient for the mothers not to feel being uncomfortable or not relaxed (Rabiee, 2004), as this could potentially disrupt the course and purpose of the study. It remains worth noting that during the focus group discussion which lasted for 75 minutes, I divided my time to focus on two separate parts. The first part was to set the tone of the discussion, and to understand mothers' background to enhance the understanding of the context under which I designed the study. To allow every mother introduce herself, I asked each to say her name (or pseudonym) and briefly tell other participants a bit about her child or children and their education levels (while not mentioning children's real names), and their (mother's) connection/relationship/membership/ activism with Jehovah's witnesses church in Pioneer Valley. The second segment of the discussion was to elicit participants' perception in relation to the experiences of the witnesses' students in public school (Appendix C. 1. (b) holds full protocol). At the end of the FGD, I thanked every mother for their insights into the discussion and I promised to be in touch with them throughout the development of the study's report until the research findings are approved, which is probably not later than May, 2016.

The effectiveness of FGD in helping collecting credible data for this study is far from being unprecedented. That is, many scholars have researched a lot on the significance of FGD. First, it clearly helped me to engage the mothers in a mediator-assisted conversation to the study's issues concerned (Vogt, King, and King, 2004). Second, as Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007)

found, focus group helped me gather information from participants (mothers) in a rapid and habitually less expensive way than interviewing mothers individually. There is, therefore, no question on why FGD was squarely applicable to this study, because (being a non-funded study) it allowed only one meeting, reduced travel particularly for me who do not have any means of transportation and I easily focused my study in a conveniently very close place, UMass Amherst. Third, the collection of data through the focus group was not restricted to discussions but observation as well. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further maintains that focus group interviews are very beneficial to data collection because they hold observation practices in addition to components of interview. More also, as Patton (2002) argues, focus group interviews controlled the quality of data since mothers' being in a group setting implicitly checked and balanced on each other's false, extreme or emotional views which I could have been exposed to in individual interviews.

Additionally, I found focus group interviews, enjoyable for the participating mothers whom they looked less fearful of being evaluated by the interviewer because of the group setting (Patton, 2002). The mothers' ability to hear from each other during the FGD might have stimulated them (mothers) to rethink their own views. Mothers being part of the sect in which gendered relations are encouraged (Penton (2002), may be indoctrinated to have a reserved mind. Nevertheless, that was not an addition to the list of limitations and constraints of this study since the empowering bottom-up principles of this method helped stimulate mothers to speak their minds. I also assumed that mothers were able to talk because the FGD was all-female. Therefore, FGD was beneficial to the researcher as it provided an opportunity to triangulate data sources by exposing me to an additional way of collecting information. This technique thus helped make the findings of this project more trustworthy.

Participant Observation



Source: JW.org

Figure 3: Picture of Drama during Convention: “These Words....You must remember”

In addition to interviews and FGD, I also used observation to collect supplementary data. It is now an open secret how I got connected to the venue of Witnesses’ annual convention in question. The process of negotiating with gatekeepers, sampling, and seeking consent from those

recruited saw me attending to the convention proceedings. Eventually, (though my project plan did not include observation as a data instrument) I did some observations on my own. This happened after getting familiarity with the on-going convention events like drama, songs, speeches, etc., and other aesthetic or semiotic expressions like dressing and sitting plan. Of particular importance during my observation was drama, in which actors created conflicts with fellow witnesses and non-witnesses over various issues. For example, one setting had more, some witnesses children acted as high school students who were challenged by peers over their (witnesses) belief in creation against evolution. Soon I learnt that drama and speeches were valuable additions to the church's cultural toolbox from which witnesses children are socialized to learn how to tackle dissenting views and practices in different fields including school community.

I befriended some men, women and children so much that I could hear some inviting me to attend their worship services at their church, and/or suggesting to conduct a bible study with me. After the annual convention, I discussed with Hastings in August, the possibility of attending the actual services (I was already invited to) at the Witnesses church nearest to UMass Amherst, from where I was operating. During the services I attended at one of local kingdom Halls, the faces of mothers and other friends I made at the convention were as if they were saying 'welcome home.' Apart from observing interaction by adults, I also set my eyes on the interaction children had with their families and other individuals. The informal observations I had during the focus group interview, during the services of the convention and at the local church, increased the quality of data collected as well as the analysis and conclusion. Through observation, I obtained important information that could not be obtained using the interview methods.

Document review

I conducted follow-up phone interviews in December 2015, and later an in-person interview with Hastings, (whom I initially used as key informant), so I could inquire about the church's demography and social and cultural context in Pioneer Valley. When both interviewees had struggled on the statistical questions, they recommended that I try consulting year books and

booklets some of which (like Awake) are authored by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania which are co-published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York and International Bible Student Association.

To add more clarity on the rationale behind the review of documents, it is worth repeating the perspective towards which this study approached religion. Like Geertz (1973), I view religion as a system of culture and using Geertz's (1973) "thick description" (pp. 87-125) which is about re-interpreting of interpreted texts, gives me opportunity to analyze and synthesize existing documented and undocumented data I collected through both observation and document review. I then filter those verbal and semiotic data through such theoretical lens I have so far internalized during my graduate studies at UMass Amherst, as dominant and non-dominant cultural capital theories, under literature review section above.

DATA MANAGEMENT

I wrote out and (where efficiency was necessary), I tape-recorded some proceedings of the FGD. I wrote out every observation and discussion verbatim and by audiotaping to help me to reconsider and echo on the data, and able to make a complete meaning about these minority students. I compressed transcriptions and informal observations by coding themes grounded on categories.

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

As a qualitative researcher, I know how fundamentally valuable data organization is to the overall research process. More data generated in qualitative research does not necessarily mean it provided the exact information needed. The triangulated data sources normally make qualitative data bulky and uncountable information (Richards, 2009). Data analysis therefore remained significant to filter out the unnecessary raw information which I collected and enabled me get data that would presumably provide meaningful information (Beyea and Nicoll, 2000). Beyea and Nicoll (2000) asserts that the main aspiration of examining and making sense of the data is to limit the massive information gathered to controllable combined data.

Since there is no rule limiting to a specific time to start data analysis, my analysis of data was ongoing process beginning from the initial collection of data in July 2015. Doing data gathering and groundwork data analysis concurrently is, according to Merriam (1998), “the right way” (p.162) to do it in qualitative research, because it permitted me as a researcher to “focus and shape my study as it proceeded,” (p.162) in the course of consistent reflections “on the data and attention to what data are saying” (Glesne, 1999, p.130). So this explains why I started a preliminary analysis alongside the interview process.

Therefore, after data collection from the three sample informants and instruments, I simply continued with the already started analysis. However, there was still a need for careful steps in going through the information in order to understand the type of data collected, notes taken and the recorded conversations. First, I transcribed interviews word for word. Second, I read all the documents containing collected data, looking for themes and patterns until the categories become redundant and no new typologies were emerging (Merriam, 2002). Then I highlighted codes (using different colors) to find the emerging themes from the findings. I did the coding by noting the key words in context and finding words that were often repeated (Merriam, 2002). Finally, I interpreted the themes in terms of existing study findings on student minorities and using the neo-Marxist dominant and non-dominant theories.

VALIDITY

To ensure credibility, accuracy and dependability of the data I employed the following steps. In the first place, as already discussed under participants’ section above, I established contacts with leaders of institutions to which the quota samples belong. My networking with key informants and, later, gatekeepers, which I already had eased my contacts with leaders of church and school institutions and this crucially helped me gain access towards obtaining revelatory and detailed information. Next, as I will explain in the next sub section, I employed multiple ways of pulling together information (triangulation) that reliably addressed the study questions by cross verifying the data. This is very much similar to observation by Merriam (2002), Corbin, and Strauss (2008)

who maintain that qualitative research necessarily uses multiple ways to gather information. Such ways, as this project made use of are, inter alia, interviews, FGD, participant observation and document review.

In addition, as discussed above I consulted my participants about the objectives and the focus of the study, location they would prefer and the suitable time they would be willing to be interviewed. This prevented loss of interest and the subsequent skewed information from the informants. However credible collected data may be, research findings may not be reliable if they are not transferable. Therefore, to ensure trustworthy findings, I avoided influencing the interview answers by asking leading questions. Rather, I assumed the facilitator's role by helping interviewees retrieve the memories of their past while at the same time, actively listening to get important points. Finally, as I will discuss in the next subsection, the use of tape-recorder also explains why the findings should be trustworthy since this limited any probability of losing important data for later transcription and analysis.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In appendices A and E, I clearly explained to the human research subjects how beneficial and freedom to move out (without questions or justification) the project would be to them. Again, I employed serious measures like seeking voluntary informed consent from participants and explaining to them about research objectives, use of pseudonyms, and aggregate reporting of findings, to protect participants from harm or coercion (see Appendices A to C for detailed steps on ethics under which this study was carried out). More than this, I increased social pressure for participants to maintain confidentiality, I facilitated a discussion among the participants at the beginning of focus groups, establishing group agreements for standards of confidentiality and asking participants to agree to those standards (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). I strongly believe that setting up consensual ground remained crucial in clarifying the expected ethical standards of confidentiality for participants and establish group norms that encouraged participating mothers to uphold those standards [see Appendix C. 1. (b)].

POSITIONALITY: RESEARCHER'S INTEREST

This section will first trace researcher's status and relationship to the informants, or anything related to my status or relation to the Jehovah's Witnesses' church. To begin with, I have focused on Jehovah's Witnesses in Pioneer valley, for convenience sake. My choice on Jehovah's Witnesses as minority groups result from different but related factors. I noted during my review that literature on minorities' students disaggregated by gender, race and class is voluminous. Sparse is literature on religious minority students of which JW children tends be most sparse. In addition, the intensity of persecutory experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses in America and other world parts (as I have discussed in the literature review above), and the discriminatory experiences of some children in American schools, face. Eventually, I was reminded of similar persecutory experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi (in the 1970s) and other African countries. Recalling from my undergraduate history courses, similar and persistent persecutory experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses (now at world level) intrigued my research and academic curiosity for minority students and Jehovah's Witnesses in particular. Apart from the above connections through educational literature and/or through education institution in the case of key informants, I am not in any singular way related to the teacher and witnesses' students I interviewed. Neither do I belong to Jehovah's Witnesses church.

I am doing this master's project in Pioneer Valley, the same area within which my graduate school, where I am studying, is located. The research project will predominantly serve no less or more than a partial requirement for my graduation. Also of note is that the research experiences here will provide me (as an international educator), an understanding of what it means to undertake a study in an area for which I lack cultural capital. For example, I found sampling teachers, in a foreign land, not an easy task. I wondered if I can attribute struggles in sampling officials like teachers to my citizenship status, which might limits my skills and knowledge over the local social and professional culture. However, the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) acculturated me through its basic course on some of the sampling skills embedded in research ethics. Finally, this research experience has formed a valuable capital from which I will be able to expand (in future) by exploring on education development and minority experiences in Africa in general, and Malawi (my country) in particular. This way I hope to inform education policies for socioeconomic wellbeing of minority population.

LIMITATIONS

I acknowledge that my small sample size may not allow me to generalize about the opinions of other people who fit the inclusion criteria (Krueger, 1994). However, the purpose of this study was to understand, from adult perspectives, ways how students of Jehovah's Witnesses church balance their religious beliefs and public school activities, and not to generalize the opinions of them to the larger population from which participants were drawn. Thus, focus groups were a reasonable approach (Chiu & Knight, 1999; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999).

Because focus groups allow participants to hear (and possibly disclose) other participants' statements, I would not easily guarantee that mothers would hold in confidence what other participants said (Belmont Report, 1979; Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). However, as I have indicated in the focus group protocol [Appendix C. 1. (b).] I took some steps to offer participants as much confidentiality as I could, both during the discussions and in reporting of the data. I notified participants of this potential risk and I had to underscore it at various stages during the process (e.g., during recruiting; on the informed consent form; at the beginning of the focus groups). Furthermore, it might not be easy to set aside my own preconceptions or standpoint that might see me as a researcher suspending what is known about the phenomenon for which the project was carried out. However, I took some initiatives. I tried to keep an open context with an absolute concentration and complete absorption in phenomenon under study. Again, I asked another researcher (expert in qualitative research) to compare my interpretation and analysis of data I had collected, especially after completing writing the draft. All this helped determine if the situation described applies to my own preconceptions (Del Siegle, 2002).

Finally, it should be noted that I only had one FGD because of my time and financial inability to have more than one of them. However instrumentally rational, my approach might be to any critic, the validity of the findings might not be affected because data was collected from purposefully sampled respondents and triangulated using other instruments as those I have

already accounted for above. This enabled me to cross-verify information from any of the data sources proposed in this project. Eventually, cross-verifying data from different sources had more revelations than I could imagine, details follows below.

On the Originality of Data

During the data analysis, I noted that I received more varied responses from students than from mothers and the teacher during individual interviews. With the mothers and the dramas and speeches, I observed that their responses and behaviors were convergent. I speculated during the follow-up interviews with students and key informant that either Jehovah's witnesses do not like giving personal opinions or they have strong socialization structures, which promote common attitudes towards issues and people. I confirmed my early assertion after I had my paper screened by Turn-it-in, which demonstrated that dramas and some answers from interviewees were in fact quotes from various Watchtower publications. Hence, I observed that some common perspectives parents offered during FGD were not just a mere choice of words; rather, it reflected their structured socialization process and verbatim references to doctrine.

I quoted the conversation from the FGD and my analysis revealed that play actors and convention speakers used the same scripts during the convention and perhaps other meetings. After further inquiry, I learnt that even the drama and speeches are mostly pre-written and published, thereby making them accessible on the internet. For example, the interview script found under finding section is also partly found not only on the internet but also in the Watchtower book, *Questions young people ask*. It is from these books that Jehovah's Witnesses are required to prepare through dramas; how to respond to daily speeches, discussions with friends and/or interviews like the one I had with them. At every worshiping center (Kingdom Hall), witnesses' members meet thrice weekly, during which they study and rehearse how to behave and speak outside with non-Jehovah's witnesses using literature and Bible quotations prepared and published by Watch Tower Society and distributed for free to each and every participating member. It is one of the discussed issues in this paper that their literature is published by one body, containing the same subject matter (about character) for most meetings and for the whole world. Even collecting data from the church members using interviews

therefore contains a question about *originality of data* since interviewees hardly say anything that is not representative of their church; and that is not doctrine. All this explains why one might find data in this paper that is quoting the doctrine of the church and also mostly found in various internet sources. In all places where I have found Internet or Book references to interviews, I have added a footnote indicating the source other than the interview. These instances also poses the fascinating question of how these interviews should be considered in the research process, and more broadly, how to conduct research in circumstances where the interviewees have rehearsed the interview process beforehand, to make sure the “correct” doctrine is formulated during interviews. These larger methodological questions, however, are outside of the scope of this capstone project.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, I present the findings of this study and its analysis. I organize the discussion around the three major questions that guided the study. The first part of analysis highlights some of the children’s experiences (from adult perspectives) in public high schools of Pioneer Valley with reference to their religious beliefs. The second part of the discussion dwells on strategies children of Jehovah’s Witnesses use to balance their religious beliefs with education values and/or activities in the public school. In other words, since research above has shown that the population of public school minority students is on the rise, so if Witness children face less favorable teaching and learning experiences, how do they manage them? The final part discusses how some public high school activities and strategies by witnesses students, restrain or promote teaching and learning processes of Witness students? From the data I analyzed, all names here are not real (pseudo names).

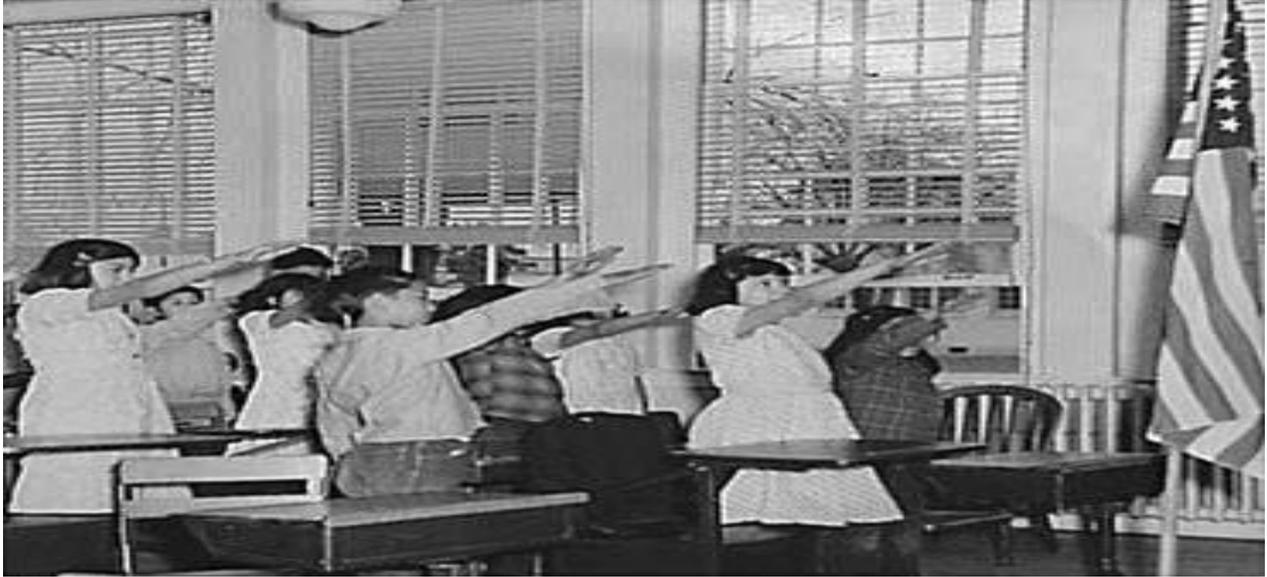
Activities, Which Affect the Teaching and Learning Processes of Witness Children.

From the dramas and speeches I observed, students; teacher; and mothers’ perspectives; I wanted to find out any practice or material content which they think are more or less favorable to the witnesses’ children with regard to their religious beliefs in public high schools of Pioneer Valley. I expected issues like pledge of Allegiance or flag salute and teachers forcing students for blood donation to be points of contention raised during data collection process as they were mentioned

in some of the literature. However, during the interviews, issues of pledging allegiance and blood appeared to command almost no attention from the interviewees (students and mothers). Other than interviews, it was the dramas and speeches I watched during the annual convention (in July 2015), which exposed me to strong messages against donating or being donated blood to and by anyone including student. To the question, ‘what are some of experiences which witnesses children find less or more challenging in high schools? Students and mothers’ responses point out to a number of issues, which I analyzed into the following themes: dress code, dating, bullying, public holidays, evolution, and teacher’s view of education.

Pledge of Allegiance

Most students unlike mothers expressed very little or no knowledge about the flag salute or pledge of allegiance. Mothers recalled how hard it was, during their high school time, to salute flag or pledge allegiance. Most students unlike mothers expressed very little or no knowledge about the flag salute or pledge of allegiance. *To us, saluting flag...is what we are encouraged not to do...*, one mother emphasized before the rest nodded their heads in appraisal before another demonstrated how she could intentionally fail her hand from rising above her forehead. When I probed on the reason for their stand point on the flag salute, most of them cited idolatry as semiotically embedded in the practice concerned. Like students, mothers seemed to acknowledge no receipt of complaints from their students related to these issues, and this convinces them that flag and allegiance issues are not at the center of discussions as was the case previously. On the reasons for the less reinforcement in today’s public high schools, mothers hurriedly reported the weakening of this pledge as a positive development to have happened in high schools. Another mothers seemed to reason from the policy perspective as she notes that *some sections of people who do not share the same belief in God constitutionally questioned, ... ‘under God’ as used in the Pledge... that the pledge discriminates against non-believing students....* This response forced me to inquire from the teacher, any systematic agenda behind pledging allegiance. Teacher Anastasia, argued the pledge or flag salute was one of school cultural tools that helped promote patriotism.



Source: Library Congress by Carol Kuruvilla

Figure 4: Students pledging allegiance to the American flag. As shown in the second picture, pledging allegiance was later replaced with hand-over-heart salute during World War II

Mothers' reports hold support to the studies I earlier reviewed of Tharpe (2005) and Nussbaum (2011). Both studies found that worshipping idols is the reason why Witness' doctrine prohibits a

child from saluting a flag in high school. While the students I interviewed never pointed to pledge of allegiance, it could be not very surprising to learn about little support for the pledge since it might attack the concept of freedom and rights, which the schools support.

Dress codes

Dress codes generally form an important element of school culture. Students usually manifest their religious or social beliefs and/or support a particular way of life through their dressing [Springfield High (2014-2015)]. To regulate students' dressing styles, some public high schools like Amherst Regional High; Greenfield High; West Springfield High; and Northampton High, use dress codes and uniforms.

Most students simply said that they do not like uniform. However, one public high school teacher, Anastasia, stated that some schools like Amherst Regional High unlike others in Springfield do not encourage school uniform. When I had asked her whether or not school uniforms are important, she personally withheld her opinion but instead opted for policy-based explanation, as she said,

School uniforms limit students' freedom of expression, as students are not able to state what they want to wear, school uniforms defeats development of individualism among children as the uniform trains them to conform to group views

Anastasia further argued ...for these and other reasons, ability to make decisions on their dressing, helps children to avoid retarded growth towards maturity...

I further probed her into the reasoning behind the use of uniform in those high schools of Pioneer Valley. With knowledge from my high school teaching experience in Malawi, I was not very much surprised by Anastasia's perspective saying, *those schools encouraging school uniforms among others, instill discipline and facilitates kind of cultivating loyalty among students towards authority*. Anastasia echoed earlier views by mothers during the FGD. Here almost all mothers supported the public school idea of having a defined dress code like uniform.

...you know what uniform or any restrictive dressing makes our children (in school) safer by making it easier to recognize our kids out of school community and if any threat approaches the school....I would send my kid to high school where uniform is encouraged since I know without uniforms my kid would be succumbed to peer pressure resulting from wearing fancy, expensive, modern clothes....

When I quizzed the mothers whether or not their unanimous support for uniform has anything to do with their religious believes, they somewhat seemed to not utterly agree with promoting individualism (for which uniform is discouraged) among their kids....*Where there is no dress code or uniform, students are tempted to wearing too trendy pants which reflects badly on us as parents and what we believe in (FGD).* This sparked my interest in what these mothers do if they are in an area like Amherst where uniform is not a must, to which one said *...we know already, we want to teach them at home and church to consider seriously an item of clothing,... what will it (clothes) got to reveal about me? Does the dressing reflect who I really am?*

Therefore, it looks like absence of unified clothing, to the witnesses' mothers is nowhere near a challenge. To the mothers, absence of uniform affords their children an opportunity to indirectly use their dressing to express their beliefs to their peers and society in general. Nevertheless, some parents admitted it is not always easy to instill a code of dressing matching their religious beliefs. I found this to be true as one of the students, Jarriyah, I interviewed recalled the following conversation with her parents.

Dad: *Are you putting on that...?*

Jarriyah: *Why not? ...I'm just going to the mall with a friend...*

Mom: *Not in that provocative attire!*

Jarriyah: *Mom..., this is what all my friends at school are wearing... besides, it makes a statement!"*

Dad: *Well, I don't like what it's stating! ...half of it (skirt) is missing....Go upstairs and change, young lady, otherwise you're not going to the mall!*

Other students like Jarriyah noted that whether the school encourages uniform or not, mostly they are in conflict with either parents or teachers and/or peers. The students reported that mostly neither too short (shorter than mid-thigh) nor too long pants and skirts are allowed in schools. Witnesses' kids said much as they would follow their parents' guidance to wear oversized pants and skirts, this dressing turns them into laughing stocks at school by their peers. Another student, Lucy, says: *I was influenced by my friends to wear look-at-me outfit to look trendy and get attention of guys... but mom always said it's sloppy....*

For Jarriyah, at times she could try put on what her peers recommended at school and try evade parents' eyes. However, I should bring clarity here that it is not all students who reported conflicting conversations with parents regarding dressing. Some students reported to have had no problems with the way parents expect them to dress (moderate dressing) or that they try to put on clothes as directed by their parents. When one student emphasized on not very fashioned or not trendy clothes, I quickly recalled what I had observed during the witnesses' annual convention in July 2015. I also remembered my classmate, an international student, at UMass who called me while driving past Mullins Center (convention venue). My friend wanted to know what was going on and why was I found there (Mullins Center) among men smartly dressed in suits and women who were mostly in long skirts. My friend reasoned that women in America could not be seen in long skirts and this dressing is exactly what I observed when I later visited a nearby church.

From my observation (during convention) on witnesses females putting on long dress/skirts and almost every male member putting on suits, and the blurting of Jarriyah's father on what he perceive as immoderate dressing, it can be concluded that dressing code is required everywhere. Whether at school, home or church, witnesses' students have to adjust and adapt to different codes befitting the context. It is clear, that while some witnesses' students regard their modest dressing as a way of expressing who they are, others would (at times) use look-at-me clothes for instrumental purposes.

Observance and/or celebrations of holidays

High school students in Pioneer Valley, like in any other part of the world observe and/or celebrate events. Witnesses' children reported that many other holiday are good since they help them refresh and focus on other life issues. To the students' observance of some holidays like Christmas and other national holidays as well as holding celebrations like of Halloween, do not go down well with their values and beliefs. However, like mothers' perceptions, most students expressed dissatisfaction on Christmas, Halloween and birthday celebrations. For example, Jude had this to say, *Christmas is connected to false worship....Roman pagans celebrated the birthday of the sun on December 25* (August 15th, 2015, personal communication). Supporting Jude's position, James further said that *the Church leaders wanted more pagans to become Christians, so even though Jesus was not born on December 25, church leaders decided to celebrate Jesus' birth on that date*. Similarly, in the words of Thom, *Halloween is related to the contact with spiritual forces, which threaten or frighten their beliefs* (student interview). Students thus seemed to relate holidays concerned to the worship of many gods, whom they claimed to be different from God (notice the first capitalized letter).

Besides Christmas, birthdays and Halloween, Mothers during the FGD added Easter to the list of discredited activities related to schooling. Like the way students reasoned, mothers claimed that some churches conduct Easter worship services at the rise of the sun. To the witnesses mothers, worshipping during sunrise, semiotically relates to the worship of the roman sun god. Since, the mothers and students seemed to believe that the observance of holidays was/is somewhat superstitious; I asked mothers if any of them or their gatekeepers in Pioneer Valley had brought these holiday concerns to the attention of school officials. They denied despite being cynical on these celebrations. In fact, mothers hinted that every witness is required not to observe the holidays concerned. This made me to ask students if they still go to school when non-witnesses children are on break. It was less surprising for me to learn that students have a neutral stance by keeping a blind eye on these holiday observance. James (February 2016), for example, reasoned that his parents also went through the same school holiday experiences. While the question of whether or not Jehovah's Witnesses church will continue participating in observing such holidays as Christmas could be a subject for another day, witnesses' non-observance claim deserves a thicker description. Their non-observance might hold water only at mental level. By

physically staying away from school could, in itself be an action that observes the holidays on their (witnesses) own behalf.

Teacher-Induced Stress



Source: JW.org

Figure 5: Picture of Teacher-Induced Pressure

Many education studies express teaching efficiency in terms of teacher's ability to improve test scores for his/her students [Gordon, Kane, & Staiger (2006)]. As such some high school teachers relay the pressure on their students to work hard to get better scores which according to Anastasia (November, 2016), help to increase life chances of students. The culture of some teachers exerting pressure (for improved performance) on their students in public high school teachers gets Jarriyah's support, who recalls,

My teacher expects no bad grade from me, always I got better scores than proceeding semester, but he could go like...Jarriyah you can do better.... And I felt pressure to work harder so I could gain hid approval (Jarriyah, August 5, 2015).

I inquired from Jude on how her teachers view the concept of working hard and the extent (if any) to which her teacher (s) assume (s) the responsibility of promoting hard-working spirit among students. She accounted for how her teacher pressures her to work hard, and her responses seem to echo Jarriyah's. For example, in her trying to describe how teacher prioritize academic at the expense of their religious goals, Jude had this to say.

Teachers force us (students) to excel academically... more especially if we demonstrate some potential of doing better. Even though you have alternatively good goals for your life, some teachers make you feel like dirt if your academic goals don't match academic goals that they think you should...teachers make you sick. (August 15, 2015, personal communication)

To check my understanding of her Jude's perspectives on different goals and which ones should come first, I asked her to clarify what she meant by *alternatively good goals*. She said, their religious beliefs recognize the importance of education but they also do not have to pursue education at the expense of serving their God. This could imply that prioritizing their church activities like preaching to their peers at school, (which is one of reasons mothers said to be behind church-based weekly trainings), could not always be possible. One mother showed concern over her child continuous pressure by his teacher. She reports...*his teacher's nasty character (pressuring her child to do better) left me with no choice but to follow the teacher at the school and share with them about my plan with my child, his life and the genuine future for my kid*. Why do you mean by genuine future and again if you were a teacher what could the behavior of parents meeting you, mean to you? To this question, she was quick to say...*no one has the right to make my son feel sick that way....Sure...it's not about grades, but skills and*

knowledge to earn him something for his life in future. That can be achieved by many other alternatives but there is only one true God! (FGD). Thus, she sounded like saying, she would rather prefer seeing her son spending time for God (religion) at church or by preaching to working for short-lived school scores. Clearly, need for every student to do well helps teachers to improve scores but it can also be limiting to witnesses students who are socialized to prioritize other spreading the gospel.

Dating



Source: Jw.Org (2016)

Figure 6: Drama in Picture: I'm I ready to date?

When I first learned about dating from students, I had many probing questions. The first question was what students meant by dating, could public high schools in Pioneer Valley allow dating? Why or why not? To the Jehovah's Witnesses' church, almost all students reported that dating (especially by the high school students themselves), is strongly prohibited until one is old enough. By contrast, teacher, Anastasia said dating is mostly not punishable in most high schools in Pioneer Valley. Her statement made me recall what witnesses students had previously

explained regardless of the fact that their parents do not allow them (students) to be dating. For Lucy she felt the need to do the prohibited arguing,

seeing my friends dating at school, expressing love, leaves me with pressure to do the same...especially whenever I don't wanna lose every pretty guy to non-believersand she adds...how do you know you wanna meet him again, where? Quizzed Lucy (August 1, 2015)

Cute girls are irresistible and if they come my answer wouldn't be no, suggested Thom (July 30, 2015). Moreover, you could honestly report to parents, was my immediate reaction to Thom, to which he said: *Could I? Their answer is obvious,* hinted Thom (July 30, 2015) who reasoned that the church and parents are against them (high school children) dating or associating themselves with practices and/or feeling related to dating.

Perspectives of Lucy and Thom on dating opened my mind to further questions which I felt needed the attention of mothers who I had interviewed already by then and during which FGD, there was no or little talk on dating. However, when some mothers to one of the local churches (Kingdom Hall) invited me, I took it an observational trip. During one informal session on social life, emerged husband-wife sharing of roles and dating of adolescents. With reference to literature (booklets) called *Awake* (November 2015) by Watchtower Society, freely distributed to us (participants), we had whole group discussion on case studies exposing the dangers of students dating at school. During the discussion, which referred to their bibles, it was clear, the church is against children's dating since during dating children are likely to have pre-marital sex; an act which the members said can open a can of worms, including unplanned pregnancies. Members further reasoned that research shows dating among children is mostly for a short while, as such, children come to view relationships as transitory—which in a sense prepares them for divorce rather than for marriage.

I tried to remain attentive, pricking my ears so I could understand the age when the church allows the children to date whether or not for marriage. Members never agreed on a particular age, instead, they were guided by the question: how can I know, am ready for dating and/or marriage. The list of characteristics was almost endless. Some of the main ones are that

financially, a child need to be responsible and never be in debt. One should be hard working, able to show and subject to authority (if a boy and a girl respectively) and in the family, one should be mature enough to handle conflicts matters. However, one could not be punished to conclude that unlike high school culture of allowing dating, Jehovah's Witnesses' stance is more instrumental than expressive of their religion. This is because during my Sunday visit to the church (December 27, 2015), elders encouraged children to date someone whose friends are believers and meet with them. By then I had already learnt through students and mothers' interview that witnesses call any one non-believer if they belong to any other church than Jehovah's Witnesses. What I did not hear from the elders is the rationale behind restricting the search for partners within the church. Nevertheless, one could relate it to the growth strategy I discussed in the literature review above.

Similar to the teaching above, some students I interviewed like James seemed to follow the no-dating rule. Since they reported to have dated nobody, neither did he report having sexual act. Recalling his experiences James says:

My peers made sex seem exciting and normal...If you're not sleeping around, you're classed as weird....With my faith I prayed and came out... and here I am at college with no dating experience and this never makes me less of a man....But thinking back to two years ago, what I would have looked for in a potential mate was so different from what I would look for now. Basically, even at this point I don't trust myself to make such a decision. When I feel that my personality has been stable for a couple of years, then I'll think about dating (July 30th, 2015).

Arguably, a reader at this juncture could find himself/herself in a pool of questions, assessing or analyzing and synthesizing students' worldview through their experiences discussed in this section. First, at an institutional level, one would want to know (taking dating as a case in point) about which institution has the right ethos towards dating between the church (prohibiting students' dating) and the public school (allowing students' dating). Second, at an individual level, students like James (with no dating experience) might manage to coexist, expressively at home/church. However, the question could be how do students like James manage to expressively navigate within the school community without falling victim to peer-induced dating? Similarly, for Lucy and Thom who reported dating experiences, one might ask how on

one hand, they instrumentally and expressively adjust back, without members within their familial and church institutions noticing their deviant dating habits. On the other hand, how the same students like Lucy and Thom instrumentally succeed in dating at school against consciousness of their religious beliefs. All these questions is the more reason why most readers, more critical than the researcher, would want to understand strategies children use to co-exist both in their homes and schools. Therefore, from the perspectives of research subjects, the next section seeks to report tactics or means of coping by students concerned.

Strategies Children Use to Balance Their Religious Beliefs with Education Values and/or Activities in the Public School.

While some school experiences are in line with witnesses beliefs, others are parallel. I focused this question on the drama (during participant observation) students, mothers to understand from their perspectives, how they deal with or advise on less favorable school activities. From the students I interviewed, their responses regarding legitimate way of life did not always match with the insights reported by mothers, but those, which commensurate with the strategies I observed during the annual district convention.

Pretending to be someone else

Students reported on pretending when I had asked them about the following questions. If your school/class mate, or teacher/principal had asked you about your religious status on the first day you enrolled in 9th grade, how would you have responded? Did the response change over time? It could appear during the interview that some students do not hide their religious beliefs. Those students illuminated that being asked is what they socialized ahead of time to take as an opportunity of sharing their (witnesses) beliefs. *I became a believer, when someone approached me during my middle school, so I wouldn't do the opposite*, summed James (July 30, 2015). By contrast, Jude like Thom shared dissimilar perspectives like the one below.

When our teacher assigned us to write about what we know about evolution, I quickly recalled at the church encouraging us that such questions as the one about revolution are exact case of opportunities for me to show and share my faith. However, I got myself tongue-tie...though I regretted later to have hidden the truth about revolution....my fears

were to see everyone in class turning me into the laughing stock....Sure I didn't want to look old among my friends (Jude , August 15, 2015).



Source: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (2012)

Figure 7: Creation or Evolution?

As I probed from Jude as to why her perspectives on evolution would look weird, she said what she learnt from school about evolution is that man evolved from an ape-like creature and that the present people is a result of series of revolutions. By contrast, Jude said that at no time in the history of her life has the church taught her about the origin of people other than through God's creation of Adam and Eve. Before interviewing Jude, Jarriyah earlier pointed out that, she learnt different (from her faith) ideas about evolution later at school. When I asked Jarriyah when she shared or will share at her church, the school-based views about evolution, she reasoned how impossible she could do that arguing that she and other witnesses, continuously get warned at the church about what she termed as *secular or non-believers' view about evolution which schools teach* (Jarriyah, August 5, 2015).

Minimizing stigma

Jude (August 15, 2015), James and Thom (July 30, 2015) unlike Lucy (August 1, 2015) and Jariyah (August 5, 2015, reported having discredited their stigmatized identity in order to fit in with the larger school group. For example, James recalls. *Some classmates cleverly faked interest in me before turning against my own faith later*” When I probed more from James how he knew that his friends interest was fake, he said. “... *later they turned my own words against me and teased me in front of others.*”

While three of the five students hide or devalued their non-dominant beliefs, I find questions, which I had earlier asked mothers worth analyzing here. From the six mothers, I wanted to know if they (mothers) had any experiences in assisting their children to cope up in high school, by asking the following questions. Do you prepare your children in any way to assist them (children) meet the challenge without confronting or visiting the school and/or officials like teachers? Has any of you have had time spent with your children on things they fear, or trying to encourage them from school-disappointments? Mothers stressed that they do not always rush in to help their children. According to one of the mothers...*always solving their school issues indicates that you have little or no confidence in the kids...* Another mother added that treating children as young and helpless defeats the purpose of school, whose challenges can also help prepare the children on how to deal with challenges when they become adults in the future.

Planning response ahead/ anticipation

By now, it is evident that some participants anticipate high school kids to meet with problems in Pioneer Valley. To start with, teacher Anastasia, after acknowledging attitude problems teachers have had in managing multicultural classes, reported about some strides education authorities and human rights bodies have cordially made specifically for religious minority students with regard to their beliefs. Anastasia said... *I'm now able to attach normalcy to views, attitudes or any behavior which I used to perceive as odd among witnesses.* When I asked for clarification on what Anastasia meant by view, attitudes or behaviors, she had this to say. *Like if she/he says I don't wanna donate my blood, or if she or he looks disinterested in birthday discussions....yeah!...if am aware, way ahead of time that one of my students belongs to this church, I surely can't see him/her as abnormal.* At the end of our interview, as I was about to

express my vote of thanks, Anastasia shared the following as her closing remark. ...*know that education officials have intervened in some cases by encouraging curriculum inclusive of diverse religiosity....like one I know is some schools do not teach evolution to their students.*



Source: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (2012)

Figure 8: Why Believe in Creation? Young People Ask.

Similar to the teachers' preparedness is that of the church itself which mothers said it is somewhat achieved through the literature which Watch Tower society publishes before distributing freely to church members and non-members. Witnesses' mothers (July 29th, 2015) showed to me the following script of presentation drama and conversation to demonstrate how children rehearse possible questions and answers way in advance before and during the time children interact with those non-witnesses. Whether at home or during one of the weekly church-based training sessions, parents or elders take responsibilities of ensuring that kid recite and reflect on the following and related issues.

Question on neutrality: *Why don't you salute the flag? Don't you love your country?*

Answer: I respect the land I live in, but I don't worship it. - So you wouldn't fight for your country? No, and millions of Jehovah's Witnesses in other lands wouldn't fight against this country either.

Question on blood: Why won't you accept blood transfusions?

Answer: I accept safe transfusions—the kind that don't carry the risk of AIDS or hepatitis. But the Bible says to abstain from blood, so that's where I draw the line. But what if you were going to die unless you took blood? Wouldn't God forgive you?

Question on choices: So-and-so is a member of your religion, and he did such and such. Why can't you?

Answer: We're taught God's requirements, but we're not brainwashed! We all have to make our own choices. Isn't that a double standard?

Question on creation: Why don't you believe in evolution?

Answer: Why should I? Scientists don't even agree on it, and they're supposed to be the experts! (Participant observation July 28, 2015; FGD, July 29, 2015)³

It is clear that parents and the church socialize their children to prepare them with navigation skills in advance.

In addition, at the end of the services I was invited to (at one of the local church), I observed parents and children interacting as if they are of the same family. Later, some of them left. Other parents started assembling, shared booklets and deliberated issues in the booklets (titled *Awake* 2015) and led by an overseer; they brainstormed ways how they would approach non-believers in the street on that day. I implicitly joined this assembly because Hastings, who drove me to the church, was among the group. After him asking if I also had to follow them out to preach, I learned that I could not manage, as this was for formally qualified witnesses who (as is required of every witness in the world) volunteer to go and preach to the street people. Among others, those preaching witnesses were required to report monthly on how many non-witnesses they preached to in how many hours. More than high school and/or higher academic qualifications,

³ Before mothers showed me booklets (*Awake*) with which they use to train and prepare their schoolchildren, I observed that the same and other similar information is what actor/actresses and speakers used during the annual district convention. Two of the six mothers during the FGD who were also part of the drama group, indicated and recalled that the same rehearsing information also found in booklets like *Questions young people ask* periodically published by only Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. So among other reasons Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society publish *Awake* booklets for parents and the church to use in their training/socializing sessions like the annual convention concerned. As published rehearsal information, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society make them available on their web page (JW.org) and in other discussion blogs.

these preaching activities are but important factors, which determine witness appointment into various leadership positions (Hastings, December 25, 2015). Other factors into marital status and faith level of family members as measured by what children contribute during church's discussions. What is more, school students (who are also being socialized at home or church) are paired with one or more qualified elders (into the preaching field) from whom they (students) either learn situational skills or practice preaching (under supervision) in the street⁴ (Hastings, December 25th, 2015). Clearly, at various levels, Witnesses students prepare and/or are prepared by individuals and institutions to navigate if the school community presents cases outside witnesses' ethos. Nevertheless, some students sometimes chose to instrumentally hide and devalue their religious values or beliefs in high school in Pioneer Valley. Peer pressure and the need to conform to hegemonic normalcy seem to account for students' hiding.

This study's finding of the notion above about some students being able to balance school and their religious beliefs, and to co-exist in families and schools, supports other works by many post-positivist sociologists. For example, Fuwa (2005), Geist (2005) and Hook (200) emphasize that to completely understand social practices and treatment like that of students, it is crucial to consider social context in which the behaviors occurs. Thus at micro level, the students families do socialize children in preparation for school as a social field. Again, at macro level, the church and the school itself play other socializing roles. The interplay of these institutional forces in shaping students' behavior and navigation skills illuminates interesting sociological epistemologies. While they might think they are freely making behavioral decisions, students are somewhat in a revolution of which students themselves become the centers of their own revolution.

Get involved

During the drama, I also noticed that parents are encouraged to perceive school principals, teachers or guidance counselors as friends or parents of their children at school, not enemies. In

⁴ Because I could not go home by his same ride, Hastings pointed me to what he identified as brother for my ride back home. Hastings like any other witness identified every male witness as 'brother' and 'sister' to any female witness. I believe these are some of the semiotics, which made me see members as more communal than individualistic.

one of the dramas I observed, a parent angered by the teacher of his child. The drama depicted an irate father visiting the school principal's office only to realize that the accused teacher had little or no knowledge of the student's religious beliefs, which (according to the mothers) should come second to no one. So to help witnesses' kids survive in high school, the speaker who followed the drama, advised parents have to meet school principals, teachers and/or guidance counselors calmly. *Parents go and talk to them about your child's challenges and explain how or not some of the school goals align with our faith* (participant observational, July 28, 2015), added another speaker who took the podium immediately after the drama.

Weight Lifting

Four of the five students said if they have too much academic pressure they do weight lifting to cope up with stress. For example, Lucy (August 1, 2015) said, *weight lifts leaves me physically and mentally stronger than the time of depression....* These students attributed their knowledge of lifting weight to school lessons and their upbringing at home. On one hand, it is clear, how in some ways, school experiences can negatively affect some witnesses' students in high school. On the other hand, the notion of students positively learning, from the same school, how to do physical and mental exercises, is, but one of the factors why one can safely conclude that the school as an institution can act against its own function, facilitating acquisition of knowledge and skills. Discussions around this, from participants' perspectives, is where I next turn to.

How Public High School Activities or Experiences Restrain or Promote Learning and Adjustment of Witnesses' Students in the Pioneer Valley?

From the interviews, it became clear to me that both the school activities themselves and the church familial intervention towards students both promote and restrict children education. This last part of the paper will discuss how this takes place. It should be noted that during the FGD, mothers acknowledged that school is good as it (school) develops and signal (through testing) the mental, emotional and spiritual growth of their high school children. Much as they singled out their own and children's experience mothers perceive as unfavorable, mothers wondered, *how one could mature into a responsible and informed citizen without some of the ungodly attitudes of peers in school.* Whether or not these mothers agreed with the functionalist and/or conflict views of education and to what extent, could be interesting to discuss at length. However, it

could be worth leaving to the leader to base such decision on what this study (through the following section) found from participants' perspectives.

Reminds students on how much education to pursue

As already alluded to, Witnesses mothers agree that education helps to prepare their children for responsible adulthood. However, learning from them and my observation of the dramas and speeches, where parents can meet teachers or school principals to discuss education goals of their (mothers') children with regard to their faith, I asked the following questions to the mothers. How much schooling does your child require to achieve your desired goal (s)? One mother was quick to warn against what she called *world assumption* (FGD, July 29, 2015), where some people equates university education to increased life chances. *I find the general consensus on high education's relationship to high class living as an illusion,... especially when I see someone with simple technical skills doing better than highly educated people...*, argued another mother (FGD, July, 29th, 2015). Another mother further accentuated by saying *...schools are not perfect, and children face challenges today that were unheard of just a few decades ago. But with your support, your child can succeed at school!* (FGD, July 29, 2015). It can safely be concluded that for Jehovah's Witnesses education is important but that it should not be pursued without limit. Parents' support may help students cope up with challenges but the church's prioritization of development of their kids' faith over academics might also affect the efforts and energy that witnesses' students apply at school.

Developing the Power of Reason

By now, this paper has discussed how Jehovah's Witnesses perceive the importance of school. Apart from mothers, students share similar appreciation for high school's good and challenging moments. Thom for instance, reports how he attributes his mental growth to high school education:

School has improved my problem-solving abilities, whether in the classroom or elsewhere. I now realize how much, deciding how to address academic, social, and physical challenges has helped me to mature....I believe school has helped prepare me for the challenges of the work environment. Also, I faced many situations that forced me to examine the reasons for my faith, so rather than quit, patiently work through the

problems you face at school. If you do, you will find that the end afterward will be much better for you (July 30, 2015).

This explains why mothers prepare and rehearse some questions and answers in advance with their children. Therefore, the mothers' socialization at home offers the children the basis for addressing life challenges through critical thinking and application thereof, later in life. Knowing how and when to apply which question/strategy surely facilitates critical thinking which is required for the kids in their adult life.

Endurance

One question is worth repeating here, if your school/class mate, or teacher/principal had asked you about your religious status on the first day you enrolled in 9th grade, how would you have responded? Despite the church socializing the students against hiding the beliefs, values and practices, Jarriyah (August 5th, 2015) and Jude (August 15th, 2015) reported how admitting and demonstrating their religious status can make them feel excluded. Avoiding to look weird (by living according to Bible standards) to prospective dating partners, or to have a sense of belonging, students like Jarriyah and Jude would cover up or discredit anything revealing their religious identity. However, mocking the experience might be against their (witnesses) faith, for purposes of employment in future, students said quitting school can be the last decision. What is more is that,

Being at school helps, you learn how to stand up for yourself, a skill that will benefit you in the workplace and elsewhere. Because I persisted, I have mastered the fundamentals of reading and writing. School has taught me how to benefit from criticism and how to express myself clearly and logically... (Lucy, August 1, 2015).

It can be safely said that high school good and bad experiences prepare witnesses to become children better adults. School challenging experiences potentially help some students to critically develop problem-solving skills as they try to pass through, thereby characterizing students as enduring. Again, those skills parents and the church schools instill in students also promote endurance among students. For example, it is no secret now that witnesses train their children

and make them (children) rehearse before they go negotiating for their needs in schools and other institutions. Moreover, in the course of good teaching and learning activities, students come to realize the dangers of low or no education. Fear from being unemployed, later, students convince themselves to remain at school, and endurance is one of the terms one can describe this students' commitment to remaining in school.

Finally, whether or not this type of endurance is good, is a too specific question to be discussed in this section and can thus be a discussion for another day. However, what this study can generally afford, through its findings guided by the question in this section only, is to agree with Shepard (2010) and Levinson's et al., (2011) works on the conflict nature of school. From the perspectives of participating students and mothers, as discussed in this last section, school experiences can develop and shape critical reasoning skills with which they (students) cope up. Relatively, few would still support Dianda (2008) and Maxwell's (2014) tendency of attributing school dropout by religious minorities like witnesses to their minority status in schools. Neither can we ignore how school and its activities implicitly make students adhere to the hegemonic values. That is, much as witnesses claim to be cynical of the rationale of and chose not to observe charismas holidays and Halloween cerebrations, for example, one could argue that the action of witnesses students by staying away from school community, is in a way of externally observing the very same holidays (on students' behalf). It is in the researcher's view to give credit to the strides made so far in extending freedom and rights to the religious minority students in Pioneer Valley. However, holding the definition of the term 'freedom' to its fullest, there is still need to mentally free witnesses students who continue observing holidays and cerebration against their own conscious beliefs.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study aimed at exploring (from the adult perspective) experiences of religious minorities in public high schools. To ensure in-depth understanding of the experiences, I used the case study of JW children in public schools in Pioneer Valley. The first part of the findings has

highlighted some of the values, beliefs, practices and attitudes witnesses' children pass through. I find this paper's findings rewarding especially on such activities as dating, which can go without being noticed by teachers and can affect students' performance. This paper has shown how observance of Christmas and other holidays characterizes fight for minority rights, not yet fully achieved.

Furthermore, I used dominant and non-dominant cultural capitals to sieve witness children's ways of balancing their religious beliefs with education values and/or activities in the public school, and students' ability to co-exist in their both homes and schools. At the center of strategies, is the idea of preparation or anticipating challenges in advance. As such, this paper finds that parents and the church train their children to prepare them for the battle of ideas and beliefs ahead. While this socialization leaves the church optimistic of their children behavior in high schools, however, some of their kids reported falling victim to pressures by their peer and teacher. For example, some Witnesses students reported to hide and/or discredit their beliefs. After returning home from school, some of the witnesses' children are able to quickly adjust to the minority behavior. The ability of students (by whatever means) implies that we cannot always attribute poor performance and dropouts to students' minority status.

In the end, I argue that, much as witnesses claim not to observe Christmas holidays and Halloween celebrations, by staying away from school community, during the time of observation, JW students and/or their action externally observes the same holidays. Similarly, this paper challenges scholars and practitioners or social workers concerned aimed at promoting religious diversity in schools to reconsider the extent to which 'freedom' applies to witnesses. It is in the researcher's view to give credit to the strides made so far in extending freedom and rights to the religious minority students in Pioneer Valley. However, holding the definition of the term 'freedom' to its fullest, there is still need to mentally free witnesses students who continue observing holidays and celebrations against their own conscious beliefs. In the future, an ethnographic study on student in their classrooms and a comprehensive quantitative study on the population of witnesses' children in public schools in Pioneer Valley.

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APPENDICES: HUMAN SUBJECTS WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

This section contains consent forms I used for recruiting participating students, teachers and parents. Also contained here is the reminder letter or email before the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion and finally, there are lists of interview questions (instruments) I used for collecting data.

INSTITUTION: University of Massachusetts Amherst

Appendix A. I. (a). Consent form for student's participation in a research study.

Researcher: Foster Kamanga.

Study Title: Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public Schools in Pioneer Valley: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses.

1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research. This form will help you understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will be asked to do as a participant and any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. I encourage you to think about this information and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to participate, please sign this form; you will be given a copy for your records.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

I am inviting students who have been to public high schools in Pioneer Valley (to participate in this research project) of any sex, gender, race, ethnicity or class, but who meet the following criteria. To participate, one must be a young adult, at least 18 years old and a member of Jehovah's Witnesses.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this research project is to better understand ways the children of Jehovah's Witnesses navigate tension between their religious beliefs and public school experiences.

4. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study will take place on the phone (phone interview) or (if in-person interview) at a mutually agreed location (between you and myself). You will be expected to participate during one session for approximately 50-60 minutes.

5. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

At the interview, I will first engage in the consent process for the second time with you. If the interview is conducted in person, I will review the consent form with you and if the interview is conducted by phone then I will email in advance the consent form and ask you to reconfirm your consent by signing and returning the electronic copy of the consent form to me. After you sign the consent form then I will begin the interview, which will be audio-taped and last approximately 50-60 minutes. You may skip any question that you feel uncomfortable answering. Interview questions will include:

- Are there public school activities which make the students belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses' church, and if any, to what extent do such students feel excluded from the public school community in the Pioneer Valley?
- How do some public high school activities, if any, affect the learning or academic performance of witnesses' students in the Pioneer Valley?
- What are some of the strategies which witnesses' students use to negotiate for the co-existence of their religious values with, materials and/or activities in the public high schools in the Pioneer Valley?

6. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

Providing an opportunity for students to talk about their positive and negative experiences can provide modest benefits to those who may need an opportunity to release any negative feelings from their high school encounters. So there are no foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that you are assisting in furthering the current knowledge regarding experiences of religious minority students in public schools, how

different experiences affect their performance as they get them through, and thereby assisting the researcher in completing the master's degree requirements.

7. WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

The researcher foresees minimal risk for those who will choose to participate in this study. There are no foreseen physical risks associated with this study. Nevertheless, given the nature of the topic (i.e. minority experiences), you might experience anxiety, discomfort and/or embarrassment, or negative emotions as a result of responding to the questions asked in this research study. You might wish to know that all questions are optional and if you experience a negative reaction you may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer, or withdraw from the study.

In addition, it is possible that (as a student) you might experience social, economic, or legal implications if you share your responses or your participation in this study with others. If you choose to participate in this study, you are encouraged to keep your participation in this study and your responses confidential. Loss of confidentiality regarding the interview data will be minimized using the methods discussed in the next section.

8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records. Study records include contact information, audio files, interview notes and interview transcripts. As a researcher, I will keep all study records, including any codes to your data, in a secure location, either a locked file cabinet in my house or a password protected computer of which I will be the only person knowing the password.

Research records will be labeled with a code. A master key that links names and codes will be maintained in a separate and secure location. The master key and audiotapes will be destroyed not later than May 8, 2016, the time after which the findings will have been reported already.

All electronic files including audio files, coding databases, and electronic interview transcript documents containing identifiable information will be password protected. My computer hosting

such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. I alone will have access to the passwords. At the conclusion of this study, I will present the information in summary format and you will not be identified in any presentations.

All participants will be assigned a pseudonym for this project. Participants' true names, contact information or other identifying information will not be linked in any way to audio files and transcripts. Any participant contact information used to schedule the interview will not be included in the research report.

9. WILL I RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

You will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

10. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. I will be glad to answer any question you have about this study. You are welcome anytime for such questions or problem related to this project by contacting me, Foster Kamanga (as a student researcher) through the email, fkamanga@umass.com or phone, (413) 362-9764.

You may also contact my project supervisor, Dr. Bjorn Nordtveit, through the email, bjorn@educ.umass.edu or phone, (413) 545 0764

Again, you may also channel your concerns to the UMass College of Education through the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Linda Griffin, through the email, lgriffin@educ.umass.edu or phone, 413-545-6985.

11. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

12. WHAT IF I KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN ALSO PARTICIPATE?

I'm also asking participants to recommend other potential participants (students belonging to Jehovah's Witness congregation) for this study. Do you know other people whose characteristics fall under the eligibility described above? If yes, please indicate their contact details below so that I can as well request voluntary informed consent from them.

Name/s: _____ Telephone/s: _____ Email/s: _____

13. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study and that I am at least 18 years of age. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. The researcher has in the process explained my rights, the requirements of this study, and the potential risks involved in participating in this study. I understand there is no compensation for, or direct benefit of participating in this study. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time by notifying the researcher by email or through the phone. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

Participant Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of Person

Print Name:

Date:

1. (b). Students' Interview Guide

Introduction

As someone who has been a student to one of public high schools in Pioneer Valley, you have been selected to speak and discuss with me today because you expressed interest. I chose you because you potentially has a great deal to share about religious minority students in public high Schools in Pioneer Valley. This research project as a whole focuses on understanding minority

students' ways of balancing tension between their religious beliefs and teaching as well as learning activities in schools. Particular focus will be on understanding how students belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses' church navigate the tension, if any, between what they learn in their church and activities they are exposed to in public high schools in Pioneer Valley? And how those experiences affect academic performance of the students in question? To achieve these objectives, therefore, I am going to ask you, _____ (name of the student) these and related questions below for about 50 minutes.

- a) Where are you from?
- b) How active and how long have you been a member of Jehovah's witnesses?
- c) Which public school (s) in Pioneer Valley have you attended?
- d) How long did you attend this (these) public school (s)?
- e) If your school/class mate, or teacher/principal had asked you about your religious status on the first day you enrolled in 9th grade, how would you have responded? Did this change over time?
- f) Did you feel personally marginalized by virtue of your religious identity at school ever since you first enrolled in the 9th grade?
 - Probe: What happened, if anything?
- g) Do you think other students/teachers/school authorities in public schools think differently about your religious beliefs than you (Jehovah's Witnesses) do?
 - If so, how? What evidence do you have that support your stand point?
- h) In what experiences (teaching and learning activities) did you feel included at school?
 - Probe: explain why? How did you feel? Give examples?
- i) In what ways/experiences did you feel excluded (teaching and learning activities) in the public school community?
- j) What was/were your best experience (s) during the high school?
 - Probe: what happened/why best?
- k) What was/were the worst experience (s) or most challenging?
 - Probe: What happened/Why worst?
- l) Do you remember of any teaching and learning method (s) and/or courses were relevant for you and went well with your beliefs?

- m) Did you find any content of the coursework that was promoting or disempowering to you and your religion?
- Probe: How did you react with such course content? Were you given enough opportunity to express your views?
- n) Do you remember of a time when your religious point of view was disregarded during the teaching and learning process by your peers or teachers?
- Probe: What happened? How did you feel? How did you manage to go ahead with schooling?
- o) How did negative experiences, by virtue of your religious identity and observance of your beliefs, affected (a) your academic performance, (b) your relationship with your teachers and (c) fellow students at school?
- p) What other thoughts or comments do you want to share?

Conclusion:

Thank you, _____ (name of the student). I appreciate you took your tightly scheduled time to be here/respond to my phone call and share your ideas and expertise or insights with me. May you now suggest any of your fellow student (s) who might also have some experiences on the matters we have just discussed. I will also appreciate if you later contact me with details of additional potential informants who might be willing to share similar information with me on this phenomenon. Finally, I will make sure to keep you informed of my progress on this study.

**Appendix A. 2. (a). Human Subjects Written Informed Consent Form for Teacher
Participation In A Research Study**

Researcher: Foster Kamanga.

Study Title: Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public Schools in Pioneer Valley: The Case of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research. This form will help you understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will be asked to do as a participant and any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. I encourage you to think about this information and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to participate, please sign this form; you will be given a copy for your records.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

I am inviting public high school teachers (to participate in this research project) of any sex, gender, race, ethnicity or class, but who meet the following criteria.

- Must have or been teaching in one or more of the public high schools in Pioneer Valley.
- Must have or have had Jehovah's Witnesses as some of the student(s) in his/her class for at least a term.
- Can or cannot be a member of Jehovah's witnesses church.
- Must be above the age of 18.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this research project is to better understand ways the students of Jehovah's Witnesses navigate tension between their religious beliefs and public school experiences.

4. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study will take place on the phone (phone interview) or (if in-person interview) at a mutually agreed location (between you and myself). You will be expected to participate during one session for approximately 50-60 minutes.

5. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

At the interview, I will first engage in the consent process for the second time with you. If the interview is conducted in person, I will review the consent form with you and if the interview is conducted by phone then I will email in advance the consent form and ask you to reconfirm your consent by signing and returning the electronic copy of the consent form to me. After you sign

the consent form then I will begin the interview, which will be audio-taped and last approximately 50-60 minutes. You may skip any question that you feel uncomfortable answering. Interview questions will include:

- Are there public school activities which make the children of Jehovah's Witnesses, and if any, to what extent do such students feel excluded from the public school community in the Pioneer Valley?
- How do some public high school activities, if any, affect the learning or academic performance of witnesses' students in the Pioneer Valley?
- What are some of the strategies, which witnesses' students use to negotiate for the co-existence of their religious values and materials and/or activities in the public high schools in the Pioneer Valley?

6. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

This will provide some insights to teachers to reflect on some of their activities and treatment towards religious minority students in question. So there are no foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that you are assisting in furthering the current knowledge regarding experiences of religious minority students in public schools, how different experiences affect the performance of such students as they pass through, and thereby assisting the researcher in completing the master's degree requirements.

7. WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

The researcher foresees minimal risk for those who will choose to participate in this study. There are no foreseen physical risks associated with this study.

Nevertheless, given the nature of the topic (i.e. minority experiences), you might experience anxiety, discomfort and/or embarrassment, or negative emotions as a result of responding to the questions asked in this research study. You might wish to know that all questions are optional and if you experience a negative reaction, you may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer, or withdraw from the study.

In addition, (as a public high school teacher) you might experience social, economic, or legal implications if you share your responses or your participation in this study with others. If you choose to participate in this study, you are encouraged to keep your participation in this study and your responses confidential. Loss of confidentiality regarding the interview data will be minimized using the methods discussed in the next section.

8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records. Study records include contact information, audio files, interview notes and interview transcripts. As a researcher, I will keep all study records, including any codes to your data, in a secure location, either a locked file cabinet in my house or a password-protected computer of which I will be the only person knowing the password.

Research records will be labeled with a code. A master key that links names and codes will be maintained in a separate and secure location. The master key and audiotapes will be destroyed not later than May 8, 2016, the time after which the findings will have been reported already.

All electronic files including audio files, coding databases, and electronic interview transcript documents containing identifiable information will be password protected. My computer hosting such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. I alone will have access to the passwords. At the conclusion of this study, I will present the information in summary format and you will not be identified in any presentations.

All participants will be assigned a pseudonym for this project. Participants' true names, contact information or other identifying information will not be linked in any way to audio files and transcripts. Any participant contact information used to schedule the interview will not be included in the research report.

9. WILL I RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

You will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

10. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. I will be glad to answer any question you have about this study. You are welcome anytime for such questions or problem related to this project by contacting me, Foster Kamanga (as a student researcher) through the email, fkamanga@umass.com or phone, (413) 362-9764.

You may also contact my project supervisor, Dr. Bjorn Nordtveit, through the email, bjorn@educ.umass.edu or phone, (413) 545 0764

Again, you may also channel your concerns to the UMass College of Education through the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Linda Griffin, through the email, lgriffin@educ.umass.edu or phone, 413-545-6985.

11. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

12. WHAT IF I KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN ALSO PARTICIPATE?

I'm also asking participants to recommend other potential participants (public high school teachers) for this study. Do you know other people whose characteristics fall under the eligibility described in the bulletin points above? If yes, please indicate their contact details below so that I can as well request voluntary informed consent from them.

Name/s: _____ Telephone/s: _____ Email/s: _____

13. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study and that I am at least 18 years of age. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. The researcher has in the process explained my rights, the

requirements of this study, and the potential risks involved in participating in this study. I understand there is no compensation for, or direct benefit of participating in this study. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time by notifying the researcher by email or through the phone. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

Participant Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of Person

Print Name:

Date:

A. 2. (b). Teachers' Interview Guide

Introduction

As a public school teacher you have been selected to speak and discuss with me today because you expressed interest and you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about religious minority students in public high Schools in Pioneer Valley. This research project as a whole focuses on understanding minority students' ways of balancing tension, if any, between their religious beliefs and teaching as well as learning activities in schools. Particular focus will be on understanding how students belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses' church navigate the tension, if any, between what they learn in their church and activities they are exposed to in public high schools in Pioneer Valley? And how those experiences affect academic performance of the students in question? To achieve these objectives, therefore, I am going to ask you, _____ (name of the teacher) these and related questions below.

- a) Where and how long have you been: in your present position (as a teacher)? And at that public institution?

- b) What do you think is the way in which public schools function to serve students of minority religious beliefs?
- c) Briefly describe your role (in a classroom) as a classroom manager as it relates to students of different religious beliefs?
- d) What do you enjoy most about being at a school or teaching in a class with such minority religious believers as Jehovah's witnesses students?
- Probe: explain why?
- e) What are some of the challenges of being at a school or teaching in a classroom with such minority religious students as witnesses' children?
- f) Do you think you have/had you had equal sense friendship and camaraderie with witnesses' students just like with other students of majority religious beliefs?
- Probe: Give examples of such experience and why you think so?
- g) On what extra curricula issues/activities, if any, are you involved in conflict with Jehovah's Witnesses' students (due to their religious belief) in the teaching and learning process?
- h) Do you remember of a time when the relationship in the class was at a threat with witnesses children?
- Probe: What happened?
- i) Do you allow such students holding on to minority religious beliefs as witnesses children to express their beliefs about religion in classroom assignments or at school-sponsored events?
- Support your answer?
- j) If such students object on religious grounds to portions of a textbook, do you excuse them from studying or participating in the material?
- Probe: explain why not/yes?
- k) How do you solve any conflict between your teaching and learning activities and witnesses' religious based viewpoints?
- Give example?
- l) Do you think, witnesses' students are overall happy with public school curricula and extra curricula activities?
- Probe: Why yes/no? Give supporting examples?

- m) How do you think they (witnesses' children) still manage to go on with public schooling even when they are not happy with the teaching and learning activities or materials or with your decisions as a teacher?
- n) Do you think you play a role towards witnesses' navigation with tension between teaching and learning activities and their religious beliefs?
- Probe: If yes, how?
- o) Do you remember of any time when you got involved in counselling a marginalized witness's student?
- Probe: If yes, what happened?
- p) Do you remember of any time when you got involved in a disciplinary action against witnesses' student (s)?
- Probe: If yes, what happened?
- q) Do you remember of any treatment against witnesses children which you think you overreacted or overacted?
- Probe: Elaborate?
- r) What was your perception towards witnesses' sect and witnesses' children before you had had them in your class or school?
- Has that changed over time
- s) What do think are possible results of witnesses' tension between public schooling and their religious beliefs towards the academic life/achievement of the witnesses' children?
- t) What other thoughts or comments do you want to share?

Conclusion:

Thank you, _____ (name of the teacher). I appreciate you took your tightly scheduled time to be here/respond to my phone call and share your ideas and expertise or insights with me. May you now suggest any of your fellow teacher (s) who might also have some experiences on the matters we have just discussed. I will also appreciate if you later contact me with details of additional potential informants who might be willing to share similar insights with me on this phenomenon. Finally, I will make sure to keep you informed of my progress on this study.

**Appendix B: Phone/Email Reminder Guide for Students, Teacher and Mothers Who
Consented to Participate.**

INSTITUTION: University of Massachusetts Amherst

Researcher: Foster Kamanga.

Study Title: Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public Schools in Pioneer Valley: The Case
of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Hi _____ (name of voluntary participant),

My name is Foster Kamanga, I'm calling/emailing to remind you of the consent you expressed to take part in an in-depth interview/ focus group on _____ (date) at _____ (time) at _____ (location). If you have questions, concerns, or if you have changed your mind by not attending, please let me know either by calling on (413) 362 - 9764 and/or email through fkamanga@umass.edu. You may also contact my supervisor for this research, Dr. Bjorn Nordtveit, through the email, bjorn@educ.umass.edu or phone, (413) 545 0764.

Thank you in advance for your time towards this study.

Appendix C. 1. (a): Consent Form for Mothers.

INSTITUTION: University of Massachusetts Amherst

Project Title: Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public Schools in Pioneer Valley: The
Case of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Investigator: Foster Kamanga

I am writing to you following the discussion I had with Mr./Dr. _____ (name of the congregation leader) regarding my study. He gave me permission to seek your voluntary informed consent since as a mother/guardian you have a great deal to share about my research, the experiences of Jehovah's witnesses' students in public high schools in Pioneer Valley.

The main focus of my research is on how public school students of Jehovah's Witnesses balance their religious beliefs and teaching and learning activities in public school communities. Are there activities which make the children of Jehovah's Witnesses feel excluded from the public school community in the Pioneer Valley? How do some activities, if any, affect the learning or academic performance of those students? What are some of the ways or strategies which students, belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses church, use to help them keep going, rather than forgoing high school in the Pioneer Valley?

I will be very grateful if you can help me to understand those perceptions and issues from your perspectives vis-a-vis your children's high school experiences which they have gone through.

I would like you and/or other mothers/guardian in your congregation (s) whom you can recommend (regardless of your race, ethnicity or class) to freely participate if and only if they meet the following conditions:

- Must be above the age of 18.
- Must be a member of the Jehovah's witnesses in the Pioneer Valley, my focus area.
- Must have or has had children in public high school in Pioneer Valley.
- Her children or children under her care must belong to her church.

If you agree to participate, I will conduct one focus group discussion with you and others which will last about 60-70 minutes. I will ask a few questions. I can show you a questionnaire prior to the focus group discussion or even before you agree that you will take part. During the focus group, there will be no "right" or "wrong" answers to the questions I will ask—I just want to hear your child's schooling experiences from your perspective.

If you accept, I will later email you requesting for a list of times and places that you think will make you feel comfortable to participate in this focus group. You can decline to participate in the whole or part of the discussion and there is no punitive action attached to that. Again, during the focus group, you will be free not to answer questions you do not want to.

All information I would obtain from those interviews and observations will be protected and nobody will have an access to it except me. Your real names would not be mentioned unless you want me to use them.

Because I want to remember everything to be discussed during the focus group, I intend to record all our discussions. Nobody will have access to these records except me. All the record will be deleted after I have analyzed all data.

You may not directly benefit from this project. However, the results of this research can be used to inform policy-makers and educators so that they would better understand cross-cultural issues within the framework of religion and adequately address religious minority children in public schools.

If you happen to have questions or any concern regarding this research then do not hesitate to reach me through my e-mail address, fkamanga@umass.edu and/or my mobile phone number, 413-362-9764. I live on 162 A1 Brittany Manor in Amherst, Massachusetts.

In case you have a question you can also contact me at this number or address. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may also contact my project supervisor, Dr. Bjorn Nordtveit, through the email, bjorn@educ.umass.edu or phone, (413) 545 0764

Again, you may also channel your concerns to the UMass College of Education through the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Linda Griffin, through the email, lgriffin@educ.umass.edu or phone, 413-545-6985.

If you think this project is something you are interested in doing, then please sign up here. By signing below, I understand that the primary purpose of this form and that I will be able to withdraw anytime without explanation.

Participant Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

- By checking here, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Appendix C. 1. (b): Protocol for Focus Group Discussion

Researcher: Foster Kamanga

Institution: University of Massachusetts Amherst

Study Title: Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public Schools in Pioneer Valley: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Date and Time: _____

Location: _____

Number of Participants: _____

I. Introductions (Welcome remarks)

Hello everyone and welcome to our focus group discussion (FGD). Thank you for agreeing to participate. My name is Foster Kamanga and I have organized this focus group discussion as part of my master's thesis and to help us reflect on experiences of your children in public high schools in Pioneer Valley. How do our children balance what they learn at the Kingdom Hall or biblical principles we teach them in our private institutions (homes) and activities they are exposed to in public high schools? How we can help our children navigate even better? And how that affect their academic performance.

To help myself not to miss information while I facilitate, I will phone-record our discussion and where necessary, I will also be taking notes. The notes will help me make sense of the audio recordings of our group discussion today.

To begin with, I would like to have everyone introduce themselves. Please say your name (or pseudonym) and briefly tell us a bit about yourself, your child or children and their education levels (do not mention their real names), and your connection/relationship/membership/ activism with Jehovah's witnesses church in Pioneer Valley.

a. Purpose and Agenda

The purpose of this focus group discussion is to give you a space to share, from your perception, ideas and experiences related to a specific set of questions about experiences of your children in public high schools.

Today's focus group will run for approximately one hour and ten minutes. Here's the agenda. First, we will discuss some guidelines for the focus group. Then, we will get into the questions. I will circulate a paper containing focus questions for you to reflect your thoughts on them by writing down onto a worksheet or otherwise. Then, we will have an open discussion of the questions. At the end of the focus group, I will say a little more about the process and then we will adjourn.

b. Guidelines

To help you share your ideas, I would like to suggest a few guidelines for our discussion.

1. Confidentiality: Once you leave this group, don't share what other people have said. You are welcome to share your own ideas, feelings, or experiences. But do not share other people's "story."
2. Speak for yourself; use "I" statement (s).
3. Share airtime with others. If you normally speak a lot, try making space for other people. If you do not usually speak up in groups, try to challenge yourself and share your thoughts.
4. Diversity of opinion is good. We are trying to hear many views, not to develop a consensus.
5. You have the right to pass or not share.
6. When you speak, please speak loudly and clearly – for the audio recordings.
7. Are there other guidelines you would like to establish, to help the group discussion?
Before we continue, do you have any questions?

II. Focus Group Discussion

During the discussion the following questions will serve the guiding purpose:

- A. How long and active has your membership been with Jehovah's Witnesses church?
- B. What do you think is the perception of non-members of Jehovah's witnesses in general, teachers and school officials in particular, towards Jehovah's witnesses' church and your children in Pioneer Valley?
- C. Mention any learning activities or outcomes which motivated you to send your child/ren to public school in Pioneer Valley?
 - Probe: Explain why?
- D. What would you like the public school to do differently, if any, from what it is doing now?
 - Probe: Elaborate, why?
- E. Are there teaching and learning activities (curricula and extra curricula) in public schools which are a threat to children with regards to your religious beliefs?
- F. If yes on the above, what and why do you advise your children as the way (S) to approach or interact in/with such school activities or functions?
- G. Have you had trouble addressing your children's tension between your religious beliefs and public school teaching and learning activities? Or disciplinary action against your child/ren's stance for your beliefs at the expense of school activities?
 - Probe: when, Where, What happened, if any? What and how did you help your child/ren with the situation (s)?
- H. Are there general tactics you advise your children to observe in case of tensions resulting from your religious beliefs and curricula and extra curricula teaching and learning public school activities?
 - Probe: If none, what would you have suggested?
- I. In what possible ways do you think such tensions, at school, if any, affect the academic life or achievement of your children?

J. What other thoughts or comments do you want to share?

- Then I will summarize some of the main points from the discussion – asking participants whether I have reasonably summarized the discussion. I will ask what I might have missed or gotten wrong.

III. **Next step**

Thank you, everyone, for what you have shared. Please hand in your worksheets. Now that we have completed the focus group interview, I will type up the audio recording of today's discussion. I will use that to look for themes in what you have shared and compare that with things which I have learnt from other interviewees. Then, I will write up my own thoughts about what has been shared, as part of my thesis. Before I finish the thesis, let me accentuate that your names and/or your identity will be confidential in the final report of this study. When the dissertation is done, I hope to share it with you all and with other people interested in experiences of religious minorities in public education system. Please remember to respect each other's confidentiality. Once you leave here, do not share what other people have said or attach their name to what they have said. You are welcome to share your own experiences or things that have come up for you, but do not share other people's "story." Before we conclude, do you have any questions for me?

IV. **Conclusion**

Thank you, everyone. I appreciate you took your tightly scheduled time to be here and sharing your ideas and expertise. I look forward to being in touch as we continue our work on these matters.