SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION

What do these terms mean?

SPIRITUALITY - RELIGION

Some people might characterize the difference between "religion" and "spirituality" in a way that resembles the video you just watched.

They might say that religion is external behavior that is rule-based, and that spirituality is more of an internalized behavior.

SPIRITUALITY - RELIGION

Those definitions are too simplistic and do not reflect the great deal of variability in both personal and academic definition of both terms.

People have different definitions based on their own experiences.

SPIRITUALITY - RELIGION

Some define spirituality as a smaller part of the larger construct of religion.

In other words, they see spirituality as just one aspect of religion.
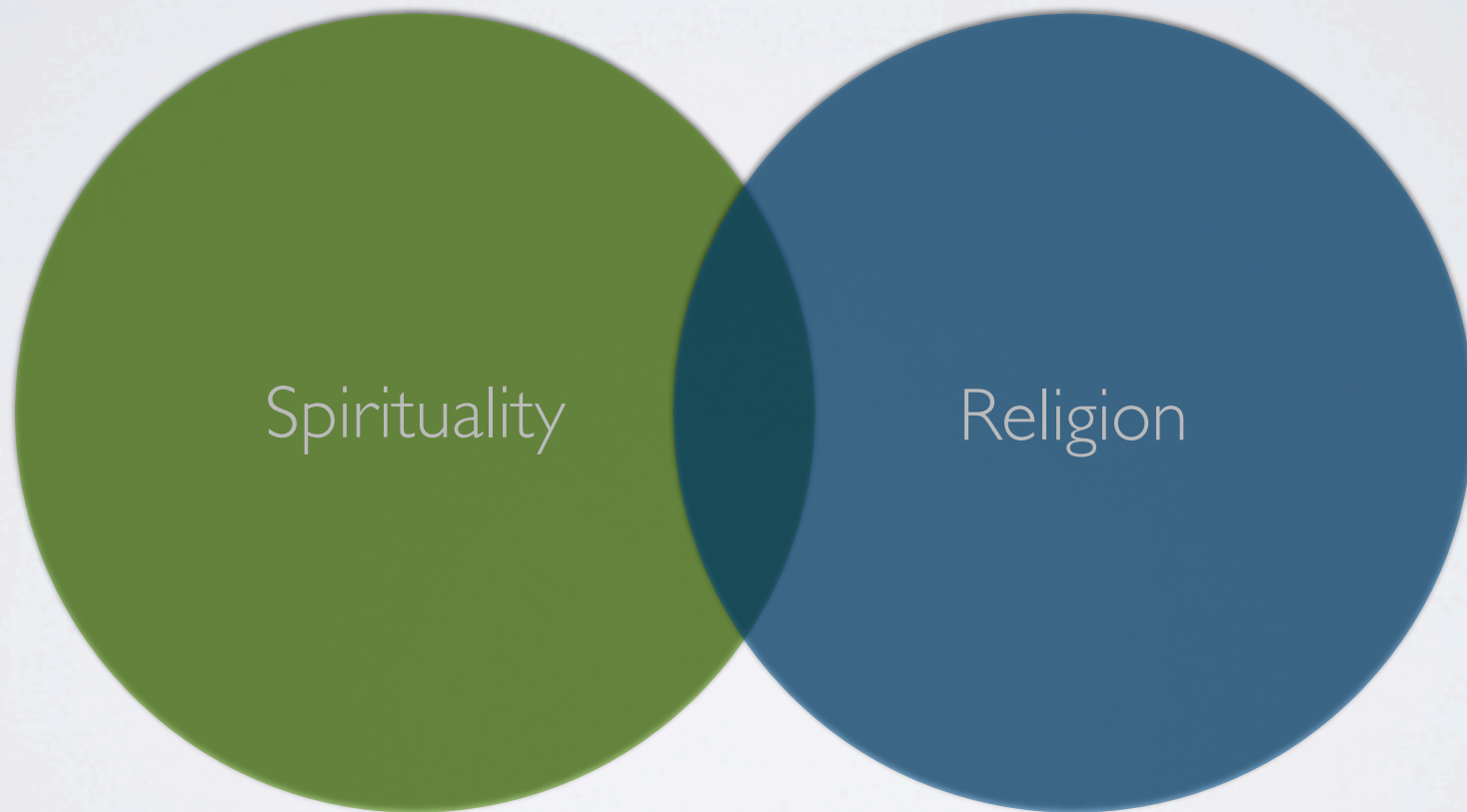
Spirituality

Religion

SPIRITUALITY - RELIGION

Others see it right the opposite.

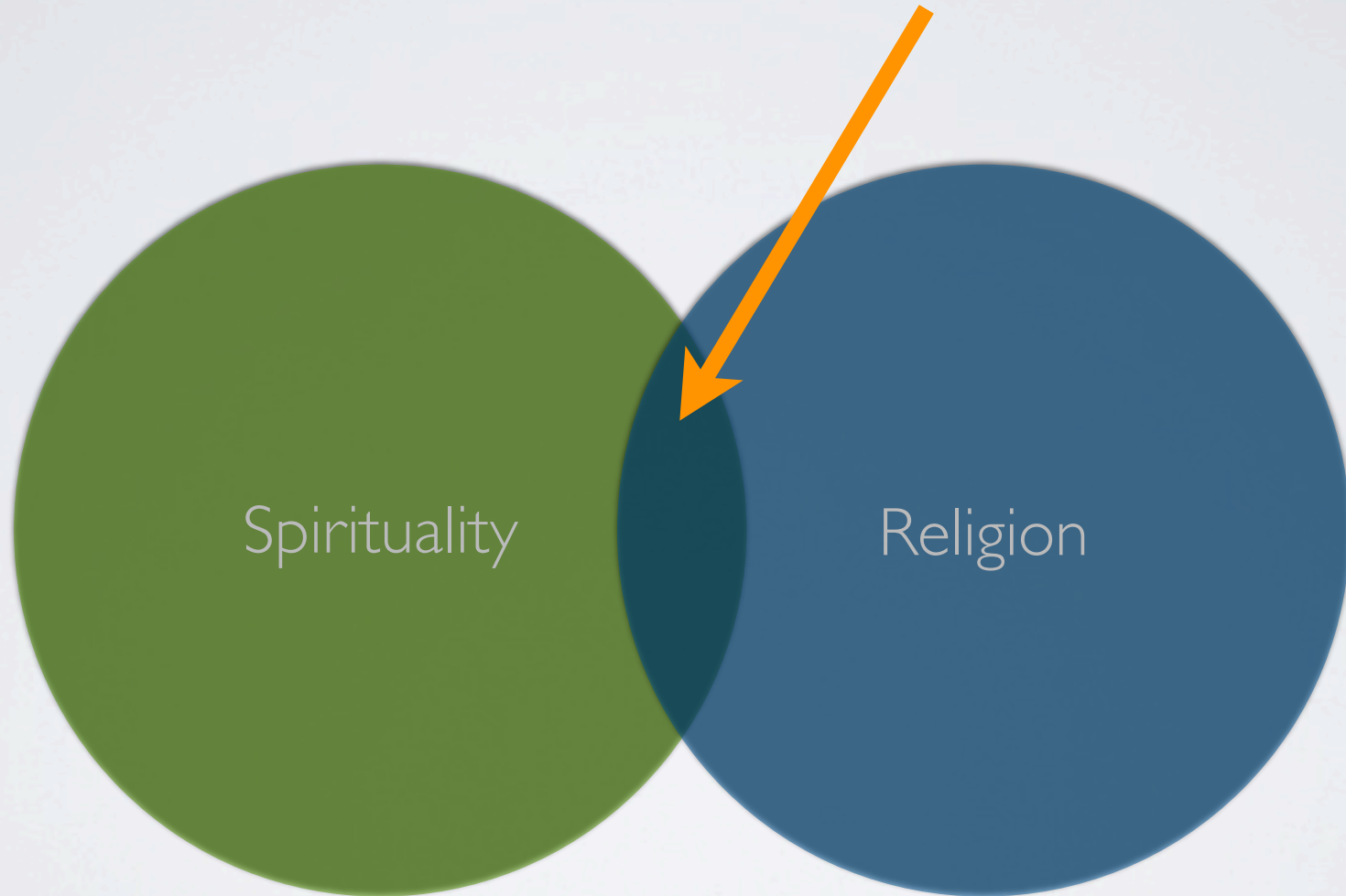They see religion as just on aspect of spirituality.

The broader reality is that when you combine all of the varioius definitions, you get the following picture of spirituality and religion.

There are certain human behaviors and experiences that could be classified as **both** "spirituality" and "religion".
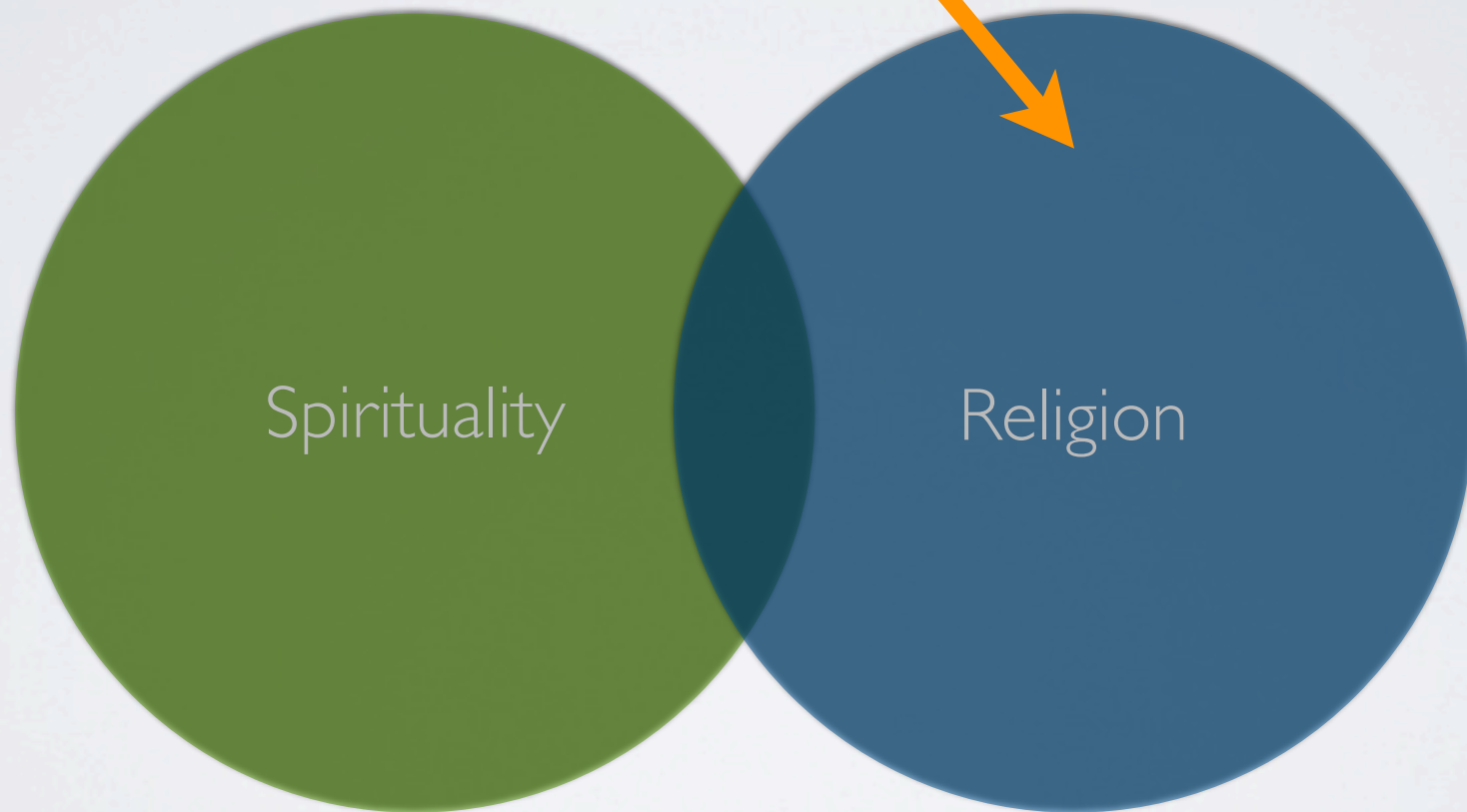
There are other human behaviors and experiences that are most commonly classified as "**spirituality**".
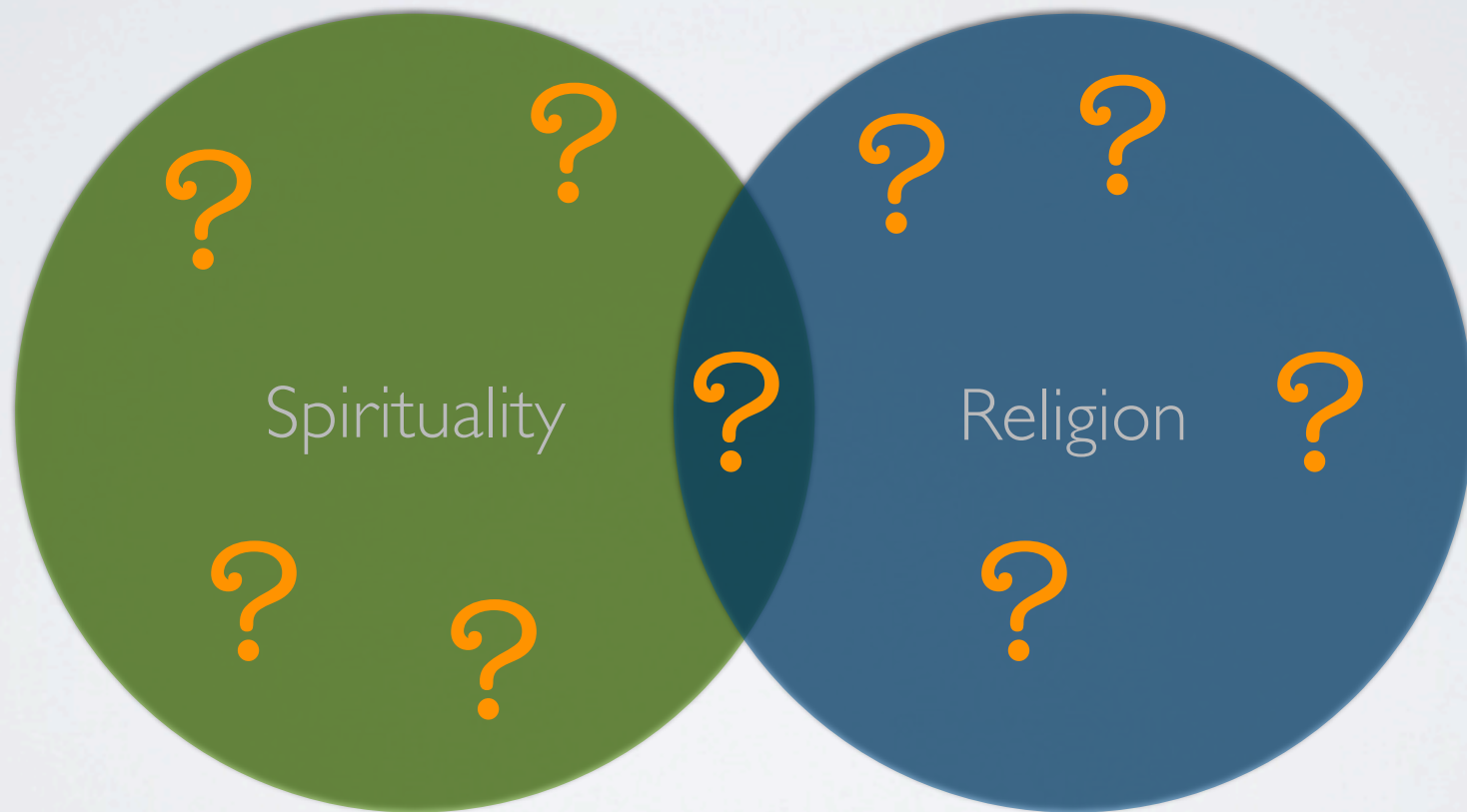
Spirituality

Religion

There are other human behaviors and experiences that are most commonly classified as "**religion**".

Again, people will define both terms differently based on their own experiences.

DEFINITIONS

From Hodge & Derezotes (2008):

"**Religion** is commonly defined in terms of an organized set of beliefs and practices - directed toward spiritual concerns - that are shared by a community".

DEFINITIONS

From Hodge & Derezotes (2008):

"**Spirituality** is typically conceptualized in more subjective, individualistic terms".

"There are two common themes..."

DEFINITIONS

From Hodge & Derezotes (2008):

1. The existence of a **transcendent** reality that is **transpersonal** in nature.

2. That this reality is "personal, **existential**, and **subjective**" and involves a "union with the **nontemporal**".

DEFINITIONS

Like any definition, that doesn't really tell you anything.

So let's take those words one at a time, so we can gain a better understanding of how spirituality is most commonly defined by academics.

tran·scend·ent |tranˈsendənt|

adjective

beyond or above the range of normal or merely physical human experience
  : *the search for a transcendent level of knowledge.*
  • surpassing the ordinary; exceptional : *the conductor was described as a "transcendent genius."*
  • (of God) existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe. Often contrasted with IMMANENT .
  • (in scholastic philosophy) higher than or not included in any of Aristotle's ten categories.
  • (in Kantian philosophy) not realizable in experience.

DERIVATIVES

tran·scend·ence |trøn(t)ˈsɛndəns| noun

tran·scend·en·cy |trøn(t)ˈsɛndənsi| noun

tran·scend·ent·ly |trøn(t)ˈsɛndəntli| adverb

ORIGIN late Middle English : from Latin **transcendent-** *'climbing over,'* from the verb **transcendere** (see TRANSCEND).

from the *New Oxford American Dictionary*

trans·per·son·al |transˈpərsənl; tranz-|

adjective

of, denoting, or dealing with states or areas of consciousness beyond the limits of personal identity : *transpersonal states of consciousness*.

from the *New Oxford American Dictionary*

ex·is·ten·tial |ˌegziˈsten CH əl|

adjective

of or relating to existence.

- Philosophy concerned with existence, esp. human existence as viewed in the theories of existentialism.
- Logic (of a proposition) affirming or implying the existence of a thing.

DERIVATIVES

ex·is·ten·tial·ly |ˈɛgzəˈstɛn(t)ʃəli| |ˈɛksəˈstɛn(t)ʃəli| adverb

ORIGIN late 17th cent.: from late Latin *existentialis*, from *existentia* (see EXISTENCE).

from the *New Oxford American Dictionary*

sub·jec·tive |səbˈjektiv|

adjective

1 based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions : *his views are highly subjective* | *there is always the danger of making a subjective judgment.* Contrasted with OBJECTIVE .
• dependent on the mind or on an individual's perception for its existence.

2 Grammar of, relating to, or denoting a case of nouns and pronouns used for the subject of a sentence.

noun (**the subjective**) Grammar
the subjective case.

DERIVATIVES

sub·jec·tive·ly |səbˈdʒektlvli| adverb

sub·jec·tive·ness |səbˈdʒektɪvnls| noun

sub·jec·tiv·i·ty |ˌsəbjekˈtivitē| |ˈsəbˈdʒekˈtɪvədi| |sʌbdʒekˈtɪvɪti| noun

ORIGIN late Middle English (originally in the sense [characteristic of a political subject, submissive]): from Latin *subjectivus*, from *subject-* *'brought under'* (see SUBJECT).

from the *New Oxford American Dictionary*

tem·po·ral [1] |ˈtemp(ə)rəl|

adjective

1 relating to worldly as opposed to spiritual affairs; secular.
2 of or relating to time.
  - Grammar relating to or denoting time or tense.

DERIVATIVES
tem·po·ral·ly |ˈtemp(ə)rəli| adverb

ORIGIN Middle English : from Old French *temporel* or Latin *temporalis*, from *tempus*, *tempor-* 'time.'

tem·po·ral [2] |ˈtemp(ə)rəl| |ˈtempər(ə)l|

adjective Anatomy
of or situated in the temples of the head.

ORIGIN late Middle English : from late Latin *temporalis*, from *tempora* 'the temples' (see TEMPLE [2]).

nontemporal would be not related to worldly affairs or time

from the *New Oxford American Dictionary*

SPIRITUALITY

So if we put that all together we can understand spirituality to be behavior or experiences that are very personal but yet take us out of ourselves and connect us to a higher consciousness that is not bound by our world or our time.

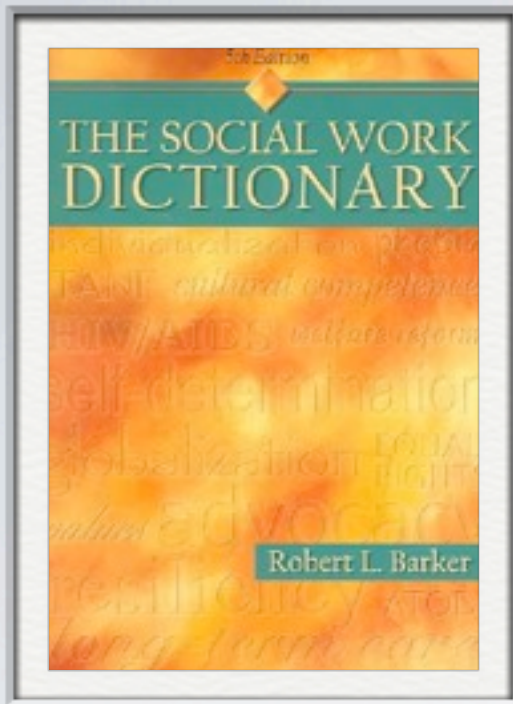That is just my (Dr. Stanfield) paraphrase.

You may have one that makes more sense to you.

Let's turn now to how Social Work has defined spirituality and religion.

SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION

What do these terms mean **to social workers**?

SPIRITUALITY

The Social Work Dictionary, which is published by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Press and written by Robert Baker, defines **spirituality** as....

"Devotion to the immaterial part of humanity and nature rather than worldly things such as possessions; an orientation to people's religious, moral, or emotional nature".

The book does not contain a definition for religion, yet NASW uses the term religion instead of spirituality in the NASW *Code of Ethics*, which we will examine more closely in a moment.
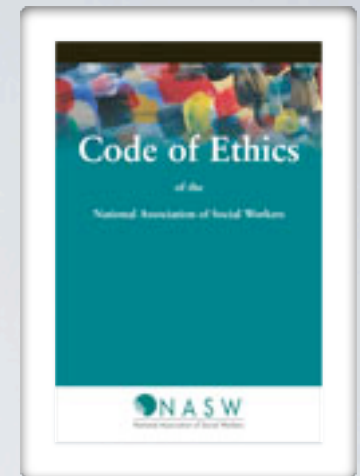
SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATIONS

- The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) sets accreditation standards for Social Work programs in the U.S.

- CSWE requires all programs include content on human diversity.

- CSWE says human diversity includes spirituality and religion.

SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATIONS

- The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) includes religion in the elements of culture when defining cultural competence.

- The NASW Code of Ethics says that social workers should not discriminate against people based on religion.
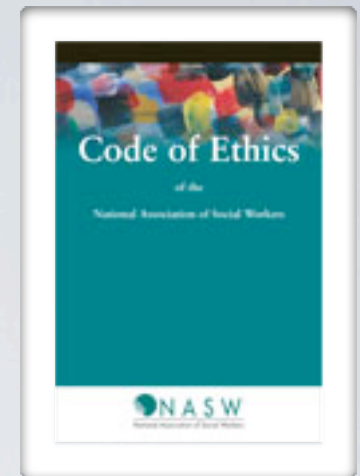
STATEMENTS FROM *THE CODE OF ETHICS*

from the *Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics* section:

"Social workers also should be aware of the impact on ethical decision making of their clients' and their own personal values and cultural and **religious** beliefs and practices. They should be aware of any conflicts between personal and professional values and deal with them responsibly".
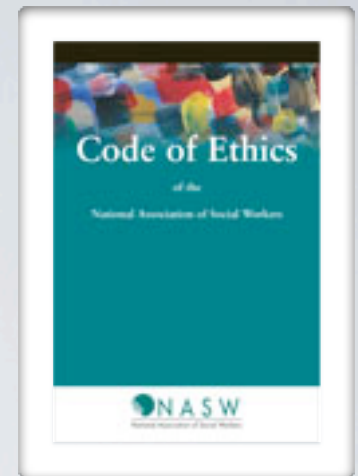
STATEMENTS FROM
THE CODE OF ETHICS

from the **I.05** *Cultural Competence and Social Diversity* section:

"(c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, **religion**, immigration status, and mental or physical disability".
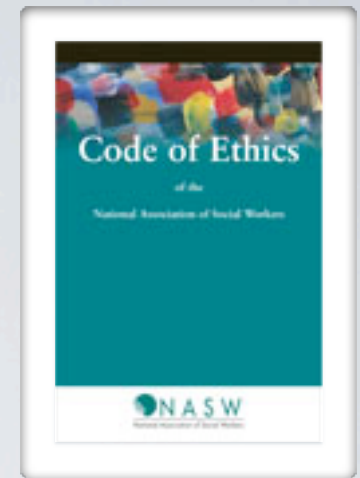
STATEMENTS FROM
THE CODE OF ETHICS

from the **1.06** *Conflicts of Interest* section:

"(b) Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, **religious**, political, or business interests".
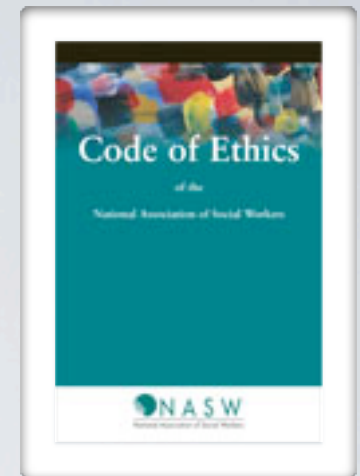
STATEMENTS FROM
THE CODE OF ETHICS
from the **2.01** *Respect* section:

"(b) Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals. Unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individuals' attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, **religion**, immigration status, and mental or physical disability".

Code of Ethics

of the

National Association of Social Workers

ONASW

STATEMENTS FROM
THE CODE OF ETHICS

from the **4.02** *Discrimination* section:

"Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, **religion**, immigration status, or mental or physical disability".
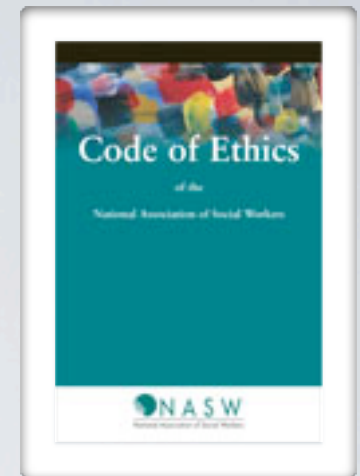
STATEMENTS FROM
THE CODE OF ETHICS

from the **6.04** *Social and Political Action* section:

"(d) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, **religion**, immigration status, or mental or physical disability".

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- The second excerpt from the *Code of Ethics* is from the section entitled *Cultural Competence and Social Diversity.*

- Well what does Cultural Competence mean?

- It basically means that, as a social worker, you can work effectively with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds, particularly cultures that are dramatically different than your own.

- Let's turn again to The Social Work Dictionary for a much more in depth definition...
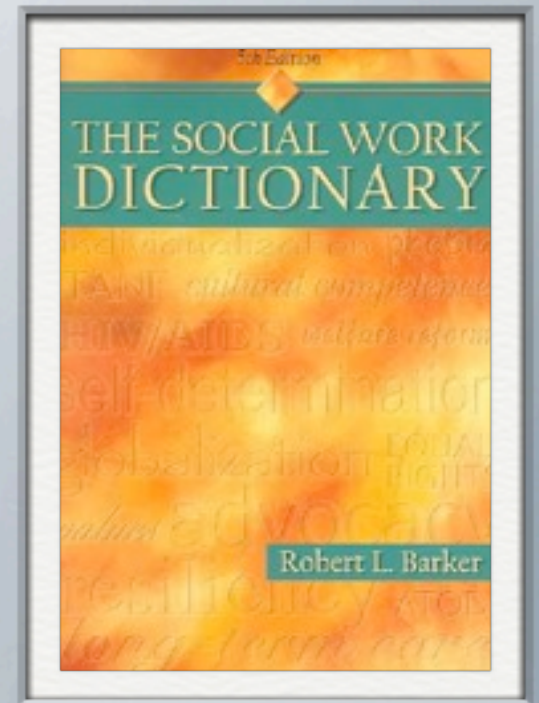
cultural competence

"Possession of the knowledge, attitudes, understanding, self-awareness, and practice skills that enable a professional person to serve clients from diverse socioethnic backgrounds".

The definition then points to the 3 components listed by the *Code of Ethics* in section 1.05:

1. Social workers should understand culture and its functions and the strengths that exist in all cultures.

2. Social workers should have knowledge about their clients' cultures and differences among cultural groups.

3. Social workers should seek education and understanding about the nature of social diversity and oppression for all cultural groups.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- So basically religion and spirituality are major components of culture.

- I like to think about culture more in terms of **each person's unique culture** as it is influenced by various influences, **rather than a group of homogeneous people**.

- We know from research that there is a great deal of variability in beliefs and experiences even within individual churches.

- So when thinking about the spirituality and religion of our clients, we must think about their own unique individual experiences and not stereotype them based on their group affiliations.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

• So that is the primary objective of this course; to make you a more culturally competent social worker.

• In this first course, we will look at how you can include spiritual and religious aspects of your client's life into the assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and termination stages of the social work helping process.

• In the second course, we will examine these same aspects as it relates to social work practice with families, groups, and communities.

• Then finally, in the third course, we will examine the spirituality and religion of social workers to determine how you can leverage your own spiritual and religious strengths in an effort to become a more effective social worker.

WHAT ABOUT **YOU**?

- How do you define religion?

- How do you define spirituality?

- Do you see yourself as more spiritual or religious?

- Do you think these terms are useful to social workers?

- Now return to the learning module outline and take the *Belief-O-Matic* and *What's Your Spiritual Type* quizzes at Beliefnet.com.