The Influence of Religious Beliefs on State Legislators’ Voting Behavior

Focus: Education Lottery

A dissertation presented
by

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Abstract

This research study examined the influence of religious beliefs of state legislators on their voting behavior. The issue chosen for this study was the North Carolina State Lottery Act that was voted on during the 2005-2006 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly. The research had eight participants, four Democrats and four Republicans, who were members of the North Carolina House of Representatives during the time of the vote on the lottery act. The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether the religious beliefs of a state legislator are important to them as they decide how they are going to vote, in this instance on a lottery bill. It was discovered that there were other influential factors, along with their religious beliefs, that played a role in the decision-making process of the legislators. The research utilized the arena theory which was developed by Mazzoni. The study used an IPA (interpretative phenomenology analysis) qualitative approach for data collection.

Keywords: state legislators, religious beliefs, influences voting behavior, arena theory
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends, new and old, who have been on this journey with me. Thank you for your interest, your cajoling, your support, and your love throughout this process. You mean the world to me and I am so thankful to have you in my life. I am truly blessed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Constituents of state legislators have varied views on the extent to which religion should influence voting behavior within the state legislative process, particularly where funding for education is concerned. Chapter 1 begins with a brief overview of research related to the education lottery in North Carolina which provides the context and background of this phenomenological study. This study addressed the issue of the influence of religious beliefs of state legislators on their voting behavior by utilizing arena theory as a model. It examined the issues and political process concerning the topic of focus—the education lottery. Through interviews with participants, the study aimed to enable others to have a better understanding of influences on legislator’s voting behavior; in particular, it took into consideration religious influences. According to Creswell (2013, p. 82), policy makers are one of the groups that might find understanding of this kind of a shared experience valuable.

This study adds to research on state legislators and religious beliefs. Much of the literature in the legislative area has been based on the voting behavior of the members of the United States Congress (U.S. Congress or Congress). This study was specifically designed to study a certain group of legislators, former members of the House of Representatives, in a specified state. The issue of religion is emphasized and provides further understanding to those who live in the “Bible Belt.”

Constituents of state legislators hold a variety of views. According to Jackson and Kingdon (1992), numerous factors motivate legislators and their voting behavior. Some motivating factors may include a legislator voting for “good” public policies, agreeing with their party’s platform, thinking about re-election, or power dynamics within their institution (Jackson & Kingdon, 1992). The authors examined the ideology of those involved in making decisions
within government and whether or not the ideology of a legislator is more important than any other variable as indicated by some economists who have examined the issue of ideology (Jackson and Kingdon, 1992). Jackson and Kingdon (1992) suggested that a need exists for more research in this area, realizing that the majority of the time the ideology of the individual does matter, and all of the considerations of the legislators usually point them in the same direction for their decision-making. There are times, however, when there are differences, which constitutes the basis for further research efforts (Jackson & Kingdon, 1992).

In the area of religion, Bentele, Sagar, Soule, and Adler (2013) reviewed legislation from U.S. state-level data from 1995–2009 and found there were more than 87 laws passed during that time period which influenced church-state relations. Most of these laws were not noticed by academics and, yet, these laws have the possibility to bring church and state closer together. Other findings from the same study suggested that the role of religion is not as separate an issue as citizens might imagine (Bentele, Sagar, Soule & Adler, 1992). The study took the following categories into consideration: religious laws and public schools including vouchers, tax credits, viewpoint anti-discrimination, moments of silence, Bible studies, religious freedom restoration acts, religious displays, and public prayer (Bentele et al., 2013).

The 2004 election was dubbed the “Values Voters” campaign which realized more than a dozen states producing bans on same-sex marriage and sustained the re-election of President George W. Bush (Jones, 2016). Rozell and Das Gupta (2006) state the core of those voting in favor of Bush were evangelicals, and a broader base including mainly white Catholics, as well as more black Protestants. According to Rozell and Das Gupta (2006), Bush increased his base among other religious groups as well. Rozell and Das Gupta (2006) were in agreement that this election was one based on the values voters. In the year following this election cycle was the
realization of the education lottery in North Carolina.

In 2005–2006, and central to this study, the North Carolina General Assembly debated a bill about the education lottery. As was reported by Fitzsimon (2005), people differed on the lottery question. Concern existed that the gambling aspect of a lottery would affect the morality of the state; on the other side of the issue, some policymakers adhered to the premise that the state would be able to acquire the monies being spent on lotteries in the surrounding states of Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia.

Varied and significant reasons obviously exist as to why legislators in the North Carolina General Assembly cast their votes as they did on the education lottery. This study examined these legislators’ processes of decision-making to understand the context of voting in the “Bible Belt” state of North Carolina; it also analyzed the issue of religious beliefs and their place in the ideology of a state legislature. This information can enlighten scholars and citizens as well as legislators in the arena of lotteries, religious beliefs, political contestation, and funding for education.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was, more specifically, to discover the extent to which legislators, serving in the North Carolina House of Representatives during the 2005–2006 Session, took their religious beliefs into consideration when voting on the education lottery bill.

**Background and Context**

**North Carolina House of Representatives.** The North Carolina General Assembly, the legislative branch of government in North Carolina, is comprised of 50 Senators and 120 Members of the House of Representatives, elected from legislative districts across the state. The districts are distributed fairly equally according to population. The Senators and Members of the
House of Representatives are elected every two years, and the sessions are biennial. Two major political parties are represented: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. During the two-year cycle, the long session is the first of the two-year session, which usually runs from January to July during the uneven years; second is the short session or second year, whose primary function is to adjust the budget. The latter typically begins in May and lasts for a period of two to three months. It is important to note there are special sessions called from time to time. When the legislature is in session, any issue may be brought forward, unless otherwise prohibited. The legislature is responsible for making the laws for the state on policy and budgetary matters. The legislators are not only responsive to their constituents, but to all of the citizens in the state. The education lottery bill was the focus of this study given that the legislators had to deal with various issues, including financial as well as moral issues, pertaining to a lottery.

**History of the North Carolina lottery.** The issue of the lottery in North Carolina has a long history. Since 1983, a lottery bill has been introduced in each session of the North Carolina General Assembly (McLaughlin, 2000). Most of the bills from 1983 until 1995 were introduced in the North Carolina Senate. In the 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1995 sessions, a lottery bill passed the North Carolina Senate but languished in the North Carolina House of Representatives. Categories of proposed designation of monies from a lottery included education, the general fund, and capital improvements.

Governor James Baxter Hunt, Jr. in a speech to the North Carolina Business Roundtable on May 17, 1993, stated “I have personal reservations about the lottery. But I believe it’s time to let the people decide, and I believe it is essential that any money from a lottery go to education.”

Arguments for a lottery included:
• It represented a way to create more revenue for the state.
• Polls had indicated a majority of residents of the state would like a lottery.
• Monies could be put to good use, i.e. education and infrastructure.
• Surrounding states had lotteries and were taking monies away from North Carolina.
• Monies could be earmarked for special programs in the area of education and the environment.
• No evidence that a lottery run by the state would have a criminal element to it was apparent.
• Gambling activities already existed in the state, including church and nonprofit bingo games, as well as gambling via casino videos in the western part of the state on the Cherokee Indian Reservation (McLaughlin, 2000) and on other Indian reservations.

Arguments against a lottery within the state included:
• The state should not support gambling.
• The cost to run a lottery might not be worth the monies generated.
• There could be a drop in revenues over time which would increase the need for more marketing and different games.
• It did not constitute a good way to produce revenues.
• More monies would be spent by poor people.
• Earmarking the revenues could present a problem and would have little benefit, for example, if earmarked for education.
• States without a lottery seemed to spend more from their state budgets for education.
• Lotteries do not increase sales in the area of retail goods (McLaughlin, 2000).

In the 1999-2000 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly, three lottery bills
were introduced in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate. The 2001-2002 Session saw the filing of bills related to the lottery. The 2003-2004 Session saw the filing of lottery bills which also occurred during the 2005-2006 session. In 2005 three committees were established: the House Select Committee on the Lottery, the Senate Select Committee on Lottery Bill H1023 and the Lottery Oversight Committee (North Carolina General Assembly website—https://www.ncleg.gov).

The passage of the legislation emphasized that the allocation of funds collected from the state lottery, identified as the education lottery, would not supplant funding for education in general, but would provide additional monies to aid public schools in North Carolina. According to a report by The Public School Forum of North Carolina (2017), the school finance laws and the Constitution of the State of North Carolina asserted that it was the state’s responsibility to pay personnel, as well as other expenses specific to the instruction of students. It is the responsibility of county governments to pay for the maintenance and building of schools. The report indicated an exception might be either a bond referendum or some other solution to a presenting problem. The report made clear existing gaps in average spending per student, depending on the investment of the schools by their county due to the county tax base. Polices approved by the legislature in the past had provided additional funds to what are known as low-wealth counties which have a small tax base. The institution of the North Carolina State Lottery during the 2005-2006 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly was seen as a revenue source for educational purposes. Indeed, the North Carolina Lottery has been a helpful revenue source for education.

**Religion and Elected Officials**

Questions and answers on whether or not the public thinks elected officials should vote
according to their specific religious views or concede to their colleagues’ opinions are documented in a survey entitled “What Americans Think: Voting Based on Religious Views” (2001) by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The survey divides responses into five categories: General Public, Catholic, Evangelical, Jewish and Non-Religious. The topics chosen for the survey included the areas of poverty, gay rights, abortion, and the death penalty. There were two main parts to each issue: (a) Should the officials use their own religious views as the main determination of a vote? or (b) Should they work with other officials holding dissimilar views? On the issue of the death penalty, for example, 46% in the Evangelical category said that votes should be based on the religious views of the official versus 42% of the Evangelicals who thought otherwise. In all of the categories this was the closest percentage on an issue. In all instances the General Public, Catholic, Jewish, and Non-Religious participants suggested elected officials should work with their colleagues and not just depend on their personal religious leanings.

The first question in Smith’s (2001) article, *Religion, Democracy and Autonomy: A Political Parable* probed whether or not legislators should be able to specifically refer to their religious bias as they decide how to cast a vote on a particular bill. Smith (2001) further questioned whether or not citizens and judges should ensure that their religious faiths are considered as they make their votes and decisions. This leads to a discussion of what freedom of religion means in the United States (U. S. Const. Amend, 1, 2006). Greenawalt (1985) cited legislators and their voting behavior as a part of a lecture at the University of Michigan School of Law. Greenawalt’s (1985) premise was more definitive than Smith’s parable (2011). Greenawalt (1985) wrote that a legislator has to not only think about the views of the constituency of the district, but the legislator should take into consideration what would make a
sensible, not foolish, decision. His argument continued, suggesting legislators should probably
give less thought to their own private convictions; however, it was not necessary for persons to
actually deny their own thoughts and feelings (Greenwalt, 1985).

**Effects of Religious Beliefs**

In North Carolina there was a traditionalist ideology which was rooted in fundamentalist
Protestant denominations, particularly the Baptists (Luebke, 1998). In fact, North Carolina has
had a conservative propensity—“The state is, as Senator Elizabeth Dole recently noted, the
buckle of the Bible Belt, and if one wants to rise in higher office, one must take North
Carolinians’ deep religiosity into account” (Christensen, 2008).

This study explored how the religious orientations and beliefs of state legislators in North
Carolina affected the passage of the education lottery. It focused on those serving in the North
Carolina House of Representatives during the time of the establishment of the education lottery
in the 2005–2006 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly. From the beginning of the
formation of the lottery, over $4.8 billion dollars was spent for education (http://www.nc-
educationlottery.org/beneficiary.aspx), with legislators directing monies for salaries of teacher
assistants, salaries of teachers, and digital learning for public schools, including charter schools,
as well as other initiatives.

With the advent of the Tea Party (a group formed within the Republican Party) and the
growth of the Religious Right, additional interest in religion and the role it plays in determining
public policy has arisen (Tea Party and Religious Right, 2010). There is some thought that those
in authority within a certain religion or denomination play an important role in the votes cast by
their members (Cann, 2009). The concerns are not whether or not there is undue pressure from
the hierarchy of religion or from a constituency, but, rather, how it affects the member if it exists
State legislators have a specific constituency within their own districts, and they serve the greater constituency of all the people living within their state. The factors influencing decision-making of legislators are not always clear. This study focused on whether or not the religion of state legislators was a major factor in their voting behavior, in one case. It documented the key influences, including but not limited to religious teachings, impacting state legislators’ decision-making when they are voting on a lottery bill which would allocate state lottery funds for education.

**Statement of the Problem**

Constituents have varied views on the extent to which religion should influence voting behavior in a state legislative process. In some regions, like the South’s Bible Belt, which was the location for this study, religious influences may be greater than in the other regions. Research has shown that North Carolina is the 10th most religious state in the United States with 65% of adults identifying themselves as “highly religious” (Lipka and Wormald, 2016). Hence, it served as an appropriate site to carry out this interpretative phenomenological analysis. This study, therefore, explored and attempted to understand the influence of religion on a state legislator’s voting behavior, specific to members of the North Carolina House of Representatives during the time of the vote on the North Carolina State Lottery Act which was signed into law on August 31, 2005.

**Research Question**

The research question guiding this study is: How do state legislators make sense of the role religious beliefs play in their voting behavior?

**Significance**
The first article to the United States Constitution makes it clear that there should not be a state religion; however, individuals are free to practice the religion of their choice. The Constitution actually prohibits the government from acknowledging one religion for all and ensures that religious tests are not allowed for public office (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). This article applies to local, state, and federal levels of government of the United States. The preamble to the Constitution of the State of North Carolina also establishes the prohibition of a sanctioned religion and grants an individual the freedom of religion. It ensures freedom of religion in the public forum.

The state legislature crafts the laws that affect its citizens in many different areas, including education, general government, the economy, justice and public safety, the environment, health and human services, transportation, and technology. Even though many policy issues may be measured by actual dollars, other issues are also part of the purview of the legislature including redistricting and rules and regulations affecting conduct of citizens and “the regulation of morality” (Fairbanks, 1979). Fairbanks (1979) concluded that religious beliefs play a role in areas such as gambling which is frequently one of the most combative issues. These are sometimes referred to as “hot button” issues; they include abortion, the death penalty, and gun control. The public might have some ideas on what factors motivate a legislator’s decision/vote, but actual data are frequently not available on this. This phenomenological study probed the question and role of religious beliefs on state legislators and their voting behavior.

A study of Latino members, who served in the 101st–108th Congresses, found that religion was not an influential factor on voting behavior (Rocca, Sanchez, & Uscinski, 2008). The factors of influence were education, gender, birthplace, age groups; but not national origin or religion (Rocca et al., 2008). However, Richardson and Fox’s (1972) study on the voting
behavior of state legislators and abortion reform found a relationship. In their follow-up study, Richardson and Fox (1975), stated that the effect of religion proved to be the preeminent predictor for legislative voting. Factors including age, political party, and constituency of the legislators were not as important.

Yamane and Oldmixon (2006) researched a state legislature versus Congress because they saw society as very complex and perceived that state legislatures were where many important laws affecting citizens would be implemented. Yamane and Oldmixon’s (2006) example reveals the notion of the importance of studying the voting behavior of state legislators due to their influence on the public, their constituents.

Another comparison of voting behavior and the religious affiliation of members of Congress was completed by Duke and Johnson (1992). There have also been studies of these topics within state legislatures (Yamane, 1999). These two examples indicate the interest in pursuing and learning more about the ways in which legislators make their decisions and what influences their conclusions on issues.

Other studies have examined how religious organizations have an effect on state legislators (Micon, 2008) and how the gambling behavior of players, including those involved in playing the lottery, are influenced by religiosity (Lam, 2006). A reason to study state legislators versus members of the U. S. Congress is the fact that state legislators are more closely aligned with the public and serve fewer constituents, therefore they are closer to the people they represent. Also, legislators in North Carolina are elected within districts and serve about the same number of people.

**Positionality Statement**

Throughout my life I have had many opportunities to become involved in various
community and church activities on the local, state, and national levels. For years I had the notion that I would like to serve in public office and the legislature is where I thought I could be most effective. In school and college I was involved in activities where I “ran for office.” I was elected as Secretary of the Student Council in high school, and I held the highest office a woman could hold, Women’s Vice President, at Florida State University.

I remember voting for the first time. I went with my parents and it was quite exciting. I believed I could make a difference. My father had served on the City Council in Jacksonville, Florida and I remember thinking the campaign card he had was so special. I had an uncle and first cousin who held offices at the state level. Also, one of my grandfathers was a local school board member, and one of my great grandfathers was a local sheriff. Therefore, serving in elected office was part of my family history on both sides.

I did not talk about it, but I knew one day I would run for the legislature. I researched elected offices, read materials, listened and thought that when the time was right, maybe I would run. And, then in 1991 I ran for the North Carolina State Senate. I lost that election, but I went on to win a seat in the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1993. It is interesting to note that during 1991, there were many women running for public office, and 1992 was declared the Year of the Woman due to the increase of female senators in the U. S. Congress. I remember thinking that I was a part of this exciting time for women. And, I thought maybe being a woman would be a positive for getting votes during my first race! I saw my service to the legislature as my ministry to serve others because I knew the laws passed and the decisions made affected all of the people in our state. My experience in the legislature was one I treasure. I had the opportunity to know the rural and urban communities, to serve with a diverse group of people, and to learn a lot about a variety of issues. In fact, I considered committee work was like going
to school where you learn and prepare; debating on the floor was the test or final exam. It was a privilege and honor to serve.

When I first ran for office, I learned that I should be able to speak extemporaneously for two or three minutes. One of the ideas I had was to use my description of how the legislature works. I have described the legislature as an equilateral triangle (Alexander, 2009). On one side of the triangle are the rules: One must follow the United States Constitution, the North Carolina Constitution, and the written rules, passed by the House of Representatives. There are also the informal rules, not written down but adhered to, of the North Carolina House of Representatives. The second side is the bills themselves, the wording and how they are handled in committee meetings and on the floor of the House. The third side is the people: peers in one’s party and in the opposition party, the constituents, lobbyists, interest groups, the Executive Branch and Judicial Branch of State government.

Having served in a state legislature as a state representative for 20 years piqued my interest in what influences the votes cast by legislators. I was aware of various groups trying to influence legislation including those who were representing a particular religious philosophy. Issues relating to the lottery, abortion rights, policies concerning same-sex marriage, gun rights, the death penalty, education, the environment, health and human service issues, as well as other major issues, prompted me to wonder: Besides political party affiliation, what and/or who makes the difference to a legislator? One might discover in a legislature located in the “Bible Belt” of the United States, where there are numerous churches and where belonging to a religious institution is part of the culture, that religion emerges as a possible reason for an individual legislator’s decision. This is certainly a thought I had while serving in the legislature. Having been a part of a legislative body served as a positive strength in understanding the process and
knowing the participants.

Numerous decisions and votes are continually made by legislatures during each legislative session. Voting is not always an easy task. Each individual legislator is responsible for his or her vote. And, all legislators have the task of explaining from time to time why they voted for or against an issue.

I distinctly remember a particular education lottery vote. I received a call from someone in authority in my denomination making it clear I should vote “no” due to the stance of the church’s policy. I had a conversation with someone else in authority in the same denomination who stated that he/she might not agree with my decision, but that I should take into account all of the parameters and vote the way I thought was most appropriate at the time. Thus, the dilemma was one I had to personally weigh. I had learned, through my service in the legislature, that after a vote, I was accountable for my vote and was responsible for explaining my voting decision. In this instance I had to consider my denomination’s policy, as well as taking into account all of the parameters surrounding the education lottery bill. Hence, trying to answer the question “How do state legislators make sense of the role religious beliefs play in their voting behavior?” is one in which I have had a great deal of interest.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is arena theory by Mazzoni (1991). Basically, the theory provides a description of four different policy-making arenas which include small groups of people, appointed groups of people, a wide range of participants, and leaders. Mazzoni (1991) gave credit to the following researchers for providing the basis of arena theory: Allison (1971); Bardach (1972); Kiser and Ostrom (1982); Hilgarter and Bosk (1988).

There are four policymaking arenas within arena theory. The subsystem and macro
arenas were the first two developed, followed by the commission and leadership arenas. The latter two were added during the study of public school choice in Minnesota. The Mazzoni (1991) study is significant because, when conducting the study on public school choice in Minnesota, the researcher identified several situations shaping the leadership context that created the proposal concerning public school choice. These situations included the interaction of government officials and private citizens or groups, regardless of party affiliation, who are unified in their effort to pass a specific piece of legislation; commitment and negotiation to the overall goal; and, the reality that the effort really did not gain much attention until the legislation was enacted. (See Figure 1.)

![Figure 1. The four state policymaking arenas described by Mazzoni (1991). Adapted from Alexander, M. (2015).](image)

Examples of these four arenas include:

- The subsystem arena is composed of a small group of people. This group might consist of a particular committee in each house of the legislature, for example the health committee. Other groups within this subsystem might include the Department of Health and Human Services, the state medical society, and other groups, with health as a major interest. This subsystem could also include a legislator who has a particular interest in a specific topic. Instead of trying to reform a whole system, this group is interested in making incremental progress by suggesting a particular idea or ideas to be implemented;
this subsystem does not attempt to make a major overhaul of an issue or department of government.

- The macro arena includes the public and mass media as well as other high-ranking leaders. For example, Equality North Carolina is an organization concerned with ensuring there is justice and equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer North Carolinians. Through their public relations and individual efforts, they work to inform legislators about their cause. They have to compete heavily against their opponents.

- The commission arena suggests the formation of official groups which might be appointed to deal with a specific issue, i.e. a health reform plan. This might be a specific commission that has been appointed by the members of the General Assembly to study a specific topic for a certain period of time. Usually many of these commissions have legislators, stakeholders, and general members of the public involved. Legislation is often born out of ideas brought forth from these entities. A formal report is usually issued whether or not an effort results in legislation.

- The leadership arena is usually formed from those who have power and control. These individuals might include eminent officials of government or those in influential businesses. There have been times within the health field in the North Carolina General Assembly where those in related fields were on opposite sides of an issue. For example, opticians and the ophthalmologists were debating the issues concerning their practices and what services should be provided to which entity according to their license status. Both sides of the issue had government officials as well as power brokers siding with them.
It is important to note that the first two parts of the arena model were the subsystem arena and the macro arena (Mazzoni, 1991, p.116). These are two basic tenets of legislation where a bill is introduced by a group whose members have similar interests, or a larger group which is able to muster a large group of people from diverse groups. The commission and leadership groups might have a narrowed focus.

In response to social problems which are recognized and are of importance to the general public, arena theory developed and was based on competition for resources and public attention by public groups—including newspapers and nonprofits—and operatives, comprised of politicians, reporters and members of the public (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988). A religious institution is usually defined as a nonprofit and is considered a public group; therefore, this research project is one of public interest and aligns with arena theory.

In a study of public school choice in Minnesota where it became evident that legislators were important, especially in the area of leadership, the arenas of commission and leadership were added to the theory (Mazzoni, 1991). Table 1 describes the four arenas of Mazzoni’s arena theory.

Table 1.

*Arenas and Outcomes According to Mazzoni* (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arena</th>
<th>Possible outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subsystem</td>
<td>Incremental change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Brings constituencies together to influence legislative decisions; outworks opponents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>Discussion takes place; gives attention to issues previously enacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Influences agendas; makes a difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from M. Alexander (2015).

Fowler (1994) studied both of Mazzoni’s arena models while researching educational
policy in Ohio, specifically Senate Bill 140 in 1988 and 1989. Using a case study approach to examine the models introduced by Mazzoni, Fowler (1994) found the original was inadequate compared with the revised model, even though she also found weakness in the revised model. Fowler (1994) asserted that, during the policy process, not much activity occurred in the macro arena where there is usually a wide range of participants; she also noted that the process waned from the subsystem to the appointment of three commissions. The commissions, along with the leadership of influential leaders, became the greatest asset to the process (Fowler, 1994). A weakness in Mazzoni’s version, Fowler (1994) claimed, was the lack of understanding of commissions and how they function. Another point raised was that leaders at the national and state level might be working together, depending on the issue (Fowler, 1994). Another matter that came to the forefront was the fact that policy innovations may occur even if the revenues are fixed, which is opposite to one of Mazzoni’s hypotheses (Fowler, 1994). Overall, however, Fowler’s (1994) conclusions indicated that the arena model is helpful in the area of examining policy issues within states.

**Strengths of the arena theory.** Arena theory, as developed by Mazzoni (1991) and by Mazzoni, Sullivan, and Sullivan, (1983), Keese (1990), and Flagel as cited in Canfield-Davis (2010), outlines several factors of influence concerning legislators. The Canfield-Davis study involved 37 participants including the governor and lieutenant governor; an educational staff person from the governor’s office; staff from the board of education; the office of financial management; six legislative staff; two staff members from the legislative council; three education lobbyists; and 22 legislators with an equal number of Democrats and Republicans. The participants maintained that trust was a key issue for them along with credibility and respect. These were important for: “(a) the legislative process; (b) acquiring information about bills; (c)
legislators; (d) voting decisions; (e) the number of legislators perceived to have these qualities; (f) lobbyists; and (g) the behaviors of legislators and lobbyists who demonstrated these attributes” (Canfield-Davis, 2010, p. 9). Even though religious affiliation was not a major factor in the research by Canfield-Davis (2010), it was a consideration in the list of 18 factors used in the study, and some participants indicated they were influenced by their beliefs. Voting behavior is reflected by a legislator’s personal feeling (Mazzoni, 1991). In a study on educational decision-making Keese (1990) found that education lobbyists and other legislators played major roles in the legislative process even though family and friends, teachers and organizations, staff, and other elected officials also played a role in decision-making. From this perspective, the arena model informed the analysis of this study, particularly in determining the factors of influence, including religious influences, on the decision-making behavior of the state legislators.

**Weakness of the arena theory.** Curtis (2011), who provided research on policymaking involving a court case in the state of Vermont, suggested looking closely at Mazzoni’s (1991) work to review the arena model and to add a judicial arena to Mazzoni’s (1991) second arena model (see Table 1.). Curtis (2011) also made a second proposal to make the theory more robust: investigating the issue of non-incremental finance reform within the education sector. Both of these approaches potentially strengthen the theory’s applicability.

Higgins (2009) claimed that one weakness of Mazzoni’s (1991) work was the major shift from one subsystem to another. Higgins recommended a study be undertaken of the subsystem and committees to understand the legislative process, given that the actual subsystem shift indicated where power is actually located (Higgins, 2009).

**Summary and appropriateness for this study.** Arena theory was considered an appropriate framework for this study because it provides a backdrop for religion and politics.
This study focused on the four arenas and how they were observed to be effective in the voting behavior of the participants, relative to their religious beliefs. Arena theory proved useful in this case because it involves looking at four distinctive constituencies who have influence in legislative matters: those with specific interests, the general public, those on specific task forces, and those in power. The research aimed to enable legislators to take stock of what influenced their voting behavior as they addressed specific issues. The study took into account the factors surrounding the lottery vote including reports, constituencies, prior legislation, and leadership in the North Carolina House of Representatives. It will enable legislators to understand the probable players who are influential within their own arena of lawmaking.

Utilizing arena theory aided this researcher in ascertaining the influence of religious beliefs in the voting behavior of state legislators by isolating it as one possible area of influence. This theory has been acknowledged by other researchers and provided a framework for discussing two topics affecting the public arena: religion and politics, which are a focus of this study.

**Key Terminology**

**Bible Belt:** “an area chiefly in the southern U.S. whose inhabitants are believed to hold uncritical allegiance to the literal accuracy of the Bible—*broadly*: an area characterized by ardent religious fundamentalism” [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Bible%20Belt](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Bible%20Belt)

**Democratic Party:** One of the two major political parties in the United States, founded in 1828. [http://www.dictionary.com/browse/democratic-party?s=t](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/democratic-party?s=t)

**Hot Button Issue:** “An emotional and usually controversial issue or concern that triggers immediate intense reaction.” [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hot%20button](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hot%20button)

**North Carolina Government:**
Executive Branch: “The Executive Branch of government enforces laws made by the legislature. The head of this branch is the Governor, who is elected every four years. Along with the Governor, the Executive Branch also includes the Lieutenant Governor, the Council of State, and many State agencies.”

House of Representatives: Composed of “120 members who serve a term of 2 years. Members must have lived in their districts 1 year before election.”

Judicial Branch: “The Judicial Branch interprets what our laws mean and makes decisions about the laws and those who break them. The Courts of the Judicial Branch are split into three divisions, the Appellate Division, The Superior Court Division and the District Court Division.”

Legislative Branch: “The Legislative Branch makes laws for North Carolina. It is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives, which together are known as the General Assembly. The Legislature meets biennially and all members are elected for two-year terms.”

Senate: Comprised of “50 members who serve a term of 2 years. Members must be 25 years old when elected; have lived in NC as a citizen for 2 years; and have lived in their district 1 year before election.”

Partisan: “Associated or affiliated with a single political party or caucus.”

All terms in this section, North Carolina Government, are found at the following site: http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/Help/KnowledgeBase/viewItem.pl?scategory=Glossary

Religious Right: “A chiefly Protestant faction in the United States, holding strongly conservative social and political views and regarded as an active and influential political group.”

Origin: The earliest use was found in The New York Times in the 1970s.

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/religious_right
**Republican Party:** A political party that began in 1854 and is today one of the two major political parties in the United States. [http://www.dictionary.com/browse/republican-party](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/republican-party)

**United States Congress:** Congress is the highest lawmaking body in the United States and is comprised of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate.  
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research project focused on the factors influencing the voting behavior of state legislators, particularly the religious influences. The phenomenological study concentrated on one state legislature in the southern part of the United States as its members considered and voted for the education lottery in 2005. The research aimed to determine what factors are important in a state legislator’s decision-making. Although results from the literature do not always indicate a specific relationship between legislators’ votes and their religion, Greenawalt (1994) stated:

We would like to have more information about how much religion is influencing individual legislators’ political judgment and how much the reverse is happening. Of course, even assuming religious views influence political judgment to a considerable degree, that does not establish that the legislators themselves see the connections or that they self-consciously take religion into account. (p. 552)

The audience for this study includes policy makers, lobbyists, those involved in public policy, and the public—all groups who stand to gain from understanding the influences that affect a state legislator’s decision-making process and voting behavior. The overarching research question guiding this study is: How do state legislators make sense of the role religious beliefs play in their voting behavior? It helped the researcher address the factors that influenced the passage of legislation in North Carolina for the education lottery in 2005.

To assist in answering this question, the researcher explored research conducted in the past in the area of state legislatures as well as research examining the topic of religion and state legislators. Due to the dearth of literature in this particular area, other research, particularly in the area of the U.S. Congress, was also examined to provide more comprehensive knowledge of
state legislators, voting behavior, and religion.

The chapter is divided into five sections: (a) “Attitudes Toward Politicians and Religion,” (b) “Voting Behavior and Religion,” (c) “Areas of Influence in State Legislatures,” (d) “Voting Behavior of Legislators,” (e) “The Lottery,” and (f) “Conclusion.”

**Attitudes Toward Politicians and Religion**

A 2001 survey by the Pew Charitable Trusts titled “What Americans Think: Voting Based on Religious Views” included five categories of respondents: the general public, Catholic, Evangelical, Jewish, and nonreligious. The main question addressed was whether those elected officials who are deeply religious should rely only on their personal beliefs or if they should negotiate with their colleagues whose religious beliefs differ. The topics chosen for the respondents were in the areas of poverty, gay rights, abortion, and the death penalty. On the issue of the death penalty, 46% of those in the Evangelical category said they thought the vote on the death penalty should be based on the religious views of the official, whereas 42% thought otherwise. In all of the categories surveyed, this was the closest percentage on an issue. The general public, Catholic, Jewish, and nonreligious participants varied in percentages, with all leaning more toward elected officials working with their colleagues and not simply depending on their own religious leanings.

In 2010, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey that indicated that 52% of all Americans were in agreement that churches should not be involved in politics, even though 61% of Americans stated they thought it is important for elected members of the U.S. Congress to have strong religious beliefs. The survey further stated that the majority of Catholics (64%) and Protestants (74%) wanted members to have strong religious beliefs; simultaneously, two-thirds of those unaffiliated with a religion and 85% of those declaring as atheists did not find religious
beliefs of importance. In 2015, research indicated that the religious affiliations of the elected members of the 114th Congress (2015–2016) matched the trends in religious affiliation within their respective regions, further indicating that they shared their beliefs with many of the people they represented (Sandstrom, 2015). According to Sandstrom (2015), a high percentage of Protestants in the population of the South (61%), and an even higher percentage of elected southern members of the 114th Congress (76%) were Protestants.

In a Faith Matters 2006 survey, the respondents were asked about six issues: sex, pornography, divorce, homosexuality, gambling, and concealing income from tax authorities. Thirty-eight percent of those attending church weekly thought gambling was always wrong; 16% of those who never or rarely attended church thought gambling was always wrong (Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Those who consider themselves as true believers, who believe only one religion is true, are in the minority and 55% of them consider the notion that gambling is always wrong (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Putnam & Campbell (2010) also conducted a survey concerning what is termed political activity at church and found that their data and observations indicated little support for “politics over the pulpit” by any group. They cited three main issues by asking whether the subject’s congregation (a) has social or political sermons monthly or more, (b) ever has voter registration or voter guides, or (c) ever organizes marches. The survey included the following categories: Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Black Protestant, Jewish, Mormon, Other Faiths. The two highest categories were: Black Protestant with the highest percentage (close to 60%) of having voter registration or voter guides and Jewish (50%) saying they have social or political sermons monthly or more. The lowest percentages of those who ever organized marches were Mainline Protestant and Mormon (less than 10%). Putnam & Campbell (2010) claim “There may not be much politics in church, but
much that has political relevance happens *through* church.” They relate that even if not obvious from the pulpit, there is still the apparent political discussion among church members.

Greenawalt (1985), in a study of legislators and their voting behavior, wrote that a legislator needs to think of the views of the constituency of the district he or she represents in making sensible decisions. His argument suggested that legislators should give less thought to their private convictions, even though it is not necessary for an individual actually to deny his or her own thoughts and feelings in political decision-making.

Smith (2001) discussed in parable form whether legislators should be able to depend on their religious bias as they cast votes on particular bills and questioned whether judges should take their religious beliefs into consideration when making their judicial decisions, and whether citizens should be encouraged by their specific faiths as they cast their votes in elections. These questions lead to an analysis of the meaning of the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment and of the Bill of Rights, where freedom of religion is described. The parable ends by raising the question of the place of religion in the public arena. This discourse is essential in understanding the place of religion within the context of an elected official’s decision-making.

References to religious beliefs may seem foreign to some, but prayer and religion are mentioned within the governmental entity of the legislature, nationally. This coalescence of religion and politics was cited by Lund (2010) in his writings on the *Marsh v. Chambers* (1983) lawsuit. The decision made an exception to the First Amendment and allowed prayer in legislatures (Lund, 2010). Lund noted, “The willingness of the people to fight tooth-and-nail for control over legislative prayer has given us the most perfect proof of its character as a religious establishment” (p. 1049). This is one example why the influence of religion on voting by legislators is not to be ignored.
A state legislator, as an elected official, serves the public and therefore is not a representative of one particular interest; although elected by a district, the person serves the whole state. Greenawalt (1985) suggested that, when speaking in public, a legislator should not use religious terms, yet the freedom to be expressive about a certain issue might mean relying on one’s beliefs, particularly religious ones. The bottom line is not to speak in an exclusive voice, one that might be considered religious (Greenawalt, 1985). Greenawalt (1985) asserted that those in public office and citizens alike should make rational decisions, void of religious consideration. Greenawalt (1985) discovered the following as he was working on a lecture which was part of the Thomas M. Cooley Lectures at the University of Michigan School of Law in March 1986: “Serious efforts by religious people to be model liberal citizens . . . would produce a frustrating alienation of their whole persons from their political characters” (p. 404).

Legislative prayer is part of a legislator’s routine. The question remains as to the degree to which religion is actually a factor in the voting behavior of a legislator.

On the basis of previous studies, a continuing interest exists in religion and its influence, particularly in the South. The data described highlights the dilemma of politics and religion. The public wants elected officials to have religious beliefs and, at the same time, does not want the church involved in politics. The following section discusses more specifically the voting behavior of members of the U.S. Congress and members of state legislatures. Many of these studies highlight the dilemma of politics and religion of elected officials, particularly legislators.

Voting Behavior and Religion

The following section explores research regarding voting behavior and religion, first examining the U. S. Congress, which includes voting behavior of Congressional members and how their religious beliefs impacted their voting behavior, and then expanding to research on
state legislatures.

A comprehensive study by Kurtz (2015) compiled data from a joint study by the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Pew Charitable Trusts which stated that 42% of state legislators did not report their religious affiliations. However, 38% listed themselves as Protestant followed by Roman Catholic at 16% with 2% reporting other Christian and 2% reporting non-Christian, which is consistent with the reporting on the population of the United States (as mentioned above), including a large percentage reporting “unaffiliated.”

**The U.S. Congress.** On the national level, one study specific to religion and voting behaviors of legislators surveyed members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS; known generally as the Mormon Church), referred to as Mormons, who served in the House of Representatives during the 109th Congress from January 3, 2005 to January 3, 2007 (Cann, 2009). The focus of the quantitative study was to test the religious influence on Mormons serving in Congress during that specified time. Cann (2009) chose Mormons as the subjects of study because of the formal authority within the structure of the Mormon Church and the perception that Mormons are influenced by their religious beliefs, which combined, suggested that their voting records would be cohesive. Cann (2009) cited the Mormon Church’s official statement on political neutrality (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, n.d.), which indicated that elected officials who are Mormon have the freedom to make their own decisions without intervention by leaders of the LDS. The analysis used only non-unanimous votes. The research did not find that Mormons were more united in their votes than other random sets of members of the House of Representatives. The study showed influence from their constituencies, not their religious beliefs. However, this finding does not discount the fact that there may be a connection between religious belief and who is elected if there is a major
religious group present comprising a large part of the constituency within a district (Cann, 2009).

Previously, Chressanthis, Gilbert, and Grimes (1991) explored whether religion played a role in how U.S. senators vote, specifically on abortion issues, and if the senators took the opinions of their constituents into consideration. The study focused on a vote taken on June 28, 1983, known as the Human Life Amendment, an amendment that would have had the potential to overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which gave women the legal right to have an abortion (Chressanthis et al., 1991). The study concluded that, although U.S. senators are responsive to the views of their constituents, senators’ religion played an important role in how they voted on this particular piece of legislation.

Even earlier, an article (as cited in Collie, 1984) categorized the voting behavior of members of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures as well as non-U.S. legislatures and included descriptions of different types of decision-making models: (a) consensus (Kingdon, 1973), (b) cue taking (Matthews & Stimson, 1970, 1975; Stimson, 1975), (c) predisposition communication (Cherryholmes & Shapiro, 1969), (d) policy dimensions (Clausen, 1973), (e) voting history (Asher & Weisberg, 1978), and (f) the electoral incentive (Fiorina, 1974, 1975). These models exemplify (a) a consensus vote where there is not much controversy; (b) specific cues, which may include party leadership and the “Conservative Coalition;” (c) a legislator’s attitude; (d) the policy itself; (e) one’s voting history; and (f) the reelection of a legislator. Two other factors deemed important were collective and individual behaviors. Collie (1984) suggested two main factors occurring within research on legislatures: (a) documenting and explaining political party unity and disagreements that take place within the structure of a political party, and (b) the voting behavior of legislators versus their constituencies.

By using roll-call voting, Fastnow, Grant, and Rudolph (1999) discovered that religion is
an important factor influencing the voting behavior of members of Congress. They studied the relationship between religious preferences and voting in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1959 to 1994 on the issue of abortion and ideological preferences of voting developed by Americans for Democratic Action. Fastnow et al. (1999) found through their research that religion was able to be precisely measured when studying legislative action and that it should be included as a factor.

A quantitative study by Haider-Markel (1999) emphasized the influence interest groups have in Congress through examining the voting behavior of members over a 20-year period, from the 95th (1977–1979) through the 104th (1995–1997) Congress. The hypothesis for the study took into consideration “partisanship, ideology, religious beliefs, and constituency opinion, with interest groups influence occurring at the margins” (p. 113). Lesbian and gay interest groups were the main groups studied, and Haider-Markel (1999) found that interest groups are influential even under the least optimal conditions. Even if groups are contributing to and involved in legislative campaigns, or organizing around legislation, they may still face difficulties, particularly if they are a disenfranchised group (Haider-Markel, 1999). Haider-Markel (1999) concluded that (a) if a group is trying to block legislation that is negative, they might have a better chance of influencing legislators; (b) interest groups are not always successful in their efforts to influence legislation; and (c) if there is little support for and much stigma tied to an interest group, for example, illegal immigrants, then influencing legislation will be a struggle.

Newman, Guth, Cole, Doran, and Larson (2016) examined whether religion affects the voting behavior of members of the U.S. House of Representatives with regard to environmental policy. The study measured the relationship between environmental policies and religion from
1973 to 2009 and found that religious affiliation is strongly related to the voting behavior of legislators and also to the composition of the district and party affiliation. Religion has implications for environmental policy because “religion provides perspectives on the origin and destiny of humankind and its relationship with nature” (Newman et al., 2016, p. 292). In summation, beliefs do matter in politics.

Guth (2014) assessed the literature on the issue of religion in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1953 to 2003. The author concluded that religion plays a strong role in a representative’s voting behavior and that a representative is likely to claim his or her choice of religion and be an active participant in his or her religious affiliation. Guth (2014) further acknowledged that religion is a dominant factor within the politics of the United States.

As summarized above, studies have documented the dynamics within the U. S. Congress and the influence of religious beliefs on the voting behavior of its members. Issues used as focal points included abortion, the environment, and religious beliefs. The next section includes a discussion of state legislatures and general topics for which a religious component or other factors were of primary influence in the voting behavior of a state legislator.

**State legislatures.** Yamane (1999) has played a significant role in researching state legislatures, noting the importance of studying religion as a factor in legislative behavior. Yamane and Oldmixon (2006) documented the different dynamics between a state legislature and Congress, perceiving society as very complex and acknowledging that state legislatures are where many important laws are implemented. They aimed to encourage others to research additional state legislatures in comparison studies or to examine even the behavior of legislators individually, to provide more data and to enable further research (Yamane & Oldmixon, 2006). Their research undergirded the notion of the importance of studying voting behavior of state
legislators as it relates to their religiosity (Yamane & Oldmixon, 2006).

Yamane’s (1999) research on state legislators in Wisconsin cemented the idea of conservative groups having perhaps the most powerful influence on individual legislators. Yamane’s (1999) data consisted of a survey utilizing abortion, capital punishment, and welfare reform as the issues, and it aimed to establish the importance of religiosity of the individual legislator as well as that of religious organizations and how they relate to the legislator. In a more recent endeavor, Yamane and Oldmixon (2006) also researched religion and the legislature. Their research aimed specifically at the legislator’s affiliation with a religious body and religious factors such as prayer, participation in religious activities, and advocacy by religious groups. They built upon their previous study of the state legislature in Wisconsin (1995 to 1996) to examine legislative dynamics more longitudinally (Yamane & Oldmixon, 2006). This analysis revealed minimal effect from advocacy by a special interest group if the legislator was already a known opponent of an issue.

Related work includes Wuthnow’s model (as cited in Yamane & Oldmixon, 2006) which had already suggested that if a person engages in religious activity, such as prayer or attending church regularly, and admits his or her religious leanings, the person will likely be more conservative in his or her voting. Furthermore, the conservatives tended to be more closely related to the Republican Party (Yamane & Oldmixon, 2006).

Research by O’Connor and Berkman (1995) explored the impact on abortion policy of conservative Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church within the United States. O’Connor and Berkman (1995) found that religion is an important factor even though there is differentiation between the Protestant churches and Roman Catholic Church. The study indicated that the Roman Catholic Church has an impact on the abortion issue owing to its pro-
life doctrine and the fact it is one united church, whereas the members of conservative Protestant churches are separate and not united in the same way (O’Connor & Berkman, 1995).

Schecter (2001) investigated abortion policy in the 1997 session of the Florida House of Representatives examining the extent to which partisanship or religion was a major influence on state legislators. The analysis of the study indicated that both the political parties of the state legislators and their religious beliefs, particularly if they were Catholic or Jewish, as well as gender, were important. This study focused on one issue within one state legislature during a specific time period.

In a study of Arkansas state legislators on the topic of sex education and abstinence education, Ramey and Young (2001) found that Democrats showed more support for sex education than Republicans, but they found no difference between those who were considered religious. There was support shown for abstinence education by those attending church regularly, but this did not correspond similarly along the lines of party affiliation or religiosity (Ramey & Young, 2001).

In a specific study of Maryland legislators and the effect of race and gender on a legislator’s decision-making, Brown (2011) chose the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Act and the Financial Exploitation of the Elderly as the bills to study. The study was explicit about race and gender, yet the research elicited information about a legislator’s political stance and religion, among other demographic data. The legislators were asked about their religious preferences and whether they perceived themselves religiously as a “born-again or Evangelical Christian” (p. 54) because many times, the Bible is used as a reference for and against a position. Legislators were also identified by race. The author concluded that White members were not decisive about whether race mattered, whereas Black members considered race identity as
important. Another outcome was that a majority of the Black women in the legislature indicated not only race but also gender as a major factor in their policy making.

Canfield-Davis, Jain, Wattam, McMurty, and Johnson (2010), meanwhile, embarked on a descriptive study taking into account a previous qualitative study to identify what were the most influential factors in the voting behavior of state legislators. Their interest was in the area of educational policy and the need for citizens to have an awareness of bills and how legislators make decisions on the bills. The 18 influential factors in the previous study were placed in ranked order from 1 to 18, and a detailed analysis of each issue was presented. The first three factors in order of influence were: fiscal impact, trust, and constituents. Religion was number 16 in the ranking, and it did not appear as an important factor in a legislator’s decision-making in the study. Other issues included timing, committee chairs, legislative leadership, legislative staff, sources of information, sponsor, regionalism, governor, interest groups, lobbyists, sources of voting advice, civil servants, and the media.

Religion was one of the factors noted along with others, including political party and constituencies. Research on state legislators varied from the importance of religious beliefs to the ranking of religion within a particular study which put it near the bottom of the rankings. Even though religion had a lower ranking, it still made the list of important issues. The next section will look at what factors are important in influencing state legislatures.

In a study of “How Does a Politician’s Personal Faith Inform the Experience of Political Decision Making?” by Johnson (2008) found the politicians, as part of their decision-making process, read scriptures, prayed and sought godly counsel. The particular vote, however, determined if they prayed before a vote, since there were many votes a day. The prayers were usually before what the politicians determined as an important vote. One of the main findings
was that the faith of the elected officials did impact their political decision-making (Johnson, 2008). Johnson (2008) determined that the politicians relied on intangible as well as other feelings that were guided by the person’s own conscience or by the Holy Spirit. The dichotomy was the fact that even though some of those in the study professed the separation of church and state and said they did not allow their personal faith to determine their political decisions, especially on morality issues, they claimed they did allow their faith to inform them on issues such as caring for the poor. The lessons derived are in sum:

- Personal faith will inform decisions, if individuals take their faith seriously.
- The Bible is seen as a baseline for discussion.
- Identify the major issues and correlate Biblical and moral issues to those social, economic or ideological issues.
- Identify Biblical principles that could be used as guides for discussion across political and religious divides.

**Areas of influence in state legislatures.** The four components of arena theory include small groups of people, a wide range of participants, constituencies, and individuals. These might encompass lobbyists, government officials, and legislators of opposite parties. In the voting process, these components and groups put different pressures and a variety of opinions on a legislator, which converge to affect the wide range of decision-making an individual legislator encounters. Research has revealed that religion is not always a primary factor in voting (Canfield-Davis, et al., 2010, p. 59). Other demographics such as gender and political party have had greater weight. The voting behavior of legislators has been of interest over the years to researchers, and different studies have determined multiple variables need consideration. However, a connection does exist between what happens in other states as well as what happens
on the federal level. For example, the states bordering North Carolina already had lotteries. Also, on the federal level there are anti-gambling laws which states must follow.

**General studies.** Huckshorn (1965) interviewed 96 of the 103 members of the 1959 Idaho legislature to ascertain the decision-making process of the legislator. Huckshorn was interested in determining what makes a difference to a legislator, aside from the legislator’s own background and career in politics, as he or she makes decisions. The five groups most important to the legislators interviewed were “constituents, [political] parties, interest groups, executive officers and fellow legislators” (p. 165). The most compelling group in a legislator’s decision-making process is the one having the most impact on the individual legislator, which varies with time (Huckshorn, 1965). According to Huckshorn, “The kaleidoscopic world of the state legislator is not exclusively composed of the five dimensions suggested here” (p. 182). Sometimes a singular influence may arise from one of these groups, or a combination of the groups identified may be influential (Huckshorn, 1965).

Arnold, Deem, and Patterson (2000) conducted interviews with members of the Ohio House of Representatives. Political party was the strongest influential factor on the voting behavior of the legislators interviewed, even though legislators did not always vote the party line. Friendship was another strong variable, along with gender, a common philosophy, and the proximity of one’s district to another legislator’s district.

Funding of K–12 in Oklahoma was the crux of a study of Oklahoma state legislators and of the ways they made their decisions (Winton-Glisson, 2006). The qualitative study focused on the main factors affecting decisions made by legislators concerning education funding. Legislators who were involved in education personally, either as a member of the teaching profession or married to a teacher; or a member of one of the education-related committees in the
legislature was the common denominator for the participants in the study. Other demographics included political party, gender, geographical location, and whether the legislator was serving in the Oklahoma Senate or the Oklahoma House. However, religion was not a factor. The findings noted that influential sources included a variety of people—those in business, lobbyists, other elected officials, and people involved in the school system. Even though lobbyists were regarded as an important part of the decision making process, there was concern from a few legislators who did not trust them. One legislator compared the lobbyists of the teacher unions with “spoiled children,” indicating the lobbyists were only interested in their concerns (Winton-Glisson, 2006, pp. 109-110). The education lobbyists were not as important as those in the business community or school representatives, or as other legislators in the decision-making process (Winton-Glisson, 2006).

**State legislatures and federal legislation.** State legislatures are one of three branches of government within each state. Legislators are cognizant of what is happening in other state venues, and they study and implement similar policies, if appropriate. An example of this occurred in a study by Eigenberg, McGuffee, Berry, and Hall (1998) in which they examined federal legislation surrounding protective orders for those who were involved in cases of domestic violence. An analysis of statutes in all 50 states revealed that reform did take place, even though the discussion surrounding the type of reform needed is still ongoing.

Another example of tying federal legislation to the state level was noted in Kahane’s (1994) study of all 50 states on the abortion issue. Once the issue was passed down to the state level, Kahane (1994) evaluated what factors, including philosophy, influenced a state legislator. The philosophy of the individual legislator and the interests of the constituency of state senators played a role with the members of the state senate, but members in the state house were not
influenced by either their own philosophies or their constituencies (Kahane, 1994). Governors paid more attention to their constituencies and relied on their own beliefs (Kahane, 1994). Even though there was concern in the state legislatures about the issues surrounding demand and economics, the responses of state senators were more aligned with governors’ beliefs; the representatives in the state houses were more interested in demand and access issues for abortion services (Kahane, 1994). One suggestion from the study was to consider, in the future, information about religion and its influence on sitting legislators to improve the model used to determine the behavior of individual legislators and governors (Kahane, 1994). This dissertation addresses sitting legislators and the influence of religious beliefs.

The main emphasis of this research study was the influence of religious beliefs on state legislators’ voting behavior with a focus on the educational lottery. The next section provides an overview of the voting behavior of state legislators.

*Voting behavior of state legislators.* Ray (2014) studied state legislatures in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania to determine the important influences particular sources have on a legislator’s voting behavior. In all three state legislatures, interest groups and legislative colleagues were most important; personal reading by legislators concerning issues facing them and those serving in the executive branch were not as important (Ray, 2014). Other variables included committee reports and recommendations, constituency, and party leadership, which varied in importance among the three legislatures (Ray, 2014).

In another study, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin legislatures were analyzed to determine the level of significance that party affiliation and party ideology had in roll-call voting by legislators (Jenkins, 2006). This quantitative study suggested that political parties are powerful when it comes to voting behavior. The reasons varied from a first-term
member who depended more on the party to the idea that parties, when more members have the same philosophy, are more influential. This study did not include, however, a unicameral or a body that was nonpartisan (Jenkins, 2006). Another study probing the influence of political parties compared the Nebraska legislature, a unicameral body, and the Kansas Senate (Wright & Schaffner, 2002) on roll-call voting and campaign issues. Members serving in the Nebraska legislature had a party affiliation, but it did not play a significant role, whereas the members of the Kansas Senate divide themselves into their political parties for organizational purposes, lending themselves to being connected to certain stances on issues (Wright & Schaffner, 2002). This research study concluded that parties play an important role through campaigns because of their positions on issues (Wright & Schaffner, 2002). Schattschneider (as cited in Wright & Schaffner, 2002) suggested that “democracy is impossible save in terms of parties” (p. 367).

Senate Bill 1, which aimed to correct what the Texas Supreme Court had stated were inequities in the *Edgewood Independent School District v. Kirby* (1984) case concerning the school’s (Edgewood Independent School District) finance system, was the basis for the 1990 special session of the Texas legislature (Flagel, 1990). The Texas Supreme Court had determined the school finance system was unconstitutional. Flagel’s (1990) research took into account the voting behavior of the legislators on Senate Bill 1. Flagel (1990) defined collective or group self-interest as the inclusion of membership in a political party, the economics of a legislator’s district as it pertained to education, and whether a plaintiff or an intervener in the case lived in the legislator’s district. Individual self-interest included the legislator’s age, gender, tenure, eligibility for reelection, and voting record on issues concerning school finance reform. Self-interest seemed to be more influential on the legislator’s voting behavior even though collective interests were also important. Flagel (1990) also acknowledged the informal process
of bargaining that takes place “behind closed doors” (p. 136).

Two questions concerning what influences the voting behavior of legislators and what influences shirking were paramount in a literature review by Bender and Lott (1996), who stated that “both political scientists and economists define shirking as the failure by the legislator to act in the interest of his constituents” (p. 68). Bender and Lott (1996) concluded by offering four assumptions: (a) legislators are cognizant of the interests of their constituency when they vote; (b) if legislators vote against the interests of their constituency, it probably is not an issue of economic consequence; (c) if the legislator is not up for reelection, he or she might not vote as often; and (d) if a legislator makes continuing departures, even small ones, in his or her voting habits, the legislator might find himself or herself removed from office. The review was based on literature on the U.S. Congress and began with the year 1979.

The New York State legislature was the focus of a study of Bundy Aid during the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 budget sessions (Hogan, 2003). Bundy Aid is the funding entity for nonpublic higher education institutions in the state of New York, and over the years funding had decreased. The study was aimed at determining the internal and external arenas affecting the way in which legislators voted, and it included in part that members of the legislature, lobbyists, and the “legislator’s interests, values, beliefs and predispositions affected their decision-making;” political philosophy or political party were not considered as important (Hogan, 2003, p. 286).

Examining educational policy and the influence of politics was the main focus of Reyes and Fusarelli’s (1994) discussion in the commemorative yearbook *The Study of Educational Politics*. The authors were interested in how elected officials influence and consider public policy. They stated that the political landscape changes as elected officials move in and out of
office and define what dictates policy, all of which depends on whether there is a conservative or liberal stance regarding educational issues:

When conservative values dominate the playing fields, the players concern themselves with high academic standards, orderliness, efficiency, and productivity; when more liberal values dominate, issues concerning equity, student access to programs, linking schools to work in the community, and reducing academic achievement gaps between student groups are emphasized. (p. 202)

Songer et al. (1986) explored what particular factors were influential on state legislators who were serving in the 1983 sessions of the Kansas and Oklahoma state legislatures. The issues studied in Kansas included taxes, banking, drunk driving, and an increase in cigarette taxes. In Oklahoma, the issues included increasing the drinking age, taxes, banking, seeking medical aid for critically ill children, and decreasing funding for education. The findings varied depending on the topic; however, with the exception of times when apparently influential party leaders on specific issues affecting the party were involved, for example, in cases of redistricting or elections, party leaders were not very influential on other issues before the legislature. Special interest groups and lobbyists were more involved in issues such as banking, with less attention placed on a legislator’s personal values, reading, or constituents (Songer et al., 1986).

Constituents were important in the area of tax issues, and the personal values of legislators were more important on bills involving topics of drinking issues, education, and medical care. The conclusion, which the authors termed as “tentative,” indicated that perhaps two types of issues are of a regulatory nature: economic issues, which include banking, and moral issues of drunk driving and medical care.

There were differing views concerning voting behavior and religion within state
legislatures found in the literature. Some examples include Wuthnow’s model (cited in Yamane & Oldmixon, 2006) which suggested if a person is engaged in a religious action, whether prayer or attending church regularly, as two examples, the person is apt to be more conservative.

Canfield-Davis et al. (2010) found out of 18 influential factors in a study of state legislators’ voting behavior, religion was 16. Hogan (2003) did rely on looking at the beliefs of legislators within his study and Songer et al., (1986) discovered that when there were economic issues the legislator’s beliefs did not come in play, but if looking at issues such as medical care or drunk driving, personal values of state legislators were deemed important.

The following section of this literature review establishes how lotteries have been utilized in other studies and relates specific thoughts regarding the lotteries. The section focuses specifically on attitudes, gambling, and lotteries. It also will address the pros and cons of lotteries within the revenue structure of states.

**The Lottery**

This phenomenological study focused on state legislation regarding the education lottery in the designated state of North Carolina where the state legislators voted on the lottery at a specific time in 2005, however, the lottery was not a new issue to North Carolina in 2005. Since 1983, interest in it had grown in those who promoted the lottery as a revenue source. Some in opposition saw the lottery as a moral issue due to gambling and concerned it would be detrimental to those with limited means because it created false hopes of rapidly acquiring wealth. Religious attitudes, gambling and lotteries, in general, are all issues that comprise aspects of lottery discussions. The next section looks carefully at the role religious attitudes play in a lottery discussion.

**Religious attitudes.** Olson, Guth, and Guth (2003) discovered, by examining a vote by
the public in South Carolina in 2000, that numerous groups oppose the lottery, yet, in that case, influence from religious entities was negligible. Citizens who voted in the two previous elections were part of a poll taken one month before the election; those 450 participants were asked questions about religious issues (Olson et al., 2003). The poll was conducted on October 3, 2000, by the Jim Self Center on the Future, part of the J. Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University (Olson et al., 2003). The questions established by Olson et al. (2003) involved whether the participant was a born-again or Evangelical Christian and whether his or her religious beliefs were paramount to the way the person was intending to cast his or her vote in the general election. The participants were questioned concerning whether they had heard from a religious leader regarding the referendum on the lottery and, if so, whether the clergyperson supported or opposed lottery (Olson et al., 2003). The downside to the research study was that only people who had voted before were interviewed, leaving a void of voters who might have voted only because the lottery issue was on the ballot. The demographics of the study suggested that more Democrats were supportive of the lottery and more Republicans were opposed to the lottery (Olson et al., 2003).

Those who claimed that they were not influenced by their faith stated that they were in favor of the lottery, whereas those stating that they used their faith in making choices said that they would vote against the lottery (Olson et al., 2003). The end result was the “apparent failure of religious leaders to mobilize opposition” (p. 106). Olson et al. (2003) noted that the way the issue was outlined might have been a major factor affecting the efforts of clergy to influence the voting behavior.

**Gambling.** The lottery is considered to be a form of gambling. Starr (1984) explored voting on gambling issues during the 1984 general elections revealing that enough signatures
were on petitions to place an amendment to the state of Florida’s constitution for the 1986 election on the ballot (Starr, 1984). In Colorado, where there was an interest in including the approval of casino gambling in a resort area, and in Arkansas, where an amusement park wanted to institute casino gambling, amendments permitting these actions were denied by the voters (Starr, 1984). However, state lotteries were approved in California, Missouri, Oregon, and West Virginia (Starr, 1984).

**Lotteries.** Legislators in West Virginia voted on adopting a lottery before the citizenry voted at the polls on the identical issue (Garrett, 1999). This quantitative study examined legislators and citizens on the issue; it found that approximately 28% of state legislators did not vote the same way as their respective constituencies (Garrett, 1999). What was not revealed is whether the legislators voted their own conscience and were not concerned about what their votes might mean politically or whether they misread their base of support within their constituencies (Garrett, 1999). Religion was one of the variables Garrett (1999) used, indicating that those citizens who were defined as religious voters and represented by a Democrat in the legislature were less favorable towards the lottery; those who were defined as religious voters represented by a Republican did not have influence on the number of yes votes. Citizens represented by a Republican did not appear to have any sway over the number of “yes” votes.

Heberling’s (2002) work, meanwhile, indicated that the lottery contributes to the perception of a “malevolent government.” In other words, when government becomes involved, for example, in a public policy issue such as a lottery, the government weakens its moral authority, regardless of the worthiness of the policy (Heberling, 2002). He took into consideration the billions of dollars spent each year by citizens playing the lottery and the major changes that transpired earlier in the United States when gambling was seen as immoral and
illegal. Instead of viewing it as a means for increasing state revenues, members of state legislatures saw the lottery as a way to raise money and to benefit the public through the investments made from the proceeds gained (Heberling, 2002). Many of the states passing legislation to permit the lottery had education as a focus; yet, in the end, Heberling (2002) found that the lottery revenues were not covering their stated purpose due to the drop in ticket sales. Three additional ideas Heberling (2002) presented for increasing revenue included raising taxes, advertising to gain new players, and ensuring that new games were presented.

According to Nelson and Mason (2003), no lotteries existed in 1963; however, by 1985, states had become increasingly inclined to embrace lotteries, except for many states in the South. By 1990, 19 states had lotteries, including the southern states of Florida and Virginia. Nelson and Mason’s (2003) research involved a case study of two southern states: Mississippi, which initiated legal casino gambling in 1990, and Georgia, which initiated a state lottery in 1993, even though as early as 1977, the state had bingo. In both situations, the states were searching for more revenue, and yet each state had a different focus. Mississippi elected to use its casino gambling profits for economic development and additional income; Georgia was interested in retrieving the money that was flowing into Florida and wanted to establish programs that would support education. Opponents of casino gambling in Mississippi consisted of the main religious organizations as well as the American Family Association, a conservative Christian group headquartered in Tupelo. Among opponents to the lottery in Georgia were clergy from the United Methodist, Southern Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches (Nelson & Mason, 2003).

Nelson and Mason (2003) used diffusion theory to understand what was undertaken in Mississippi and Georgia, making three modifications: (a) anticipatory diffusion, defined as the
concern that another state might ratify an issue first, making the second state’s ratification ineffectual; (b) *incremental diffusion* which suggested that elected officials wanted to show innovation in the way an issue was defined for their particular state; and (c) *antidiffusion*, which involved states trying to prevent other states from making policies that might affect them. Nelson and Mason (2003) concluded that it is essential to understand the importance of elected officials as key players in public policy issues and that politics must be included in an understanding the dynamics of policy making. For example, in Mississippi, the idea of casino gambling had been raised by a few state legislators, who then turned to colleagues whose districts would profit from the casinos; they subsequently reached out to others about the importance of constituents and how the passage of this legislation would make a difference in their colleagues’ districts (Nelson and Mason, 2003). In Georgia, the lottery was a major issue in a gubernatorial campaign (Nelson and Mason, 2003).

More recently, Nelson (2013) compared legalized gambling in Tennessee and Mississippi utilizing morality politics as the basis for his study. Nelson (2013) referred to Mooney’s definition of morality politics as “clashes of ‘first principles’” including “legal sanctions of right and wrong [and] validations of particular or particular sets of fundamental values” (p. 62). In other words, as Nelson (2013) suggested, those who opposed an issue would utilize economics, permissive choice, and competing ethical values to support their position. Nelson (2013) asserted that gambling encompassed all three of these issues.

Wyett (1991) emphasized that even though some citizens view the lottery as a product, concern exists about its regressive nature. Wyett (1991) proposed that revenues from lottery sales be returned to the players or that states ensure that programs are in place to assist those who play the lottery, as well as ensuring that administrators of the lotteries are looking at ways of
reducing the proportion of revenues derived from the lottery, because it is viewed as a regressive tax. Wyett (1991) proposed that (a) those who play receive larger amounts of money by removing a specific state share of the income; (b) the lottery be operated in an efficient manner; (c) the winnings not be taxed; and (d) the lottery be abolished altogether, which would aid low-income families, divest a state from a form of gambling, and make elected officials more accountable because they would have to raise taxes instead of hiding behind the lottery.

Purtell and Fossett (2010) studied whether it would be feasible to privatize lotteries to provide increased revenues from lottery sales and reduce operational costs. They researched six states (California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Texas) to determine whether privatization, due to a ruling of the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) that did not permit leases for lotteries, was a possibility. It is important to note that the OLC is not a lawmaking regulatory body and therefore its opinions could be challenged. Privatization only made sense for Illinois and Texas (Purtell & Fossett, 2010).

Wisman (2006) provided a history of the economics pertaining to the lottery and described it as “an ideal instrument for kleptocratic plutocracy” (p. 956) and a means where income is distributed from the “have-nots to the haves” (p. 956). The bottom line for Wisman (2006) was that those who play the lottery are individuals who have fewer ways to build wealth.

Furthermore, even though citizens have a choice to play the lottery, Wisman (2006) noted that it “aggressively promotes to these least fortunate the prospect of ‘making it.’” He stated, “It maintains a pretense that the revenues will especially benefit the poor while enabling the state to cut taxes for the financially better off” (p. 964).

During the 1980s and 1990s in the North Carolina General Assembly, those who were considered populist-leaning Democrats perceived the lottery as a regressive tax; while those who
were traditionalist Republicans considered the immorality of gambling (Luebke, 1998). These two prototypes were a hindrance to those pro-lottery legislators and the proponents of the lobbying corporations that would profit from a lottery to realize their efforts (Luebke, 1998). The original definition of morality policy, as cited by Mucciaroni (2011) and defined by Haider-Markel and Meier (1966, p. 333) states: ‘At least one advocacy coalition…portray(s) the issue as one of morality or sin and use(s) moral arguments in its policy advocacy.’” Mucciaroni (2011) discusses the issue of rights of gays and lesbians and how opponents frame their stance in opposition to morality policy. His study of data from the state and congressional levels suggests that even though the opponents of gay and lesbian rights might object due to their own religious beliefs, the opponents make arguments based on policy: who should make the policy and how should it be defined. Morality policy does not seem to be the ultimate factor. Mucciaroni (2011) suggests that government morality “portrays the actions (or inaction) of public officials and agencies as right or wrong, good or bad” and that gambling alongside other issues are framed by supporters as the responsibility for government to eradicate discrimination and to ensure individual freedom. Ferraiolo (2013) discusses state lotteries in four states: North Carolina (Senate), Oklahoma (Senate), Tennessee, and Texas, since these states had audio recordings of the actual proceedings of these legislative bodies and were among states noted as having a high percentage of Protestants who were fundamentalists. One of the main inferences of this study is the critics of the lottery were careful not to talk about sin but about the negative impact not only on families but on communities and states. The two states where there were the most speeches for the lottery were Texas and Tennessee. In Tennessee, North Carolina and Oklahoma there were speeches on how the monies from the lottery would be good for public education. (The monies from Texas were initially distributed to the general fund.) Ferraiolo (2013) finds in her
study that there are both morality talks as well as speeches that are more rational-instrumental, which are described by Mucciaroni (2011) as “policies as valuable only if they help to produce desired results” (p. 191).

In the end, some would agree with Hart and Sofley (2004), who stated that the lottery is needed for states to have additional revenue without raising taxes. They claimed that “adults have to be the lone stewards over their individual finances however they choose to allocate them” (p. 66). Furthermore, Hart and Sofley (2004) have stated that, if the lottery is run efficiently, the revenues derived may significantly benefit citizens.

**Conclusion**

From the review of the literature, it is evident that there is a dearth of information on state legislators and what influences their voting behavior. Religion has been a demographic in many studies, but there is still a lack of understanding of its influence, if any, on state legislators as they make their decisions on numerous issues. In the 2005-2006 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly all 120 members of the House of Representatives listed a religious affiliation (J. McElroy, personal communication, February 12, 2018). After all, North Carolina is one of the states which is part of the Bible Belt.

The literature review examined two main legislative bodies: The U. S. Congress and state legislatures. One of the major outcomes was discovering there was more research on the U. S. Congress than state legislatures, even though Yamane & Oldmixon, (2006) stress the importance of the state legislatures due to the fact many important laws are passed on the state level. The members of a legislature also have smaller districts than those in Congress, hence, the elected officials are closer to the people.

The literature review described the influence of religion and other influences on the
voting behavior of legislators and the attitudes of the public towards politicians and religion. One of the takeaways from the literature review was the fact that even though the public might want to ensure their elected official has a religious leaning, it is also important for the elected official to listen to others and work with their colleagues within the political system. Examples of other factors considered in different research studies included constituents, party affiliation, leadership, and lobbyists.

Since this study focuses on the education lottery vote, the lottery was also included in the review. Gambling, the issue of state lotteries, and religious attitudes around the lottery were also discussed, including issues specifically related to religion propensity in North Carolina.

This research study focused on analyzing what influences state legislators, and its findings have the potential to aid policy makers in better comprehending the workings of a legislature and what is helpful to sitting legislators. This literature review highlighted the need for additional studies on the significance of religious beliefs on the behavior of state legislators and what they define as the most important factors in their decision-making. The study contributes to the literature through its examination of state legislators and their religious influences.
Chapter 3: Method

This interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) study addressed the question: How do state legislators make sense of the role religious beliefs play in their voting behavior? This chapter outlines the methodological approach used, identifies the research design, describes the site and participants, explains the data collection and data analysis procedures, and provides a summary and conclusion.

Qualitative Research

This study used an IPA qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenology focuses on the researcher studying people who have had the same experience and explores their perceptions of what was learned through a shared phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 104). Qualitative methods allow the researcher to include “the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44).

Creswell (2013) discussed qualitative research in general and the necessity of ensuring face-to-face interaction with participants; he described that a main role is played by the researcher who defines specific themes that are discovered during the study. He outlined defining items which must be incorporated into the qualitative research process: The researcher must understand the meaning of the what the participants make of their experiences and be flexible in the collection of data; and direct conversations must take place with the participants to gain a full understanding of the issue under study (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Even though this form of research is time-consuming in both the data collection and analysis stages, Creswell (2013, p.49) clarified that if guidelines are adhered to, qualitative research can be as rigorous as quantitative research.
This qualitative study embraced the descriptions by the participants as they reflected on their experiences surrounding the introduction, discussion, and voting that surrounded the implementation of the education lottery in North Carolina. Thus, an IPA approach was deemed most appropriate to examine the phenomenon. It was essential to ensure the participants validated the role they played during this time period (Creswell, 2013). When utilizing the phenomenological approach, it is important to focus on not only the descriptions relayed by the participants but to acknowledge their experiences (Creswell 2013). Creswell suggested that this is a way to for the researcher to interview individuals who have lived through the same time period—in the case of this study, the period surrounding voting choices and behavior—to obtain a better understanding of what occurred. The narrative inquiry involved in IPA enabled this researcher to study more than one individual, using interviews and documents from the North Carolina General Assembly; the study then developed themes that emerged from the participant interviews.

**Research Approach: IPA**

This study used an IPA approach to examine the question of the influence of religious beliefs on the voting behavior of state legislators. There are three elements that constitute IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography.

**Philosophers of phenomenology.** Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) suggested that the human experience should be expressed by individuals as they reflect on their experiences; things must not be taken for granted, but both researcher and participant actually concentrate on what is happening, and thus, the situation or phenomenon is defined (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). In this process, the researcher must (and can, according to the philosopher) “bracket” their own art experiences and biases. Secondly, Husserl was concerned with how he, as an individual,
needed to conduct a phenomenological study and how it would be most effective, even though this theory remained underdeveloped (Smith et al., 2012).

One of Husserl’s students was Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who acknowledged Husserl’s work even though he took a different approach and stated that human beings find themselves in a world of “objects, relationships and language.” Heidegger also suggested that life is an earthly one and no one knows how long he or she will live, but while here one needs to understand how to make meaning out of one’s situation (Smith, et al, 2012).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) also acknowledged the work of Husserl. His contribution to phenomenology concerns the relationship of one’s body to the world and the fact that each person has an individual experience and will not be able to ever understand completely another’s experience, due to the character of individuality (Smith, et al., 2012). The researcher using IPA, according to Merleau-Ponty, therefore, relies on the participants to relay their experience.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) had an interest not only in the fact that human beings are worldly, but he emphasized the process that occurs in each individual (Smith et al., 2012). He claimed that human beings are a work in progress and that they are not static but continue to grow and develop; in short, we are not what we are or seem to be but what we can become (Smith et. al, 2012).

**Hermeneutics.** Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2012), in their discussion of hermeneutics, the second influence on IPA, referred to the work of Schleiermacher, Heidegger, and Gadamer. Schleiermacher acknowledged that interpretation of a phenomenon and writing about it is a “craft or art” (Smith, et al., 2012, 22) as well as an accurate recounting of the text. Thus, the data set itself is important, but so is the actual conversation with the participant in establishing
meaning and a full, rich interpretation of the experience. Likewise, Heidegger clarified that, in interpretation, the researcher must place priority on what is being obtained, not on the researcher’s own preconceived ideas. Heidegger also suggested the importance of allowing a researcher time to engage first with the text before trying to bracket preconceptions or arrive at an accurate interpretation. In addition, Gadamer emphasized the concern for eliminating preconceptions and the importance of deeply listening to the voice of the participant.

**Hermeneutical circle.** The hermeneutic circle is a way of thinking. In Smith et al. (2012) it is described through the words, parts and whole. As individuals describe a phenomenon, they might be looking at one particular part, but it is a segment of the whole situation; and, at the same time, the whole is made up of the parts of the situation. In other words, the data and the phenomenon may be described in various ways. Table 2 is one example provided (Smith et al., 2012, p. 28):

Table 2.

*Smith et al.’s Hermeneutic Circle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The part</th>
<th>The whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The single word</td>
<td>The sentence in which the word is embedded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The single extract</td>
<td>The complete text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The particular text</td>
<td>The complete oeuvre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interview</td>
<td>The research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The single episode</td>
<td>The complete life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Idiography.** The third influence of IPA is concern for the particular or ideography (Smith, et. al., 2012). There are two parts of ideography: detail and noting the experience of a phenomenon as expressed through a particular person within a particular situation. This might begin as an analysis of a very specific framework, but it moves onto looking at the situation in a
Using IPA in this study allowed the researcher to focus on specific participants who were sitting legislators at the time of the lottery vote. These participants were not in elected office at the time of the interviews. The research took into consideration the opinions and reflections of the participants and sought to interpret the experiences of the participants. The study attempted to understand and chronicle the experiences of legislators at a given time regarding the particular situation of the vote on the education lottery.

**Site and Participants**

This IPA study consisted of in-depth interviews with eight participants involved in a similar phenomenon, voting on a lottery bill in the North Carolina General Assembly. The interviews were conducted at a site that was mutually established by the participant and the researcher. The participants were invited by the researcher to participate by a phone call during which an explanation of the purpose and components of the study were explained, and participation was confirmed. Follow-up letters and/or e-mails were also sent. It was essential for the legislators to know their identities would be protected completely, with full respect for confidentiality.

Due to the specific nature of this study, which has political overtones, the sampling of participants was purposive (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 32). The participants represented a diverse group of former state legislators, who were serving during the time of the education lottery vote of 2005, but who were not, when interviewed, serving in the North Carolina House of Representatives. The researcher identified the participants from a list obtained from the North Carolina General Assembly with the criteria that they were members of the House of Representatives in 2005 and were not serving when contacted.
The diversity of the participants included variation on these categories: sex, race, geography, religion, and political parties. The researcher drew from a representation of the demographics of the state legislature at the time of the lottery vote. The sample included representatives who voted for and some who voted against the establishment of a lottery in North Carolina. The participants were invited to be involved in the study first by a phone call followed up by a letter or e-mail. They were asked to sign an informed consent form and were assured of the full confidentiality of their participation. The informed consent gave the participants the option to opt out of the study at any time. Participants were also invited to review the text of the interview transcriptions to offer corrections or deletions, as appropriate.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection consisted of structured interviews that were guided by a list of open-ended questions developed to illuminate participant experiences on the study’s research question. These oral data were collected during an interview of approximately one hour that was recorded. The participants were aware that their interviews were recorded and that their identities would and will in all future presentations (written or oral) be kept confidential. The recorded data were transcribed by a legal transcriptionist. The transcriptionist cited his/her certification to the researcher and was made aware of the importance of confidentiality by the researcher. The transcriptions were analyzed, coded, and interpreted by the researcher. This entailed looking for specific themes and any other pertinent information. The paper transcripts were stored in a locked file cabinet at the home of the researcher, and the electronic materials information were also placed on a USB device and locked in the file cabinet.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted according to IPA procedures as described by Smith et al.
According to Smith et al. (2012) collecting data is a process and can be achieved by being focused, reflective and engaged. There are six main steps to the process which this researcher followed: (a) reading and re-reading, (b) initial noting, (c) developing emergent themes, (d) searching for connections across emergent themes, (e) moving to the next case, and (f) looking for patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2012).

Analysis of the data took place upon completion of the transcription of the interviews. Starting with one case, preferably one that was compelling to the researcher, and being committed to unraveling the details, the process outlined above provided this researcher with the necessary steps to ensure she conducted a dependable analysis.

The first step involved not only reading the transcript of the interview, but also listening to the audio, which enabled hearing the participant’s voice, including tone and inflections (Smith et al., 2012), and absorbing the recorded interaction as an experience. The listening and the reading and re-reading of the transcript were important procedures helping the researcher maintain the focus on the participant’s message. Smith et al. (2012) noted, “This reading also facilitates an appreciation of how rapport and trust may build across an interview and thus highlight the location of richer and more detailed sections, or indeed contradictions and paradoxes” (p. 82).

The second step involved language and concepts: The researcher engaged in note taking while listening to and reading the transcript (Smith et al, 2012). This proved to be a very time-consuming aspect of analysis, but it became the essence of the material across all of the interviews and assisted the researcher in identifying the information needed to develop themes and connections of the participant.

The development of themes, step three, was a key piece of the analysis; it combined both
the views of the participant and the interpretation by the researcher (Smith et al., 2012). Creswell (2013) suggested that the themes be derived from the significant statements made by participants and then linked together in a larger group. These larger groups of themes enabled the researcher to understand the individual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Once the themes were identified, then step four became easier finding the relationships between the themes and how they related to the research question (Smith et al., 2012). Smith et al. (2012) suggested several ways of identifying themes that have materialized, which the researcher used: (a) abstraction, similar themes with an encompassing title; (b) subsumption, when there is a group of related super-ordinate themes; (c) polarization, opposite themes emerge; (d) numeration, the amount of times a theme appears; and (e) function, a complex relationship of themes which might be positive and negative. Smith et al. (2012) clarified that once the themes are identified, a graph or some other type of table might be helpful. This proved to be true for the researcher’s tabulation in the case of this study. Creswell (2013) also acknowledged the importance of writing a complete description of the experience of the participants as noted through the themes, which was included in the analysis for this study.

Step five indicates that once the first interview has been analyzed then the next phase is to go to an interview of another participant and repeat steps one through four, which this researcher did (Smith et al., 2012). Smith et al. (2012) explained that the next interview should be analyzed on its own merit and individuality and is not to be impacted by any other interview. This procedure was followed. Step six is bringing all of the material together and to consider not only the individuality of the participants but to see where their paths cross and examine what they share (Smith, et al., 2012). The results of this final procedure, which represent a culmination of the prior steps, are presented in Chapter 4 in this study.
Considerations of Trustworthiness

**Trustworthiness.** This exploration of what the participants experienced during the education lottery vote of 2005 in North Carolina involved interviewing each participant separately, giving them the opportunity to relay their personal experiences to the researcher. The researcher took every step possible to ensure trust was maintained with the participants and bias limited. The participants had access to their part in the study to ensure what they said was relayed and recorded appropriately. The site where the interviews took place was determined by the participants. No monetary compensation was afforded. One possible limitation would have been if the participant preferred to meet by a virtual meeting versus face-to-face. This would have made it more difficult for the researcher to determine accurately facial expressions and nuances, and to observe what else is going on with the participant. All eight participants were interviewed in a face-to-face meeting.

Another important part of trustworthiness is ensuring that the data are consistent. Saldaña (2009) identified field notes as those notes written by the researcher as they observe the participant’s response. Notes were taken during several interviews. These notes, in this case study, provided additional information obtained during the interviews that aided the reflective analysis of the data in addition to the copious notes made from the oral and written transcripts.

**Transferability**

The proposed phenomenological study aimed to enhance the understanding of the voting behavior of elected officials, specifically state legislators. There are various government officials, in elected and appointed offices, including committees and commissions, who are required to vote on specific issues. In this context, this research study has contributed to understanding what is involved in a legislator’s decision-making process with a particular focus
on the effect of religious beliefs.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The researcher took every precaution to obtain and sustain the trust from the participants that this research was done in a fair manner and that their remarks were recorded accurately. Confidentiality was strictly adhered to, and participants were asked if they would like to review their transcripts. The researcher completed, filed, received approval for, and rigorously followed the appropriate human subjects’ protocols from Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the participants were selected and data collection began and throughout the entire research process.

**Conclusion**

A plethora of discussion exists in the area of education and politics concerning private, church, and charter schools alike. This research study makes a strong contribution to that important contemporary discussion of religion, education, and politics by focusing on the experiences of individuals involved in the passage and management of funds related to the North Carolina Education Lottery, which provides monies to school programs in all 100 counties of the state. In context, this IPA study was geared toward understanding how and the extent to which religious beliefs of the legislators, during the time of the education lottery vote, played a part in their decision-making. The primary question which served as the basis for this research was: How do state legislators make sense of the role religious beliefs play in their voting behavior?

In a time in which political history in the United States and how it intersects with religious beliefs is under discussion on the federal and state levels, particularly in the South, this research has assisted in defining what, in particular, the variable of religious beliefs plays in the voting behavior of state legislators.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

This phenomenological study addresses the issue of the influence of religious beliefs of state legislators on their voting behavior and uses their voting on a bill about a lottery to focus the analysis. The basic model informing the study is Mazzoni’s arena theory. The study addresses the topic focus which is the educational lottery. Through interviews with participants, this study enables others to have a better understanding of the influences affecting the voting behavior of legislators in relation to religious influences. Constituents of state legislators have varied views on the extent to which religion should influence voting behavior within the state legislative process, particularly where funding for education is concerned. The following analysis gives an account from eight participants, former legislators, of how they view the intersection of their votes and their religious beliefs.

The North Carolina State Lottery Act, House Bill 1023, was the bill chosen as the focus of the study of religious beliefs and voting behavior. The bill passed the House of Representatives on April 6, 2005 with all 120 representatives present: 61 Ayes; 59 Noes; 0 Not voting; 0 Excused Absent; 0 Excused Vote. The bill then went to the North Carolina Senate where the vote passed with 48 senators present: 24 Ayes; 24 Noes; 0 Not voting; 2 Excused Absent; 0 Excused Vote on August 30, 2005 and was ratified. The bill was signed by the Governor on August 31, 2005 and is Session Law 2005-34.

The 146th North Carolina General Assembly during the 2005–2006 Session was comprised of 120 members serving in the House of Representatives. Table 2 describes the members:
Table 3.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63 Democrats</td>
<td>32 Women</td>
<td>113 listed a specific type of religious affiliation.</td>
<td>100 White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 Republicans</td>
<td>88 Men</td>
<td>7 listed the broader category of Protestant</td>
<td>18 African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Native American</td>
<td>1 Hispanic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants: General Information and Procedures

There were eight participants in this study. All eight participants served in the 146th Session (2005-2006) of the North Carolina General Assembly as members of the House of Representatives and were not serving in office at the time of the interviews. Each participant was present for the vote on the North Carolina State Lottery Act, known as the education lottery. No members of the North Carolina State Senate were interviewed.

Due to the concern of confidentiality requested by some of the interviewees, all statistics will be combined, or identities generalized to assure confidentiality. Also, plural pronouns will be used to conceal gender. There were a limited number of participants to choose from since some representatives were still serving in some elected capacity, were not found, had died, or were difficult to contact.

The participants were equally divided by sex (four men and four women), by political party (four Democrats and four Republicans), and by votes (with four votes aye and four votes no on the educational lottery). All participants directly shared their religious belief affiliation. The three regions known as East or Coastal, Central or Piedmont, West or Mountains, of the State of North Carolina were represented. There were participants from urban and rural areas.
Four of the participants at the time of the 146th Session had been involved in business-related jobs. Four had professional degrees and had worked in private and public settings. Including the session on which this study is based, the eight participants had served a total of 31 sessions in the legislature. The participants are listed as Legislator 1, Legislator 2, Legislator 3, Legislator 4, Legislator 5, Legislator 6, Legislator 7, and Legislator 8.

Each participant was called by the researcher who explained the proposed study and solicited their participation. There was a mutually convenient date and place established for the interviews with follow-up conducted via letters and e-mails to the participants. Each participant filled out an informed consent form. The researcher traveled to different venues: churches, public places, and homes. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes. The researcher traveled a total of 1,876 miles to the different sites. The audio recordings and written transcriptions were kept in a locked file cabinet and placed on a USB drive that was also stored under lock and key.

At the beginning of the interview process, the researcher greeted the participant and began by thanking the participant for their time. An explanation of the study followed with an emphasis on the intersection of the participant’s voting behavior and their particular religious beliefs. Arena theory, and its four factors of influence consisting of leadership, committees, the public, and lobbyists, was explained briefly. The participants were known to the researcher since she had served as a legislator with them in the North Carolina General Assembly; therefore, conversation came readily and easily. There was already a level of trust between the interviewer and the participants.

The eight audio interviews of the participants were listened to and reviewed a minimum of eight times. Major themes and issues from the transcripts were listed on index cards and then
summarized on paper. The following categories were defined throughout the interviews and became the three superordinate themes: influences, religious beliefs, and the education lottery. These themes follow the description of the participants.

**Description of the Participants**

Below is a description of the eight participants.

**Participant profiles.**

*Legislator 1.* Before being elected to the legislature, Legislator 1 had been involved in the legislative process, including volunteering on campaigns and as an advocate for certain issues before the North Carolina General Assembly. Legislator 1 had a religious affiliation which gave Legislature 1 flexibility in that there was not a pronouncement of “one way to go” when addressing issues. Legislator 1 defined their faith community as one centered on “good works” and was not one that was judgmental.

Taxes had just been raised by the legislature due to a recent recession. Having a fair tax policy was important to this person and, therefore, there was concern about the lottery being a policy that was not good from a fiscal perspective; however, Legislator 1 found upon conducting a survey with the people in their district, that most of them supported the lottery, with only a few who expressed a rejection of it.

*Legislator 2.* Legislator 2 was involved in the political process on the local level and had interest in education and equal justice issues. This person was involved in a religious community and noted that gambling was simply not an issue from their perspective. This person’s faith community revolved around social issues such as economics, the environment, and social consciousness. The lottery was seen from this legislator’s perspective as a revenue source as well as entertainment; they never saw the lottery as a sin. Legislator 2 expressed the concern of
“paternalism toward poor people or low-wealth people in that they don’t have the wherewithal to understand what their priorities should be or how they should balance their budget and set financial priorities, et cetera.” The comparison offered was between golf and the lottery, the fact that some people cannot afford to play golf, and the lottery is a way of entertainment.

Paternalism, the legislator said, was not a “legitimate argument.” *Legislator 3.* Legislator 3 had been involved in political activities but had not anticipated serving in the legislature; this individual was encouraged to run by people in their district. Legislator 3 was entrenched in their faith, having been raised with religion as a main factor in their life. Legislator 3 was also amenable to learning about other religious viewpoints. Legislator 3’s faith was focused on the importance of morality in all affairs and on helping people and doing what was considered to be the decision for the majority of the people. The lottery was not an issue that was raised within this person’s faith community; the clerics did not discuss the issue.

*Legislator 4.* Legislator 4 was invited to pursue the office of representative. Legislator 4 was a proponent of a progressive tax and had a concern about a lottery being a tax on the poor. Legislator 4 wondered if there was not a better, fairer way that did not burden the poor, which extended back to Legislator 4’s religious beliefs of being fair and just, “not burdening the poor.”

Religious beliefs were important to Legislator 4 who had a deep faith and commitment to fairness and social justice. Legislator 4 stated that “at the end of the day…you have to do what you really believe is right.”

*Legislator 5.* Over the years people had spoken to Legislator 5 about running for office and finally Legislator 5 decided to run and was compelled by the issues at the State level. Legislator 5 indicated faith had always been a part of their life since they were a child; it carried into the realms of family, politics and work.
Legislator 5 had been brought up initially with the understanding that gambling was an important issue within their faith community. As time went on Legislature 5 began to find gambling more acceptable. After all, “Gambling was going on, but it was going on undercover… [we] had these video poker machines, which was a huge issue in North Carolina.”

Legislator 6. “Never viewed, as convinced by others, as not a good policy; not a moral issue for voting for the lottery or buying a lottery ticket.”

Legislator 6 had a long-time interest, as did their family, in politics and government. Their family has an historical involvement with their religious communities. They were referred to as “independent religious, not so much formalized religion, as beliefs.” Some members of the family “did not believe in dancing… [and] wouldn’t allow a deck of cards in the house.” Yet, a next generation family member “decided that a deck of cards was not a sin.” Overall the background of this legislator was one of “anti-liquor, anti-alcohol, and anti-gambling.”

Legislator 6 never heard a sermon or talk that dealt with the issue of gambling or the lottery. The concern from the faith community was more along the lines of “They didn’t say if take a drink you go to hell, but they would have condemned you for going out drunk.”

Legislator 6 was aware there were faith institutions where chances were being sold for a quilt. And, there were other meetings where chances were being sold and it was hard to see the difference between these types of chances and a lottery.

Legislator 7. Legislator 7 was convinced one day by a close friend that it was time to make a commitment to the local community, which Legislator 7 embraced. Not long after being involved in various political activities on the local level and through the encouragement of the friend again, Legislator 7 ran for the legislature and was elected. Being involved on the state level was of interest to Legislator 7 due to the opportunity to be involved in public policy issues
involving the citizens, not only locally, but on a statewide level.

Legislator 7 has been involved in a faith community most of the individual’s adult life, was involved in leadership positions as well as different programs, but was not aware of any stance on gambling, for or against it.

**Legislator 8.** Legislator 8 explained their interest in politics began when they were very young and considered themselves at that time as a “political hack.” The individual spent time in volunteer jobs as well as paid jobs in the political arena and worked on various campaigns. Legislator 8 was encouraged to run for office and learned immediately that their constituency was very important and stated, “I was determined to serve them.” Legislator 8 was also explicit in the fact that “once you’re elected, you serve everybody.”

As far as religious beliefs are concerned, Legislator 8 had been a member of a couple of faith communities, some which probably were preaching against the lottery and others who “want people to be independent in their thinking.” Legislator 8 did not hear a talk or sermon in their present faith setting where gambling was an issue, either for or against.

**Findings and Analysis**

There are three superordinate themes: influences, religious beliefs and the education lottery. Each is described below along with sub-themes.

**Superordinate theme one: influences of religious beliefs on the legislator.** The first theme to emerge was the degree to which religious beliefs influenced a legislator’s thinking and voting on the educational lottery bill.

Influences was a major theme and included the legislator’s attitudes toward religion, both generally and in the context of their voting on legislative issues. In order to determine the role their religious beliefs played in their vote on the lottery, discussion took place about the legislator’s
faith. Each participant was involved within a religious community. Two participants mentioned a more conservative viewpoint early on in their upbringing, while others talked about a broader view of issues, particularly in the case of the lottery or the larger category of gambling. Attitudes of constituents toward religion as well as attitudes toward gambling were other major factors of influence.

Legislator 3 had been brought up in one religious setting but from time to time went to other venues in order to learn about other beliefs. This legislator affirmed they look at the morality of everything and mentioned the importance of helping people and “what’s going to be the best thing for most people.” Legislator 7 spoke about “serving others” as an important part of their learning, which was a similar expression of their beliefs.

Legislator 5 discussed the importance of religious beliefs, having been brought up in a religious family whereas a child and later as an adult religion was a major part of their life: family, work and politics. There was no doubt that faith and prayer played a key role in whatever they would undertake, according to Legislator 5. “I pray every day, and so I certainly included, you know, topics that I was struggling with in the legislature.”

Legislator 1 reiterated that their beliefs were based on caring for people and was involved in a place where people were able to express their own values and spirituality in a welcoming, non-judgmental space. Legislator 1 mentioned social justice as one of the pivotal issues in their place of worship. Legislator 2 cited a similar belief system mentioning social consciousness and the interest in social justice issues as well. The Far Right is still prevalent but not as pervasive as it once was according to Legislator 8, who suggested that the religious institution they attended now was more interested in people being independent in their thinking.

Only one of the eight participants acknowledged having any sermon or specific discourse
within their religious institutions that cited any explicit communication regarding a lottery. In addition, there was mention of bingo games, raffles, and buying chances for a quilt within some of the religious establishments, so a lottery of sorts was acknowledged.

Sub-theme one: religious beliefs of legislators —personal and legislatively. In general, all of the legislators interviewed had a religious conviction, which was internalized, and was part of who they stated they are as individuals. Even though some of the legislators had belonged to a different religious community in the past with gambling as a negative; at the time of the interview the legislators’ viewpoints were not influenced by their personal religious institutions because they were part of communities where gambling, pro or con, was not discussed.

Legislators 1, 2, 3, and 4 had been involved in their faith communities for a long time. Legislators 5, 6, and 8 had been a part of several different religious communities over the years. Legislator 7 stated that most of their adult life they had been involved in a faith community.

Legislator 5 indicated faith had always been a part of their life since childhood. Their faith was a mainstay within their family, their politics and their work. “I pray every day [including on] topics that I was struggling with in the legislature.” Legislator 5 remarked on the crowds that attended the morning Bible study at the General Assembly. They went on to say that many people depended on their faith for guidance in trying to make right decisions. Legislator 5 remarked that when one is facing decisions where one hopes to decide in the right way and the right thing is “when your faith obviously…comes involved.”

Religious beliefs were important to Legislator 4 who had a deep faith and commitment to fairness and social justice. Legislator 4 referred to the verse “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35, Revised Standard Version of the Bible). Legislator 4 stated “My religious beliefs are very
much woven into who I am…doing something in a fair way….” Legislator 4 also stated that “at the end of the day…you have to do what you really believe is right” which was also affirmed by Legislator 6.

Legislator 6 mentioned that two members of the clergy in their district said they would not vote for them again and stated “I [the legislator] was going to burn in hell.” These members of the clergy were not known to the legislator and contacted the legislator after the vote was taken. Legislator 6 was aware that they would be “disappointing those who held sincere views.” This legislator expressed concern about how the money would be spent as well as the importance to listening to their constituents.

Legislator 4 stated they did not “wear religion on their sleeve.” This comment was implicit in the ways the legislators expressed their religious beliefs. They had a religious belief system, but it was embedded in their overall philosophy and belief system. Legislator 8 did not see the lottery issue as a religious issue nor identified it in that way, compared to abortion which carries moral and religious values within many religious structures.

**Sub-theme two: religious attitudes of constituents.** Legislator 1 conducted a survey of the people in their district and found that most of them supported the lottery, while only a few mentioned rejection of it. A major revelation to Legislator 1 was from a constituent who was very religious. The spouse of the constituent was very conservative. There were medical problems within the family. When the constituent was asked what they thought about the lottery, they replied they not only wanted it but were going to buy a ticket and win. Legislator 6 had the experience of a constituent relaying that their clergy person said that if you buy a lottery ticket, you are committing a sin and asked members of that faith to sign a petition to send to the legislator telling the legislator to vote no. The constituent told Legislator 6 they signed the
petition but pulled out two tickets as they conveyed the message from the clergy person, and asked Legislator 6 to ignore their name on the petition. The constituent asserted “Playing a lottery isn’t a sin.” Legislator 6 said citizens would send e-mails and leave phone messages and said that “nobody I knew was ever ugly to me about it or threatening.” Legislator 7 noted pressure from several groups: colleagues, outside faith groups, individuals and various other groups about their position on the lottery, pro and con. In the end Legislator 7 realized to vote for or against was their decision.

Sub-theme three: religious and moral attitudes toward gambling and the lottery. None of the legislators suggested the lottery was a part of their teachings and discussions in the confines of their religious institution. Legislator 3 made the point that “helping people…what’s going to be the best thing for the most people” was important. Legislator 8 declared that, for them, the lottery was not identified as a religious issue. Legislator 6 reiterated they had never heard a sermon about the lottery or gambling. Legislators internalized their faith and were not influenced by the hierarchy of their religious institutions. Religion was a factor through their own lenses, which brought apprehension that the poor would waste their money to those who were aware there were already lottery-type programs in the community, such as buying raffle tickets for a quilt or some other prize. These are not the lottery per se but fall under the larger category of gambling.

The issue of the lottery was not a moral one for Legislator 1, but one of raising revenues. Legislator 2 had a concern about paternalism towards those who were poor and the suggestion the poor were not able to understand how to address their priorities or the factors surrounding balancing a budget. This concerned Legislator 2. Also, Legislator 2 stated “Well, my church didn’t have a stance on the lottery.” And as far as the religious community was
concerned Legislator 7 said, “There was no official position on their part…they’re so focused on their day-to-day work.”

Legislator 8 recalled one horrific phone call from a leader in a faith community who was against gambling. Legislator 8 also received a few phone calls where ugly words were spoken. Even when Legislator 8 was invited to speak at different religious relate events, however, there was no memory of the congregation’s being involved with any of Legislator 8’s issues in the General Assembly. Legislator 8 expressed it this way: “My [faith community] was over here and my service to my constituents was over here and the two never met.” Legislator 8 stated, “I don’t think I’ve ever heard a sermon… [concerning the lottery].”

Legislator 6 said “No…I never heard from the minister… [about the lottery].” A story conveyed to Legislator 6, however, concerned a minister. A constituent was informed by his/her preacher to contact Legislator 6 and tell them to vote “no” because it was a sin. The constituent signed a petition opposing the lottery, and then admitted to buying a couple of lottery tickets! (It was reasons like that which prompted Legislator 6 not to rely on petitions.)

Superordinate theme two: attitudes toward lotteries and ways to raise revenue.

There were different views among the legislators ranging from those who believed the money from the lottery would be beneficial to the state to those who were concerned about paternalism. For example, Legislator 2 thought the lottery would be good for both the economy and the state since jobs were needed and something like “$300 to $400 million” was leaving the state because citizens were going to other states to play the lottery.

Sub-theme one: attitudes of legislators. Legislator 1 was concerned about money going to rich people as well as to the poor. Yet Legislator 1 surmised if there was going to be a lottery, then it behooved them to advocate for appropriate use of the lottery monies. Legislator 1 thought
that not supplanting education monies, having some restrictions on advertising, and having monies go to lower income students were acceptable policies. Legislator 2 also believed money from the lottery should go to education needs but should be “in addition to salaries and construction” and thought it necessary that the lottery monies should not supplant what was already in the budget.

In opposition to this stance Legislator 5 raised the argument of how the lottery would be a disadvantage to the poor, even though Legislator 5 was cognizant that people were willing to go across state lines to buy tickets. In other words, Legislator 5 said “All the issues, the lottery and gambling was not good.” Legislator 7 also raised the question of paternalism. Legislator 7 reviewed some studies concerning lotteries and found that the poorest neighborhoods, where the people had the least amount of disposable income, had the highest ticket sales. Not only were ticket sales high but the studies also demonstrated the addictive behavior of some of the people in these neighborhoods, and that there would be families going without food and other essentials, due to the money being spent on lottery tickets. In raising the issue of paternalism, Legislator 7 questioned whether decisions were being made for another group of people and there was “great guilt about this.” This was a dilemma.

Legislator 6 did not think it made any difference whether the lottery bill was called the education lottery. It was seen by Legislator 6 as a public relations gimmick and they did not give it much credence. Legislator 6 was aware of the lost revenue because people were driving to other states to buy lottery tickets; sometimes bringing them back and selling them to friends. This was a concern of lost monies to the state.
Legislator 8 remarked that the lottery issue was not a new one. After researching the lottery issue and going to hearings Legislator 8 made the determination that the school systems were going to be beneficiaries of the lottery monies and that was positive for the state.

Legislator 3 had mixed feelings about the lottery and was not sure at the beginning how they were going to vote. They stated, “I do not think the lottery was discussed much or anything.” Legislator 3’s concerns centered around advertisements for the lottery that would have to be produced and the temptation for people to fritter away their money. When it was determined that the money was going to be used for educational purposes, the lottery gained greater legislative support. Legislator 3 was concerned that people might be misled into thinking they could really “strike it rich by buying that ticket and they are really wasting their money.”

Though raised in a faith community where gambling was an important issue, Legislator 5 saw the dilemma of plundering the poor and the fact that some people might become addicted to gambling. Once it was argued and determined the proceeds would go to education and there would be support groups to help the addicted, then the lottery seemed to be a reasonable solution. Legislator 5, however, was still concerned about the amount of revenue from the lottery sales which would go to pay those who operated the lottery, how much they would receive. This was a fairness issue for Legislator 5. Legislator 4 believed the lottery was not the appropriate way to raise revenue even though some of the discussion centered on issues such as funding for early childhood education. Even though Legislator 4 did not think that the lottery was a suitable way to raise revenue, they tried to make improvements to the bill as it went forward and stated, “You know, I tried to be my best self.”

**Sub-theme two: attitudes of constituents.** Legislator 1’s constituents were interested in having a lottery for revenue versus having taxes. Legislator 2 had constituents who wanted the
lottery as a way of entertainment, based on their experience with other state lotteries. Legislator 3 had constituents who were in support of the lottery since it was going to help education, and some thought they the state would acquire wealth quickly. Legislator 4 had many constituents who supported the lottery as well as many who were in opposition. Some in the business community were among the largest proponents for the lottery due to it bringing in more revenue, according to Legislator 5. Legislator 6 decided to survey their prior contributors. Out of approximately 400 contributors 68% wanted Legislator 6 to vote for the lottery, 15% said they did not, and the others had no opinion. Some of the constituents of Legislator 6 noted that some people spent too much money on the lottery, but money was needed for the state. Legislator 7 responded that some of their constituents were pleased to know the money could be used for schools, even though Legislator 7 had concerns about what amount would really be available. Legislator 8 let their constituents know how they were going to vote and asked them to let them know if whether they disagreed and why. Money to be used for education, as in other districts, was also a factor.

Superordinate theme three: influences on the lottery bill. There were several main categories of people who played a role in the legislator’s decision of whether to vote for or against the lottery. The categories of people who were influential include constituents, leadership and committees, colleagues, and lobbyists. The following sub-themes express the opinions of the legislative participants.

Sub-theme one: constituents. The number one category of influence was constituents. Five out of the eight participants listed constituents as their number one factor of influence. Legislator 1 always put their constituents first. Throughout the session Legislator 1 would meet with the same groups of constituents and would discuss different issues that were before the
legislature. Constituents were also important to Legislator 6 who stated, “On every vote I never consciously voted against my constituents, what I thought…their interests were.” Legislator 4 said “I always wanted to hear what my constituents had to say, and I would read my e-mails.” There was no doubt with Legislator 8 about the importance of constituents. Legislator 8 was unambiguous in saying they knew their constituents through their campaigning and Legislator 8 allegedly stated “I was determined to serve them…. ” Legislator 7 knew the person who held office before them and learned that the former legislator made it clear that constituents should be served first. Legislator 7 followed suit.

Sub-theme two: leadership and committees. Five out of eight legislative participants listed leadership as one of their main factors of influence. Two of the five participants said it was their number one realm of influence. Legislator 2 mentioned leadership first but also later added leadership and committees. Legislator 2 talked about learning the importance of relationships from the leadership. Legislator 2 observed the importance of others implementing strategy, counting votes, and the importance of listening to other legislators. Leadership was a major influence for Legislator 2. Legislator 5 spoke of leadership in terms not only of those in the leadership positions in the North Carolina House of Representatives, but also mentioned those who were leaders in the party caucus. Only one legislator, Legislator 4, did not discuss leadership per se. In fact, however, they did listen to leadership and were aware of the priorities and issues set before them in the caucus, but constituents were far more influential. The other three, who spoke about leadership, did not give it high priority.

Sub-theme three: colleagues. Six out of eight participants listed one or more of the following categories: members, committees, friends, caucus, and the public as a part of the overarching category of colleagues. Legislator 1 mentioned members of the legislature as one
category of people they would communicate with about issues. “You had to be nimble enough to find your avenue to get something done and it may be different from one session to another” was a statement from Legislator 1. Legislator 6 found that more legislators came by their office to talk about the lottery than those in the general public and thought that was because they were more concerned about the issue, since they were going to be voting on the lottery; however, Legislator 6 also acknowledged the public was an important influence.

There were two who specifically cited the category committees. Legislator 3 talked about members as most important but found that committees were important, too, for “speaking with many people as I could who knew more about it than I did, who could help me…to make a good decision.” Legislator 8 also found committees helpful. Legislator 5 was influenced by the caucus, four legislators listened to the members, and Legislator 3 talked about the importance of friends.

Legislator 5 found it helpful to hear what their caucus members had to say on issues as well as those in the other party. The viewpoints from others on both the fiscal and social ideology of issues was helpful as Legislator 5 wrestled with an issue. Legislator 3 was interested in hearing arguments for and against an issue and deemed it important to listen to as many colleagues as possible as they formed their opinion about an issue. Legislator 7 thought colleagues were important and appreciated friendships that formed within the legislature which led to trusted conversations, even if the member had a different point of view. Legislator 3 signaled the importance of friends as well as constituents. Legislator 8 talked about the importance of study committees within the work of the legislature. This was helpful to Legislator 8 in determining their stance on a topic, since these committees are outside of the regular committee structure and usually involve people from various parts of the states as well as
legislators and legislative staff. Legislator 2 paid more attention to leadership than any other category of influence while Legislator 4 was more interested in the opinions of constituents, citing that component of influence as most important.

**Sub-theme four: lobbyists.** Even though lobbyists were not portrayed as an influence in the sense of listening and doing what they suggested, they played a major role in giving information and direction to issues and were expected to be able to address both sides of an issue. All eight of the participants listed lobbyists last in the area of influence and, yet, all the participants mentioned lobbyists as helpful with their various viewpoints on issues. For example, opinions varied from Legislator 6 saying “I was never influenced by them” to Legislator 8 saying “I used lobbyists to find out the issues.” Legislator 8 acknowledged that there was a combination of influences which helped form their view, nevertheless they also learned from the lobbyists, representing both sides of an issue, “what they might do for me that I would support their issue.” This was like similar to Legislator 2 who expressed the fact the lobbyists did not influence them, but they were important in learning about both sides of an issue. Legislator 5 agreed with the idea of the recognizing the knowledge lobbyists had since Legislator 5 was interested in both sides of an issue. Legislator 4 concurred and added they would never tell the lobbyists how they were going to vote on an issue. Legislator 3 “took the lobbyists very lightly…and they knew I was not going to spend a lot of time with them…." Legislator 3 responded that they were not really interested in hearing them on some of the larger issues because of the way they sounded: On the lottery issue the pro-lottery lobbyists “came across like ads to the public for the lottery.” This was not acceptable to Legislator 3. Legislator 1 was adamant that “last I would pay attention to the lobbyists…but I would always listen to them.” Legislator 7 made it clear they were more interested in the remarks from constituents, members
Conclusion

In this study three themes were identified: superordinate theme 1—influences of religious beliefs on the legislator; superordinate theme 2—attitudes toward lotteries and ways to raise revenue, superordinate theme 3—influences on the lottery bill.

Theme one: Each legislator interviewed expressed a religious conviction which was part of who they are as individuals. Their religious beliefs were not as seen as isolated from their overall personal philosophy. Their faith communities were not a major consideration in their attitude toward how they would vote on the lottery bill, and sometimes they visited other faith communities. The faith communities of these participants did not emphasize the lottery, for or against within their programs during this time. Constituents, however, were very important to the legislators and the legislators did listen to what they had to say even though in the end each legislator had to decide on how they were going to vote. It was interesting that North Carolina is one of the states in the “Bible Belt” and yet, for those who voted for the bill as well as those who voted against it, their individual faith communities did not play a major role.

Theme two: The attitudes of the legislators towards lotteries brought forward a range of views from those who thought the money from a lottery would be beneficial to the state to those who believed a lottery evokes paternalism, opposing it on the grounds that poor people would spend their money recklessly. Legislators expressed their opinions concerning the need for money for the state, particularly in the area of education, and yet there might be better ways, such as taxes, to bring in the money. Alternatively, there were those who expressed the fact that North Carolina was losing money to other states which had a lottery.

Theme three: The number one category of influence of the legislators were their
constituents. There were different methods of reaching constituents from holding small group meetings to surveys. Some of the participants held meetings to discuss the lottery issue, the others relied on e-mail messages. Each participant, in their own way, was cognizant of how they thought the overall constituency would respond and, as importantly, each legislator understood they would need to respond to how they cast their vote. Over half of the legislators spoke about the importance of the leadership. This included those in the leadership of the House of Representatives, as well as those in leadership in the individual party caucus and committees. Even though five out of eight responded favorably for the leadership, three did not give leadership a high priority. Colleagues were also important, with six out of eight participants noting this category. Legislators would communicate with them about different issues and found it helpful to determine the fiscal and social ideologies of bills. Lobbyists were listed last in the area of influence. Their role was seen as helpful though in the area of imparting information and direction on issues. The lobbyists were reliable and helpful in the decision-making process.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, will connect these findings, the literature review from Chapter 2, and the study’s theoretical framework.
Chapter 5: Interpretations, Recommendations, Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to address the issue of the influence of religious beliefs of state legislators on their voting behavior. A comprehensive study by Kurtz (2015) stated that 42% of state legislators nationwide did not identify their religious affiliations. In contrast, only 7.5% of the legislators in the North Carolina House of Representatives in the 2005–2006 session did not report their specific religious affiliation (North Carolina General Assembly Working Document); thus, to study religious beliefs and voting behavior of state legislators seemed warranted in this state.

The research question guiding this study was: How do state legislators make sense of the role religious beliefs play in their voting behavior?

This chapter reviews the interpretation of primary findings and the impact of relevant literature on the study as related to the literature review, the theoretical framework, and implications for practice. This interpretative phenomenological study had eight participants who served during the 2005–2006 Session of the North Carolina Legislature and who had voted either for or against the specific bill: The North Carolina State Lottery Act, House Bill 1023. The eight participants were not currently serving in the legislature at the time of the interviews.

Interpretation of Primary Findings

Three superordinate themes and associated subthemes emerged from the research:
Table 4.

Themes and Sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
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| 1. influences of religious beliefs on the legislator | 1. religious beliefs of legislators: personal and legislatively
| 2. attitudes toward lotteries and ways to raise revenue | 1. attitudes of legislators
| 3. influences on the lottery bill | 1. constituents
| | 2. leadership and committees.
| | 3. colleagues.
| | 4. lobbyists

Superordinate theme one: influences of religious beliefs on the legislator. The need to explore religion and legislators has been amply justified. Lund (2010) writing on the *Marsh v. Chambers* lawsuit of 1983, which permitted an exception to the First Amendment of the US Constitution by allowing prayer in state legislatures, wrote “The willingness of the people to fight tooth-and-nail for control over legislative prayer has given us the most perfect proof of its character as a religious establishment” (p. 1049). Therefore, to investigate the connection of religion and voting should not be ignored.

Smith’s (2001) parable raises the question of the place of religion within the public arena. Smith (2001) stated that professors of law and those who are political academics might make an argument that people should be allowed to vote and debate on issues from a religious or secular viewpoint or, on the contrary, claim that they should restrain from utilizing referencing their faith within the realm of public issues. Interestingly, Smith (2001) went on to discuss a possible “red herring”: “The familiar answer suggests that democratic deliberation, or perhaps even democratic legitimacy, requires that public decisions should be made on the basis of reasons ‘accessible’ to all citizens” (p. 685). Smith (2001) argued that the accessibility response
is artificial, citing that our identification as a self-governing democracy implies making public
decisions, without any type of interference, about issues. According to Smith (2001) the real
question is one which asks, “Is the introduction of religion into public deliberation inappropriate
because it offends a justified commitment to human autonomy?” (p. 687).

Such illustrations of the influence of prayer and religion as well as whether the issue of
religion should be in public debate at all, are two examples of what has spurred the question of
how religious beliefs of legislators affects their voting behavior. While interviewing the
participants, there was not a concern raised when religious beliefs were brought to the forefront
in the discussion. The mention of the issue of religious beliefs had been stated when the
participants were asked to join the study. This confirms the inclusion of religion as part of these
legislator’s’ belief systems.

The findings of the research also confirmed that even though religious beliefs are
important to individuals, the participants relied on their own decisions after considering input
from constituents and others, as well as their own internal philosophies.

All the participants who were part of this study acknowledged their personal belief
systems. Their religious views were internalized. The participants had been a part of religious
communities over the years and a few indicated their religious faith had been a part of their lives
since childhood. Even though religious beliefs were a part of the legislators’ convictions, the
participants conceded that their faith communities were not the motivating factor of their vote on
the lottery. Instead, the legislators looked at the lottery vote from various angles including
economics and social justice. This supports Greenawalt (1986) who wrote that legislators should
not deny their own thoughts and feelings in decision-making but should give less thought to their
private convictions. In this instance the legislators, having internalized their beliefs, did not
single them out as the main motivating factor of their vote.

Yamane and Oldmixon (2006) have done a significant amount of research in the area of state legislatures and how their function relates to religiosity by specifically identifying a legislator’s affiliation with a religious body and religious factors, such as prayer, participation in religious activities, and advocacy by religious groups. One of their findings indicated that the legislator, if engaged in religious activity, might be more likely to vote in a conservative manner. In the current study the researcher relied on the participants to talk about their overall religious leanings, not in explicit terms but in general terms. The emphasis from the participants centered on broad issues such as “good works,” education, and social justice issues as defined by them, versus specific theological issues such as how scripture is defined and what worship encompasses.

Of the eight participants two mentioned having a conservative upbringing. When determining the vote on the lottery their religious institutions were not the primary influencers. The religious institutions did not take a specific stand on the lottery. The yea and no votes on the lottery outcome were evenly divided among the participants, all of whom spoke about their religious beliefs and their institutions in a general way. There were four votes for the bill and four votes against the bill.

The findings of the research also confirmed that even though religious beliefs are important to individual legislators, the participants relied on their own decisions only after considering input from constituents and others, as well as their own internal philosophies. Religious attitudes of constituents played an important role in the decision making of these participants. Five of the eight participants listed constituents as the most important influencers. Since representatives are elected from a district, to serve their constituents is a primary focus.
From sending surveys to those in their district, to having meetings with constituents and utilizing their views as a sounding board, the legislators agreed to the importance of researching constituent perspectives. Songer et al. (1986) suggested that issues of concern for constituents focus on the area of taxes, but the personal values of legislators were more important on bills involving drinking issues, education, and medical care. This concurs, as noted above, with the lottery issue that encompasses both economic and, for some, social justice issues.

There were instances noted which indicate the importance of constituents and their religious beliefs. Legislator 1 learned from one of their religious constituents how important the lottery might be if they won because it would help them with their health needs. Others include Legislator 7 who heard pros and cons from faith groups and Legislator 6 who had bought tickets even though this was opposed by their clergy person. Even though the analysis by Cann (2009) was focused on the members who were Mormons within the House of Representatives during the 109th Congress, versus a state legislature, the research showed influence from their constituents as more significant than the personal beliefs of the Mormon legislators. Whether constituents express their religious beliefs or not, they played a major role in legislators’ decision-making.

“Both political scientists and economists define shirking as the failure by the legislator to act in the interest of his[her] constituents” (Bender and Lott, 1996, p. 68). Even though this study was based on the U. S. Congress, it is still relevant for state legislators as it shows the influence of constituents and the fact legislators need to be cognizant of how they decide to vote. The authors listed four assumptions: Legislators need to be aware of the interests of their constituents and probably could vote against those interests as long as there is not a financial repercussion. The legislator might tend to vote less frequently (which is more of an option for Congress; North Carolina legislators are required to vote). Also, if the legislators continue
voting in opposition to their constituencies, they might lose their next election (Bender and Lott, 1996, p. 68). Constituents are very important to the individual legislators, after all; the constituents voted them into office and, equally significant, the legislator is their representative.

In a study by Olson et al. (2003) there were participants who claimed that they were not influenced by their faith and said they would vote in favor of a lottery; whereas those stating they used their faith in making choices would not vote in favor of a lottery. It is important to be aware that this was a study of a vote by the public, not legislators, in South Carolina. In West Virginia the legislators voted on a lottery before the citizens did (Garrett, 1999), and 28% of the legislators voted in opposition to their constituents (Garrett, 1999). In this study (Garrett, 1999) those who were defined as religious and were represented by a Democrat in the West Virginia Legislature were less favorable towards the lottery than those represented by a Republican. Of the participants in the current study who claimed religious beliefs four voted yes and four voted no on the lottery bill before them. Of the eight participants, two Democrats voted yes and two voted no; two Republicans voted yes and two voted no.

Opponents of casino gambling in Mississippi included mainstream religious organizations as well as the American Family Association, a conservative Christian group headquartered in Tupelo; and in Georgia clergy from the United Methodist, Southern Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches were opposed to a lottery (Nelson and Mason, 2003). In contrast, in the current study there was not a concerted opposition in a major way from the religious communities in North Carolina.

In the end, the participants made their decision based on factors of their constituency, revenue to the state, and what they personally determined was in the best interest of the citizenry.

The participants in this study asserted that the lottery was not a part of their teachings
and/or discussions within their religious institutions. They were not influenced by those in authority within their religious settings and, therefore, it was their own philosophy and questions that determined their decision-making. The legislators varied in their thinking about the possibility of a lottery. Their opinions and concerns ran the gamut from the concern of paternalism to the notion of the lottery being good for the economy of the state.

In sum, the participants made their decision based on factors of their constituency, revenue to the state, and what they personally determined was in the best interest of the citizenry.

Superordinate theme two: attitudes toward lotteries and ways to raise revenue.

Superordinate theme two focused on the revenue issue of the lottery. There were opposing viewpoints from the legislators. On the one hand there were participants who were adamant that a lottery was a regressive tax and would damage the poor; and, on the other, there were those who thought the lottery was a revenue source that could be helpful to citizens. The supporters were also concerned money was already going to other states since people were going out of state to play the lottery.

Those on both sides of the revenue issue spoke strongly in favor of their position. Those against the lottery were concerned about preying on the poor and the fact there were other ways to raise revenue. Some of the participants in support of the lottery were concerned about paternalism and saw the lottery as a source not only of revenue, but a form of entertainment.

According to participants in the current study, their constituents also had varied views on the lottery issue. There were some who thought having a lottery for state revenue was better than raising taxes. There were some who saw the lottery as entertainment. The fact the monies were designated for education caught the attention of some constituents who saw that as a positive, and yet, there was concern about people thinking they would acquire wealth quickly. These
were not new ideas or concerns. In Colorado, for example, there was an interest in including the approval of casino gambling in a resort area, but this failed due to TV ads which asked “‘Do you really want to have the gang over?’ followed by a burst of machine-gun fire.” (Starr, 1984). Similarly, Arkansas saw such an amendment defeated in a town that was economically depressed. However, California, Missouri, Oregon, and West Virginia all approved lotteries (Starr, 1984).

Heberling (2002) indicated that the lottery is attributed to a “malevolent government” regardless of the worthiness of a policy. Heberling (2002) reported that many of the states that passed a lottery bill promoted the lottery as a method to raise money, even though he found the lottery revenues not covering their stated purpose due to a drop in ticket sales. Wyett (1991) emphasized the concern of some citizens that the lottery was regressive and Wisman (2006) stated, “It maintains a pretense that the revenues will especially benefit the poor while enabling the state to cut taxes for the financially better off” (p. 964). Offering a different perspective, Hart and Sofley (2004) claimed it is up to adults to decide how to allocate their financial resources. They also surmised that the revenues from the lottery, if run efficiently, could benefit the citizenry. These are some of the same arguments that the participants shared as they debated the issue of the lottery.
Superordinate theme three: influences on the lottery bill. The first category of influences on the participants in the study was their constituents. The participants listened to them; both the pros and cons. Some members had meetings with constituents on a regular basis and sought their input. Others sought input from their constituents on a more informal basis. Whatever their means to reach out to their constituents, they needed to be aware of the diversity of views. Ultimately even though the participant’s decision might differ with the views of some of the constituents, each legislator in the study had to vote and needed to be able to explain their decision.

In a study of the members of the House of Representatives in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania, Ray (1982), utilizing the analysis of John Kingdon (1973) on voting decisions by Congress, noted constituents were important even though these three legislative bodies varied in the importance of constituents. Even though the legislators responded spontaneously that constituents were significant, members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives reported the importance of their constituency at 28% and the members of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts reported 32%. Forty-eight percent of the members of the New Hampshire House reported the significance of constituents. Interestingly New Hampshire legislators were considered the least “professional” of the three studied due to most living at home and, therefore, were working as well as living among their constituents; plus, their legislative sessions were shorter than many others. These factors were relevant to the importance of constituents as a determinant factor in votes by these legislators.

Interest groups and legislative colleagues were found to be important in the study by Ray (1982), which introduces the next second group of influencers.

Colleagues, described in this instance as members, committees, friends, the political
caucuses, and the public, were other people with whom legislators interacted and whose viewpoints mattered. The 2001 survey by the Pew Charitable Trusts suggests that elected officials should work more with their colleagues than depending on their own religiosity. The current study supported this point of view. For example, the committee structure within the legislature was important in the area of the lottery and legislators expressed that talking to the members within their caucuses was helpful in shaping their opinion.

Colleagues within a legislature refer to those within the legislative body. If legislators are in the minority, it behooves them to find some allies in the majority party who can help with an issue. At the same time those in the majority party should not overlook those in the minority party for assistance in their legislation. During each session there is likely some turnover within a legislative body. With the turnover there is the need for new relationships. This also means that a change in the number of members in the majority and the minority makes a difference. Numbers of the members in a party makes a difference. To be loyal to one’s political party is important, and the individual members have to decide how they will respond to each issue; merely doing what the leadership wants versus doing what the member deems best for the whole. The vote on the lottery in this study was very close, passing by only two votes with all members present and voting. The following table lists the votes:

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nelson and Mason (2003) related how a few state legislators in Mississippi had raised the issue of casino gambling and turned to colleagues whose districts would profit from the casino. The emphasis was on profit but also the need to have an informed constituency to support the measure. The participants in the current study did not mention the districts they represented as specifically benefiting from a lottery as some in Mississippi indicated, but did take constituent views into consideration.

In another study Jenkins (2006) indicated that their reasons varied, but first-term members depended more on the political party. The participants in the current study did not, however, place as much emphasis on political parties.

A third source of influence is lobbyists. Winton-Glisson (2006) in their a study of funding for K-12 in Oklahoma focused on legislators who would be affecting the decisions of educational funding in the state. They identified several groups of people who were influential, including lobbyists. A few legislators did not trust the lobbyists and one legislator compared the lobbyists of the teacher unions with “spoiled children” because they were only interested in their concerns. The lobbyists were not as important as those in the business community, school representatives, or other legislators according to Winton-Glisson (2006).

The current study shows a different side of lobbyists. Lobbyists in this study provided helpful information both pro and con on the issue of the lottery. In fact, even though lobbyists were placed last in the area of influence by all eight participants, their knowledge was a welcome offer. Lobbyists portray the issues they are representing and need to know the opposite position as well. When lobbyists are lobbying for a particular issue, they try to find representatives they can count on to handle a bill or to be a significant player in developing a pro stance position. Those who are against an issue also need to have the support of members who can persuade
others to oppose the issue. A good lobbyist is one who is truthful and knows both sides of an issue and is able to explain his or her position in a well-defined manner and in a reasonable amount of time. Lobbyists usually work with one or more legislators in order to advance their agenda. Because there are myriad issues that come before a legislature, in the researcher’s personal experience, it is helpful to have lobbyists who are an expert on their issue and have data to solidify their positions.

Findings and Theoretical Framework

Mazzoni’s (1991) arena theory provided the basis for the theoretical framework for this study. The arena theory basically provides a description of four different policy making areas which include the subsystem, comprising small groups of people; the commission, which consists of appointed groups of people, including the public and mass media; the macro, a wide range of participants, usually dealing with a specific issue; and leadership, which includes those leaders with power and control. The subsystem and the macro were the first parts of the arena model with commission and leadership added later to the theory (Mazzoni, 1991, p.116).

The influence of religious beliefs on legislators falls within the area of macro arena, according to the definition of the four different policy-making areas of the arena theory. This arena encompasses a wide range of participants. The input from the participants in the ways they described their faith communities was not anticipated by the researcher. The reason this was not anticipated is the fact the legislature being studied is in the “Bible Belt.” At the time of this vote on the lottery, the faith communities were silent and were not advocating publicly on the lottery issue.

In this study the input gained was collected more from the community at large, not specifically the faith community. For example, macro arena would cover the public, including
the lobbyists; in contrast, the commission would include the appointed committees; and the leadership would be those legislators in leadership positions and other elected officials. Power and control and public policy was being determined within all facets of the arena theory rather than solely elected leadership; yet the one group with the most influence was the general public, the participants’ constituents.

The attitudes towards lotteries and raising of revenues, the second superordinate theme, also utilizes the arena theory. Leadership, the public, formal committees, and informal groups who are supportive of a lottery were all major players, some more influential than others, in the determination of the final resolution to the lottery, House Bill 1023. Legislators have the opportunity to be with and to listen to myriad voices on an issue. Policymaking is a process of following an issue from beginning to end in order to determine the best outcome for citizens and it takes understanding and acknowledgement of the policy-making arenas to make it work.

The third superordinate theme focused on the influences on the lottery bill. It also was inclusive of the macro policy-making arena, a macro (wide range of participants) which includes constituents, colleagues, and lobbyists, and the policy-making arena of leadership. The fact that the constituents were listed first and the lobbyists last is probably in alignment with most legislatures. Depending on the content of a bill determines who the key players might be for a sitting legislator. The two determined in this study, constituents and lobbyists, would probably remain in their positions of first and last in the areas of influence.

Implications for Practice:

The main finding from this study indicates that even though legislators may belong to a religious institution and have specific religious beliefs, the institutions with their religious leanings were not the major factor in the way the participants voted on the lottery bill. The
legislators were more likely to be influenced by their constituents. The leadership of the legislature and colleagues are two other main groups that influenced the participants. Lobbyists, even though placed last, were appreciated for their knowledge, pro and con.

What was important in this study is the fact that even though there was not an outward and visible sign of the participant’s’ religious institution helping in informing their religious beliefs, all participants had taken on their own personal mantle of religiosity and were aware of it being embedded within them. Some participants were more verbal about their religious beliefs but each one acknowledged they had internalized their religion in one way or another. What I observed was the thoughtful and deliberative way in which these state legislators approach the issues. It was apparent that these eight participants had a personal philosophy and religious viewpoint, but at the same time they were able to look at both sides of an issue and did not take their tasks lightly. Even though they lived in the “Bible Belt,” they were able to discern for themselves what they thought would be best for the state. There was an even divide between the yes and no votes of these eight legislators. They were aware of the impact of their vote and they were cognizant that they would need to explain their vote.

The findings of this study are important and should be of interest to the participants in realizing even though they differed in many ways, their colleagues in the study were similar in the fact that their religious beliefs are a part of who they are as human beings and with few exceptions, each individual thought through the impact of a lottery within the state. The importance of knowing the legislators and having a basic understanding of the influences of their voting behavior should be of interest to other elected officials, those in public policy, the general public, educators, and lobbyists. The constituents need to understand they not only vote for the legislators, but that legislators realize their importance of their constituents and, therefore, it
behooves them to play an active role in policy making. And, lobbyists, even though listed last, should know of their importance and not to be discouraged about being ranking last in influence because they were also still deemed important.

**Recommendations for Existing Practices and Policies**

1. State legislators need to reach out to their constituents. There are various methods to seek input including town hall meetings, weekly news alerts, social media, and individual meetings throughout the year, not only when the legislators are campaigning or in session.

2. Constituents need to understand their importance and when given the opportunity to participate whether by a survey or any other means, they should take it seriously. Their stance on an issue may make a difference.

3. Legislators need to build relationships with their colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, in order to make an informed decision.

4. State legislators need to reach out to lobbyists and ensure they are aware of both sides of an issue.

5. State legislators need to be open to learning how an issue has been implemented in other states, and the pros and cons that have arisen.

Perhaps if another “hot button” issue, such as abortion, was the focus, there might have been more religious views expressed from the institutional authority as noted previously in the literature review by Chressanthis, Gilbert, and Grimes (1991), who explored whether religion played a role in how U.S. senators vote, specifically on abortion issues. The study concluded that, although U.S. senators are responsive to the views of their constituents, senators’ religion played an important role in how they voted.
Recommendations for Future Research

In contemplating future research of determining the connection between religious beliefs and the voting behavior of state legislators, a qualitative study of members of the House of Representatives and the Senate within state legislature might show varied results. Another avenue would be to choose two to three legislatures in different parts of the country, who during a similar time period passed similar legislation. Even though eight participants are a valid sample for a qualitative research study, a larger number might show other differences.

The lottery was the focus issue used in this study. Perhaps, a study on other “hot button” issues—abortion, same-sex marriage, gun control—might yield different results as far as religious institutions are concerned. There might be more secular viewpoints as well. The most influential category was constituents according to five out of the eight participants, who listed it as the number one factor. Five out of eight participants also listed leadership as one of the main factors, although only two participants listed it as their number one influence. Leadership included a party caucus as well as leadership within the House of Representatives. Another category ranked higher than leadership: Six out of eight participants specifically listed colleagues but included various groups of people. Future research, however, could also compare several categories to review at once to determine whether there are any differences in the areas of influence, instead of simply describing what might emerge.

As expressed in the literature review, more work has been done on those serving in the United States Congress versus state legislators. The state legislators are closer to the people due to the smaller population within their districts versus those in Congress who have a larger population within their districts. To continue to reach out to state legislatures would bring more knowledge and enhance information to those serving as well as to those who are thinking about
being candidates.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to ascertain the influence of the religious beliefs of state legislators on their voting behavior. The focus issue was the lottery. Even though there were not specific ways in which religious institutions of these eight participants engaged in advocacy during the time of this specific vote, the participants did listen to various proponents and opponents during their discernment period before their vote. The participants heard opposing viewpoints on the lottery bill from the concerns of paternalism and bad revenue policy to the need for money in the state and the fact money was being lost to surrounding states which already had lotteries. In the end they had to make their individual decisions.

This research for legislators shows the importance of constituents, the leadership, colleagues, and lobbyists. It is helpful in acknowledging that religious beliefs are important and valued. Those in leadership have an important role in not only setting agendas for meetings but educating and working with others in forming issues and discussions. For those in the general public, it is important to be able to access information about candidates during election season in order to determine the philosophy and character of those vying for office. For those who are colleagues, trust is important, and legislators can learn about and discern issues from one another. And, even though lobbyists were listed last in the order of influence, it must be noted that they are still very important. Lobbyists are a prime example of knowing the issues and able to impart information to others.

In conclusion the political process is very complex. Those serving in public office need to hear from their constituents. They are indeed a very important part of the process and are very important influencers. Those serving and those who would like to serve, whether in elected or
appointed office, need to be aware of the many voices of the public, religious and secular.
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Appendix A: First Contact With Potential Participants

The script below is an outline of issues to be covered in a phone call to potential participants.

Hello ____. My name is Martha Alexander.
Thank you for taking my call.
How have you been?
I am calling in my role as a student researcher. I am working on my doctor of education at Northeastern University in Boston and am working on the research for my dissertation. The title is: The Influence of Religious Beliefs on State Legislators’ Voting Behavior Focus: Education Lottery.

I am recruiting participants for this study who were present and voting during the 2005-2006 North Carolina General Assembly but who are not serving at the moment in elected office. I would like for you to be one of the participants.

The time commitment would be one interview of 60-90 minutes. You and I would determine the site where the interview will take place. There will be an informed consent document which will need to be signed by you before we begin. And, confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me.

Please know that your participation is entirely voluntary.

Would you be able to participate in my research study?

Many thanks. I look forward to working with you. I think you will be of value to this study. I will email you a follow up message from my student email address xxx@husky.neu.edu.
Appendix B: Follow-Up Letter (if needed)

Date_____

Dear_____

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my research study, The Influence of Religious Beliefs on State legislators’ Voting Behavior Focus: Educational Lottery. I have attached the informed consent form for you to review. I will be calling you to set up an appointment for the interview. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

Please note the information gathered will be confidential and your real name will definitely not be used without your written permission.

I look forward to working with you. I appreciate your support and help with this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Martha Bedell Alexander
xxx@husky.neu.edu
Graduate Student Researcher
College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University Charlotte
Appendix C: Signed Informed Consent Document

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**Northeastern University, Department** Education/Doctoral
**Name of Investigator(s):** W. Sandra Nickel, PhD, Principal Investigator
Martha Bedell Alexander, Student Investigator
**Title of Project:** The Influence of Religious Beliefs on State Legislators’ Voting Behavior
Focus: Educational Lottery

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**Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

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**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**

The reason you have been asked to take part in this research study is because you served in the North Carolina General Assembly during the 2005-2006 Session and you are not currently a sitting member of the legislature.

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**Why is this research study being done?**

The purpose of this study is to understand and identify the major factors that play a role in a legislator’s voting behavior.

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**What will I be asked to do?**

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to take part in one interview session with the student researcher. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by a certified transcriptionist. Once the transcription has been completed you will have an opportunity to review it. Pseudonyms will be used in the data analysis. It is important to note that the researcher might need to engage the participants in a follow-up session.

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**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

The site of the meeting will be determined by you and the researcher. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes.

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**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process and all field notes and recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet. There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort to the participants.
Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Introduction

The researcher would begin the process thanking the participants for their time and then giving a quick overview of the project. This would include what influences the participant’s voting behavior, in particular religious beliefs. The researcher will explain briefly The Arena Theory and its four factors: leadership, committees, the public and lobbyists. The interview will include the following questions.

1. Tell me about yourself and your time as a representative in the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA).

2. Which of these four areas are most influential in your consideration of issues: the legislative leadership, legislative committees, the public, lobbyists?

3. What are the main issues of the religious beliefs of your church, synagogue or religious institution concerning gambling issues, in particularly, a lottery. Describe how your religious beliefs were a factor in determining your vote on the educational lottery.

   If religious beliefs are not mentioned, the follow-up question would be: Please explain whether or not you have ever considered your religious beliefs when considering how you voted. Please clarify your religious beliefs and if they usually align with how you vote.

4. In this particular instance of the lottery vote which influenced your vote the most: the leadership, committees, the public, lobbyists?
5. What do you recall about the educational lottery vote during the 2005-2006 Session of the NCGA?

6. a. Please explain the major factors that influenced your vote on the educational lottery.

   b. Were there other factors?

7. Describe the religious resources you might rely on in determining your stand on “hot button” issues and other pertinent issues where your vote on the floor is required.

8. What is a major factor that usually influences your voting behavior?

9. What are additional factors that you might take into consideration?

   *When the interview has been completed, the researcher will thank them for their time and consideration of these issues.*
Appendix E

Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Martha Alexander successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 11/11/2014

Certification Number: 1615602