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MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE: COLLEGE STUDENT SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL CONCERN AND ACTION

A thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

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by

Philip D. Byers

March 2010

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Higher Education and Student Development
Taylor University
Upland, Indiana

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTERS THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Philip D. Byers

entitled

Mercy, Not Sacrifice: College Student Spirituality and Social Concern and Action

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree

in Higher Education and Student Development
March 2010

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ABSTRACT

Recently, scholars and practitioners are increasingly promoting a reexamination of the role of spirituality in the college environment (Astin, 2004; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Lindholm & Astin, 2007). Since spirituality has often been associated with service and a variety of other humanitarian motivations, multiple higher education theorists have speculated on the relationship between the two learning outcomes. However, influential higher education researchers have noted the dearth of research on spirituality in higher education in general (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, n.d.), and heretofore investigators have barely examined the connection between spirituality and manifestations of social action. In this study I examined the relationship between Spirituality and Social Concern and Action through a data set of 3,462 respondents surveyed by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). I found Spirituality correlated significantly to all measurements of Social Concern and Action. I also analyzed the impact of Institutional Type on the relationship between Spirituality and Social Concern and Action. In a Multiple Analysis of Variance, I found students at institutions designated as "religious" scored significantly lower than their peers at "public" and "private" institutions in regards to Compassionate Self-Concept. In contrast, I found "public" institutions scored significantly lower than their peers at "private" and "religious" institutions on measures of Charitable Involvement and Ethic of Caring. These findings are an indication of a close link between Spirituality, Social Concern and Action, and Institutional Type.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If, truly, much will be required of them who much receive, then the rest of my life must certainly be spent as a concerted repayment of a substantial debt accrued. While my benefactors are numerous, several deserve specific mention in connection to my thesis. To Yvonne Boyd, Julie Straight, Mark Lambertus, and Marvin Williams, English teachers who cut no corners even when some of their colleagues did. To the Rev. Randy Gruendyke, campus pastor and friend who helped shape my understanding of spiritual development and discipleship. To Ryan Klaver and Caleb Barrows, stellar men who got less than they bargained for in a roommate yet never uttered a complaint. To the men of the Box, brothers-in-Christ whose impact on my career in higher education, though vast, pales in comparison to their examples as men in pursuit of the Living God. To Scott and Jennifer Moeschberger, quality supervisors who demonstrated much forbearance to their oft-harried graduate assistant while never failing to treat me as a friend (they took me to Ireland, too!). To Tim Herrmann, the professor, mentor, and friend who, more than any other, has shaped my ideas about what it means to think and act faithfully in higher education. To Ian and Michelle Byers and Beth and Noah DeLong (as well as all my beautiful nieces), siblings whose love and friendship are more than a brother could ever imagine. To my mom and dad (and my daddy, Bill Wagner), whose unwavering support, tireless advocacy, and seemingly limitless love I will never be able to repay. And to Jesus Christ, in whom I live, move, study, and have my being. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The eighth century B. C. was not a good time for the ancient kingdom of Israel. According to the outline in the Hebrew Bible, the people of Israel had fallen from the heights of the reign of kings David and Solomon to the depths of a divided kingdom and, by the mid-eighth century B.C., the threat of impending invasion and subjugation by the neighboring Assyrians. It is in this context the Jewish prophet Hosea is believed to have lived, and the text of the Hebrew Bible records his dark ministry. Using the vivid imagery of harlotry, the Book of Hosea depicts the transgressions of the Jewish people and records the manner in which Yahweh, the god of the Jews, chastises them for their unfaithfulness. As the text builds to a crescendo, the prophet records Yahweh's disgust at their practice of empty religion, claiming, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6, New International Version).

This admonition, though specific in this case to the god of the Jews, is representative of the cultural sentiment which grips many in the twenty-first century: a distaste and distrust for any form of supposed spirituality which does not promote the pursuit of merciful, compassionate living. As the academy considers the role of student spirituality in a comprehensive undergraduate experience, the connection between spirituality and social action requires attention. Existing research has examined how college students develop in their spirituality but has not fully explored the predictive ability of this spirituality on student social concern and action. Furthermore, the impact of institutional type has not been adequately analyzed to substantially evaluate its influence.

This research intends to investigate the link between students' spiritual development and their social concern and action, an understanding of which provides valuable insight for institutions and practitioners seeking to promote both of these important educational outcomes. One goal of this research is to validate the growing emphasis on spirituality as a viable means by which practitioners can promote holistic development in students. Additionally, an understanding of the impact of institutional type could inform the improvement of curricular and co-curricular efforts to foster student spiritual development and social concern and action. In the words of ancient Archbishop of Constantinople John Chrysostom (YEAR), "let us not neglect the matter. By mercy we greatly benefit ourselves, not the poor only. We receive much more than we provide" (p. 29).

Purpose

Recently, scholars and practitioners are promoting a reexamination of the role of spirituality in the life of the college student (Astin, 2004; Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2005; Freitas, 2008; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Love & Talbot, 1999; Murphy, 2005). Advocating a move beyond a simple examination of religious involvement or an evaluation of intrinsic expressions of spirit, Love (2001) asserts higher education professionals "need to recognize the spiritual aspects of everyday life and not just associate spirituality with religious practice. Students' involvement in social, volunteer, leadership, and community service activity may be a manifestation of their spiritual development and quest for meaning" (p. 14).

Virtually all colleges acknowledge the importance of the civic mission and the responsibility to serve the greater good. While spirituality has often been associated with service and a variety of other humanitarian motivations, heretofore there has been only a cursory examination of what role spirituality might play in promoting these commitments (Smith & Snell, 2009). Identifying the forces that contribute to the development of such qualities would be tremendously beneficial in understanding this complex issue more fully. Determining whether or not there are linkages between spirituality and social concern and action will provide insight into potential avenues for furthering the civic mission of higher education. Furthermore, determining how these connections might vary by institutional type will deepen this understanding and provide a foundation for potential institutional action.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Spirituality in Higher Education

The twentieth century was not good for the integration of higher education and spirituality. Multiple scholars have argued, in recent years most higher education professionals have been hesitant or even unwilling to examine spirituality in the academy (Astin, 2004; Kuh, 2006; Lindholm & Astin, 2007). In her study of college student sexuality, Freitas (2008) even claims the "dominant but implicit attitude on campus…is that spirituality and religion are private" (p. 217). However, it was not ever thus. The careful work of various higher education historians has demonstrated how religion and spirituality were integral to the original models of American higher education (Kullberg, 2007; Marsden, 1994; Ringenberg, 2006; Stamm, 2005; Williams, 2002). Perhaps the two foremost historians of higher education, Rudolph (1960) and Thelin (2004), both have illuminated the influence of religion in the founding days of American higher education.

Indeed, Ringenberg (2006) contends the expulsion of spirituality from the academy did not begin in full until the latter part of the nineteenth century, at which point "American higher education in general changed its spiritual direction to the point that by the 1980s it exerted a primarily negative effect upon the spiritual development of its students" (p. 113). This evaluation is more than just one scholar's interpretation, however. Half a century ago, without the benefit of hindsight, Allport (1950) wrote, amongst his contemporary intellectuals, the subject of religion had become taboo.

Marsden (1994), especially, has demonstrated how schools which once had been constructed upon the foundation of religious faith had "resolved the problems of pluralism by virtually excluding all religious perspectives from the nation's highest academic life" (p. 5).

In addition, multiple scholars have demonstrated how mid-twentieth century academia was particularly hostile to religious sentiment, as the events of the Scopes Monkey Trial and the horrors of two world wars combined to place Christianity on tenuous footing (Carpenter, 1997; Marsden, 2006). It is reasonable to conclude the disregard with which Christianity was viewed in the academy also had ramifications for any general expressions of spirituality. With the endorsement of several higher education researchers and faith development theorists however, the benefits of spirituality are now being re-examined in the halls of the academy.

Defining Spirituality

An examination of the literature surrounding spirituality reveals the forces contributing to and issuing from the spiritual development process are complex (Speck, 2005). Spirituality must be understood in both its extrinsic practice and intrinsic manifestations, and must be distinguished from the closely-related construct of religiosity. Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno (2003) provide an operational delineation of the two constructs based on items from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey. In their understanding, student religiosity is "the extent to which students attended religious services, discussed religion, participated in religious clubs or groups, and prayed or meditated" (p. 724). In contrast, these researchers understand student spirituality to be "the importance to students of integrating spirituality into their lives, as well as their self-rated spirituality in relation to others of the same age" (p. 724).

These definitions are consistent with the view that spirituality is individualized and involves the personal development of meaning and purpose, that is finding one's place in a larger, transcendent understanding of reality (Cherry, De Berg, & Porterfield, 2001; Parks, 1986 & 2000). However, they do not preclude the idea of external expressions of student spirituality. While behaviors are generally considered the domain of religiosity, the term "religiosity" also implies a formalized understanding and expression of a structured belief system (Cherry et al., 2001; Love, 2001). Neither a definition of spirituality which concerns only its intrinsic manifestations nor a definition of religiosity concerned primarily with the expression of institutionalized beliefs can account for student social concern and action. Indeed, Lindholm and Astin (2007) note the inextricable connection between spirituality and behavior when they assert spirituality promotes connectedness, which likewise yields "empathy, ethical behavior, civic responsibility, passion, and action for social justice" (p. 186). Thus, in the spirit of other faith development theorists and researchers, this study assumes student spirituality will be connected to extrinsic manifestations.

One of the foremost of those faith development theorists is James W. Fowler, and his conceptualization of student faith development acknowledges both its internal and external aspects. Referencing the conclusions of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Fowler (1981) maintains faith is "not a separate dimension of life, a compartmentalized specialty," but rather it is "an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one's hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions" (p. 14). Asserting faith development is rooted in the pursuit of purpose, Fowler clarifies this pursuit is "in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose" (p. 4). In a separate work, Fowler (1986) explicitly states "faith begins in relationship" (p. 16).

This emphasis on self and others is evidenced in the manner in which Fowler's six stages move from the egocentric outward, and a review of these stages shows Stage 4 is especially pertinent to the present study. Although some recent research suggests many college students function at a level between Stages 3 and 4, Fowler (1981) submits Stage 4 is sometimes associated with the departure for college because it is a time when one is "extracted from the interpersonal groups that had largely formed, maintained and limited his identity" (p. 178). Continuing, Fowler posits these types of relocations mean a young adult "must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyles, beliefs, and attitudes" (p. 182). If Fowler is correct, the experience of leaving for college is often associated with the fourth stage of faith development – the stage which promotes the recognition of a responsibility for contribution – then this theory, too, corroborates the idea student spirituality and social concern and action could be linked.

Faith development theorist Sharon Daloz-Parks also submits that while a significant part of student faith development involves internal processes, real faith must relate to other people and society-at-large. In a slight modification to a claim from her seminal work, Parks (2000) asserts that the "central task of young adulthood is to discover and compose a faith that can orient the soul to truth and shape a fitting relationship between self and other, self and world" (p. 206). Daloz and Daloz-Parks (2003) identify the formation of a life dream as a central component of faith development, a dream which is specifically a "synthesis of one's own strengths and passions with a recognition of the urgent needs of the world" (p. 21). Parks (2000) explains the importance of recognizing the existence and concerns of other people by noting how this recognition fulfills two great life yearnings, the desire to "exercise one's own distinct agency [one's own power to make a difference] and the yearning for belonging" (p. 91). Like Fowler, Parks' conception of student faith development is more reason to believe student spirituality, and social concern and action should be connected.

In anecdotal form, Daloz and Daloz-Parks (2003) describe this phenomenon in the story of one female student's spiritual awakening. The student in question recounts how at the point of spiritual commitment "my eyes were opened to the world instead of being focused just on me. I turned outward, and I wanted to give back the joy that had found me" (p. 2). While conceding the literature related to spirituality and civic engagement is not extensive, Love and Talbot (1999) argue there appears to be a discernable relationship between these domains, writing "spiritual development involves developing a greater connectedness to self, and others through relationships and union with community" (p. 365).

Multiple examples of this theoretical connection are present in the literature. Welch and Mellberg (2008), studying spiritual maturation using Allport's framework, contend real growth in spirituality "include[s] a concern for the welfare of others and an attempt to move beyond egocentricity" (p. 145). Similarly, Love and Talbot (1999) posit spiritual development can only occur when one's sense of self is "unitary, consistent, [and] congruent with our actions and beliefs" (p. 364). In her study of spirituality and gender amongst college students, Bryant (2007), too, contends definitions of spirituality should entail those behaviors which are geared towards the improvement of the human condition. Elaborating on this statement Bryant asserts, “inasmuch as these constructs ascertain an individual’s recognition of human interconnectedness and the needs of others…they are in essence a manifestation of spiritual maturity” (p. 836).

Measuring Spirituality

Though contemporary higher education practitioners and researchers are largely beginning to affirm the importance of developing spirituality, a reliable means by which to quantify and describe levels of student spirituality is difficult to develop. Bryant et al. (2003) recognize this problem, pointing out how subjectivity in the interpretation of the term “spirituality” may lead to great diversity in interpretation amongst survey respondents. Specifically, these authors exhort fellow researchers toward greater clarity in terminology writing, before survey items can be developed researchers need to determine “what it is that we are intending to measure” when referencing “spirituality” (p. 740).

With Bryant et al.’s critique in mind, it is necessary for any contemporary study of spirituality to understand the history of the measurement of spirituality. One researcher whose work has had vast influence on the field is Gordon Allport. Writing and researching at Harvard in the mid-twentieth century, Allport and Ross (1967) conceived two primary motivations of religious involvement: the intrinsic and the extrinsic. While these two classifications are complex, Allport and Ross characterize them by claiming, in essence, “the extrinsically motivated person *uses* his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated *lives* his religion” (p. 434). Though Allport and Ross were studying motivations for *religious* expression, the concepts and principles expressed in their work have continued to be referenced in much of the literature examining spirituality (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, n.d.; Welch & Mellberg, 2008).

Even as this framework has informed subsequent researchers, some contemporary scholars argue the intrinsic / extrinsic model is no longer the most effective means by which to understand student expressions of spirituality. Slater, Hall, and Edwards (2001) specifically contend in the twenty-first century people no longer use religion and spirituality as means by which to gain social status (p. 17). This recognition, combined with the arguments presented above for the connection between spirituality and social action, has encouraged a small number of researchers to evaluate the current measures used to quantify spirituality and, in some cases, to develop new instruments.

Slater, Hall, and Edwards (2001) point out any such endeavor faces considerable obstacles. In their estimation, challenges facing the careful researcher of college student spirituality may include “the lack of precision in definitions of various constructs, the issue of illusory spiritual health, ceiling effects, social desirability, and bias” (p. 5). In addition, contemporary researchers are challenged by what A. W. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (n.d.) recognize as the “paucity of published research in the higher education literature” (Background of the Study, para. 3).

In spite of these real concerns, Chickering (2005) makes a case for the general reliability and value of such surveys, pointing out how longitudinal capabilities of current researchers, specifically those working under the auspices of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California – Los Angeles, have provided higher education practitioners with a bevy of fresh data to cull for new insight. Chickering points out because HERI administers the College Student Beliefs and Values Survey

[CSBV] repeatedly and to students from diverse institutional backgrounds, it can be considered a reliable gauge of college student spirituality (p. 223). Chickering asserts, contrary to popular belief, “it is possible to assess ‘ineffable outcomes’ for students concerning authenticity, purpose, meaning, and spiritual growth” (p. 240). Thus, while it is appropriate to concede the inherent difficulty in measuring something which seems intangible such as spirituality, higher education experts contend the endeavor is possible when implemented with care and an eye towards longitudinal reliability.

Defining Social Concern and Action

Similar to the debate over the constituent parts which comprise spirituality, there is no absolute consensus concerning the necessary qualities which constitute social concern and action. One major reason for this lack of clarity is the relative dearth of research and theory concerning the topic. However, Bell (1997) provides a helpful starting point, noting social justice “is both a process and a goal…[it] involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader world” (pp. 1-2). After even a cursory reading of Bell’s definition, one cannot avoid the correspondence to several of the definitions of spirituality listed above. Clearly, a theoretical basis for linking the two concepts exists within the literature.

Though social concern and action research is generally underdeveloped in higher education, Bell is not the only researcher examining the topic. Responding to Bell’s article, Taylor (2009) submits “one’s level of Social Justice orientation could be described as the extent to which he or she is familiar with, sympathetic toward, and/or committed to the ‘process’ and ‘goal’ of Social Justice” (p. 5). In an article focusing on pedagogical approaches to promoting social justice learning, Mayhew and Fernandez (2007) found learning contexts are most effective when they involve students in "role-taking, reflection, community service, and dialogues with diverse peers" (p. 76).

One up-and-coming voice in the conversation is Stephen John Quaye, a higher education researcher at the University of Maryland. In his article examining contemporary student activism, he develops and expounds upon a concept he finds in most contemporary student activists, one he calls "critical hope" (p. 3). According to Quaye's (2007) definition, this hope which motivates student activists is one "anchored in the belief that by challenging inequitable behaviors, college students can work to improve their circumstances and those of their current and future peers" (p. 3). Among these student advocates, this kind of activity generally leads to "appreciation of differences, cultivation of students' voices, and connection to global society" (p. 3).

One researcher who has long been interested in the social action of students is current president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Arthur Levine. In his study of 9,100 college students from campuses across the United States, Levine (1999) found evidence to suggest the student participants may be the "most socially active generation since the late 1930s" (p. A52). Levine also pointed out this student activism is informed by a belief, held by three-quarters of the students, individuals have the ability to bring about social change, and it is comprised by diverse activities including "building homes…or raising funds and collecting clothes for the homeless" (p. A52).

All these voices unite to paint a helpful but complex picture of social concern and action in the realm of higher education. Borrowing from these influential researchers mentioned above, social concern and action in this study will be understood as *the quality* *marked by a sense of agency and informed by the recognition that membership in a global community of diverse peoples necessitates expressions of compassion and charity*.

Social Concern and Action in Higher Education

Increasing student social engagement has been a primary goal of higher education in America since its inception (Dalton, 2006). Rudolph (1960) submits the original founders of higher education in America sought to develop "competent rulers" as well as cultured citizens who would contribute to civil society (p. 6). Thelin (2003) corroborates this analysis, noting early institutional priorities were motivated by a deep belief in the ability of education to civilize students and prepare them for leadership in matters of church and state (p. 5). Similarly, Vine (1998) has demonstrated how the colleges of eighteenth century colonial America were deeply invested in the effort of producing graduates who would be committed to the promotion of the public welfare.

Unlike the decline of focus on spirituality detailed above, talk of social engagement never fell out of favor in the academy. Rudolph (1960) demonstrates how the Progressive movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found one of its central vehicles in higher education. Rudolph details how clergyman Lyman Abbott argued, while the English university revolved around culture and the German institution emphasized scholarship, the American university focused on "the preparation of young Americans for active lives of service" (p. 356).

One powerful expression of this impulse was called the "Wisconsin Idea," and it was predicated upon the presupposition "informed intelligence…applied to the problems of modern society" could make a dramatic impact on the welfare of the populace at large (Rudolph, 1960, p. 363). Asserting the University of Wisconsin's clear intention was to "serve the state," Hoeveler (1997) notes, though the idea found its pioneering expression in Madison, "the concept, and indeed the rhetoric, of service to state was at this time becoming the norm of the state universities everywhere in America" (p. 234).

Similarly, Rudolph (1960) describes how the "college settlement" movement mobilized students in efforts of social action and Progressive spirit, resulting in activities which ranged from addressing the "slum problems" in Indianapolis to teaching the co-operative idea to tenement-dwellers in Boston (p. 367). Perhaps the most eloquent expression of this Progressive ethos was delivered by President Woodrow Wilson in his renowned address, "Princeton in the Nation's Service." Disparaging the idea the object of education is "merely to draw out the powers of the individual mind" (p. 22), Wilson boldly asserted "it is not learning but the spirit of service that will give a college place in the public annals of the nation" (Wilson & Link, 1966, p. 30).

Higher education's focus on social action did not end with the Progressive movement though, for both literature and higher education professionals reflect the emphasis on this desired learning outcome. Winniford, Carpenter, and Grider (1997) describe how the formation of Campus Compact in 1986 was an intentional measure to "encourage the integration of service into the central mission of colleges and universities" (p. 135). With the 1987 release of "A Perspective on Student Affairs," NASPA corroborated this goal, writing the purposes of higher education now include "education for responsible, enlightened citizenship as well as vocational training" (p. 5). Similarly, NASPA and the American College Personnel Association published a book in 2004 which identified society's expectation of colleges to develop capable students, preparing them for "effective and engaged citizenship" (Keeling & Dungy, p. 3).

The increased focus on the benefits of service learning is another contemporary outgrowth of this priority (Reich, 2006; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). Wutzdorff and Giles, Jr., (1997) note while student service has always been an intended outcome of higher education, educators have recently begun to build service into the curriculum in efforts to ensure the development of social concern and action (p. 105). Boyte and Hollander's (1998) "Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University" likewise supports a movement towards more intentional integration of service priorities into the curricular and co-curricular endeavors of American colleges and universities. The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) has even published a series of eighteen volumes dedicated to the integration of service-learning principles and specific disciplines, with the disciplines represented including accounting, management, psychology, religious studies, and others. The abundance of evidence for this deepening examination of service-learning demonstrates a continuing commitment in higher education to promote social concern amongst its constituents.

While the culture of higher education has continued to place a high value on the importance of social contribution, some recent research shows these values are not priorities for young adults. In their study of spirituality among emerging adults, Smith and Snell (2009) note "few talk about the value of a broad education for shaping people into informed and responsible citizens in civic life, for producing leaders and members who can work together toward the common good of all in society" (p. 54). Later in the same study, Smith and Snell assert emerging adults are generally less involved in social and institutional endeavors, including volunteer activities and charitable donations (p.

92). If students are tending to demonstrate decreasing commitment to basic desired learning outcomes, then higher education practitioners should investigate any correlates that tend to increase these desired outcomes.

Based upon the conclusions of faith development theorists detailed above, it is fair to speculate greater levels of spiritual development would lead to greater levels of this desired service to community. Research has indicated authentic spiritual experience should be connected to efficacious social action. While the possibility of contributing to the currently sparse body of literature establishing such connections is one of the potential benefits of this investigation, literature does exist which helps establish basic connections between spirituality and social concern and action.

Astin (1993) identified positive associations between students’ commitment to developing a meaningful philosophy of life and their social activism and community orientation types. Serow and Dreyden (1990) also found a strong relationship between spiritual and religious values and community service involvement. A. W. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (n.d.) point out, while it is not possible to pinpoint the exact nature of the relationship between spirituality and social action, concepts of community involvement, caring, and social action do seem to “tap spiritual qualities that may be relevant to the goals of education” (Discussion section, para. 8).

Likewise, Kuh and Gonyea (2006) found students who “engage frequently in spirituality-enhancing activities” are also “more likely to perform community service” (p. 44). In a separate study, Oliner (2005) demonstrated a relationship between levels of spirituality and a number of qualities, including “a sense of restorative justice,” “the importance of making and receiving an apology,” and the “desire to be forgiven” (p. 30).

One helpful definition also illuminates this potential connection. Ehrlich (2000) defines civic engagement as:

> Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and nonpolitical processes. (p. vi)

While this definition is quite simple, the motivations fueling such efforts are less clear. To harbor concern for others and to work to promote conditions that foster quality of life, justice, and hope require a value-orientation that prioritizes social concern and action. The literature supports the prospect that spirituality is one of the variables influencing that unique value-orientation.

Motivations for Social Concern and Action

While this research intends to search for connections between spirituality and social concern and action, various researchers have theorized and established other correlates to levels of social concern. In a review of all the literature concerning motivation in volunteerism, Winniford et al. (1997) establish motivation is complex, calling it a "multifaceted phenomenon" worthy of continued study (p. 135).

Historically, researchers interested in the impetus for social concern and action have isolated both egoistic and altruistic motivations. In essence, the egoistic understanding of motivation posits human efforts of volunteerism and charity are rooted in personal fulfillment while the altruistic conception assumes such actions are primarily philanthropic in nature. Maslow (1970) has been especially formative in the development of the egoistic construct, as his hierarchy of needs model argues all human motivations are based in efforts to fulfill felt needs. The categories of need Maslow identifies as especially influential include: (a) physiological impulses; (b) the desire for safety, belongingness, love, and esteem; (c) the need for self-actualization; (d) a desire to be known; and (e) aesthetic fulfillment (pp. 35-51).

A contemporary study by Zlotkowski (2005) supports this egoistic construct, as he argues among students “whose experience of community work is not associated with meaningful learning and recognized leadership,” the first year in college often promotes a rapid decline in community work (p. 365). In the case of many of these students, the lack of fulfillment of their personal needs precipitated a decline in involvement, a pattern supporting the idea at least some motivation for volunteerism is egoistic in nature.

Still, even as Winniford et al. (1997) posit classic theories of motivation tend to be egoistic, some theorists do promote the idea of altruistic motivation. Developing the theoretical foundation of altruistic motivation, Wakefield (1993) argues altruism actually forms the foundation of all human service. Likewise, Allen and Rushton (1983) found evidence community volunteers do possess characteristics associated with altruism. While the literature supporting altruistic motivation is not as developed it still forms a basis upon which one can compare the potential altruistic ramifications of spiritual commitment. This study will make sure to consider the myriad factors influencing spirituality and social concern and action.

Role of Institutional Types

It has been shown that a major factor related to civic growth is the nature or type of institution a student chooses to attend. The literature indicates differences in civic-mindedness extend to those institutions describing themselves as faith-based. In a comparison of character development at values-oriented, public, general liberal arts colleges and universities and the evangelical colleges of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), Kuh (1998) found “CCCU colleges had the most distinctive impact on character” (p. 20). Further, Kuh found both the college environment and students’ particular experiences while in college influence character development.

Plainly, engaged citizenship and service to society are central to the educational mission, goals, and purposes of such institutions. While the literature studying this topic within such institutions is not extensive, it does generally reflect the positive influence of efforts resulting from these priorities. Rhee and Dey (1996) found students attending church-affiliated colleges had significantly stronger civic values than those attending other types of institutions. In explaining this finding they reasoned “…church affiliated colleges are more likely to emphasize ethical goals of the institution, which are closely related to civic values” (p. 13). Still, while these voices support the role of institutional type, Astin (1993) argued many of the effects of institutional type are indirect because they are “mediated by faculty, peer group, and involvement variables” (p. 413). Likewise, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) called the evidence regarding the role of institutional type “inconclusive” (p. 301), and in their follow up study (2005), the same authors write very few between-college effects are found to be statistically reliable (p. 295). In light of the considerable ambiguity that exists concerning the precise impact of institutional type it is essential researchers continue to explore and elucidate this variable.

Research Questions

If, as Oliner (2005) contends, the literature surrounding forgiveness and social care suggests “the ethic of caring and the nurturance of humanity can be taught to all people of all ages" (p. 32) then higher education practitioners are compelled to make every effort to comprehend any and all forces which could promote a greater sense of caring, nurturance, and ownership for the betterment of civil society.

In this study I seek to investigate the role Spirituality and Institutional type have on Charitable Involvement, Ethic of Caring, and Compassionate Self-Concept. I hypothesize higher levels of Spirituality will correlate to increased manifestations of social concern and action. I also hypothesize Institutional Type and Spirituality will work together to impact significantly the three measures of social concern and action. Though the literature seems to support these hypotheses, this connection is not entirely clear. In keeping with the recommendations of researchers like Pedersen, Williams, and Kristensen (2000), I recognize the relationship between spirituality and behavior must be investigated in more depth. Thus, the two research questions that guide this study are:

- In the general population of American college students, what relationship does Spirituality have to Charitable Involvement, Ethic of Caring, and Compassionate Self-Concept?
- What impact do Institutional Type and Spirituality have on Charitable Involvement, Ethic of Caring, and Compassionate Self-Concept? More specifically, do these elements vary between "religious" institutions and other institutional types?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

In order to investigate the correlation between Spirituality and social concern and action and to ascertain how Institutional Type may also relate to these constructs, in this study I will utilize the 2003 data base of the HERI College Student Beliefs and Values (CSBV) survey. The CSBV is a subset of the annual Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, the nation’s most expansive and enduring empirical study of higher education. Initially, the CSBV pilot survey was conceived in order to examine the longitudinal development of third-year college students who previously participated in the 2000 CIRP Freshman Survey. Designed in conjunction with the Spirituality in Higher Education project conducted by HERI, the CSBV has been the foundation for several recent studies concerning college student spirituality (e.g., Bryant, 2007; Bryant & Astin, 2008; & Lindholm, 2006). Thus, participants for this study will be individuals who participated in the 2003 HERI CSBV Survey, including 3,462 students attending institutions of all types (Higher Education, 2004). These respondents were split between Public Universities (543), Private Universities (655), Public 4-year Institutions (609), Private 4-year Institutions (686), and Religious 4-year Institutions (969).

Constructs

All descriptions and alpha levels below are taken from A. W. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (n.d.), and all reported internal consistency scores are Cronbach's Alpha.

Spirituality

Spirituality Identification Scale

This scale, comprised of 13 items, reflects a student's spiritual experiences and measures one's proclivity to see events in spiritual terms. The item "on a spiritual quest" and all those items measuring a student's "spiritual experience" had to be transformed in order to apply the "high" and "low" designations HERI developed subsequently through the use of new data. These "high" and "low" designations will be discussed more below. Reported alpha levels are between .88 and .89.

Table 1

Spirituality Identification Scale

Items	Scale of Measurement
Personal goal: Integrating spirituality into my life Personal goal: Seeking out opportunities to grow spiritually	Rated on 4-point scale, 1 = *not important,* 2 = *somewhat important,* 3 = *very important,* 4 = *essential*
Self-description: Having an interest in spirituality Self-description: Believing in the sacredness of life	Rated on 3-point scale, 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *to some extent,* 3 = *to great extent*
Self-rating: Spirituality	Rated on 5-point scale, 1 = *lowest 10%,* 2 = *below average*, 3 = *average*, 4 = *above average,* 5 = *highest 10%*

On a spiritual quest	Rated on 2-point scale, 1 = *no*, 2 = *yes*
Belief: People can reach a higher plane of spiritual consciousness	Rated on 4-point scale, 1 = *disagree strong*, 2 = *disagree some*, 3 = *agree some*, 4 = *agree strong*
Spiritual experience while: Listening to beautiful music	Rated on 4-point scale, 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *occasionally*, 3 = *frequently*
Spiritual experience while: Viewing a great work of art	
Spiritual experience while: Participating in a musical or artistic performance	
Spiritual experience while: Engaging in athletics	
Spiritual experience while: Witnessing the beauty and harmony of nature	
Spiritual experience while: Meditating	

Social Concern and Action

Charitable Involvement

This scale, comprised of 7 items, measures an individual's experience in social action and volunteer work. Alpha levels for this scale range from .68 to .71.

Table 2

Charitable Involvement Scale

Items	Scale of Measurement
Hours per week: Volunteer work	Rated on 8 point scale, 1 = *none*, 2 = *<1*, 3 = *1-2*, 4 = *3-5*, 5 = *6-10*, 6 = *11-15*, 7 = *16-20*, 8 = *>20*
Experience: Participated in community food or clothing drive Experience: Performed volunteer work Experience: Donated money to charity Experience: Performed community service as part of a class Experience: Helped friends with personal problems	Rated on 3-point scale, 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *occasionally*, 3 = *frequently*
Personal goal: Participating in a community action program	Rated on 4-point scale, 1 = *not important*, 2 = *somewhat important*, 3 = *very important*, 4 = *essential*

Ethic of Caring

This scale of 8 items measures an individual's desire and commitment to become a change agent in local and global environments. Reported alpha levels range from .79 to .82.

Table 3

Ethic of Caring Scale

Items	Scale of Measurement
Engaged in: Trying to change things that are unfair in the world	Rated on 3-point scale, 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *to some extent*, 3 = *to great extent*
Personal goal: Helping others who are in difficulty Personal goal: Reducing pain and suffering in the world Personal goal: Helping to promote racial harmony Personal goal: Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment Personal goal: Becoming a community leader Personal goal: Influencing social values Personal goal: Influencing the political structure	Rated on 4-point scale, 1 = *not important*, 2 = *somewhat important*, 3 = *very important*, 4 = *essential*

Compassionate Self-Concept

This simple, 4-item scale measures a student's self reported pro-social qualities (kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity). This scale has a reported alpha level of .78.

Table 4

Compassionate Self-Concept Scale

Items	Scale of Measurement
Self-rating: Kindness Self-rating: Compassion Self-rating: Forgiveness Self-rating: Generosity	Rated on 5-point scale, 1 = *lowest 10%*, 2 = *below average*, 3 = *average*, 4 = *above average*, 5 = *highest 10%*

Analyses

Research Question 1

In this study I utilized three bivariate correlations to test the relationship between Spirituality and Charitable Involvement, Ethic of Caring, and Compassionate Self-Concept.

Research Question 2

To test differences in Ethic of Caring, Compassionate Self-Concept, and Charitable Involvement, I will employ a 5 (Institutional Type) x 3 (Spirituality Low / Moderate / High) Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, “In the general population of American college students, what relationship does Spirituality have to Charitable Involvement, Ethic of Caring, and Compassionate Self-Concept?” I employed simple bivariate correlations in order to test the relationship between Spirituality and Charitable Involvement (CI), Ethic of Caring (EC), and Compassionate Self-Concept (CSC). These correlations demonstrated each of the three relationships were significant at the 0.01 level. The Pearson’s *r* for both CSC (.266) and CI (.286) demonstrated a moderate positive correlation. The correlation between Spirituality and EC was more noteworthy, measuring at a .387. According to these correlations there is at least a moderate correlation between Spirituality and each of the scales forming the social concern and action construct. Table 5 below illustrates these various correlations.

Table 5

Correlations

		Spirituality	CI	EC	CSC
Spirituality	Pearson's *r*	1	.286*	.387*	.266*
	Sig	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	3462	3462	3462	3462
CI	Pearson's *r*	.286*	1	.462*	.209*
	Sig	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	3462	3462	3462	3462
EC	Pearson's *r*	.387*	.462*	1	.273*
	Sig	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	3462	3462	3462	3462
CSC	Pearson's *r*	.266*	.209*	.273*	1
	Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	3462	3462	3462	3462

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, "What impact do Institutional Type and Spirituality have on Charitable Involvement, Ethic of Caring, and Compassionate Self-Concept? More specifically, do these elements vary between 'religious' institutions and other Institution Types?" The two independent variables have multiple levels in this analysis. Spirituality was comprised of "low," "moderate," and "high" levels. Institutional Type (IT) was a five-level variable, dividing into Public 4-year, Private 4-year, Public University, Private University, and Religious 4-year. In order to evaluate the second research question I utilized a 5 (Institutional Type) x 3 (Spirituality) Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), testing the effects on the three dependent variables, Charitable Involvement, Ethic of Caring, and Compassionate Self-Concept.

To facilitate the MANOVA, it was first necessary to change Spirituality from a continuous variable to a categorical variable. In conjunction with their development of the scales utilized in this study, HERI researchers also explicated the method by which they distinguished between “high” and “low” scores. Because the scales in question measure the *degree* to which the subjects possess a given quality and not an absolute value, the researchers concede that “high” and “low” definitions are arbitrary “to a certain extent” (Astin et al., Defining Low Scores, para. 2). Acknowledging that reality, these researchers build a case for the employment of “a certain amount of rationality” by means of exploring the pattern of responses a participant would need to show in order to be labeled “high” or “low” (Defining Low Scores, para. 2).

In accordance with their work I labeled those scores ranging from 13-22 as “low”. Scores between 23 and 32 were considered “moderate,” and scores greater than or equal to 33 were defined as “high.” According to these guidelines, 657 respondents were rated as possessing “low” degrees of spirituality. A larger sample of 1896 respondents were rated as having “moderate” degrees of spirituality, and 909 respondents were rated as evidencing “high” spirituality. Tables 6.1-6.4 depict the total respondents and the spread of each of these Spirituality types across Institutional Types.

Table 6.1

Respondents by Institutional Type

Institution	N	% of Respondents
Public University	543	15.68
Private University	655	18.92
Public 4-year Institutions	609	17.60
Private 4-year Institutions	686	19.82

Religious 4-year Institutions	969	27.99

Table 6.2

“Low” Spirituality by Institutional Type

Institution	N	% of Low
Public University	107	16.29
Private University	97	14.76
Public 4-year Institutions	169	25.72
Private 4-year Institutions	151	22.98
Religious 4-year Institutions	133	20.24

Table 6.3

“Moderate” Spirituality by Institutional Type

Institution	N	% of Moderate
Public University	320	16.88
Private University	388	20.46
Public 4-year Institutions	342	18.04
Private 4-year Institutions	319	16.82
Religious 4-year Institutions	527	27.80

Table 6.4

“High” Spirituality by Institutional Type

Institution	N	% of High
Public University	116	12.76
Private University	170	18.70
Public 4-year Institutions	98	10.78

Private 4-year Institutions	216	23.76
Religious 4-year Institutions	309	33.99

Interaction Effect

Preliminary statistical measures for the interaction between the variables were mixed. Neither CI nor EC interacted in a significant way with Spirituality and Institutional Type. In contrast, the interaction effect between Spirituality, IT, and CSC was significant (*p*=.010). However, the minimal effect size of this correlation as demonstrated in the partial eta squared value (.006) demands restraint in the interpretation of this correlation. The complete results from this MANOVA are represented in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Spirituality, Social Concern, and Institutional Type

Source	DV	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Spirituality	CI	2048.30	2	1024.15	120.51	.000	.065
	EC	6945.08	2	3472.54	236.73	.000	.121
	CSC	1233.21	2	616.61	134.15	.000	.072
Inst. Type	CI	240.40	4	60.10	7.07	.000	.008
	EC	187.99	4	47.00	3.20	.012	.004
	CSC	79.28	4	19.82	4.31	.002	.005
Spirituality x Inst. Type	CI	85.17	8	10.65	1.25	.264	.003
	EC	150.78	8	18.85	1.29	.246	.003
	CSC	92.95	8	11.62	2.53	.010	.006

The next step was to split the file by the “low,” “moderate,” and “high” designations in order to run individual ANOVAs to determine the source of the significance of the CSC variable. Three separate ANOVAs for the “low,” “moderate,” and "high" designations were performed with IT as the independent variable and CSC as the dependent variable. The results from these ANOVAs are displayed in Tables 8.1-8.3 below.

Table 8.1

One-way Analysis of Variance for Low Spirituality on CSC

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
IT	37.69	4	9.42	1.743	.139
Error	3525.48	652	5.41		

Note. R Squared = .011

Table 8.2

One-way Analysis of Variance for Moderate Spirituality on CSC

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
IT	108.20	4	27.05	6.03	.000
Error	8481.17	1891	4.49		

Note. R Squared = .013

Table 8.3

One-way Analysis of Variance for High Spirituality on CSC

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
IT	77.98	4	19.50	4.59	.001
Error	3837.16	904	4.25		

Note. R Squared = .020

In the first ANOVA examining low spirituality I found no significant effect. In contrast, the effect between IT and CSC was highly significant (*p*=.000) among those labeled moderately spiritual. Though the effect size was small (R Squared = .013), this effect merits more examination. Specifically, post hoc tests reveal the sources of this significant relationship. The mean score on CSC for moderately spiritual students at Religious 4-year institutions (*M*=14.66, *SD*=2.11) was significantly less than their counterparts at both Public universities (*M*=15.27, *SD*=2.22, *p*=.001) and at Public 4-year institutions (*M*=15.16, *SD*=2.16, *p*=.006). Also, moderately spiritual students at Public universities scored significantly higher than their counterparts at Private universities (*M*=14.78, *SD*=2.08, *p*=.018).

Similarly, the effect between IT and CSC was also significant (*p*=.001) among those designated highly spiritual. The effect size for this relationship (R Squared = .020) was moderately stronger than that of the effect among moderately spiritual students. Again, post hoc tests reveal the sources of this significance, and the theme is the same. Highly spiritual students at Religious 4-year institutions (*M*=15.52, *SD*=2.06) averaged significantly lower scores on CSC than did their counterparts at Public universities (*M*=16.14, *SD*=2.18, *p*=.045) and Public 4-year institutions (*M*=16.41, *SD*=2.07, *p*=.002).

Main Effects

Results for the main effects between the individual independent variables and the three dependent variables were uniform. The trend clearly demonstrated both of the independent variables were significantly correlated to the three scales of social concern and action: as student spirituality increased, so did levels of student social concern and action. However, strong p-values (.000) for the correlation between Spirituality and each of the three scales were tempered by small effect sizes as demonstrated by the η^2 values for CI (.065), EC (.121), and CSC (.072). This was even more true for the correlation between IT and the three scales. While CI (.000), EC (.012), and CSC (.002) again possessed strong p-values, their corresponding effect sizes as represented by their η^2 values (.008, .004, .005) were very small (For a complete listing of these significances and effect sizes, see Table 7 above). Each of these relationships requires more careful scrutiny.

Spirituality and the Variables

As implied above, post hoc testing reveals the relationships between every level of spirituality and each of the three dependent variables were highly significant (*p* = .000). To best understand the strength of this significance, however, it is necessary to calculate effect sizes. Simple calculations of Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988) demonstrate the relationship with the weakest effect size concerned CI and those scoring "Low" and "Moderate" on the spirituality scale (*d*=-0.354). In contrast, the relationship with the strongest effect size concerned EC and those scoring "Low" and "High" on the spirituality scale (*d*=-1.152). The clear trend demonstrates as students score higher on the Spirituality variable their demonstration of the social concern and action variables also increases. Tables 9.1-9.3 below show all the effect size results.

Table 9.1

Spirituality and CI Effect Sizes

Relationship	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Low to Medium	.000	-0.354
Medium to High	.000	-0.480
Low to High	.000	-0.834

Table 9.2

Spirituality and EC Effect Sizes

Relationship	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Low to Medium	.000	-0.490
Medium to High	.000	-0.663
Low to High	.000	-1.152

Table 9.3

Spirituality and CSC Effect Sizes

Relationship	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Low to Medium	.000	-0.379
Medium to High	.000	-0.421
Low to High	.000	-0.785

Institutional Type and the Variables

Before one can use Cohen's *d* to measure the effect size of the relationship between IT and each of the three criterion variables, it is again necessary to utilize post hoc testing to determine the sub-sources of the statistical significance. In this study I used Tukey's HSD.

Charitable Involvement

The statistics concerning the main effect between CI and IT all demonstrated the significant difference between the Public universities and the Public 4-year institutions in comparison to all their counterparts. Students at Public universities scored significantly lower (*M*=14.78, *SD*=3.14) than did their counterparts at Private universities (*M*=15.68, *SD*=2.96, *p*=.000), Private 4-year institutions (*M*=15.39, *SD*=15.39, *p*=.002), and Religious 4-year institutions (*M*=15.55, *SD*=2.88, *p*=.000). Likewise, students at Public 4-year institutions scored significantly lower (*M*=14.41, *SD*=3.29) than did their peers at Private universities, Private 4-year institutions, and Religious 4-year institutions (all *p*=.000). The clear trend shows students at institutions designated as "public" scoring lower on CI than their counterparts at “private” or “religious” institutions. Calculations of Cohen’s *d* (Cohen, 1988) demonstrate the weakest effect size occurs in the significance between Public universities and Private 4-year institutions (*d*=-0.205) while the strongest effect size marks the significance between Public universities and Private universities (*d*=-0.407). Table 10 below displays effect sizes for all the significant relationships between IT and CI.

Table 10

Institutional Type and CI Effect Sizes

Relationship	*p*	Cohen’s *d*
Public U – Private U	.000	-0.297
Public U – Private 4	.002	-0.205
Public U – Religious 4	.000	-0.256
Public 4 – Private U	.000	-0.407
Public 4 – Private 4	.000	-0.319
Public 4 – Religious 4	.000	-0.368

Ethic of Caring

Similar to the results from CI, the statistics concerning the main effect between EC and IT demonstrated the significant difference between those institutions designated as “public” and those institutions labeled as “private” or “religious.” Specifically, Public universities scored significantly lower (*M*=18.15, *SD*=4.02) than did their peers at Private 4-year institutions (*M*=19.02, *SD*=4.03, *p*=.001) or Religious 4-year institutions (*M*=18.93, *SD*=4.01, *p*=.002). Students at Public 4-year institutions also scored significantly lower (*M*=17.66, *SD*=4.32) than did their peers at Private universities (*M*=18.72, *SD*=4.14, *p*=.000), Private 4-year institutions (*p*=.000), and Religious 4-year institutions (*p*=.000). Once again, the clear trend shows students at institutions designated as “public” scoring lower than their peers at those labeled “private” or “religious.” Calculations of Cohen’s *d* (Cohen, 1988) demonstrate the weakest effect size occurs in the significance between Public universities and Religious 4-year institutions (*d*=-0.194) while the strongest effect size marks the significance between Public 4-year institutions and Private 4-year institutions (*d*=-0.326). Table 11 below displays effect sizes for all the significant relationships between IT and CI.

Table 11

Institutional Type and EC Effect Sizes

Relationship	*p*	Cohen’s *d*
Public U – Private 4	.001	-0.217
Public U – Religious 4	.002	-0.194
Public 4 – Private U	.000	-0.249
Public 4 – Private 4	.000	-0.326
Public 4 – Religious 4	.000	-0.303

Compassionate Self-Concept

In contrast to the results of the previous two variables, but in corroboration of the findings from the interaction effect, the main effect between CSC and IT demonstrated the only significant difference was directly related to those institutions designated as “religious.” Indeed, students at Religious 4-year institutions scored significantly lower (*M*=14.87, *SD*=2.16) than did their peers at Public universities (*M*=15.21, *SD*=2.35, *p*=.022, *d*=-0.150) and Private 4-year institutions (*M*=15.16, *SD*=2.10, *p*=.047, *d*=-0.136). In relation to CSC, students at institutions designated as “religious” scored significantly lower than their counterparts at other institutions. It is important to note the Cohen’s *d* values listed above are small enough to require some restraint in the interpretation of this significance.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Spirituality

The results from this study corroborate my hypothesis, that the theoretical link between spirituality and manifestations of social concern and action would evidence itself in the behaviors of college students. Indeed, Spirituality scores correlated significantly with each of the three variables factoring into the construct of social concern and action. However, the strength of the significance and the effect sizes for each of the relationships require restraint in the interpretation of this relationship. While the results corroborate my hypothesis generally, they are not as strong as I would have proposed. Future research should explore whether the theoretical connection between the two concepts is, in fact, weak or whether the spirituality currently being promoted at institutions of higher education is perhaps different in kind from that discussed in the literature.

This relationship between Spirituality and each of the three dependent variables was demonstrated even more clearly via the MANOVA. Results from that test revealed increased spirituality yielded increased degrees of each of the social concern and action variables at every level of spirituality. Significantly, the strong Cohen's *d* values for each of these relationships demonstrate Spirituality has strong predictive ability for manifestations of social concern and action among college students.

These findings support those institutions, theorists, and practitioners who have promoted spiritual development as a higher education learning outcome worthy of institutional focus and investment. As established earlier in this study, the promotion of values of social concern and action among student populations has been a priority of higher education since its very inception. Thus, having confirmed to some degree the theoretical proposition that spirituality enhances or facilitates the development of these values, the results from this study supports institutional commitments to spiritual development and provides a basis for further institutional investigation into the efficacy of their respective spiritual development initiatives. Indeed, the strength of the relationship between Spirituality and the social concern and action variables suggests higher education administrators would be remiss, if not negligent, to ignore the implications of spiritual development among their student bodies.

Institutional Type

Affirming my hypothesis, the results also demonstrate the significance of Institutional Type pertaining to conversations of spiritual development and the promotion of values of social concern and action. In terms of a significant three-way interaction, the only significant relationship was that between Spirituality, Institutional Type, and Compassionate Self-Concept. Contrary to my hypothesis and distinct from the findings of the ANOVAs in relation to the three dependent variables, this three-way interaction demonstrated the deficiency of those institutions designated as “religious” in promoting high scores of CSC.

There are multiple options for how to interpret this finding. The first option is to accept it at face value: students at schools designated as “religious” are less compassionate than their peers at schools labeled “public” or “private.” While the principle of Occam’s Razor encourages us to accept the simplest feasible explanation, this finding merits more detailed consideration. Specifically, one may question this initial conclusion because of two factors: the results concerning the other dependent variables and the fact that Compassionate Self-Concept was the only variable scored by a self-rating. Conceivably, there are a host of reasons why a respondent would self-rate on the lower end of the spectrum. Indeed, variations in perceived responsibility could play a major role in such self-assessment. For instance, the student believing herself to be morally- or ethically-bound to make the alleviation of suffering a daily priority could plausibly rate herself much lower on CSC than her peer who believes charity and social action to be admirable, but purely voluntary, endeavors.

As I will discuss more below, those institutions designated as “religious” actually fared very well in comparison to their counterparts in relation to the other variables. In regards to Ethic of Caring and Charitable Involvement, they consistently scored significantly higher than those institutions labeled as “public,” and there was consistently no significant difference between “religious” and “private” institutions. While this reality by no means allows the researcher to dismiss the findings of the MANOVA, the strong performance of the “religious” institutions in these two constructs does make it difficult to conclude that students who consistently outperform or match their peers in demonstrations of caring and charity simultaneously would possess less compassion.

The solution then, perhaps, lies in the fact that CSC was a variable comprised entirely of student self-ratings. Understanding the emphasis in most religious traditions upon concepts of human “sinfulness,” it is conceivable to believe that students attending “religious” institutions may take a more harsh approach to self-assessment than their peers at “public” or “private” institutions.

Some research exists which counters this interpretation. Bahr and Martin (1983) found no direct correlation or significance between religiosity and self-esteem. In their recent examination of religion and spirituality among emerging adults, Smith and Snell (2009) argue that college-aged individuals “lack a reliable basis for any particular conviction or direction by which to guide their lives” (p. 294). This assertion may cast doubt on the idea any contemporary college student feels guilt sufficient to damage a self-rating on compassion.

In contrast, Francis and Jackson (2003) have demonstrated how respondents who demonstrated high religiosity also scored high on measures of guilt. Watson, Morris, and Hood (1987) likewise found beliefs in the reality of sin, when conceived in “an orthodox language of guilt,” were inversely related to attitudes toward self (p. 543). Exline and Geyer (2004) probably describe the situation best in the discussion section of their study of humility. They note “religious imperatives toward humility and belief in a Higher Power” could potentially promote more “humble” self-assessments among the religious, while recognizing religious people may also be especially susceptible to “religious pride, in which religious people see themselves as being ‘holier than thou’” (p. 111). Thus, while the basis for this interpretation is largely theoretical and demands a measured application to the present data, future research should take into account the role of theological and religious presuppositions in self-assessment measures.

The results from this study affirm Institutional Type is a complex variable which exerts itself in different ways on the different measures of social concern and action. It is important to discuss each of these three measures separately.

Charitable Involvement and Ethic of Caring

The results of the ANOVA and post hoc testing reveal, in terms of promoting student involvement in charitable activities, institutions designated as “public” fall significantly behind those institutions designated as “private” or “religious.” It is also important to note there was no significant difference in CI between “private” institutions and “religious” institutions.

Likewise, the results of the ANOVA and post hoc testing reveal institutions designated as “public” again score significantly lower than their peers in terms of possessing a caring ethic of life. Of the six possible relationships between institutions designated as “public” and their counterparts, five of the differences were significant. As was the case with CI, there was no significant difference between “private” and “religious” institutions in terms of promoting EC.

These findings are important because they demonstrate students attending “public” institutions are lagging behind their counterparts in the development of these two important learning outcomes. There are at least two ways to interpret this significant difference. One possible solution is that “public” institutions are promoting these learning outcomes less successfully. However, it is much more likely that qualities and dispositions which characterize students before they ever arrive at college also impact the achievement of these learning outcomes.

One reasonable inference in this vein concerns the impact of socio-economic status. Besides indicating the significant difference between “public” institutions and those designated “private” and “religious,” this study also reveals no significant difference between those latter two Institutional Types. Because students at “private” or “religious” institutions generally come from higher socio-economic statuses, one must consider whether socio-economic status is, indeed, a more effective predictor of social concern and action than is Institutional Type. Future studies should control for socio-economic status to test this conclusion.

These findings are also important, however, because they imply “religious” institutions are faring no better than those institutions which are simply “private,” even though at least some “religious” institutions have long expressed special attention and commitment to the promotion of such values. One must consider whether or not these results would be the same if there were a distinction made between those institutions which are “historically religious” and the more homogenous, theologically-conservative institutions comprising the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Practitioners at “public” institutions interacting with these findings should be eager to examine their respective institutions to analyze the need for developing or for enhancing currently existing spirituality initiatives. Similarly, it would behoove professionals at “religious” institutions to reexamine their specific institutional commitments and to explore why they may not be distinguishing themselves from their “private” counterparts.

Compassionate Self-Concept

Distinct from the findings of the two variables listed above but supporting the findings of the MANOVA’s interaction effect, the ANOVA and post hoc testing reveal “religious” institutions scored significantly lower than their counterparts at Public universities and Private 4-year institutions. While this relationship has already been discussed in detail above, it merits repeating practitioners at “religious” institutions should demonstrate a measured eagerness to explore these findings in more depth. The results certainly merit more exploration, though the realization they are informed by a self-assessment should temper any institutional concerns until a more robust measure of compassion is developed.

Limitations

This study has multiple limitations which must inform any attempts at future research concerning spirituality and social concern and action. First of all, any study of college student spirituality must concede the lack of operational clarity surrounding the construct of spirituality. While in this study I cite and borrow from the most influential names studying college student spirituality, future researchers should continue to pursue greater precision in their discussion of the construct.

One major limitation directly associated with the issue mentioned above is the categorization of spirituality into “high” and “low” types. While the standards outlined by Astin et al. (n.d.) are accepted within the academy and supported by years of research, a complex construct like spirituality demands judicious attention. Future researchers should establish a more effective means by which to determine the designation of “high” and “low” spirituality types.

Another major limitation to this study is the lack of analysis concerning the direct relation between scores on the Spirituality variable according to Institutional Type. While I do demonstrate in this study the success of various Institutional Types in promoting certain representations of social concern and action and while I do reveal expressions of social concern and action rise in positive correlation to degrees of spirituality, I do not demonstrate conclusively those institutions which score lower on the social concern and action measures simultaneously score lower on Spirituality. Researchers who examine this relationship with more precision will yield more definitive results.

Additionally, any researcher would be remiss to ignore the possibility of unidentified confounding variables. By its very nature, spirituality is something which comprises many aspects of an individual's life. Naturally, this increases the number of potential confounding variables. While in this study I have examined many of these potential confounding variables, innovative future researchers could design projects taking these variables into account.

A lack of precision in terminology concerning institutional type is another limitation of this study. Though the HERI data is divided by institution, the institutional types identified here are broad. Specifically, there is a broad diversity of institutions comprised in the HERI designation of "religious." Future researchers could attempt to differentiate between "religious" institutions based upon their relationship to "mainline" or "evangelical" traditions. It stands to reason greater precision in the identification of institutional types would yield more definitive results.

Conclusion

In his examination of the experiences of Black evangelical Christians, Edward Gilbreath asserts "spirituality may be personal but it's definitely not private" (p. 40). In simple terms, that statement characterizes the theory upon which this study was based and the spirit in which it is written. As the literature suggests, there ought not and cannot be a bifurcation between genuine spiritual development and enthusiastic expressions of social concern and action.

Likewise, any attempt to describe a dichotomy between the education of mind and the development of spirit is patently false. Institutional members serious about the endeavor of educating students cannot operate responsibly so long as they continue to neglect the spiritual development of their students. Those institutional members best equipped to develop students and promote the greater public good will be the very institutional members who promote spiritual development and who intentionally communicate the inextricable connection between spirituality and manifestations of social concern and action. In this study I provide empirical evidence of this connection and demand responsible higher education administrators consider its implications for their specific institutions.

So then, like the Hebrews of old, let us not promote a spirituality focused solely on the individual. Rather, may higher education practitioners promote both the personal search for meaning and the public application of that meaning. May sacrifice *and* mercy evermore reside at the very center of our educational purpose.

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