

ABSTRACT

ROBERTS, CATHY JOYCE. Assessing Religious Friendliness at a Public University.
(Under the direction of Raymond Siuman Ting.)

This study considers the religious atmosphere of a public, land grant research institution located in the southern United States. Specifically, the researcher designed the Religious Friendliness Questionnaire to assess the amount of comfort and safety that on-campus students felt when discussing and practicing their religious beliefs. With a sample size of 114, results suggested a safe environment for on-campus residents as a whole; however, there were significant differences when the Christian sample was compared to the non-Christian sample. The non-Christian sample appeared to feel less safe, less supported, was willing to talk about religion, and was more open to learning about other belief systems. Christians were less comfortable discussing their beliefs, received more institutional support, felt less pressure to change their beliefs, and were less open to learning about other religions.

ASSESSING RELIGIOUS FRIENDLINESS AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

by
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Assessing Religious Friendliness at a Public University

Understanding student development at the college level is a difficult task, especially when considering how many components influence students' well-being on campus (Majors & Sedlacek, 2001). While researchers have made connections between student identity development and success in adjusting to college (Low & Handal, 1995; Maton, 1989; Schafer, 1997), current theories have yet to be applied to every aspect of diversity present on American campuses. In particular, religious diversity has long been ignored, as evidenced by the lack of research on the topic that deals with college students (Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003). With no theoretical support, it is no wonder that colleges have avoided applying theory to religious welfare because they have not even assessed whether or not their campuses are religiously friendly. Other reasons for the failure to consider the impact of religion is likely a result of the policy of separation between government and religion among public institutions. They have been discouraged from tackling this delicate topic.

Before colleges can consider how to assess religion on their campuses or make positive changes to those environments, they must first define what they are looking for. Religion is complex and is frequently intertwined with spirituality. While the terms were once used interchangeably, the majority of current literature does differentiate between the two.

Definition of Spirituality

Although definitions of spirituality vary, the overall traits are consistent. Spiritual people are aware of a reality beyond the physical world, although they may not necessarily understand it (Chapman & Grosshoeme, 2002). These people also find

purpose in their lives by understanding the whole picture of the environment around them. They not only focus on the direct relationships they have with those close to them, but also, the indirect influence they have on others (Testerman, 1997). True spirituality means grasping the interrelatedness of the world and the dimensions beyond it. Another important trait of spiritual people involves an awareness of a higher power. In the United States, higher power usually refers to the concept of God; however, the term can have many meanings (Chapman & Grosshoeme, 2002; Culliford, 2002; Testerman, 1997).

Definition of Religion

On the other hand, religion is currently viewed as institutionalized religion. This includes the boundaries and limitations emphasized in the form of dos and don'ts, such as no killing, no stealing, and no premarital sex. Traditions, rituals, and ceremonies also fall under the definition of religious commitment (Chapman & Grosshoeme, 2002; Testerman, 1997).

Religion and Spirituality Working Together

Despite the differentiation between spirituality and religiousness, this does not mean the two ideas do not interact with each other. Spirituality can, and often does, function as a factor of religion. In 1996, Matthews pointed out that religious commitment could serve as a conduit to spirituality by way of rituals. He believed the practice of ceremonies and traditions guided people toward an awareness of a higher power, as well as an understanding of the interrelatedness among people.

In 1997, Testerman put it in a more easily understandable way. He urged researchers to look at spirituality as the “journey” and religious commitment as the “map.” Institutionalized religion serves as a map of the territory and possible paths a

person can take to get from one point of the map to another. Spirituality represents the final destinations on the map that a person seeks out.

Just as spirituality can function alongside religious commitment, the two can also operate independently. Relying on Testerman's analogy again, keep in mind that a person can spend all of his or her time following the roads on the map without ever reaching a destination. In other words, a person can consistently follow the traditions and rituals of a religion without ever gaining spiritual awareness; but rather, the person will have secondary gains (Testerman, 1997).

One possible instance of this is during Christmas time. The original purpose of Christmas was to promote an awareness of the birth of Christ and to gain an understanding of what he meant to the world. Sometimes though, people observing the Christmas holiday focus on receiving presents or attending parties. In this case, they are going through the motions of religious commitment by following the map, but the result does not bring them closer to a spiritual understanding.

From the solely spiritual perspective, a person can start out on a journey without any preconceived path in mind. This means spirituality can be gained through unconventional means rather than a strict adherence to traditions of institutionalized religion.

There are many different ways of interpreting the meaning of religion and spirituality. As a result, it is vital for researchers to carefully define these constructs in their studies. Since spirituality is commonly gained through religious practice, it is acceptable to use religious behaviors as a means of assessing the spiritual and religious environment on a college campus.

The Importance of the Topic

It is important to consider why institutions should care about the religious well-being of their students. The importance comes in four areas: 1) the beneficial relationship between spirituality and mental health, 2) students' abilities to adjust to college life, 3) the way religion on campus influences how students react to other forms of diversity, and 4) students often expect their university to provide information and support for their religious and spiritual development. Some research studies were found in these categories.

Mental Health Benefits of Spirituality

Based on careful consideration of the literature on this topic, it seems that spirituality, and not necessarily religious commitment, is associated with good levels of mental health. Baetz et al. in 2002 and Black's study in 1991 found a majority of alcoholics to lack a sense of purpose in life. Meaning in life is a spiritual characteristic and not an institutionalized one. In other studies, when religiously committed couples reported higher feelings of satisfaction and happiness in marriage than non-religious couples (D. Larson, Swyers, & S. Larson, 1995; Mahoney et al., 1999), they again were reporting spiritual characteristics.

The above studies are used to support religious commitment's positive correlation to good mental health, but the measured feelings of happiness are attributed to traits of spirituality. Religious commitment appears as the conduit through which people express their spiritual awareness. These spiritual characteristics are used as the markers to show that people are happy and have psychological well-being.

These studies also suggest institutionalized religion is not a guaranteed source for gaining spiritual awareness, nor is it the only source. Especially in the United States, the accessibility of some denomination of Christianity is high, although other forms of institutionalized religion are also readily available. This observation suggests institutionalized religion is the conventional means by which people in the United States can begin their “journey” toward spiritual understanding.

However, religious commitment is not the only possible path people can take to gain spirituality. Activities such as meditation or time spent alone while thinking about the state of surroundings are considered unconventional means of seeking spirituality without a tie to any institution of religion (Kass et al., 1991).

When spirituality and religion work together or spirituality works independently, people can improve their mental health. This path of development could be a vital method for colleges to ensure the overall well-being of their students. Good mental health would ready students for the academic and social stressors of campus life.

Student Adjustment to College Life

In 1989, Maton focused on college freshmen in their first semester to assess how spiritual support influenced the students’ personal-emotional adjustment in low and high stress situations. The study found a positive relationship between spiritual support and personal-emotional adjustment regardless of the event being at a low or high stress level.

Religious development also aids students in adjusting to college across cultures. A study in 2002 by Walker and Dixon focused on the religious and spiritual levels of African American students and how such participation related to academic performance. The results suggested a positive relationship between the more religious or spiritual

students and those students who achieved higher grade point averages and had more academic honors bestowed upon them. The same study also found that European Americans with strong religious practices had higher grade point averages than those without the same strong convictions.

Low and Handal (1995) surveyed 500 college students from three universities to study the relationship between religion and overall adjustment to college. Participants were administered the Personal Religiosity Inventory and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Religiosity was positively correlated to overall adjustment for men and women, particularly for freshmen.

Another study focused on how a sense of purpose in life, often gained from religious support, influences students' levels of personal distress (Schafer, 1997). Schafer found an inverse relationship between a sense of direction for student goals and levels of distress. The results suggested that students who are able to find purpose because of a religious association are more likely to have a stronger resistance to high stress levels.

Student Reactions to Other Forms of Diversity

In 1998, Strange and Alston put into motion the *Voice Project* for 70 graduate students at Bowling Green State University. Their goal was to observe the stages students went through when asked to select and research a "voice" of a person who was different from their own. The students were told to play the part of individuals they selected by reading articles about the group, interviewing someone who claimed membership in the group, and by immersing themselves in cultural experiences unique to the group. The differences could be in age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual

orientation, or socio-economic status. As the semester wore on, participants were asked to keep a daily journal and portray how they believed their chosen “voices” would feel in certain situations.

At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that every student had developed a more open-minded perspective of dealing with diverse populations and situations. Even though the students each began their “voices” at a different level of complexity and awareness, all of them were still rewarded with the tools to help them navigate through future diverse encounters (Strange & Alston, 1998).

Bowling Green State University took a special interest in developing the awareness of its students, and each individual experienced a personal growth in how he or she viewed others. Even though the participants in the *Voice Project* were at the graduate level, they still represented people who had gone through their undergraduate programs holding beliefs that were inaccurate. The journal entries of the graduate students all referred to stereotypes they had believed in throughout their lives. It is difficult to believe that these students somehow lost their stereotypes as undergraduates and then found them again once they reached graduate school. The needs students have for developing skills to deal with diverse groups is still present at the undergraduate level. If other institutions applied a similar approach to religious diversity on campus, then their own students could become better equipped to positively interact with a variety of religious groups.

Students’ reactions to any aspect of diversity are also likely influenced by their own religious growth. Newman, Dannenfels, and Benishek (2002) found they could use religion to estimate student levels of homophobia. In particular, the study assessed

the religiosity of participants and their feelings about gays and lesbians. Of the 2,469 participants, 78.4 percent identified themselves as Christian and of differing levels of conservatism. Subjects identified as conservative Christians were more likely to hold homophobic views than non-conservatives.

Student Expectations of Spiritual Development

To better assess the needs and concerns of college students, Majors and Sedlacek (2001) distributed the University New Student Census to 1,912 incoming freshmen. Using factor analysis, Majors and Sedlacek determined eight main concerns of the participants, one of which was religion and spirituality. The students were expecting to find opportunities to expand their religious and spiritual knowledge to better prepare them for working after college.

Similarly, Astin (2004) has found a great need for more spiritual and religious development based on the challenges that college students are facing. As a result of his extensive research, Astin estimates that 65 percent of college students report occasionally questioning their own beliefs and 18 percent frequently question them. Forty-six percent of students have sometimes felt frustration and anger at God, 76 percent have sometimes questioned the purpose and meaning of evil, suffering, and death, and 21 percent have frequently thought about evil, suffering, and death.

The Rationale for this Study

With all of the research on the benefits of religion and spirituality, it is unclear why universities have not utilized this information in their attempts at improving college life. Even more mysterious, no known studies were found that considered the negative or positive effects of diverse religious culture on campus. As higher education professionals

and researchers increasingly discuss the value of learning about diversity (Schlosser & Sedlacek, 2003; Whitt, Edison, & Pascarella, 2001), no apparent efforts have been made to explore such religious differences.

This study will assess the religious friendliness of a campus at a public research university. The chosen campus is a large, technical land-grant university located in the southeastern part of the United States. The hypothesis is that North Carolina State University's (NCSU) campus is not religiously friendly, which will be defined by the lack of safety and comfort students feel when expressing their religious beliefs. For example, participants will be asked if they have ever been harassed verbally or physically as a result of their religious beliefs, as well as, questions relating to other students' reactions when subjects speak about a belief different from theirs.

NCSU is located in what is referred to as the "Bible Belt," which makes it reasonable to say that the college population is predominantly Christian. In 2003, Schlosser and Sedlacek discussed two basic signs that a campus is predominantly Christian and not open to religious minorities. The signs are present at NCSU; they involve the academic calendar and the type of religious guidance available to students on campus.

NCSU's academic calendar is like most other institutions in that it is based on Christian holidays. This means that campus-wide breaks are scheduled around the predominant religious holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Students who celebrate non-Christian holidays such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Samhain, or Diwali must negotiate with their professors to miss class when their holidays do not fall on a weekend. The difficulty that non-Christian students must experience in arranging to

miss classes is further aggravated by the institution's constant need for non-Christian students to prove they are missing class for a legitimate holiday. Usually, the professor or staff member giving the approval to miss class is Christian, thus less likely to sincerely accommodate the non-Christian student (Clark et al., 2002). Not only are Christian students given an advantage, but also, non-Christian students are sent the subtle message that their beliefs are less important than the mainstream ones (Schlosser & Sedlacek, 2003).

Most campuses have an office or department that deals specifically with the religious or spiritual development of students. Staff members in this office are expected to serve as a resource for students, regardless of what specific spiritual or religious needs they are looking to find. NCSU provides this service; however, the office title alone is enough to deter any non-Christian students from seeking help (Schlosser & Sedlacek, 2003). The office is called the "Chaplain's Cooperative Ministries." The terms chaplain and ministries are Christian in origin, and not adequate for communicating an openness to religious diversity. Non-Christian students are no more likely to utilize this office than Christian students would use an office that was called, "Rabbi's Cooperative Synagogues" or "Monk's Cooperative Temples." Again, Christian students are given another advantage over non-Christian students in respect to having an on-campus resource more dedicated to their particular form of religious and spiritual development.

As a predominantly Christian institution, the researcher believes that the NCSU on-campus community marginalizes religious minorities, just as other mainstream universities do. With Christianity as the predominant religion on NCSU's campus, it is impossible for Christian privilege to not be present. By its very nature, Christian

privilege demoralizes minority religions on campus and causes Christians to fear any belief system different from their own (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003). Thus, non-Christian students at NCSU likely feel the campus is not open to their religious beliefs and practices.

During this assessment, no differentiation will be made between religion and spirituality. Together, the two terms will be defined as any belief that relates to how people understand their purpose and goals in life. The definition also encompasses what behaviors people believe they should act out as a result of their interpretation of a higher power.

The needs of this study also make it necessary to define Christianity and non-Christianity. Christian participants are defined as those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and they believe in the sacredness of the Old and New Testaments. Non-Christian participants are all those who do not believe Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they do not believe in the sacredness of the Old and New Testaments.

There are three main questions in this study: 1) Can the researcher develop a valid and reliable instrument capable of measuring religious friendliness among college students? 2) How do students score on religious friendliness? 3) Are there any differences in the religious friendliness scores between Christians and non-Christians?

Method

Participants

A total of 115 participants completed the questionnaire; however, the researcher tossed out one survey because the subject was not of legal age. Subjects in this study had to be at least 18 years of age, attending NCSU, and residing on campus. During the

2004-2005 academic year, NCSU housed 6, 487 in residence halls (Pappenhagen, 2005), all of which were possible subjects for this study if they were old enough.

Participants were chosen from a stratified sample based on class standing and race. This was to ensure survey results from a variety of diverse student groups. Three residence halls were selected to meet the need for variety. The first and second buildings house 700-750 predominantly freshmen students and the third building accommodates 160 international, non-freshmen students.

Out of 114 subjects, 48.2 percent were male, 42.1 were female, and 9.7 percent did not respond to the item. Ages ranged from 18 years old to 24 years old with a mean of 19.31 years. The racial break down of the participants was 78.1 percent White, 11.4 percent Black, 5.3 percent Asian, 1.8 percent Latino, 0.9 percent Arabic, 1.8 percent Other, and 0.9 percent did not respond. Subjects also came from various classes: 43 freshmen, 31 sophomores, 14 juniors, 15 seniors, and 3 graduate students. Since freshmen account for 47 percent of NCSU's on campus population (Pappenhagen, 2005), it is no wonder that the same group should represent 40.6 percent in the 114 strong sample.

Religious demographic information was collected in two areas. The first demographic item asked about the form of religion the participant prescribed to, and the second item allowed them to specify a denomination. Christians comprised 72.8 percent of the sample. Non-Christians were at 26.3 percent and 0.9 percent did not respond. Of the non-Christians there were 9 Agnostic, 7 Atheist, 5 Other, 4 Hindu, 3 Jewish, 1 Islamic, 1 Pagan, and 1 person did not respond. For religious denomination the participants were 29 Baptists, 16 Methodists, 11 Catholics, 5 Others, 2 Lutherans, 2

Presbyterians, 1 Wiccan, and 1 Sunni. Forty-seven participants did not fill in this item either because it did not apply to them or they did not wish to share the information.

Instrument

The researcher was unable to find an instrument that inquired about religious friendliness on a college campus, thus the survey used was designed specifically for this climate assessment. Item content was based on observations of students at NCSU and feedback from the researcher's committee. It contained 14 Likert scale items and one free response item (see Appendix A). The scale was from 1 to 5 with 1 representing "this doesn't apply to me at all" and 5 representing "this applies to me very much." These items were statements on topics about overall comfort in discussing and practicing religious beliefs, to experiences of harassment at the hands of other students, to students' willingness to learn about other religions.

Procedure

The principal researcher recruited participants by getting residents to fill out surveys at residence hall programs spring 2004. Once participants agreed to take the survey they were given an information sheet detailing the requirements of participation. The sheet also told the subjects to turn in a completed questionnaire if they gave their full consent. The researcher collected the finished surveys and allowed the participants to keep the information sheet in case they had further questions.

Data Analysis

The data was collected and organized in a spreadsheet before using the SPSS 10.1 program to run a factor analysis, create scales from those factors, and to do a t-test. SPSS

was used for the 14 Likert scale items but not the free response item. Qualitative analysis was used to organize the participants' responses from the open-ended question.

Factor analysis was used to gain a better understanding of the themes at work in the questionnaire. The initial factor analysis gave factors that were too difficult to differentiate between, so a rotation was performed using the Varimax method with Kaiser Normalization. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity gave a chi-square of 665.09, $p < .0001$, and 91 degrees of freedom. Factors were then retained if the eigenvalue was above a 1.0 relationship. Within each factor, an item from the questionnaire was associated with a particular factor if it had above a .40 correlation coefficient.

The retained means and standard deviations of the retained factors were then used to create scales for scoring participants. Participants received a scale score for each individual factor. A t-test for equality of means was the final process used to see how the Christians and non-Christians differed on each scale.

Results

Quantitative Analysis

After the data was collected, descriptive statistics were run on the 14 items to get a better sense of each item's mean and standard deviation (see Table 1). Items 4 and 9 had small standard deviations when compared to the 1.0 deviation that signifies a bell curve. This suggests that items 4 and 9 cannot discern variance well. On the other end of the spectrum, items 8 and 14 had large standard deviations well above 1.0, suggesting that these items pick up on too much variance and may not apply to what the researcher was looking for in the study. These four items may need to be re-worded or completely taken out of future assessments with this tool.

Table 1

Item Descriptive Statistics

Item	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1	4.29	0.93
2	3.94	1.01
3	3.68	1.06
4	4.27	0.86
5	3.95	1.07
6	4.30	1.06
7	3.13	1.04
8	1.64	1.12
9	1.25	0.68
10	4.07	1.02
11	1.61	1.07
12	3.48	1.04
13	3.02	1.03
14	2.86	1.19

Based on the eigenvalues from the factor analysis, four factors were retained (see Table 2). The first factor, Comfort, relates to the level of comfort participants feel in discussing their religious beliefs in class, in the halls, and with peers. The Comfort factor

included items 1 and 3 through 6 (see Table 3). The second factor, dubbed Support, was made up of items 7, 12, 13, and 14, all of which dealt with the amount of institutional support participants experience from programming, residence life staff, and the dining hall food. The third factor, Pressure, refers to the amount of outside pressure subjects experienced at the hands of other students on campus. The items, 8, 9, and 11, all questioned participants on any harassment they had dealt with as a result of their beliefs. The final factor, Learning, relates to how open students and staff are to learning about religions different from their own. The Learning factor was formed with items 2 and 10.

Table 2

Eigenvalues of the Four Factors

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Comfort	4.38	31.27
Support	2.50	17.82
Pressure	1.45	10.38
Learning	1.21	8.67

Table 3

Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Component/Factor			
	Comfort	Support	Pressure	Learning
1	0.74	-0.09	-0.08	0.36
2	0.24	0.08	0.10	0.85
3	0.86	0.12	0.04	0.06
4	0.84	0.11	-0.09	0.23
5	0.87	0.17	0.005	0.04
6	0.73	0.29	-0.27	0.02
7	0.13	0.66	5.55E-05	-0.26
8	0.18	-0.22	0.79	0.09
9	-0.17	-0.06	0.84	-0.07
10	0.18	0.04	0.11	0.86
11	-0.22	-0.13	0.70	0.23
12	0.15	0.76	-0.12	-0.03
13	0.10	0.70	-0.18	0.15
14	0.05	0.64	-.011	0.23

The researcher then calculated the reliability coefficients for each of the factors. Comfort achieved an alpha level of 0.86, Support had a 0.67 alpha level, Pressure showed a 0.69 alpha level, and Learning came in with an alpha level of 0.84. All four scales had very

high standard deviations, suggesting a wide spread of variance. Based on the means, the overall sample scored high on the Comfort and Learning scales with averages of 20.12 out of a possible 25.0 points and 8.0 out of 10.0, respectively. The participants also scored relatively low on the Pressure scale, and they averaged near the middle on the Support scale (see Table 4 for the scale means, standard deviations, and possible ranges).

Table 4

Factor Descriptive Statistics

Factor	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Possible Score Range
Comfort	20.12	3.89	5 – 25
Support	12.47	3.06	4 – 20
Pressure	4.51	2.31	3 – 15
Learning	8.00	1.88	2 – 10

After the means and standard deviations were used to create scale scores for participants, the t-test for equality of means showed significant values for all four factors (see Table 5). Table 6 shows just what were the differences between the Christians and non-Christians. Christians had a higher mean on the Support scale than non-Christians, and Christians had lower averages on the Comfort, Pressure, and Learning scales.

Table 5

T-test of Christian and Non-Christian Means on the Four Factors

	Religion	<u>M</u>	t	df	p
Comfort	Christian	20.10	-0.75	111	0.045
	Non-Christian	20.68			
Support	Christian	12.93	2.45	110	0.012
	Non-Christian	11.30			
Pressure	Christian	4.10	-3.32	111	0.001
	Non-Christian	5.67			
Learning	Christian	7.66	-4.23	111	0.0001
	Non-Christian	9.17			

Note: for Christians n=83; for non-Christians n=30

Qualitative Analysis

The free response question was made up of two parts, “what could the university do to improve religious friendliness on campus?” and “should the university change anything?” The researcher assigned codes to each category of responses from the open-ended item on the survey after reading through and organizing them into a conceptually clustered matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Since there were two components to the question, themes from the first part were given codes beginning with A and part two answers were given codes beginning with B. Code C was used to denote any responses

that did not answer the question but still gave the researcher an idea of participants' reactions to the questionnaire (see Appendix B for coded responses).

Code A. The first part of the question, what could the university do to improve religious friendliness on campus, had five themes emerge and five codes were assigned accordingly. The categories were Awareness (A1), Food (A2), University Resources (A3), Uncertainty (A4), and No Change (A5). Awareness responses were coded as such because the suggestions for change emphasized new programs, classes, and organizations to promote awareness and tolerance of different religions. The Food coding was given to answers focused on offering foods in the dining halls and campus convenience stores that follow special religious dietary needs. University Resources refers to suggestions for educating faculty and staff members on religious diversity and creating a resource center that is friendly to all religions. The Uncertainty code categorized answers where the participants tried to think of a suggestion for change and could not think of one. The coding of No Change represents subjects that said no changes should be made to the campus atmosphere.

Code B. The second part of the free response question, should the university change anything, had four categories emerge from the participant responses. The categories were Yes (B1), No (B2), Uncertainty (B3), and Helpless (B4). The first two codes, Yes and No, refer to whether or not a participant responded that NCSU should make efforts to change the religious environment on campus. The Uncertainty coding plays the same role for the second question as it did the first – for answers in which the subject could not decide what was the appropriate course of action. The Helpless coding was used for participants that wanted the university to change something, but they did not

think it was possible. Many of these responses expressed a sense of hopelessness that religion could ever be openly discussed and practice on campus.

Code C. Many participants did not just answer the free response question, but also opted to give their overall opinions of the religious environment on campus. Three themes emerged from these responses: Negative (C1), Positive (C2), and Unchangeable (C3). Answers coded as Negative referred to respondents that voiced a negative attitude towards the current religious environment on campus. The Positive code encompassed statements made in a positive light in reference to the current religious environment. The third code, Unchangeable, was given to responses that were without positive or negative wording. Instead, Unchangeable answers revolved around the idea that "...people are going to act as they please." This was how one participant responded. Others in this category voiced similar concepts.

Discussion

There are no other known climate assessments on this topic, so it is difficult to compare this study's results with others. Since checking for consistency with other studies is out of the question, it is up to the researcher to try to decipher the significant results and their implications. Overall, the questionnaire is a valid and reliable instrument when considering the four scales that emerged and the free responses of participants. Subjects' responses on the last item matched up with the themes found through the four scales. The alpha coefficients of the four scales suggest adequate reliability, especially considering that none were below 0.67.

The campus as a whole is comfortable discussing and practicing religious beliefs and learning about other religions. Pressure to change beliefs is low, and support for

religious development is moderate. As for the scale scores themselves, the means can be used as baselines for future research.

Interpretation of Results

It is important to notice how the means for Christians and non-Christians on the four scales are different. It is not enough to just know that there is a significant difference, but also which group is higher and which is lower. Non-Christians scored higher than Christians on Comfort, Pressure, and Learning. Only on the Support scale did Christians average higher than non-Christians. Non-Christians feeling they have to defend their beliefs against the majority religion may influence the differences in Comfort. Higher scores on the Pressure scale add some support to this concept. If non-Christians are experiencing higher levels of pressure to change their beliefs they may be forced into better preparation when discussing their religions. In order to maintain their identities, these students may have to take on an air of comfort when discussing their ideas in the face of criticism. Non-Christians are also more open to learning about other belief systems compared to Christians. Finally, Christians are receiving more support in their religious pursuits than non-Christians. This added help is in the form of programs, residence life staff, and accommodating food services at the dining halls.

The results from this study strongly suggest that religious differences are an issue for students when it comes to living on campus. Non-Christians seem to be facing stressors beyond the normal adjustment of starting and graduating from college. This means that non-Christian students may be at a slight disadvantage when it comes to college adjustment because they are not receiving equal spiritual support. Remember, earlier studies have found that students receiving religious support dealt with stress more

easily than those who were not supported or in a position to openly practice their beliefs (Low & Handal, 1995; Maton, 1989; Schafer, 1997; Walker & Dixon, 2002). This study's results, coupled with previous studies on the benefits of religious and spiritual support, point to the need for colleges and higher education professionals to make changes.

Institutional Changes

Categories from the qualitative analysis portion of this study shed light on some specific things that professionals can do to improve the friendliness on campus. Participants offered multiple ideas, including the creation of an unbiased religious resource center, panel discussions representing various beliefs, food services that accommodate more religious dietary needs, and a push for a greater variety of programs. Many students in the study acknowledged the necessity of using precaution when discussing religion; however, they believe the answer is for the college to actively promote all religions rather than sitting back and waiting for students to take the initiative. Participant responses such as those coded Helpless suggest that students need guidance in creating a friendly religious atmosphere. The university's current tactic of leaving spiritual development up for grabs to motivated students is not working. If it were, then there would not have been a significant difference between Christians and non-Christians on the Comfort, Support, Pressure and Learning scales. Students should not have to adamantly speak up for additional supportive services for religious and spiritual development when the university already takes the initiative to help students in other areas of college life. Of its own accord, NCSU already puts resources into the First Year College learning community, the International learning community, the

Multicultural Center, and the Women's Center, just to name a few. Why, then, is there not a Spiritual Development Center? True, there is the Chaplain's Cooperative Ministries Office, but the inadequacies of that program have already been discussed.

Implications for Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff will also need to make a united commitment to a religiously friendly campus if change is to ever occur at NCSU. One idea is to offer workshops for faculty and staff members to help them become better equipped to support students' spirituality in the classroom and in the residence halls. Further research into the religious perceptions of college employees will be necessary in order to devise a plan for adequately educating professors and student affairs professionals. Some of the free response answers offer some explanation as to why certain religious groups are feeling pressured. These particular responses suggest that the struggle may be in finding the balance between discussing spirituality and religion in an educational way rather than promoting a form of religion as the right path for everyone. Faculty and staff members may need to be convinced that religion can be part of an educational discussion.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the obvious limitations of this study involve the newly created questionnaire and the size and location of the sample. Thus, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire requires more studies that utilize it. Four of the items on the instrument had very high or very low standard deviations. They could be thrown out or re-worded in future assessments to increase the consistency and applicability of the questionnaire. Additionally, not only did this study use a small sample size, but also, participants were recruited from only one campus. A larger sample size that includes other schools may

show different results than this study. Since this study dealt solely with one institution, usefulness of the information for other schools is questionable.

Another shortcoming of this study is in the qualitative analysis. Only the primary researcher reviewed the free response answers and categorized them. If a second auditor had been utilized, perhaps he or she would have noticed different categories. A second opinion on the qualitative answers may have resulted in different codes for individual responses.

Future Research

Future research should focus on four areas. First, more research should be conducted on campus climate assessments on this topic. Other colleges and universities may find the same results or they may find that NCSU's assessment was unusual. Second, research efforts should work on creating a dependable and reliable instrument for assessing religious friendliness. Even this study demonstrated possible flaws in the items on the questionnaire that was used. Third, researchers should look into more detailed implications of the differences in the college experience between Christians and non-Christians. Fourth, faculty and staff members should definitely be included in future research on the perceptions of religion on college campuses. It is currently unknown just how much professors and staff members influence the religious and spiritual development of students. Students' reactions may largely depend on the responses they receive from those in authority positions on campus.

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Religious Friendliness

-Demographics: Age: _____ Race: _____ Sex: M or F (circle one)
 -Religion: (circle one below) Class Status: (circle one)
 Christianity Paganism Hinduism Freshman
 Judaism Shinto Buddhism Sophomore
 Islam Taoism Agnosticism Junior
 Atheism Other _____ Senior
 -If applicable, please specify your denomination (i.e. Protestant, Baptist, Tibetan, Wiccan): _____

Directions: Read through each item and circle your corresponding response on the scale.
 1 = this doesn't apply to me at all 2 = this doesn't apply to me very much
 3 = neutral 4 = this applies to me somewhat
 5 = this applies to me completely

1. I feel comfortable discussing my religious beliefs. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I enjoy learning about other religions. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I feel comfortable expressing my religious beliefs in class. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I feel comfortable expressing my religious beliefs with peers. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I feel comfortable expressing my religious beliefs in the residence halls. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel I can openly practice my beliefs on campus. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I think people on campus are open to learning about religious beliefs different from their own. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I have been verbally harassed on campus as a result of my beliefs. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I have been physically harassed on campus as a result of my beliefs. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I am open to learning about religious beliefs different than my own. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I feel pressured by other residents to change my religious beliefs. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I feel on-campus staff supports religious diversity in the halls. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I think programs in the halls reflect a variety of religious beliefs. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I think on-campus programs serving food make the effort to provide for

a variety of religious dietary needs.

1 2 3 4 5

15. What could the university do to improve religious friendliness on campus? Should the university change anything? (Please write your answer on the back of the page).

Appendix B

Conceptually Clustered Matrix

#	Q1: What can the improve?	Q2: Should the university change?	Q3: Overall reaction?
1	(A1) Though the various religions should be an educational option. An accepting attitude toward diversity would improve friendliness.	(B4)The university itself has done as much as expected.	(C1) Education and personal religion need not mix. The majority culture at this university suppresses religions other than Christianity, but less so for most major religions.
7		(B4)I'm not sure of anything the university could change.	
8	(A1) Could do more awareness programs		
9		(B2) I think everything is fine.	
10		(B2) I like NCSU the way it is. GO STATE :)	
11		(B2) It's all good :)	
12		(B2) Not really.	
13		(B4) The University does a good job of staying neutral. Really, there's not much more the University can do without seeming overly concerned with religion.	(C1) In the time between freshmen orientation and graduation, organizations like "The University" and "The Student Body" become so intangible that it is hard to credit them or fault them with anything. There are more Christian organizations/events than any other, but I think that is mainly due to varying

		<p>amounts of effort members of other religions will commit to converting... er... "communicating" their beliefs. - most of the problems I've had with other groups on campus are on a small scale, such as the almost hostile takeover of public meeting/ study places for Bible study (whoever heard of a calculus study group demanding everyone else leave a dormitory lounge?).</p>
14	(B2) It seems like the university does not have problems with religion - friendliness.	(C2) However, my views are more common than some other views on campus. There could be a problem that I have not experienced.
15	(A2) Dining halls should offer a wider variety of foods to encompass religious beliefs and the staff should be knowledgeable about what ingredients are used in meals.	
16	(A2) I notice the dining hall rarely has food suitable for vegetarians, if they do, it's the same food every night.	
17		(C1) I hear a lot about the Christian faith, but not too much about any others.
18	(A1) Actively promote tolerance.	

19	(A1) Religious services should be held around campus for all different religions so others can see how they do things in different religions.	
20		(B2) I think it is fine. It is not really the university's role/responsibility to promote religious belief but to protect them.
21	(A1) Include more religious programs in their agenda for diversity.	(C2) Diversity is not just racial, but it also pertains to religion. Teachers of classes (especially sociology) should be more sensitive to the different religions present in their classrooms.
22	(A1) Respect all beliefs.	(B4) I don't think there is anything they can do really. (C3) People have personal beliefs and are going to act as they please.
23	(A1) Expose people to other religions through programs and activities.	
24		(c1) Christianity seems to be stressed way more than any other belief. Other religions do not seem to be equally represented, there are not forums or events to teach others about these minority religions.
25	(A2) Have better food in Fountain.	
26	(A2) Better dining hall food.	
27		(B2) University does good with the religious variety. It's

		religion friendly enough.	
31	(A1) Allow every type of group to speak. Maybe find more different people from different religions to talk about their beliefs.		
33	(A1) Making the religion classes more public so that more people would be inclined to take them and to increase their knowledge and understanding of other religions.		
36	(A1) Have forums or events that call on people from all different religions/cultures to interact. Scholars seminar or Honors, etc.		(C1) Religion isn't just a belief for me - it's a WAY OF LIFE. I can't just turn on my religion and turn it off.
38		(B2) Nah.	(C2) Religion shouldn't be a big deal any way.
39	(A1) Provide more educational opportunities on minority religions via new religion courses. Provide encouragement of minority religion student organizations.		
40		(B3) Don't know, been trying to figure it out and can't.	(C1) Too many belief-smothering Christians roaming the earth.
41		(B2) If this is so; change nothing.	(C2) I feel that in reality religious practices and displays of belief on campus are at a happy medium. Don't fix it if it isn't broken!
42	(A5) Don't change anything.		
44	(A4) I don't have any suggestions.		(C2) I'm Christian and have a Bible study on campus and feel very comfortable in my walk on campus. Although sometimes I am a little timid on

			bringing up religion.
49		(B2) I don't think the university should have a hand in what the students decide to launch and promote.	(C2) Campus life is open to pretty much everything. People and programs represent whatever the students leading the organizations want.
53			(C1) Don't let the crazy people attack you about your religious beliefs.
54			It PWNS
56	(A5) Nothing.		
60		(B2) No.	
62	(A3) Supplying a place that any group (religious or not) can reserve for a meeting.	(B2) The university should really not try to meet an standards, being part of the state's university system and not a private college. I am not aware of the university's current policies, so I don't know what they could do about it.	(C3) I thought the University (The State or government) was not supposed to get involved with religion.
63		(B2)No.	
64		(B2) No changes!	(C2) The campus is very understanding and open.
65	(A4) I don't know.	(B3) I don't know.	
66	(A4)I am not sure.	(B3) I am not sure.	
69		(B2) Things are pretty good.	
70	(A1)Well we could get anyone who resented here to leave their hometown to visit NYC, Boston, San Fransico or any other city diversified enough to openly welcome all types of people.	(B4) Usually not possible.	(C1) We live in North Carolina. I.e. not NCSU, unfortunately.
72			(C1) I understand including all other religions that are not as prevalent as

			Christianity - and I believe it is important - but sometimes I feel that something can't be billed as specifically "Christian" without getting criticism.
73	(A1) More activities for Christianity and the good Word of the Lord :)		
77	(A3) I think our university can develop a center that would provide resources to students of any religion (counseling, referrals, programs, organizations, tc.) or a space to safely navigate the worlds of spirituality and religion with professionals who can help them understand what they are experiencing. I think that more multi-faith programs should be done and that the Cooperative Campus Ministries here didn't misrepresent themselves as all encompassing. I think that each religious organization should have a representative on a board of students whom program and address the needs of the students. I think that our campus should no force religion and spirituality on students in programs (like ceremonies, etc.) but should openly have multi-faith programs that encourage a climate of spirituality that doesn't alienate people.	(B1) We need to incorporate the academic side of religion with our religion representations of different religions. We need to do a better job of creating an atmosphere of open communication where students understand that though others have different beliefs, the religions still have a lot in common.	(C1) Our university is so concerned with not offending anyone that they alienate more student groups and allow 1 or 2 to be most prevalent. We don't have true separation of church and state and religion seeps into random areas within the university and I think that we should just embrace it and address the needs appropriately and not ignore the area of a student's spiritual identity development.
78	(A4) Can't think of anything.		
79	(A3) Educate students and staff on different religions and cultures.		
80		(B2) I feel the university is doing fine with respecting everyone's religious	

		beliefs.	
83	(A3) Present a complete schedule of different religious services at the beginning of the year.		
88	(A1) Should continue to promote diversity	(B4) I believe the university is doing its part	
89		(B2) It seems fine with me.	
91			(C1) Although I am part of the Christian religion, I feel that Christian presence on campus is overpowering and very "in your face"
92		(B1) I don't feel this campus is very open to the atheist community, and I'd like to see something done about that. It still seems something should be done to improve the reputation of atheists.	(C1) This is difficult to achieve because atheists are[n't] in the vast majority, especially in this part of the state. But for those of us who don't stand around cursing the religious around us.
93		(B1) I feel that it is the university's job to maintain a safe, tolerant environment but not let religion influence university proceedings.	
97		(B4) I don't think the university can do anything to change friendliness on campus.	(C3) People are going to be themselves and act how they want to act.
100	(A4) Not sure.	(B3) Not sure.	
101	(A1) Increase awareness of the non-major religions. Have cultural programs highlighting different religions. More support for an atheist/agnostic student association.		
104	(A3) I think the school should give		

	some amount of funding to open religious forums on campus that are not biased and have all sides represented equally.	
105	(A2) The C-store by Alexander only carries 2 kinds of Hot Pockets (pepperoni pizza and ham & cheese) both containing pork, and my Muslim roommate cannot eat them. GET SOME STEAK AND CHEESE... please.	
106	(A2) Beef hotdogs for the Muslim community, non-pork Hot Pockets in the C-store.	
107	(A1) Make a week where they talk about different religions.	
112	(A1) Prevent Christian preachers from verbally abusing people who do not believe as they do could go a long way in making people feel more comfortable on-campus.	
113	(A2) Meal program.	
115	(A3) I wish we had a campus religious adviser who was knowledgeable about all religions and who was willing to serve as an unbiased resource to all students' religious and spiritual needs.	(C1) My dietary needs are not met by the dining facilities on campus. My RAs make me feel uncomfortable about my religious beliefs. Campus ministries is not a place that I feel I am able to use as a religious resource, which is a shame because I'm so passionate about learning about all religions. This campus is not welcoming to religions other than Christianity. The differences I perceive between my beliefs and the beliefs of other

NCSU students
makes me feel
unsafe and
unwelcome at NC
State.

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