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Religious Development of College Students in Diverse Environments

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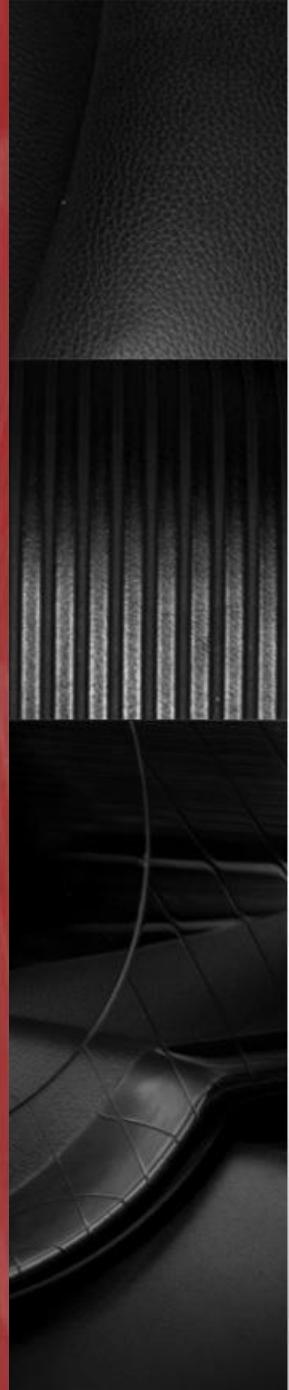


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Religious Development of College Students in Religiously Diverse and Specifically Religious Campus Climates

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Importance of Environmental Context

- How context can help
- How context can hurt
 - Emotional difficulties and adjustment issues (Arunkumar, Midgley, & Urdan, 1999; Kumar & Maehr, 2007)
 - Estrangement (Bernard, GeBauer, & Maio, 2006; Kumar, 2006)



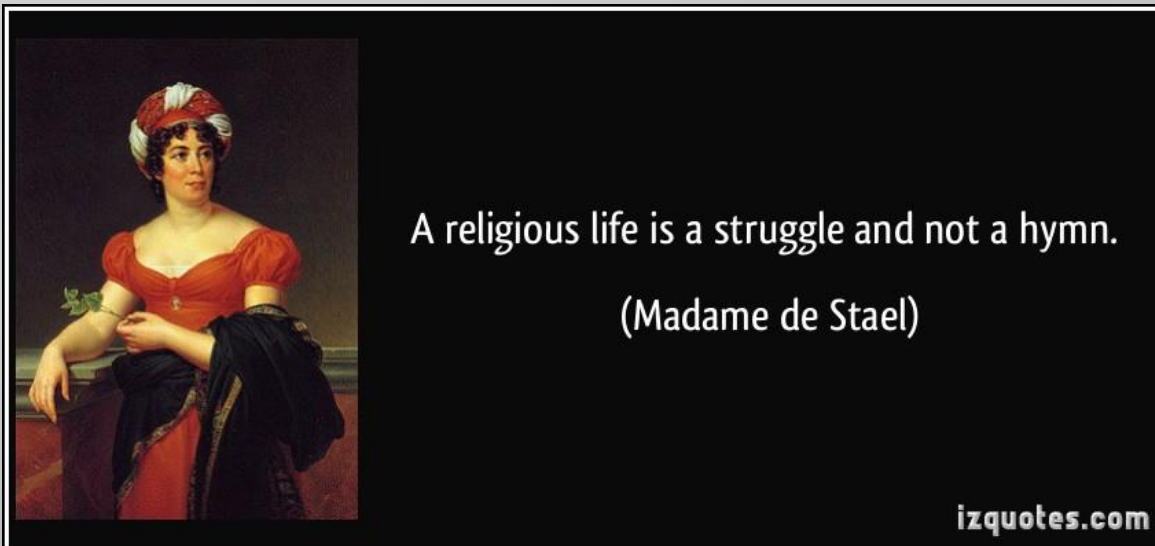
Binding Moral Community on Campus



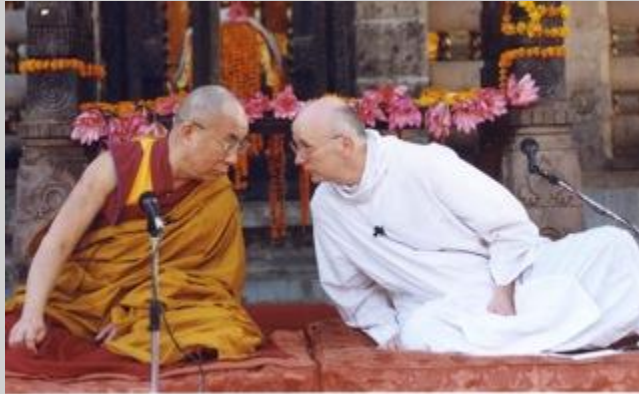
- Lack of decline in religious participation in students attending evangelical universities (Hill, 2009)
- Whether implicit or explicit, may lead to ideological conflict (Bryant, 2008)
- Religious dissonance (Hathcoat, Cho, Kim, 2013; Larson & Shady, 2012)

Religious Pressures and Coping

- Religious Pressures
 - Fear of exploring alternatives (Altemeyer, 1988)
 - The problem of in-group favoritism (Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2012)
- Religious Coping (Pargament, Feuille, & Burdzy, 2011)
 - Positive
 - Negative



Inter-Religious Dialogue



- Religious pluralism vs. the exclusive religious ideology on college campuses
- Aspects of inter-religious dialogue (Streib, Hood, & Kline, 2010)
 - Certainty of the truth in one's sacred text (TTT); correlated with fundamentalism (Streib, et al., 2010; Streib & Kline, 2014)
 - The idea that fairness, tolerance, and rationality (FTR) should guide religious dialogue
 - Appreciation of "Other" religious worldviews (XENOS)
- http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/downtown/muslim-group-s-first-time-in-veterans-day-parade-met/article_c6380305-4d81-5065-8fbd-b722bb9c5597.html

Presence of Meaning in Life



- *Religious minorities attending religious higher educational institutions tend to have lower levels of well-being, both with respect to affect and general satisfaction with their academic experiences, than students within the majority (Bowman, Felix, & Ortis, 2014).*
- Hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2013)
- Meaning in life has a positive correlation with religiosity (Van Tongeren, Hook, & Davis, 2013).

Research Aim



- Students congruent with the theology of an evangelical university were compared to incongruent students on
 - Three religious schemas (TTT, FTR, & XENOS)
 - Positive and negative religious coping strategies
 - Religious pressure
 - Presence of meaning in life.
- To facilitate comparisons, both groups were also compared on the same variables to a sample of students enrolled at a university with an explicitly inclusive mission statement



Procedures

- Cross-sectional, web-based, survey design
 - Evangelical Christian university
 - Inclusive, secular university
- Elicitation
- Group assignment based on Evangelical Christian university's mission statement; importance of glossolalia
 - "Exclusive congruent" = Pentecostal, Assembly of God, Charismatic, Non-denominational
 - "Exclusive incongruent" = Jewish, Catholic, Agnostic, Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints



Participants

- 977 total participants:
 - 857 from the evangelical university; 120 from the public university
 - All were undergraduates, ages 18-24
 - 630 women and 347 men
 - Year in school: 228 first year, 239 sophomores, 256 juniors, and 254 seniors.
 - 63% self-identified as White Americans, not of Hispanic origin, 14% as African Americans, 8% as “Other”, and 4.3% as Mexican American; all other racial-ethnic groups represented less than 5% of the sample.
- Group membership
 - Exclusive-congruent ($N=764$)
 - Exclusive-incongruent ($N=104$)
 - Inclusive ($N=120$)

Table 1

Group Totals (N) by Demographic Variables

	Inclusive-congruent	Exclusive-congruent	Exclusive-incongruent	Total
Women	95	497	55	647
Men	35	267	49	351
First Year Students	3	203	25	231
Sophomores	39	178	25	242
Juniors	57	187	23	267
Seniors	31	196	31	258
African American	4	108	25	137
American Indian	4	21	4	29
Asian American	7	23	2	32
Mexican American	11	32	0	43
Other	14	59	10	83
Other Hispanic	9	29	7	45
White American, not of Hispanic Origin	81	492	56	629



Instruments

- Religious Schema Scale (Streib, Hood, & Klein, 2010)
 - 15 items, scale of 1-5
 - $\alpha = .89, .66$, and $.66$ for TTT, FTR, and XENO, respectively
- Brief RCOPE (Pargament, Feuille, & Burdzy, 2011)
 - 458 reported coping about death of family member or friend; others reported about losses of pet, friendship, love relationship, parental divorce, etc.
 - 15 items, scale of 1-5
 - $\alpha = .91$ (PCOPE); $\alpha = .84$ (NCOPE)
- Religious Pressures Scale (Altemeyer, 1988)
 - 10 items, scale of 1-5
 - $\alpha = .87$
- Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006)
 - 10 items, scale of 1-5
 - $\alpha = .87$

	Inclusive (I) M(SD)	Exclusive Congruent (EC) M(SD)	Exclusive Incongruent (EI) M(SD)	F (df)	Tukey Test Pairwise Comparisons	η^2
RSS-TTT	9.86 (4.78)	21.08 (3.50)	19.75 (4.79)	419.59*** (2, 932)	I \neq EC***, I \neq EI*** EC \neq EI**	.47
RSS-FTR	21.34 (3.29)	21.38 (2.71)	21.37 (3.21)	.01 (2, 932)	ns	.00002
RSS-XENOS	17.22 (3.7)	15.03 (4.01)	15.93 (4.76)	15.24*** (2, 932)	I \neq EC***, I \neq EI*, EC \neq EI ^a	.03
RCOPE Positive	13.27 (7.63)	24.75 (6.43)	23.97 (7.91)	149.49*** (2, 947)	I \neq EC***, I \neq EI***	.24
RCOPE Negative	111.47 (5.33)	12.60 (5.52)	13.45 (6.13)	3.61* (2, 947)	I \neq EC ^a , I \neq EI**	.01
RPS	23.44 (8.51)	38.34 (8.73)	35.52 (10.33)	39.03*** (2, 824)	I \neq EC***, I \neq EI***, EC \neq EI**	.09
MILQ	16.02 (5.28)	20.02 (4.21)	19.24 (5.15)	36.45*** (2, 907)	I \neq EC***, I \neq EI***	.07

Note. ^a = $p \leq .1$; * = $p \leq .05$; ** = $p \leq .01$; *** = $p \leq .001$. RSS-TTT = Religious Schema Scale, Truth-in-Text; RSS-FTR = Religious Schema Scale, Fairness, Tolerance, Rationality; RSS-XENOS = Religious Schema Scale, Xenosophia; RCOPE-Positive = Religious Coping, Positive Scale; RCOPE-Negative = Religious Coping, Negative Scale; RPS = Religious Pressures Scale; MILQ = Meaning in Life Scale (Present)



Results Recapped

- When compared with congruent students, students whose religious or denominational preference was incongruent with the mission of the evangelical university reported:
 - Lower certainty of truth in text
 - Higher value of “other” religious worldviews
 - Lower religious pressure

- When compared with students from the inclusive university, religious university students as a whole reported:
 - Higher certainty of truth in text
 - Lower value of “other” religious worldviews
 - Higher religious pressure
 - Higher religious coping, both positive and negative
 - Higher meaning in life



Discussion

- Students who are incongruent with an exclusive theological mission advanced by a university may have specific challenges.
- Congruency, or lack thereof, for the students at the evangelical university failed to coincide with differences in meaning in life, though both reported greater meaning than inclusive students.
 - The impact of campus climate on student satisfaction has not been found to be contingent upon religion (Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2014).
- Students congruent with the charismatic moral community feared the most negative consequences for potentially abandoning their religion.
 - Mayhew and Rockenbach (2013) also found that religious majority students perceiving divisiveness in the climate were more likely to have strong worldview commitments.

Unexpected Similarities

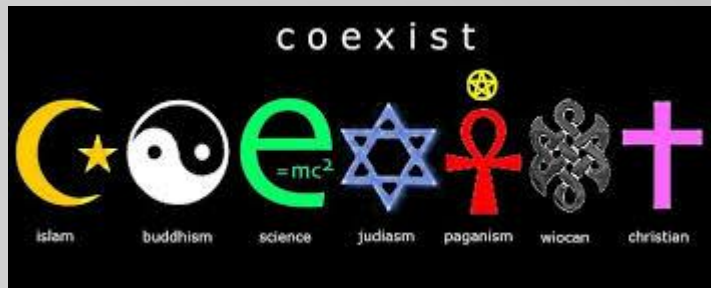
- Both groups of students appear to have similar levels of meaning in life and equally rely upon positive religious coping when dealing with stress.
- Students sampled from the institution with an inclusive mission statement, though more open to aspects of religious pluralism, had lower levels of meaning in life than both incongruent and congruent students.
 - Students at the evangelical institution, irrespective of their congruency, might have been more certain about the truth of religious texts and teachings than the students we sampled from the inclusive institution.
 - Students at the evangelical institution might have benefited from institutional structures or have been more likely to participate in high-impact practices, such as involvement in charitable services, resultant in more meaning in life.





Limitations

- Lack of direct measure of religious congruency or dissonance with campus climate
- Selection effect when comparing with inclusive university
- Reliabilities of FTR and XENO, $r=.66$ for both, suggest that those results should be interpreted with caution.
- Sample size differences restricted the ability to make important comparisons.



Religious Pluralism

- Religious pluralism (Nash, 2007), which is at odds with an exclusive religious theology, poses challenges for such institutions.
- The experience of religious diversity and struggle may enhance self-authorship with respect to religious and/or spiritual development (Bryant, 2011c).
- It is telling that students who were incongruent with the institution's theology reported substantive religious pressure, and were less certain about the truth of religious texts and teachings than congruent counterparts.

Conclusions

- A religiously diverse campus provides more opportunities to facilitate appreciation and value for divergent worldviews, though this may come at the cost of increased struggle in the search for self-authorship.
- A moral community united by an exclusive ideology may be particularly apt at providing students with opportunities to develop a sense of meaning in life, though this comes at the cost of fully appreciating the value offered by other religious views and the potential isolation of students who fail to align with the institution's theology.
- Suggestions for campuses:



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