

8-1-2008

# The Role of Spirituality and the Impact on Social Responsibility

Jonathan Ridenour  
*George Fox University*

Clark D. Campbell  
*George Fox University*

Rodger K. Bufford  
*George Fox University*, [rbufford@georgefox.edu](mailto:rbufford@georgefox.edu)

Kathleen Gathercoal  
*George Fox University*, [kgatherc@georgefox.edu](mailto:kgatherc@georgefox.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gscp\\_fac](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gscp_fac)



Part of the [Clinical Psychology Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Ridenour, Jonathan; Campbell, Clark D.; Bufford, Rodger K.; and Gathercoal, Kathleen, "The Role of Spirituality and the Impact on Social Responsibility" (2008). *Faculty Publications - Grad School of Clinical Psychology*. Paper 32.  
[http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gscp\\_fac/32](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gscp_fac/32)

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications - Grad School of Clinical Psychology by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolfe@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolfe@georgefox.edu).

# The Role of Spirituality and its Impact on Social Responsibility

Jonathan Ridenour, Psy.D., Rodger K. Bufford, Ph.D., Clark D. Campbell, Ph.D. & Kathleen Gathercoal, Ph.D.

Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology George Fox University

## Abstract

Research on social responsibility shows that community and social organizations play an important role in developing social responsibility. Religious groups comprise a considerable number of community and social organizations. The present study explored the impact of spirituality on social responsibility and assumed a positive correlation.

Measures included a demographic questionnaire with questions about religious affiliation and social service, the Social Responsibility Scale (Starrett, 1996) which measures global social responsibility and social activism, the Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) by Allport and Ross (1967) which measures Intrinsic (I) and Extrinsic (E) religious orientation, and the Quest scale (Q) by Batson and Schoenrade (1991) which measures religious searching.

Data were gathered from student volunteers. Results indicated that GFU students generally reported that they were Christian, intrinsically oriented, and attended religious services at least once a week. Reed students generally reported they were atheist/agnostic, were extrinsically oriented, and attended religious services less than three times per year. On the Starrett scale, GFU students indicated they were more socially conservative and were more likely to focus social service on individuals, while Reed students were more likely to focus on global and institutional expressions of social service. The two groups were similar on Quest and on Traditional Values and Fatalistic Indifference. The groups also showed similar levels of giving and volunteering.

Two distinct patterns of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to social service emerged. One is characterized by Christian commitment, intrinsic religious orientation, high religious participation, and social service focused on individuals. The second is characterized by atheism/agnosticism, extrinsic religious orientation, low religious participation, and social service focused globally and on institutional change. The original goal of identifying three patterns of spirituality and social service was partly successful.

## Introduction

Social responsibility is defined as pro-social behavior that seeks to advance and promote the welfare of others. Some, such as Starrett (1996), contend that conservative religious beliefs are inversely related to social responsibility. However, other researcher conclude that social responsibility and religion are positively related. Younis, McLellan, and Yates (1999) reported that involvement in community service was more common for youth with a religious influence than those without it. Wilson & Musick (1997) and Osterie et al. (1998) found parallel results in adults. This seeming inconsistency might be explained when the measures of social responsibility and religion are examined carefully. Saroglou et al. (2005) suggest that religiousness has a definite but limited effect on reported prosocial behavior that does not reflect self-delusion.

In summary, personality, genetics, and community involvement influence social responsibility. Definitions of social responsibility and some of the findings appear to be related to deeply held moral perspectives of researchers and participants. The present study investigated the connections among religious orientation and affiliation, various forms of social service, and Starrett's Social Responsibility Scale.

## Method

### Participants

Data were collected in undergraduate psychology classes in two private Pacific Northwest Universities. In all 136 students participated, 65 from George Fox University, a Quaker university, and 71 from Reed College, a non-religiously affiliated private college. There were 45 males (41.5%) and 88 females (58.5%). Ethnically, 113 of the participants were Caucasian (86.3%), 4 were Asian (3.1%), 2 were African-American (1.5%), 3 were Hispanic (2.3%), and 9 selected "other" (6.9%). For the religious-affiliated university all but one identified him or herself as a Christian (98.5%). For the non-religiously affiliated university, 48 identified themselves as Atheist/Agnostic (69.5%), 12 as Christian (17.4%), 3 as Jewish (4.3%), and 6 as "other" (8.7%).

### Instruments

Instruments included the Social Responsibility Scale (Starrett, 1996), the Religious Orientation Scale (Allport and Ross, 1967), and the Quest Scale Revised (Batson and Ventis, 1982). Demographic questions, included items about spiritual beliefs, social and community volunteer activities, and religious involvement. Starrett's original subscales along with those proposed by Bufford, et al. (2004) were scored for the Social Responsibility Scale (Starrett, 1996).

### Procedure

Students at both universities were sampled from introductory psychology classes. Scores were computed for the original Social Responsibility scales developed by Starrett, including Global Social Responsibility (GSR), Responsibility Toward People (RP), and Social Conservatism (SC), along with the modified GSR scales, Traditional Values (TV), Institutionalized Peacemaking (IP), and Fatalistic Indifference (FI) developed by Bufford et al (2004). Spirituality was measured by the Religious Orientation Scale's (ROS) of Extrinsic (E) and Intrinsic (I), as well as the revised Quest scale (Q). Demographic information, religious orientation, and social involvement were also measured.

## Results

The amount of religious activity among participant varied considerably; 28 (21.1%) reported no religious participation, while 60 (45.2%) reported religious participation at least once a week. Volunteer social service also varied widely; 46 (34.6%) reported that they volunteered less than twice a year, while 20 (15%) reported volunteer services at least once a week.

Because religious involvement and orientation was highly correlated with university affiliation, independent sample t-tests were used to compare scores from the two universities. Reed College participants scored higher on GSR ( $t_{(114)} = -7.0, p < .001$ ) and IP ( $t_{(114)} = -10.3, p < .001$ ) while George Fox University participants scored higher on RP ( $t_{(117)} = 4.8, p < .001$ ) and SC ( $t_{(113)} = 8.6, p < .001$ ). However, no differences were found on FI ( $t_{(118)} = -1.5, p = .13$ ) and TV ( $t_{(116)} = 1.47, p = .15$ ). George Fox students also scored significantly higher on Intrinsic ( $t_{(112)} = 9.8, p < .001$ ), while Reed students scored higher on Extrinsic ( $t_{(112)} = -4.9, p < .001$ ). No difference was found on Quest ( $t_{(114)} = -1.9, p < .01$ ). Analyses of variance showed that GFU students reported they were more likely to attend religious services ( $F_{(1, 131)} = 268.44, p < .001; \eta^2 = .67$ ), volunteered more frequently ( $F_{(1, 131)} = 7.31, p = .008; \eta^2 = .05$ ), and giving larger amounts ( $F_{(1, 128)} = 17.54, p < .001; \eta^2 = .12$ ).

## Conclusions

The results suggested two very different patterns of religious beliefs, religious behaviors, and approaches to social responsibility. George Fox students commonly reported Christian religious identity, frequent attendance, and an intrinsic religious orientation. They frequently engaged in service activities that were oriented toward individuals. They scored higher on social conservatism, and reported they tended to focus on services to individuals. Reed College students commonly reported atheism/agnosticism, seldom attended religious services, and generally had an extrinsic religious orientation. They tended to prefer global and institutional approaches to social responsibility.

The initial hypothesis was that three approaches to spirituality would be identified, each with distinctive patterns of religious orientation, beliefs, behaviors, and approaches to social responsibility. Results were partly successful as two distinct patterns were identified. In this sample, Christian profession, intrinsic orientation, frequent attendance, and an individualistic focus on social service went together; these were accompanied by somewhat greater frequency of service activity and higher amount of giving to social services. In contrast, participants who were atheist/agnostic seldom attended religious services, were extrinsically religiously oriented, and focused social services globally and on fostering institutional changes. Further research will be needed to evaluate the generality of these findings and to assess whether other patterns of spirituality and social service also occur.

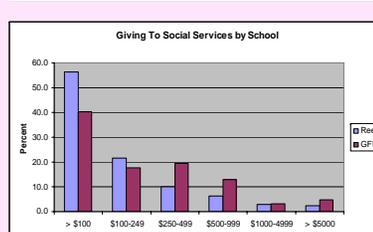
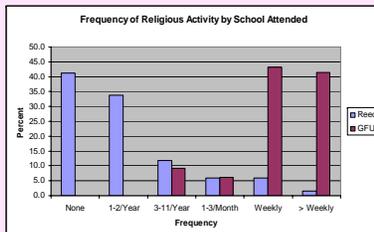
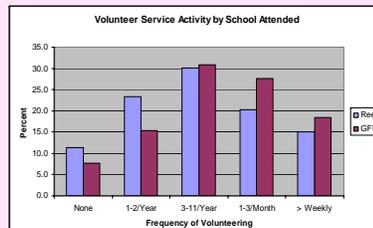
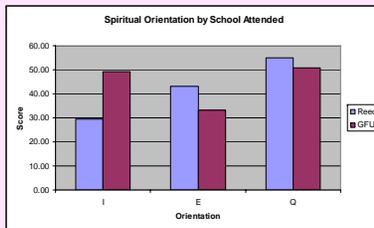
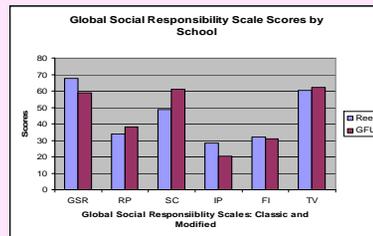
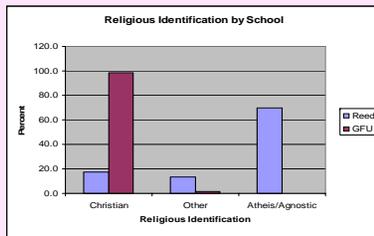


Table 1  
Means and Standard Deviations by Group and t-Tests of Group Differences

|  | N  | GFU   |       | N  | REED  |       | df  | F      | p     |
|--|----|-------|-------|----|-------|-------|-----|--------|-------|
|  |    | M     | SD    |    | M     | SD    |     |        |       |
| <b>Social Responsibility Original Scales</b> |    |       |       |    |       |       |     |        |       |
| GSR  | 62 | 58.74 | 6.31  | 54 | 67.65 | 7.32  | 114 | -7.00  | 0.001 |
| RP   | 62 | 38.11 | 4.01  | 57 | 33.93 | 5.42  | 117 | 4.80   | 0.001 |
| SC   | 61 | 60.95 | 7.83  | 54 | 48.65 | 7.53  | 113 | 8.60   | 0.001 |
| <b>Revised Scales</b>                        |    |       |       |    |       |       |     |        |       |
| IP   | 61 | 20.54 | 4.25  | 55 | 28.49 | 4.04  | 114 | -10.30 | 0.001 |
| FI   | 64 | 30.78 | 3.55  | 56 | 31.95 | 4.75  | 118 | -1.50  | 0.130 |
| TV   | 62 | 62.15 | 5.52  | 56 | 60.54 | 6.39  | 116 | 1.47   | 0.150 |
| <b>Spiritual Orientation</b>                 |    |       |       |    |       |       |     |        |       |
| I  | 62 | 49.26 | 8.78  | 52 | 29.60 | 12.52 | 112 | 9.82   | 0.001 |
| E  | 62 | 33.26 | 10.14 | 52 | 43.13 | 11.47 | 112 | -4.88  | 0.001 |
| Q  | 64 | 50.91 | 10.79 | 52 | 55.00 | 13.05 | 114 | -1.85  | NS    |
| <b>Religious Activity</b>                    |    |       |       |    |       |       |     |        |       |
| Volunteering                                 | 65 | 5.17  | 0.91  | 68 | 2.06  | 1.24  | 131 | 16.38  | 0.001 |
| Giving*                                      | 65 | 3.35  | 1.20  | 68 | 2.78  | 1.24  | 131 | 2.70   | 0.008 |
|  | 62 | 6.61  | 1.69  | 68 | 7.59  | 0.87  | 128 | -4.19  | 0.001 |

\*Note: Giving is reverse-scores.