# "VALUING"

# EDUCATION FOR FUTURE CONSCIOUSNESS:

## THE ROLE OF CONNECTEDNESS AND HOPE

### AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF AN AUSTRALIAN COHORT OF
### FIRST YEAR PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

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## Abstract

Plagiarism is a symptom of a systemic problem inherent in educational institutions which becomes reflected in the behaviour of its population. Rather than a private moral issue, its psycho-social-spiritual roots lie deeply embedded within society's ascriptions of meaning and valuing processes. Values has become just another catchall bag for institutions wanting to be seen doing the right thing and are being taken at face value, not as "lived experience". Valuing is a process that issues from innate goodness. It is a guiding principle toward self and other, communal and world advancement. The current obsession with plagiarism highlights confusion about what is being valued and how meaning is being ascribed in the educative enterprise. Plagiarism as a lack of integrity signals a systemic lack of commitment to worthwhile personal, communal and global goals through an abandonment of spiritual self-care, care of other and of the environment, and a lack of responsibility for creating the future. When learning fails to be a spiritual endeavour and to have an altruistic motive, dishonesty accrues no personal moral censure. The problem is created through education's fostering "the split mind" of the "verbal and unlived" mind of the university pitted against the "lived but typically unverbalised" mind of the individual (Paul, 1990). This conflicting valuing gives rise to public disengagement from the pursuit of a higher consciousness and the abandonment of a moral fixed point. The present study reveals the private valuing that students engage in which remains an untapped resource of enormous creative potential for education.

Using a range of measures and both quantitative and qualitative analyses, a study of 77 predominantly young, female, first year psychology students at a regional Australian University revealed spirituality as relevant to their lives but not as New Age Spirituality or Traditional Christianity. Rather, they identify it in terms of humanistic values and virtues absent of religion, God, atheism or agnosticism. Spiritual values are ascribed naturalistic meanings with the psychological construct of hope rating as the predominant value ahead of a secondary emphasis on the behavioural dimensions of morality and conduct followed by the more collectivist qualities of peace and friendship. Religious affiliation did not influence how spirituality was perceived except for rating higher on forgiveness. Spiritual Transcendence proved to be a more relevant measure of the existential concerns of this cohort especially on the facets of Universality and Connectedness. Expressed beliefs about spirituality correlated with the central features of Spiritual Transcendence concerning unity, connection, meaning and purpose, personal and global responsibility and a sense of goodness. Content analysis of open-ended responses to questions about what gives meaning to their lives revealed a corresponding and overwhelming emphasis on connectedness to significant others (50%), reliance on personal qualities (20%), positive attitudes (13%), and finally spiritual or religious beliefs traditionally defined (10%).

**Keywords: valuing, spiritual intelligence, hope, connectedness, transcendence, future consciousness**

**Introduction**

When looking over the conference programme, I initially thought my paper would not be relevant to the issues of concern of plagiarism and educational integrity. A cursory view of the presentation topics for Day 1 revealed use of the following language: "stealing information", "protecting academic integrity", "rules", "cheating", "vigilance", "infractions" and the such like. Reading on, I was relieved to note in Dr Angelo's synopsis for Day 2's keynote address, that to treat educational integrity as a legal or administrative problem is "both inadequate and ultimately damaging to the academic values they seek to protect." He goes on to say that "recent research provides useful, if sometimes surprising insights into students' values and behaviours and suggests guidelines for more effective policy and practice." This paper on "Valuing: the role of connectedness and hope in educating for future consciousness: an empirical study on an Australian cohort of first year psychology students" would therefore appear to be relevant and may provide a possible lead-in to Dr Angelo's address.

Every problem has a first cause. Often we use models that narrowly focus on the last element in a chain of causation. Modern medicine tends to treat symptoms as causes and loses sight of the deep roots of disease. Education and psychology seek to palliate with "evidence-based" programmes and approaches that treat symptoms hardly ever causes. In addition, apparent success does not take into account the capacity of individuals to self-heal and self-progress in spite of, not because of such efforts. Holistic models on the other hand, look for first causes which are complex, "internal", multi-layered and multi-dimensional.  To even think of plagiarism as a legal or administrative problem is to impose a principle of external "control" or "policing" which is about treating symptoms, thus ensuring the problem will never be eradicated. Like computer hackers and sport dopers, humans who cheat will always be one step ahead of the technology they create. Without considering the psycho-social-spiritual issues underlying behaviours like real cheating - not the accidental infraction of petty and meaningless rules, we can never hope to find a remedy. Not only are we missing the trees for the wood – that is, the bigger picture, but in cutting down the plant, we still leave the roots intact and those true offenders who cleverly and without conscience escape detection at university, carry over a lack of integrity into the workplace and family life and contribute to the demise of a hopeful vision of the future.

Looking at first causes, the issue is not one of policing and control but of personal morality or what gives meaning and purpose to an individual student or academic's life. I argue in this paper, for a view of "valuing" rather than "values" that brings into focus the lived experience of people and not a bag of virtues that can be taught or caught. While awareness-raising is one of education's key functions, "valuing" cannot be taught as imposed objective knowledge but has to be skilfully revealed and developed as the common valued experience of fellow human beings. Valuing is a process that issues from the innate goodness of people. It is the recognition of one's own value in the scheme of things and the inherent value of the scheme itself and a valuing of how one contributes to it. Everyone is capable of it and engages in it often or we would never be able to get home safely each day. If cheating occurs, we ought not look at a model of the innate badness of human beings or the failure of policing, but at the pressures brought to bear on individuals by consumerist, materialist, impersonal, synthetic, superficial, now-focused, me-focused, diversion-addicted and age, illness and death-phobic societies whose values are promulgated by the family, the mass media, corporations, politicians and profit-motivated educational institutions.

**Background to the Study**

In a paper presented at a conference on International Education, (Giorgio, 2004c), I argue for a model of International Education that has caring as its core. Models of human caring are increasingly being endorsed in faculties of nursing where spirituality in particular, is viewed as an important means of personal and professional development both for the students themselves and their caring practices (Hoover, 2002). The present study has implications not only for

transpersonal but also global "caring" and recommends that such a model be adopted in the training of students across all faculties to include caring for others, for the environment and for the future. It takes as the departure point that students recognise and meet their own need for deeper sources of meaning before they address the needs of others or the world. Such caring of self and other can be defined as a "spiritual" endeavour idiosyncratically defined, in which one identifies with the other through connecting to "valuing" as universal human experience.

 "Valuing" rather than "values" engages a view of values-based education as process rather than product. Such a view enlarges the scope of discussion beyond the "tool kit" approach to values to engage the deeper, more complex, personalised process of ascription of meaning and purpose within the framework of students' lives at university. "Valuing" as a process is simultaneously a vision, a guiding principle, an outlook and a personal commitment to self-growth and communal and world advancement. While "valuing" has relevance to all members of the university body at large, this paper focuses on psychology students and as such has limited generalisability. Its worth is in raising important questions and validating the "valuing" that occurs at the deeper level of student functioning.

When I conducted the research described in this paper for my Honours Psychology thesis using first year Psychology students at the University of Wollongong, I did not anticipate what I found. It was purely exploratory in spite of stated hypotheses supported by the literature. In my choice of topic, I followed Exline (2002, p.245), who said "we can learn a great deal about basic human behavioral processes by studying how people practice their religion, maintain their faith, and are shaped by it" and, I would add, by the lack of it. I wanted to find out if these students were "spiritual" and if so, in what way and whether there was a connection with well-being. The measurement scales employed enabled as a by-product, gauging the valuing process of the subjects without necessarily finding evidence for the hypotheses relating to health. Without providing details of the research project in full, what relates to valuing has been presented here for the purpose of this conference.

I took as the central theme in the literature review that psychological and physical illness result from people being unable to find sources of meaning, hope, comfort, peace, strength and connection in life. My book "Surviving Cancer" (Giorgio, 2005) is a personal exploration of this theme. Sick individuals create sick families, sick workplaces, sick societies, and a sick world. Sickness envisioned as "spiritual distress" extends out from individuals into their communities and the world at large, contributing to human and ecological abuse, the disintegration of relationships and the fragmentation of community and a world order ever on the brink of  chaos. Plagiarism as a lack of personal and corporate integrity is a mere symptom of a lack of commitment to worthwhile personal, communal and global goals. The evidence can be viewed on the daily "News".  Mustakova-Possardt (2004) says that in both individualist and collectivist societies today, there are signs of moral and spiritual decline reflected in the failure of education to bring about the alleviation of human suffering and the exploitation of nature. Lombardo and Richter (2005, p.1) put it this way:

> In a time when we possess more financial wealth, material goods, and technological conveniences than ever before, we suffer from chronic stress and anxiety, information and choice overload, a decrease in perceived happiness, feelings of loss of control, deterioration in interpersonal trust and connectivity, and an epidemic of escalating depression.

Academics are largely intellectually and emotionally resistant to spirituality which Exline (2002) attributes to the predominant paradigm of materialist science. There is a tendency to equate "spirituality" with religiousness or new ageism and a failure to recognise that "…it can be an enormously fertile source of insights and observations that can be used to develop and refine psychological theories..." (p.245).  Spiritual self-care, care of other and of the environment does not have to involve God or Religion but is most often, according to Anandaraja and Hight (2001), about compassionate presence, listening and encouragement of realistic hope and proper gaurdianship.  McSherry, Draper & Kendrick's (2002) research on the "spiritual care" aspect of

the clinician's role found that it enables clients to find meaning and purpose in their illness which can enhance quality of life and well-being. Any search for meaning and feelings of connectedness especially in the face of isolation, hopelessness and fear of the unknown, is essentially a "spiritual" concern. To help others with distress is to help them understand it as the suffering that accompanies the evaluation of the significance or meaning of a phenomenon.

Similarly education, like medicine, exists to alleviate suffering through dispelling ignorance. If education however, reflects a society which gives meaning to phenomena in terms of personal or national gain, profit and loss, marketable skill and material comfort, this "valuation" of the instrumentality of education infiltrates the student mind. Learning has no altruistic motive or personal morality and fails to be a spiritual endeavour. In such a climate, blatant plagiarism is not dishonest. It is one means to producing goods and accrues no moral censure. It is seen that a student is hauled before the highest academic committee accused of plagiarism for failing to use quotation marks on a properly referenced powerpoint slide for a minor tutotial presentation, while a group of other students openly collaborate on a tough assignment that should have been done individually and all gain high distinctions while the accused student struggles alone and only just passes. The current obsession with plagiarism will spawn countless examples such as this one issuing from our current confusion about what is being valued and how meaning is being ascribed in the educative enterprise.

It is argued that "valuing" issues from the "philosophical mind" which "…probes the foundations of its own thought, realises that its thinking is defined by basic concepts, aims, assumptions and values… (and) gives serious consideration to alternative and competing concepts, aims, assumptions and values…" (Paul, 1990, p. 450). There is a call in these words not to confuse one's own thinking with reality. It is the responsibility of educational institutions to rightly foster the philosophical mind of each and every student whatever their course of study and for its educators to model such a mind. In my current life as a student, I have not witnessed such modelling or even openness to considering the philosophical mind. According to Paul (1990), the sorry state of education is that it fosters "the split mind" – one which is "verbal and unlived", for example, the values of the learning institution and the society it represents, counterposed against the one "lived but typically unverbalised" (Paul, 1990, p.451). He claims the lived valuing of students largely goes unrecognised and that there is an assumption in academia of no need for students to reflect deeply about their own meaning-making or the meaning-making of the education machine and the messages being promulgated and absorbed. What Paul said sixteen years ago still holds true today. The essential morality and call to goodness of the fertile young mind of the university student is being "squashed under the weight of conflicting valuing" as they are "socialized into unreflectiveness" to make the grade and find a job (Paul, 1990, p.451).

This conflicting valuing is evidenced in Education today where there is an apparent disconnection between what people learn and how they live both as autonomous beings and as members of a larger community to which they are accountable (Giorgio, 2004a). McInnis (2001) similarly argued this case against Australian International Education. A body of literature cited by Kezar and Rhodes (2001) describes educational institutions' disengagement from public concerns and a lack of civic consciousness as rooted in a disregard of the affective dimension. Outcomes such as self-confidence, social responsibility, self-esteem, personal efficacy and civic-mindedness are considered as secondary goals, if considered at all, as are the cognitive values of critical reflection and new ways of thinking about the social world and one's part in it.

In this post-modern age of constructivism, valuing has to be brought into the educative process as the fixed points in a world of relativity. There may be no single, stable, external reality that is accurately perceived nor one true interpretation of that reality, yet while humans "actively and proactively, construct and construe the realities to which they respond" (Steinfeld, 2000, p.356), they do so according to their valuing processes. Sorokin's (1954) famous treatise on love points to it being the shared foundation of all human valuing. Fifty years ago he said we know very little about the kind of unselfish love which transforms individuals, groups and societies into altruistic

and creative beings who think and behave as members of a global family. We still know very little about it. However, Positive Psychology as developed by Seligman of "learned helplessness" fame, is targeting subjective states like happiness (Rotter, 2000), and virtues like love which lead to values such as altruism (Post, 2002). Education's duty is to enable the flourishing of this universal and pre-existing cardinal virtue in unstifled, young, agile minds. First, education has to recognise it and then develop programmes based on its importance. The present study seeks confirmation of the central importance of love and hope in the young lives of psychologists-in-training who often become our future leaders.

In Theological and Positive Psychology circles, interest has increasingly focused on "hope" as a prime virtue for this age. Rochford (2003, p.1) defined it as "…finding oneself in a world of suffering and lack, and yet turned beyond that world toward the coming of an end to suffering and lack…to know the incompleteness of the world…and first of all to have faith in an ultimate good". Hope appears antithetical to our materialist being-in-the-world for it is future-oriented and undefined. It adopts a transcendent perspective of life which acknowledges that the highest part of the human being is not intellectual but spiritual as it is based on things unseen and things to come.

Transcendence is endorsed as a key concept in Positive Psychology and is particularly relevant to education as it highlights the possibility of a deeper understanding of how we construct meaning and maintain integrity in face of the many conflicting forces that affect our lives and keep us in bondage to addictions upon which consumerist living depends (Patel & Giorgio, 2005). According to Seligman (2002), meaning and purpose in life involve both the development of character virtues and the identification with some reality or goal "beyond oneself". Extreme individualism works against finding meaning and purpose defined as identification with some reality or goal "beyond oneself". To quote  Lombardo & Richter (2005, p.46):

> Transcendence is anathema to our modern emphasis on the ego, self-gratification, and subjectivism – there is something beyond our private realities that needs to become our center of gravity and our standard of truth and value (and) since purpose in life requires transcendence, a future oriented mindset involves practicing the virtue of transcendence. Extreme individualism and egocentricity work against future consciousness.

Spirituality has pride-of-place in Positive Psychology which ranks it as "the most human of the character strengths as well as the most sublime…(involving) coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe and one's place within it" (Seligman & Peterson, 2004, p.533). Spirituality, in fact, is argued to be the most "natural" of the human qualities (Boyer, 2004) and thought to be the highest of the human intelligences (Giorgio, 2004b; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).  As a virtue for the future, Kelly (2005) asks us to consider "hopeful intelligence" which answers the question of human destiny in a consumerist world.  Hope anticipates release into a fuller dimension of life along with spiritual freedom and personal responsibility. In the midst of suffering, death, failure, meaninglessness, fear and guilt, we might find a transcendent and intelligent ground of the universe.

**The Study**

The research questions relevant to this paper were broadly concerning how first year psychology students view spirituality and how they derive meaning and purpose to their lives. The first question was approached by testing three hypotheses:
1) Alternative Spirituality and Christian Religiosity do not represent the "spiritual" orientation of young university students.
2) A Humanistic orientation that has valuing as its base is a more relevant perception of this cohort's spirituality.
3) Spiritual Transcendence is a more representative measure of this spirituality than either o "Alternative/New Age Spirituality" or "Traditional Christianity".

The second question was answered through a content analysis of written responses to a survey which allowed for a more personal and unstructured consideration of sources of meaning and purpose in life.

**Method**

**Sample**

Data was collected via both quantitative and qualitative methods. A volunteer-for-credit sample was taken from the undergraduate pool of University of Wollongong first year psychology students ($N$=77). Relevant sample biodata is reported in Table 1.

**Procedure**

After clearance from The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong, advertising and recruitment was conducted electronically. Prior to completing a battery of tests, participants had the opportunity to read an information sheet describing the nature and purpose of the research before giving informed consent. Stapled sets of scales were distributed with instructions to complete within one hour in an allocated testing room. Tests were administered by the researcher in groups of 15 participants over a period of several weeks. Scores on individual scales were summed to form a composite score for the indices of spirituality and health and for each of the mediating variables. These were entered into SPSS for data analysis. Only the first part of the study is relevant to this paper. Aspects relating to health and mediating variables have been omitted.

**Instruments**

The Spirituality Rating Scale (appendix A) provides a profile of participants' beliefs about spirituality (McSherry, Draper & Kendrick, 2002). The 11 items are scored on a 5 point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The "spiritual care" component of the original scale was omitted as it pertained to clinicians and was not relevant to the student sample employed. Spirituality was tested for its dimensions of hope, meaning, purpose, forgiveness, beliefs, values, God, morality, creativity and self-expression. The scale demonstrated reasonable reliability. The modified scale however, was not re-validated as it was not used as a measure of "Spirituality" but as a descriptive tool for assessing participant beliefs. The scale ratings were reported item by item and not globally.

The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions Scale (appendix B) is an objective measure using the two subscales of "Christian Religiosity" and "Alternative Spirituality," both derived from a number of other widely used scales (Nasel & Haynes, 2005). It discriminates well between people who adhere to Traditional Christianity and those who adopt the principles of New Age/Unaffiliated contemporary spirituality. It has a clear factor structure and good internal reliability. Dimensions of religiosity are belief-based and include church attendance, beliefs about Christ, the resurrection, the Bible, God's will, judgment, values, exclusivity, evil, divine inspiration, meaning and prayer. Dimensions of spirituality are largely experiential and include connectedness, mysticism, unity, duality, transcendence and self-realisation. It also includes the practice of meditation and multi-belief pathways based on free choice. Each subscale's global score was calculated by summing the individual scores from the items and entered into SPSS. Scores for Christian Religiosity are 0 = not religious at all to 56 = extremely religious in the Christian tradition; and for Spirituality, 0 = not spiritual at all to 60 = extremely spiritual. Items *i* and *l* of the Christian Religiosity subscale are reversed scored.

The Spiritual Transcendence Scale (appendix C) tests the capacity of individuals to stand outside their immediate sense of time and place and to view life from a larger, more objective perspective seeing the fundamental unity underlying everything (Piedmont, 1999). It has a single overall

factor with a possible total score of 24 which is a summation of three facet scales: prayer fulfilment (9) - the feeling of joy and contentment that results from personal encounters with a transcendent reality; universality (9) - a belief in the unitive nature of life, and connectedness (6) - the belief that one is part of a larger human reality that spans generations and groups. 'Yes' is given a score of '1' and 'No' a score of "0". High internal reliabilities have been recorded for each subscale. A total score for Transcendence was entered into SPSS along with separate scores for each facet scale to facilitate comparison. Compared to other spirituality scales, this scale is based on a broad, inclusive view of spirituality that includes traditional faiths.

The open-ended <u>HOPE questionnaire</u> (appendix D) devised by Anandaraja & Hight, (2001) as a patient interview schedule for doctors, contextualises spirituality within a health setting. It generalises well to anyone in the health profession as a self and client assessment tool. A content analysis of responses was conducted. For the purposes of this paper, only the responses for H (Hope) are reported. Mnemonics refer to the following categories:
   H: Sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection
   O: Organized religion
   P: Personal spirituality practices
E: Effects of health
Handwritten responses were collected and separately analysed for thematic patterns, and emerging themes were grouped under each of the mnemonic category items.

**Results**

From Table 1, descriptive analysis revealed the subject group to be predominantly single (84.4%), female (80.5%) and young ( $M = 21.3$ years, SD = 5.6). Only 62.4% considered themselves fully Australian while the remainder was representative of the multicultural nature of Australian society. 45.4% professed a Christian faith, 3.9% were "something" else, 13% were atheist/agnostic and 37.7% were nothing. Approximately half claimed to be either spiritual or religious (mostly religious). 61.7% stated they come from a Christian faith background, 6% from some other faith, 5.8% agnostic/atheist and 23.4% nothing. The data shows a generational lowering of adherence to a faith from their own professed adherence to that of their family background. 42.9% claimed their life ambition is success and happiness while 46.8% claimed it was to gain a profession, and 10% were uncertain.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender | M 15 (19.5%) |
| | F  62 (80.5%) |
| | |
| Age | 18-21 (76.7%) |
| | 22-25 (13.0%) |
| | 28-44 (10.3%) |
| Mean Age | 21.3, SD=5.6 |
| | |
| Marital Status | Partnered 12, 15.6% |
| | Single 65, 84.4% |
| | |
| Cultural Origin | Australian 48 (62.4%) |
| | Aboriginal 1 (1.3%) |
| | Austral/Europ 5 (6.5%) |
| | Europ/Asian 1 (1.3%) |
| | Asian 6  (7.8%) |
| | Indian 2 (2.6%) |
| | Maori 1 (1.3%) |
| | African 1 (1.3%) |
| | Black American 1 (1.3%) |
| | White American 1 (1.3%) |
| | Scandinavian 2 (2.6%) |
| | Greek/Macedonian 2 (2.6%) |
| | English/Scottish 3  (3.9%) |
| | Middle Eastern 3  (3.9%) |
| | |
| Religion | Atheist/Agnostic 10 (13%) |
| | Church of England 6 (7.8%) |
| | Catholic 8.5 (11%) |
| | Christian 17.5  (22.7%) |
| | Orthodox 3 (3.9%) |
| | Unnamed 3 (3.9%) |
| | None Professed 29 (37.7%) |
| | |
| Religious Background | Atheist/Agnostic 4.5 (5.8%) |
| | Church England 8.5 (11%) |
| | Catholic 19 (24.7%) |
| | Christian 17  (22.1%) |
| | Ab/Hin/Bud/Afr 4.5 (6%) |
| | Orthodox 3 (3.9%) |
| | None Professed 18 (23.4%) |
| | |
| Life Ambition | Happiness 24 (31.2%) |
| | Psychologist 21 (27.3%) |
| | Other Profession 15 (19.5%) |
| | Success 9 (11.7%) |
| | Uncertain 9 (11.7%) |

Ratings for individual items testing beliefs about spirituality on the Spirituality Rating Scale were entered singly into SPSS using the labels matching the items of Forgiveness, Church, No God, Meaning, Hope, Conduct, Peace, Creativity, Friendship and Atheism. Descriptive statistics provided means on which a summary comparison was made (Table 2). From the table, it can be seen that Spirituality was most strongly associated with hope and morality followed by conduct, peace and friendship, then forgiveness, meaning, creativity and finally atheism. It was not associated with God or Church.

## Table 2: A Comparison of Means for the Spirituality Rating Scale

> *I believe spirituality is concerned with a need to forgive and a need to be forgiven.*
> The response was moderately positive (*M* forgive = 3.6, *SD* = 1.01).
> *I believe spirituality involves going to church/place of worship.*
> The response was strongly negative (*M* church = 1.6, *SD* = .86).
> *I believe spirituality is not concerned with belief and faith in a God or a Supreme Being.*
> The response was indeterminate (*M* no god = 2.5, *SD* = 1.26).
> *I believe spirituality is about finding meaning in the good and bad events of life.*
> The response was moderately positive (*M* meaning = 3.7, *SD* = .84).
> *I believe spirituality is about having a sense of hope in life.*
> The response was moderately to strongly positive (*M* hope = 4.1, *SD* =.88).
> *I believe spirituality is to do with the way I conduct my life here and now.*
> The response was moderately positive (*M* conduct = 3.8, *SD* = .89).
> *I believe spirituality is a unifying force so I can be at peace with myself and the world.*
> The response was moderately positive (*M* peace = 3.8, *SD* = 1.0).
> *I believe spirituality includes areas such as art, creativity and self -expression.*
> The response was mildly positive (*M* create = 3.6, *SD* = 1.1).
> *I believe spirituality involves personal friendships and relationships.*
> The response was moderately positive (*M* relate = 3.8, *SD* = .99).
> *I believe spirituality applies to atheists or agnostics.*
> The response was moderately positive (*M* atheist = 3.4, *SD* = 1.1).
> *I believe spirituality includes people's morals.*
> The response was moderately positive (*M* atheist = 4.1, *SD* = .74).

Entering the item variables for beliefs about spirituality into SPSS and conducting a bivariate correlation (Table 3), no correlations were significant for any item and "church". The strongest significant correlations (p<.01) were firstly for hope followed by morality, friendship, conduct and then forgiveness. From this it would appear that the sample rates its beliefs about spirituality less in Traditional Religious or New Age Spirituality terms and more in Humanistic terms.

## Table 3: Correlation Matrix for The Spirituality Rating Scale Scores (p<.01 ** ; p<.05 *)

|  | Forgive | Church | NoGod | Meaning | Hope | Conduct | Peace | Create | Friend | Atheism |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Church | .055 | | | | | | | | | |
|  | .636 | | | | | | | | | |
| No God | -390** | .026 | | | | | | | | |
|  | .000 | .822 | | | | | | | | |
| Meaning | .305** | .088 | -.035 | | | | | | | |
|  | .007 | .447 | .759 | | | | | | | |
| Hope | .344** | .075 | -.034 | .484** | | | | | | |
|  | .002 | .519 | .766 | .000 | | | | | | |
| Conduct | .089 | -.109 | .189 | .110 | .439** | | | | | |
|  | .439 | .345 | .100 | .341 | .000 | | | | | |
| Peace | .083 | .149 | .347** | .074 | .351** | .433** | | | | |
|  | .471 | .197 | .002 | .524 | .002 | .000 | | | | |
| Creativity | .101 | -.054 | .106 | .117 | .112 | .266* | .192 | | | |
|  | .382 | .640 | .358 | .312 | .331 | .019 | .094 | | | |
| Friendship | .261* | -.091 | -.016 | .246* | .392** | .339** | .270* | .504** | | |
|  | .022 | .432 | .890 | .031 | .000 | .003 | .018 | .000 | | |
| Atheism | -.024 | -.071 | .265* | .014 | .209 | .394** | .258* | .613** | .301** | |
|  | .835 | .538 | .020 | .906 | .068 | .000 | .024 | .000 | .008 | |
| Morality | .231* | -.052 | -.089 | .079 | .330** | .319** | .234* | .251* | .477** | .308** |
|  | .043 | .656 | .441 | .497 | .003 | .005 | .040 | .027 | .000 | .006 |

To test if the belief profile was similar for the "religious/spiritual" and "nothing" groups, means from SPSS descriptive statistics showed only one significant difference on the item relating to forgiveness with it being slightly higher for the affiliated group: $M= 3.89$, $SD = .88$, compared with the unaffiliated group: $M= 3.33$, $SD = 1.1$. An independent samples t-test found this difference to be statistically significant at $p<.05$: $t=-2.476$ (75), $p=.016$. No other differences were found.

Responses to the H component of the HOPE survey: "sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection" were grouped under headings representing each item (Table 4).
1. What is there in your life that gives you internal support?
2. What are your sources of hope, strength, comfort and peace?
3. What do you hold on to during difficult times?
4. What sustains you and keeps you going?
5. For some people, religious or spiritual beliefs act as a source of comfort and strength in dealing with life's ups and downs; is this true for you? If "no", was it ever? If "yes," what changed?

**Table 4: Sources of Hope, Meaning, Comfort and Strength**

| Internal support | Hope, strength, comfort, peace | Hard times | Sustenance, motivation | Spirituality as comfort/strength |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affiliation  87 | Affiliation  109 | Affiliation  47 | Affiliation  48 | Yes  29 |
| Self   44 | Spiritual  22 | Attitude  34 | Self  39 | No  28 |
| Spiritual  12 | Attitude  18 | Self  19 | Attitude  22 | Sometimes 10 |
| External  8 | External  16 | Spiritual  12 | Spiritual  7 | Other 3 |
| Existential  8 | Self  14 | External  5 | External  7 | No response  4 |

Totals - Affiliation: 291;  Self: 117;  Attitude: 74;  Spiritual: 53;  External: 36;  Existential: 8

1.    Source of internal support
Affiliation: family, friends, partner, children, esteemed others, pets (87 scores)
Self: positivity, determination, motivation, strength, self-worth, self-belief (44 scores)
Spiritual: God, Jesus, faith, religion, prayer, meditation (12 scores)
External: art, sport, hobbies, nature (8)
Existential: meaning, values (8 scores)

2.    Source of hope, strength, comfort and peace
Affiliation: family, friends, partner, church, others, pets (109 scores)
Spiritual: God, faith, religion, prayer, meditation, religion (22 scores)
Attitude: beliefs, goals, positivity (18 scores)
External: life, bodily, space, nature (16 scores)
Self: determination, self-belief (14 scores)

3.    Support in difficult times
Affiliation: family, friends (47 scores)
Attitude: positivity, good fortune, past experience, hope, acceptance (34 scores)
Self: self-belief, determination, goals (19 scores)
Spiritual: God, faith, religion, prayer (12 scores)
External: interests (5 scores)

4.    Sustenance and motivation
Affiliation: family, friends (48 scores)
Self: self-belief, determination, goals (39 scores)
Attitude: positivity, hope, past experience, hope, acceptance (22 scores)
Spiritual: God, faith, religion (7 scores)
External: routines,  interests, nature (7 scores)

5.    Religious/spiritual beliefs: source of strength and comfort
Yes  29
No  28
Sometimes 10
Other 3
No response  4

"No" respondents' reasons for not deriving comfort and strength from spiritual or religious beliefs: "Religion drummed in as a child"; "negative life experiences"; "no help from prayer"; "no background"; "didn't ever know what it was or felt like"; "better to be God to yourself"; "never seen it to be a source of comfort or direction"; "influenced by grandparents"; "being honest and not ever really believing"; "basic morals and belief come from humanity"; "questioning faith now and not sure what to believe"; "feelings changed as grew older and learnt more about religion"; "belief in a higher plan"; "looked into it but don't agree"; "used to when young but now can rely on myself and others and no need of something imaginary"; "parents never forced to choose a religion and never spent time finding one".

**Discussion**

Results confirmed Hypothesis 1 that neither measures of "Alternative (New Age) Spirituality" nor "Christian Religiosity" was representative of this cohort of first year psychology students as a whole, even though subjects claiming religious adherence rated more highly on "Christian Religiosity". Further support for Hypothesis 1 was provided by responses to additional self-identification items which indicated that the group as a whole did not perceive itself to be religious in the traditional sense nor spiritual in the New Age sense. Yet there was a tendency to perceive spirituality as an inherent part of who they were. Subsequent results showed that this "spiritual" identity was more humanistic than either religious or spiritual thus confirming Hypothesis 2. "Spirituality" was defined more in terms of the psychological construct of hope than anything else, with a secondary emphasis on the behavioural dimensions of morality and conduct followed by the more collectivist qualities of peace and friendship. It was not associated with the presence or absence of a God nor with any Religion or "Church". Religious affiliation had no effect on how spirituality was perceived except for a slightly higher tendency to rate forgiveness as important.

Hypothesis 3 was largely confirmed in that Transcendence means appeared to be higher than either spirituality or religiosity overall. Subjects did not appear to score very differently on spirituality and religiosity however they did score more highly on Transcendence with the stronger results for Universality and Connectedness than for Prayer Fulfilment. There was no significant difference on Transcendence between those in the religiously affiliated group and the non-affiliated group. The suggestion is that Spiritual Transcendence may be a stronger measure of the spiritual orientation of the group as a whole independent of religious affiliation. Neither Christian Religiosity nor Alternative Spirituality correlated with each other, while Transcendence correlated with both, and highly significantly with "Christian Religiosity". This suggests that Transcendence is not only a stronger measure of "Spirituality" for this group but may also subsume the other two measures. Furthermore, Transcendence is a measure common to all participants irrespective of their stated religious or spiritual affiliation rendering it a more useful instrument than others for future research on younger cohorts. There is the possibility that such results may also support Piedmont's (1999) contention that "Transcendence" is the sixth personality factor since it exists independently of Religiosity and Spirituality in this cohort.

There is no support for Nasel and Haynes' (2005) observation that for this group at least, there is a movement away from traditional religions towards "alternative" or "new age" spiritualities. A generational lowering of adherence to a particular faith was apparent, supporting part of the claim of a move away from traditional religions but not in any particular direction. The results of the present research have some similarity to Salsman, et al's., (2005) study on first year psychology students. They found the means on religious motivation to be lower than for other cohorts. Spirituality is an important part of how the students see themselves but only when construed as neither traditional religion nor alternative spirituality. From their expressed beliefs about spirituality, results clearly indicated that it has less to do with a God than atheism or agnosticism, and nothing to do with organised religion, supporting the claims made by Nasel & Haynes (2005). It is most strongly associated with humanistic values and virtues. It appears that spiritual values are being ascribed naturalistic meanings not dependant on church teachings, supporting a

view of contemporary spirituality as a form of "humanism" independent of spirituality and religion. Spiritual Humanism like Spiritual Transcendence may be an inherent part of human functioning, a "natural" spiritual inclination independent of religious affiliation and church teachings (Seligman & Peterson, 2004; Boyer, 2004; Piedmont, 2001). Certainly notions like spiritual intelligence would support such as claim (Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Emmons, 2000).

The HOPE survey results show that the locus of internal support is external to the self, found in relationship to others (affiliation), principally family, then friends. This corresponds with their view of spirituality as consistent with the "connectedness" facet of Transcendence. The result is possibly explained by the biased nature of the sample – young and female. Traditionally, women as carers ascribe relationship the highest valuation and connectedness as a feminine virtue. Relying on self in terms of deriving support from one's own personal resources was only half as important as affiliation. Girls may stay closer to parents than boys. Young university students today in general may not look within themselves for support when they are still dependant on parents. The personal qualities identified for internal support were principally positivity, determination, motivation, strength and self-worth. Again, given the youthfulness of the sample, spirituality as God, religion or beliefs is not viewed as a particularly important source of internal motivation. External supports like sport, hobbies, nature were not rated important.

Sources of hope, strength, comfort and peace were again overwhelmingly derived from relationship with family and significant others (affiliation) and much less from spiritual, existential and external supports. These students do not look to themselves for these qualities. Support in difficult times was again found in family and friends and secondly, from their own mental attitude. Giving positive ascriptions to negative events, knowing from past experience that difficulties are self-limiting, viewing one's own misfortunes to be less severe than others and through hope, finding acceptance, were all mentioned as significant attitudes in facing life's difficulties. Of less importance is the support of self-reliance through believing in oneself, having clear goals and being determined. Spirituality was not viewed as a significant support.

What sustains and keeps them going is predictably family and friends but more closely followed by the personal resources of self-belief, determination and having goals. Half as many again gave the attitudes of positivity, hope, acceptance and assurance based on coping from past experience. Spirituality is largely not viewed as a source of sustenance and motivation. Finally, religious or spiritual beliefs are seen as a source of strength and comfort in dealing with life's ups and downs in approximately 38% of participants. Reasons given for not ever or no longer finding spirituality a source of comfort and meaning were different in each case for the few who responded to this item. Generally responses confirm the lack of relevance and meaning of conventional ideas of religion and spirituality for this cohort of students.

**Limitations of the Study**

The principal limitation of all quantitative studies is the lack of adequate measurement instruments. Reductionism is inescapable A number of methodological issues affect reliability, particularly the sampling frame. The cohort studied were intelligent, psychology students, volunteers, young and mainly female. Results pertain to this restricted group of subjects. All measures based on self-report are subject to the limitations commonly associated with subjective self-perception. The current findings for "young" first year psychology students are further limited by the cross-sectional nature of the study. There are furthermore, many potentially important confounding variables which need to be assessed and statistically controlled for in a study that is not as limited as the present one. Also the interpretative significance of covariate effects heavily depends on the theoretical and practical issues involved.

## Conclusion

The greatest obstacle to values-based education is the belief that spirituality has no intellectual significance and that there is no worth in recovering the lost channels of communication between the transcendent, the spiritual and society. Moral structures of the future require a profound change in the conception of essential relationship. Relatedness needs to be taught along every dimension of living as an understanding of the interdependence of all forms of life on the planet and a new sense of responsibility towards them. At present, most relationships and therefore societies, are pervaded by power relations of dominance and submission. Authentic relationships are based on love not force. Kelly (2005) sums it up by saying, "Unless we have rationality with values and value in rationality, science is mere cleverness and morality, mere sentiment". The present study exposes the lived valuing of students which Paul (1990) claimed goes largely unrecognised in universities. It highlights how they ascribe meaning and purpose to life in terms of what they rate as important. Inherent to the valuing process of this group is a "spirituality" that defines self in terms of its relationship to other while dealing with the world through their personal strengths and attitudes of positivity, determination and self-worth, and a transcendent vision of hope.

From such insight into students' valuing, we might have the basis to proceed with Dr Angelo's suggestion for defining guidelines in more effective policy and practice. We might envision an educative process that draws on, promotes and extends such valuing in every activity conducted at university. Curriculum design, programming, assessment and evaluation might all be seeded from the fundamental human question: What meaning are we giving this according to what valuing process? Without bringing back every rationale to its first causes, we can never hope to promote integrity within education or to provide hope for the future. For example, the study models research to students that treats their deeper natures and what they value, as worthy subjects of academic enquiry. If affiliation is shown to be prime valuing among the cohort studied, education's task then is to foster, develop and extend this natural process toward a more other-centred "valuing" that enhances global citizenship, social responsibility and moral commitment. What and how they learn ought to reflect their natural tendency toward connectedness but in a direction of greater "otherness" and a sense of career and work as "service" based on their revealed personal strengths.

## Implications of the Study

According to Lombardo & Richter ( 2005) and Seligman (2002) we can evolve future consciousness only through the focused development of a core set of character virtues, an idea that dates back to Aristotle. While this research shows students actively engaging in valuing and finding sources of meaning and hope in their personal lives, looking at university mission statements little or no acknowledgement of the innate spirituality of the people it serves nor the philosophical and theological traditions from which its diverse population comes. It does not promote an inclusive and holistic vision based on the common ground of universal values and the lived valuing of its members. Course content and teaching approaches do not acknowledge and extend the fundamental motivations of students as "spiritual" beings however defined, represented by the study group. To engage students' valuing processes more meaningfully, it is suggested that traditional values-based projects be reappraised in light of further research and that new culturally-inclusive, holistic and progressive approaches be trialled across faculties. One such programme still under development, is the Brahma Kumaris "Values for Tertiary Education". An introduction to this programme will be the focus of the workshop accompanying this paper.

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## Appendix A

### Spirituality Rating Scale
(McSherry, Draper & Kendrick, 2002).

*Note: this scale is 1 to 5*
Indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1= strongly disagree    2= disagree    3= uncertain    4= agree    5= strongly agree

\_\_\_ a) I believe spirituality is concerned with a need to forgive and a need to be forgiven.

\_\_\_ b) I believe spirituality involves only going to church/place of worship.

\_\_\_ c) I believe spirituality is not concerned with belief and faith in a Supreme Being.

\_\_\_ d) I believe spirituality is about finding meaning in good and bad events of life.

\_\_\_ e) I believe spirituality is about having a sense of hope in life.

\_\_\_ f)  I believe spirituality is to do with the way I conduct my life here and now.

\_\_\_ g) I believe spirituality is a force for unity and peace both within me and the world.

\_\_\_ h) I believe spirituality includes areas such as art, creativity and self -expression.

\_\_\_ i)  I believe spirituality involves personal friendships and relationships.

\_\_\_ j)  I believe spirituality applies to atheists and agnostics.

\_\_\_ k) I believe spirituality includes people's morals.

# Appendix B

## Spiritual and Religious Dimensions Scale
(Nasel & Haynes, 2005)

Note: this scale is 0 - 4
0 = strongly disagree    1 = disagree    2 = uncertain    3 = agree    4= strongly agree

'Christian Religiosity'
___ a)  The Resurrection proves beyond a doubt that Jesus was the Christ
___ b)  Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God made a way to forgive sin.
___ c)  I believe that going to religious services is important.
___ d)  My spirituality is based primarily on the Bible and its teachings.
___ e)  I try to follow God's will for my life.
___ f)  God will judge each person after their death.
___ g)  All or most of my personal values are derived from my religion.
___ h)  Christ will return some day soon.
___ i)  Jesus Christ, like others, may have been  a great ethical teacher, but not God.
___ j)  There is only one true path to God, and all other paths are misleading.
___ k)  Evil comes from the devil.
___ l)  The Bible teaches about morals but isn't more divinely inspired than others.
___ m) Religion is very important to me as it answers questions about life's meaning.
___ n)  I practice some form of prayer.

'Alternative Spirituality'
___ a)  I had an experience where I seemed deeply connected to everything.
___ b)  I have had a mystical experience.
___ c)  I had experience of seeming to merge with a power or force greater than  I.
___ d)  I seek a number of spiritual and religious belief systems on my spiritual path.
___ e)  I had an experience in which I seemed to transcend space and time.
___ f)  I had an experience where I seemed to go beyond an everyday sense of self.
___ g)  I refer to more than one sacred text for guidance.
___ h)  I believe that I have a Higher Self.
___ i)  Every living thing is connected on a higher level: humans, animals, plants, all.
___ j)  I have had an experience in which all things seemed divine.
___ k  I practice meditation on a regular basis.
___ l)  I seek alternative interpretations of sacred religious texts and statements.
___m) Personal growth and self development very much motivate my spiritual pursuits.
___ n)  Learning to appreciate my dark or 'sinful' side is essential to spiritual growth.
___ o)  I consider all sides to a problem, including the spiritual side before deciding.

Additional self-identification items
___ p)  Spirituality is an important part of who I am as a person.
___ q)  I see myself as a religiously oriented person.
___ r)  My spirituality reflects 'traditional' Christian values.
___ s)  My spirituality reflects many New Age principles.
___ t)  This questionnaire appears to be measuring spirituality.
___ u)  I responded to all statements honestly.

**Spiritual Transcendence Scale**
(Piedmont, 1999)

Note: this measure is categorical: Yes =1, No =0

Prayer Fulfilment

___ a)  I meditate or pray so I can reach a higher spiritual plane.
___ b)  I have had at least one peak experience.
___ c)  I can step out of my own concerns to experience a larger sense of fulfilment.
___ d)  I find inner strength and peace from my prayers and meditation.
___ e)  Sometimes the details of my life distract me from prayer and meditation.
___ f)  When in prayer or meditation I have become oblivious to events of this world.
___ g)  I experienced deep fulfilment and bliss through my prayers and meditations.
___ h)  I have had a spiritual experience where I lost track of time and space.
___ i)  The desires of my body do not keep me from my prayers and meditation.

Universality

___ j)  I feel that on a higher level all of us share a common bond.
___ k)  All life is interconnected.
___ l)  There is a higher plane of consciousness that binds us all.
___m)  Even if individuals are difficult, I feel a bond of emotion with all humanity
___ n)  I believe that there is a larger meaning to life.
___ o)  I believe that death is a doorway to another plane of existence.
___ p)  I believe that there is a larger plan to life.
___ q)  There is an order to the universe that transcends human thinking.
___ r)  I believe that on some level my life is intimately tied to all of humanity.

Connectedness

___ s)  Although dead, images of my relatives continue to influence my life.
___ t)  It is important to me to give something back to the community.
___u)  I am a link in the chain of my family's heritage.
___v)  I am concerned about those who will come after me in life.
___w)  I still have strong emotional ties with someone who has died.
___x)  Although there is good and bad in people, I believe humanity as a whole is good

**HOPE  Questionnaire**
(Anandaraja & Hight, 2001)

**Instructions**
Please take half hour to complete this.You may use the attached lined sheets.

H: <u>Sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection</u>
   1. What is there in your life that gives you internal support?
   2. What are your sources of hope, strength, comfort and peace?
   3. What do you hold on to during difficult times?
   4. What sustains you and keeps you going?
   5. For some people, their religious or spiritual beliefs act as a source of comfort and strength
      in dealing life's ups and downs; is this true for you?
   6. If the answer is "Yes," go on to O and P questions.
   If the answer is "No," consider asking: Was it ever? If the answer is "Yes," what changed?

O: <u>Organized religion</u>
   7. Do you consider yourself part of an organized religion?
   8. How important is this to you?
   9. What aspects of your religion are helpful and not so helpful to you?
   10. Are you part of a religious or spiritual community? Does it help you? How?

P: <u>Personal spirituality practices</u>
   11. Do you have personal spiritual beliefs that are independent of organized
   religion? What are they?
   12. Do you believe in God? What kind of relationship do you have with God?
   13. What aspects of your spirituality or spiritual practices do you find most
   helpful to you personally? (e.g., prayer, meditation, reading scripture,
   attending religious services, listening to music, hiking, communing with
   nature)

E: <u>Effects of health</u>
   14. Does ill health affected your ability to do  the things that usually help you spiritually?
   (Or affected your relationship with God?)
   15. Is there anything you access that usually helps you?
   16. Are you worried about any conflicts between your beliefs and your lifestyle?
   17. Would it be helpful for you to speak to a clinical chaplain/community spiritual leader?
   18. Are there any specific practices or restrictions you engage in?