

BELIEF SYSTEM AWARENESS

AT UW-STOUT

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to investigate an awareness level of belief systems of the faculty, staff, students and alumni from the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin. This is the first step toward understanding others' belief systems, which can lead to tolerance and acceptance of each individual's own belief system. An electronic survey of 44 questions was conducted as a means to collect data for this study. The survey was distributed to 464 subjects whose names were found on the UW-Stout email directory. A total of 61 responses were received. The response rate was 13 percent.

Survey results were collected by the researcher and examined using percentages, means and standard deviation. It was concluded through this survey that the respondents

are aware of their own belief systems. This was determined by the fact that the majority of respondents did not answer “don’t know” to the majority of questions. Although most are aware of their own belief systems, they are not as aware that other populations hold equal valid belief systems. It was also found that most respondents thought that they themselves or their parents most greatly influenced their individual belief systems. In addition the respondents were somewhat tolerant of others’ belief systems. The research was limited because the sample population was small. Eighty-two percent of the respondents stated Christianity as their preferred religion, and 90 percent were Caucasian, however the world’s Christian population is reportedly 33 percent and the world’s Caucasian population is 25 percent.

Possible future studies would be to include a larger sample group and to ask questions with narrow objective.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background/History

Societies, cultures, religions and individuals contribute to the diversity of our world. Each person's beliefs, values and attitudes create one's own unique belief system, each exclusive belief system being valid for the individual. These basic components, manipulated by inward and outward events are the essence of that which drives, influences and motivates human thinking that leads to behavior (Walsch, 2003). Negative behaviors and interactions in work environments often stem from human beings' diverse belief systems. In an effort to understand each others' belief systems, it is important to first understand one's own belief system. Understanding is vital for building a respectful civilization.

This study is to determine the level of awareness each individuals holds, regarding their own belief system and contrariant belief systems equal in validity. Many times when several cultures meet in work environments the different belief systems cause work environments to become uncooperative. Many of attempted behavioral change agents have not changed behavior because external forces cannot change behavior, only beliefs do (Walsch, 2003). Since national culture is deeply rooted, it is reasonable to conclude that nationality continues to affect employees' preferences and work behaviors (Salk Essec & Brannen, 2000).

This study is important to bring awareness to the fact as quoted in the Association of International Educators report written by Bollag (2003), "We are unnecessarily putting ourselves at risk because of our stubborn monolingualism and ignorance of the world." It is important to understand alternative belief systems; the United States, where people of many different faiths and ethnicities live together, have a responsibility to learn and understand each other to live in a positive social environment" (Douglas, 2002). One of the most serious negative consequences in

the world of education is the failure to teach people about differing belief systems and shared common values.

Statement of the Problem

Although studies indicate that culture's role in past research and theory is very complex (Salk et al. 2000) it is understood that culture, socialization and belief system associated with them are a main force behind an individual's behaviors (Barnard & Spencer, 1996). Brinkerhoff and Gill (1994) stated that behavior is not independent of the organization, therefore the socialization behaviors extolled on every individual are not exclusive to private life, but are also demonstrated within the organization. When differentiating belief systems come together, cooperation in the work place can be compromised and performance problems increase. Cultural characteristics and beliefs can sometimes be enough to negatively affect how people work together (Salk Essec and Brannen, 2000). To understand others' individual belief systems, people must first understand their own unique belief system. The problem that arises and the focus of this research is to what degree individuals are aware of the belief system and whether they agree to value others; belief systems equally.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine to the extent possible how faculty, staff, students and alumni from UW-Stout perceive their understanding of their individual belief system. In one small step, the survey will motivate people to evaluate what they believe, what they value and where their beliefs fall on the spectrum of possibilities. In addition this study will motivate others to consider what and or who have influenced their belief systems and expose them to contrariant belief system.

Definition of Terms

The following defined terms will be used throughout the study.

1. Contrariant: of contrarier to contradict. Contrary; opposed; antagonistic; inconsistent; contradictory (Dictionary.com).
2. Belief system: A complex system of believing consisting of the following components.
 - a. Beliefs: Mental acceptance of and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something accepted without proof (Rokeach, 1968).
 - b. Attitude: a complex mental orientation involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways (Rokeach, 1968).
 - c. Values: beliefs about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end state of existence worth or not worth attaining (Rokeach, 1968).

Research Objectives

To begin to understand if individuals recognize that their beliefs, attitudes and values are part of their own belief system, it is important to determine if people give thought and are aware of their belief systems. Collecting data from a variety of subjects with a variety of backgrounds in an electronic survey is one way to accomplish this. Research objectives of this study include:

1. To gather information regarding the subjects awareness of their own beliefs.
2. To motivate subjects to give thought regarding what/who influenced their beliefs.
3. To further awareness of contrariant belief systems.

Limitations of the Study

There are five major limitations of this study. The limitations are:

1) Logical contradictions in understanding the questions with the same interpretation due to the subject of the study. Belief systems have logical contradictions. Believing in a “belief system” is part of what one believes. If individuals are unaware that each person has beliefs, attitudes and values that can be compiled into a “belief system,” answers to questions can easily be misinterpreted and analyzed data skewed.

2) Subjects from UW-Stout represent a small population pool of respondents. Sixty-one respondents contributed to this study. Ninety-two percent of the respondents were Caucasian and 82 percent were Christian.

a) According to Oxford Encyclopedia World Atlas (1997), 80 percent of the U.S. population is white, 12 percent are African American and other races equal eight percent. The world Caucasian population is under 20 percent. If race is a factor in what people believe, the results from UW-Stout will not represent a national or global population.

b) The survey is not representative of the national or global mean of ethnicities and beliefs systems (of which religions are typical contributors). In one category, *religious preference*, the national population of the Christian world is about 85 percent which comes close to the study population who selected Christianity as their preferred religion, however, the world’s population of Christians is 33 percent. From a global perspective, the UW-Stout study population represents about three times greater than the number of reported Christians in the world.

3) The turn around time of returning the surveys may have limited the number of subjects completing the survey, therefore, subjects had between March 28 and April 1 to complete the online survey. The subjects may not have had enough time to respond to the survey.

4) The survey was electronic. This poses several limitations. Research has found that although some researchers will obtain equal and possibly higher response rates using electronic surveys, the majority of electronic surveys produce lower response rates (Shannon & Bradshaw, 2002).

a) The survey could only be completed online.

b) If subjects did not look at their email accounts in a timely fashion, they may not have seen the survey request.

c) Subject may not feel comfortable taking an online survey especially if they believe that their identity can be determined.

5) The subjects were mostly if not all college educated. Since the college educated population of the United States is approximately 25 percent, the respondents from UW-Stout represent a much higher mean than that of the United States and global populations. If education is a factor in belief systems awareness, the results from UW-Stout will not be representative of the national population who is college educated.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Homogenous European cultures will soon be a minority in the United States. If not already, in the near future of this century, racial and ethnic groups in the United States will have a greater total population than the previously dominated European descendant population (Henry, 1990). Immigrants from European will be a minority and by the year 2056, the mean American will link their ethnic background to the African, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islands, and Arabian continents.

Barbara Dyer, president and CEO of Hitachi Foundation states, the business workplace will no longer be able to adapt the worker to the workplace, but will need to adapt the workplace to this new generation of worker (Philppidis, 2002). That adaptation will come from multi-ethnic populations with a variety of beliefs systems working along side each other. In order to create high performance organizations, they will need to work cooperatively side-by-side. Awareness of the vast extent of different belief systems may be the first step in creating a cooperative work environment (Mink, 1995). This literature review includes belief systems through America's array of belief systems, America's assumption toward others' belief systems, the lack of studies about belief systems, belief systems in religion and finally belief system awareness.

America's Array of Belief Systems

The past American population is mostly from European decent. In general belief systems from European cultures are similar as most immigrants practiced beliefs stemming from Christian teachings with belief in a monotheistic god. Today immigrants from Asia and Africa and Arabian countries practice beliefs stemming from ideology that is foreign to the belief systems that built the American society. These cultures bring beliefs of ancestry worship,

polytheism, reincarnation and other belief systems that originate from areas that seem vastly different than the (formerly) homogenous America.

The new immigration of Americans' belief systems include many and often overtly different belief systems. Those whose belief systems stem from Christian teachings include belief in one God. They also share beliefs and values of the afterlife and humanities purpose on earth.

Immigrants from African countries bring beliefs in polytheistic Gods, and ancestral worship. They also derived belief systems from some of the oldest in the world; they possess belief system's professing that no event has a life of its own and that each thing affects something else and was previously affected by something.

Similar to Native Americans' belief systems, belief systems of many people of Asia come about through their religion of animism, the oldest known type of belief system in the world (Frank, 1951, Belief Systems Vocabulary List). American animists practice nature worship and belief that ancestors watch the living from the spirit world. They believe shamans communicate with the spiritual realm on behalf of the living and believe in Gods that control our natural elements.

Some East Indian-Americans' belief systems include the practice of Hinduism which includes worship of polytheistic gods, reincarnation, reaching nirvana and a rigid caste systems. Some Arabic-American belief systems include Islam teachings which include justification for holy wars. It is important that people understand that belief systems representative from various ethnicities in America possess equal validity.

Assumption Toward Others' Beliefs

The United States is redefining what it is to be American (Riche, 1991). Henry mentioned that multicultural races often felt that whites granted right to equality as a gift rather than something people of color inherited as a natural right (1990). This feeling is changing due to the number of different ethnicities demanding equality. Prior to the influx of non-European immigrants since 1975, excluding small populations of Africa, Asian, Arabic descendants, most American's had similar physical features. As different European ethnicities intermarried and physical features blended, separate ethnicities became less obvious. European descendants' skin was white; men and women respectively were of similar build with a variety of eye and hair color. With less-obvious physical traits to distinguish alternative cultures, so too was it difficult to determine different belief systems.

Now, the largest immigration population comes from the continents of Africa, Asia and Arabic nations (Henry, 1990). Asian, Africa and Arabic national's physical features differ from the typical European norm by the fact that most their skin is of color, most eyes are dark with epithelial eyelids, and almost 100 % have dark hair. These people have distinguishable physical features compared to their Caucasian cousins. Belief systems associated with non-European societies include religious beliefs including Animism, Christian, Jewish, Shinto, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, atheism, and pantheism. These religions are often incongruent to the Christianity practiced by most European-descendant-American. Judgments and assumptions of others' belief systems in relationship to the obvious physical identifiers of skin, hair and eyes, can become a bed of contention in the work place (Adams, 1999). Because of the difference in the appearance of the Homo sapiens species, through association, it is of human nature to link physical characteristics with associated belief systems. As Mary Pipher (2002) states, today

when we speak with, or work with, or socialize with others who have different belief systems, we continually challenge and consider how the other person may be interpreting what we say or do and conversely we need to interpret the meaning of what they are doing or saying. This challenge is not only energy consuming, it often does not produce an answer to internal questions asked since Americans don't have the foundation of the others' belief system to decode words, behaviors, practices, and celebrations. These problems lead to frustration, mistrust, misunderstanding and prejudice.

Adams (1999) said that thoughts, actions and behaviors that seem perfectly reasonable in one culture may seem ridiculous, disrespectful, inefficient or unfair to in other cultures. When cultural preferences dictate conflict resolution increased misunderstanding occurs because of unknown and unfamiliar contrariant cultural processes.

Lack of Studies About Belief Systems

A related stream of research comes from sociological literature found to clarify the difficulties associated with understanding and researching belief systems. Studies on cultural beliefs in the work place seem to be sparse (Martin, 2002). "However, there has been relatively little comparable work regarding one crucial subset of culture, namely, knowledge or beliefs, even through it was this subset of culture that was first held to be determined by aspects of social structure (Marx & Engels [1845-46] 1976).

Budhwar and Sparrow (2002) stated that first and foremost there was a need for more cross-national Human Resources Management (HRM) studies. Earley and Stubblebine (1989), stated that it is not clear how studies relate based on an individual's cultural backgrounds and belief systems. Sociology of knowledge which is the link between beliefs and structural patterns of interaction has not been agreed upon successfully (Martin, 2002). One reason is that the

sociology of knowledge has attempted to explain the content of some belief systems through research observation. Generally observations are conducted by members outside the observed community, where it is difficult for the observer to interpret and generalize individual responses. Stehr and Grundmann (2001) believe that studies in sociology have a poor record in gaining understanding of cultures believing there is much irregularity in the social phenomena. Other researchers like Meagher and Wilson (2002) however, take issue with nay sayer's stating that practicality of knowledge is determined by careful judgment of social scientists and outcomes are measurable.

Belief Systems in Religion

The definition of religion according to Knox & Marston (2003) is a belief system and a set of practices that recognize the existence of a power higher than humans. Frank (1951) states that man has historically developed ways to organize and regulate group living. These human creations are identified as societies. Societies draw from religion to establish rules of the society. In a society, children are brought up to utilize the groups approved rituals, ceremonies, beliefs assumption etc which creates acceptable practices to create social order within their culture (Frank, 1951).

Religious beliefs contribute a large portion of what is taught as acceptable in a particular society and these practices lay the foundation for what is expected as acceptable beliefs, values and attitudes that lead to behaviors, actions, and practices of each individual in that culture.

“It is what the child hears and understands and believes that enters into his emerging personality. He builds up his own private frame of reference, with all the gaps, misunderstandings, distortions, and misconceptions of a three, four, or five year old and incorporates them in his basic concepts and assumptions. Most of us go through life

trying to fit all of our subsequent experiences and learning into this early private frame of reference. Unless someone helps us, we rarely revise or reconstruct our early private version of life and re-think it in more adult terms” (Frank, 1951).

Culture is a form of primary socialization that is particularly resistant to change (Salk & Brannen, 2000). Linking the fact that America is now mostly non-Caucasian (Henry, 1990), and that each individual is socialized from cultures that are resistant to change, within our perceived national cultural framework resides conflict. There are variations of acceptable, behaviors, practices and belief systems difficult to change and understand but equally valid.

As defined in chapter one, belief systems include beliefs, values and attitudes; organized societies include all of these components to establish a social institution or society. Most of the world’s major religions recognize powers higher than humans and many include belief in mono or polytheistic Gods (Belief Systems Vocabulary).

By the year 2000, 50 % of all elementary and secondary-school children will be from an ethnic minority (Henry, 1990; O’Hara, 1993). These children become tomorrow’s work force. Ethnic minorities bring the wonderment and excitement of contrariant belief systems, but they also bring the chaos and misinterpretations. People from different cultures with different belief systems do not react to the same information in the same way (Gitelson, Bing, and Laroche 2001). Knowing about the beliefs and practices of people who share this world is vital to the future (Douglass, 2002).

Belief System Awareness

Awareness is the key to the first step, noted Karp (1998), when discussing the Gestalt theory. Mink (1995) charted the seven stages of concern stating that awareness is the first step in producing change, followed by stages of information, personal management, consequences, collaboration and refocusing. Mink's interpretation of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) stages of concern, introduces the link in the process between realization of how contrariant cultural beliefs systems impede cooperative work environments and the beginning stage of bringing about this change by first becoming aware of it. Frank says (1951) affective societies in one country may be rejected in another country, however as Mink (1995) states when people are aware of their own belief systems they can become aware of others' belief systems.

On every dollar bill is the phrase E-Pluribus unum, one formed from many, or from diversity comes unity (Henry, 1990; Riche, 1991). Our American society was shaped with the help of the bill of rights (Martin, 1993) stating that congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. No other influence is stronger in shaping our beliefs values and attitudes than organized religion. This social structure provides the backbone in the stability of our nation. Awareness of individual's contrariant or congruent belief system will build a respectful humanity.

Survey Design

The survey was designed with 44 questions and distributed through the electronic email system at UW-Stout. The questions were arranged in groups of key question asking the subject of their beliefs, values and attitudes regarding God, the human soul, sexual practices, best

practices, religions as divine or human creations, views in spiritualism, demonstrations of religious practices and thoughts on religion ensuring a better life. The ease of selecting names and sending the survey to many subjects in a relatively short period of time made an online survey attractive. As a laptop campus and in the spirit of encouraging use of technology campus wide, the UW-Stout response rate had potential for substantial success.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

It is interesting to note how a Master's of Training and Development student decides to study belief systems awareness on the UW-Stout campus. As stated in previous chapters, there is a need to research and understand how and why different cultures do not work cooperatively together in the workplace and how training and development personnel needs to address contrariant cultural belief systems.

When there are problems between people from different cultures many times it is for the reason that they have different belief systems which lead to different problem solving ideas. Action and behaviors stem from what an individual believes, and when actions and behaviors are not understood by others in the workplace, conflict can arise.

With the idea that contrariant cultural belief systems often impede cooperative work environments, the topic was too broad in that it included all cultures and all work environments. Narrowing the topic was a must for a beginning researcher. A first attempt to accomplish this was to narrow the topic to include one specific culture and one specific workplace. In pondering whether to conduct a qualitative or quantitative study and producing measurement questions, the topic was still too large and seemingly impossible to achieve worthwhile results. In asking sample questions of some UW-Stout professors the topic narrowed even further when it was realized that most of the proposed sample questions would produce reliable results only if the study population understood that what they believed was actually part of a belief system.

It was at that time that the researcher and her advisor agreed that determining the *degree of awareness* people possess *of their own belief systems* would narrow the topic to a manageable research project.

This chapter will describe the methodology used from five topic areas including: (1) subject selection and description, (2) instrument development, (3) data collection and (4) analysis procedures, and (5) limitations of the study.

Subject Selection and Description

A random sample of the UW- Stout faculty, staff, student and alumni populations were asked to voluntarily complete a quantitative online survey of 44 questions regarding their demographics, their beliefs, attitudes and values. Email addresses of the UW-Stout faculty, staff, student and alumni populations are available for research, however, the survey questionnaires will be sent to 464 subjects. All of the people whose last name began with the letter N and were listed in the email directory were selected as recipients. The letter “N” was arbitrary, but chosen because of its relative middle placement in the alphabet so as not to burden those at the front or end of the alphabet who may more often become targets due their proximity to the front or back of the alphabet. Also “N” was chosen because a large subject sample could be obtained through last names beginning with the letter “N.” By selecting faculty, staff, student and alumni populations whose last name began with “N,” the entire subject sample are neatly contained with one decisive factor. This would allow for some crossover of recipients if future studies were conducted and the survey of the same population was desired. It would also allow for follow up emails within the exact population. A single letter was chosen because of the ease of distribution of the survey. When sending out email from a Stout web account, selecting consecutive names is infinitely more efficient than selecting names at random.

To find the names in the UW-Stout email directory, the researcher logged on to the UW- Stout web email account. Next, a new email letter was opened. After clicking on the “To” button, the “find names—Web page dialog” box appeared. Typing the letter “n” in the “Display

name” box and clicking find, displayed 100 names in alphabetical order, 95 which were valid individual accounts. To avoid having to scroll through hundreds of names and perceive the email as junk mail or spamming, the researcher added each subjects email address to the BCC list. Additionally, “nelson” was typed in the “Display name” box to continue with the alphabetical list of names. Picking up from where the previously list ended, 77 more names were sent an email BCC. Additionally, the letters “nem, nep, ner, nes, net, neu, new, nez, ng, ni, no, nu and ny were typed into the “Display name” to emit five, one, two, nine, nine, 25, 11, two, nine, 77, 97, 14 and 15 names respectively, all which were added to the BCC box. A total of 5 emails were sent to include the 464 names.

Instrumentation

The purpose of this study was to quantify if possible what population percentage of UW-Stout faculty, staff, student and alumni populations were aware of the beliefs, attitudes and values that make up their belief systems. As demonstrated through the literature review, when considering belief systems, many aspects of a society and culture contribute to an individual’s belief systems, however none more so than that of a culture’s religion. In every society since recorded times religion has been a part of that society (Bowker, 2002). Most of the measurement questions therefore question beliefs attitudes and values that most likely were developed from religious teachings. Considering belief system influences that stemmed from areas such as parents, secular society, culture, etc., would not only become difficult to separate where they come from but also be daunting in the number of measurement questions it could take to thoroughly examine the different areas. It is for these reasons above that most questions come from an organized-religious nature. The questions were developed upon the review of literature by the researcher. Questions were grouped in series pertaining to:

- 1) Beliefs, as defined in chapter one as the mental acceptance of and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something accepted without proof.
- 2) Attitudes, defined as a complex mental orientation involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways.
- 3) Values, defined as beliefs about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end state of existence worth or not worth attaining.

Since no existing survey fit the scope of this study, an instrument was developed to measure the awareness of UW- Stout faculty, staff, student and alumni populations.

The instrument for this study was a self-reported confidential survey is one that measures faculty, staff, students' and alumnus' awareness of their belief systems, motivates subjects to give thought regarding what or who influenced their belief systems and to further awareness of contrariant belief systems.

Of the 44 questions asked of the faculty, staff, student and alumni, five were demographic questions including gender, program affiliation at UW- Stout, race, age and religious preference. Subjects used radio buttons, fill in the blank or drop down format respectively, two questions asking the subjects how often they think about what they believe and how often they re-evaluate what they believe. The sequential 32 measurement questions were selections on a six-point Likert scale including, strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree and don't know. The final three questions conclude the survey with one yes-no, one Likert scaled question and one non-required short essay question. Question eight and forty-three are the same question. Questions eight asks the subjects' understanding of their belief system prior to taking the survey, questions forty-three asks the subjects' understanding of their belief system after taking the survey.

Data Collection Procedures

A completion of Human Subject Protection training is required prior to sending out the electronic surveys. Consent for the research was obtained electronically from the UW- Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) on March 15, 2004. The research grant, funded by the Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs through the Student Research Fund, was awarded to the researcher in support of the presentation of the research results at the second annual “New Directions for the Humanities” in Prato, Italy, July 20, 2004. After the approval, a cover letter was included with the survey explaining the purpose of the study and inviting the subjects’ voluntary response. The cover letter that was sent for approval at the Stout Solutions office appears as Appendix A.

A total of 464 subjects were sent the cover letter along with an email hyperlink to the survey on March 28, 2004. The request was made to complete the survey and submit it by April 1, 2004. All survey data was confidential to the subject due to the nature of the electronic survey collection methodology. When the subject completed the survey, an email is returned to the researcher coming from the webmaster email address, the subject was unidentifiable.

A second email was sent to the same original subject list on March 30, 2004 and appears as Exhibit B. The email included a word of thanks to those who had already participated in the survey, and encouraged others if they had not yet completed a survey that the deadline to do so was April 1, 2004. It was also noted that the survey should take between 10-15 minutes to complete.

On April 1, 2004, the final email was sent to the original group as it appears in Appendix C. In the email the people were again thanked for their participation and encouraged to take the survey if they hadn't already done so. It was also noted that if the subjects were interested in viewing the results, that they could do so at research Day, April 28, 2004 in the Student Center. The three invitations to complete the survey were successful in helping the researcher to achieve a 13 percent response rate. A total of 61 responses were received out of 464 sent out by the April 1, 2004 deadline.

Data Analysis

The research data was viewed electronically evaluated in detail and is included under results in chapter IV. Comparisons of the different responses were viewed and conclusions made. Upon the deadline date the survey was closed. The mean and standard deviation were calculated and included in chapter IV.

Limitations

There are distinct advantages to using electronic surveys mostly the ease and efficiency of distributing the survey, however; there are also some limiting factors. The survey was limited to the UW-Stout population which due to demographics will not represent a national or a global perspective. Although everyone at UW-Stout has access to email, there may still be a portion of the population who is not comfortable using technology. The subjects may not feel their responses are secure since there is always a way for *someone* to determine who the response email is coming from. Those comfortable with using technology and comfortable taking an on-line survey may not represent the statistical norm (Shannon & Bradshaw, 2002).

Data analysis methodologies did not include the break down of how different demographics responded to different questions. Therefore, belief system awareness was not broken down by demographics.

Also, in questions eight and forty-three it cannot be determined the number of respondents who changed their thought on who/what most greatly influenced their belief system. As a whole a small percentage changed their minds, however, because the data is collective, only the sums of category responses are totaled, not the individual's change between each individual's response.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Results

This chapter will include the results of surveys on the awareness of belief systems of faculty, staff, students and alumni at UW-Stout, Menomonie, and Wisconsin. The surveys were completed between March 28, 2004 and April 1, 2004. It also includes demographic information of the respondents.

Four hundred sixty four surveys were sent electronically to the UW-Stout population whose last name began with the letter "N." Eleven emails were returned as undeliverable. Of the remaining 453 surveys distributed, a total of 61 surveys were returned, all were usable. This resulted in an overall return rate of 13 percent. Subjects included 61 percent females and 39 percent males.

Demographic Information

TABLE 4.1 Demographic Information

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
GENDER:		
Female	37	60.7 %
Male	24	39.3 %

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
ETHNICITY:		
Caucasian	56	91.8 %
Asian Heritage	2	3.3 %
African American	1	1.6 %
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other	2	3.3 %

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
AGE:		
18-19	4	6.6 %
20-21	18	29.5 %
22-23	13	21.3 %
24-27	7	11.5 %
28-30	3	4.9 %
31-35	3	4.9 %
36-45	6	9.8 %
46-60	6	9.8 %
61+	1	1.6 %

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
RELIGIOUS STATUS:		
Christian	50	82 %
Muslim		
Buddhist	3	4.9 %
Animism		
Jewish		
Hindu		
Confucianism		
Taoism		
None	7	11.5 %
Other	2	3.3 %

Demographic	Frequency (N)
PROGRAM AFFILIATION	
Administration	1
AM&CS	1
Apparel Design and Development	4
Applied Math and Computer Science	1
Art Education	3
Construction	2
Dance Team	1
Early Childhood Education	6
Engineering Technology	2
General Business	7
Food & Nutritional Sciences	1
Graphic Communications Mgmt	2
Mental health counseling	1
IT	1
N/A	1
Packaging	2
Psychology	3
Risk Control	1
Student Services	1
SVRI	1
Tech Ed	1
Technology Education	1
Telecommunication Systems	4
Training and Development	6
Vocational Rehab	7

Demographic items measuring gender, program of study, ethnicity, age, and religion preference produced multiple-choice data at the nominal scale of measurement. These items are described by mean and standard deviation for each question. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (92 percent). The second most represented groups were subjects who selected the “other” and Asian categories with 3.3 percent each. The one remaining participant indicated that her/his ethnic heritage was African American. About 57 percent of the subjects were traditional

college age (ages 18 to 23) and 43 percent were nontraditional college age (greater than age 24). Exactly 82 percent of the sample claimed to practice Christianity. The second most claimed religious practice was “None” at about 11 percent and Buddhism at five percent. Table 4.1 reports demographic data using the Likert scale for the eleven question group areas, 1) Strongly Disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree and 6) Don’t Know. Any subject who answered “don’t know” to any question was not included in the mean or standard deviation calculations as noted in the frequency column in the tables below.

Key areas of Questions of the Belief System Awareness Questionnaire

In order to examine the participants’ awareness of their belief systems, the belief system awareness questionnaire asked the following eleven key areas questions: 1) Belief in monotheistic, polytheistic or atheistic views, 2) Belief in the human soul 3) Belief in various sexual relationship practices, 4) Thought in subjects’ belief system as best for everyone, 5) Thought in religions humanly or divinely created, 6) View in religion as true path or guides/manipulates behavior, 7) View in spiritualism versus religion, 8) Demonstrations of religious practices, 9) Thought in one religion ensuring a better life over another, 10) Thought in one belief system better than others’. 11) Validity of beliefs. 12) Who/what most influenced belief systems.

In addition, these groups of questions were categorized by the three factors that compile a belief system.

1. Beliefs: Questions in groups one, five, six and nine.
2. Attitudes: Questions in groups two, seven and ten.
3. Values: Questions in group three, four and eight.

The categorical summary will be discussed in chapter V.

1) *Mono Theistic, Polytheistic or Atheistic Views*

TABLE 4.2. Mono Theistic, Polytheistic or Atheistic Views

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I believe in one God.	60	4.01	1.38
I believe in many Gods.	60	1.66	1.01
I do not believe in any God (s).	59	1.56	1.09

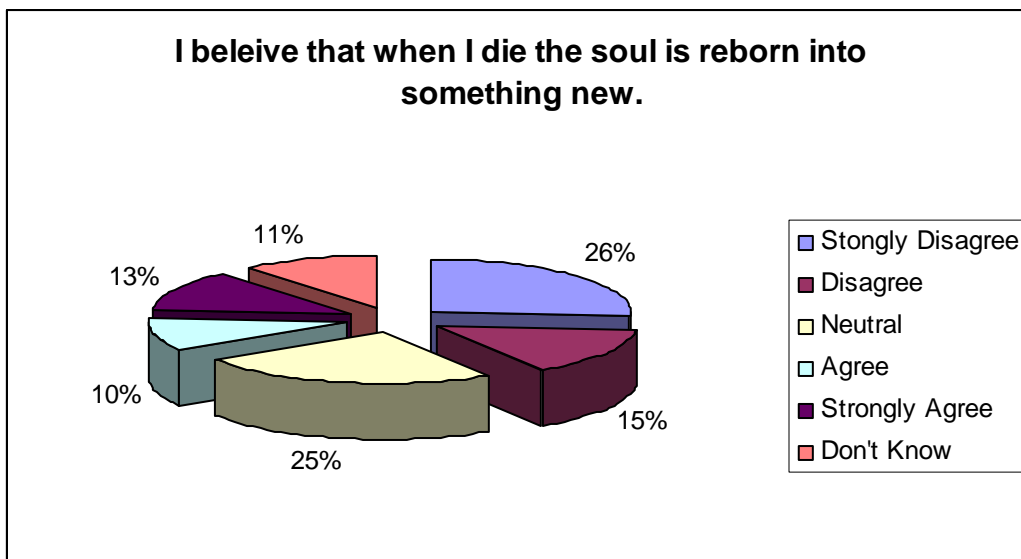
Subjects were asked to indicate their belief in monotheism, polytheism and atheism. The statistical mean for belief in a monotheistic God was 4.01 or agreeing that they believed in one God. The standard deviation was 1.38 as there over 18% of the subjects disagreed or strongly disagreed that they believed in one God. The other two questions, belief in many Gods or no Gods were met with a mean of 1.66 and 1.56 respectively; the standard deviation was approximately 1 in both questions. See table 4.2 for details regarding monotheistic, polytheistic and atheistic beliefs about God.

2) *The Human Soul*

TABLE 4.3. The Human Soul

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I believe that when I die, <i>my soul lives on eternally.</i>	56	4.31	.99
I believe that when I die, <i>there is no soul and my life is finished.</i>	57	1.64	.93
I believe that when I die <i>the soul is reborn into something new.</i>	54	2.65	1.38

GRAPH 1. Question 14, I believe that when I die *the soul is reborn into something new.*



Belief if there is a human soul and if so, what happens to the human soul after death was the second series of questions. The majority of the subjects believe that the soul lives on eternally, however, five of the subjects responded, “Don’t Know” which was not included in the mean (4.31) or standard deviation (.99). The mean in the second question, “I believe that there is

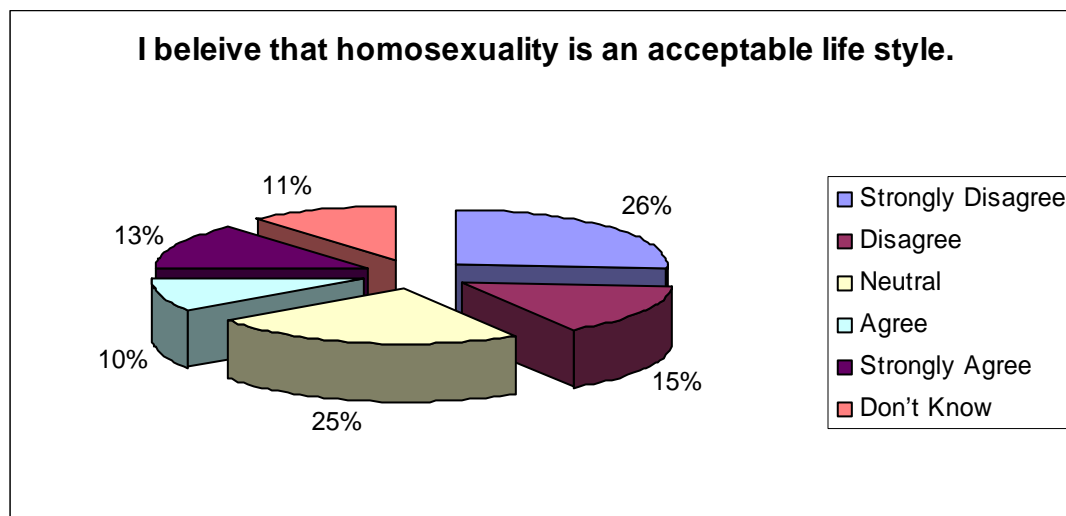
no soul and my life is finished when I die,” was 1.64 as most of the subjects strongly disagreed or disagreed. The standard deviation was .93. The third question, “the soul is reincarnated,” had a mean of 2.65 with a standard deviation of 1.38. As noted in table 4.3 beliefs in the human soul were mixed. No one category completely dominated the others as each of the categories ranged between 11 and 25 percent of all responses. The neutral category received 15 responses representing 25 percent of all responses.

3) Sexual Relationship Practices

TABLE 4.4. Sexual Relationship Practices

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I believe that <i>homosexuality</i> (including physical homosexual activity) is an acceptable life style.	61	3.18	1.46
I believe in <i>monogamy</i> is an acceptable life style.	57	4.29	1.00
I believe in <i>polygamy</i> is an acceptable life style.	57	1.89	.98

GRAPH 4.2. Question 15. I believe that homosexuality (including physical homosexual activity) is an acceptable life style.



In series three, subjects were asked if they believed that homosexuality, monogamy and polygamy were acceptable life styles. Question one, regarding homosexuality, has a mean of 3.18 and standard deviation of 1.46. None of the 61 subjects responded “Don’t Know” if they

believed homosexuality was an acceptable lifestyle. Graph 4.2 depicts the breakdown of responses. In question two, belief in monogamy subjects overwhelmingly strongly agreed that monogamy was an acceptable life style, the mean response was 4.29 and the standard deviation was 1. In question three, most people disagreed or strongly disagreed that polygamy was an acceptable lifestyle and mean 1.89 with a standard deviation of .98. See Table 4.4 for details regarding the belief in homo, mono and poly sexual practices.

One question of the three in this series was mixed. It was the question whether the subjects thought homosexuality was an acceptable life style. Forty-one percent of the subjects strongly disagreed or disagreed that homosexuality is an acceptable life style. Forty-eight percent believes that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle. Eleven percent responded “Don’t Know” to the question. See Graph 4.2.

4) *Subjects' Belief System Best for Everyone*

TABLE 4.5. Subjects' Belief System Best for Everyone

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I think it is best if all people believe in <i>one God</i> .	60	2.76	1.37
I think it is best if all people believe in <i>more than one God</i> .	60	2.08	.95
I think it is best if all people believe in <i>no God(s)</i> .	60	1.89	.98

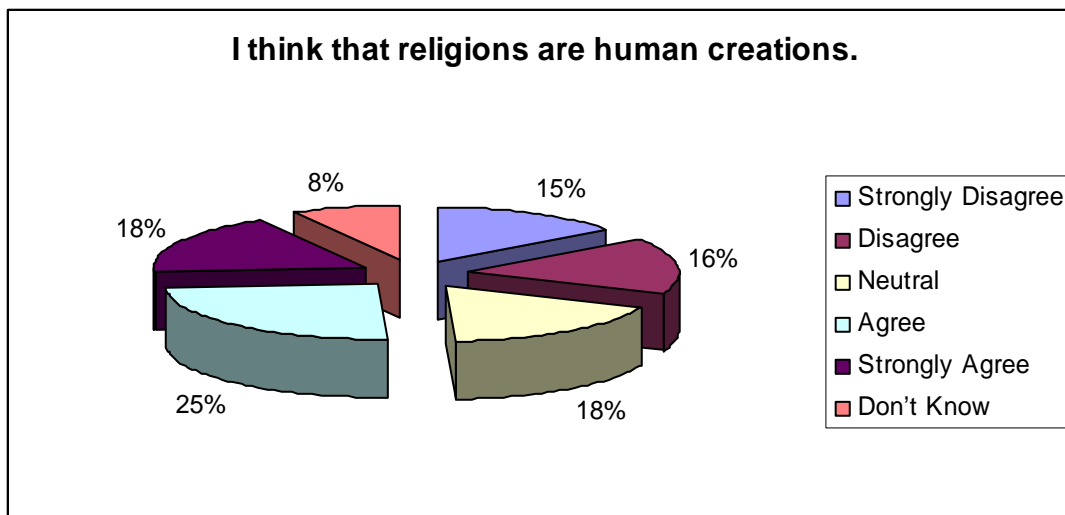
Series four centered on whether subjects thought it best if other people believed in monotheistic, polytheistic, or atheistic beliefs. Only one subject from each of the three questions responded, "Don't Know" what they thought about one God, many Gods or no Gods being the best for all people to believe. The mean for those who through response was that they believed one God was the best for all people was 2.76 with a standard deviation of 1.37. The mean for those who through response was that they believed many Gods were the best for all people was 1.89 with a standard deviation of .98. Most respondents disagreed that it was best if all people believed in no God(s).

5) Religions Humanly or Divinely Created

TABLE 4.6. Religions Humanly or Divinely Created

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I think that religions are <i>human creations</i> .	55	3.49	2.85
I think that religions are <i>divine creations</i> .	55	3.27	1.21
I view religion as a <i>social system</i> .	55	3.41	1.05

GRAPH 4.3. Question 21. I think that religions are human creations.



The fifth series, regarding if subjects viewed religions as human or divine creations and whether religion was a social system, was met with six “don’t know” responses in each of the questions. Total respondents excluding those who responded, “Don’t Know” were leaning slightly towards agreeing that religions are human creations at 3.49, the standard deviation was 2.85 as shown in graph 4.3. The mean of question two, that religions are divine creations is 3.27

with a standard deviation of 1.21. The mean for those who viewed religion as a social system is 3.41 with a standard deviation of 1.05.

6) *Religion the True Path as Guide or Manipulation*

TABLE 4.7. Religion the True Path as Guide or Manipulation

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I view religion as a <i>true path</i> to follow for eternal life.	58	3.25	1.33
I view religion as a set of <i>rules which guide</i> peoples' behavior.	61	3.8	1.08
I view religion as a set of <i>rules which manipulate</i> people's behavior.	61	2.96	1.22

Series six discussed the subjects' view of religions as the true path to follow for external life and whether they viewed religion as a guide or manipulation of peoples' behavior. The mean response of question one, if religion was the true path to follow for eternal life was 3.25 with a standard deviation of 1.33. Question two, if religion was viewed as a *guide* for peoples' behavior, had a mean of 3.8 and standard deviation of 1.08. Question three, if religion was viewed as rules that *manipulated* people's behavior had a mean of 2.96 and standard deviation of 1.22.

7) *Spirituality versus Religion in Subjects' Life*

TABLE 4.8. Spirituality versus Religion in Subjects' Life

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>I practice</i> organized religion and view myself as spiritual.	59	3.07	1.21
<i>I do not practice</i> organized religion and view myself as spiritual.	60	2.77	1.27

Table 4.8 identifies the similarities in what seem to be opposing questions. The mean for the two questions was 3.07 and 2.77 with the standard deviation of 1.21 and 1.27 respectively.

8) *Religious Practices*

TABLE 4.9. Religious Practices

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I often practice my spiritual beliefs by <i>attending a religious gathering place.</i>	60	3.92	.82
I often practice my spiritual beliefs through <i>martial arts.</i>	61	1.54	.67
I often practice my spiritual beliefs through <i>meditation</i>	61	2.43	1.26
I often practice my spiritual beliefs by <i>reading a book of faith (i.e. the Bible, Torah and Koran).</i>	60	2.87	1.3

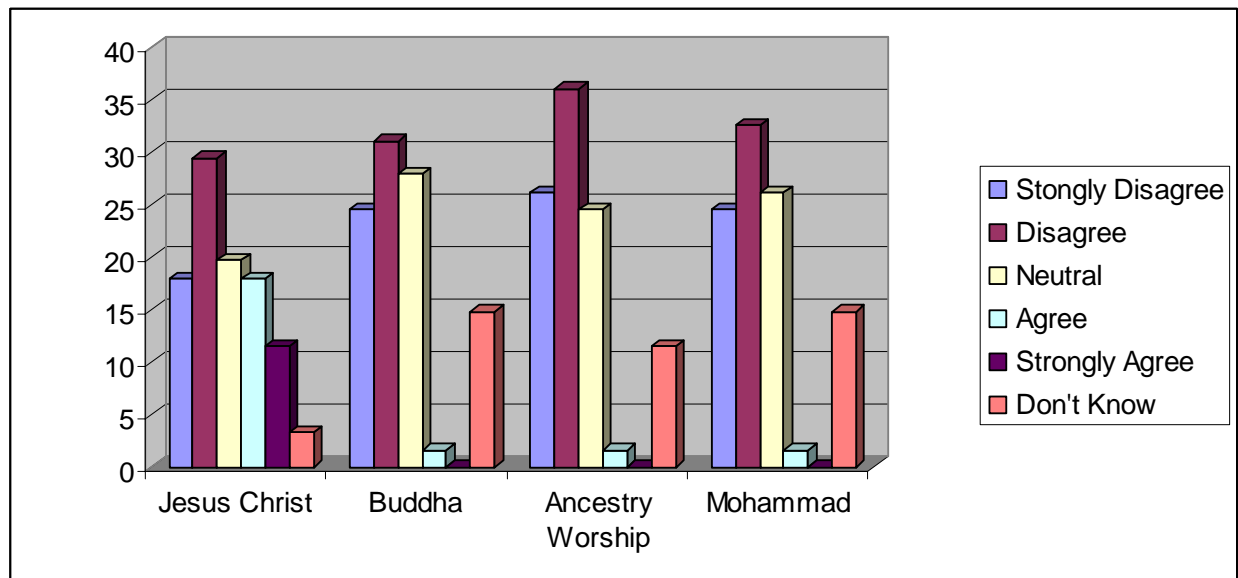
Series eight took a look at how the subjects practiced spiritual beliefs. The questions include ways to practice religion i.e. attending a gather place, through martial arts, mediation or by reading a book of faith. Most subjects agreed or strongly agreed that they attended a gathering place. The mean was 3.92. Most people strongly disagreed or disagreed that they practiced spiritual beliefs through martial arts with an mean of 1.54, but responses were close to neutral, 2.43 and 2.87 respectively when subject were asked if they used mediation or read books of faith as a way to practice their spiritual beliefs.

9) Religion Ensures a Better Life

TABLE 4.10. Religion Ensures a Better Life

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I think people who practice beliefs that include <i>Jesus Christ</i> a personal savior have a better life than others who don't believe in Jesus Christ as a Personal savior.	59	2.74	1.28
I think people who practice beliefs that include <i>Buddha</i> as the enlightened one have a better life than others who don't include Buddha as the enlightened one.	52	2.08	.83
I think people who practice beliefs that include the practice <i>summoning ancestors for guidance</i> have a better life than others who don't practice summoning ancestors for guidance.	54	2.46	.55
I think people who practice beliefs that include <i>Mohammed</i> as the prophet of Allah have a better life than others who don't include Mohammed as their prophet.	52	2.06	.82

GRAPH 4.4 Questions 33-36, Prophets' Devotees Have a Better Life Than Another.



In series nine, subjects were asked if they thought devotees who practiced religious beliefs of one of the Major Prophets had a better life than other prophets' devotees. Except for Christianity, where 59 subjects responded something other than "Don't Know," the responses were quite similar in that seven to nine subjects responded "Don't Know" to questions regarding lives being better for devotees of prophets other than Jesus Christ. As shown in graph 4.4, subjects who agreed or strongly agreed that lives of people would be better if they followed Jesus Christ totaled nearly 30 percent. Other than the one respondent who thought the lives of people would be better if they followed Buddha, Ancestry worship or Mohammad, no one responded that the lives of people would be better if devoted to teachings of other religions.

10) One Belief System Better Than Others'

TABLE 4.11 One Distinctive Belief System Better Than Others'

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I believe my religion <i>is the best path</i> for most people to follow.	61	2.85	1.14
I believe my religion <i>is not the best path</i> for most people to follow.	59	2.42	1.06
Other belief systems may <i>not be the best for me</i> , but they are the <i>best choice for those who believe them</i> .	59	3.66	1.27
My belief system is <i>my own way of thinking, not right or wrong</i> regardless if others see it as such.	60	3.83	1.14
<i>Most people have equally valid belief systems</i> although each belief system may be dramatically different.	59	3.76	1.03

Series ten addressed questions that led the subjects to evaluate their belief system from the point of view on whether it was the best path for them or others to follow. As shown in Table 4.11, most subjects selected responses other than “Don’t Know,” which are not included in the means or standard deviation. The means for question one and two, somewhat opposing questions are 2.85 and 2.42; standard deviations are 1.14 and 1.06 respectively. Question three asked the subject to evaluate if others’ know what is best for them. The mean response was 3.66, between neutral and disagree with a standard deviation of 1.27.

Validity of Beliefs

One (1) yes or no question is asked, “Have you questioned the validity of what you believe.”

TABLE 4.12. Validity of Belief System.

Question	Frequency	Yes	No
I have questioned the validity of what I believe.	61	50	11

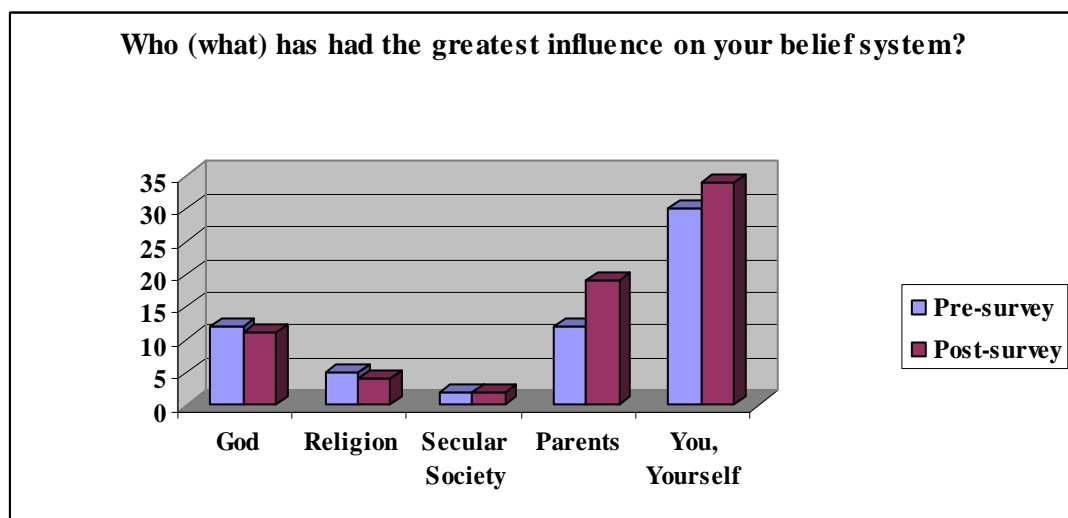
One of the final questions in the survey was whether or not the subject had questioned the validity of what they believed. Eighty-two percent responded that they had questioned the validity, 18 percent responded that they had not.

11) *Pre versus Post Question on Belief System Influence*

TABLE 4.13. Pre versus Post Question on Belief System Influence

Question	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre Survey: At this point in the survey, what (who) do you believe has had the greatest impact on your belief system?	61	3.75	1.55
Post Survey: At this point in the survey, what (who) do you believe has had the greatest impact on your belief system?	61	3.69	1.49

GRAPH 4.5. Questions 8, 43. At this point in the survey, what (who) do you believe has had the greatest influence on your belief system?"



Questions 8 and 43, “At this point in the survey, what (who) do you believe has had the greatest impact on your belief system?” were asked twice in the survey, once near the beginning and once as the last question. The Likert scale consisted of 1) God, 2) Religion, 3) Secular

Society, 4) Parents, 5) You, Yourself. The mean response of the question placed near the beginning of the survey mean 3.75 the standard deviation was 1.55. The post survey response had a mean of 3.69 with a standard deviation of 1.49.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

To understand if individuals recognize that their beliefs were part of their own belief system, it was important to determine if people gave thought to and were aware of their beliefs, attitudes and values. The survey ascertained to the extent possible that by completing the survey, subjects would come to know the greatest influencers of their belief systems. By completing the survey, new awareness to those influences could be altered if the subject deemed consequential of the survey. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the finding of the research, draw conclusion, and offer recommendation for future study in this area. Data was collected from the subjects and the following objectives were met.

- I. Information regarding the subject's awareness of their own beliefs was collected.
- II. Subjects were motivated to give thought regarding what/who influenced their beliefs.
- III. Awareness of contrariant belief systems.

Summary

I. Belief Systems Awareness

Information regarding the subject's awareness of their own beliefs was collected. The largest body of data to meet the listed objectives came from the data collection from the measurement questions. The questions were asked in ten triadic groupings. The ten groups of questions fell into three subsets that defined a belief system. The subsets included beliefs, attitudes and values.

A. Beliefs: Questions in groups one, five, and nine.

- 1) Belief in mono theistic, polytheistic or atheistic views

Since the beginning of recorded societies, most people have believed in a supreme being (Bowker, 2002). The belief systems awareness survey identify if the subjects believed in one, more than one or no God (s). In this triad of questions, if people strongly agreed or agreed in one God, that it seemingly would lend itself to reason that they would oppose belief in more than one God. In the case of these questions identifying mono, poly or atheistic views, 70 percent of the subjects believed in one god, however, 79 percent of the subjects disagreed or strongly agreed that they believed in more than one God. If people believe in one God, than why would they also believe in many Gods? If the question were stated, "I believe in one God *only*." There may be no discrepancy in the diametrically opposed questions. What is true about this triad of questions is that if the subject believed in one or many Gods, the same percentage of subjects strongly disagreed when asked if they believe in no God (s). In conclusion, those who believe in one or many God (s), do not contradict themselves stating they also believe in no God (s). Those who believe in one God, sometimes also believe in many Gods.

5) Thought of religions humanly or divinely created

Of all the groupings of questions, it is the questions regarding whether religions are divinely or humanly created that spoke of the populations discrepancies in their awareness of belief systems. There was a high degree of standard deviation from respondents when asked if they thought religions are human creations.

Eighty-two percent of the respondents were Christian, 79 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they believed in one God. The research showed that 31 percent disagree or strongly disagree that religions were human creations. Generally Christians who believe in one God also believe in the creation story of Christianity that God created the world in seven days. This

research shows the discrepancy in what people are taught through the Christian religion and what they validate as truth.

9) Thought in one religion ensuring a better life over another

Most of the respondents were Christian, and of those, almost 30 percent agreed or strongly agreed that others would have a better life if they followed a Christian life. Only 1.6 percent agreed or strongly agreed that people would have better lives if they followed the teachings of other religions. It is also interesting to note that approximately 50 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that others would have a better life if they followed any one of the mentioned religions. Conclusions drawn are that those religions that are familiar to an individual are more likely to be chosen as a way to ensure a better life for others. Those religions unfamiliar to an individual will not ensure a better life for others.

B. Attitudes: Questions in groups two, six seven and ten.

2) Belief in the human soul

Findings in what subjects believe happened with the human soul was mixed. For those who believed that the soul lives on after life, also believe that the soul does not die upon physical death of an individual. However, people were equally stated between strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing in regards to the soul being reborn. The soul being reborn is a response generally seen by those who believe in re-incarnation. The opposing information is that the majority of the subjects responded that they were Christians (79 percent) and re-incarnation or belief that the soul is reborn into something new (65 percent did not disagree or strongly disagree) is generally not a Christian teaching. Generally Christians do not believe in re-incarnation. It could be concluded that Christian teachings are becoming hybrids of other religious teachings.

6) View in religion as true path or guides/manipulates behavior

In response to whether religion manipulates behavior, 13 percent of the respondents were neutral. Of the remaining 87 percent, about one half agreed or strongly agreed, and the other one-half disagreed or strongly disagreed that religion manipulates behavior. On a whole, there is disagreement amongst the respondents that religion manipulates behavior. Conclusions can be drawn that different experiences in the way religious instruction is delivered or presented in ones life may produce attitudes that religion manipulates behavior.

10) Thought in one belief system better than others'

Sixty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed that no distinctive belief system is better than another. This left 36 percent of the respondents, who either disagreed, strongly disagreed, were neutral or didn't know if others have equally valid belief systems. Conclusions are made that although people are aware of their own beliefs, they may not be aware that others' belief systems are equally valid.

Values: Questions in group three, four and eight.

3) Belief in various sexual relationship practices

Most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that monogamous relationships were acceptable which was congruent with the teachings of the study populations' religious preferences.

Nearly 47 percent agreed or strongly agreed that homo sexual relationships were acceptable. Over 88 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that monogamous relationships were acceptable. Nearly 10 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that polygamous relationships were acceptable. Conclusions drawn are that homosexuality is a sexual preference discussed openly today. Polygamy is not an accepted practice in the United States; however, polygamy is widely accepted in other parts of the world from where new immigrants are arriving in the United States. Accepting polygamous beliefs is contrariant with monogamous beliefs. With lack of acceptance, there is lack of understanding. This supports that although people are aware of their own beliefs, they may not be aware that others' belief systems are equally valid.

4) Thought in subjects' belief system as best for everyone

Where belief in subject's belief system being best for everyone was concerned, 26 percent agreed that belief in one God was best for everyone. Almost five percent agreed that belief in many Gods were best for everyone. Less than two percent agreed that belief in no God (s) was best for everyone. Conclusions drawn: For people who do not believe in one God, or Polytheistic Gods, it may be difficult for monotheists to accept alternative belief systems and conflict can arise. This supports that although people are aware of their own beliefs, they may not be aware that others' belief systems are equally valid.

II. Subjects were motivated to give thought regarding what/who influenced their beliefs.

By virtue of the fact that the subjects completed the survey, they gave thought to their belief systems. This objective was met in the survey.

III. Awareness of contrariant belief systems.

By virtue of the fact that the subjects completed the survey, they were exposed to contrariant belief systems. Although they may not believe that alternative and often opposing belief systems are the best belief system for them, at a minimum, the respondents could observe the alternative questions stated in close proximity to the questions that were a part of their belief system. This objective was met in the survey.

Conclusions

As noted in the literature review, the conclusive evidence of the research findings is varied. Studies on cultural beliefs in the work place seem to be sparse (Martin, 2002). “However, there has been relatively little comparable work regarding one crucial subset of culture, namely, knowledge or beliefs, even through it was this subset of culture that was first held to be determined by aspects of social structure (Marx & Engels [1845-46] 1976).” Human beliefs are difficult to quantify, however, bringing awareness to individual’s belief systems through quantitative surveys are successful. This study correlated with many findings throughout literature.

It has been concluded through this survey that people are aware of their own belief systems. This was determined by the fact that the majority of respondents did not answer “don’t know” to the majority of questions. It has also been concluded that although people are aware of their own beliefs, they may not see the equal validity in others’ belief systems. Finally, it was

concluded that religions familiar to the respondents are stated to be ensure better lives for others where as religions unfamiliar to respondents are not stated to ensure better lives for others.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further studies include:

- a. Involve a larger population of varied religions. Tighten the sample population by distributing surveys to groups that knowingly practice the various faiths. Surveys could also be distributed where subjects knowingly gather to practice faiths that influence their belief systems.
- b. Shorten the survey to a few questions with very specific objectives. Now that awareness has been established, further studies could include research of tolerance and/or acceptance of others' equally valid belief systems.

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Appendix A: Survey Letter

Connie M. Ross
1628 5th St. W. #5
Menomonie, WI 54751
rossco@uwstout.edu

March 27, 2004

Dear UW-Stout faculty, staff, student or alumni,

I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, majoring in Training and Development. I am working on a thesis as a requirement for Master's Degree. My thesis topic is *How Populations at UW-Stout Perceive Their Belief Systems*. You are invited to voluntarily participate in an online survey about this topic; there is no penalty if you choose not to participate. I would be helpful if you submit this survey electronically by April 1, 2004.

Individuals, cultures, and belief systems contribute to the diversity of our world. Each person's qualities, characteristics and beliefs contain valid components for the individual. These basic components are the essence of which drives, influences and motivates human thinking that leads to behavior. Negative behaviors and interactions in work environment often stem from different belief systems. This study is to determine the awareness that individuals hold regarding their own belief system.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality in this survey. If you agree to participate, the online process will assure your anonymity. The risk of this survey is that it may bring awareness to core belief areas that may inspire you to further self reflection.

Questions about the rights of research of human subjects can be directed to Sue Foxwell, Human Subjects Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 152 Voc Rehab, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126 or thesis advisor, Dr. Joseph Benkowski, Associate Dean for Outreach, Directory STTI or researcher, 278A Technology Wing- Jarvis Hall, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-5266 or researcher, Connie M. Ross at the address listed above or phone (715) 231-3927.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Connie M. Ross

Appendix B: Follow up Survey Letter

-----Original Message-----

From: Ross, Connie M

Sent: Tue 3/30/2004 7:27 AM

To:

Cc:

Subject: Belief Systems Awareness Survey #2

Hello,

A few days ago you received an e-mail message asking you to assist in assessing belief systems awareness at UW-Stout.

If you have filled out the survey, thank you! If not, we ask you to take a few minutes to go to the URL below and help with this important endeavor by completing the survey. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

Please complete the survey <http://www.uwstout.edu/survey/rossco.html> by Thursday, April 1.

Thank you,

Connie M. Ross

Appendix C: Final Follow up Survey Letter

-----Original Message-----

From: Ross, Connie M

Sent: Thu 4/1/2004 6:47 AM

To:

Cc:

Subject: Belief Systems Awareness Survey results

Hello,

If you have filled out the belief systems survey, thank you!

If not, today is the last day to do so. <http://www.uwstout.edu/survey/rossco.html>

If you would like to view the results of the survey, the researcher will present the research data during "Research Day" Tuesday, April 28, 2004. The event will be held in the *Crystal Ballroom/Great Hall* of the Student Center. I hope to see you there.

Please identify yourself if you filled out the survey, I'd like to meet you and personally say thank you. (Please note, your specific responses are unknown to the researcher.)

Sincerely,

Connie M. Ross

Appendix D: Belief System Awareness Questionnaire

General Instructions: Read each item carefully and mark the appropriate space or write your response in the appropriate space. Please respond to all statements.

Personal Background

1. Gender
 - Male
 - Female

2. What program are you enrolled in, or most associated with at UW- Stout?
 - Please specify

3. What is your race/ethnicity
 - Caucasian
 - African American
 - Hispanic
 - Asian Heritage
 - Native American
 - Other (please specify)

4. What is your age:
 - 16-17
 - 18-19
 - 20-21
 - 22-23
 - 24-27
 - 28-30
 - 31-35
 - 36-45
 - 46-61
 - 61+

5. What religion (if any) do you mainly practice?
 - Christian
 - Muslim
 - Buddhist
 - Animism
 - Jewish
 - Hindu
 - Confucianism
 - Taoism
 - Other (please specify)

Please indicate your best response with the following statements by clicking on the appropriate button following the statement.

6. How often do you think about what you believe?
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Every few months
 - Rarely
 - Never
7. How often do you re-evaluate what you believe?
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Every few months
 - Rarely
 - Never
8. At this point in the survey, what (who) do you believe has had the greatest impact on your belief system?
- Secular Society
 - Parents
 - Religion (s)
 - God
 - You, yourself

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by clicking on the appropriate button following the statement.

- | Strongly
Disagree
SD | Disagree
D | Neutral
N | Agree
A | Strongly
Agree
SA | Don't
Know
DK |
|---|---------------|--------------|------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 9. I believe in one God. | | | | | SD D N A SA DK |
| 10. I believe in many Gods. | | | | | SD D N A SA DK |
| 11. I do not believe in any god/gods | | | | | SD D N A SA DK |
| 12. I believe that when I die, my soul lives on eternally | | | | | SD D N A SA DK |
| 13. I believe that when I die, there is no soul and my
life is finished. | | | | | SD D N A SA DK |

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 14. I believe that when I die the soul is reborn into something new. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 15. I believe that homosexuality (including physical homosexual activity) is an acceptable life style. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 16. I believe in monogamy is an acceptable life style. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 17. I believe in polygamy is an acceptable life style. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 18. I think it is best if all people believe in one God. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 19. I think it is best if all people believe in more than one God. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 20. I think it is best if all people believe in no God(s). | SD D N A SA DK |
| 21. I think that religions are human creations. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 22. I think that religions are divine creations. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 23. I view religion as a social system. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 24. I view religion as a true path to follow for eternal life. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 25. I view religion as a set of rules which guide people's behavior. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 26. I view religion as a set of rules which manipulate peoples' behavior. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 27. I practice organized religion and view myself as spiritual. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 28. I do not practice organized religion and view myself as spiritual. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 29. I often practice my spiritual beliefs by attending a religious gathering place. | SD D N A SA DK |
| 30. I often practice my spiritual beliefs through martial arts. | SD D N A SA DK |

31. I often practice my spiritual beliefs through meditation. SD D N A SA DK
32. I often practice my spiritual beliefs by reading a book of faith (i.e. the Bible, Torah, Koran). SD D N A SA DK
33. I think people who practice beliefs that include Jesus Christ as a personal savior have a better life than others who don't believe in Jesus Christ as a Personal savior. SD D N A SA DK
34. I think people who practice beliefs that include Buddha as the enlightened one have a better life than others who don't include Buddha as the enlightened one. SD D N A SA DK
35. I think people who practice beliefs that include the practice summoning ancestors for guidance have a better life than others who don't practice summoning ancestors for guidance. SD D N A SA DK
36. I think people who practice beliefs that include Mohammed as the prophet of Allah have a better life than others who don't include Mohammed as their prophet. SD D N A SA DK
37. I believe my religion is the best path for most people to follow. SD D N A SA DK
38. I believe my religion is not the best path for most people to follow. SD D N A SA DK
39. Other belief systems may not be the best for me, but they are the best choice for those who believe them. SD D N A SA DK
40. My belief system is my own way of thinking, not right or SD D N A SA DK

wrong regardless if others see it as such.

41. Most people have equally valid belief systems although

SD D N A SA DK

each belief system may be dramatically different.

42. I have questioned the validity of what I believe.

___ No
___ Yes

DIRECTION: Circle the best answer that most accurately describes what your beliefs.

43. At this point in the survey, what (who) do you believe has had the greatest impact on your belief system?

- a. Secular Society
- b. Parents
- c. Religion (s)
- d. God
- e. You, yourself

44. Please add anything that you might like the researcher to know about your belief system.

Appendix E-Written Responses

I consider myself to be first spiritual, then religious. I haven't always had a church
 1 home with which I am happy. I feel free to accept and reject what I hear at church. If I didn't have friends and surrogate family at church, I wouldn't go.

1 I am Catholic by family religion but attend Baptist church for I like how they stick to the word of God as it is written in the Bible. I feel the Catholic church is more of a system set by Man. There are all different religions and that is what makes the world different just like the Economic status of various people all over the world.

1 I am of the Catholic faith. My views of some things such as Mary, the Rosary, baptism, and the Eucharist are slightly different because of my Protestant upbringing. For the most part I just place less emphasis on these things as far as salvation is concerned.

1 I believe that religion gives us the basis for understanding right from wrong. Without this society runs amuck. I do not believe that I have to attend a church to feel to have these beliefs. Religion should be uplifting and should make you feel good in your soul. It should not be punishing or at any time make you feel insignificant.

1 I believe that people have their choice of choosing their own religion but some religion I believe in but other I believe that some crazy guy made up and know they believe in him and I even? My own religion is there even a God! Think religion is what it makes out of it. Not, what a church or a place where you practice your religion.

1 I believe that religion that doesn't include hate and includes love for others is the best religion. I think that religions that make happier lives for people are good religions. I think Christianity includes both of things- no matter what denomination of Christianity. America is based on Christianity and people in America have prospered unlike any other nation- the base of Christianity is that it doesn't include making other people believe what Christians believe and yet Christianity has prospered. Isn't that ironic?

1 I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only true God and that it is not by attending church or being active in the church that makes a human being spiritual. (I do believe that a person should attend church regularly and be active in church, but these activities in themselves do not make a person spiritual, or a better person apart from the daily reading of God's Word and having a personal relationship with Him). God is the only one that can supply all of our needs and keep us pure. Yes, He does place people in our paths and did provide us with a Bible to read. But, He only uses these to remind us of who He is and what He requires of us daily. It is only Christ in us and flowing through us that allows a person to keep His commandments and live, as He wants us to live. Apart from Christ we are nothing and cannot be truly free. There is no other like Him, for He is God, giver and sustainer of life as we know it!!

1 I believe in one God, His son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit which is manifest in us. He is ubiquitous. He does not require us to believe in Him to be powerful - He just is. I don't think that one life is better than another based on what they believe. We are all equal in God's eyes, and His love for us is unending, unchanging, and unshakable.

I consider myself christian because it is the religion i was raised to believe. i do not actively practice my religion nor do i believe that everything my religion is necessarily correct. I believe some things within christianity, but I also disagree with many things. One thing I really hate is when people try to push their religion on others and will not listen to what others have to say about what they believe in. I feel that people can believe whatever they choose to believe, but they should not try to push religion on anyone because if someone is going to believe in something, it should be because they want to, not because someone told them to. i feel that there are many people that get religion pushed at/onto them in this school. i get asked multiple times every week to participate in campus crusade activities, and it really annoys me because i have said no so many times and i am sick of the same people asking me time after time. it makes me feel that they think less of me, but i am perfectly content believing what i believe and practicing or not practicing what i do or do not.

1 i hate people who push religion. If you believe in something, good for you. Stay away from me with thoughts of change.

i personally do not believe in any religion, but i am not against them. I think religion can bring people together, and in most cases it has a positive outcome. Where i do think religion is a problem, is when people feel that just because their religion says something is wrong, that nobody at all should do it. I also think that others trying to "push" their religion on people is not right. Let people believe what they want to believe, as long as they don't try to effect my life because of those beliefs.

1 I think age(lack of knowledge at a younger age and somewhat more influential.) and the college scene can influence what or how a person believes.

I think everyone has a right to believe in whatever God. As long as we are good to others and do no harm we should be considered Christians. Everyone has a right to practice there beliefs in there own way.

1 lifes a garden, dig it

Most of my answers in this survey seem refined to me having taken a Philosophy class in which we discussed a few aspects of religion in society. We laid major emphasis on Buddhism and Christianity. In this class we also focussed on the lives of great philosophers like socrates. During his time, homosexuality was the norm people only had wives to sire children but besides their wives they also had male partners.

1 My belief system is a strong part of my life but often times i question the source, happenings and other things. But I do have a strong faith in what i was raised in.

Not everyone believe in Christianity, and people don't see that they should until they see it. Until they see how everthing fits together and that is the only reason why we are all here on this planet, Earth.

1 Raised catholic by devout parents who were also open minded theologically. Thrown out of pre confirmative courses "for asking too many questions.." I admire christianity and all religions as an social or cultural construct, but I feel they are dangerous.

1 This is a test from the researcher

With so many organized religious groups, each with their differences and subsequent off-shoots, I find it to all be as valid as the passing subject the telephone game (where one person starts the message and it changes a little here and there, etc.). However, being raised in the Lutheran (ELCA) section, if you will, of Christianity, I find that even though everybody has a slightly different liturgy, or even more intense religious practices (some muslims, for example, must pray multiple times a day in a certain direction, where as a Lutheran attends 40 minutes a week, etc.), it all sort of ends up with God. Theologians have been studying the origin of life for who knows how long, and there is no way to scientifically prove Gods existence. There has been many prophets, and we have the Bible. Jesus did exist, there is actual tangible evidence that points to this. There is also evidence to suggest a 'jesus' of the western hemisphere appeared around Mexico. (I believe this is the Church of Latter day saints) But, the evidence all adds up, and I cannot buy in to the big bang theory. There is no way that something can just spontaneously exist from nothing. Something has to have created it, and that is why I believe in God. I don't go to church now, I should add my father was a pastor for most of my younger life, since most of what I saw in the church was simply a group of people getting together to gossip about this and that, staring blankly ahead silently during the service. It was almost like some felt like they wouldn't be cool if they didn't show up every week (this was a small town). But anyway, it's too bad that there isn't a spirit for all human beings. I think it would be nice if we could all just unite, just imagine what could be accomplished. I think God would really like this. I sometimes wonder if, as a race, we are being challenged by God to overcome boundaries and work toward some common goal. Maybe the conquest of space? There is a lot of stuff that exists out there. Or maybe we are all supposed to keep on reproducing until we have reached the final pair of humans, much like the beginning with adam and eve, resulting in the final answer. These are some far out ideas, but one can not really say for sure, yet. I could shoot on about all sort of views and things, but I'll just leave it at that. Well, good luck and I hope everything goes excellent!