INTRODUCTION

College students are vulnerable to the effects of sexual assault, sexually transmitted diseases, premarital sex, and teenage pregnancy. Research on college students is needed to address these issues and to develop interventions specifically targeting this population. Because of the prevalence of risky sexual behaviors among college students, it is important to examine protective factors to reduce these risks (Beckwith & Morrow 2005). Though much research has been conducted between religiosity and sexual attitudes, spirituality could be an important component of reducing high risk behaviors that has not been fully researched. Therefore, our study has been designed to study gender, spirituality and sexual attitudes as a way to more fully understand and promote health in this population.

METHODOLOGY

Measures
• Spirituality Scale – one overall score
• Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale – four subscales: permissiveness, birth control, communion, instrumentality

Sample
• Convenience sample in an undergraduate human sexuality class at a large southeastern research university
• N=161
• 73% females and 27% males
• Caucasian 87%, African American 6.2%, Asian American 2.5%, Latino/Latina 1.2%, other 3.1%
• Christian 71.4%, Muslim 1.2%, Jewish 3.8%, and other 23.1%
• Freshman 8.1%, Sophomore 29.8%, Junior 38.5%, Senior 23.6%
• 18 to 28, with the mean and mode being 20

Data Analysis
• We examined if spirituality and gender were significant predictors of four aspects of sexual attitudes using multiple regression.

RESULTS

Multiple regression found that our model significantly predicted three of the four subscales:
• Permissiveness (r-squared=.25; F=26.984, p<.001; t(gender)=6.133, p<.001; t(spirituality)=-4.524, p<.001)
• Birth control (r-squared=.051; F=4.268, p<.05; t(gender)=-2.693, p<.05; t(spirituality)=-.912, p>.05)
• Instrumentality (r-squared=.048; F=4.018, p<.05; t(gender)=1.178, p>.05; t(spirituality)=-2.475, p<.05)

Spirituality and gender were not found to predict communion score (F=.316, p>.05).

DISCUSSION

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

• The more spiritual a person is the less he/she will accept attitudes towards sex that confirm casual sex and sex with multiple partners.

• Males are significantly more accepting of permissiveness attitudes towards sex.

• Women were found to be significantly more accepting of attitudes towards birth control than men and that spirituality seemed to have no significant correlation with birth control.

• No significant relationship between spirituality and communion.

• As people become more spiritual, they are less likely to view sex as solely an experience of the body (instrumentality), but are not more or less likely to agree with such statements as “At its best, sex is a merging of two souls” (communion).

• Spiritual interventions may be appropriate and helpful for individuals to reduce high risk sexual behavior, specifically for men who are more accepting of permissive attitudes towards sex.

• Males should be targeted more for birth control education and spirituality would not necessarily be a helpful construct to use in these interventions.

• For therapists, it is important to discuss with clients how spirituality and sexuality relate in their own lives, as it is not clear from this research all the possible intersections. Gaining insight into the relationship between spirituality and sexuality may help illuminate possible solutions to clients’ problems.