

---

Possamai A, Dunn K, Hopkins P, Worthington L, Amin F. [Muslim students' cultural and religious experiences in city, suburban and regional university campuses in NSW, Australia](#). *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 2016, 38(6), 637-648.

**Copyright:**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2018, available online:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/1360080X.2016.1211950>

**Date deposited:**

22/11/2016

**Embargo release date:**

28 January 2018



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International licence](#)

# **Muslim students' cultural and religious experiences in city, suburban and regional university campuses in NSW, Australia**

Adam Possamai\*, Kevin Dunn\*, Peter Hopkins+, Lisa Worthington\*, and  
Faroque Amin\*

\*Western Sydney University, Australia

+ Newcastle University, UK Contact:

Adam Possamai

[A.Possamai@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:A.Possamai@westernsydney.edu.au)

## **Abstract**

Although there is much research about the growing ethnic and religious diversity on university campuses across the world, relatively little is known about the religious and cultural experiences of Muslim students on university campuses in Australia. We draw upon an analysis of a survey that was completed by 323 Muslim students who were studying at universities in New South Wales, Australia. While we argue that these places are post-secular, we discover that city campus tend to be more secular than regional and suburban ones. Regional campuses, on the other hand, tend to make a Muslim student more religious.

Keywords: university campus, Muslims, students, religious discrimination

## **Introduction**

Australia is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world (Bouma, 2006). Like the society that surrounds them, universities as institutions have to adapt themselves continuously to a changing environment, including a religiously diverse one. Rogers (2004, p. 148) has argued Australian Universities, despite being largely secular institutions, must ensure that '[the] spiritual and faith-related issues are kept on the administrative agenda for student and staff support on campus'. Universities do have the challenge of providing for an increasingly diverse student body.

The dynamics and social effects of growing religious and socio-cultural diversity at universities has been researched extensively across the world since the beginning of the new century (Andersson et al., 2012; Batorowicz, 2007; Dutton, 2008; Gilliat-Ray, 2000; Hopkins, 2011; Jacobson & Jacobson, 2012; Possamai & Brackenreg, 2009; Possamai et al., 2014; Possamai et al., 2016; Sharma & Guest, 2013). This research continues to point out that there is still much to be known about how universities can better encourage inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding and interaction in light of their diversifying populations. Gilliat-Ray (2000) and Sommerville (2006) argue that now more than ever, public institutions like universities need to address the importance of religion – even if religion might be seen as tangential to the substantive work of such institutions: 'Universities are being forced to consider the needs and implications of the life-world of a new generation of students from a variety of different religious traditions' (Gilliat-Ray, 2000, p. 144). Given contemporary political concerns about the future of multiculturalism and inter-faith cohesion (e.g. Richardson, 2013), this article seeks to understand the cultural experiences of Muslim students in New South Wales.

International research on religious identity, religiosity, civic participation and academic performance show mostly a positive association between these variables. Pascarella and Terenzini argue that students are involved in religious activities, particularly when they engage in, 'serious discussions about religious . . . [and] political beliefs' (2005, p. 121). These kinds

of activities have been associated with increased religious conviction and overall religiousness, social integration and better emotional wellbeing among students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Bryant (2007) added that these activities can also result in deeper self-knowledge and in having direction. Along the same wave line, Cole (2010) argued that helping students to develop and maintain a religious identity could have a positive effect on student outcomes. However, there is often anxiety among Muslim students about the stereotypes that are attached to Muslim identities that may affect a student's academic performance (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). But this can also result in students distancing themselves socially, resulting in them feeling a disconnection from the university community and the university as a whole. Steele's (1992) research also supports this through his work on stereotype threat. He argued that when a student perceives his or her group to be regarded as inferior, academic performance can suffer. Also, Rogers (2004) noted that many international students are accustomed to spirituality and/or religion being central to their life. As such, religion could be one of a number of ways of creating social networks for international students facing loneliness away from their country of origin (Sawir et al., 2008).

The higher education sector in the United States is both larger and more diverse than that in Australia and in the UK. In addition to state-supported universities, there are many privately-endowed tertiary institutions, some of which have religious affiliations. In terms of levels of religiosity on campuses in the United States, John Schmalzbauer argues that campus religion is not in decline. He describes campus religion as, 'A mixture of cyclical and linear motifs, it resembles the larger fluctuations in American religion' (2013, p. 116). Rather than diminishing, student participation in campus religion in the US has remained stable over the last century. He concludes that higher education is not particularly hazardous to religious commitment (Schmalzbauer, 2013). Roger Finke and Rodney Stark concur that fluctuations are not, 'a decline in religion, but only a decline in the fortunes of specific religious organizations as they give way to new ones' (Finke & Starke, 2005, p. 46).

Religion on campus will be lived and expressed differently across different social and spatial configurations of a university. Mayrl and Oeur (2009) conducted a literature review of all studies of religion in US universities and colleges, and found that treating the university institution as an undifferentiated category is problematic. The role and position of religion varies on different types of campus, such as public or private, large or small, urban or rural, research or teaching driven, or of Christian or secularist genesis. In other words, different campus cultures may influence religious activities accordingly. In his research on evangelisation on various universities in the world, Dutton (2008) noticed that piety will be stronger on a secular campus where these Christians might feel that their religious identity is being challenged. Also, the more remote the campus is (as opposed to city or suburban campuses), the stronger the level of piety. These cultural and social factors would be influential in the formation of tightly structured evangelical student groups on campus. This type of research has not been conducted yet among Muslim students in an Australian context.

Data from a previous publication (Possamai et al., 2016) revealed Australian Muslim university students as having a strong religiosity. They are at ease with showing external signs of their religion, and attending a university campus does not appear to reduce religious commitment. In our survey, they expressed strong pro-diversity views. We also discovered that among our sample of Muslim students in NSW universities, almost 30 per cent of these had become more religious since their enrolment (40 per cent for women and 33 per cent for men; and 32 per cent for international and 38 per cent for local students). Close to 40 per cent had remained with the same level of religiosity. While our previous research (Possamai et al., 2016) treated these respondents as part of a single group of university campuses, this article pushes the analysis forward by taking into account the literature above. The data has not been analysed specifically with regards to the social-geographical location of the campus, and this is the main

aim of this article. We are thus exploring any possible difference in the cultural and religious experience of Muslim students in three different categories of university in NSW: the urban, suburban and regional ones.

## Method

This article reports on the results of an online survey. It contained a total of 36 questions, and was placed on the Qualtrics platform on 29 June 2013. Several steps were taken to circulate the news of the survey and to encourage potential participation from Muslim students in universities across the state of New South Wales (NSW). Around five hundred flyers were distributed at the different campuses of Western Sydney University (WSU), the University of Sydney and the University of Newcastle, Australia. An invitation notice containing a shortened and easy url address to the online survey was also placed in notice boards in these campuses. An advertisement with the link to the Qualtrics survey site was posted on a social networking site, (i.e. Facebook) and it continued for more than one month, targeting users with the specific demographic features mentioned previously. The same advertisement was posted in web forums of several Australian universities, their official Facebook pages and groups of Muslim student associations of different Australian universities in NSW. Additionally, an invitation email was sent to around 200 Muslim students at Western Sydney University and the University of Sydney. Personalised emails were also sent to Muslim academics and organisers of Muslim students' associations of these universities. The survey was closed on 28 August 2014 and a total of 447 participants had accessed it online to that point.

The results reported here are based on 323 valid survey responses. The participants in the survey included students from WSU (58.3 per cent), the University of Sydney (9 per cent), the University of NSW (UNSW) (8.6 per cent), the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) (8 per cent), Macquarie University (6.2 per cent), University of Wollongong (3.4 per cent) and the University of Newcastle (1.9 per cent). The other institutions were Charles Stuart University and the Sydney campuses of Southern Cross University, Central Queensland University, the Australian Catholic University, the University of Notre Dame and the International College of Management. One person from an overseas university filled out the survey. Fifty-two people commenced the process but failed to provide any answers. Seventy respondents were based at a non-NSW institution or did not provide evidence that they were based in NSW (many of the latter only having provided information on gender and age only). These were all removed. For the purposes of this article, we took out one person who did not report on her institution.

**Table 1: Campus Location, NSW, 2013-2014**

Location	N	%
City	88	27
Regional	20	6
Suburb	215	67
Total	323	100

*Source: Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

Table 1 indicates the proportion of our informants per type of university. We included the University of Sydney, UNSW, UTS, the University of Notre Dame and other universities with a satellite campus in the CBD (e.g. CQU and CSU) as part of the 'city' location. For regional, we amalgamated the University of Wollongong, Newcastle University and Charles Sturt University. For the suburban ones, Western Sydney University, Macquarie and the Australian Catholic University. The aim for this article is not to compare and contrast specific

universities but the geographical location where they are situated. While the numbers for city (n=88) and suburban (=215) students are robust, the case is not as strong for the regional ones (n=20). We do acknowledge this limitation.

Stevenson, Dunn, Possamai and Piracha (2010) discovered that while the whole of Australia was becoming less Christian, the decline is higher in the metropolitan area where city campuses are, and in the western suburbs which have been the foci of immigrant settlement since the 1980s. In these suburbs, we find a large percentage of the suburban campuses that are part of this study. The decline of Christianity tends to be reduced as one move away from central western Sydney. Metropolitan statistical local government areas (LGAs) are also witnessing an increase in numbers of people claiming to be from a non-religious background. While city campuses are clearly located in a more non-religious geographical zone, suburban campuses are scattered around the western and northern parts of Sydney with different religious and class composition. The regional campuses include the south, north and west of NSW and their diversity have also not been captured in this article. This is unfortunately another limitation to this study.

*The socio-demographics of Muslims on university campuses*

Among the participating students, most students studied in Education (18 per cent), Health (15 per cent), Management and Commerce (14 per cent), Engineering (13 per cent) and in Society and Culture (11 per cent). All other study areas occupy less than 10 per cent, such as Information Technology (6 per cent), Architecture and Building (3 per cent) and so on.

**Table 2: Age and Student’s Campus Locality, NSW, 2013-2014**

	Gender			Student’s Campus Locality		
	Female	Male	Total	Local	International	Total
City	32 (36%)	56 (64%)	88 (100%)	71 (81%)	16 (19%)	87 (100%)
Suburb	128 (59%)	87 (41%)	215 (100%)	181 (85%)	33 (15%)	214 (100%)
Regional	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	20 (100%)	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	20 (100%)
Total	167 (52%)	156 (48%)	323 (100%)	259 (81 %)	62 (19%)	321 (100%)

*Source: Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

Eighty-one per cent of the participants identified themselves as local and 19 per cent of them were international. Among the international students, female students represented only 36 per cent of this sub-group. That proportion is higher among local students (55 per cent). This sample, therefore, has an over-representation of men among international students. This may reflect the gender mix of Muslim international students in Australian universities, but there are no population level data with which to test that hypothesis. With regards to gender, Table 2 indicates an overproportion of female students in suburban universities (59 per cent compared to 52 per cent for the total), and an overproportion of male students in city and regional campuses. With regards to international students, we find in the same table a strong overproportion in regional universities (65 per cent compared to 19 per cent for the total). The suburban population in this sample thus tends to be local and female Muslims. The regional population is oriented more towards a male international sample and the city one, a slightly more male and international one.

Most participants were aged, as expected, between 17 and 30 years (89 per cent). Most informants were within their first three years of university study (70 per cent). However, 13

per cent of the total participants in this survey had completed their university study before filling out the survey, and belonged to an older age group.

**Table 3: Country of birth (Top 10), Muslim university students, NSW, 2013-2014, N=287**

	N	%
Australia	148	52
Pakistan	21	7
Bangladesh	21	7
Lebanon	14	5
Iraq	13	5
Saudi Arabia	8	3
Afghanistan	8	3
Indonesia	9	3
Malaysia	6	2
Egypt	5	2

*Source: Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

The most common place of birth of this survey's participants was Australia (52 per cent) (Table 3). In our sample, Pakistan and Bangladesh were the next two highest countries of birth (7 per cent both). Turkey was not found in the top 10 countries of birth from our sample; only three participants were from that background. Major countries of birth of Muslims in Australia include Lebanon and Turkey, yet only Lebanon was in the top ten birthplaces of Muslim university students. However, our research (Possamai et al., 2016) reveals that a quarter of the participants of the sample had a mother and/or father who was born in Turkey and Lebanon. The most common place of birth for participants' mothers and fathers was Lebanon (20 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively), this was followed by Pakistan (7 per cent of mothers and 9 per cent of fathers) and Bangladesh (7 per cent and 9 per cent). Close to half of the sample were second generation immigrants. Ten of the respondents had both parents born in Australia. Our analysis of these birthplace connections reveals around 51 per cent are first generation immigrants and 41 per cent second generation Australians. The sample is, without a doubt, a very multicultural one.

**Table 4: Country of Birth per type of university, NSW, 2013-2014**

	Australia		Other	
	N	%	N	%
City	42	53	38	47
Suburban	103	55	85	45
Regional	3	16	16	84
Total	148	52	139	48

*Source: Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

Table 4 indicates a slight overproportion of Muslim students born in Australia at suburban (55 per cent), and then, city campus (53 per cent). In regional campuses, on the other hand, we find that a very large majority of the students (84 per cent) were born overseas. This is explained in part by the larger proportion of international students at regional universities from our sample (65 per cent; see Table 2).

#### *Religious Beliefs and Practices on Campus*

The survey reveals that 66 per cent of the sample performs their prayers five times a day, and 87 per cent at least once a week (Possamai et al., 2016). We are thus assuming that our sample is highly religious (see Table 6). The extent of religious performance on campus is more modest, as not all students live on campus. In this higher education setting, 23 per cent of the sample prayed five times a day, and a total of 62 per cent at least once a week (see Table 5). Almost one-fifth (19 per cent) of the international population pray five times per day on campus compared to 23 per cent for the local population (Possamai et al., 2016). We could assume that international students are more likely to live on campus than local ones and local students are more likely to have a home base or local place of worship they can use. The data, however, indicate that local students are slightly more likely to use prayer facilities on campus. We also noticed another difference; only 17 per cent of the female students reported praying five times a day on campus compared to 28 per cent of men (Possamai et al., 2016). This indicates that universities in NSW are providing religious facilities that are frequently used by a section of Muslim students. When asked to provide any comments to the survey, 39 participants expressed their concern about needing bigger prayer facilities or a cleaner Musallah (place of gathering) or a cleaner bathroom attached to their prayer room. So while usage is high there were concerns about over-crowding and cleanliness.

When praying five times a day on campus, Table 5 informs us of a slight over-proportion of regional students (16 per cent) compared to the total (13 per cent), city (12 per cent) and suburban (13 per cent) ones. With regards to having all prayers but sometimes not on time, we discover that city campuses have a higher proportion (17 per cent) compared to the total (10 per cent) and the suburban (7 per cent) and regional ones (6 per cent). The reason might be that these city campuses tend to be bigger than the suburban and regional ones, and with only one multi-faith room on campus, accessing it on time between classes might be a problem. Of interest is the answer to attending the Friday prayers only. Only 3 per cent of the suburban sample attend Friday prayers only, compared to the city (16 per cent), the regional (11 per cent), and the overall (7 per cent) one. In other research on the practice of religion and spirituality on the suburban campuses of Western Sydney University, Possamai and Brackenreg (2009) discovered that due to the availability of mosques surrounding these campuses, students tended to commute for this most important prayer of the week, instead of staying on campus.

**Table 5: Daily prayer habits on campus, Muslim university students, NSW, 2013-2014, N=281.**

	N Total	%	N City	%	N Suburban	%	N Regional	%
All five prayers on time	36	13	9	12	24	13	3	16
All prayers but sometimes not on time	27	10	13	17	13	7	1	6
Less than five times	91	32	23	31	63	33	5	28
Friday prayer only	19	7	12	16	5	3	2	11
Less than once per week	28	10	5	7	20	11	3	17
Never	80	28	13	17	63	33	4	22
Total	281	100	75	100	188	100	18	100

*Source: Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

**Table 6: Importance of religion in daily life, Muslim university students, NSW, 2013-2014, N=281.**

	N total	%	N city	%	N suburbs	%	N Regional	%
Very important	189	67	50	66	125	67	14	77
Important	65	23	14	19	49	26	2	11
Somewhat important	22	8	11	15	10	5	1	6
Not important at all	5	2	0	0	4	2	1	6
Total	281	100	75	100	188	100	18	100

Source: *Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

Table 6 reveals that for 90 per cent of the sample, religion in the everyday life of these students is important and very important. The proportion for city (85 per cent) and regional (88 per cent) is slightly lower than the suburban (93 per cent) ones. For the whole sample, two-thirds (67 per cent) claim this to be very important. In the regional context, this goes higher (77 per cent). The suburban and city setting are at the same level (67 per cent and 66 per cent). In this sample, we have an indication that religious life is more ‘very important’ for regional students.

**Table7: Identifiable Muslim, Muslim university students, NSW, 2013-2014, N=277.**

	N	per cent	N city	per cent	N suburbs	per cent	N Regional	per cent
Most of the time	131	47	32	44	91	49	8	45
Yes, sometimes	62	23	17	23	41	22	4	22
No	84	30	24	33	54	29	6	32
Total	277	100	73	100	186	100	18	100

Source: *Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

With regards to Muslims being more visible with their religion in their appearance, Table 7 only indicates a slight difference from the city (44 per cent most of the time) and regional (44 per cent) grouping with the suburban (49 per cent) (the overall proportion being 47per cent).

**Table 8: Religious perspectives changed since attending the university, Muslim university students, NSW, 2013-2014, N=258**

	N Total	%	N City	%	N Suburbs	%	N Regional	%
Became more religious	95	37	27	38	60	35	8	50
Became less religious	17	6	6	9	10	6	1	6
Remained same	126	49	29	41	90	52	7	44
Not sure	20	8	8	12	12	7	0	0
Total	323	100	70	100	172		16	100

Source: *Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

In Table 8, 37 per cent of the whole sample claimed to have become more religious since their enrolment at university (40 per cent for women and 33 per cent for men; and 32 per cent for international and 38 per cent for local students; see (Possamai et al., 2016)) whereas 49 per cent of them had remained at the same level of religiosity. Only the regional respondents (50 per cent) showed a stronger rate of response than the city (38 per cent) and the suburban

(35 per cent) respondents with regards to becoming more religious. This is in line with Dutton's (2008) research on evangelisation on various universities in the world, as already underlined in the introduction. He found that the more remote the campus is (as opposed to city or suburban campuses), the stronger the level of piety. When looking at the proportion of students remaining the same, we again find a difference between the suburban (52 per cent), compared to the city (41 per cent), regional (44 per cent) and overall ones (49 per cent). In this sample, suburban campuses tend to generate fewer changes with regards to religiosity. Although the numbers are small (n=17), it appears that city campuses tend to slightly make Muslim students less religious (9 per cent). This is a higher proportion compared to suburban (6 per cent), regional (6 per cent) and overall (6 per cent) ones.

According to this whole sample, it can be concluded that Australia's higher education institutions are not places where students lose faith. For many, their faith remains the same, or is even enhanced. Overall, most students are confident enough to perform the rituals of their religion and be identified as a Muslim which demonstrates a robustness to religious diversity on NSW university campuses. However, we do find as well that regional campuses are more likely to make a Muslim student more religious, and a city one more secularised.

In an earlier article, we (Possamai et al., 2016) detailed the overall opinions of the Muslim students from this sample on their practice of religion on campus and their experiences of discrimination. We found that the more religious Muslim students are, the more they have concerns about cross-gender mixing in higher education and the need for more Muslims, rather than non-Muslim, friends. However, most Muslims do not express a desire for mono-gender campuses and/or same sex instructors. We also reported that the majority of Australian Muslim university students do report experiencing discrimination on the basis of their religious identity in educational settings, however, only one-in-ten claim that it happens often, and for a quarter, it happens sometimes. This does not suggest that university campuses protect students from anti-Islamic racism. However, the positive attitudes towards diversity, by university students, suggest resilience to the negative encounters to which they are exposed.

For the purposes of this article, we did not want to cover all the same opinions as we had done elsewhere (Possamai et al., 2016). Instead, we generated some coefficient of correlations between the locality of their campus (city, suburban or regional) and all the opinion questions listed in the survey. We found that the correlations were the most significant when answering these questions:

'There is a drinking culture among university students' (Pearson Correlation: -0.315, correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed))

'Do you disagree or agree that ...

- 'there is racial prejudice in the on-line discussions that you are doing for your university subjects' (Pearson Correlation: -0.144, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed))
- 'there is conflict between religious groups on your campus' (Pearson Correlation: -0.126, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed))
- 'there is conflict between atheist and religious groups on your campus' (Pearson Correlation: -0.157, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed))
- 'there is conflict between Muslim groups on campus' (Pearson Correlation: +0.150, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed))

**Table 9: Differences of Opinion across Types of University, NSW, 2013-2014**

	N Total	%	N City	%	N Suburbs	%	N Regional	%
Do you agree that there is a drinking culture among university students (Agree and Strongly Agree), N=258	161	62	58	83	90	52	13	81
Do you disagree or agree that (Agree and Strongly Agree) ...								
there is racial prejudice in the on-line discussions that you are doing for your university subjects, N=254	19	7	7	10	11	7	1	6
there is conflict between religious groups on your campus, N=254	21	8	5	7	14	8	2	13
there is conflict between atheist and religious groups on your campus, N=254	34	13	9	13	22	13	3	19
there is conflict between Muslim groups on campus, N=254	40	16	13	19	26	10	1	6

*Source: Muslims on Campus Survey: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*

Table 9 reveals the results of the cross-tabulations of these variables. The differences between locality are much stronger, of course, for the highest correlation (-0.303). There is a strong difference in the perception of drinking culture among university students between suburban (52 per cent agree and strongly agree) than city (83 per cent) and regional (81 per cent) ones. Based on previous research conducted by Possamai and Brackenreg (2009) specifically on Western Sydney University, we can interpret that suburban universities are universities to which people commute regularly between work and family responsibility, and do not tend to stay on campus for more than what is needed (e.g. classes). For the city and regional ones, we expect a stronger residential culture and stronger student nightlife events. We assume that this is why we have a strong difference for this question.

For the three other questions, the difference is not as great (which is explained by a much lower coefficient of correlation) but we do find that there is a perceived strong conflict between atheist and religious groups in regional campuses (19 per cent) compared to the overall (13 per cent) and suburban (13 per cent) rates. With regards to perceived conflict between religious groups, city (7 per cent) and suburban (8 per cent) are on par with the overall rate (8 per cent), whereas the regional one (13 per cent) is higher. This confirms the assumption that city campuses are more secular in nature whereas regional campuses (bearing in mind the small sample size of this category), while promoting piety at a higher level (see above) is witnessing a perceived higher level of inter-religious and atheist-religious tensions.

However, this comment has to be put in the context of sub-Muslim group tensions. There is conflict for only 6 per cent of the regional sample, compared to an overall of 16 per cent, a city one of 19 per cent, and a suburban one of 10 per cent. While city campuses are more secular and do not have much inter-religious conflict, there seems to be a higher rate of reported conflict between Muslim groups. On the other hand, in regional campus, hardly any conflict between Muslim groups is noted and the likeliness of a student becoming more religious is also stronger.

When dealing with the question about on-line prejudice, the proportion among city students (10 per cent) is not significantly higher than the suburban (7 per cent), the regional (6 per cent) or the overall rate (7 per cent).

## **Discussion**

In Possamai et al. (2016), we argued that in light of this sample, university campuses in NSW are post-secular rather than secular (Beaumont, 2008; Beaumont & Dias, 2008; Olson et al., 2013). By post-secular, we make reference to the process of the deprivatisation of religion, referring to the public emergence and affirmation of religion rather than an assumption that faith should remain a private and publicly hidden commitment. Post-secularism is being seen as conceptual position that better facilitates the understanding of the current dialogue about the management of the presence and influence of religious groups in the public sphere within a secular framework (Habermas & Ratzinger, 2006). This led us to argue that in keeping with post-secular realities, and the reality of racism and Islamophobia, university campuses ought to tolerate faith and to support religious diversity.

Stevenson et al. (2010) argued that in the context of Sydney as a global city, the issue of post-secularism was not as straight forward. While some specific clusters of suburbs were staying Christian, others were becoming more secular or more religious but non-Christian. This led these authors to argue that Sydney is experiencing various patterns of secularisation and de-secularisation, and that the move from a secular society to a more or less religious one is not unilinear.

We have also underlined similar processes in this article. While we analysed all the universities as post-secular in our previous research, we have discovered that post-secularism will be affected by the type of university in which a Muslim student is located. Indeed, and bearing in mind the limitations of this study (see above), regional campuses are more likely to make a Muslim student more religious, and a city one more secularised. There is also more tension between Muslim groups in a city campus than in a regional one. Prayer times are more regularly observed by students on city campuses than on the other types of campus. The perception of a drinking culture on campus is also perceived to be stronger for Muslim students from city and regional campuses, than for suburban ones. These findings highlight the various processes of secularisation and de-secularisation found on different types of university campuses.

## References

- Andersson J., Sadgrove, J., & Valentine, G. (2012). Consuming campus: geographies of encounter at a British university. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 13 (5), 501-515.
- Batorowicz, K. (2007). Dealing with religious diversity within universities. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities & Nations*, 7 (5), 285–291.
- Beaumont, J. (2008). Faith Action on Urban Social Issues. *Urban Studies*, 45(10), 2019-2034.
- Beaumont, J. and Dias, C. (2008). Faith-Based Organisations and Urban Social Justice in the Netherlands. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 99(4), 382-392.
- Bouma, G. (2006). *Australian Soul. Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-first Century*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Bryant, A. N. (2007). The effects of Involvement in Campus Religious Communities on College Student Adjustment and Development. *Journal of College and Character*, 8 (3), 1–25.
- Cole, D. and S. Ahmadi (2010). Reconsidering Campus Diversity: An Examination of Muslim Students' Experiences. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 81 (2), 121-139.

- Dutton, E. (2008). *Meeting Jesus at University. Rites of Passage and Student Evangelicals*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Finke, R. and R. Stark (2005). *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Gilliat-Ray, S. (2000). *Religion in Higher Education. The Politics of the Multi-faith Campus*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Habermas, J. and J. Ratzinger (2006). *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. San Francisco: Ignatius.
- Hopkins P. (2011). Towards Critical Geographies of the University Campus: Understanding the Contested Experiences of Muslim Students. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36 (1), 157-169.
- Jacobson, D. & R. Jacobson (2012). *No Longer Visible. Religion in University Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mayrl, D., & Oeur, F. (2009). Religion and Higher Education: Current Knowledge and Directions for Future Research. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 48(2), 260–275.
- Nasir, S.N. & J. Al-Amin. (2006). Creating Identity-Safe Spaces on College Campuses for Muslim Students. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 38 (2), 22-27.
- Olson, E., Hopkins, P., Pain, R. & Vincett, G. (2013). Rethorising the postsecular present: embodiment, spatial transcendence and challenges to authenticity among young Christians in Glasgow, Scotland. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 103(6), 1421-1436.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P.T. (2005) *How college affects students: A third decade of research (Vol. 2)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Possamai, A. & E. Brackenreg (2009). Religious and Spirituality Diversity in a Multi-Campus Suburban University: What Type of Need for Chaplaincy? *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 31 (4), 355-366.
- Possamai, A., A. Sriprakash, E. Brackenreg & J. McGuire (2014). Chaplaincies in a 'post-secular' multicultural university. *Fieldwork in Religion*, 9 (2), 147-165.
- Possamai, A., Dunn Kevin M., Hopkins, P., Amin, F., Worthington, L. & Ali J. (2016, forthcoming) Muslim students' religious and cultural experiences in the micro-publics of university campuses in NSW, Australia, *Australian Geographer*, 47(3).
- Richardson, J. (2013). Managing minority religious and ethnic groups in Australia: Implications for social cohesion. *Social Compass*, 60 (4), 579-590.
- Rogers, B. (2004). A Timely Initiative: Placing and Funding Chaplain Coordinators in Australian Tertiary institutions. *Journal of the Tertiary Campus Ministry Association*, 2, 138-183.

Sawir, E., S. Marginson, A. Deumert, C. Nyland, C. & G. Ramia (2008). Loneliness and International Students: An Australian Study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 148-180.

Schmalzbauer, J. (2013). Campus Religious Life in America: Revitalization and Renewal. *Society*, 50 (2), 115-131.

Sharma, S. & Guest, M. (2013). Navigating religion between university and home: Christian students' experiences in English universities. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 14(1), 59-79

Sommerville, C. (2006). *The Decline of the Secular University*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Steele, C.M. (1997). A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance. *American Psychologist*, 52 (6), 613-629.

Stevenson D., K. Dunn, A. Possamai, & A. Piracha, A. Possamai (2010). Sydney: An Examination of a 'Post-Secular' World City. *Australian Geographer*, 41 (3), 323-350.