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Liberal Arts, Religion, and Irreligion: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Student Religiosity and Secularity at the Claremont Colleges

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**LIBERAL ARTS, RELIGION, AND IRRELIGION: A CROSS-SECTIONAL
ANALYSIS OF STUDENT RELIGIOSITY AND SECULARITY AT THE
CLAREMONT COLLEGES**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

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and Secularity at the Claremont Colleges

ABSTRACT

This study measures levels of religiosity and secularity among students at the Claremont Colleges, including students' (ir)religious affiliations, beliefs, and practices. The religious landscape in the U.S. is shifting in multiple ways, and young adults feature prominently in these changes. Using data from an online survey of students, the present study addresses the following research questions: What is the (ir)religious makeup of the student body at the Claremont Colleges? Do the observed patterns mirror those of the general U.S. population? The results of this study show that the sample population at the Claremont Colleges is much less religious than the U.S. as a whole in terms of affiliation, beliefs, and practices. The findings highlight the shifting religious landscape in the U.S., particularly in the younger population, and the importance of understanding these shifts in order to best serve the needs of students.

Key words: secularism, secularity, religion, college, college students, survey

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Liberal Arts, Religion, and Irreligion: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Student Religiosity and Secularity at the Claremont Colleges

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The religious climate of the U.S. is shifting. Researchers are reporting large-scale change, including significantly increased levels of secularity and a decline in religious participation (Kosmin and Keysar 2009; Sherkat 2014:94; Baker and Smith 2015). Between 2007 and 2014, the percentage of the population that does not identify with a religion increased from 16% to 22.8%, and the percentages of U.S. adults who affiliate with a religion, believe in God, pray daily, and attend services at least monthly have all decreased (Pew Research Center 2015c).

In addition to increased secularity, Americans are reporting slightly increased levels of “spirituality,” a characteristic that is not necessarily linked to traditional religiosity. The General Social Survey (GSS) allows respondents to identify as spiritual, religious, or both. Eighty percent chose both, but 14%, a small but growing minority, identified themselves as “at least moderately spiritual and but not more than slightly religious” (Chaves 2011:40). With a slight decrease in overall religiosity of the U.S. population, this “diffuse spirituality” may be the only characteristic that is moving in the opposite direction (Chaves 2011:37).

Young adults feature prominently in the present changes in the religious landscape of the U.S., and college-age Americans are redefining the “categories and classifications” often associated with religiosity and secularity (Kosmin and Keysar 2013:4). In 2013, Kosmin and Keysar conducted a large-scale study of college students to investigate

students' beliefs, and they found that students are divided into "three distinct worldviews": religious, secular, and spiritual, reflecting the importance of the growing movements of both secularity and spirituality among young people in particular (2011:1). Similarly, in 2014, The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey (an annual study of college freshmen in the U.S.) found that more first-year students than ever before (27.5%) were religiously unaffiliated when they entered college (Eagan et al. 2014:5).

The important role that young adults have in the shifting religious landscape in the U.S. makes college and university campuses critical environments for researching religion and secularity, and further research is necessary to address college students' levels of (ir)religiosity. The present study measures levels of religiosity and secularity among students at the Claremont Colleges, including students' religious affiliations, beliefs, practices, or lack thereof. Through an online survey distributed to students at all five Claremont Colleges, I gathered information about students' (ir)religiosity by asking questions about (ir)religious affiliations, beliefs, practices, and opinions, with additional questions about students' demographic characteristics.

My central research questions are: What is the (ir)religious makeup of the student body at the Claremont Colleges? What are the (ir)religious beliefs and practices of the student body? Do the observed patterns mirror those of the general U.S. population? This project provides new information about important characteristics of students at the Claremont Colleges. With the changing religious landscape in the U.S. and in institutions of higher education, it is crucial to have an understanding of student religiosity and secularity. Colleges and universities often provide students with resources and support

services related to religion and students' general well-being, such as chaplains from different religious backgrounds and a center for religious life on campus. To most effectively serve their students' needs, these institutions must be aware of the (ir)religious makeup and characteristics of their respective student bodies. For example, some universities, such as Stanford, Yale, Rutgers, and others, now include a Humanist chaplaincy alongside the traditional religious chaplaincies, in order to better serve the needs of their secular student population ("Humanist Chaplaincies" 2016). The results of this study can help inform administrative decisions regarding student support services, such as the creation of a new Chaplain position or the availability of resources for a diverse range of religions.

The following chapter reviews the current literature on religiosity and secularity in the U.S. and the available (although limited) literature on college students' religiosity. I provide definitions of the key terms and discuss the challenges of measuring religiosity and secularity, in addition to the methodology of the study, including the sample, procedure, and operationalization of religiosity variables. The findings present descriptive statistics of the religiosity of the sample population and the key patterns found in the data. To conclude, I consider the implications of this research and the specific areas that future research should address.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

U.S. Trends in Religiosity: Secularity and Spirituality

The religious landscape of the U.S. is shifting, and studies are showing an increase in secularity and a decline in religious participation (Kosmin and Keysar 2009; Sherkat 2014:94; Baker and Smith 2015). Dubbed “the rise of the ‘nones’ ” by sociologists of religion, this shift involves more Americans rejecting organized religion than ever before (Kosmin and Keysar 2009:1; Sherkat 2014; Baker and Smith 2015).

According to data from the General Social Survey (GSS), more than 16% of adult Americans said they have “no religion” in 2008, compared to a mere 3% in a 1957 government survey (Chaves 2011:18-19). Between the 2007 Pew Religious Landscape Survey (Pew RLS) and the 2014 Pew RLS, the percentages of U.S. adults who affiliate with a religion, believe in God, pray daily, and attend services at least monthly all decreased (Pew 2015c).

In that same time period, the percentage of the population that does not identify with a religion (the religiously unaffiliated population) increased from 16% (in 2007) to 22.8% (in 2014). The “unaffiliated” group does not necessarily mean “atheist” or “agnostic” when it comes to theistic belief, but the percentage of the population that identifies as atheist and agnostic has also grown since the 2007 survey. Currently, 3.1% identifies as atheist, and 4.0% as agnostic, compared to 1.6% and 2.4% (respectively) in the 2007 Pew RLS (Pew 2015a). The members of this unaffiliated population “describe themselves in increasingly secular terms” and have become increasingly secular in measures of religious belief and behavior as well (Pew 2015a). With the growth of the unaffiliated

population in numbers and strength of irreligiousness, the change in the general U.S. population shows a decrease, albeit a slight decrease, in religiosity. Chaves (2011) argues that even when it is difficult to pinpoint one measurement of religiosity in the U.S., the data shows that “*no traditional religious belief or practice has increased in recent decades*” (2011:14, original emphasis).

There are multiple factors that may account for this shift towards secularity. First, the rise of the “Religious Right” and an increasing association between conservative Republicanism and evangelical Christianity has alienated many less-conservative Christians from their religion. Second, the uncovering of the sexual abuse scandals within the Catholic Church has turned many Catholics away from religion. Third, as seen in European countries, an increase of women in the workplace is associated with women’s decreasing involvement in religion, and therefore their family’s overall involvement; the increased number of women in the workforce in the U.S. over the past few decades may have similar effects on the religiosity of the country (Zuckerman 2014).

Despite the overall trend towards secularity in recent decades, the U.S. remains remarkably religious when compared to other Western nations (Chaves 2011:10). Although still the dominant religion, the Christian population has shrunk in the past few decades, and Protestants no longer form the majority (Pew 2015b). According to the 2014 Pew RLS, 77% of Americans affiliate with a religion: 47% are Protestant, 21% Catholic, 6% are of Non-Christian faiths, and the remaining 23% are unaffiliated (Pew 2015b). Fifty percent of Americans say they attend religious services at least monthly, and 55% of Americans say they pray daily. According to a question from the Pew RLS, 89% of Americans believe in God or a “universal spirit” (Pew 2015c).

In addition to increased levels of secularity and the changing religious makeup of the U.S., Americans are reporting increased levels of “spirituality” in recent years, as mentioned previously (Chaves 2011; Stark 2008; Kosmin and Keysar 2013). Although this at first seems contradictory to the observed trends in secularity, spirituality does not necessarily have to do with what is commonly thought of as traditional religiosity, and although sometimes linked to traditional religiosity, spirituality levels do not always correlate with religiosity levels (Chaves 2011). In fact, there is a small but growing minority of Americans who identify as “spiritual,” but not “religious” (Chaves 2011:37). The GSS allows respondents to identify as spiritual, religious, or both. In 2008, 80% of respondents chose both, but 14%, a small but growing minority, identified themselves as “at least moderately spiritual but not more than slightly religious” (2011:40).

The spiritual population tends to claim a belief in a “Higher Power of some kind” but not in the traditional sense of a “God” (Kosmin and Keysar 2013). More Americans demonstrated a belief in a higher power in 2014 (13%) than in 1991 (7%), fitting the increasing trend in spirituality (Hout and Smith 2015). With a slight decrease in overall religiosity of the U.S. population, this “diffuse spirituality” may be the only characteristic that is moving in the opposite direction (Chaves 2011:37). Although it is difficult to know exactly what respondents mean when they identify themselves as being “spiritual,” Chaves (2011) describes this population thusly: “Such people consider themselves to be generally concerned with spiritual matters (whatever *that* means) but are not interested in organized religion” (2011:41).

The trend in spirituality might be due to similar reasons as the secularity trend. Just as less-conservative Christians have been alienated from their religion due to conservative

political developments such as the “Religious Right” and have come to identify as “secular” instead of affiliating with an organized religion, the politicization of religion and its association with conservatism has similarly alienated those who do not want to associate with this form of organized religion, but *do* want to hold onto some form of theistic belief (Kosmin and Keysar 2013). Thus, they might claim a “spiritual” identity instead of a religious or secular one. Recent political developments concerning religion have therefore contributed to the trend of spirituality just as they have contributed to that of secularity.

Surveys on Religion in the U.S.

There are a few large-scale surveys that have been done in recent years in the U.S. on religion and secularity, and these surveys show the trends discussed above. Although the Constitution prohibits the U.S. Census Bureau from gathering its own data on religion, there are other sources of national data, some of which are included in the Census Bureau’s publications (Kosmin and Keysar 2009:2; Sherkat 2014:6). Beginning in 1972, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) has administered the General Social Survey (GSS) and has surveyed the U.S. population on religious identifications and beliefs. In 2007 and 2014, the Pew Research Center administered the Pew Religious Landscape Survey (RLS), collecting information on Americans’ religious affiliations, beliefs, practices, and social and political views. In 2005 and 2007, the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS) was conducted, asking respondents about religious beliefs and practices, albeit with a smaller sample (Stark 2008). In 1990, 2001, and 2008, Kosmin and Keysar (of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture) conducted the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), a nationally representative survey

concerning religious affiliation, beliefs, and practices of adults in the contiguous forty-eight states (Kosmin and Keysar 2009:2). I will compare my findings regarding the religiosity and secularity of students at the Claremont Colleges to the findings of the national surveys described above, and the demographic patterns therein (see below), to assess whether the present study's sample of students at the Claremont Colleges exhibits the same patterns of religiosity and secularity as the U.S. as a whole.

The Demographics of Religion and Secularity

Different populations—based on geography, gender, race or ethnicity, economic standing, age, and other factors—vary in their levels of religiosity and secularity. For example, geography correlates with religiosity such that states in the Pacific region have the highest percentage of residents who are not affiliated with a religion, at 30% (Hout and Smith 2015). In terms of age, younger Americans tend to be less religious than their older counterparts (Pew 2015c). When it comes to gender, men tend to be less religious than women (Baker and Smith 2015; Stark 2008; Pew 2015b). In terms of politics, political and social conservatism tend to correlate with higher levels of religiosity (Chaves 2011). Those who identify as politically conservative affiliate with religions more frequently than those who identify as politically liberal (Hout and Smith 2015; Chaves 2011). Similarly, church attendance correlates with political (and social) conservatism (Chaves 2011). Race differences often correlate with religiosity differences (Johnson, Matre, and Armbrrecht 1991:258; Stark 2008). In terms of education, higher levels of education correlate with lower levels of religiosity (Stark 2008:122, Sherkat 2014:131).

Baker and Smith (2015) argue that claiming a secular identity is claiming a marginalized identity, and that it is therefore more difficult (and rarer) for individuals with low levels of social prestige and power to do. With the normalization of religious identities, being religious means having access to the “privileges of conventionality” (2015:99). Since a religious identity is normative and often “tied to claims about full citizenship and public morality, secular identity is less prevalent among members of minority positions, especially those relating to the primary axes of power: social class, race and ethnicity, and gender” (2015:116). These minority statuses of race, class, and gender are not chosen; they are ascribed. The minority status of secularity would be a chosen status, and it makes sense that members of marginalized minority groups would not “compound stigmatization with an additional degraded status” (2015:116). Secularity often correlates with “social power” (2015:131) because those with “ample supply of social status can better afford the penalties applied for the ideological and cultural deviance of secularity” (2015:131).

The tendency for certain minority groups to be more religious is also linked to the fact that “connections to community are often predicated on religious organizations, especially for minorities” (Baker and Smith 2015:132). These (religious) communities are often the place for minority “subculture formation and maintenance” (2015:132); where minority groups “create and sustain subcultures to generate cultural worldviews, products, and understandings that are not ‘whitewashed’ ” (2015:132).

Women’s higher rates of religiosity might seem paradoxical, given the “patriarchal power structures of most organized religions” (Baker and Smith 2015:141), but Aune, Sharma, and Vincette (2008) argue that, for women, “religion becomes a way of

expressing one's identity and agency" (2008:8). Braude (2008) examines reasons why women remain devout religious participants despite the unavailability of opportunities for institutionalized involvement, including finding "strength in religious faith" and looking to their religion as "a source of both community and personal identity" (Braude 2008:2). Braude (2008) also addresses the role of family and children in relation to women's religiosity. As "guardians of the home" (Braude 2008:3), a woman's religiosity is tied to her family's religiosity. By taking her children to her "place of worship" and educating them in her beliefs (Braude 2008:3), a woman's family bonds are deeply connected to her religious experience.

Baker and Smith (2015) examined education levels and political views in relation to gender and secularity, and found that higher education levels and liberal political views correlate with greater gender equality between men and women in relation to secularity and religion. They therefore predict that the gender gaps in religiosity and secularity should decline as society experiences secularization "accompanied by greater gender equality" (2015:145).

Religion on the College Campus

As discussed in the Chapter One, young adults are an important demographic in the present trends in religiosity in the U.S., and college-age Americans are redefining the common "categories and classifications" of religion and secularity (Kosmin and Keysar 2013:4). Young adults play a particularly important role in the two large trends in religion in the U.S. outlined here, secularity and spirituality. The spirituality phenomenon is "more pronounced among younger people," with 20% of Americans under forty identifying as spiritual according to the GSS, and similar patterns in other surveys'

findings (Chaves 2011:40; Stark 2008). In 2013, Kosmin and Keysar (2013) conducted a large-scale study of college students to investigate students' beliefs, and they found that students are divided into "three distinct worldviews": religious, secular, and spiritual (2013:1), reflecting the importance of the growing movements of both secularity and spirituality among young people in particular. Similarly, as described in Chapter One, the CIRP Freshman survey found that in 2014 "students' affiliation with religion [hit] an all-time low, as more students start[ed] college not identifying with any religion"; 27.5% of freshmen selected "none" when asked about their religious preference, up 2.9% from 2013, and up 12% from the first CIRP Freshman Survey in 1971 (Eagan et al. 2014:5).

Few researchers have explored secularity and religiosity on college campuses, despite the crucial role of young adults in the shifting religious landscape in the U.S. (Kosmin and Keysar 2013; Eagan et al. 2014). Using data from three previous studies, Twenge et al (2015) found that millennials, particularly adolescents in high school and entering college, were less religious than other generations in terms of religious affiliation, commitment, and practice. This data focused on students from eighth grade through the beginning of freshman year of college, and therefore did not include in-depth exploration of college students' religiosity. Similarly, The CIRP Freshman Survey does not include an in-depth exploration of college students' religiosity in its project. The CIRP Freshman Survey is designed to collect information about students' lives and experiences as they enter college; religiosity is not a focus of the questions. In fact, only a few items of the more than fifty questions in the survey reference religiosity (Eagan et al. 2015).

Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) developed the College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Survey to measure "various aspects of the students' religious and

spiritual life and development” (2011:44), but they focused their project on the changes in student spirituality and religiousness over a student’s time in school. Their research provided them with insight into this particular aspect of student religiosity (spiritual “development”) but at the cost of exploring students’ general, static religiosity. The present study addresses the need for detailed description and analysis of students’ (ir)religious affiliations, beliefs, and practices, instead of focusing on students’ religious or spiritual development.

Much of the available literature concerning college students’ religiosity deals with interfaith work on college campuses. The Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey (CRSCS) studies students’ engagement in religiously diverse campus climates, with an emphasis on opportunities for interfaith interaction and cooperation (“IFYC”). By focusing on interfaith goals, the CRSCS cannot fully address all aspects of students’ (ir)religiosity. Another large part of the literature in this area focuses on the relationship between student religiosity and various other factors, including as academic achievement, coping and drinking behaviors, general health behaviors, and identity formation (Owens 2013; Harrell and Powell 2013; Hooker, Masters, and Carey 2014; Dalessandro 2015). Although it is important to study both interfaith efforts and religiosity’s relationship to a range of factors, it is also necessary to have a greater understanding of students’ general (ir)religiosity, both for its importance in its own right and to be able to inform other work like the previously mentioned studies of religiosity’s relationship to various factors. In the present study, I address the need for this greater understanding of the overall (ir)religiosity of college students, particularly that of the student body at the Claremont Colleges.

With the changes in the religious landscape in the U.S. and the importance of young adults in these shifts, further research is necessary to address college students' religiosity and secularity. To date, there are no available data on the religiosity and secularity of students at the Claremont Colleges. In the present study, I address this need by distributing a questionnaire to students at all five Claremont Colleges, containing questions about religious affiliation, beliefs, practices, and demographics, allowing for intra- and inter-college comparisons and observations.

In addition to potentially informing student well-being-related policy and gathering information about the student body that can be taken into account in student support services, this research will help to fill a gap in our knowledge about the beliefs, opinions, and lives of a generation of students who are playing a crucial role in the changing landscape of religion in the U.S. (Kosmin and Keysar 2013). Additionally, this sample offers a novel and useful research opportunity, given that no previous studies have examined religiosity and student body characteristics across a consortium of undergraduate institutions. The Claremont Colleges Consortium provides a unique environment with additional considerations to take into account. For example, does student religiosity vary in relation to the students' school affiliation within the consortium? Are the students of certain institutions in the Claremont Colleges more religious than others?

In the present study, I document student levels of religiosity and secularity using a combination of questions about (ir)religious affiliations, beliefs, practices, and opinions. For the purposes of this study, I use the definition of "religiosity" as outlined by Johnson et al. (1991): "the nature and extent of a person's religious beliefs and behaviors"

(1991:252). This definition is sufficiently broad for the multidimensional nature of religiosity. The following chapter will detail how I measure religiosity using a combination of factors that must be considered in order to paint a picture of this multidimensional variable, including respondents' (ir)religious affiliations, beliefs, and practices.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Site

The Claremont Colleges are located in a suburban city about thirty miles east of downtown Los Angeles, with a population of approximately 35,000 (“City of Claremont” 2016). The downtown area of the city includes local and chain businesses, restaurants, and entertainment. Adjacent to the downtown area are the Claremont Colleges, for which Claremont is known. The Claremont Colleges consist of five different undergraduate liberal arts colleges: Claremont McKenna College, Harvey Mudd College, Pitzer College, Pomona College, and Scripps College. The five campuses are contiguous and fit within one square mile, each campus’ distinct architectural style differentiating it from the next. Each institution has its own administration, with some resources shared amongst the schools, such as the library and certain intercollegiate academic departments. Students can take classes on any of the five campuses, eat at any of the schools’ dining halls, and interact with students on the other campuses regularly. There is a “Center for Religious Life” that hosts religious services and other activities, with three Chaplains of different religious backgrounds. There are also student groups for various religions, such as Intersity Christian Fellowship and Hillel, which engage students through meetings, discussions, and events related to religion (Claremont University Consortium 2016). The Secular Student Alliance at the Claremont Colleges, a Humanist student group, engages students in a similar way through meetings, discussions, and events, but through the lens of a secular community.

Procedure

For this study, I collected data from students at the Claremont Colleges using a 5-10 minute online questionnaire. In the context of the present study's research site and population, an online questionnaire is the most effective way to gather a large amount of data on the many aspects of religiosity that must be addressed in a cross-sectional analysis such as this (McAndrew and Voas 2011), given the college environment and students' use of technology. Additionally, the automatic coding enabled by Qualtrics eliminates the risk of coding errors. This study employs quantitative methods in order to obtain an accurate and large-scale snapshot of the (ir)religiosity of the student body and relevant data analysis on the results. There is ample scholarly literature that demonstrates that "quantification of religiosity is possible" (2011:2), and quantitative analysis is an important and useful tool in studying religiosity (McAndrew and Voas 2011).

I distributed the online questionnaire through the Facebook groups of each class year at each of the five schools (for example, "Claremont Colleges Class of 2017") and through student listservs that all students at the respective school would have access to. I also emailed professors from an array of disciplines and from all five schools with the survey link and information about my thesis, so that they could send it on to their students if they so chose. The study therefore uses a convenience sample, but one with relatively good distribution across the five colleges and across different class years, as detailed below. Convenience sampling is not generalizable to the full population, because the participants in the study are not a randomly-generated group (Nardi 2014). However, it was the best form of sampling for this study, because it allowed me to advertise my study in order to gather a sufficient number of responses. Due to my inclusive advertising

techniques, I was able to gather responses from a diverse group of students, one not necessarily too far from being representative of the full student body, despite the lack of statistical generalizability (Nardi 2014).

As previously stated, there are no available data on the (ir)religiosity of the student body at the Claremont Colleges to date. Such data would have the potential to inform administrative decision-making regarding student support services and resources for both religious and nonreligious students. This lack of information about an important characteristic of this community led me to design the present study and collect original data in order to address this need.

Characteristics of The Sample Population

I gathered a total of 674 completed responses. Respondents were able to skip questions that they did not want to answer, therefore resulting in a slightly different N for some questions. Due to my status as a Scripps student, I was able to gather more responses from Scripps students (27%) than from students at the other schools. Scripps College is a women's college, which therefore resulted in a larger percentage of female respondents (72%). Despite that, the sample consists of a portion of each of the five Claremont Colleges, with almost equal spread across class years.

The Social Sciences is the most popular area of study for respondents (34%), which might be explained by my status as a Sociology student and by the fact that students in the Social Sciences are willing to take surveys for their classmates. The political views of the sample population are the least equally distributed across the spectrum, showing the overwhelmingly liberal (78%) views of students. Although students hail from all areas of the country and from abroad, the majority of the sample population examined here is

from the West (58%), which consists of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Table 1
Sample Population Characteristics

Characteristics	Percent (%)
Sex Assigned at Birth (N = 650)	
Female	72
Male	28
Race/Ethnicity (N = unknown)	
White or Caucasian	67
Black or African American	7
Hispanic or Latino	11
Asian or Pacific Islander	25
Other	5
Area of Study (N = 648)	
Arts and Humanities	12
Natural/Physical Sciences	26
Social Sciences	34
Mathematics/Technology/Engineering	19
Undecided	9
Class Standing (N = 645)	
1 st year	28
2 nd year	25
3 rd year	20
4 th year	26
College (N = 646)	
Claremont McKenna	18
Harvey Mudd	16
Pitzer	16
Pomona	23
Scripps	27
Region (N = 651)	
Northeast	11
Midwest	11
South	9
West	58
Outside U.S.	10
Political Views (N = 651)	
Conservative	4
Moderate	18
Liberal	78

Operationalization

Researchers have different ways of measuring religiosity. A multi-dimensional approach, taking multiple factors into account, is often found to be most effective in the operationalization of religiosity (McAndrew and Voas 2011:3). Religiosity's subjective and complex nature does not lend itself to easy measurement via a single scale, and since individuals express their secularity and religiosity in many—often contradictory—ways (McAndrew and Voas 2011; Baker and Smith 2015). I use a combination of questions related to respondents' (ir)religious affiliation, beliefs, and practices to paint a picture of the religious landscape of the student body.

Taken individually, these factors are potentially problematic in measuring a respondent's religiosity, due to different interpretations, varying importance of different factors across religions, and respondents' potentially inaccurate self-reported behavior (McAndrew and Voas 2011). Religious affiliation, for example, indicates for some respondents a “voluntary association” with a religion, while for others it is a label more akin to a nationality than a faith (Sherkat 2014). Attendance at religious services, another common religiosity measure, is not only consistently over-reported (by approximately 10%), but it holds different meanings in different religious contexts; a devout Roman Catholic might express their religiosity through regular church attendance, whereas a Jewish woman “may express [her] piety within the household rather than in public places of worship” (McAndrew and Voas 2011:5). Due to the various challenges in pinpointing a religiosity measure, I ask respondents about various aspects of their religiosity in order to form an accurate picture of student religiosity.

Some of the questions included in the survey are from previous surveys, such as the GSS and Pew RLS, and others are questions that I created myself. When possible, I use previously written questions, both for reliability purposes and to be able to compare my results to the results of previous national studies that use the same question(s). In some cases, I made changes to a previously used question in order to adapt it to this study. For the full questionnaire, see Appendix C.

Religious preference. To learn about the religious makeup of the student body, the first question asks, “What is your religious preference, if any?” (Q3). I employ a simplified method of categorization of religions, including the most prevalent religions in the U.S., a few additional religions as per recommendation by individuals involved with religious life on campus, an option labeled “Other,” where respondents are able to write in a custom response if they so choose, and a “None/No religion” option.

One of the challenges in surveying religiosity is to avoid conflating religious affiliation or practices with theistic belief. We know that “identification with and participation in religious groups is often not correspondent with the acceptance of religious dogma” (Sherkat 2014:91), and individuals may “believe without belonging,” just as they might “belong without believing” (2014:91). Therefore, belief and affiliation must be addressed with separate questions. Despite this, many surveys conflate the two. The Pew RLS only asks respondents who specify “no religion” whether they are agnostic or atheist, therefore not allowing respondents to be religiously affiliated while not believing in God (Baker and Smith 2015:21). The 2015 CIRP Freshman Survey, which included the response options “atheist” and “agnostic” in the religious preference question for the first time in the 2015 survey, similarly conflates beliefs with affiliation;

the respondents who might identify with a religion *and* as an agnostic or an atheist are not represented (Eagan et al. 2015:22).

Religiosity. To get a general idea of the self-defined religiosity of the student body, I ask respondents to what extent they consider themselves a “religious person” (Q4). The response categories are on a scale from more to less religions: “Very religious,” “Moderately religious,” “Slightly religious,” or “Not religious at all.” As previously discussed, the term “religious” means different things for different people; each respondent can answer this question using whatever it is that “religious” means to them.

Spirituality. Similarly to Q4, I ask respondents to what extent they consider themselves a “spiritual person,” with the same scale of response categories as Q4: “Very spiritual,” “Moderately spiritual,” “Slightly spiritual,” or “Not spiritual at all” (Q5).

God-belief. This question asks, “Currently, which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?” (Q6). Respondents can choose between the following answers: “I don't believe in God,” “I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out,” “I don't believe in a God, but do believe in a Higher Power of some kind,” “I believe in God, but with some doubts,” or “I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it.”

I avoid using any labels for belief categories, such as “atheist” or “agnostic” in this question because a respondent might express an atheistic belief (for example, that they don't believe in God) without identifying with the *label* “atheist.” Terms such as atheist and agnostic often have negative connotations that discourage nonbelievers from claiming such a label (Goodman and Mueller 2009), and these labels are therefore not always an accurate representation of respondents' theistic beliefs. Students might say

they do not believe in God, but they would not necessarily say that they are “atheist.” I therefore ask about God-belief, religious affiliation, religious practices, and secular labels (see below) in separate questions.

Secular labels. I ask respondents whether they identify as “atheist,” “agnostic,” or “Humanist” (Q15). This allows respondents to express their secular/Humanist identity through a secular label, whether or not they have indicated that they affiliate with or practice a religion.

Humanism poses a challenge because there is no clear consensus on the definition of Humanism and whether it should “count” as a religion (“Definitions of Humanism”). It is sometimes included in lists of religions as an alternative to traditional religious affiliation. Thus, some respondents chose to write in a response for the religious affiliation question such as “secular humanist” or “Humanism” in the “Other” category. However, I chose to include Humanism in this separate question on secular labels so that respondents who did not identify with any of the traditional religions listed (and who did not choose to write in a custom response) would choose the “None/No religion” option, creating a more accurate representation of the unaffiliated cohort.

Beliefs. To learn about students’ (ir)religious beliefs, I ask respondents whether they believe in life after death, ghosts, angels, reincarnation, heaven, and hell (Q17). The response categories are “Yes,” “No,” or “Don’t know / Not sure.”

Prayer. I ask respondents, “Currently, how often do you pray, if at all?” (Q9), with response categories moving from more to less frequently: “Several times a day,” “Once a day,” “Several times a week,” “Once a week,” “Less than once a week,” or “Never.”

Practices. To learn about students' religious practices, I ask about attendance at religious services, participation in other religious activities or events, and participation in services or activities with on-campus religious groups (Q18, Q21). The response categories are "Never," "A few times a year," "Once or twice a month," "Once a week," and "More than once a week." I also ask whether respondents consider themselves to be a member of a religious group on campus (Q20).

Hypotheses

Although I do predict that I will find some of the same correlations in my data as are found in the general U.S. population, I expect that the nature of the different populations (the Claremont Colleges student body vs. the U.S. adult population) will create a few key differences. First, I am studying a population that is, for the most part, between the ages of 18 and 22, and thus may exhibit lower levels of religiosity, according to literature documenting the correlation between age and religiosity and generational differences in religiosity levels (Pew 2015a). Second, even without taking age into account, my population is not representative of the U.S. population as a whole. Students disproportionately come from certain geographic regions that are remarkably secular (particularly the Pacific region, due to the Colleges' location and appeal), and by virtue of being in college, students are already at a relatively high level of education. Additionally, students are overwhelmingly liberal in their political views (see Table 1). All of these factors point towards lower levels of religiosity than the general U.S. population.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Overall Findings

When compared to the general U.S. population, the Claremont Colleges sample is far more secular. This is evident through many of the questions asked of respondents in this study. The first obvious indicator of higher levels of secularity at the Claremont Colleges when compared to the general U.S. population is the (ir)religious affiliations of respondents. As Figure 1 and Table 2 show, almost half of the sample (47.5%) chose the “None/No religion” option when asked about their religious preference, compared to approximately 23% of the general U.S. population (Pew 2015c) (for details on the religious makeup of the U.S. population, see Appendix A).

The religious makeup of the sample population also differs significantly from that of the general U.S. population (see Figure 1, Table 2). After “None/No religion,” the most common response was “Catholic” (12.0%), followed by “Jewish” (10.3%) and “Non-denominational Christian” (7.9%). 4.3% of respondents chose “Other” and wrote in a custom response, including labels such as “atheist,” “agnostic,” and specific religious groups not listed as a multiple choice response, such as “Sikhism.” 2.5% responded “Hindu,” and 2.4% responded “Muslim,” followed by various Christian faiths: Presbyterian (2.2%), Episcopalian (1.6%), Baptist (1.5%), Lutheran (1.5%), Methodist (1.0%), and the following with less than 1% each: Eastern Orthodox, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Evangelical, LDS/Mormon, Pentecostal, and Seventh Day Adventist. The respondents who chose “Other” and wrote in a custom response that was not a religion—for example, “atheism”—might have otherwise chosen the “None/No

religion” category if they had not had the option of choosing “Other” and writing in their own response.

Fig. 1.—Q3. “What is your religious preference, if any?”

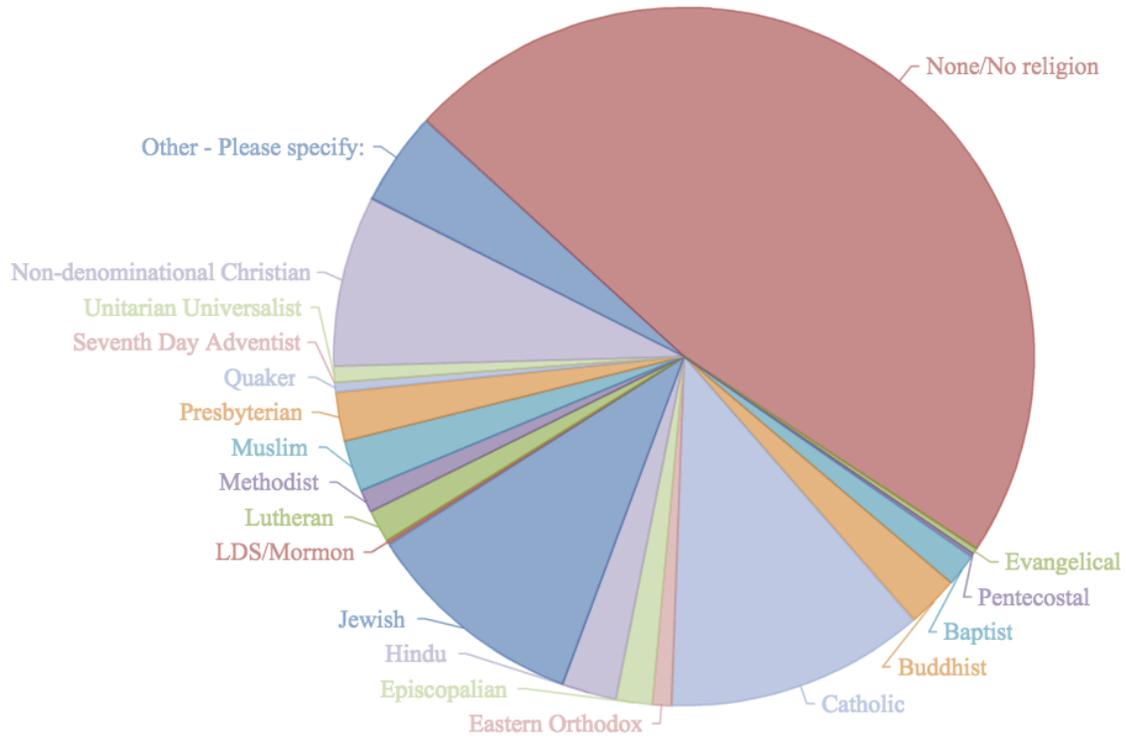


Table 2
Q3. “What is your religious preference, if any?”

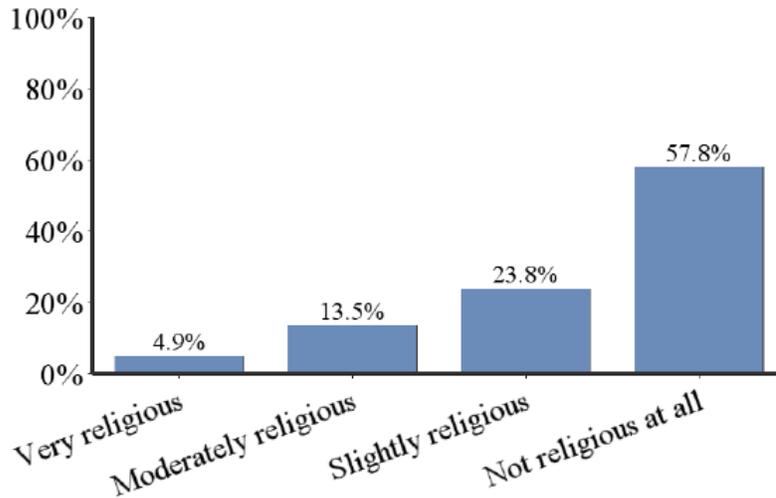
Religious Preference	Percent (%)
None/No religion	47.5
Catholic	12.0
Jewish	10.3
Non-denominational Christian	7.9
Other - Please specify	4.3
Hindu	2.5
Buddhist	2.4
Muslim	2.4
Presbyterian	2.2
Episcopalian	1.6
Baptist	1.5
Lutheran	1.5
Methodist	1.0
Eastern Orthodox	0.9
Unitarian Universalist	0.7
Quaker	0.4
Evangelical	0.3
LDS/Mormon	0.1
Pentecostal	0.1
Seventh Day Adventist	0.0

When all non-Catholic Christian categories are combined into one cohort, they consist of 17.6% of respondents (see Appendix B, Figure 8). When Catholicism is included in this new category, all of the Christian cohorts make up 30.3% of respondents. When the remaining religions except Judaism are collapsed into a single cohort (“Other Religions”), this new category accounts for 7.3% of the sample (see Appendix B, Figure 9). Judaism and the “Other” category remain the same (10.3% and 4.3%, respectively).

The sample population self-identifies as overwhelmingly nonreligious (see Figure 2), and the majority of respondents consider themselves “Not religious at all” (57.8%). The second-largest cohort identifies as “Slightly Religious” (23.8%), followed by

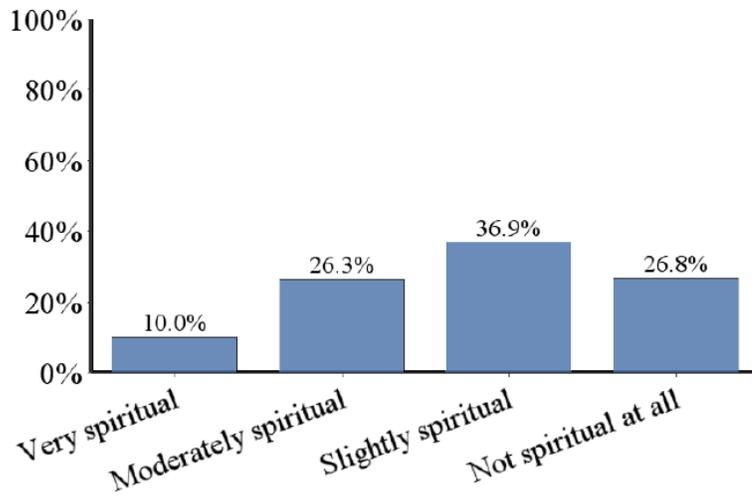
“Moderately religious” (13.5%). Only a very small minority consider themselves “Very religious” (4.9%). Overall, the sample is overwhelmingly nonreligious.

Fig. 2.—Q4. “Currently, to what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?”



The spirituality trend discussed in Chapter Two is evident in the present study. Respondents were more likely to identify as spiritual than they were to identify as religious (see Figure 3). All of the categories along the spectrum of “spiritual” are larger than those along the spectrum of “religious.” Only 26.8% consider themselves “Not spiritual at all,” while the majority (73.2%) consider themselves spiritual to some degree. Therefore, there are students who consider themselves spiritual but do *not* consider themselves religious. Thus, previous researchers’ (Chaves 2011; Stark 2008; Kosmin and Keysar 2013) observations of the “spiritual but not religious” group are evident in the sample studied. In fact, this trend is more obvious in my sample at the Claremont Colleges than in the general U.S. population, due to the presence of high levels of spirituality *despite* extremely low levels of traditional religiosity expressed by the present study’s sample (much lower than those of the general U.S. population).

Fig. 3.—Q5. “Currently, to what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?”



With approximately one quarter (24.9%) of the sample not believing in God (atheist) and another quarter (27.6%) of the sample not knowing whether there is a God (agnostic), the majority (52.5%) of respondents fit the definition of atheist or agnostic (see Table 3). This is in stark contrast to the beliefs of the U.S. population as a whole, where God-belief is much more common: only 3% of the U.S. population fits the definition of atheist, and 5% fit the definition of agnostic, making up only 8% overall (Hout and Smith 2015).

In this study, 16.6% of respondents do not believe in a “God,” but do believe in a “Higher Power of some kind,” and the remaining portion of the sample believes in God “with some doubts” (17.2%) or knows “God really exists and...[has] no doubts about it” (13.7%). Therefore, the smallest response group is the last group, the one that has the strongest level of god-belief, at 13.7%. This shows a clear contrast between the present study’s sample population and the general U.S. population: 58% of the U.S. population holds this firm belief in God “with no doubts,” compared to only 13.7% of this sample (Hout and Smith 2015).

Table 3
Q6. “Currently, which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?”

God-belief	Percent (%)
I don't believe in God	24.9
I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out	27.6
I don't believe in a God, but do believe in a Higher Power of some kind	16.6
I believe in God, but with some doubts	17.2
I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it	13.7

As demonstrated in Table 4 (below), the (in)frequency of prayer of the sample population also indicates high levels of secularity. The majority (57.3%) never prays, which is in stark contrast to 12.9% of the U.S. population that never prays (“The Association of Religion Data Archives”). Of the remaining portion of the sample, 17.7% say they pray less than once a week, 7.4% say they pray once a week, 5.7% say they pray several times a week, 6.0% once a day, and 5.9% several times a day.

Table 4
Q9. “Currently, how often do you pray, if at all?”

	Never (%)	Less than once a week (%)	Once a week (%)	Several times a week (%)	Once a day (%)	Several times a day (%)
Currently, how often do you pray, if at all?	57.3	17.7	7.4	5.7	6.0	5.9

Despite almost half of the sample population choosing the “None/No religion” option when asked about their current religious preference (see Figure 1, Table 2), only one quarter of respondents (25.3%)—still larger than any other cohort—were raised without religion (see Figure 4, Table 5). The next-largest response group consists of respondents who were raised Catholic (20.6%), followed by respondents who were raised Jewish (12.2%).

The percentage of students who were raised with “None/No religion” (25.3%) is almost half of the percentage that currently identifies with that group (see Figure 1, Table 2 for current religious affiliations). Therefore, many students who were raised religious have since stopped identifying with the religion of their parents or of their childhood. This is particularly true for the Catholic population: although 20.6% of students were raised Catholic, currently only 12.0% identify as Catholic. This shift in affiliation with Catholicism is in line with the shifts in the religious landscape of the U.S. as a whole, and may be explained by the aforementioned scandal in the Catholic Church that has been exposed only in recent years, and has led to a large-scale exit from the Catholic Church by many once-practicing Catholics (see Chapter Two).

Fig. 4.—Q10. “In what religion were you raised, if any?”

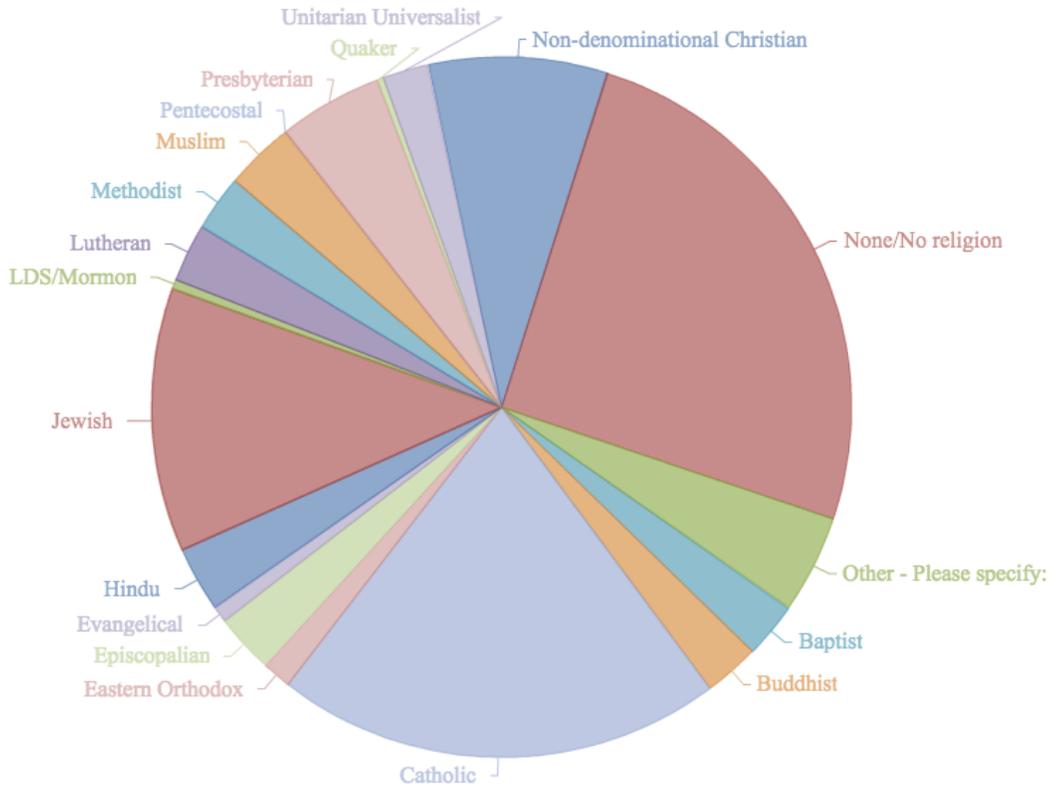
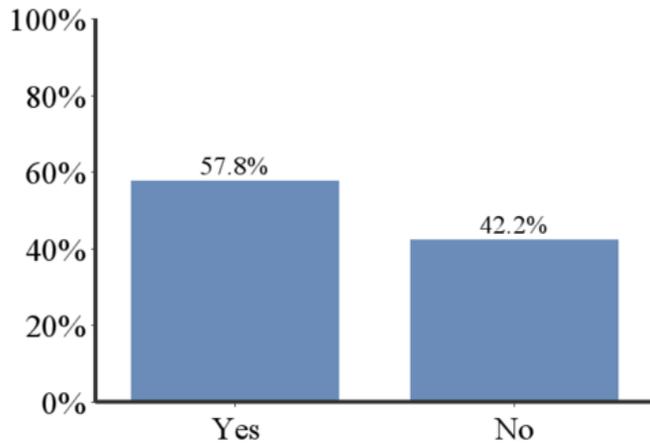


Table 5
Q10. “In what religion were you raised, if any?”

Religion	Percent (%)
None/No religion	25.3
Catholic	20.6
Jewish	12.2
Non-denominational Christian	8.3
Presbyterian	4.8
Other - Please specify	4.5
Muslim	3.2
Hindu	3.0
Episcopalian	2.7
Lutheran	2.7
Methodist	2.6
Buddhist	2.6
Baptist	2.6
Unitarian Universalist	2.1
Eastern Orthodox	1.4
Evangelical	0.8
LDS/Mormon	0.5
Quaker	0.3
Seventh Day Adventist	0.0
Pentecostal	0.0

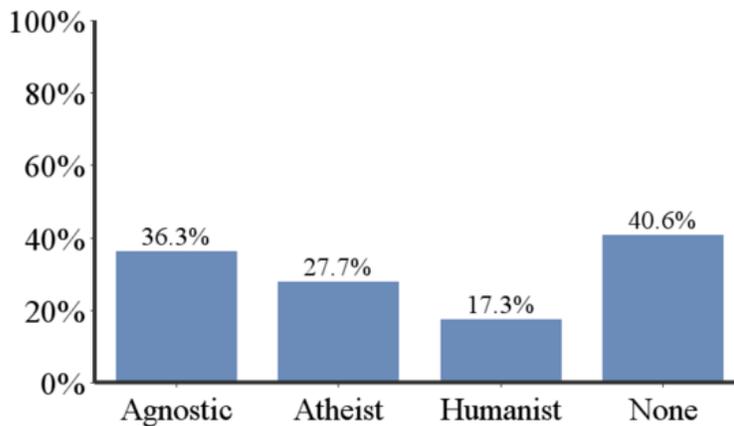
Despite the overwhelmingly nonreligious responses to questions about current religiosity (as seen in Figure 1, Table 2), 57.8% of respondents had a religious initiation ceremony of some kind (see Figure 5, below). This statistic does fit within the percentage of the sample that was raised with religion (74.7%) (see Figure 6, Table 5).

Fig. 5.—Q14. “Did you have a religious initiation ceremony, such as a baptism, christening, circumcision, confirmation, bar mitzvah, or naming ceremony?”



Respondents were asked about whether they would identify themselves using any of the secular labels “agnostic,” “atheist,” or “Humanist” (see Figure 6). Only 40.6% of the sample population would *not* use any of the three labels. Respondents were given the option to choose all of the labels with which they would identify themselves. Of the sample population, 36.3% would use the label “agnostic,” 27.7% would use the label “atheist,” and 17.3% would use the label “Humanist.”

Fig. 6.—Q15. “Would you use any of the following labels to identify yourself? Choose all that apply.”



Respondents were asked about a variety of religious beliefs (see Table 6), and their responses break down as follows:

- 28.1% of respondents believe in life after death, 31.9% do not, and 39.9% don't know or aren't sure. Life after death therefore is the belief from Question 17 with the largest percentage of students who believe in it or aren't sure if they believe in it, and the lowest percentage of students who do not believe in it.
- 18.5% of respondents believe in ghosts, 57.6% do not, and 23.9% don't know or aren't sure.
- 24.2% of respondents believe in angels, 55.6% do not, and 20.2% don't know or aren't sure.
- 14.6% of respondents believe in reincarnation, 51.6% do not, and 33.8% don't know or aren't sure. Fewer students believe in reincarnation than any of the other beliefs listed in Q17.
- Respondents have different beliefs regarding heaven than they do regarding hell. 25.3% believe in heaven, while only 18.1% believe in hell. Similarly, 46.8% say they do not believe in heaven, while 57.3% say they do not believe in hell. A similar percentage of respondents aren't sure or don't know whether they believe in heaven and hell: 27.9% don't know or aren't sure if they believe in heaven, and 24.6% don't know or aren't sure if they believe in hell.

Table 6

Q17. "Please mark whichever best represents your current beliefs. Do you believe in...?"

Belief	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know/ Not Sure (%)
Life after death	28.1	31.9	39.9
Ghosts	18.5	57.6	23.9
Angels	24.2	55.6	20.2
Reincarnation	14.6	51.6	33.8
Heaven	25.3	46.8	27.9
Hell	18.1	57.3	24.6

Q18 asks about attendance at religious services (see Table 7). The majority of the sample population attends religious services a few times a year or less (83.8%), and this group is split almost exactly in half between those who never attend (41.8%) and those who attend a few times a year (42.0%). The remaining portion of the sample (16.2%) attends services more than a few times a year: 6.6% attend once or twice a month, 8.3% once a week, and only 1.4% more than once a week.

There is a similar pattern for participation in religious activities or events besides services (see Table 8). The majority of the sample participates in religious activities or events only a few times a year or less (86.3%), and most of that cohort (57.6%, still a majority of the full sample) *never participates* in such activities or events. The remaining respondents (13.7%) participate more than a few times a year: 4.8% participate once or twice a month, 4.0% participate once a week, and 4.9% participate more than once a week.

A small percentage of respondents (13.0%) consider themselves to be a member of a religious group on campus (see Figure 7, below). Students' participation in religious

services or other activities with religious groups on campus (see Table 8) follows similar patterns to the previous questions on (ir)religious practices in general, as demonstrated in Table 7. The majority of respondents participate in religious services or other activities with religious groups on campus only a few times a year or less (86.1%), with 69.4% never attending or participating and 16.7% attending or participating a few times a year. The remaining portion of the sample breaks down as follows: 4.0% attend or participate once or twice a month, 5.5% attend or participate once a week, and 4.4% attend or participate more than once a week.

Table 7
Q18. “Currently, how often do you...?”

Practice	Never (%)	A few times a year (%)	Once or twice a month (%)	Once a week (%)	More than once a week (%)
Attend religious services (aside from weddings, funerals, and coming of age ceremonies)	41.8	42.0	6.6	8.3	1.4
Participate in religious activities or events (other than services) such as Bible study, prayer groups, meals, or other religious gatherings	57.6	28.7	4.8	4.0	4.9

Fig. 7.—Q20. “Do you currently consider yourself to be a member of a religious group on campus?”

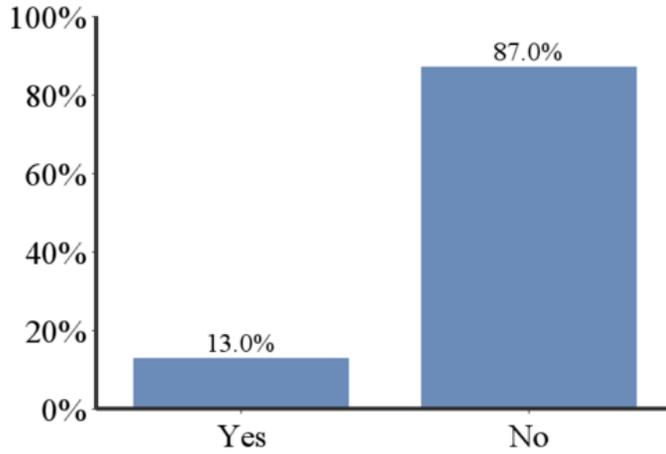


Table 8

Q21. “Whether or not you consider yourself a member of a religious group on campus, how often do you...?”

Practice	Never (%)	A few times a year (%)	Once or twice a month (%)	Once a week (%)	More than once a week (%)
Attend religious services or participate in other activities with a religious group on campus (such as Bible study, prayer groups, meals, or other gatherings)	69.4	16.7	4.0	5.5	4.4

As demonstrated in Table 9 (below), the college environment affects students’ rate of attendance at religious service and/or other religious activities or events. The influence of being at home tends to increase participation in the sample, and 37.8% of respondents attend more frequently when at home than when at school. A much smaller percentage

(8%) attends more frequently when at school than when at home, and 11.2% attend with the same frequency when at home and when at school. A relatively large cohort (43.1%) does not attend when they are at home or at school.

Table 9
Q19. “Thinking about your practices when you’re at home and when you’re at school, which statement best describes your situation?”

Response	Percent (%)
I attend religious services and/or other religious activities or events (aside from weddings, funerals, and coming of age ceremonies) more frequently when I am at home than when I am at school	37.8
I attend religious services and/or other religious activities or events (aside from weddings, funerals, and coming of age ceremonies) more frequently when I am at school than when I am at home	8.0
I attend with the same frequency when I am at home and at school	11.2
I don't attend at home or at school	43.1

Patterns Across the Consortium

When broken down by college, the following patterns emerge in the sample:

- In terms of religious affiliation (Q3), Pitzer (PZ) has no non-denominational Christians, compared to approximately 10% of the students at the other four colleges. Additionally, Pitzer has a higher percentage of students who identify as “Other” (10%), compared to 2-5% at the other schools. Harvey Mudd College (HMC) has the largest percentage of students who identify as “None/No religion” (62%), compared to the other schools at 40-45%. Claremont McKenna College (CMC) has the lowest “None/No Religion” percentage at 39%. CMC also has the largest Catholic

population at 22%, compared to the other schools at approximately 9%. Pitzer has the largest Jewish population of the five schools at 22%, compared to approximately 9% at the other schools.

- CMC has the highest percentages of students who consider themselves “moderately religious” (24%) and “slightly religious” (28%), while they have the lowest percentage of students who consider themselves “not religious at all.” HMC has the highest percentage of students who consider themselves “not religious at all” (68%). Scripps, despite relatively low percentages of students who consider themselves “moderately religious” (11%) and “slightly religious” (25%), has a slightly higher percentage of students who consider themselves “very religious” (7%).
- HMC has the highest percentage of students who consider themselves “not spiritual at all” (43%), compared to approximately 25% at the other schools.
- HMC has the highest percentage of students who say they do not believe in God, at 40%. CMC has the lowest percentage for this category, at 12%, while the other schools fall in between the two, at approximately 25%. PZ has the highest percentage of students who do not believe in a God, but do believe in a “Higher Power,” at 29%. CMC has the highest percentage of students who believe in God with doubts (27%) and who believe in God with no doubts (19%). HMC has the lowest percentage of students who believe in God with no doubts (6%).
- CMC has more frequent rates of prayer, and the lowest percentage of students who “never” pray at 44%, compared to approximately 60% at the other schools. HMC has the highest percentage of students who never pray, at 71%. Scripps, although

exhibiting low rates of prayer overall, has the highest percentage of students who pray “several times a day” (9%).

- CMC students are more likely to have had a religious initiation ceremony.
- HMC students are more likely to use self-identify with the labels “agnostic” and “atheist,” whereas CMC students are least likely to self-identify as “atheist.”
- Pomona students are more likely to “participate in religious activities or events (other than services)” more than once a week.
- Pomona students are more likely to attend services or participate in activities with a religious group on-campus, but HMC has more students who are members of campus religious groups, followed very closely by Pomona and Scripps. CMC has one of the lower rates of religious group membership, despite its higher levels of religiosity based on self-identification and belief. Pitzer students are the least likely of the five colleges to be a member of a campus religious group.

Gender

Using respondents’ sex assigned at birth, I divided the results into two groups, male (M) and female (F). The following patterns emerged in the results:

- For religious affiliation, females have a slightly larger “None/No religion” category than males, at 48% and 46% respectively, but there is slight variation in most of the response categories for religious affiliation. Therefore, there is no clear difference in religious affiliation by gender.
- There is no observable difference between levels of self-defined religiosity (Q4).
- Females are more likely to be “moderately spiritual” and slightly less likely to be “very spiritual” or “slightly spiritual,” resulting in a slightly higher rate of spirituality

for females than for males. Overall, 73.8% of females identify as spiritual to some degree, whereas 70.6% of males do.

- Males are more likely than females to not believe in God, at 26.7% and 24.3%, respectively (Q5).
- More males have had a religious initiation ceremony (62.8% as opposed to 56.4% of females) (Q14).
- More males than females would identify with the label “atheist” (32.4% and 25.7%, respectively), but more females than males would identify with the label “agnostic” (36.6% and 35.2%, respectively).
- When asked about various religious beliefs (Q17), males were more likely to respond “No” than females were, for every listed belief except heaven. For every item except angels (where it is almost equal), females were more likely to choose the “Don’t know/Not sure” answer than males.

Race/Ethnicity

Looking at the breakdown of responses based on race or ethnicity (Q26), the following patterns emerge:

- Both white (50%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (50%) respondents were more likely to fit in the “None/No religion” category than Latino (39%) or Black (38%) respondents.
- Similarly, White respondents were more likely to identify as “Not religious at all” at 61.6%, followed by Asian/Pacific Islander respondents at 59.4%, Black respondents at 54.8%, and Hispanic respondents at 46.6%.

- White respondents are more likely to never pray (64.5%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander respondents (54.5%), Latino respondents (41.1%), and Black respondents (40.5%).
- White respondents were the most likely to not believe in God (29.7%), followed by Black respondents (26.2%) and Asian/Pacific Islander respondents (18.8%). Latino respondents were least likely to not believe in God, at 13.7%.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The sample population of the Claremont Colleges student body is overwhelmingly secular, as demonstrated by their beliefs, practices, and (ir)religious affiliations. Despite this trend, there is also evidence of high levels of spirituality, demonstrated through students' self-identification and beliefs. Both of these observations fit the broader trends of secularity and spirituality in the general U.S. population.

Why So Secular?

As discussed in my hypotheses (see Chapter Three), there are a few potential reasons why students at the Claremont Colleges would be less religious than the general U.S. population. First, young adults—those in the “millennial” generation, which includes the students surveyed in this study—are less religious than older generations (Twenge 2015). According to the 2014 GSS, 33% of 18-to-24 year olds say they do not affiliate with a religion, which is a larger percentage than any other age group (Hout and Smith 2015). However, the students in my sample report an even higher frequency of “Nones” than in the general millennial population. This is not surprising, given the secular-leaning characteristics present in my sample, including secular home regions, high levels of education, and liberalism.

Students in my sample disproportionately grew up in secular regions of the U.S., particularly the Pacific region (part of the “West” category, see Chapter Three, Table 1). Therefore, a majority of the present study's sample (58%) comes from the most secular region in the country, when measured according to rate of religious affiliation.

By virtue of being college students, the students in this study have already achieved a relatively high level of education, and they are on a path towards reaching an even higher level. High levels of education tend to correlate with low levels of religiosity, and higher education levels mean a greater likelihood of not affiliating with a religion (Hout and Smith 2015). Therefore, the high percentage of religiously unaffiliated students fits the larger pattern of high levels of education and secularity.

The political leanings of students in this study also fit the larger patterns concerning liberalism/conservatism and secularity/religiosity, as discussed in Chapter Two. With only 4% identifying as conservative, 18% as moderate, and the majority (78%) identifying as liberal (see Table 1), the sample population is much more liberal than the general U.S. population, in which 37% identify as conservative, 35% as moderate, and only 24% as liberal (Saad 2016). Therefore, the demographic prominence of liberalism in this study's sample fits with the lower levels of religiosity exhibited in the sample.

Why So Spiritual?

As discussed in the Literature Review (see Chapter Two), there is a trend toward "spirituality" (with its many definitions and interpretations) in American religiosity (Chaves 2011; Stark 2008; Kosmin and Keysar 2013). This trend is evident in the present study in various patterns in the findings, as demonstrated in the large percentage of students who consider themselves spiritual and the large percentage of students who believe in "a Higher Power of some kind" but not in a "God." The results of the present study point to the significance of the spirituality trend, and the prominence of this trend in the way it plays out in a sample of young adults.

What could explain this trend, and its noticeable prevalence at the Claremont Colleges? As previously discussed (see Chapter Two), the trend in spirituality is particularly pronounced among young adults (Chaves 2011; Stark 2008), and therefore the college student age range of the present study's sample would increase the prominence of this trend. Similarly, the liberal political leanings of the majority of the present study's sample population (see Table 1) fit the overall pattern of spirituality.

The results of this study show the relevance and significance of the larger trends in religiosity in the U.S., particularly the rise in secularity and spirituality (as discussed in Chapter Two), in the context of a college consortium. Given the large-scale changes that the U.S. population is experiencing in (ir)religiosity, it can be particularly useful to observe how these trends play out in particular contexts, such as on college campuses. Further research must continue to look at both the small-scale and the large-scale contexts of religiosity and secularity trends in the U.S.

Further Analysis

The differences in religiosity across the five Claremont Colleges and across different demographics might be explained in the same way that I have analyzed the overall religiosity of the sample population in relation to the general U.S. population: by using the demographic trends of religiosity. For instance, higher levels of political conservatism at CMC might help to make sense of the higher levels of religiosity found in the CMC sample. Similarly, different academic focuses and popularity of particular areas of study at each of the five schools might correlate with differences in religiosity. For example, the focus on engineering, science, and mathematics at HMC might attract a different type of student than CMC's focus on government and economics. The general character of

each school might also relate to the students' religiosity levels and how said religiosity is expressed. For example, Pitzer emphasizes social justice and encourages students to challenge norms and traditional approaches to learning. This might help explain the high percentage of Pitzer students who believe in a "Higher Power" but not a traditional "God," given the connection between believing in a "Higher Power" (which is associated with considering oneself "spiritual") and rejecting traditional, organized religion, as explained in Chapter Two. The same reasoning could apply to Pitzer's having the highest percentage of students in the "Other—Please Specify" category for religious preference.

HMC, despite its low level of overall religiosity and high number of nonbelievers, has the highest rate of membership in on-campus religious groups. It may be that this increased membership in on-campus religious groups is not in spite of HMC's high levels of secularity, but *because of* its high levels of secularity. Religious students at HMC might seek out a religious group because of their overwhelmingly secular surroundings. Using that same reasoning, one can understand why religious students at CMC, the most religious of the five campuses (although still very secular), might *not* feel the need to seek out a religious group on-campus. Similarly, Pitzer students' low rates of membership in on-campus religious groups might also be related to students' not feeling a need to join a religious group. Unlike religious students at a school with a more explicitly atheistic student sample such as HMC, religious students at CMC or Pitzer (although still at two very secular schools) might not feel the need to seek support in their beliefs through a campus religious group. Future research should examine how these demographic and institutional differences might further explain the observed cross-college differences.

The literature on gender patterns can inform our understanding of this study's results in terms of gender differences. As outlined in the previous chapter, there is not a large difference in religiosity between the male and female subgroups, despite the differences that are typically observed across gender lines in the population at large (as described in Chapter Two). It is possible that the high education levels and the generally liberal political views of this study's sample might explain the lack of contrast between males' and females' religiosity levels. As previously described (see Chapter Two), Baker and Smith (2015) predict that the religiosity gender gap should lessen as society experiences secularization accompanied by greater gender equality. Greater gender equality correlates with higher education levels and liberal political views, and thus should be present in this study's sample due to the sample's liberal political views and already-high level of education. It therefore makes sense that this sample would exhibit very little gender-based differences in religiosity levels; this sample might serve as an example of Baker and Smith's hypothesis in action.

Baker and Smith's research may also help explain the higher levels of religiosity of minority groups observed in this study, where Black and Latino respondents, both minority groups, exhibit higher levels of religiosity. Baker and Smith (2015) argue that the normalization of religious identities gives religious individuals the "privileges of conventionality" (2015:99), and that claiming the (additional) minority status of being "secular" is therefore more difficult for already underprivileged groups. They also argue that the crucial role of religious organizations in providing community and maintaining connections to a particular subculture is another important factor in minority groups' higher levels of religiosity (see Chapter Two). Both of these aspects of minority groups'

religiosity help explain the results of the present study, where minority groups do indeed exhibit higher levels of religiosity.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the sample population of students at the Claremont Colleges exhibits high levels of secularity. I have shown differences in religiosity across the five colleges and across different demographics, including gender and race. The many factors that I address in this study, including beliefs, practices, and affiliations, reflect the larger patterns of secularity and spirituality as observed in the general U.S. population.

Further research on religiosity and secularity of the young adult population is needed. Young adults' prominent position in the changing religious landscape of the U.S. makes college and university campuses especially important environments in which to carry out this research. Research on the student populations of colleges and universities would provide insight into how the larger trends in religiosity and secularity play out in these important subpopulations. The present study provides one example of how this occurs.

Further research can be done concerning this particular sample population with the data that I have collected for the present study. Future analysis should include additional comparisons across the five colleges and across demographic differences. Additionally, further data analysis could include testing for statistically significant patterns in the aforementioned comparisons. If this particular study were to be replicated in different environments, surveying a random sample population instead of using convenience sampling would be ideal. However, due to the size and diversity of the sample of this study, I would not expect to find drastically different results if the study were to be replicated using random sampling within the Claremont Colleges.

The diversity in college campuses' student bodies points to the need for an understanding of students' (ir)religiosity to inform administrative decision-making in higher education. When attempting to provide students with relevant resources and support services, an understanding of students' (ir)religious identities must be taken into account in order to provide the best possible resources on any given campus. Further research concerning student religiosity and secularity is needed to ensure that students can find what they need on their college campuses. To fully understand students' (ir)religiosity, it is imperative to relate any observed trends to what is happening in the larger context of the country. This study has demonstrated the relevance of U.S. trends in (ir)religiosity in the context of a college student sample. The high levels of secularity and the observed trend in spirituality in the sample population indicate that the religious landscape of the U.S. is indeed changing: the country is experiencing a slight rise in spirituality, while becoming less religious overall.

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APPENDIX A
RELIGION IN THE U.S.

According to the Pew RLS, 47% of Americans are Protestant, 21% Catholic, and 6% are of non-Christian faiths. This is in stark contrast to the religious makeup of the Claremont Colleges sample (see Figure 1, Table 2), where Protestants make up only 17.6% of the population (See Appendix B, Figure 8). Similarly, the Catholic population at the Claremont Colleges (12%) is much lower than that of the U.S. population (21%). According to the Pew RLS, the Jewish population in the U.S. was 1.7% in 2007 and 1.9% in 2014 (Pew 2015b), and the GSS reports the Jewish population at 1.5% in 2014 (Hout and Smith 2015). The Jewish population at the Claremont Colleges (10.3%) is considerably larger than the U.S. figures.

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL TABLES AND FIGURES

Fig. 8.—Q3 recoded to simplify religious affiliation groups.

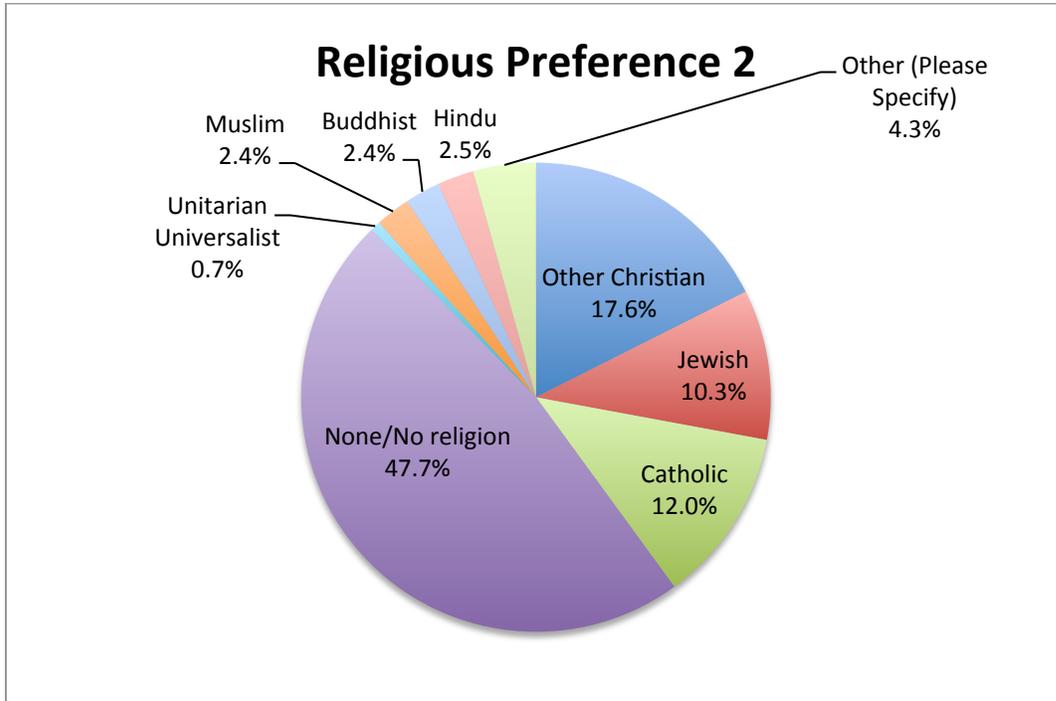


Fig. 9.—Q3 recoded to simplify religious affiliation groups further.

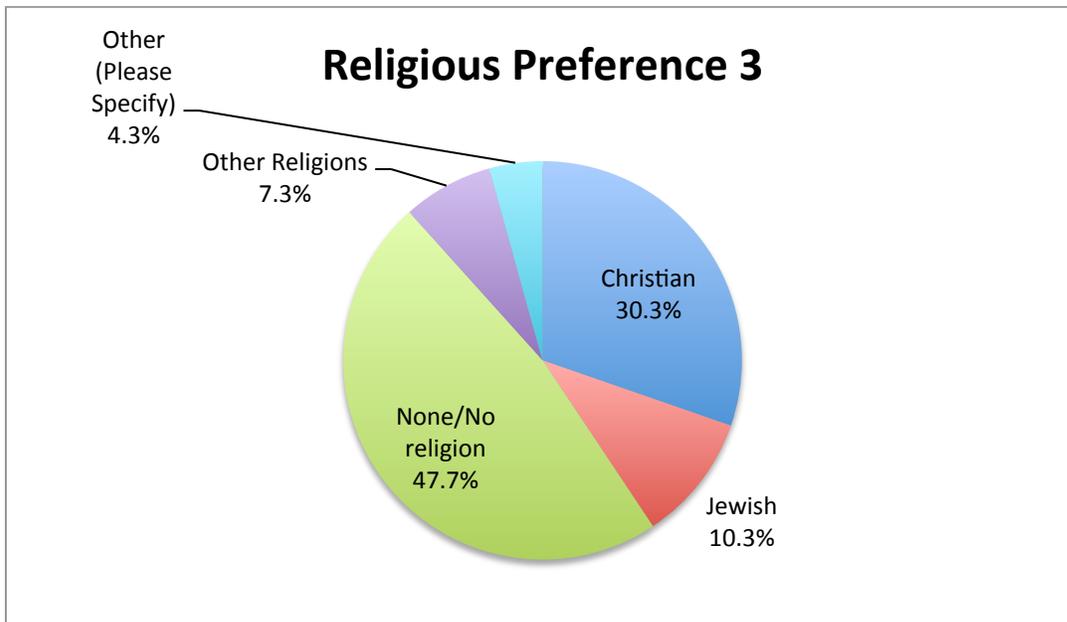


Table 10
 Q16. “Please indicate your current level of agreement with each of the following statements:”

Statement	Level of Agreement				
	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neutral / No Opinion	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
We should have the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance	2.9	5.5	31.2	21.1	39.4
Religion should play a role in government	0.6	3.3	6.1	17.1	72.9
Religious people tend to be more moral than nonreligious people	1.1	13.1	23.4	27.2	35.4
Creationism (the idea that God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years) is a good explanation for the origins of human life on earth	3.2	7.0	7.8	9.6	72.5
Evolution (the idea that human beings developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life) is a good explanation for the origins of human life on earth	86.7	8.6	2.6	1.5	0.6

Table 11
 Q22. “Currently, how many of your close friends at the 5Cs...?”

Practice	All (%)	Most (%)	Some (%)	None (%)	Don't know / Not sure (%)
Share your religious (or irreligious) views	1.5	29.2	45.9	9.0	14.4
Regularly attend religious services or participate in other activities with a religious group on campus (such as Bible study, prayer groups, meals, or other gatherings)	0.0	2.0	57.0	28.1	12.9
Belong to a campus religious group	0.0	1.8	52.7	31.8	13.7

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello!

You are invited to participate in this research study about the secular and religious beliefs and practices of students at the Claremont Colleges. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

This research is being conducted as part of a senior thesis by Jennie Frishtick, a Scripps student majoring in Sociology at Pitzer College. You are qualified to participate in this research because you are currently a student at the Claremont Colleges and because you are 18 years of age. The purpose of this research study is to learn about the secular and religious make-up of the student body, including students' beliefs, practices, and ideas about religion and secularity. The survey consists of all multiple-choice questions, and will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. The risks of this research are expected to be minimal. The questions that are asked are about the kinds of things that you might talk about in everyday life with family and friends: your secular and/or religious beliefs and practices, and some general background/demographic information. Some questions in the survey ask about personal information such as gender identity and family background. If you find that the information in the survey makes you uncomfortable or feel that it will make you uncomfortable, you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time. If you would like any follow-up counseling, you may contact Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services at 909.621.8202.

All responses to this survey are completely anonymous. The data are being collected with a password-protected Qualtrics account, and no identifying information, such as IP addresses or your name, will be collected. The results of this study will be included in a senior thesis that may be published through Scripps College, and will be presented as part of a senior thesis presentation at the end of the semester. The results may also be presented or published outside of Scripps College.

You can enter for a chance to win one of five \$20 Amazon gift certificates by following the link at the end of the survey.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you are unable or if you don't want to answer a question, you can leave it blank. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time. Your decision to discontinue participation at any time during the study will not result in any loss of benefits to which

you are otherwise entitled. You may not experience any non-monetary benefit from participating in this study.

There is no injury coverage for this project. Scripps College cannot cover any costs of injury resulting from this project if any were to occur.

If you have any questions before, during, or after participating, you may contact Jennie Frishtick at jfrishti5474@scrippscollege.edu or 802.299.7096. If you have questions about your rights as a participant that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact the Administrator of the Scripps College Institutional Review Board (Gretchen Edwalds-Gilbert, v: 909.607.9100; email: gedwald@scrippscollege.edu), the IRB Chair of Quantitative Research (Jennifer Ma, v: 909.621.8992, email: jma@scrippscollege.edu), or the IRB Administrative Officer (Adrian Quintanar, v: 909.621.8237; email: adrian.quintanar@scrippscollege.edu).

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study.

— Yes, I certify that I am at least 18 years of age and I have read the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in this study (survey will begin when you click the forward arrow)

— No, I do not wish to participate (survey will close when you click the forward arrow)

Q2 Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. You can withdraw from the survey at any time, and you can skip any questions that you don't want to answer or that you are uncomfortable answering.

Q3 What is your religious preference, if any?

- Baptist
- Buddhist
- Catholic
- Eastern Orthodox
- Episcopalian
- Evangelical
- Hindu
- Jewish
- LDS/Mormon
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Muslim
- Pentecostal
- Presbyterian
- Quaker
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Unitarian Universalist
- Non-denominational Christian
- None/No religion
- Other - Please specify: _____

Q4 Currently, to what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?*

- Very religious
- Moderately religious
- Slightly religious
- Not religious at all

*This question is adapted from the General Social Survey.

Q5 Currently, to what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

- Very spiritual
- Moderately spiritual
- Slightly spiritual
- Not spiritual at all

Q6 Currently, which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?*

- I don't believe in God
- I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out
- I don't believe in a God, but do believe in a Higher Power of some kind
- I believe in God, but with some doubts
- I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it

*This question is adapted from the General Social Survey.

The following description and question only appear for respondents who selected "None/No religion" or "Other" and wrote in a custom response of "humanist" or "humanism" for Q2:

Q7 Given that you chose "None/No religion" or "Other" and wrote in "Humanism" when asked about your religious preference, here is a question about your experiences:

Q8 In the past five years, have you experienced discrimination or prejudice because of your lack of religious identification or affiliation? Choose all that apply:*

- Yes, from family members
- Yes, from friends at home
- Yes, at the 5Cs
- Yes, in other circumstances
- No, I have not experienced discrimination or prejudice

*This question is adapted from the American Religious Identification Survey.

Q9 Currently, how often do you pray, if at all?*

- Several times a day
- Once a day
- Several times a week
- Once a Week
- Less than once a week
- Never

*This question is adapted from the General Social Survey.

Q10 In what religion were you raised, if any?

- Baptist
- Buddhist
- Catholic
- Eastern Orthodox
- Episcopalian
- Evangelical
- Hindu
- Jewish
- LDS/Mormon
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Muslim
- Pentecostal
- Presbyterian
- Quaker
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Unitarian Universalist
- Non-denominational Christian
- None/No religion
- Other - Please specify: _____
- I don't know

Q11 When you were growing up, which best describes your family's situation?

- I grew up with two parents
- I grew up with one parent
- I was raised by people other than my parents
- None of the above

The following question is only asked of respondents who selected “I grew up with two parents” for Q11:

Q12 Thinking about your parents' religious identification, which best describes your family's situation?

- Both of my parents identified with the same religion
- Each parent identified with a different religion
- Neither of my parents identified with a religion

The following question is only asked of respondents who selected “I grew up with one parent” for Q11:

Q13 Thinking about your parent's religious identification, which best describes your family's situation?

- My parent identified with a religion
- My parent did not identify with a religion

Q14 Did you have a religious initiation ceremony, such as a baptism, christening, circumcision, confirmation, bar mitzvah, or naming ceremony?*

- Yes
- No

*This question is adapted from the American Religious Identification Survey.

Q15 Would you use any of the following labels to identify yourself? Choose all that apply:

- Agnostic
- Atheist
- Humanist
- I would not use any of the above

Q16 Please indicate your current level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neutral / No Opinion	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Evolution (the idea that human beings developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life) is a good explanation for the origins of human life on earth	<input type="radio"/>				
Creationism (the idea that God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years) is a good explanation for the origins of human life on earth	<input type="radio"/>				
Religious people tend to be more moral than non-religious people	<input type="radio"/>				

Religion should play a role in government	<input type="radio"/>				
We should have the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance	<input type="radio"/>				

Q17 Please mark whichever best represents your current beliefs:*

	Yes	No	Don't know / Not sure
Do believe in life after death?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you believe in ghosts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you believe in angels?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you believe in reincarnation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you believe in heaven?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you believe in hell?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*These questions are adapted from the General Social Survey and the American Religious Identification Survey.

Q18 Currently, how often do you...

	Never	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once a week	More than once a week
Attend religious services (aside from weddings, funerals, and coming of age ceremonies)?	<input type="radio"/>				
Participate in religious activities or events (other than services), such as Bible study, prayer groups, meals, or other religious gatherings?	<input type="radio"/>				

Q19 Thinking about your practices when you're at home and when you're at school, which statement best describes your situation?

- I attend religious services and/or other religious activities or events (aside from weddings, funerals, and coming of age ceremonies) more frequently when I am at home than when I am at school
- I attend religious services and/or other religious activities or events (aside from weddings, funerals, and coming of age ceremonies) more frequently when I am at school than when I am at home
- I attend with the same frequency when I am at home and at school
- I don't attend at home or at school

Q20 Do you currently consider yourself to be a member of a religious group on campus?

- Yes
- No

Q21 Whether or not you consider yourself a member of a religious group on campus, how often do you attend religious services or participate in other activities with a religious group on campus (such as Bible study, prayer groups, meals, or other gatherings)?

- Never
- A few times a year
- Once or twice a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

Q22 Currently, how many of your close friends at the 5Cs...*

	All	Most	Some	None	Don't know / Not sure
Share your religious (or irreligious) views?	<input type="radio"/>				
Regularly attend religious services or participate in other religious activities (such as Bible study, prayer groups, or other religious gatherings)?	<input type="radio"/>				
Belong to a campus religious group?	<input type="radio"/>				

*These questions are adapted from the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey.

Q23 The following questions ask about general background information. You can skip any questions that you don't want to answer or that you are uncomfortable answering.

Q24 In general, how would you describe your current political views?

- Very conservative
- Conservative
- Moderate
- Liberal
- Very liberal

Q25 With which political party are you currently registered?

- Democratic
- Republican
- Independent
- Other: _____
- Not registered

Q26 How would you identify your race/ethnicity? Choose all that apply:

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Other – Please Specify: _____

Q27 Do you consider yourself a feminist?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure / No opinion

Q28 What was your sex assigned at birth?

- Male
- Female
- Intersex/other

Q29 Currently, how would you define your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Genderqueer/Nonbinary
- Other: _____

Q30 Currently, how would you identify your sexual orientation? Choose all that apply:

- Heterosexual
- Asexual
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Questioning
- Queer
- Other: _____

Q31 In what region did you grow up, if you grew up in the U.S.? If you lived in multiple places, choose the region where you spent the most time or where you consider yourself to have grown up:

- New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)
- Upper Mid-Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania)
- Lower Mid-Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, Washington, DC)
- East North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin)
- West North Central (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota)
- South Atlantic (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia)
- East South Central (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee)
- West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)
- Mountain (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming)
- Pacific (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington)
- I grew up outside of the U.S.

Q32 Would you consider the area where you grew up to be rural, urban, or suburban?

- Rural
- Urban
- Suburban

Q33 What is the highest level of education that your mother/guardian has achieved to date?

Q34 What is the highest level of education that your father/guardian has achieved to date?

- Junior high/Middle school or less
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Postsecondary school other than college (e.g., vocational school)
- Some college
- College degree
- Some graduate school
- Graduate degree

Q35 Are you currently receiving any needs-based financial aid, or have you ever received any while at the 5Cs?

- Yes, I am currently receiving needs-based financial aid
- I have received needs-based financial aid in the past, but am not currently receiving any
- No, I have never received any needs-based financial aid

Q36 Do you currently have a work-study job and/or have you had a work-study job in the past, while at the 5Cs?

- Yes, I currently have a work-study job
- I have had a work-study job in the past, but I do not currently have one
- No, I have never had a work-study job

Q37 To the best of your knowledge, which of the following best describes your family's current annual total income?

- \$30,000 – 59,999
- \$60,000 – 89,999
- \$90,000 – 119,999
- \$120,000 – 149,999
- \$150,000 – 179,000
- \$180,000 – 209,999
- \$210,000 – 239,999
- Above \$240,000
- Don't Know

Q38 Please indicate your college:

- Claremont McKenna
- Harvey Mudd
- Pitzer
- Pomona
- Scripps

Q39 What year are you?

- Class of 2016
- Class of 2017
- Class of 2018
- Class of 2019

Q40 How old are you?

[dropdown menu]

Q41 What is your general area of study? Please select one of the options from the dropdown menu:

- Arts and Humanities (e.g., English, Languages, Media Studies, Music, Philosophy, Theatre) _____
- Natural/Physical Sciences (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, EA, Neuroscience, Physics)
- Mathematics/Technology/Engineering (e.g., Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics)
- Social Sciences (e.g., Anthro, Econ, Ethnic/Cultural Studies, Politics, Psych, PPA, Soc, FGSS)
- Undecided