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Quantifying and Qualifying the Religious Habitus: Substantiating Post-Secularism on a Liberal Arts College Campus

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Abstract

For most of the 20th century, sociologists widely believed that religion and its influence were declining. The latter half of the 1990s, followed by 9/11, however, marked a turning point in which social scientists came to understand that religion was resurging and increasingly influencing various areas of human affairs. This new era is categorized as a “post-secular” society (Jacobsen & Jacobsen 2008). Previously, institutions of higher education were seen as secularizing machines; however, today, colleges and universities are studied as societal microcosms contributing to religion’s revival (Cherry, DeBerg & Porterfield 2001; Bryant 2007). Granted that today’s college students are the leaders of tomorrow, I conducted a study to substantiate the claim that we are indeed living in a post-secular society with the goal of acquiring insights into how religion may impact human affairs in the future. Notably, I studied how religion influences today’s college students. Using Bourdieu’s (1979) habitus as a theoretical framework, I analyze how religion influences college students’ beliefs, preferences, and overall orientations to the social world.

Through surveys and interviews, I study the effect of being raised with or without a religion as well as participating or not participating in religion on campus. My goal is to draw quantifiable and qualifiable conclusions about the influences of religion on subjects’ and respondents’ habituses. My results show that religion remains influential on the habituses of the college students who attend a diverse, multicultural, secular, and multi-religious institution. The significance of religion on different aspects of the habitus, however, varies across religious groups and levels of participation.

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Introduction

Following World War II, the study of religion in higher education became primarily confined to academia. Sociologists believed that America was experiencing a decline in religious participation, and, more specifically, that our world was no longer significantly influenced by religion and religious activity. Many now question, however, just how valid these claims of secularization really were, given that they were being made against the backdrop of the Civil Rights, Black liberation, and anti-war movements, all of which were progressive movements drawing heavily upon religion. Regardless, by the 1990s, sociologists began to uncover that a lack of religious participation was not indicative of a lack of religiosity. Today, it is understood that we are living in a “post-secular” world (Jacobsen & Jacobsen 2008). Studying how religion influences today’s college students allows us to further understand the extent to which and how religion may affect the future of society’s institutions, policies, human affairs.

Religion is present in various aspects of today’s college students’ lives, and there is extensive literature that studies the role of religion on campus. Various ethnographies, qualitative analyses, and empirical studies have examined the spirituality and religiousness of students (Bryant 2007), analyzed differences in believing in God between ethnic and racial groups (Bartlett 2005), studied how students navigate their religious identities on campus (Hadia 2007), and researched how religion influences intimate behaviors (Stark 1996; Burdette 2009). These studies, however, overwhelmingly focus on students who identify as religious and scarcely draw comparisons between active participants in religion on campus and non-participants. Similarly, sociologists have yet to both qualify and quantify the differences in how religion influences those who are active participants in religion on campus and those who were raised with religion but do not participate in campus religious activity.

In order to examine these persisting gaps in the literature, my study seeks to quantify and qualify the religious habitus on a liberal arts college campus in order to substantiate the claim that we are living in a post-secular society. Bourdieu's habitus (1979) determines one's tastes, preferences, beliefs, and orientation to the social world. The religious habitus entails how religion influences these aspects of the individual. Using surveys and interviews, I study, both quantitatively and qualitatively, differences between those who participate in religion on campus and those who do not across four different categories of religion—Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Other¹—in order to understand the significance of the religious habitus on college campuses today.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Post-Secularism on College Campuses

The theory of post-secularism is essential in understanding the role of religion in higher education today. Jacobsen and Jacobsen (2008) underscore that the twentieth century was largely categorized by a secular understanding of the college campus. It was widely accepted amongst sociologists that America and the world were experiencing a decline in religious participation and thus religion's influence over human affairs. Because our world was secularizing, it was believed that our institutions of higher education also needed to be secularized, since they “educate students for the future of our world”; by the 1970s, “higher education was about public knowledge, and public knowledge was defined in purely secular terms” (Jacobsen & Jacobsen 2008: 9-10). By the mid 1960s, religion's role on college campuses became largely confined to academia, in which religion was studied more as a historical phenomenon rather than a present

¹ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam all comprise the Other category. Although these religions are incredibly different from one another, there were not enough respondents and subjects from each of these religions for it to be statistically sensible to provide each of them with their own group for my study.

force on modern-day peoples and institutions. Surveys found that student religious participation was declining in higher education; thus, although religion continued to survive in some regards, such as cult formation, sociologists ultimately understood that we were living in an increasingly secularized society (Stark & Bainbridge 1985). Institutions of higher education were seen as secularizing machines.

The 1990s, followed by the turn of the century and 9/11, lead to a significant shift in this belief of secularization and a heightened interest in studying religion. The field of the sociology of religion experienced a shift in which religion's influence came to be understood as growing rather than declining. The literature on the sociology of religion in higher education has thus erupted as a result of findings that there is indeed a resurgence of religion's influence over human affairs. Higher education is now seen as a vehicle by which this descendance of secularization in society has occurred. Since institutions of higher education educate and produce students who are and are for the future, by studying religion's role on college campuses, sociologists can better understand the role that religion will play in society's near future. Therefore, present day literature on religion in higher education now focuses on understanding religion's role on campuses through expansive and nuanced perspectives.

Earlier studies indicated that the more educated one was the less religious one became (Albrecht & Heaton 1984), but sociologists now believe that this notion does not capture an accurate nor complete understanding of the role that religion was and is actually playing in the lives of college students. As a result, largely due to the ethnographic study of campus religious life by Cherry, DeBerg, and Porterfield in 2001, there has been an increased interest in understanding the role of spirituality and religion in the lives of students (Lee, Matzkin, & Arthur 2004; Kuh & Gonyea 2006; Bryant 2007; Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader 2012).

This renewed interest in the post-secular college campus has opened up a vast field of potential areas of exploration for studying religion and spirituality in the lives of college students. Though some sociologists have used attendance at religious services and events as a measure of campus religiosity (Bainbridge & Stark 1985), more recent studies have found that religious attendance is not the best measure of a student body's religiousness. Notably, researchers find that God and spirituality manifest across student bodies in ways that attendance at religious services does not reveal (Cherry, DeBerg, & Porterfield 2001; Wolfe 2003; Bryant 2007). Regardless, my study aims to answer lingering questions about student religiousness by qualifying and quantifying differences in religion's influence on the lives of participants in religious life on campus and non-participants across various religions. Previous studies scarcely analyze differences between and within religions. I do not aim to answer whether or not students are more religious today than they were in the past. Rather, I qualify and quantify religion's role in shaping students' lives, outlooks, and beliefs. I use the post-secular framework to situate my study in the context of the broader trends of studying religion in spaces of higher education, specifically to conceive of how religion influences the habituses of today's college students.

Religious Habitus

Every individual is socialized into a specific habitus (Bourdieu 1979, 1984). The habitus can be defined as a "system of dispositions [which are] lasting acquired schemes of perception, thought, and action" (Grusendorf 2016: 7). Moreover, a habitus determines one's orientation to the social world, including tastes, preferences, and suppositions about one's life trajectory. Even if one does not consider oneself a religious person, being raised with a particular religion inevitably impacts one's habitus. While being raised in an ingroup religious community may

more obviously and significantly impact one's habitus—that is, have a stronger influence on various aspects of their world outlooks—it may be more difficult to qualify the religious habituses of those raised outgroup religious environments.

Sociologists have historically understood habitus as a pre-reflexive response to one's social environment, but Hurtado (2009) argues that there is, in fact, a rational consciousness associated with habitus. This theory is qualified by Shanneik (2011) who studies Islamic converts from Catholicism. Converts, she argues, consciously choose their religious habituses, which guide, determine, and dictate their lives. A similar, earlier study was conducted by Hadia (2007), which analyzes Muslim students negotiating their religious identity within a college campus setting. While this study is earlier than Hurtado's theory of rational consciousness, it supports the idea that habitus, and religious habitus more specifically, is associated with a rational consciousness and is not a purely pre-reflexive response.

My study requires subjects and respondents to have some form of self-awareness of their religious habituses, as they are answering questions that actively force them to consider the way that religion impacts their beliefs and preferences. Since subjects and respondents provide subjective responses to how religion influences various aspects of their lives, they are helping qualify and quantify their religious habituses. Through my study, it is revealed that some subjects and respondents do have rational consciousnesses of their religious habituses. This is particularly true for more religious subjects, especially those who were raised in a religious ingroup environment. Others, however, may not have rational consciousnesses of their religious habituses, namely those who were raised with religion but do not participate on campus and were most likely raised in a non-religious environment. My study is the first to quantify and qualify the differences in religious habitus between participants and non-participants in religion on

campus. Additionally, I study those who were raised with no religion at all as a comparison point to determine how being raised with religion, even if one is not an active participant, impacts the religious habitus. This methodology helps reveal how the religious habitus is both a pre-reflexive response to one's environment and a part of a rational consciousness, since it demonstrates both the ways in which respondents and subjects are and are not aware of how significantly religion influences their habituses.

Sometimes the religious habitus will take on the form of an entire lifestyle, as Shanneik studied. While Stevenson (2012) studied the religious habituses of religious students at a secular university, the literature lacks a study that analyzes the religious habitus beyond strictly religious students. In light of these lingering questions, I study the religious habituses across different religions, levels of religious participation, and religiosity within both a secular and multi-religious context. In studying how religion affects political views and participation, relationship preferences, and views about gender roles and relations on this college campus, a more holistic understanding of the religious habitus will come to light. My study aims to provide insights into the significance of religious habituses for college students in this secular university's multi-religious context by qualifying and quantifying how students subjectively understand religion's influence on their own lives, identities, beliefs, and overall orientation to the social world.

Spirituality and Religiosity: What Does it All Mean?

The literature on the sociology of religion, the sociology of higher education, and their intersection has extensively studied the role of spirituality in the lives of college students. A subset of this literature has specifically studied the spiritual struggles of college students, most notably, the struggles of women, religious minorities, and LGBTQ+ students, because of the

marginalization they may typically experience within religious settings and communities (Dubow, Pargament, Boxer, & Tarakeshwar 1999; Chater 2000; Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris & Hecker 2001; Bryant 2003; Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richardson 2005; Bryant & Astin 2008). Earlier studies have focused on quantifying these struggles, while more recent studies have tried to qualify them by “envisioning how identities—particularly intersecting identity dimensions—are situated within the spiritual struggle process” (Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader 2012). This differentiation between religion and spirituality is fairly developed in the subset of this literature that studies gendered differences in religiousness and spirituality, which, although is not my focus, nevertheless provides valuable theoretical insights for my study. It is imperative to underscore that spirituality can be altogether separate from religious belief and practice.

There is an established literature that studies differences in religiousness and religious participation between men and women: in childhood and adolescence (Smith et al. 2002; Buchko 2004; Smith & Denton 2005), how men and women frame their religiosity through different modes and objectives (Ozorak 2003), and gendered patterns of religiousness in later adulthood (Neill & Kahn 1999; Thompson & Remmes 2002). This literature is important in understanding that religiosity and spirituality are not as strongly linked for some as they are for others. Specifically, Bryant’s study (2007) tests the assumption that women are more religious than men due to their higher levels of spirituality found through previous studies (Ozorak 1996; Kanis 2002; Stark 2002), but “during one of the most critical and transformative times in life: the college years” (2007: 4).

Bryant finds that “religious identity seems more strongly linked to men’s spirituality than to women’s,” suggesting that “women’s spirituality assumes greater flexibility in the dynamic interface with religious identity such that spiritual commitments and goals may or may not exist

within a religious framework” (2007:10). In other words, men may be more inclined than women to associate religiosity with spirituality, leading to men indicating lower levels of spirituality than women in Bryant’s study. Bryant builds on Bender’s (2007) study, which analyzes how previous quantitative research is limited in studying students’ religiosity because of the variation in definitions students may assign to “spirituality.” This theory applies to my study, as I analyze varying patterns of religiosity across different religions and between active participants and non-participants.

While Bartlett (2005) studies racial and ethnic differences in believing in a God, the literature is porous in both quantifying and qualifying differences in how a belief in a God is or is not linked to self-perceived levels of religiousness and religion’s importance to one’s identity across religions and between non-participants and active participants in religion on campus. Therefore, my study fills gaps in the literature by analyzing differences in understandings about what it means to be religious across religious groups and levels of participation. Yet, religious beliefs and participation rates may vary throughout college, and thus it is important to consider the role of religious attainment in the study of the religious habituses of today’s college students.

Religious Attainment Throughout College

The literature on religious attainment throughout college has produced conflicting results. Some studies have been longitudinal, studying one group of students over the course of four years (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler 2007), while other studies have purely examined differences in participation between upperclassmen and lowerclassmen on campus in a singular year (Gaulden 2012). The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) found that in 2004, 2012, and 2019, respectively, 81 percent, 73.2 percent, and 65.7 percent of college freshmen frequently or

occasionally attend religious services (HERI). Yet, sociologists have found that student religious participation declines throughout college (Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno 2003; Mooney 2005; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler 2007; Hurtado 2007).

Hill (2009) and Gonyea and Kuh (2006) study institution type as a factor in determining the religiousness of a study body and the student body's religious attainment. While Hill finds "students attending Catholic and mainline Protestant affiliated institutions decline in religious participation at a faster rate than students attending evangelical institutions and students attending nonreligious public colleges and universities" (2009: 515), Gonyea and Kuh find that "students attending non-affiliated, private institutions did not differ in any appreciable way from their public-school peers, with both groups generally engaging least often in spiritual activities [than students at Catholic and other Protestant-affiliated institutions]" (2006: 3). Therefore, while students attending religiously affiliated universities may experience a faster decline in their religious participation than those studying at secular universities, they participate in religious activity, overall, at a higher rate, regardless of whether or not this participation stems from an institutional requirement.

All of these studies ultimately make it quite difficult to discern exactly how significant the impact of college on religious attainment actually is. As Mayrl and Oeur underscore, however, religious participation is not always indicative of religiousness nor spirituality. They find that "most students affiliate with a religious tradition and believe in God, [but] fewer students attend religious services and pray regularly" (2009: 263). While previously this was seen by sociologists as an indication that college undermined religion and faith (Feldman & Newcomb 1969; Caplovitz & Sherrow 1977; Hunter 1983; Hadaway & Roof 1988), more recently, sociologists have come to understand that lack of participation in religion on campus is

not a strong indication of a decline in religiousness across the college years (Hartley 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005).

It is not a primary goal of my research to study differences in the religious habituses between underclassmen and upperclassmen, nor do I look to prove nor disprove that college has a negative effect on religious attainment. Since sociologists have previously studied the effect of college on religious beliefs (Lee et al. 2006; Hurtado et al. 2007) and whether or not college impacts frequency of religious participation (Gonyea & Kuh 2006; Hill 2009), I aim to quantify and qualify the significance of religious participation, or lack thereof, in shaping religious habitus, rather than strictly religious beliefs. Studying religion's effect on relationship patterns is one way to discern differences in the religious habitus.

Relationships: Religion as a Moral Community

Religion has long been established as a factor influencing one's intimate behaviors. Sociologists have studied how religiosity impacts contraception use and age of first sexual encounter (Garris, Steckler, & McIntire 1976; Lugoe & Biswalo 1997; Wallace & Foreman 1998; Manlove et al. 2005). Additional studies have sought to understand the relationship between religion and having a moral responsibility in sexual relationships, mostly among adolescent girls and young women (McCormick 1986; Miller & Gur 2002), while other sociologists explain heterogeneity within denominations by finding a relationship between church attendance frequency and premarital sexual conduct (Brewster et al. 1998; Cochran et al. 2004).

The literature on religion influencing relationships and intimate behavior in higher education has mainly used Stark's (1996) framework that figures religion as a moral community,

which posits that “religion should be understood sociologically as a group property rather than solely an individual one” (Burdette et al. 2009: 538). Burdette (2009), studying effects of institution type on intimate behavior, argues that religiously affiliated universities reinforce religion which contributes to larger, more influential moral communities than is created by religious groups on secular college campuses. However, this research focuses distinctly on religion’s influence, through the moral community, on sexual behaviors—not on deciding who one may choose to be in a relationship with.

Religion’s influence on choosing a partner is a much less established area of the literature. Hollingshead (1950) was one of the first sociologists to study the effects of one’s culture on marital decisions, testing the factors of race, age, religion, ethnic origin, and class on their influence of “marriage mates.” More recently, McClendon (2016) studied the association between the concentration of coreligionists in local marriage markets and marriage timing and partner selection to test the belief that religion was becoming a less important factor in choosing a partner. While these studies examine marital patterns among college aged individuals, the literature is porous in studying how religion influences dating patterns and relationship decisions on a secular college campus among multiple religions across varying levels of religiousness. Ultimately, these studies have largely focused on the significance of religion as a determining factor on who one may marry outside the campus setting rather than how religion may or may not impact who one dates while on a diverse college campus. Sociologists have not looked at how the religious habitus affects dating patterns and behaviors. I demonstrate that religion remains influential in relationship decision-making, even though marrying within religion proves to be more important for some groups and religions in my study than for others.

Summary

Until the 1990s, it was understood that the world was secularizing and thus our institutions of higher education should secularize as well. Sociologists found that there was a decrease in religious service attendance on college campuses, which was believed to represent a decline in the religiousness of society. In the early 2000s, however, sociologists noticed an uptick in religious activity and began to study the college campus through a post-secular framework. Because institutions of higher education produce students who will impact the future, it is imperative to study how religion impacts today's students' habituses, that is, their world outlooks, beliefs, and orientations to the social world.

There have been conflicting conclusions about whether or not education and college attendance impact religious participation. It had previously been understood that religious participation alone was indicative of religiousness; however, sociologists no longer believe this to be true. I draw upon the subset of the literature that studies gendered differences in understandings of religiousness and spirituality to study how religion influences the habituses of both participating and non-participating students. Further, I study how religion influences various factors beyond purely subjective levels of religiousness, such as how religion impacts who one may choose in a partner, to make qualified conclusions about the religious habitus of students on a post-secular liberal arts college campus.

Data and Methods

Data Collection

My primary method of data collection was through a Google survey. This survey allowed me to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Questions were asked on a Likert scale of 1 through 10 with space below each question for respondents to elaborate on their numbered

responses. I used this survey to find potential interview subjects by providing room at the end of the survey for those interested in being contacted for an interview to leave their names and email addresses. Otherwise, the survey was anonymous. I collected 240 completed survey responses,² and I conducted 13 in-depth interviews, all with individuals I was connected with through my survey. Interviews and transcripts were stored in an encrypted server to ensure maximum security.

Variables that appear in my survey data are: one's religion, if one participates in religion on campus, how one's religion affects their political participation/views, how one's religion affects their perception of gender and gender roles, how religious one considers oneself, how likely one is to be in a relationship with someone from a different religion, how likely one is to continue practicing one's religion after college, and how central religion is to one's identity. I used these measurements because all are important elements that contribute to the habitus of an individual (Leander 2009; Thorpe 2009; Gorely, Holroyd & Kirk 2010; Holt, Bowlby & Lea 2013). To discern if respondents are active participants, I provided the examples of social events, cultural events, religious services, and a space for respondents to indicate other areas of participation. Participating in courses through religious and faith-based institutions on campus were the only other forms of participation mentioned.

All interviews were conducted over zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews lasted between fifteen and seventy minutes, with the average interview lasting about thirty minutes. Those interviewed are currently all students or recent graduates, within five years, of the same liberal arts midwestern college. Far more individuals indicated interest in being interviewed than I was able to actually interview. I only chose to interview those who were

² I had to leave out 33 responses from my study because there was important information missing from their responses.

raised in a religion, as indicated on my survey, and I sought maximum variation in choosing subjects (Merriam 2002; Jones, Torres, & Arminio 2006; Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader 2012). I considered religion, sect of religion, year in college, numbers chosen on the Likert scales, and additional information respondents provided in selecting my interview subjects. All subjects were incredibly eager to answer my questions and expressed no reluctance throughout the interviews.

These methods of data collection most likely led to some biases within my data. The majority of respondents were either Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, as these were the main student leaders and advisors who responded to my emails as well as the majority of my own social network of which I leveraged. A survey conducted by a comparable private midwestern university in 2016 found that approximately 16% of students identify as secular/non-religious, 25% identify as Christian, and 6% identify as Jewish. The overall response rate was 29%. The response rate for the campus-wide survey makes it difficult to know if their respondents are completely representative of the student body. Meanwhile, 14% of my survey's respondents identify as having no religion, 24.5% identify as Jewish, and 53.3% identify as either Protestant or Catholic. While my study and the former survey find similar percentages for identifying with no religion, the percentage of students who identify as Jewish and Christian are larger in my sample size. This most probably occurs due to the fact that the religious student groups who responded to my outreach emails were mainly Catholic and Protestant, and my own social network is mainly Jewish and Christian.

My survey data was collected in three ways, all of which used the internet during the COVID-19 pandemic between the months of July and October 2020. I could not visit religious groups in person nor could I approach individuals I did not know to complete my survey in

person. Therefore, everyone who completed my survey did so on their own accord. Ultimately, this could have contributed to bias in my data set, as people who were more interested in the topic were probably most likely to complete it. My three methods were as follows: I posted in various Facebook groups; I contacted student leaders and advisors for different religious groups on campus through the university's spirituality page to ask if they would share my survey with their groups' list-serves; and I reached out to my peers to ask them to complete the survey.

Data

Table 1 breaks down survey respondents by religion and year in college. Table 2 provides a breakdown of respondents between active participants and non-participants by religion. Table 3 provides the descriptions of interview subjects by gender, year in college, religion raised with, religion currently practicing/identifying with, and if one is an active participant on campus.

Table 1

Religion	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year	Graduated	Total
<u>Jewish</u>	4 (1.67%)	8 (3.33%)	15 (6.25%)	24 (10%)	8 (3.33%)	59 (24.58%)
<u>Catholic</u>	4 (1.67%)	12 (5%)	20 (8.3%)	24 (10%)	12 (5%)	72 (30%)
<u>Protestant</u>	2 (.83%)	7 (2.92%)	23 (9.58%)	15 (6.25%)	9 (3.75%)	56 (23.33%)
<u>Other</u>	1 (.42%)	2 (.83%)	10 (4.17%)	3 (1.25%)	4 (1.67%)	20 (8.33%)
<u>No Religion</u>	1 (.42%)	7 (2.92%)	13 (5.42%)	9 (3.75%)	3 (1.25%)	33 (13.75%)
<u>Total</u>	12 (5%)	36 (15%)	81 (33.75%)	75 (31.25%)	36 (15%)	240 (100%)

Table 2

Religion	Active	Not-Active	Total
<u>Jewish</u>	41 (17.08%)	18 (7.5%)	59 (24.58%)
<u>Catholic</u>	28 (11.67%)	44 (18.33%)	72 (30%)
<u>Protestant</u>	18 (7.5%)	38 (15.83%)	56 (23.33%)
<u>Other</u>	12 (5%)	8 (3.33%)	20 (8.33%)
<u>No Religion</u>	0 (0%)	33 (13.75%)	33 (13.75%)
<u>Total</u>	99 (41.25%)	141 (58.75%)	240 (100%)

Table 3

Interview Subject	Gender	Year	Religion Raised	Religion Currently Practicing/Identifying With	Active Participant
1	Female	Fourth	Judaism	Judaism	Yes
2	Female	Graduated 2020	Protestantism (Seventh Day Adventist)	Protestantism (Seventh Day Adventist)	No
3	Male	Fourth	Judaism	Judaism	Yes
4	Female	Fourth	Catholicism	Catholicism	Yes
5	Female	Fourth	Protestantism (Evangelical Strain)	Protestantism	Yes
6	Male	Fourth	Catholicism	Judaism	Yes
7	Male	Graduated 2020	Islam	Islam	No
8	Female	Third	Hinduism	Hinduism	No
9	Male	Second	Catholicism	Catholicism	No
10	Female	Fourth	Judaism	Judaism	Yes
11	Female	Graduated 2020	Judaism	Judaism	Yes
12	Female	Second	Judaism	Judaism	Yes
13	Male	Graduated 2020	Catholicism	Catholicism	Yes

Methods of Analysis

I conducted my quantitative analysis using R. I divided my data into four different sheets based on religious group: Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Other. For each dataset, I assigned a 1 for active participants and a 0 to non-participants. I then ran a t-test to determine if there was any statistically significant difference between the means of those who are involved in religion on campus and those who are not involved for the categories of religiosity, religion's important to identity, likeliness to continue practicing the religion post-college, and religion's influence on politics, gender, and relationships. I conducted an additional t-test to look for significant differences in the means between those who are not involved in religion on campus, but were raised with religion, and those who were raised with no religion at all for the categories of religion's influence on gender and politics in order to quantify religion's influence on these beliefs irrespective of campus participation. Finally, I looked for a statistically significant relationship between likeliness to continue one's religion post-college and willingness to date outside one's religion by conducting a correlation test between the two variables.

I conducted my qualitative analysis by coding my interview transcripts and the information provided by respondents on my survey. While my survey and interview questions were already divided into the categories of religiousness, identity, politics, gender, and relationships, I looked for patterns across and within religious groups. I additionally analyzed differences and similarities between those who are active participants and those who are not participants within and across religions. I used my qualitative data to support my quantitative analysis by providing additional information that may help to explain certain relationships or patterns in my quantitative data. Sometimes my qualitative data does not align with my quantitative results, which is helpful in thinking about the shortcomings of my quantitative analysis and potential areas and methods for further research.

Results and Analysis

The post-secular framework asserts that the world has moved past the era of secularism and into a period with a strong resurgence of religion, including beliefs, practices, and cultural elements. My research and analysis do not aim disprove nor approve the theory, but rather to substantiate it. On a liberal arts college campus, how does religion influence students' habituses? I do not look to conclude whether or not the student body is 'religious,' in so far as answering if students actively attend churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worships more often than not. Rather, I study how an upbringing within a particular religion, without religion's presence, and/or actively participating in religion on campus has shaped the habituses, and thus the world outlooks, ideologies, beliefs, and dispositions, of college students today. In qualifying and applying the post-secular framework, I study the role that religion plays in the lives of my research subjects in order to draw conclusions about the reality of post-secularism. I use post-secularism to understand how religion pervades, exists, and influences college students

throughout multiple aspects of their lives, which work tangentially to answer the larger question of how religion influences the habituses of modern-day college students.

My analysis is divided into four sections, each of which analyzes differences between active participants in religion on campus and non-participants for four categories of religion: Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Other. First, I analyze the differences between one's self-perceived level of religiosity and the importance of religion to one's identity. Second, I analyze how religion influences political beliefs and participation. Third, I analyze how one's religion influences one's views of gender. Fourth, I analyze how one's religion influences who one may choose in a romantic partner, likeliness to continue the religion post-college, and the relationship between willingness to date outside one's religion and one's likeliness to continue participating in the religion post-college. For politics and gender, I also analyze differences in the means between non-participants who were raised with religion and those who were raised with no religion at all.

Religiosity, Religious Identity, and the Meaning of God

Participation in religious life on campus has a statistically significant impact on the mean for how religious one identifies as (table 4). For each religious group, the P value is below .001. The smallest difference in the means is between the two groups for Jewish students while the largest difference is between the two Catholic groups. This same result holds true between those who are participants and those who are not when asked about religion's importance to one's identity (table 5). The means for both of the non-participant groups, religiosity and identity, remained relatively unchanged across religions, except for the Jewish students, where the mean is 2.177 higher for religion's importance to one's identity.

Table 4: t-Test: Involvement and Religiosity

	<u>Mean for Involved</u>	<u>Mean for Not Involved</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
<u>Jewish</u>	6.905	4.529	-3.8701*
<u>Catholic</u>	7.969	3.85	-7.4139*
<u>Protestant</u>	8.4	5.639	-4.06*
<u>Other</u>	7.333	3.75	-4.294*
<u>Total</u>	7.5	4.423	-9.633*

***P≤.001**

Table 5: t-Test: Involvement and Religion's Importance to Identity

	<u>Mean for Involved</u>	<u>Mean for Not Involved</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
<u>Jewish</u>	8.643	6.706	-2.9314**
<u>Catholic</u>	8.125	3.525	-7.8486***
<u>Protestant</u>	8.65	5.361	-4.1847***
<u>Other</u>	8.417	5.5	-2.529*
<u>Total</u>	8.392	4.784	-10.175***

*****P≤.001 ** P≤.01 *P≤.05**

Those who are involved in religion on campus indicate both that they are more religious and that religion is more central to their identity than those who do not participate for each category of religion. My qualitative data reveals that each religious group considers different qualifiers in informing their subjective level of religiousness and religious identity.

A cognitive dissonance emerges for many Jewish subjects who are active participants on campus, in which they do not believe in nor feel a strong connection to God but identify as religious and/or see religion as a central tenant of their identity. Most Jewish subjects, however, do not see this cognitive dissonance as presenting a barrier to being Jewish. One Orthodox

Jewish interview subject said, “In terms of identity, it’s the most important thing for me. [Religion] is everything... The irony is that I have everything except for the traditional religion thing, which is God, because I don’t really believe in God.” Similarly, a Jewish participant respondent in my survey, who put 8 for level of religiousness, wrote, “For me, I’d probably separate the word religious from belief in God.” Another Jewish participant respondent, who indicates that religion is a 9 in centrality to her identity but is a 6 in religiousness writes, “Participation in cultural religious observances is important to me, but I don’t believe in God.” An individual who participates in Jewish social events on campus writes, “I am borderline atheist,” but religion (Judaism) is a 10 in importance to their identity. Thus, this dissonance, at least partially, explains why Jewish active participants in my study have the lowest mean for religiousness in my survey: many Jewish participants frame their Judaism in terms of a cultural and ethnic identity rather than a strictly religious one, in which only the latter implies a belief in God. Participating is not as indicative of religiousness for some Jewish subjects and respondents. This analysis further demonstrates why Jewish respondents have the smallest difference in the means between the two groups for both religiousness and identity. Ultimately, believing in God is not a finite determinant for how religious Jewish subjects and respondents identify as nor how central to their identity Judaism may be.

For many Jewish participants, involvement in religion on campus is not as linked with religiosity, both as a belief in God and overall self-perception of religiosity. This is supported by the 6.905 median, the lowest of the four religion categories (table 4). Moreover, the difference between the means is also the smallest for the two groups of Jewish students for religion’s centrality to one’s identity, and the highest mean for both participants and non-participants for this category (table 5). Therefore, though differences are statistically significant between Jewish

groups in my study, they remain less significant for both religiosity and identity than the other three groups of religion, which is sometimes explained by a closer connection to history and culture rather than to God.

The Protestant, Catholic, and Other groups all have similar patterns between the two groups for religiousness and identity (tables 4 and 5, respectively). Protestant participant respondents wrote often about believing in God and His intentions in creating the world. One individual wrote, “God loves all His children equally, and it is not my place to judge anyone,” and another, “I believe that some things are between a person and their God and we as a people have no control over their relationship.” Moreover, a Catholic active participant subject told me, “We are all brothers and sisters created in the image and likeness of God. Who, then, are we to determine God’s plan or decisions.” All of these individuals indicate being at or above the mean of 5 for religiosity and religion’s centrality to their identity, and all indicate God as being a central tenant of their religiousness and religious identity.

On the other hand, Christian respondents who do not participate in campus religious life are much less influenced by God, and, subsequently, many do not believe in God. One Protestant respondent writes, “I don’t worry too much about whether or not God exists, or turn to the Bible for guidance,” while another says, “My spirituality only affects how I feel about things that happen in my life and how I behave. However, I still don’t believe in any God.” Additionally, an interview subject, who was raised in Christianity, but now considers himself as only spiritual, indicates, “I don’t really believe in like a God or anything like that.” There is a more significant difference between Christian participants and non-participants in the means for religiosity and religion’s centrality to one’s identity than there is between the means for the two groups of Jewish subjects and respondents. Qualitatively, this gap arises due to the understanding that

religiosity and religious identity stem from belief in God among Christian respondents, which many Christian non-participants do not believe in, even though many do indicate that they are spiritual.

Lack of belief in God, however, is not indicative that non-participating Christians in my study do not connect to their religion. One Protestant non-participant says, “I participate in religion by occasionally praying or contemplating religious ideas. I don’t need to go to a church or be a part of a congregation to participate in my own religious beliefs,” and, in relation to identity, another respondent wrote, “Maybe just as a connection to my grandparents and roots, which I guess relates to my identity.” Therefore, lack of participation in religion on campus is not always indicative that one does not identify with nor practice their religion, both culturally and religiously. These respondents all indicate religion as being below the scale mean of 5 in its importance to their identity, which is explained through my qualitative analysis as occurring because God is seen as a core tenant of religiosity and religious identity for many Christian subjects and respondents. This qualitative analysis provides some explanations for the significant gaps between the participant and non-participant groups for both religion’s importance to identity and religiosity. Belief in God may or may not impact the habituses of subjects and respondents, and therefore it is sometimes, but certainly not always, the strongest indicator of religion’s influence on one’s identity and self-perceived religiousness.

Shaping, Influencing, and Informing Political Beliefs

There is a statistically significant difference between the means reported for religion’s influence on politics between those who participate in religion on campus versus those who do not for each religious group except the Other group (table 6). For Jewish respondents, the

difference in the means is least significant with a P-value of .01. Catholic and Protestant differences between the means are most significant with P-values both under .001.

Table 6: t-Test Involvement and Politics

	<u>Mean for Involved</u>	<u>Mean for Not Involved</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
<u>Jewish</u>	6.214	4.47	-2.6383*
<u>Catholic</u>	6.531	2.9	-5.3394**
<u>Protestant</u>	6.9	4.056	-3.599**
<u>Other</u>	4.667	3.375	-1.0508
<u>Total</u>	6.186	3.429	-7.7358**

****P≤.001 *P≤.01**

Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference between the means of those who are born and raised with a religion, though are not involved in religion on campus, and those who were raised with no religion at all in regards to how one’s religion influences one’s politics (table 7). While both means are relatively low and below the mean of 5 on the Likert scale, these results still indicate that being raised with religion does, at least somewhat, lead to religion impacting one’s political views to a greater extent than for those who were raised without any religion.

Table 7: t-Test: Not Involved and Politics

<u>Raised With Religion (Mean)</u>	3.865
<u>Raised Without Religion (Mean)</u>	1.923
<u>t-Value</u>	-3.3372*

***P-Value ≤.001**

Involvement in campus religious life has a clear impact on religion's influence on one's politics within my sample, and being raised with religion has at least some significant impact on religion's influence on one's politics compared to those who were raised with no religion at all. The first major trend in my qualitative data is the use of Jesus's life to justify liberal political leanings. One interview subject, who was raised in a politically conservative Evangelical southern community, told me:

I lean very far left. Jesus was a man with brown skin murdered by cops. As far as I'm concerned, things like universal healthcare, higher wages, looser immigration policies, etc. are the only way to fulfill that golden rule.

Instead of abandoning religion upon entering college due to the way it was intertwined with her self-perceived negative conservative upbringing, she continues to embrace Christian teachings and applies them to her own liberal political framework by using Jesus's life as a justification for her own leftist political views. Another interview subject, who was raised Catholic in Chicago, told me, "Jesus is a radical, you know, like he was a wild dude. He did not give a shit about anyone's social norms. Like he was there for the poor and the vulnerable." Similarly, she uses Jesus and his teachings to justify her political leanings. The former subject occasionally attends mass at an Egalitarian church on campus, while the latter is involved in a Catholic student group and attends Mass each Sunday.

An additional Protestant participant in religion on campus discusses her similar beliefs, "My religious views increase my outrage at the horrific abuse and neglect of kids that is occurring the border [and] my views on justice incite me to care about our broken criminal justice system." For these subjects, who are participants in religion on campus, their religion deeply influences their political beliefs, as they broadly apply concepts of justice and equality from the Bible and Jesus's life to injustices in society today. They do not make religiously

motivated political arguments. Rather, they use religious teachings to shape their own outlooks on injustice and determine that they have a duty to protect society's most vulnerable.

The second trend in my qualitative data is the use of religion and religious scripture to inform political beliefs. One interview subject, who was raised Catholic and has been converting to Orthodox Judaism over the past two years, recalls, "I was raised in the more conservative Catholic household in terms of conservative views, with like marriage and abortion and things like that." Upon beginning his conversion to Judaism, however, his beliefs, especially on abortion, began to change:

Obviously with the exception of endangering a woman's health, Jewish law would then say, it's not a matter of choice anymore, but the woman must take care of her health first and terminate the pregnancy. I do believe that laws that are complete blanket bans are problematic.

This transition stems directly from his conversion to Judaism, and thus Jewish law comes to inform his political beliefs, changing from once believing abortion is always wrong to believing that "laws that are complete blanket bans are problematic." Ultimately, at least some of his political beliefs are directly informed by religious teachings and are thus religiously motivated. This is true when he is both a Catholic and does not believe in abortion and when he is Jewish and believes in abortion for certain situations. This individual was my only interview subject and respondent who identified as having been raised in a different religion than the one he is currently practicing.

While religion certainly influences some individuals' political beliefs, the third trend reveals that many, mostly non-participants, believe religion shouldn't influence politics at all. One Catholic non-participant respondent believes the two "should have absolutely nothing to do with one another." This sentiment is shared by multiple respondents, and another agnostic writes, "I do not tolerate political arguments and policies that are religiously motivated." These

respondents, the first raised in Catholicism and the second raised in Protestantism, see religion as only negatively influencing politics. This is very different from many active participant Christian subjects and respondents who see elements of Christianity as supporting and justifying positive policies and practices that help society's most vulnerable, which many non-participants see religion in politics as inherently at odds with.

One Catholic non-participant respondent who "disagrees with political stances of the church," indicates, "I would like to baptize any children I have and teach them about Catholicism," in addition to "following morals outlined by Catholicism." Moreover, a Catholic interview subject no longer attends Church because he "saw too much of people hiding behind the organization of religion to further their own agenda of some form of hatred or bigotry that they didn't align with the actual teachings of the Bible and New Testament." While some Catholic respondents and subjects, participants and non-participants alike, believe that religion should not influence politics due to harmful misconstructions, they still believe in Catholicism's morals and teachings and would like to raise their families with those aspects of religion. Therefore, indicating that one does not believe religion should influence their politics does not necessarily mean that politics are obsolete in shaping one's religious identity and world view. Rather, many see organized religion specifically as negatively impacting policies, which they indicate as standing against. Thus, some respondents, mainly non-participants, view religion as influencing politics strictly through the mouth piece of the church, while others, mainly active participants, use their own religious views outside of the church to inform, shape, and influence their political beliefs which further encourage them to fight for social justice type causes.

While Protestant and Catholic respondents have the largest quantitative and qualitative differences between those who participate and those who do not, Jewish and Muslim respondents

have similar responses between those who participate and those who do not. For participants of these two religions, religion influences their politics more so by who they may choose to vote for, specifically if a politician may attack their identity on the basis of religion, which is the fourth major trend. This analysis may explain the less significant difference between the means of the two groups for the Other and Jewish categories. One non-participating Muslim respondent wrote:

It affects my political views in that islamophobia is one of the biggest red flags for any sort of political organization I might try participate in or a politician I might support. Other than that, though, I don't think my religion should affect the way I vote, since not everyone follows my religion.

Similarly, another Muslim non-participant writes, "It's important for me to know what faith and beliefs politicians have, as well as their policies and their reasonings behind them," yet his actual political beliefs are not influenced by Islam.

Numerous Jewish respondents indicate having similar feelings. One non-participating respondent writes, "I also find politicians' stances on hate crimes very important, as I feel that hate crimes against Jews are often swept under the rug;" another writes, "Questions about antisemitism are influenced by my religion;" and an additional active participant says, "I am very wary of overt and more subtle antisemitism that I consider pervasive, and I strongly consider that when forming political opinions." Thus, while some Jewish participants in religion on campus may have their actual political beliefs, such as stances on abortion, influenced by Judaism, both participants and non-participant Jewish individuals may consider their religious identity, but not elements of their religion, when choosing candidates to vote for regardless of one's level of religiousness. This pattern did not emerge with any other religious group aside from Jewish and Muslim respondents and subjects.

Ultimately, how religion influences politics varies across participants and non-participants and across religious groups in my study. Some, mostly Christian participants, see religion as positively influencing their political beliefs, while other Christian participants believe their religion positively influences their own views although the churches' stances are drastically outdated. Though some Jewish participants' political beliefs are informed by religious law, most Jewish participants and non-participants in my study allow religion to influence their politics insofar as politicians' stances on antisemitism. This pattern is similar for Muslim subjects in my study in regards to islamophobia. In constructing the habitus, religion, therefore, influences politics in a multitude of ways.

Gender as Finite, a Construct, and God's Creation

There are statistically significant differences in religion's influence on beliefs about gender between the means of the two groups for each religion, except the Other category (table 8). Protestant and Jewish students have the least statistically significant difference with a P-value below .05. The difference between the Catholic groups is the most significant with a P-value below .001.

Table 8: t-Test Involvement and Gender Views

	Mean for Involved	Mean for Not Involved	t-Value
<u>Jewish</u>	5.19	3.353	-2.4681*
<u>Catholic</u>	5.5	2.75	-4.0439**
<u>Protestant</u>	5.55	3.861	-2.0811*
<u>Other</u>	4.083	3	-.82518
<u>Total</u>	5.294	3.101	-6.1171**

****P≤.001 *P≤.05**

A statistically significant difference is also produced between the means of those who are born and raised with a religion, though are not involved in religion on campus, and those who were raised with no religion with regards to religion's impact on one's views about gender (table 9). This indicates that growing up with a religion does have some impact on one's views on gender and that the more involved one is within the religion, the more significant that impact becomes.

Table 9: t-Test Not Involved and Gender Views

<u>Raised With Religion (Mean)</u>	3.423
<u>Raised Without Religion (Mean)</u>	2
<u>t-Value</u>	-2.5423*

*P-Value ≤ 0.05

My survey responses and interviews help to qualify both the extent to which religion influences one's views and beliefs about gender and where some differences arise within and between religions. The first pattern that arose around gender across all religions is the idea that there are strictly two sexes, as advocated for by religion and religious institutions. Many respondents acknowledge how the traditionalism of religion influences their beliefs on gender and family, though not necessarily gender roles. One non-participant respondent, who was raised Protestant, writes:

God made us the way we are. With the exception of some medical/genetic irregularities, there are males and females for a reason. God designed us so that we may reproduce sexually. Besides that, my belief in a creator does not entail any prescriptions for gender relations or gender roles. People should do what makes them happy and associate with those that facilitate that.

This respondent's belief in God is directly linked to his views about gender, specifically in regards to there being two sexes, "so that we may reproduce sexually." His beliefs, however,

stop short of prescribed gender roles, though he does not go as far as to say that gender roles are a social construction. Similarly, a participant Protestant writes:

I personally do think that there are two genders and don't really understand transgender... My belief is that everyone was put on earth exactly as they are and if you want to dress a certain way that's maybe different from what your gender typically is in society, that's totally fine.

This respondent sees God as creating everyone “exactly as they are,” although does not necessarily believe that this means one must always “dress a certain way” and that it’s “totally fine” to bend traditional gender roles and norms. A non-participant Protestant writes, “I believe that God made two genders... everyone was put on earth exactly as they are; like if there's a God, I don't think (s)he said ‘Women need to wear dresses, men need to wear pants.’” Thus, many subjects and respondents within the Protestant community, regardless of their participation in religion on campus, acknowledge and support that their religion teaches that God made two genders. The roles of those genders, however, are not dictated by their religion, either because they do not allow it to or because they do not believe God actually intended it be that way. Therefore, religion influences these individuals’, both non-participants and participants, views insofar as God has created everyone just as He had intended, and it would be wrong to try and change His will.

On the other hand, the second trend I analyzed is that a lot of my respondents across all religions maintain that, within their religion, God is loving of all, and thus total gender equality is actually supported through their interpretations of their religions. One Protestant non-participant respondent writes, “I believe God created all humans equal and people f’ed it up and because we’re all made in God’s image; all genders are valid and we have a moral duty to work toward gender equality.” A non-participant Jewish respondent writes, “I do not ascribe to traditional gender roles. My own interpretation of my faith aligns with this.” A non-participant

Protestant indicates, “Do unto your neighbor and you would want done to yourself, and that includes gender equality,” and another of a like background writes, “St. Paul writes that there is no man nor woman when we all are made one in Christ Jesus.” And another Protestant participant indicates, “I was brought up with a strong emphasis on the heroic, essential, center-stage parts women take in the Bible, ergo, my current views on gender, gender roles, etc.”

Across all religions and levels of participation on campus, there are many who believe that their religion positively impacts their beliefs about gender and that this is how their religions intend for it to be interpreted.

The final trend that emerges across all religions is the idea that religion gets gender completely wrong, and there is no room for religion in achieving gender equality. This view point is largely held by non-participants across all religions. One Jewish non-participant writes, “My own specific communities hold many views that I find to be frankly outdated.” A non-participant Catholic writes, “If anything, it’s one of the things I find the most trouble with in my religion,” and another indicates that religion influences his views on gender, “to the extent that [he] disagree[s] with it.” A Catholic non-participant writes, “Catholicism gets this very wrong,” and a Catholic participant writes, “It’s why I chose to go to public school!” Many, but not all, subjects who hold these viewpoints were raised with religion and are not active participants on campus. This analysis explains the significant difference in the means between the non-participant groups of those who were raised with and without religion, as religion has led some to develop opposite beliefs than what they were taught growing up. Therefore, in thinking about religion’s influence on shaping habitus, religion certainly impacts some individuals’ beliefs on gender. This influence varies between non-participants, whose association with religion and gender tends to be a negative relationship, and participants, where influence tends to be viewed

more positively. These differences are heavily reflected by the significant differences between the means across most of the religious groups and is further supported by my qualitative findings.

Post-College: Relationships, Continuation, and Preservation

My analysis of religion's influence on who one may choose to date reveals significant statistical differences in the means between those who participate in organized religion on campus and those who do not (table 10). Jewish students have the largest discrepancy between the means for the two groups yielding a P-value of less than .001. The Catholic and Protestant groups yield significant P-values of less than .01. Non-participants for each religious group are much more willing to date outside of their religion than participants. Similarly, those who are participants in religious life for each group are much more likely to continue with their religion post-college than those are not (table 11).

Table 10: t-Test Involvement and Dating Outside One's Religion

	<u>Mean for Involved</u>	<u>Mean for Not Involved</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
<u>Jewish</u>	4.571	9.353	5.2685**
<u>Catholic</u>	6.438	8.15	2.7603*
<u>Protestant</u>	6.1	8.306	2.8862*
<u>Other</u>	5.667	9.125	2.6831
<u>Total</u>	5.431	8.471	8.5465**

**P≤.001 * P≤.01

Table 11: t-Test Involvement and Continuing the Religion Post-College

	Mean for Involved	Mean for Not Involved	t-Value
<u>Jewish</u>	9.453	6.824	-4.2423*
<u>Catholic</u>	8.9375	3.675	-6.7223*
<u>Protestant</u>	9.2	4.944	-4.6278*
<u>Other</u>	9.083	7.6	-1.5893
<u>Total</u>	9.118	6.882	-6.399*

***P≤.001**

To explore the relationship between likeliness/willingness to date outside one's religion and continuing to practice the religion post-college, I ran a correlation test between the two variables for each of the religious groups (table 12). The Catholic and Other groups have the weakest correlation between these two variables for both the participating and non-participating groups, while Jewish and Protestant participants have a significant negative correlation between the two variables, though there is no significant relationship for the non-participants.

Table 12: t-Test Relationship Between Dating Outside One's Religion and Continuing the Religion Post-College

		t-value
<u>Jewish</u>	Participate	-2.1108*
	Does Not Participate	-.67271
<u>Catholic</u>	Participate	-1.8978
	Does Not Participate	-.25108
<u>Protestant</u>	Participate	-2.3726*
	Does Not participate	-1.7989
<u>Other</u>	Participate	-1.1558
	Does Not participate	0.31363

***P≤.05**

Jewish respondents in my study have the largest discrepancy in the means of those willing to date outside their religion between the participant and non-participant groups. One non-participant Jewish respondent indicates that she is very willing to date outside of her religion, but her “parents are adamant that [she] raise [her] kids Jewish,” and is an 8 on the scale of likeliness to continue with her religion after college. Another non-participant respondent, who was a 10 on both willing to date outside Judaism and likeliness to continue the religion, wrote:

There is something very special about coming from a religion/culture that has survived millennium of persecution. I feel it is my duty to be proud of and embrace my identity as a Jew, and to pass this culture down to my future kin, in honor of the millions of Jews who have lost their lives before me.

Regardless of her willingness to date outside Judaism, she still feels a “duty” to “pass this culture down.” An additional non-participant respondent who is very willing to date outside Judaism writes, “I don’t think partner religion is that important to me as long as I can bring Jewish culture in.” Though there is not a statistically significant relationship between the variables of continuing religion and willingness to date outside religion for non-participating Jews, these respondents reveal that this group does not necessarily see dating outside religion as being at odds with continuing the religion. Rather, many still wish to continue Judaism, and this continuation is particularly important to them irrespective of their partner’s religion.

On the other hand, two interview subjects, both of whom are Jewish participants, told me that marrying within the religion is one of the only ways to continue the religion and traditions. One subject tells me that he “treats his relationships with much of the rest of the world as more or less transactional,” including both romantic and platonic relationships. Moreover, he says:

Once I have kids, I’m probably going to send them to an orthodox school, just like my parents sent me to an Orthodox school without being Orthodox, because that’s the only way to reproduce it. Otherwise, you just, more or less, fall apart.

An interview subject who was raised Catholic, but has now been converting to Orthodox Judaism, has a similar view of the relationship between dating outside the religion and continuing it. He told me, “I want to marry someone who is proud to be a Jew...who believes in putting Torah into every aspect of their life and shares the same fundamental beliefs and practices.” Thus, while marrying within the religion is not as important for non-participant Jewish subjects as it is for active Jewish subjects, continuation is a core tenant of Judaism for many non-participant respondents regardless.

Ultimately, while participation has a statistically significant impact on the means of Protestants, Catholics, and Jewish respondents on one’s willingness to date outside one’s religion, many respondents maintain they are primarily concerned with shared values in choosing a romantic partner. Less religious respondents indicate that choosing a partner is more about values, irrespective of which religion one may practice. One respondent wrote, “It’s more about values than anything. If their religious beliefs happen to coincide with my personal values then that’s great,” and another wrote, “I kind of think all religions teach the same thing.” A Muslim interview subject, who does not actively practice, told me that on Hinge,³ he set his preferences to Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish people because “anyone from South Asia or the Middle East for the most part has a similar cultural background to me...and Jewish people, I just feel, have very, very similar beliefs to Muslims...It’d be a very compatible match.”

On the other hand, respondents, who indicate being above the mean of 5 for religiousness, believe that sharing “core values” can only stem from practicing the same religion. One wrote of her ex-boyfriend, with whom she shared the same religion, “I really enjoyed having the same core values as my partner,” while another wrote, “A romantic relationship

³ Hinge is a popular dating app that allows one to set specific preferences for what one is looking for in a partner.

requires sharing core values.” Thus, in choosing who to be in a relationship with, which may ultimately translate into who one may marry, some respondents believe it is about shared values rather than shared religion. Others, generally more religiously active respondents, believe that shared core values stem only from a shared religion, even if their partner is not as religious as they are. Therefore, although the meaning of religion’s influence may differ across levels of religiousness, religion maintains a strong influence over the romantic tastes and preferences of subjects and respondents throughout my study, thus continuing to impact the habituses of today’s college students.

Discussion and Conclusion

Summary

Religion remains a significant influence in the lives of college students. Although religion is scarcely relevant for those who were raised with no religion, drawing statistical comparisons between this group and those who do not participate but were raised with religion reveals that religion statistically significantly impacts various aspects of the habitus. It was previously believed by sociologists that religious participation was the strongest indicator of a student body’s religiousness. And, although social scientists have conducted ethnographic and qualitative studies to show how religious participation is not always the strongest indicator of religiousness, my study quantified and qualified this belief in a way that had not been previously done.

Between participants and non-participants, Jewish respondents have the smallest difference between the means for religiousness and religion’s importance to one’s identity. Moreover, religiousness and religious identity are much less linked to a belief in God and much more associated with cultural and ancestral connections for Jewish respondents and subjects.

Protestant and Catholic individuals, however, draw a much deeper connection between religiousness, religious identity, and God. Thus, religion influences habitus quite differently for subjective religiousness and religious identity between Jews, and Catholics and Protestants, as the followers of the former religion tend to maintain a much different conception of personal religion than those practicing the latter two religions in my study.

Religion impacts political beliefs and preferences similarly for participating Catholic and Protestant individuals. Many use religious teachings and Jesus's life to justify liberal political leanings and actions rather than to make religiously motivated political arguments. On the other hand, many non-participating Catholics and Protestants believe religion can only negatively influence politics, usually by hiding behind institutions, such as the church. Some of these individuals, however, continue to practice and believe in the morals of their religion, despite the negative ways in which institutions tend to make religiously motivated political arguments that, in their perceptions, harm others.

Although some Jewish participants support religiously motivated political arguments, in areas such as abortion, most Jewish individuals, participants and non-participants, have their political preferences shaped by how a politician addresses antisemitism and hate crimes. This is also true for Muslim respondents and subjects in how politicians address islamophobia irrespective of participation. Rather than religion itself influencing political views and opinions, a politician's particular opinions about their religion and policies may influence whether or not some Jewish and Muslim subjects and respondents would potentially vote for them, in turn shaping the habitus. Ultimately, religion has deeply influenced the political preferences and beliefs of the habitus for many subjects and respondents. Even if some individuals see religion as

only negatively impacting politics, their political leanings have nevertheless been partially shaped by observances of how religion is weaponized in politics to harm vulnerable populations.

Beliefs on gender and gender roles are the least statistically significant area of the habitus that is influenced by religion. However, my qualitative analysis reveals that religion does persist as an influence on these beliefs in various ways, though with the least considerable difference between participants and non-participants. Some individuals believe that there are only two genders created by a God, yet stop short of proclaiming that gender roles are proscribed by a God. Others, however, believe that a God has made everyone just the way they are, and we, as humans, are wrong to work against a God's intentions. Although some find that their religion positively influences their ideas of gender relations and roles, many others understand religion's approach to gender to be outdated and wrong. Regardless, religion continues to influence these beliefs within the habitus. For some, this stems from a direct belief within their religion, while for others it is much more grounded in a reflexive response, often believing their religion is wrong, and forming opinions that are directly in opposition to the religion in which they were raised. My statistical analysis between those who were raised with religion but do not participate and those who were raised with no religion at all further support the notion that religion remains influential in shaping ideas and views about gender.

Finally, religion impacts who one may choose in a partner in various ways and, for Jewish and Protestant individuals in my study, the more likely one is to date outside their religion, the less likely one is to continue to practice the religion post college. Jewish participants are highly unlikely to date outside their religion, believing that dating and marrying within the religion is critical to Jewish continuation. Although Jewish non-participants are more likely to date outside their religion, my qualitative analysis reveals that Jewish continuation remains a

crucial factor. Ultimately, many individuals across levels of participation and religiousness in my study believe that values are the primary concern in choosing a partner, while some, often more religious individuals, believe that they are only able to share core values with their partner if they practice the same religion.

In qualifying and quantifying the religious habitus on a multi-religious and secular liberal arts campus, I find that, for students who were raised with a religion, religion remains influential for them throughout many aspects of their lives. Participation on campus is indicative of religion more significantly impacting one's habitus across all areas I studied. However, not participating, but being raised with religion, also proves to have statistical significance for religion's influence on political and gender views when compared to those who were raised with no religion at all.

Policy Implications

College students on this college campus will go on to work across all areas of society, including, but not limited to, finance, government, education, and law. All of these areas, and more, have implications on the future of policy. In studying the religious habitus of college students, social scientists are able to more holistically understand the role that religion will play in the future of public policy. It was previously believed that the world was undergoing a secularization, in which religion was no longer relevant to human affairs and institutions. Now, however, it is apparent that this is not the case. Religion persists as an influential factor in the lives of college students, which is indicative of the role that religion may potentially have over human affairs in the near future.

For some groups of religion, participation proves to be more statistically significant in determining the effects of religion on the habituses of college students. It appears to be obvious

that the more one participates in religious activity, the more influential religion will reveal itself to be in one's life. However, my study demonstrates that even though one may not be actively involved in religion, purely being raised with religion, even if one does not identify as religious, has a statistically significant impact on how religion influences one's political and gender beliefs when compared to the group that was raised with no religion at all. This discovery has important implications for the future of policy, both at the micro and macro levels, insofar as religion may continue to subconsciously influence the decisions of powerful individuals who are in policy-making roles. While this may be true for governmental policy making, these results further show how religion may influence human affairs and policy at smaller firms across a diverse range of industries and fields.

Studying the influence of religion on the habitus further serves to reveal the interplay of implicit biases that arise as a result of being raised within a particular religion. Understanding how religion influences college students' beliefs about gender may allow us to better grasp the ways in which these beliefs subconsciously influence certain patterns, such as hiring practices and government policy. This research shows the vitality of taking preventative measures against practices and policies that could have discriminatory consequences, particularly in my discussion of gender.

Moreover, my study allows one to understand the interplay of religion and politics through nuanced perspectives. Although some individuals in my study have certain political beliefs, such as abortion rights, directly shaped by their religion, many others actually use religious teachings as a springboard for supporting social justice issues. Some individuals in my study cite that they are disillusioned by institutionalized religion, which they see as often being associated with bigotry. Yet, many of these same individuals remain active participants in the

religion, both participating in certain religious events and/or practicing their religion alone without the structure of an organized religious institutions. This analysis reveals that religion may very well play a strong role in the future of progressive legislation and policy making, though without the direct influence of an organized institution. While the latter may persist as a force in policy making, my analysis suggests that non-organized religion may also influence policy and political institutions as well.

Ultimately, my study suggests that religion remains a strong influence across many areas of the habitus. The habitus determines various different aspects of the individual, which all contribute to one's overall orientation to the social world. My study reveals some of the ways that religion influences the habitus of college students, who are inevitably the individuals holding policy making roles in the future across a variety of institutions, firms, and levels of government. Since the majority of my subjects and respondents are either upperclassmen or have graduated within the last five years, my analysis is, at least partially, indicative of how religion may influence the habituses of the world's leaders in the near future.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

My research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. I was unable to visit the campus and directly ask individuals to complete my survey. Thus, I had to leverage my own social networks to gather subjects and respondents. This limitation impacted my ability to gain a dataset that is more representative of the entire college campus in areas such as age and religion. Future social scientists studying the religious habitus should visit religious groups in person, or perhaps even stop individuals throughout the campuses they are studying, in order to collect more diverse datasets.

My study opens the doors for further areas of inquiry which may use a mixed methods approach to study the influence of religion on the habitus, since this approach had not previously been taken. There are also methods that would have helped to improve my own study and which should be used to further study the religious habitus. For example, it would be helpful to look at differences across varying types of college campuses. Doing so would allow sociologists to further grasp how institution type may influence the religious habitus beyond the previous research of Gonyea and Kuh (2006) and Hill (2009). Moreover, my study only analyzes one group of individuals in a singular moment in time. The majority of subjects and respondents are upperclassmen or have recently graduated, and thus my study is not able to fully ascertain how individuals' beliefs, religious participation, and practices change throughout college. Future studies should study one group of students over the trajectory of their college careers in order to analyze how the religious habitus changes or stays the same over time. Using one or both of these methods would allow sociologists to obtain a clearer picture of how the religious habitus is shaped and changed throughout the college years.

In short, the preceding data and analyses offer a wide range of potential areas for future research and academic inquiry. My study presents new methodologies that combine quantitative and qualitative analyses that can inspire studies which examine the significance of religion in shaping the habitus. Religious identity and how religion may influence various aspects of one's world outlook is a complicated concept; often, studies may become clouded or colored by differing subjective conceptions of what religion means. Despite the shortcomings of my study, and the fact that my research was conducted during a pandemic, my methods, analysis, and results can inspire new ways of approaching the study of the religious habitus. This study has contributed toward creating a more profound understanding of what it means to live in a post-

secular society, yielding new insights into the religious lives of college students. College campuses are excellent microcosms of society to study, as they allow social scientists to glimpse into the lives of those who will be in charge of the world tomorrow. Religious habitus is only one way of exploring this, and building upon my research will allow us to further understand the true significance of religion's influence on beliefs, behaviors, and, ultimately, policy and human affairs.

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