

**LGBT RIGHTS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS: INTRAGROUP ATTITUDINAL
DIFFERENCES OF THE NON-RELIGIOUS IN THE UNITED STATES**

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all those who have guided and supported me throughout my life, allowing me to be in the position that I am today. For my family, who always helped me when they could and encouraged me to do what was best for me even if it meant moving away. For my friends, who always listened even when they had no idea what I was talking about. For my professors, who taught me the skills I needed to succeed. And for Dr. Christopher Ellison, whose supportive words and patience has assisted me in the completion of this thesis and who has guided me throughout my time at UTSA. Thank you all.

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The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2018

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This study adds to the growing literature on the non-religious in the United States which has assumed that, overall, the non-religious are a homogenous group when it concerns moral-political attitudes. Using the framework of secularization and the concept of the Non-theist collective identity this study explores intragroup differences among the non-religious in terms of attitudes towards LGBT rights and women’s rights. The Non-theist collective identity includes a general support for human rights, particularly LGBT and women’s rights. In this study, pooled data from the General Social Survey years 2006-2016 were used to compare Non-theists (those without a god belief) and Non-religious Believers (those with a god belief) on their attitudes towards homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion. Analysis of the data reveal that Non-theists are significantly more likely to support homosexuality, same-sex marriage, traumatic abortion, and elective abortion when compared to Non-religious Believers. Implications of these findings include the need for a better categorization of non-religious affiliation in general surveys. Other implications and future direction of research are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The numbers of the non-religious in the United States of America are on the rise. That is a sentence which would invoke a variety of reactions from groups across the United States and a sentence that an increasing number of polls and research studies are showing to be true. With this increase of non-religious persons in the United States there has been an appropriate rise in study by sociologists. As the serious study of the non-religious is relatively new in sociology there are many areas that have yet to be researched. One of these lacking areas is the intragroup differences within the non-religious. Research on the non-religious has been focused on two areas: the whole of the non-religious and those in the atheist movement. We know, however, that the non-religious are not homogenous, and that non-religiousness is not analogous to atheism. The category of non-religious contained those that are atheist, agnostic, secularist, spiritual but not religious, unaffiliated believers, deists, and several other terms used to define varying levels of belief in a god and/or a higher power (Cimino and Smith 2014; Lee 2015). Despite the knowledge of the various kinds of non-religiousness little research explores their intragroup differences, especially when it comes to social, moral, and political attitudes.

While there are numerous terms by which the non-religious can define themselves a clear method of categorizing them comes from their belief in a god/higher power. There are those that have a positive belief in a god/higher power of some sort (e.g. unaffiliated believers, deists, spiritual but not religious, etc.) and those without a belief in a god/higher power of any kind (e.g. atheists, agnostics, secularists, etc.). For the purposes of this study, I will refer to those with a positive god/higher power belief as Non-religious Believers. Those without a positive god/higher power belief will be referred to as Non-theists. These terms shall be applied throughout this paper, except when discussing research in which other terms are more appropriate for sake of

clarity. In this study we will be examining the differences in attitudes between Non-religious Believers and Non-theists on two of the most controversial topics on the United States political and social stage today: LGBT rights and women's rights.

These two topics were chosen due to their current position at the forefront of the consciousness of those in United States. LGBT rights will be examined by exploring attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex marriage, while women's rights will be examined through attitudes towards abortion. Homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion are all legal in the United States; however, there is a constant push against them from conservative segments of religious society, which continues to make them relevant issues of study.

In the following, this paper will summarize the secularization paradigm before exploring the current research on the non-religious. What we know about Non-theists which may make them different than Non-religious Believers on LGBT and women's rights will be examined. We will then briefly summarize the predictors of attitudes towards homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion; along with the limited research concerning intragroup differences of the non-religious on these issues. The data and methods of analyses will be detailed before the results. Results of binary logistic regression will be described at length. Finally, the significance of the results, possible explanations, theorized implications, and suggested avenues for further research will be explored.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

Secularization

When the foundation of sociology was being conceptualized during the Enlightenment era in Western Europe, religion was one of the societal institutions that Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and others all spoke to; while their work was written independently their unintended consensus was that religion was on the decline as modern society advanced and would eventually disappear. While the concept of secularization has changed over the decades it is essential to mark its origin to understand the developments of secularization.

Karl Marx believed that religion, along with all other social institutions, was a means by which the Bourgeoisie controlled the Proletariat. To Marx, the rebellion of the Proletariat would mean the end for both the Bourgeoisie and religion. Through Marx's communist vision the State would replace religion's functions on the societal level - assisting the poor through redistribution of wealth - and personal religious beliefs would be replaced by science and philosophy (Marx and Engels [1955] 1967).

Max Weber was not ideologically driven to wish for the end of religion like Marx was; however, he still predicted that religion would decrease in influence and visibility in time. In Weber's version of secularization, capitalism and industrialization were leading humanity to create an "iron cage" of bureaucracy and rationalization. To Weber as humans began to increasingly make choices to increase efficiency and systematize society they would become disenchanted with religion thus leading to religion fading from its importance in human's lives (Weber [1905] 2001).

Emile Durkheim had a concept of religion that was different from his contemporaries and most today. To Durkheim religion did not necessarily have to possess a supernatural element,

such as God, but consisted of sacred concepts. The sacred being an object or idea that is set apart and those who speak against the object are violation of the society's rules, thereby, the society would exorcise the profanity to maintain the purity of what is sacred (Durkheim [1912] 1995). While Durkheim did believe that religion is a part of human nature, like Weber he thought that belief in the supernatural was dying out due to science and reason; and that the current religions - particularly in the West - would be replaced by the "cult of individualism" (Durkheim [1912] 1995). What could be called a secular religion this cult of individualism would be based off Enlightenment thinking, focusing on individual human rights, the rationality endowed within individuals, and the concept that people are born free and equal.

The process of secularization was described by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim as occurring in different manners but all with the same result of the demise of religion. Secularization was the *status quo* belief of sociologists for several decades but when researchers began to more seriously study religion in the 1960s they found that religion was not marching along to a funeral dirge as predicted. Instead, religion was maintaining course or, in the case of the United States, thriving. These new discoveries meant that what sociologists had thought was the straightforward process of secularization had to be adjusted to include greater nuance based on the current research.

Both the initial theories of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, and along with some¹ of the more recent theories of secularization contain three individual but interacting methods of how the process of secularization would present in a society (Tschannen 1991). These are 1) rationalization - the reduction in levels of practice, belief, or affiliation at the individual level; 2)

¹ One of the modern theories which does not fall into the systemization by Tschannen is Chaves' work framing secularization as not the decline of religion itself but the decline of religious authority (Chaves 1994).

worldliness - religious organizations undergo change based off the discoveries of science and social change; 3) differentiation - societal norms, law, and culture become separated from religion. These three processes have alternatively been called societal secularization, organizational secularization, and individual secularization (Dobbelaere and Fragniere 2002).

In *The Sacred Canopy* Peter Berger primarily explores this societal secularization. Like Weber and Durkheim Berger saw the influence of traditional religion and religious institutions as declining in both culture and government and driven by industrialization and urbanization (1967). The laical process of the government presents itself in multiple ways. One is the disentanglement of religious institutions and power from government positions - unseen in the United States but occurring more so in Europe where there are official State religions (Dobbelaere 1987). Durkheim supported another process of laicization in the reclaiming of education from the hands of ecclesiastical authority and giving control of education to the State (Lukes 1972). In a broader sense, this form of societal secularization would be the State taking on roles that had only been filled by the Church before such as giving welfare to the poor or treating the sick. The second part of societal secularization is the separation of religious content in culture, this can be seen in works of art and literature but also, opinions and beliefs that are now formed by scientific thought and ethics (Dobbelaere 1987, Tschannen 1991).

The laicism of society detailed by societal secularization is related to organizational secularization. As stated above, organizational secularization occurs when religions undergo a change due to outside pressures from a culture's advances in science and overall social change. This religious change can be in different forms but is most easily seen in the religious evolution of certain beliefs (Dobbelaere and Fragniere 2002). A prime example would be the increasing acceptance of divorce in Christian religions, as divorce became increasingly common in the

West, due to new laws, Christian denominations began to change the way they treated divorcees to reflect the new social reality (Smith 2015).

The final element of secularization is individual secularization. This micro-level secularization is defined as decreasing levels of religious practice, belief, or affiliation in a population. Individual secularization does not mean that people no longer believe in a god or higher power, but it may be shown in decreasing attendance at religious services, a move away from organized religion, or an increasing acceptance of scientific explanations for natural phenomenon (Bruce 2002). It may be that the same changes of rationalization, industrialization, and urbanization that drive societal secularization drive individual secularization as well (Dobbelaere and Fragniere 2002).

There is a fourth element of secularization is not shared by all theories of secularization, this is privatization – when religious practice and beliefs become less important in the public realm and are relegated to the private realm with a personal worldview (Tschannen 1991). Luckmann theorized that as religion lost influence over other spheres of life and a plurality of worldviews arose, the competition would cause people to construct their own private worldview which draws upon the various available worldviews not just a religious one (1967).

Recent research has cast doubt on the straightforward nature that secularization predicts as religion remains a prevalent aspect of many modern societies, especially the United States. Some are in favor of a pluralistic or economic model utilizing rational-choice theory (see Berger 2012; Berger 2014; Stark and Finke 2000) to explain the shifts of religious behavior we see in modernity. There is a continued defense of secularization as a paradigm by which to view the changes in modern society and that encompasses the arguments and theories of critics (see Bruce 2011; Dobbelaere and Fragniere 2002; Lechner 1991; Voas and Chaves 2016) and some have put

forth that critics of secularization use arguments like those of secularization proponents (Tschannen 1994). However, the debate over secularization continues.

Despite this continued debate of the secularization thesis' ability to explain societal and religious change, it cannot be denied that in Western culture there had been a rise in individuals becoming more openly secular. There is evidence to show that religious service attendance and belief in supernatural aspects of religions (e.g. belief in hell, belief in angels, etc.) are both on the decline in both the United States and Europe (Twenge, et. al. 2016; Dogan 2002). Evidence for decreasing belief in a god/high power and disaffiliation from religion is strong and will be discussed in the next section. This paper will be framed around the idea that as the population of the non-religious grows it is important to understand their attitudes not only in juxtaposition to the religious but including any intragroup differences that may exist.

The Non-religious

While the concept of secularization may continually be debated in sociological literature, as stated, it cannot be denied that there are large portions of the populations in the United States, Canada, and Europe that are openly not religious in their beliefs (Bruce 2002; Lee 2015). The population of the non-religious has been growing in Western countries over the past few decades and we have seen a jump in numbers during the last ten years. In Europe, the non-religious population in 2010 was around 19% (Pew Research Center 2015b). In 2011, the non-religious population in Canada was 24% rising from 4% in 1970 (Pew Research Center 2013). The United States saw a similar increase of the non-religious as Canada, rising from 5% in 1970 to 23% in 2014 (Pew Research Center 2013; 2015a). Non-religious affiliation is greatest in Asian-pacific countries where 22% of the population was non-religious in 2010, but that 22% comprised 76% of the total global population of the non-religious (Pew Research Center 2015b). While the non-

religious in the Asian-pacific do comprise a clear majority of the global population non-religious most research on the non-religious has been focused on those in Western countries.

As mentioned above, the portion of the United States population that is claiming non-religious affiliation has risen over the years. There has been a slow rise in the non-religious since the 1990's but from 2008 to 2014 the estimated non-religious population spiked from 17% to 23% (Pew Research Center 2015a). Conservative estimates from Gallup put the spike at 12% to 18% from 2008 to 2016 (Gallup News 2016). Overall, the non-religious in the United States tend to be young, male, and white (Baker and Smith 2009a; Edgell, Frost, Stewart 2017). In between the conservative and liberal estimates there can be no doubt that non-religious affiliation is on the rise in the United States (Hout 2017). As described in the previous section, secularization has historically been the model by which sociologists have thought society was moving but more recent research case doubt on to that assumption. If secularization is occurring on a societal level within the United States is still up for debate but what cannot be denied is that the number of people becoming non-religious is growing in number. Hout and Fischer point towards the religious conservatives and their affiliation with the right-wing in the United States as driving people away from religion; though the pathways by which people become non-religious are varied and more research needs to be done on the way people are increasingly becoming non-religious (Hout and Fischer 2002; Hout and Fischer 2014; LeDrew 2013).

Supporting Hout and Fischer's hypothesis for the increase of the non-religious is that, compared to other religious affiliations, the non-religious often lean more liberal and are in more support of same-sex marriage and abortion (Becker 2012; Bruce 2003; Hout and Fischer 2002; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Sherkat et al. 2011; Strickler and Danigelis 2002). When the performing statistical analyses, the non-religious are often used as the comparison group for

religious affiliations. Due to this we mostly know the political leanings and social attitudes of the non-religious as the byproduct of knowing that the religious of most denominations are more likely to be conservative, not how much more likely the non-religious are to be liberal.

As posited previously, research in the United States, Canada, and Europe has shown that the non-religious do not form a singular homogenous category (Altemeyer 2009; Baker and Smith 2009a; Hout and Fischer 2002; Lim, MacGregor and Putnam 2010; Storm 2009; Wilkins-Laflamme 2015). Approximately one third to one half of the non-religious claim they have no belief in a god or high power or that it is impossible to know if a god or higher power exists, they are atheists or agnostics, respectively (Baker and Smith 2009a; Cragun et al. 2012; Lipka 2015b; Zuckerman 2012) However, these studies do not parse out the differences between these individual non-religious groups other than their various levels of religiosity and spirituality. Though there are many varieties of non-religion to study most of the research done has been focused on Non-theist, particularly atheist, experiences. The term Non-theist has been used in a variety of ways as the terminology of the non-religious develops (see Cragun and Hammer 2011; Lee 2015; Silver et. al. 2014); as stated previously, we shall be using the term Non-theist to refer to those without a god/higher power belief (i.e. atheists and agnostics).

Non-theists hold a peculiar place in society in that they are a group that has been traditionally seen as being held together by what they do not believe with nothing else in common other than disbelief in a deity; studies have shown though that there is a collective Non-theist identity. Collective identity can arise in various ways, for Non-theists one of the processes that has shaped their collective identity is the discrimination that they face from the larger society. Studies have shown that Non-theists are one of the least trusted groups in the United States (Edgell, Gerteis, Hartmann 2006; Edgell et al 2016) and are discriminated against on

surprisingly regular bases (Najle and Gervais 2016). Like other stigmatized groups, this distrust and discrimination strengthens their identities as Non-theists (Doane and Elliott 2015). Efforts to combat this discrimination are seen in the ways that Non-theists maintain the boundaries of their identity. Primarily, the Non-theist identity's boundaries are maintained by reinforcing the line between the Non-theists lack of religion and belief in a god/higher power and those that are religious and believe in a god/higher power (Guenther, Mulligan, and Papp 2013).

Manifestations of boundary maintenance would be seen in the formation of Non-theist groups, framing religion as anti-science, and pointing out the harm religion does to marginalized groups – especially LGBT persons and women (Guenther, Mulligan, and Papp 2013; Smith 2013).

Traditionally, the Non-theist collective identity has been studied through the lens of the collective atheist identity. Research on the collective atheist identity has mostly been done in studying Non-theist groups, which are comprised of what Cimino and Smith would deem "active atheists" (2014).² The groups that "active atheists" take part in range from national organizations (e.g. Freedom from Religion Foundation, American Atheists, American Humanists, and the Center for Inquiry, etc.) to local groups (e.g. Freethinkers and Atheists of Central Texas, Minnesota Atheists, divisions of the Secular Student Alliance, etc.). These Non-theistic groups cover a variety of needs for Non-theists the local groups focusing on building social support and providing a space for like-minded people (Tomlins 2015) and the national organizations performing campaigns and handling legal cases (Beaman 2015; Cimino and Smith 2014). One notable campaign copied is the Open Secular campaign which is an active effort to combat

² While most of the research uses the term "atheist" in reference to the subjects of study, both atheists and agnostics are active members of many "atheist" communities lending to a broader Non-theistic identity (Baker and Smith 2015; McGrath 2004; Zuckerman, Galen, and Pasquale 2016).

discrimination and normalize Non-theism, just as the LGBT movement participated and encouraged coming out (Cimino and Smith 2014; Smith 2013).

These Non-theist groups and their functions are a byproduct of the greater Non-theistic identity, and their boundary maintenance, which centers around two main issues: non-belief and science. The Non-theistic identity surrounding non-belief manifests itself in several ways including consuming atheistic media and discussing their non-belief (Loveland 2016); but one of the most prevalent manifestations is strong support for the separation of State and Church (Baker and Smith 2009a; Cimino and Smith 2014). The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) is a legal organization that many Non-theists turn to when they believe there are violations of the Establishment Clause in the United States. These violations range from prayers before local council meetings, ten commandment monuments in front of courthouses, and school staff leading students in prayer, among others (Freedom From Religion Foundation 2018). The court cases handled by the FFRF are just some of the legal cases that Non-theists become involved in support of the separation of State and Church (Beaman 2015).

The second part of the Non-theist collective identity is a support for and adoration of science, these manifests in similar ways to their collective identity actions around of non-belief. Non-theists will consume scientific media, discuss/debate science - particularly evolution and the origins of the universe - with the religious, celebrate famous scientists, and they advocate for scientific literacy, especially for children (Cimino and Smith 2016; Jacoby 2004; Liddell and Stedman 2011; Smith 2013). A notable way in which Non-theists advocate for scientific literacy is by attempting to keep Creationism out of science classrooms in favor of evolution and other valid scientific theories (Cimino and Smith 2014). Additionally, there are have been the

formation of scientific literacy camps, such as Camp Quest, to combat religious summer camps and designed to promote curiosity and scientific understanding in children (Bullivant 2015).

Secondary to the collective identity cores of non-belief and science appreciation, Non-theists also hold a less salient but still important collective identity around human rights issues³ - in particular, women's rights and LGBT rights (Liddell and Stedman 2011; Smith 2013). While national Non-theist organizations do not handle these human rights issues head on they do openly support movements and organizations that do (Liddell and Stedman 2011). This collective identity around human rights issues may stem from the inclusion of secular humanist philosophy in Non-theist thought (Jacoby 2004); however, some claim that secular humanist philosophy and the current Non-theist movement are separate (LeDrew 2016).

While the boundary maintenance of the Non-theist identity keeps a firm distinction of being apart from religion, Non-theist communities do exclude those who have left a religion but embrace apostates (Guenther, Mulligan, and Papp 2013; Smith 2013). This is logical as approximately 70% to 90% of Non-theists have apostatized from religion, and usually a Christian religious background (Baker and Smither 2009b; Sherkat 2014); estimates of the percentage of apostates in the Non-theist community due to the limited number of studies on the topic. The reasons behind Non-theists leaving their religion and becoming Non-theists is different for every individual, however, there are trends to be found that center around: having more liberal politics than their religion, becoming more educated on both issues of science and other religions, slowly reasoning out their non-belief, and being unable to reconcile moral differences with their religion (LeDrew 2013; Vargas 2012; Zuckerman 2012). Despite the myth

³ It should be noted that the definition of human rights can vary depending on the group – religious or otherwise – and confliction may exist between groups. For Non-theists human rights are generally synonymous with values of equality for all persons no matter the race, gender, religion, etc.

that "something bad" must have happened to make a person a Non-theist, most Non-theists leave their religion and faith after a slow and gradually building process which takes into consideration many factors (LeDrew 2013; Zuckerman 2012; Zuckerman, Galen, and Pasquale 2016).

There is very little research comparing Non-religious Believers and Non-theists. From what research there is we know that in the already liberal, white, and male realm of the non-religious, Non-theists are comprised of more liberal, whites, and males than Non-religious Believers; Non-theists are also younger (Cimino and Smith 2014). Compared to Non-religious Believers, Non-theists are less likely to participate in private religious acts like praying or meditation; they are also "not at all religious" and "not at all spiritual" in greater frequency (Baker and Smith 2009a).

Attitudes towards Homosexuality and Same-sex Marriage

Research on attitudes towards LGBT issues within the United States has shown the religious denomination and religiosity are some of the strongest predictors of attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex marriage. (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009; Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Olson, Cadge and Harrison. 2006; Sherkat et al. 2011; Whitehead 2010). Out of all religious denominations in the United States, Conservative Protestants tend to be the least supportive when it comes to accepting homosexuality and same-sex marriage (Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Sherkat et al. 2011). Meanwhile, Mainline Protestants are much more supportive of same-sex marriage and same-sex relationships, as well as those that are non-religious (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009; Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Hill, Moulton, and Burdette 2004; Loftus 2001; Sherkat et al. 2011). While much of research has used the non-religious as the comparison group in statistical analysis, that analysis has shown that the non-religious are the group that is most in favor of same-sex marriage (Loftus 2001). In line with religious

denomination, religious service attendance also predicts attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex marriage; as religious service attendance increases the likelihood of supporting homosexuality and same-sex marriage decreases (Sherkat et al. 2011). In tandem with religious beliefs research has also found that those who are conservative, Southern, non-white, male, and older all tend to be less supportive of homosexuality and same-sex marriage (Brumbaugh et al. 2008; Jelen 2017; Sherkat 2016).

When studying attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex marriage the focus has been on religious variation. As mentioned, what we know of the non-religious' attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex marriage is as the reference category in statistical analysis to religious groups. Along with that, little research has been done which treats the non-religious as a heterogeneous category when examining their perceptions of homosexuality and the surrounding issues. There are two papers that do look at the intragroup differences of the non-religious when it comes to same-sex marriage and both have conflicting results.

The first of these two conflicting studies is by Baker and Smith who published a study examining the differences in private spiritual life, stances on social-political issues, and opinion on religion in the public sphere between atheists, agnostics, and unchurched believers. Results from this study show that there are differences between these three groups in terms of private spiritual life and opinions on religion in the public sphere. However, this study, using a scale of moral liberalism, was unable to find significant differences on the three groups' stances on social-political issues. This finding is key, as the scale of moral liberalism included a measure on same-sex marriage, which when removed and run by itself still no significant difference was found between the groups. (Baker and Smith 2009a)

Contrary to Baker and Smith's findings is a paper presentation by Frame. This study looked at Non-theists and compared them to those with 'no particular religion' or the Religiously Disengaged. Across models controlling for religiosity, attribution of homosexuality, and personal awareness of a homosexual person this study found that Non-theists were more likely to support same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption than the Religiously Disengaged. (Frame 2017)

There are differences between the measures used by the Frame study and the Baker and Smith study. Baker and Smith used a measure of belief in god to determine their groups of atheist, agnostic, and unchurched believers (2009a); whereas, Frame used self-identification of religious affiliation (2017). There is also a difference in when the data used was gathering, Baker and Smith used the 2008 Baylor Religious Survey which was before the large increase in the non-religious as mentioned above (2009a); while Frame used 2014 data from the Public Religion Research Institute (2017). Both differences in these studies may be leading to their contrary results.

Attitudes towards Abortion

Research into attitudes towards abortion has shown that some of the strongest predictors are religious affiliation and religiosity. Conservative Protestants are in the most opposition to abortion and, overall, are growing increasingly against abortion as time passes (Bartkowski et al 2012; Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Hoffman and Johnson 2005). Catholics are generally opposed to abortion, but the Conservative Protestants have surpassed them on being the most anti-abortion religious affiliation. Mainline Protestants fall in between Catholics and the non-religious, in their opposition to abortion with the non-religious being one of the groups - along with Jews - to have the least opposition to abortion. Along with this, research has found that religiosity and belief in a personal relationship with a god both increase the likelihood of being in opposition to abortion

(Clements 2014; Strickler and Danigelis 2002; Unnever, Bartkowski, and Cullen 2010). Political attitudes and race also play a large part in predicting attitudes towards abortion, with conservatives and non-whites less likely to support abortion than liberals and whites (Hess and Rueb 2005; Jelen 2017; Jelen and Wilcox 1992; Wilcox 1992).

Abortion is not a singular issue but one of nuanced facets (Sanger 2016); religion, race, political ideology, age, gender, and more all go into predicting attitudes towards abortion but what also matters is the type of abortion involved. Abortion is not a monolith and is undertaken for different reasons, which can be broadly categorized as elective (social) or traumatic (physical) reasons (Hoffman and Johnson 2005; Jelen and Wilcox 2003). Traumatic abortion is abortion that is undertaken for reasons such as the health of the mother, the pregnancy was due to rape and/or incest, deformation of the fetus, etc. Even among Conservative Protestants, there is less opposition to abortion in the realm traumatic abortion, particularly where the health of the mother is a concern (Hoffman and Johnson 2005). It is usually with elective abortion that we find the most opposition to abortion, elective abortion is undertaken for reasons such as the mother cannot afford the child, the mother does not want the child, the mother is unmarried, etc. Overall, there is more opposition to elective abortion than to traumatic abortion (Hoffman and Johnson 2005; Jelen and Wilcox 2003).

Looking at intragroup differences of the non-religious in relation to abortion we see that there has been little research on the subject. Baker and Smith's study on intragroup differences of the non-religious in 2008 had an index of moral liberalism which included the measure of "abortion, if the family cannot afford the child". The results showed that there were no significant differences between unchurched believers, atheists, and agnostics on the scale of moral liberalism (Baker and Smith 2008). Their single measure of abortion is an elective

abortion measure and therefore does not capture the full complexity of attitudes towards abortion. Recent Pew Research data show that when asked about abortion in "all or almost all cases" Non-religious Believers support abortion 67% of the time, whereas, atheists and agnostics supported abortion 87% of the time (Masci 2018). Given the simplicity of Baker and Smith's measure of abortion and the new Pew Research data, another investigation of the intragroup differences of the non-religious on abortion is warranted.

Hypotheses

Given the previous research on homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion we know that the non-religious are more likely to be in favor of these issues than most religious persons. Previously, the non-religious have been considered as a homogenous category on homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion, however, there are marked differences between the Non-theists and the Non-religious Believers that may lead to heterogeneity of attitudes towards these issues. Given how the Non-theist collective identity is not only based around their secularity and appreciation of science but also support for LGBT rights and women's rights, Non-theists may be in greater favor of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, abortion than the Non-religious Believers. Therefore, we put forth four hypotheses to explore possible differences in attitudes towards these issues:

Hypothesis One: Non-theists are more likely to support homosexuality than Non-religious Believers.

Hypothesis Two: Non-theists are more likely to support same-sex marriage than Non-religious Believers.

Hypothesis Three: Non-theists are more likely to support traumatic abortions than Non-religious Believers.

Hypothesis Four: Non-theists are more likely to support elective abortions than Non-religious Believers.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODS

Data Source

Data for this study come from the pooled 2006-2016 NORC General Social Surveys (GSS). Briefly, the GSS is a replicated cross-sectional survey conducted in biannually—in even-numbered years—by the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago. Each GSS is based on a sample that is designed to be representative of the population of adults aged 18 and over who reside in the lower 48 states of the U.S., i.e., excluding Alaska and Hawaii. In most years, the GSS surveys between 2000-3000 individuals, although oversamples are drawn in select years. Data are collected via in-person interviews, which typically last approximately 90 minutes. Response rate for the GSS is approximately 75-78% from 1977-1998 and 70% since 2000. The GSS is an omnibus survey, meaning that it includes items on a wide array of topics, such as political and social values, lifestyles, family life, work history, religion and spirituality, demographic characteristics, and many others. All of this makes the GSS an ideal source of data for this study.

One important feature of the GSS employs a split-ballot design. Briefly, the GSS seeks to accomplish three objectives: (a) to maximize the number of topics and items that can be included in any given year; (b) to incorporate new items on timely or emergent topics; and (c) to gather information on core items—i.e., those that are repeated in virtually every iteration of the GSS—from a sufficient number of respondents to allow the reliable mapping of social trends, i.e., estimation of patterns and correlates of continuity and change over time. To accomplish these objectives, the GSS employs a split ballot interview design. Although a limited number of core items are asked of all respondents in each survey year, many other items are included only in certain years, while others are asked of only a randomly selected subset of the total number of

respondents. This split ballot design often reduces the number of cases available for analysis by limiting the number of valid responses on specific items of interest.

The sample of non-religious persons used in this study was derived using the following steps. First, data from all iterations of the GSS from 2006-2016 were combined into a single pooled dataset. Second, individuals were identified as non-religious based on their response to the following item, which is asked of all GSS respondents each year: “What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?” For purposes of this study, persons who responded with “no religion” or “none” are defined as non-religious, and they were selected as the effective sample for this study (N=2962). Specific annual totals are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Increase of Non-Religious Preference GSS 2006-2016

Year	Total	Non-religious	Frequency
2006	4484	739	16.50%
2008	2014	332	16.50%
2010	2031	363	17.90%
2012	1967	387	19.70%
2014	2520	522	20.70%
2016	2849	619	21.70%

Measures

Homosexuality. For our first hypothesis the dependent measure is taken from the GSS question inquiring about attitudes towards same-sex intercourse. Participants were asked if they believed that “sexual relations between two adults of the same sex” is (1) “always wrong”, (2) “almost always wrong”, (3) “wrong only sometimes”, or (4) “not wrong at all”. For purpose of this study the variable was dichotomized. “Always wrong”, “almost always wrong” and “wrong only sometimes” were collapsed and recoded into does not support homosexuality (N = 519);

this was done as those who answered, “almost always wrong” and “wrong only sometimes” do not support homosexuality in some instances. “Not wrong at all” was recoded into supports homosexuality (N = 1194). This measure was dichotomized due to small cell sizes and failure to meet the Brant test of parallel lines when ordered logistic regression was attempted.

Same-sex marriage. The dependent measure for our second hypothesis is from the GSS question which asked participants how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement of “Homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another.” This measure has five categories, ranging from (1) “strongly agree”, to (3) “neither agree nor disagree”, to (5) “strongly disagree.” This measure was made into the binary of agree and disagree. “Strongly agree” and “agree” were recoded as in favor of same-sex marriage (N = 1248). “Strongly disagree”, “disagree”, and “neither agree nor disagree” were recoded into not in favor of same-sex marriage (N = 328); as those who responded “neither agree nor disagree” were not explicitly in favor of same-sex marriage the choice was made to include them in the ‘not in favor’ category. This measure was dichotomized due to small cell sizes and failure to meet the Brant test of parallel lines when ordered logistic regression was attempted.

Abortion. Two indexes of attitudes towards abortion were created to measure abortion from six individual variables. In the included variables participants were asked to respond yes or no to whether they believed it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain an abortion under six varying circumstances. The first index measures increasing acceptance of traumatic abortion and includes the circumstances of: a strong chance of serious defect in the baby, the woman’s health is in danger, and she is pregnant as the result of rape. This index has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74. The second index measures increasing acceptance of elective abortion and includes the circumstances of: the woman is low income and cannot afford more children,

the woman is married and wants no more children, and the woman is not married and does not want to marry the man. This index has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. When creating these indexes each response of "yes" was counted as a 1, with "no" being a zero. Responses were summed to create two indexes of increasing acceptance towards abortion ranging from zero to 3, with zero being no support of traumatic/elective abortion and 3 being in full support of traumatic/elective abortion. A final measure of abortion exists from the same set as the ones used in the indexes, this variable asks about the participant's opinion towards abortion for any reason. As this circumstance covers both traumatic abortions and elective abortions it was not used in either index. Due to small cell sizes and a failure to meet the Brant test of parallel lines these indexes were dichotomized into (1) complete support for traumatic/elective abortion and (0) incomplete support for traumatic/elective abortion.

God belief. For the independent variable measuring belief in a god/higher power - which defines the intragroup differences of the non-religious - the GSS question concerning confidence in the existence of God was used. This question asked participants "which category comes closest to expressing your belief about God": (1) "I don't believe in God", (2) "I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out", (3) "I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a Higher Power of some kind", (4) "I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others", (5) "While I have my doubts, I feel that I do believe in God", and (6) "I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it." Those that responded as not believing in a god (atheists) or not knowing if a god existed (agnostics) were recoded into Non-theists (N = 888). Those that responded as believing in a Higher Power or as having a god belief of some kind were recoded into Non-religious Believers (N = 1791). For analyses Non-religious Believers will be the comparison group to Non-theists (Non-religious Believers = 0,

Non-theists = 1). Due to the split ballot design of the GSS, in 2006 this variable was asked of only three of four ballots, losing 246 participants from the larger non-religious sample. After accounting for those who did not answer this variable question (N = 37) our overall effective sample size for this study is 2679 non-religious participants.

Control Variables. Across both hypotheses the variables of sex, race, age, income, educational attainment, political ideology, religious service attendance, childhood religion, country region, and year of GSS will be used as controls during the analyses. The measure of sex is dichotomous in these analyses with male being the comparative group to female (male = 0, female = 1), interviewers did not ask the respondents their sex but recorded based off their own observation. Race was measured similarly to sex in that interviewers did not ask the participant their race unless they were unsure then which they asked, “What race do you consider yourself?”; categories by which answers were coded were white, black, and other. For my analyses I have dichotomized the variable of race into white and non-white (white = 0, non-white = 1).

The participant’s religious upbringing was measured across multiple religious denominations, both Christian and non-Christian. For this analysis, Protestant, Catholic, and non-religious upbringings will be examined with a non-religious upbringing as the reference category (Non-religious = 0, Protestant = 1, Catholic = 1); this will partially control for lingering religious sentiments and the possible effects between those who have converted from religion compared to those raised non-religious. The GSS categorized participants into nine different country regions which I narrowed to four as follows: Mid-Atlantic and New England became Northeast, East North Central and West North Central became Midwest, Pacific and Mountain became West, and South Atlantic, South West Central, and South East Central became South. For analyses

three dichotomized variables were created with South as the reference category (South = 0, Northeast =1, Midwest = 1, West =1).

The participant's political ideology was measured they were asked to place themselves on a seven-point scale from (1) "extremely liberal", (4) "moderate", (7) "extremely conservative"; this scale was inversed to be a scale of increasing liberalism. Age, educational attainment, income, and year of GSS are measured as continuous variables. Age is measured by years ranging from 18 years of age to 89 years of age or older. Educational attainment is measured by years ranging from zero to 20 years of schooling. Income is measured in real constant dollars of the total family income which is adjusted for inflation. The year the GSS was administered is controlled for in the pooled data.

Analytical Methods

Each hypothesis will be tested using a using the Stata version 12 statistical software to run analyses. Hypothesis one and two, examining attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex marriage respectively, will be tested using binomial logistic regression. Binomial logistic regression will also be used to test the hypotheses three and four, examining attitudes traumatic abortion and elective abortion respectively. All analyses will be weighted using the included weights in the GSS data set.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

As shown in table 2, there are significant differences between Non-religious Believers and Non-theists in terms of their demographics. Non-theists have, on average, a year more of education than Non-religious believers and make approximately \$15000 more per year. Contrary to previous studies there is no significant difference between the two groups in age. Holding true to previous research Non-theists are comprised of significantly fewer females and non-whites, and more liberals than Non-religious Believers. Non-theists live less in the South and Midwest and more in West and Northeast than Non-religious Believers. Both groups were raised with no significant difference in religious background.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Variables by God Belief		
	Non-religious Believers	Non-theists
Female	50.40%	32.9%***
Non-white	26.50%	12.8%***
Age (years)	41.93	42.32
Edu. Attainment (years)	13.65	14.80***
Income (dollars)	45097.64	60106.97***
Political Views (1-7)	4.39	4.83***
Raised Protestant	43.70%	43.20%
Raised Catholic	29.50%	28.20%
Midwest	25.00%	22.70%
West	29.90%	34.3%*
Northeast	16.10%	20.9%**

Note: Non-theist and Non-religious Believer means compared for significance

** $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$*

In table 3, we can see that both hypothesis one and two were supported. Non-theists are more likely to support homosexuality by a factor of 1.58 and to support same-sex marriage by a factor of 1.80 than Non-religious Believers. We can see that when looking at attitudes towards homosexuality, being a Non-theist or Non-religious Believer is one of the strongest predictors. Variables of country region – West and Northeast – and being a female are stronger than Non-

theism in their predictive strength of support of homosexuality; while increasing educational attainment and being more liberal are slightly weaker than Non-theism. The predictive power of these variables changes when looking at attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Once again, Non-theism is one of the strongest predictors of support of same-sex marriage. Living in the West continues to be a stronger predictor along with that a person's political views are a stronger predictor as well. Sex continues to be a predictor of attitudes toward same-sex marriage, but interestingly educational attainment is no longer a significant predictor. For both homosexuality and same-sex marriage as age increases and for those who are non-white the odds of supporting homosexuality and same-sex marriage decrease. We can see that for each two-year increase the odds of supporting homosexuality and same-sex marriage, in general, increase. Finally, there appears to be no effects of raised religion on the likelihood of supporting same-sex marriage.

Table 3

Odds Ratios of Homosexuality and Same-sex Marriage		
	Homosexuality	Same-Sex Marriage
Non-theist	1.58**	1.80**
Female	1.95***	1.58**
Non-white	0.45***	0.61*
Age	0.98***	0.98***
Edu. Attainment	1.20***	1.04
Income	1.00	1.00
Political Views	1.43***	1.88***
Raised Protestant	1.25	1.26
Raised Catholic	1.44	1.70
Midwest	1.24	1.08
West	1.95***	1.85**
Northeast	2.21***	1.15
Year	1.10***	1.12***

Note: Hosmer-Lemeshow tests show appropriate goodness of fit

Homosexuality Chi-squared = 325.24, pseudo R² = 0.297

Same-Sex Marriage Chi-squared = 228.33, pseudo R² = 0.259

*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p ≤ 0.001

The data continues to support hypotheses three and four. As seen in table 4, the odds that Non-theists would show complete support for traumatic abortion are greater than Non-religious Believers by a factor of 2.01; and Non-theists are more likely show complete support for elective abortion by a factor of 1.90 compared to Non-religious Believers. For both traumatic abortion and elective abortion Non-theism is the second strongest predictor when it comes to complete support, living in the West is a stronger predictor for both hypothesis. Those who are more liberal, more education, living in the Northeast, and older all show an increased likelihood of supporting all forms of elective abortion and traumatic abortion. For those who are non-white the odds of supporting traumatic abortion decrease and race is non-significant for elective abortion. Sex, raised religion, living in the Midwest, and GSS year are all non-significant in predicting attitudes towards traumatic abortion and elective abortion.

Table 4

Odds Ratios for Traumatic and Elective Abortion		
	Traumatic Abortion	Elective Abortion
Non-theist	2.01**	1.90***
Female	0.83	1.04
Non-white	0.59**	0.74
Age	1.02**	1.01**
Edu. Attainment	1.17***	1.21***
Income	1.00*	1.00
Political Views	1.42***	1.58***
Raised Protestant	1.22	1.28
Raised Catholic	1.21	1.30
Midwest	1.06	0.97
West	2.15***	1.93***
Northeast	1.99*	1.69**
Year	0.97	0.98

Note: Hosmer-Lemeshow tests show appropriate goodness of fit

Traumatic Abortion Chi-squared = 201.19, pseudo R² = 0.239

Elective Abortion Chi-squared = 356.53, pseudo R² = 0.308

p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, * p ≤ 0.001*

Auxiliary Analyses

To strengthen the decision to combine those who are atheist and agnostic into the single category of Non-theist all hypotheses were tested comparing atheists and agnostics. In table five we can see that when looking at the means of the demographic variables atheists and agnostics are similar in most ways. Agnostics do consist of significantly more females and are significantly younger than atheists, but they are not significantly different on all other variables. When looking at the outputs of binary logistic regression when comparing atheists and agnostics on our dependent variables there are no significant differences to be found in the likelihood of supporting homosexuality, same-sex marriage, traumatic abortion, and elective abortion (see Appendix A).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Variables by Non-theism		
	Agnostics	Atheists
Female	36.40%	27.40% **
Non-white	12.00%	14.10%
Age (years)	40.92	44.52 **
Edu. Attainment (years)	14.93	14.6
Income (dollars)	61480.83	57999.24
Political Views (1-7)	4.82	4.87
Raised Protestant	42.60%	44.10%
Raised Catholic	28.30%	28.10%
Midwest	21.60%	24.50%
West	35.30%	32.90%
Northeast	20.50%	21.60%

Note: Atheist and Agnostic means compared for significance

** $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$*

As the data set used for analysis was pooled across several years auxiliary analyses were run to discover any potential significance between the years. The analyses reveal that there are no significant interactions between GSS years for any of the hypotheses (see Appendix B). Overall, the individual years were non-significant in analyses and no trend could be found to

indicate that as the number of the Non-religious grow there are increasing disparities between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers. Significant statistical analyses may have been prevented, however, due to small cell size.

Auxiliary analyses were performed on all measures of abortion available to see if the findings of the primary analyses of the traumatic and elective abortion were consistent for the variables that comprised the condensed indexes. As seen in table six, Non-theists are significantly more likely to support abortion for any reason and most listed forms of abortion than Non-religious Believers. The exception to this trend is abortion in the case of the mother's health for which there is no significant difference between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers. This may be due to the overwhelming support for abortion in the case of the mother's health for both Non-theists (98.2%) and Non-religious Believers (93.1%); whereas, Non-theists and Non-religious Believers differed by at least 10% on all other abortion measures. Just as in the primary analyses Non-theism is one of the strongest predictors of being in favor each abortion type and abortion for any reason. As with the primary analyses living in the West, educational attainment, and political views are consistent predictors of attitudes towards abortion. The effects of living in the Northeast, race, age, and income being variable predictors of abortion in their significance. Once again sex, raised religion, living in the Midwest, and GSS year has no significant effect on attitudes towards any of the abortion measures.

Table 6

Odds Ratios of Individual Measures of Abortion

	Traumatic Abortion			Elective Abortion			Any Reason
	Health of Mother	Defect in Fetus	Result of Rape	No More Children	Is Single	Is Poor	
Non-theist	2.02	2.27***	2.05*	1.71***	1.92***	1.90***	1.57**
Female	0.99	0.81	0.727	0.89	0.95	1.02	0.99
Non-white	0.633	0.62*	0.718	0.90	0.69*	0.95	0.71*
Age	1.013	1.03***	1.008	1.014**	1.02***	1.01**	1.01
Edu. Attainment	1.13*	1.11**	1.22***	1.16***	1.19***	1.19***	1.17**
Income	1.00*	1.00*	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Political Views	1.55***	1.33***	1.40***	1.48***	1.61***	1.58***	1.58**
Raised Protestant	1.05	1.10	1.31	1.22	1.21	1.22	1.23
Raised Catholic	1.25	1.29	1.04	1.19	1.07	1.14	1.05
Midwest	1.21	1.03	1.36	0.98	1.05	1.10	1.13
West	2.55*	2.94***	2.59***	1.95***	1.94***	1.91***	1.77**
Northeast	1.83	2.67**	1.79	1.57*	1.88**	1.63*	1.99**
Year	0.95	0.97	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.99	1.02

Note: Hosmer-Lemeshow tests show appropriate goodness of fit

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The studies concerning the non-religious have been limited in scope due to the perception that those who are non-religious are homogenous in their views. Very few studies have been performed attempting to discover intragroup differences within the non-religious category. Of the studies that have been performed the findings are mixed on what intragroup differences exist in the non-religious category, if any (Baker and Smith 2009; Frame 2017). This study adds to the argument that there is heterogeneity between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers beyond differences in god belief. Apart from having differing views on the existence of a god/higher power this study finds that there are significant differences between Non-theist and Non-religious Believers in terms of their attitudes towards homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion. Our results reveal that Non-theists are more likely to be in support of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, traumatic abortion, and elective abortion compared to Non-religious Believers, when holding all other variables constant. These results indicate that assuming homogeneity of the non-religious in their attitudes towards moral-political issues is a mistake.

This study adds to the burgeoning area of literature concerning the non-religious in the United States and the implications of this study are far reaching. One of the major implications of this study is that by finding significant attitudinal differences between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers the potential power of the Non-theist collective identity has been glimpsed. The Non-theist collective identity extends beyond the expected area of their non-belief into the areas of science idealization and support of human rights (Cimino and Smith 2014). While some explanatory factors behind the attitudinal differences between the Non-theists and Non-religious Believers may lay in who becomes non-theistic, the collective identity of Non-theists strengthen

the beliefs that are in support of human rights – particularly LGBT and women’s rights – as a part of the boundary maintenance work performed by those in the Non-theist community.

The origin of the human rights focused portion of the Non-theist collective identity may stem from two areas. One comes from Hout and Fischer’s theory that the rise in the non-religious was reactionary and responding to the rise and visibility of the Religious Right in the United States and that those who were liberal were leaving religious affiliation to separate themselves from the association conservatism was gaining with religion (2002; 2014). Along this line of thought, compared to Non-religious Believers, Non-theists may further separate themselves from religion and religious belief to disassociate themselves from that conservative ideology they see being espoused within religious groups. In turn, Non-theists build their collective identity opposed to religion, not only as stated non-believers, but in supporting values that they see religion and religious belief conflicting with, that is science and human rights. Some Non-theists openly state that their reason, or one of the reasons, behind leaving religion was moral conflicts with religious doctrine (LeDrew 2013; Vargas 2012; Zuckerman 2012). More research is needed to explore this possible explanation for the inclusion of human rights in the Non-theist collective identity. The second plausible reason for the human rights part of the Non-theist collective identity comes from the inclusion of secular humanism and humanist philosophy. Secular humanist ethics are ones that promote equality between all humans regardless of gender, race, or sexuality (Kurtz 1973) and many Non-theists used these humanist ethics to form their base of morality in lieu of a religious guide (Baker and Smith 2015; Cimino and Smith 2007; Jacoby 2004). By taking on the values of humanism into their collective identity Non-theists not only have a framework that their identity can build upon – just as the religious do in their holy texts – but they also partition their values from the influence of religion by using a secular source for

their morals. Non-religious Believers do not have a large singular source from which to draw upon for their values like Non-theists do with secular humanism.

The results of this study also have implications for the concepts of secularization and how we view the growth of the non-religious in the United States. Previous research has shown the non-religious to be one of the most liberal religious affiliations in the country (Hout and Fischer 2002; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Sherkat et al. 2011) and in this study we see that the Non-theists are significantly more liberal when it comes to homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion than Non-religious Believers. Research has also shown that the majority of non-religious persons are apostates from their childhood religion (Baker and Smith 2009b; Sherkat 2014). If these trends of increasing non-religiousness continue the United States may reach a tipping point in the number of non-religious persons which causing a culture shift in how the general population of the United States views being non-religious. Where once there was a negative view towards being non-religious, particularly non-theistic, this cultural shift would allow for non-religiousness to be an acceptable practice and position. Even considering the relatively low fertility rates of the non-religious compare to the religious (Hayford and Morgan 2008; Skirbekk, Kaufmann, and Goujon 2010), if people continue to leave religion – whether remaining believers or not – society will eventually accommodate them. It may be that the tipping point has already occurred or will soon, however, Pew data has shown that about 36% of Millennials, those born 1985 or after, are non-religious and with 16% of Millennials having no belief in a god/higher power (Lipka 2015a; Pew Research Center 2014). Millennials are also the most liberal generation (Fischer 2018) and their substantial number of non-religious persons lends some support to Hout and Fischer’s argument that non-religiousness is linked to liberal attitudes and a reaction against the Religion Right. However, in an attempt to stem the loss of

young participants traditional religious organizations will have to adjust to the changing political and social attitudes, in effect undergoing some form of organizational secularization and becoming worldlier. The increasingly secular culture may also bring about more intense forms of privatization, where religion is kept personally and inside the home.

In this cultural shift the effect on Non-theists will be different than it would be for Non-religious Believers. I predict three possible courses that this cultural shift will have for Non-theists. The first is that Non-theists will continue to be cultural outsiders due to their lack of a belief in a god/higher power. This will continue to enforce their collective identity and their attitudes will continue to be more liberal than Non-religious Believers and most other religious affiliations in their political and social attitudes. Second, Non-theists will be included in this cultural shift and the issues that are a part of their collective identity and the ideals to which they aspire to politically – both humanist values and secular values (i.e. the separation of Church and State) – will gain wider support. As the secular values are enforced in society a larger societal secularization will begin to occur within the United States. With the acceptance of Non-theists their numbers may see a growth as the stigma associated with non-belief lessens. Third, Non-theists will be included within the cultural shift and they will see their number begin to grow. However, just as the growth of the non-religious eventually led to difference between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers, Non-theists will begin to see greater division within their own category. This division may be between atheists and agnostics, between those who believe all religions/religious beliefs are negative (anti-theists) and those who believe a person can follow religion if they wish, or other groups yet to be defined properly by the current literature.

A cultural tipping point does not need to be reached to see that the Non-theist collective identity is having an effect within the United States. Part of the Non-theist collective identity is

support for the separation of Church and State. Non-theists groups, like the FFRF, have had legal success in strengthening the separation of Church and State by suing for the enforcement of the Establishment Clause in public spaces. Non-theists actively push for broad societal secularization in the United States both by encouraging the implementation of the secularity found within the law, by promoting their version of rational thought, and in the stimulation of scientific literacy within their communities. On the individual level, Non-theists having a collective identity that can be adopted and engaged with that supports LGBT and women's rights, may be attractive to people who have doubts about their religion or who have left their religion because of moral conflicts surrounding those issues. From this we may begin to see Non-theists become a greater percentage of the Non-religious population. Even for Non-religious Believers the Non-theist community may be an attractive group to partially participate in due to their organizations and collective identity supporting human rights, whereas, Non-religious Believers do not have those structures. In participating in Non-theist communities for the political structures Non-religious Believers give support for those organizations which would give those organizations greater influence in the larger society.

The important implications of this study extend beyond sociological theory and prediction to application for researchers; primarily how we treat the non-religious in surveys. The differences found here demonstrate the need for surveys that include a question on religious affiliation to not limit themselves to only offering 'no religion' or 'none' as the choice for non-religious. Instead surveys should offer additional options such as atheist and agnostic to capture Non-theists and Non-religious Believers separately. Another method that surveys could use would be to include a supplementary question to religious affiliation asking about belief in a god/higher power, as seen in this data set. This change should be seriously considered by

researchers going forward, especially those that wish to focus on religion, as if there are differences between Non-theists and Non-religious believers on homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion as seen here there are potentially differences in other areas. These differences may not only include other political and social attitudes, but also physical and mental health, deviancy, and other areas that have not yet been explored. Some research does already suggest that Non-religious Believers and Non-theists do differ on measures of mental and physical health (Hayward, Krause, et al. 2016).

Going forward researchers should also consider revising the way by which they chose their reference category for religion affiliation when performing statistical analyses. As mentioned previously, the non-religious have traditional been used as the reference category for religious affiliation when researchers perform statistical analyses which leads to most of the information we know about the attitudes of the non-religious being indirect knowledge (e.g. we know conservative protestants are less likely to be liberal than the non-religious, but not how much more likely the non-religious are to be liberal than conservative protestants.) This perspective limits our knowledge of the non-religious and may be one of the reasons why intragroup differences of the non-religious have not been explored by many researchers. In consistently using the non-religious as the reference group researchers have inadvertently masked their visibility in research outcomes as they are not seen in the result tables. With the growing numbers of non-religious in the United States and the results of this study revealing intragroup differences within the non-religious, efforts should be made to no longer obscure the non-religious by relegating them to the role of primary reference group.

Apart from the methodological notes previously mentioned, further research should take the intragroup differences of the non-religious seriously and explore the potential reasons behind

these differences. The literature indicates several possible paths that should be explored, and I shall outline three. First, the Non-theist collective identity should be further explored and its impact on Non-theists analyzed. Previous research on the Non-theist collective identity has been mostly performed using interviews from small samples of the Non-theist population – those who attend Secular conferences (see LeDrew 2013; Smith 2013) and those who attend a local Non-theist meeting (see Guenther, Mulligan, and Papp 2013; Liddell and Stedman 2011). The large and active population of online Non-theists have been mostly ignored by researchers, while what limited quantitative work on Non-theists to date focused on attitudinal variations. This work has also limited its reach to atheists or has applied their findings to only atheists, ignoring the broader Non-theist community; agnostics in particular are ignored and, as shown here, they appear not to be statistically different in many ways from atheists, including in their attitudes towards homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion. A more in-depth examination of Non-theists is needed to fully understand their collective identity and how the presence of this collect identity may affect the attitudes of Non-theists. It may be that the differences found in this study are not because of the Non-theist collective identity but another factor, possibly including their non-belief in a god/higher power.

Second, researchers should examine further differences between Non-theists and the Non-religious Believers. As touched upon above, there may be other differences between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers beyond the ones found here. These differences may be only in other social and political attitudes or they may extend to other realms as well. As the Non-theists have a collective identity they may experience similar protective effects in mental health from this shared identity just as the religious. Some research already suggests that the negative effects of having “no religion” do not extend to Non-theists (Galen 2015; Jong et al. 2016). Just

as there has been little intragroup analysis between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers when comes to social attitudes, there is a lack comparing them on mental and physical health as well (Hwang, Hammer, and Cragun 2009). Future studies should explore divergent pathways among those who have disaffiliated. In particular, what led some apostates to retain their belief in a god/higher power while shedding their religious identity, whereas, others have become non-believers as well? There is research into why Non-theists become non-theistic but there is limited research on the differing pathways of Non-theists and Non-religious Believers. There is also a need to explore the possible existence of any Non-religious Believer collective identity and, if one does exist, how is compared to the Non-theist collective identity. Further research should also consider how Non-religious Believers and Non-theists compare to other religious affiliations, for example Mainline Protestant and Jewish, in attitudinal variation.

Finally, the social networks of both the Non-theists and the Non-religious Believers should be compared to provide a possible alternate explanation for the differences found between the two groups on these issues. It may be that the differences we find between Non-theists and Non-religious Believers in this study are not due to, or not only due to, the collective identity of Non-theists. Instead attribution of these differences may be given to the social network differences between the two groups. There is limited research on the social networks of the non-religious, however, research does suggest that Americans do segregate themselves by religiosity (DiPrete et al. 2011) and that Non-theists do seek out relationships with fellow Non-theists to mitigate the effect of their stigmatized identities (Mann 2015). In this study we can see that there are more Non-theists in the West and Northeast, regions that have large socially liberal populations and are more diverse than other regions of the United States. Previous research has partially controlled for social network differences between the two groups and found the overall

effect of non-religious affiliation persisted (Frame 2017); however, the control measures of social networks were not very broad, consisting of only two measures.

Just the previous research into the intragroup differences of the non-religious had their limitations this study does as well. Though the theory of this study relies on the Non-theist collective identity due to survey limitations the identity of participants as Non-theists is assumed. While people may not hold a god belief they do not have to identify as atheist, agnostic, etc. or actively participate in the Non-theist identity boundary maintenance. Our findings do find significant differences despite this limitation indicating that either there is more behind the differences than just Non-theist collective identity or that the Non-theist collective identity extends to non-believers to do not explicitly identify as atheist or agnostic. Again, this emphasizes the need for a more diverse selection of non-religious affiliation in future surveys. Another limitation of this study is limited number of non-religious included. While pooling that data has expanded the number of participants to a healthy amount for analyses their numbers remain lower than most research done on the religious. Furthermore, the small cell sizes of our dependent measures have limited the statistical models that could be used, and a larger sample size of non-religious participants would be advisable for future research. A final limitation is a limitation of the number of questions asked about LGBT and women's rights. The questions about homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion only cover a small range of LGBT and women's rights issues. This limitation is due to the module style of the GSS which means that not all questions that may be relevant to LGBT and women's rights are asked consistently between years.

In conclusion, this study does find that there are significant differences within the non-religious category on the issues concerning LGBT and women's rights. Non-theists are

significantly more likely to support homosexuality and same-sex marriage and be in complete support of both traumatic abortion and elective abortion when compared to Non-religious Believers. These significant differences may be attributed to the Non-theist collective identity an aspect of which is support for human rights, in particular, LGBT and women's rights. The results of this study emphasize the need for surveys to include the additional options of atheist and agnostic on measures of religious affiliation so that the intragroup differences of the non-religious may be further, and more easily, explored. This study adds to the growing literature concerning the non-religious and reveals that when studying this rising population that researchers must be aware of the potential differences that exist between the Non-theists and the Non-religious Believers that comprise the overall non-religious population.

APPENDIX A

Odds Ratios for Comparison of Atheists and Agnostics

	Homosexuality ⁰	Same-sex Marriage ⁱ	Traumatic Abortion ⁰	Elective Abortion ⁱ
Atheist	1.21	0.95	2.29	0.78
Female	4.92***	2.16	0.73*	1.37
Non-white	0.24***	0.69	0.17***	0.35**
Age	0.98**	0.98*	1.04*	1.02**
Edu. Attainment	1.16**	0.98	1.13	1.09
Income	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00*
Political Views	1.49***	2.15***	1.49*	1.50***
Raised Protestant	1.11	2.15	1.44	1.21
Raised Catholic	1.29	3.52**	1.13	1.07
Midwest	0.97	0.85	0.56	1.25
West	0.86	2.14	2.66	2.70**
Northeast	0.73	0.85	1.64	2.33
Year	1.12***	1.09	0.92	1.02

Note: ⁰Hosmer-Lemeshow test shows appropriate goodness of fit

ⁱHosmer-Lemeshow test shows inappropriate goodness of fit

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

APPENDIX B

Odds Ratios by GSS Year for the Effect of Non-theism

	Homosexuality	Same-sex Marriage	Traumatic Abortion	Elective Abortion
2006	2.67**	2.23	2.63	1.49
2008	0.665	1.77	4.92	2.66*
2010	1.02	2.24	1.42	1.00
2012	2.64*	2.95*	3.39	3.50**
2014	2.31*	1.12	0.99	1.77
2016	1.88	1.56	2.79*	2.81***

Note: Hosmer-Lemeshow tests show goodness of fit

** $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$*

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