

# Chapter 8

## The Global Variation of Non-religious Worldviews



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**Abstract** This chapter explores the worldviews and values from a pooled data of non-religious young adults undergoing higher education from 12 countries. From an initial pool of 559, 75 respondents were chosen based on screening questions on religious identity and belonging. The exploration of worldview prototypes is done through utilizing Faith Q-Sort. The emerging worldview prototypes are interpreted further with the survey data, most importantly the ratings of different types of motivational values. The values survey is based on the Portrait Values Questionnaire. The findings of this study indicate that there are several non-religious outlooks that can accommodate openness towards religion or spirituality. Their only common ground is that they do not consistently reject all aspects of religion. The values of the non-religious respondents were in line with previous studies with self-direction values, but diverged by placing high value on benevolence. Interesting differences between the value profiles of the different non-religious outlook types were discovered, pointing to the relevance of taking into account the outlook variety internal to non-religion.

**Keywords** University students · Non-religion · Irreligion · Atheism · Secularity · Worldviews · Values · Schwartz · Q-method · Faith Q-Sort · PVQ

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## 8.1 Introduction

The tendency to approach non-religion as a residual category, after the main world-religion options have been exhausted, is increasingly being replaced by more nuanced investigations into the internal variation of non-religion. Campbell (1971) found in his pioneering sociological study that a pure type of irreligion, where all religions and all their components are rejected, is rare. Furthermore, irreligion is expressed in a range of ways along a social continuum, where individual and private represent one end of the spectrum and the well-organized associations the other. Hunsberger and Altemeyer's (2006) study on organized atheism in the US and Canada found their affiliated atheist respondents to resemble religious fundamentalists in dogmatism, exhibiting a strong "Us versus Them" ethnocentrism, whereas their willingness to proselytize ranged from moderate to low. Some studies have focused on the demographics of non-religion (Keysar & Kosmin, 2007; Keysar & Navarro-Rivera, 2013; Taira, 2014; see Zuckerman, 2010a, b for several chapters on the demographics of non-religion in various contexts), whereas others have investigated the qualitative differentiation within non-religion, resulting in promising yet tentative typologies (Manning, 2010; Schnell & Keenan, 2011; Cotter, 2015; Beyer, 2015; Lee, 2012, 2015; LeDrew, 2016; Kontala, 2016). A recent effort of a nuanced typology is found in a report by the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2018a). Using cluster analysis, three types of highly religious, two types of somewhat religious and two types of non-religious outlooks are distinguished.

Millennials have been found to side with science and free inquiry (Sherkat, 2014), contrasted with distancing themselves from the religious right (Hout & Fischer, 2002) and rejecting religious authority, including institutions, even though not necessarily religion as a whole (Kosmin & Keysar, 2009). More generally, previous studies have found non-religion to correlate negatively with age (Uecker et al., 2007; Arnett, 2004; Voas & Crockett, 2005; Koenig, 2015; Niemelä, 2015) and positively with education (see Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Feigelman et al., 1992, Keysar & Kosmin, 2007; Keysar, 2017; Phillips, 2009; Bainbridge, 2009; Argyle, 2000 for individual differences; and Braun, 2012; Azarvan, 2013; Keysar & Navarro-Rivera, 2013 for international differences). The respondents in this study are not only young university students; a segment we would expect to score high on secularity based on previous studies. We have chosen to focus on the most non-religious respondents in our sample; those who self-identify as the least religious in the survey.

Previous studies have mostly focused on Western samples. As stated in a recent summary of the academic research on non-religion: "Most of the data summarized in this book pertain to the United States and Western Europe" (Zuckerman et al., 2016, p. 36). The present chapter assesses the variety of non-religion in a global sample of 12 countries, thereby contributing to these investigations by using a cross-cultural sample, and taking the variety within non-religion seriously.

Our sampling criteria direct attention towards those individuals whose self-identification indicate a rejection of religion that transcends religious authority. As

such, we can expect the sample to give relevant insights into the variety of non-religious outlooks held by educated millennials. We expect to find dispositions that signify differentiation from religion in various ways. This can mean rejection of religious practices, belonging, or beliefs, but also openness towards some aspects of religion.

We focus on university students participating in the international research project Young Adults and Religion in a Global Perspective (YARG), who in the survey preceding the interviews opted for a non-religious identification and lack of belonging to a religious group, community, or tradition (see Appendix 3 for the full survey). To explore variations of non-religion in the data, the chapter presents an analysis of these non-religious participants ( $n = 75$ ). For this we use Faith Q-Sort (FQS), a Q-methodological application for assessing the subjective outlook domain, developed by David Wulff (2019) (for more on FQS see Chap. 1 and 3 in this volume). As a second aim, the emerging non-religious prototypes found in the data are analyzed as value profiles. We use the revised version of Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz et al., 2012) to examine whether the various non-religious outlooks are indicative of differences in value priorities (for more on the PVQ, see Chap. 11 in this volume).

Before presenting the results of the FQS analysis, we turn to analysis of non-religious identification in the survey sample<sup>1</sup> ( $n = 4964$ ) to examine how common non-religious identification amongst university students in the respective case studies is. We also examine to which extent non-religious identification is related to gender and financial background.

## 8.2 Non-religious Identification in the Survey

Response options to the survey question about religious identification, “*Regardless of whether you consider yourself as belonging or close to a particular religious group, community, or tradition, how religious would you say you are?*”, ranged from zero (“not at all religious”), to ten (“very religious”). We begin by presenting the percentage of respondents who have estimated their religiosity as a zero on a zero-to-ten scale, i.e. opted for the most non-religious self-identification. The means of self-assessed religiosity reported for each case study (Table 8.1) suggest great variation between the case studies.<sup>2</sup> 40% of the Swedish and 28% of the Canadian, but only 1% of the Ghanaian respondents opted for the non-religious response alternative. The mean value for each case study provides an optional way of looking at the distributions between non-religious and religious identifications in the data. The way in which the case studies differ by and large remains the same. Taken

<sup>1</sup>Survey includes Japan, which did not participate in the follow-up phase.

<sup>2</sup>The differences in proportion of non-religious respondents between case studies were analyzed by Pearson chi-square: 300.395 ( $P < .001$ ,  $df = 12$ ). Differences between means of self-assessed religiosity in the respective case studies were tested with ANOVA: 69.599 ( $P = .001$ ,  $df = 12$ ).

**Table 8.1** The distribution between non-religious and other respondents per case study; percent; and mean of self-assessed religiosity on a 0–10 scale by case study

Country	Non-religious survey respondents (response = 0)	%	Others, survey respondents	Total	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Sweden	40		60	100	2.04	2.56	328
Canada	28		72	100	2.73	2.75	410
Russia	23		77	100	2.79	2.47	343
Finland	20		80	100	3.54	3.23	484
US	18		82	100	3.37	2.77	304
Israel	15		85	100	4.20	2.88	761
China	14		86	100	3.63	2.59	325
Peru	13		87	100	3.95	2.81	321
Japan	10		90	100	4.15	2.61	324
Poland	10		90	100	4.51	2.75	299
Turkey	8		92	100	4.33	2.52	347
India	8		92	100	4.54	2.62	298
Ghana	1		99	100	6.78	2.25	420
Total	16		84	100	3.93	2.93	4964

**Table 8.2** Distributions of “not at all religious” (“0”) and other respondents (1–10) per gender in percent and mean of self-assessed religiosity on a 0–10 scale by case study

Gender	Non-religious survey respondents	Others, survey respondents	Total	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>
Male	18.8	81.2	100	3.76	1974
Female	14.5	85.5	100	4.05	2965
Other	12.0	88.0	100	3.28	25
Total	16.2	83.8	100	3.93	4964

together, the total mean for religious self-identification in the survey data suggests a weak tendency towards non-religious identification.

Are there, then, any notable differences in the gender (for more on gender differences see Chaps. 3 and 9 in this volume) distribution of the non-religious respondents ( $n = 803$ )? One of the universally recurring findings in previous research is the positive correlation between religiosity and being female, non-religiosity being predominantly a male phenomenon (Furseth, 2010; Mahlamäki, 2012; Zuckerman et al., 2016; Pew Research Center 2016). Table 8.2 suggests that male respondents identify as non-religious to a somewhat higher extent than female respondents, which is confirmed by a chi-square analysis and the analysis of the means for each gender.<sup>3</sup>

Next, we look into the differences in how they describe their family background compared to other respondents ( $n = 4191$ ). We start with financial background.

<sup>3</sup>The differences in proportion of non-religious respondents by gender was analyzed by Pearson chi-square: 16.334 ( $P < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). Differences of means in religiosity by gender was analyzed through a t-test:  $t = -3.420$  ( $P = .001$ ,  $df = 4937$ ). Due to small  $n$ , the gender category “other” was omitted from the analysis.

**Table 8.3** “In considering your family’s monthly income relative to the average in your country, is it...”. Distributions of non-religious respondents (0) and others (1–10), percent

Family’s monthly income relative to average in the country	Non-religious survey respondents	Others, survey respondents	Total
Much lower than the average	9.8	11.3	11.1
Somewhat lower than the average	13.7	15.8	15.5
About the average	31.0	31.6	31.5
Somewhat higher than the average	30.1	27.1	27.6
Much higher than the average	10.6	6.9	7.5
I don’t know	4.7	7.3	6.9
Total	100 ( <i>n</i> = 803)	100 ( <i>n</i> = 4161)	100 ( <i>n</i> = 4964)

Internationally, countries with high percentages of nonbelievers and those who place less importance on religion tend to be amongst the wealthier ones, despite anomalies such as Vietnam and the US<sup>4</sup> (Zuckerman, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2015, 2018b). According to a study by Pew (Pew Research Center, 2009), middle class income indicates less importance placed on religion than low income. Our analysis is in line with these findings, suggesting that the non-religious tend to describe their family’s monthly income in a somewhat more positive manner than other respondents<sup>5</sup> (Table 8.3).

How the non-religious respondents describe the role of religion in their childhood family is markedly different in comparison to the others.<sup>6</sup> The mean on a 0–10 scale for the non-religious respondents is considerably lower ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 2.61$ ) than for the other respondents ( $M = 5.51$ ,  $SD = 2.73$ ).<sup>7</sup> 37% of the non-religious describe their home as “not at all religious” (0), while the corresponding proportion amongst the others is merely 4%. Consequently, there is a strong correlation between religious identification and description of childhood home religiosity.<sup>8</sup>

We proceed by looking at the value profiles of the non-religious respondents, the purpose being to explore whether the values of the non-religious respondents differ from the others. Previous studies have shown that secularity indicates an increased value placed on self-direction, hedonism, stimulation, and achievement, whereas increased religiosity is indicative of conformity, tradition, security, and benevolence (Farias & Lalljee, 2008; Pepper et al., 2010; Roccas, 2005; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995; Saroglou et al., 2004). As shown in Table 8.4, the non-religious respondents

<sup>4</sup>The US is high on national wealth and God-belief, whereas the pattern is reversed for Vietnam.

<sup>5</sup>Differences in descriptions of family income by religious identification was analyzed by Pearson chi-square: 16.980 ( $P = .002$ ,  $df = 4$ ). Those who answered “I don’t know” on family income were excluded.

<sup>6</sup>The question was worded “How religious would you say the family you grew up in was?”.

<sup>7</sup>Differences in the assessment of religiosity in one’s childhood home were tested through a t-test:  $t = -30.593$  ( $P < .001$ ;  $df = 4962$ ).

<sup>8</sup>A bivariate Pearson correlation was used to analyze associations between religious identification and descriptions of the religiosity of one’s home:  $.611$  ( $P < .001$ ).

( $n = 803$ ) do not radically differ from the others ( $n = 4161$ ). As expected, the non-religious respondents score higher than others in the two self-direction values, and lower in tradition. The results do not conform to previous studies with benevolence that is usually associated with increased religiosity, by being scored high by both groups. Previous studies have not explored varieties of non-religious outlooks in particular. In this study, we may therefore find a lack of association between outlooks and value priorities, but we may also find that particular outlooks are coupled with particular value orientations.

These findings suggest that compared to others, the non-religious respondents are more likely to be males and to have a non-religious family background. Non-religious self-identification is not evenly distributed over the case studies. While a non-religious position is fairly common in Sweden, Canada and Russia, it is quite unusual in Ghana. Non-religious self-identification conforms to expectations regarding high value placed on self-direction and low on tradition, whereas high value on benevolence is not what we would expect to find amongst non-religious respondents.

We conclude this phase by exploring whether the non-religious respondents, who participated in the follow-up phase consisting of FQS and interviews, differ in any significant ways from the larger sample of non-religious participants who responded to the survey. Some case studies are highly represented in the non-religious sample analyzed here, whereas others have no representation at all. While Sweden, Israel,<sup>9</sup> Canada and Finland make up more than half of the sample of non-religious respondents, none of the Ghanaian FQS participants self-identified as non-religious.<sup>10</sup> When discrepancies between survey respondents ( $n = 769$ ) and non-religious FQS participants ( $n = 75$ ) do occur, they are partly due to the selection criteria for the FQS participants. In the selection of participants, survey data was used to maximize the variation of outlooks in the FQS sample regarding value profiles, gender, demographic factors, religious affiliations or their absence, family religiosity, experiences of discrimination, social cohesion and connectivity, and attitudes with same sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia. The similarities between the samples outweigh the differences. Analyses of differences in gender distribution, descriptions of family income or descriptions of religiosity in one's family between the sample of non-religious FQS participants ( $n = 75$ ) and the non-religious survey respondents ( $n = 802$ ) found no significant differences between the samples, providing further support for the similarity of the two samples.

Next, we turn our attention to the variety of non-religious outlooks found amongst the non-religious respondents who engaged with FQS.

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<sup>9</sup>As a supplementary note to the table, it should be noted that non-religiosity is not evenly distributed between the subgroups in the Israeli case study. Whereas Israeli Jews are inclined to self-identify as non-religious to a rather high degree, Israeli Arabs are not.

<sup>10</sup>In the Ghanaian group of FQS participants, there were no values below '2' on the 0–10 scale of religious identification. Japan is not included in the table, since Japanese participation was delimited to the survey.

**Table 8.4** Pairwise comparisons between religious and non-religious respondents' values using Welch's t-test

Value	Religious ( <i>n</i> = 4161)		Non-religious ( <i>n</i> = 803)		t-value (df)	<i>P</i>	Effect size	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
Achievement	0.22	0.71	0.26	0.84	-1.31 (1034.4)	.19	-0.08	-0.04
Benevolence-caring	0.63	0.66	0.77	0.72	-5.33 (1080.4)	< .001*	-0.33	-0.16
Benevolence-dependability	0.64	0.70	0.88	0.69	-8.88 (1143)	< .001*	-0.53	-0.25
Conformity-interpersonal	-0.21	0.98	-0.48	1.10	6.36 (1061)	< .001*	0.39	0.19
Conformity-rules	-0.42	1.00	-0.56	1.14	3.32 (1057.4)	< .001*	0.20	0.10
Face	0.03	0.87	-0.12	1.01	4.07 (1039.5)	< .001*	0.25	0.13
Hedonism	0.26	0.82	0.48	0.84	-6.88 (1112.9)	< .001*	-0.41	-0.20
Humility	-0.26	0.86	-0.33	0.93	1.90 (1087.1)	.06	0.12	0.06
Power-dominance	-1.41	1.11	-1.43	1.14	0.33 (1111.2)	.74	0.02	0.01
Power-resources	-1.16	1.13	-1.23	1.19	1.61 (1097.4)	.11	0.10	0.05
Self-direction-actions	0.55	0.73	0.95	0.74	-13.99 (1123.5)	< .001*	-0.84	-0.39
Self-direction-thoughts	0.49	0.74	0.89	0.78	-13.20 (1096.8)	< .001*	-0.80	-0.37
Security-personal	0.30	0.66	0.24	0.74	2.17 (1066.5)	.03*	0.13	0.07
Security-societal	0.36	0.81	0.35	0.95	0.20 (1039.2)	.84	0.01	0.01
Stimulation	-0.06	0.89	-0.01	0.98	-1.29 (1070.9)	.20	-0.08	-0.04
Tradition	-0.68	1.12	-1.88	1.03	29.81 (1194)	< .001*	1.73	0.65
Universalism-concern	0.54	0.78	0.69	0.94	-4.12 (1022.8)	< .001*	-0.26	-0.13
Universalism-nature	-0.23	1.01	-0.08	1.09	-3.43 (1083.8)	< .001*	-0.21	-0.10
Universalism-tolerance	0.42	0.82	0.63	0.88	-6.34 (1084.5)	< .001*	-0.39	-0.19

*Note.* Degrees of freedom for t-tests reported in brackets. A positive effect size indicates that religious respondents gave higher importance to a value than non-religious respondents, whereas a negative effect size indicates the opposite

### 8.3 FQS Analysis

In this section, we turn to the outlook types amongst the non-religious FQS participants. The analysis explores outlook variety regarding attitudes towards religious or spiritual beliefs, practices, traditions, and institutions. Moreover, the instrument enables us to see how other worldview dimensions, such as emotional postures and social orientations interact with the more specifically non-religious/religious/non-spiritual/spiritual dimension.

One of the main goals of YARG is to map ‘religious subjectivities’. As the term ‘religious subjectivities’ goes against respondent self-identification, we use the terms ‘outlook’ and ‘worldview’ when we refer to the subjectivities of our respondents (Kontala, 2016). As an English version of the originally German term *Weltanschauung*, ‘worldview’ has been used for ideologies, individual outlooks, explicit philosophies and implicit structures (Naugle, 2002; Nilsson, 2013; Kontala, 2016). ‘Outlook’ and ‘worldview’ can be understood as ‘parent categories’ that can accommodate religious, non-religious, spiritual, secular and other kinds of subjectivities. The emerging preferences that are shared at an interpersonal level are called worldview prototypes, or just prototypes.

In a previous Q-methodological study on non-religious group-affiliates, Kontala (2016) found three non-religious worldview prototypes characterized by distinct combinations of instantiation along three dimensions: a religion and spiritual rejecting dimension, a social and societal dimension, and an experiential dimension. Other studies (Pasquale, 2010; Schnell & Keenan, 2011; Cotter, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2018b) have pointed to similar differentiations. Tentatively, we expect to find a range of non-religious outlooks. Based on previous studies, a central differentiating feature may be the disposition towards religion and spirituality.

Using PQMethod by Peter Schmolck (2014), we followed the standard YARG procedure for FQS. The analysis yielded five prototypes. The largest prototype was associated with 13 defining respondents, the second largest with six, the third with three, and the remaining two prototypes with two defining respondents. Combined, these five prototypes explain 53% of the total variance.

The first step in the analysis was to assess the common ground for all prototypes. Two consensus statements were disagreed by all prototypes, as they were placed at the negative end of the board: “Observes with great care prescribed religious practices and laws” [FQS067] and “Has sensed the presence or influence of specific spirits, demons or patron saints” [FQS068]. Furthermore, the following two statements were agreeable for all prototypes: “Actively works towards making the world a better place to live” [FQS051] and “Supports individual freedom of choice in matters of faith and morality” [FQS100].

Clearly, the common ground is narrow. Individual freedom of choice and actively working for a better world are important, whereas religious practices and laws are not. Neither have any of the prototypes sensed the presence of spirits, demons or patron saints. In a similar study focusing on non-religious group-affiliates, the common ground included nine consensus statements that held internal salience for all



prototypes (Kontala, 2016). It is possible that the reason for the stronger internal salience relates to the sampling strategy, where non-religious affiliation resulted in more homogeneity. In any case, the non-religious FQS respondents can hardly be characterized as a group, and variation between the prototypes is likely to emerge.

Let us conclude this phase by observing a surprising feature. Contrary to what one might assume amongst the non-religious, the statement “Believes in a divine being with whom one can have a personal relationship” [FQS053] is not strongly rejected by any prototype. Four prototypes see the statement as neutral or ambivalent, and prototype 2 sees it as most agreeable. This suggests that the prototypes display variation in terms of their beliefs.

We proceed to look at the variety of worldviews associated with a non-religious identification.

### 8.3.1 *Prototype 1: Activist Humanist*

Awareness cannot be explained, it’s a feeling and uh, my feeling and thoughts are as strong as a believer’s, but in the opposite way. [...] My faith in the non-existence of God is absolute. (YCASH344)

The individuals who define Prototype 1 are predominantly from Canada (Canada:  $n = 5$ ; Israel:  $n = 1$ ). Out of the six defining individuals, four are female and two are male.

Persons of this prototype report having undergone a change in their worldview. They reject religious authorities, restrictions, practices, and ideas. For them, religious revelation is metaphoric and outdated, religion itself being a product of human fears and desires. They also reject religious ideas that are in conflict with science or rationality. Despite lacking spiritual or mystical experiences, they feel moved by sacred places. Critical of the religion of their own people, and religion’s role in the ruling of the nation, they are positively engaged by the religious traditions of others. In general, they feel a sense of peace even in the face of difficulties. Socially, they are touched by the suffering of others and want to work towards making the world a better place. Their outlook includes a desire to change societal structures and values. Supporting individual freedom of choice, they believe in human progress on a worldwide scale.

The Activist Humanists stand out from the other prototypes with two items. More strongly than others, they reject the idea of reincarnation, and the idea of battling with inner impulses experienced as evil. We label this prototype Activist Humanist to distinguish it from another humanist prototype, the Religion Rejecting Humanist (Non-religious 4). These two prototypes are otherwise quite similar, but Non-religious 1 ranks the two items related to secular activism higher than Non-religious 4. As we will see, there is quite some difference between this and the next prototype.

### 8.3.2 *Prototype 2: Spiritual Pluralist*

I can't deny the existence of God and I can't say that I don't care. [...] I can't say that I'm a religious spiritual person, eh, because I could be and I don't know. That is, I think that I am still in a learning process and, although I have reached a point where I can feel something safe to have certain bases, it doesn't mean that I am stuck there and that I am going to die like this. [...] Many times, when they ask me: "Are you a Christian or do you believe in God?" [...] I share my experience, I don't end up answering "yes" or "no" or "maybe", I simply share what I have lived and there it is. (YPESC030)

The three individuals defining Prototype 2 are from Israel ( $n = 1$ ) and Peru ( $n = 2$ ). All are male.

Persons of this prototype have experienced a profound change in their outlook. They are similar to the previous prototype in this respect, otherwise the prototypes differ, as this prototype places importance on the divine. Their conception of divinity accommodates both personal and impersonal features. They describe their spiritual life in terms of mystical experience rather than in terms of religious doctrine. Meaningful spiritual experiences include moments of profound illumination, sensing a divine or universal luminous element within, and being moved and deeply sustained by music, art, or poetry. They report spending time reading or talking about their convictions, and strive to safeguard their purity.

Persons of this prototype seem to self-identify as spiritual but not religious,<sup>11</sup> and have a pluralistic approach to religion. While lacking loyalty to or interest in a particular national or familial religious tradition, there is appreciation of many traditions as pointers to a common truth. These preferences are combined with commitment to following a spiritual path that is in harmony with the environment.

Likeminded association and personal self-realization are important for them. Moreover, they feel touched by the suffering of others and actively work towards making the world a better place to live. Due to their openness to spirituality and interest in religion without being limited to one tradition, we call this prototype Spiritual Pluralist.

Based on the prototype descriptions alone, we might not guess that Spiritual Pluralists self-identify as non-religious, and lack religious affiliation. They primarily distance themselves from organized religion that is the national norm, which is the likely explanation behind their survey responses.

This prototype is an outlier in this study, as they differ from all other prototypes by ranking 21 statements either higher or lower than the other prototypes. The previous prototype has only two such statements. The combined message of such distinctions is this: Spiritual Pluralists value meaningful experiences that are expressed with references to spiritual dimensions, they express openness to the divine, and identify themselves as spiritual. They are not committed to one religion, but see value and truth in the plurality of religious traditions.

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<sup>11</sup> Item sorting does not contradict the non-religious survey identity, but adds a spiritual component to it.

### 8.3.3 *Prototype 3: Non-committed Conservative*

You are a Muslim, that is how our God created you, and – it does not have to be – that you are in a religious group [...]. Your convictions or everything do not have to be all the time around religion. (YILSK143)

The two individuals who define this prototype are from Israel and Poland: one is male and one is female.

This outlook shares much of the humanistic orientation of the Activist Humanists. The important difference between Non-religious 1 and Non-religious 3 is in how they view societal structures. While Activist Humanists expressed a desire to change societal values and structures, this is not the case with Non-religious 3. Instead, this prototype appreciates institutions and traditions. Valuing the religion of their nation, family and ancestors, persons of this prototype give substantial amounts of time or money to some religious organization or worthy cause. Such indicators point to a conservative outlook, further supported by their view that men and women are by nature intended for different roles.

Following dietary practices and having their sexuality guided by a religious or spiritual outlook, persons of this outlook view religion as a central means for becoming a better person. They believe in some way, describe “the ultimate” as a life force or creative energy, and their religious own outlook as vague and shifting. Despite the strands that indicate presence of religion and belief, religion is also described as a remote factor that does not involve investment of time and engagement. The prototype seems to hold an in-between position, approving of traditional gender roles as well as religious traditions and institutions, yet without engagement in a religious community. Reluctant to reject religion, they do not embrace it either. Emotionally, they appreciate the atmosphere of the sacred places, and face the prospect of death with courage and calmness.

Due to valuing traditions and institutions, we call this prototype Non-committed Conservative. It embodies another way to combine non-religiosity with openness towards religion or spirituality.

### 8.3.4 *Prototype 4: Religion Rejecting Humanist*

I have previously heard it said that [...] if a person is able to find a sense of consolation from faith, then that is something that makes it all worthwhile to retain your faith. But like, in the case of myself, I just do not experience it like that [...] instead, I just choose to think of myself as a separate entity in my own right as a person. I know that this type of a view may come off as a very depressing one to others, but I just feel like that type of consolation is not there for me. (YSEJK002)

The 13 individuals who define this prototype mostly come from Northern Europe: Sweden ( $n = 5$ ), Finland ( $n = 3$ ), Poland ( $n = 2$ ), and Russia ( $n = 1$ ). Participants from Peru ( $n = 1$ ) and China ( $n = 1$ ) are also represented. The prototype is predominantly female ( $n = 8$ ; male:  $n = 5$ ).

Persons of this prototype believe that one can be deeply moral without being religious and support individual freedom of choice in matters of faith and conscience. Seeing personal self-realization as a primary spiritual goal in life and believing that human progress is possible on a worldwide scale, they embrace an outlook that actively seeks to change societal structures and values. Profoundly touched by the suffering of others, they actively work towards making the world a better place to live. The orientation of this prototype can therefore be characterized as secular humanist.

Their humanism is combined with mainly associating with the likeminded, and consistently rejecting religion. Religious doctrines, practices, institutions, exemplary figures, and theistic beliefs are all rejected.<sup>12</sup> Instead of religion, sustenance is found from music, art or poetry. In terms of outlook and emotional disposition, the prototype is characterized by a sense of guilt, combined with lack of direction, purpose, or goal. Seeing this world as a place of suffering and sorrow, the prototype sees no higher purpose or ultimate destiny for the human species.

While this prototype shares its humanistic traits with the Activist Humanists, it differs by rejecting religion and spirituality more consistently, expressing feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and lacking a clear goal in life. In line with the main feature of this prototype which at the same time distinguishes this prototype from prototype 1, prototype 4 is named Religious Rejecting Humanist.

### 8.3.5 *Prototype 5: Quasi-Spiritual*

I'm not a religious person, like I don't believe in God, I don't believe in – specific higher power, but I do believe in like [...] karma, so like, if you're, um, a bad person, like you'll get your karma. [...] I don't know if I believe in like an afterlife, I'm not sure. I believe something happens to you when you die but I don't know what [...] there's no proof so that also, is a struggle, but I believe if you're a good person, then good things happen to you [...] that's [...] my spirituality [...], things like that, it's karma and stuff like that. That's what I believe in. (YUSTP036)

Two individuals define Prototype 5. One is male and one is female, and they come from Turkey and USA.

Persons of this prototype share much of the humanist, religion rejecting tendencies of Non-religious 1 and Non-religious 4, but are open to some aspects of belief and faith. Viewing religious faith as a never-ending quest, they seek to intensify their experience of the divine. They claim personal self-realization to be a primary spiritual goal in their lives. They have used methods of attaining altered states of consciousness, and experienced moments of profound illumination. Valuing their purity, they strive to safeguard it. Furthermore, they see a higher purpose for the

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<sup>12</sup>FQS055, FQS070, FQS060, FQS087, FQS031, FQS032, FQS071, FQS092, FQS036, FQS046, FQS066, FQS097, FQS074, FQS067, FQS079, FQS099, FQS001, FQS049, FQS041, FQS016, FQS059, FQS038, FQS020, FQS098, FQS015, FQS101, FQS024, FQS018

human species, and primarily express their religion in charitable acts or social action. Persons of this outlook also feel moved by the atmosphere of sacred or venerated places. Hence, there are indications of openness to religious experience and belief. Their response pattern indicates a sense of personal agency, and interest in tangible results.

A distinguishing feature of the societal orientation of this prototype is taking comfort in thinking that those who do not live righteously will face suffering or punishment. Combined with the lowest score of all prototypes in being touched by the suffering of others, the Quasi-spiritual seem to have a heightened sense of judgement towards others.

The emerging outlook of this prototype could be summarized as follows. It shares the main secular humanistic and religion rejecting tendencies with Non-religious 1 and Non-religious 4. Its general rejection of religion is combined with openness to quasi-spiritual tendencies, where the primary ingredient is personal agency. For this reason, we name this prototype Quasi-spiritual.

### **8.3.6 Summary of Prototypes**

Since the first pilot study of David Wulff, a recurring feature in FQS studies has been the stability of a secular humanist orientation, often coupled with religion rejecting tendencies (Wulff, 2019). In a sample of respondents who describe themselves as non-religious, we might expect to see secular humanism coupled with alienation from religion. Three of the prototypes fit into this pattern. These are the prototypes Non-religious 1 (Activist Humanist), Non-religious 4 (Religion Rejecting Humanist) and Non-religious 5 (Quasi-spiritual). The correlations between these prototypes range between 56% and 73%. In contrast, there is only an 8% correlation between prototypes Non-religious 2 (Spiritual Pluralist) and Non-religious 3 (Non-committed Conservative), and neither of these prototypes correlate more than 30% with any of the remaining three prototypes.

How much do the prototypes explain of the total variance? The two prototypes that have the largest explanatory power are the Religion Rejecting Humanist (19%) and the Activist Humanist (12%). The remaining three prototypes explain 5–9% each, suggesting that these prototypes represent minor dispositions, which is supported by the low numbers of defining respondents in these prototypes. However, taken together, the minor prototypes explain 22% of the variance. While these three prototypes remain distant from each other in terms of content, they are all characterized by response patterns that one might not associate with non-religion. They make up too much of the variance to be dismissed as outliers.

Whereas the Spiritual Pluralists are interested in spirituality as expressed in many traditions, the Non-committed Conservatives value traditions and institutions. The Quasi-spiritual favor practices involving personal agency, with overlaps with the domains of religion and spirituality. Despite mutual differences, these

prototypes inform us that even among non-religious individuals, we may find openness towards religion, spirituality, or both.

The inter-prototype differences have been noted in relation to religion and spirituality, in emotional and experiential life, and in social and societal orientation. We will take a second look at these features after first examining how the prototypes correlate with values.

## 8.4 Non-religious Outlooks and Values

Since the response pattern of each respondent correlates with each prototype to a varying degree, individual value profiles can be compared to the extent to which the respondent is associated with each of the five prototypes. This allows us to say something about the value preferences of each prototype, and the analysis reveals some surprising features.

The Activist Humanist prototype (Non-religious 1) is characterized by concern for others, activism, and an outlook that supports the changing of societal structures and values. Yet when we investigate this prototype from a value perspective, we find that out of the five prototypes, this one scores lowest on self-direction: action.<sup>13</sup> Non-religious 1 is also characterized by scoring lower than others on stimulation.<sup>14</sup> The low score of self-direction: action can be contrasted with benevolence: caring, that this prototype scores higher than other prototypes.<sup>15</sup> Almost on the same level, this prototype values conformity: rules<sup>16</sup> – something that the other prototypes score negatively.

The Spiritual Pluralist prototype (Non-religious 2) is characterized by high values of universalism: concern and universalism: tolerance. The scores for these values are higher than for other values, and higher than the other prototypes.<sup>17</sup> Independence: thought is another value important for this prototype. Previous studies suggest that increased secularity corresponds to self-direction, and increased religiosity to conservation. Surprisingly, the most religion and spirituality accommodating prototype of our study values independence: thought more than the religion rejecting ones (Non-religious 1 and Non-religious 4).<sup>18</sup> The Spiritual Pluralists also value benevolence: dependability more than the other prototypes. The three

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<sup>13</sup>-0.242 is significant at the 0.01 level.

<sup>14</sup>-0.234 is significant at the 0.05 level

<sup>15</sup>0.279 is significant at the 0.05 level.

<sup>16</sup>0.232 is significant on 0.01 level.

<sup>17</sup>0.365 for universalism: concern is significant at the 0.01 level, whereas 0.255 for universalism: tolerance is significant at the 0.05 level.

<sup>18</sup>0.246 is significant at the 0.01 level.

values with notably low scores for this prototype are face, security: societal, and power: dominance.<sup>19</sup>

The Non-committed Conservative prototype (Non-religious 3) was previously seen to appreciate traditions and institutions. It is therefore not surprising that this prototype differs from all other prototypes by valuing tradition.<sup>20</sup> Another significant feature is that universalism: concern has the lowest score for this prototype.<sup>21</sup>

When the Religion Rejecting Humanist prototype (Non-religious 4) is compared with the other prototypes, one value stands out. This prototype has the lowest score on benevolence: caring.<sup>22</sup> This is relevant for prototype comparisons. For the Activist Humanists, benevolence: caring is important. For the Religion Rejecting Humanists, the opposite is the case.

The Quasi-spiritual prototype (Non-religious 5) shows signs of personal agency, involving methods to bring about altered states of consciousness. These findings are expressed in the value profile of this prototype, where the highest value is placed on stimulation.<sup>23</sup> This goes hand in hand with the lowest value on tradition.<sup>24</sup> The value profiles of all prototypes are presented in Table 8.5.

With the added information about values, we can summarize the five prototypes in Table 8.6, where information derived by the value-investigation is presented with *italics*.

## 8.5 Conclusion

We started with an initial survey investigation to see what role non-religion plays in the larger survey sample. Non-religious identity is somewhat correlated with being male, and strongly correlated with being raised in a non-religious home. On values, the effect of non-religion is seen on a higher score on self-direction-values, and lower score on tradition. When the survey sample is compared with the more narrow sample of the FQS participants, the similarities outweigh the differences.

We have followed Colin Campbell's (1971) lead about the variation of non-religious experience by examining non-religious worldview prototypes, both by common ground and differentiation. The five prototypes were quite different, suggesting that the common ground for those who define themselves as non-religious is small. While the Activist Humanists (Non-religious 1) and the Religion Rejecting Humanists (Non-religious 4) were consistent in their rejection of religion and

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<sup>19</sup>Face (−0.338) and security: societal (−0.322) are significant at 0.01 level, whereas power: dominance (−0.251) is significant at 0.01 level.

<sup>20</sup>0.290 is significant on 0.01 level.

<sup>21</sup>−0.338, significant on 0.01 level.

<sup>22</sup>−0.277, significant on 0.05 level.

<sup>23</sup>0.240 is significant at 0.05 level.

<sup>24</sup>−0.359 is significant at 0.01 level.

**Table 8.5** Value profiles of the prototypes

Pearson Correlation					
Value	Non-religious 1: Activist Humanist	Non-religious 2: Spiritual Pluralist	Non-religious 3: Non-committed Conservative	Non-religious 4: Religion Rejecting Humanist	Non-religious 5: Quasi-spiritual
Achievement	-.19	.04	.13	-.06	-.03
Benevolence: caring	.28*	.17	-.10	-.28*	.05
Benevolence: dependability	.21	.24*	-.21	-.17	.08
Conformity: interpersonal	.08	.06	-.04	.05	-.10
Conformity: rules	.23*	-.18	-.08	.07	-.12
Face	.08	-.34**	.17	.11	-.01
Hedonism	-.01	-.10	.01	.02	.09
Humility	.05	.12	-.02	-.03	-.02
Power: dominance	-.22	-.25*	.12	.19	-.16
Power: resources	-.19	-.22	.06	.15	-.13
Self-direction: action	-.24*	.10	.07	-.02	.10
Self-direction: thought	-.08	.25*	-.16	.01	.09
Security: personal	-.05	.11	-.03	-.08	.13
Security: societal	.04	-.32**	.06	.10	.17
Stimulation	-.23*	.13	-.08	-.09	.24*
Tradition	-.08	-.16	.29*	-.11	-.36**
Universalism: concern	.18	.37**	-.34**	-.03	.01
Universalism: nature	.03	.20	.04	-.14	.08
Universalism: tolerance	.20	.26*	-.07	.05	.07

*Note.* \* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed), \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

spirituality, the Spiritual pluralists (Non-religious 2) and the Non-committed Conservative (Non-religious 3) displayed openness towards religion or spirituality, albeit in different ways. The Quasi-spiritual (Non-religious 5) displayed religion rejecting tendencies as Non-religious 1 and Non-religious 4, yet resembled Non-religious 2 and Non-religious 3 by having openness to some forms of spirituality or religion, in its own characteristic manner.



**Table 8.6** Summary of the five non-religious prototypes

	Non-religious 1: Activist Humanist	Non-religious 2: Spiritual Pluralist	Non-religious 3: Non-committed Conservative	Non-religious 4: Religion Rejecting Humanist	Non-religious 5: Quasi-spiritual
<b>Humanism</b>	Belief in human progress and group-based activism <i>Values caring</i>	Activism <i>Values universal concern and tolerance</i> <i>Independent thinking</i>	Religious humanism	Secular humanist orientation	Higher purpose for human species
<b>Religion and spirituality</b>	Rejects strongly reincarnation Mostly reject religion exceptions: moved by sacred places; interest in others' religious traditions	Spiritual but not religious Pluralism Interest in the divine Spiritual experiences Spends time with spiritual matters Safeguards personal purity	Vaguely religious Appreciates religious institutions and <i>traditions</i> Follows some restrictions Does not invest time in religion Abstract concept of divinity	Consistent rejection	Doubts religious convictions Rejects religious institutions, beliefs, and practices Quest-orientation Openness to spirituality if emphasis is on personal agency
<b>Emotions and experiences</b>	Stability and harmony <i>Uninterested in stimulation</i>	Spiritual experiences Sustained by music, art and poetry	Appreciation for sacred places	Pessimism Feelings of guilt and adrift Sustained by music, art and poetry	Goal oriented Stable and content <i>Values stimulation</i>
<b>Social and societal orientation</b>	Likeminded association Moved by suffering Wants to change society <i>Conforms to rules</i> <i>Does not value self-directed action</i>	Self-realization is important Moved by suffering Likeminded association <i>Values self-transcendence, not social security, fame, and power for dominance</i>	Appreciation of institutions and <i>traditions</i> Different roles for men and women <i>Does not value universal concern</i>	Likeminded association Moved by suffering <i>Low on benevolence: caring</i>	Personal agency Judgement towards wrongdoers <i>Rejects tradition</i>

What does the examination of non-religious worldview prototypes and values tell us? Due to the global scope of the sample and the focus on young adults, some useful suggestions for future studies can be made. The results show that for some people, non-religion involves traditional values, or a low score on self-direction. For others, non-religious identity encompasses independence of thought or stimulation,

combined with openness to some features of religion or spirituality. For example, we found that the Spiritual Pluralists (Non-religious 2), who place the highest emphasis on self-direction: thought, display remarkable openness towards religions, but do not see that any one tradition would hold a monopoly for truth, and do not self-identify as religious. Based on previous studies, we might have expected the most religion-rejecting prototype to value self-direction. Instead, we found the most religion accommodating prototype to value self-direction most. We also found the Non-committed Conservative prototype that combines non-religious identity and lack of religious affiliation with appreciation for traditions, including religious ones. The third prototype with some openness towards religion or spirituality is the Quasi-spiritual prototype. This prototype appears to reject religion and spirituality consistently, yet when it comes to personal agency, there is openness to religious or spiritual experiences. Here, the curiosity lies in the fact that stimulation, which previous studies have associated with non-religion, is connected to experiences which, if not overtly religious, can be called quasi-spiritual. These findings suggest the usefulness of considering outlook variation in studies about non-religious value profiles.

Adding the investigation of values to the FQS can also aid the factor interpretation. Benevolence: caring is foremost for the Activist Humanists, and least important for the Religion Rejecting Humanists, a finding that distinguished the social orientation of these two prototypes.

It is important to be attentive to the different ways in which an individual can self-describe as non-religious. Non-religious identity can entail a range of outlooks and value priorities. At the very least, this study points to the usefulness of not treating the non-religious as a homogeneous category. We found that despite a non-religious self-identification, three prototypes expressed openness towards religion or spirituality to varying degrees, and in distinct ways. Spiritual Pluralist, Non-committed Conservative, and Quasi-spiritual are small prototypes, but combined, they inform us that quite a few individuals seem to accommodate religion or spirituality, despite a non-religious identity and lack of religious affiliation. Taira (2014) has suggested that the model of assessing non-religion/religion at least by the three dimensions of behavior, beliefs, and belonging (Keysar & Kosmin, 2007) should be expanded to attitudes and identities. While Taira's suggestion was made in the Finnish context, the present study hints that such expansion would be useful for global samples. In the YARG data, non-religious identification is combined with attitudes ranging from consistent rejection of religion to openness to many of its features.

The openness towards religion and spirituality in the three small prototypes explains 22% of the study variance. This can be compared to Kontala (2016) on non-religious group-affiliates, where the Experientially Spiritual prototype explained 17% of the study variance, and Kontala & Keysar (forthcoming), where 19% of the study variance was explained by minor prototypes with openness towards religion. The three studies used sampling strategies indicating different levels of non-religious commitment. Kontala's study on group-affiliates represents the most active end of the non-religious spectrum. The present study did not focus on

active non-religion, only lack of religious commitment. Kontala and Keysar used a larger sample with religious identity score ranging from ‘0’–‘2’. Based on the three studies, it seems useful to be attentive to “deviant” forms of non-religious outlooks in future studies.

We welcome similar studies, alternatively, larger and random samples to explore this variation to provide a more nuanced understanding about non-religious identities, outlooks, values, and their different combinations.

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