

WESTMONT COLLEGE

# **SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

**Report of a Longitudinal Study**

**2004-07**

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## **SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

### **Report of a Longitudinal Study**

In 2003, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA began a seven-year study to examine the spiritual development of undergraduate students during the college years. Funded by the John Templeton Foundation, "Spirituality in Higher Education: Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose," was the first national longitudinal study of students' spiritual growth. The fundamental tenant of the principle investigators at HERI is that colleges and universities should focus more on students' spiritual development because spirituality is an essential part of students' lives.

Westmont was one of 236 colleges and universities that participated in the study. In the fall of 2004, the College Student's Beliefs and Values Survey (CSBV) was administered to first-year college students. Two-thirds of the fall 2004 first-year students in the sample attended public colleges and universities. Three years later in the spring of 2007, students who had taken the CSBV as first-year students were asked to take the survey again. Nationally, HERI obtained longitudinal data from 14,527 students. For Westmont, matched data was available for 91 students; 25% of the first-year class in 2004. Male students were underrepresented in the Westmont sample (29% of the sample, but 37% of the first-year class).

Results are presented in three categories: (1) Westmont students, (2) students attending other colleges identified as evangelical, and (3) student data from all 236 participating colleges and universities. The data reported in the following tables is the percentage (%) of students who responded as described in the table. For each item, 2004 and 2007 data is presented, along with the observed change over this time period. Remember, this is a longitudinal study. The 2004 and 2007 responses are from the same students. Results are also available disaggregated by gender. Only selected portions of this data will be presented where the largest gender differences were observed.

### **Method of Analysis**

HERI has performed extensive factorial analysis of the data. The HERI research team describes the results along two broad, multifaceted dimensions of spirituality and religiousness. For them, a spiritual person is the one who believes in the sacredness of life, seeks opportunity to grow spiritually and believes humans are all spiritual beings. Religiousness has more to do with involvement and commitment to a church, a religious organization or a formal belief system. In this scheme, a person may be either spiritual or religious (or neither) or both spiritual and religious.

Spirituality, as defined by the five measures derived from the factor analysis, is:

1. Spiritual quest - involves an active quest for life's big questions; developing a meaningful philosophy of life
2. Ecumenical worldview – reflects interest in different religious traditions; understands other cultures; love is the root of all great religions
3. Ethic of caring – commitment to values such as caring and compassion for others; seeking to reduce the pain and suffering of others
4. Charitable involvement - a lifestyle that includes service to others; donating to charities; community service
5. Equanimity - a capacity to maintain one's sense of calm and centeredness especially in times of stress; feeling a connection to all of humanity.

The five measures of religiousness identified are:

1. Religious commitment - following religious teaching in daily life; gaining personal strength by trusting in a higher power
2. Religious engagement - attending religious services; prayer; reading sacred texts
3. Religious/social conservatism - having religious convictions about life style choices and behavior; using prayer to seek forgiveness; belief that people who do not believe in God will be punished
4. Religious skepticism – belief that science will be able to explain everything; disbelief in life after death
5. Religious struggle - having unsettled feelings about religious beliefs; distant from God.

### Results from the Factor Analysis

Westmont students scored high on most of the spirituality and religiousness scales. Results from Westmont students were similar to students from other evangelical colleges but quite different from results obtained from all colleges studied (Table 1). Westmont students scored highest on the religious scales of engagement and commitment but also scored relatively high on the spiritual scales of equanimity, ethic of caring and quest. Students from the national population scored higher on the spirituality scales of equanimity and quest than they did on any of the religious scales.

Table 1

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student scored "high" on the following factor scores:</b>									
Equanimity	68	63	-5	58	59	1	35	41	6
Spirituality	57	61	5	47	52	5	17	21	5
Ethic of Caring	20	55	35	17	33	16	14	27	12
Spiritual Quest	41	53	12	30	40	11	24	33	9
Ecumenical Worldview	11	26	15	8	18	10	13	18	5
Charitable Involvement	15	18	2	13	14	1	12	9	-3
Religious Engagement	77	81	4	74	72	-2	21	17	-4
Religious Commitment	82	74	-8	69	67	-3	23	23	0
Religious/Social Conservatism	61	57	-5	69	59	-10	16	14	-2
Religious Struggle	9	27	19	7	17	10	9	13	3
Religious Skepticism	1	0	-1	2	1	-1	19	20	1

Scoring high on all of the religiousness scales is not necessarily a positive outcome. Given the items that constitute the religious skepticism scale, it is not surprising students at Westmont and other evangelical colleges scored quite low. In order to better understand the meaning of each scale, the reader may want to examine Appendix A, where the survey items associated with each scale are listed.

I will occasionally mention throughout this report conclusions reached by the HERI researchers from their analyses. One of their findings can be noted in Table 1. In general, the religious engagement of college students declines during college, while spiritual qualities grow. With Westmont students, an increase on several spirituality measures is evident but the decline in religious engagement is not present.

Results from the ethic of caring and charitable involvement scales are interesting. These scales are concerned with similar themes but the former is focused on attitudes while the later is focused on actions. It was on the ethic of caring scale that the largest change occurred from 2004 to 2007. However, little change was observed on the charitable involvement scale. This statement is actually not accurate since it ignores an interesting gender difference found with Westmont students. The charitable involvement score declined with the male students (Table 2) but increased with female students (Table 3).

Another gender difference worth noting involved the religious struggle scale. Upon entry to Westmont, a number of male students indicated they had already been having religious struggles. Three years later, the number of males having religious struggles remained unchanged (Table 2). A very different pattern exists for women. Reporting having had religious struggles upon arrival at Westmont was almost nonexistent with the female students but three years later, nearly one-third of the women scored high on the religious struggles scale (Table 3).

Table 2

Male Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student scored "high" on the following factor scores:</b>									
Equanimity	57	65	9	54	54	0	30	37	7
Ethic of Caring	20	52	32	17	32	15	11	23	12
Spirituality	44	48	4	40	48	8	14	19	5
Spiritual Quest	38	42	4	28	38	10	21	29	8
Ecumenical Worldview	12	20	8	8	17	9	8	15	6
Charitable Involvement	13	4	-9	7	9	3	7	6	-1
Religious Engagement	68	76	8	71	69	-2	18	16	-2
Religious Commitment	54	71	17	62	61	-1	18	20	2
Religious/Social Conservatism	40	56	16	67	57	-10	14	13	-1
Religious Struggle	17	17	0	7	16	9	10	12	2
Religious Skepticism	5	0	-5	3	2	-1	25	26	2

At first glance the large decline on the religious commitment scale by Westmont women might be alarming (Table 3). It is important to note, however, this decline is relative to a very high 2004 score (93%) and 75% of the women scoring high in 2007 was still greater than either Westmont men or students of both genders at other evangelical schools.

Table 3

Female Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student scored "high" on the following factor scores:</b>									
Spirituality	62	67	5	51	55	3	18	23	4
Equanimity	72	62	-10	62	63	2	39	45	6
Spiritual Quest	42	58	15	30	42	12	26	35	9
Ethic of Caring	20	56	36	16	33	17	17	30	13
Ecumenical Worldview	10	28	18	8	18	11	17	20	4
Charitable Involvement	16	23	7	17	17	0	15	12	-4
Religious Engagement	81	82	2	76	74	-2	23	18	-5
Religious Commitment	93	75	-18	74	71	-4	27	26	-1
Religious/Social Conservatism	70	57	-13	71	61	-10	18	14	-3
Religious Struggle	5	31	26	8	18	10	9	13	4
Religious Skepticism	0	0	0	1	1	0	14	16	1

Finally, it is interesting to observe the amount of change between 2004 and 2007 comparing Westmont women and all other groups. Westmont women display more change on more of the scales than Westmont men or the students from other institutions. It seems that Westmont women are undergoing a time of significant change in their thinking on spirituality and religiousness. The results do not provide the opportunity to speculate why this may be a season of greater change for women at Westmont compared to women at other evangelical colleges.

### Results from Survey Items

In the last section we looked at the factor analysis generated scales from the survey items. In this section we will examine responses to specific survey items.

#### Items focused on actions.

College students pray. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the data in Table 4 is to compare the responses made by the All Institution students with their responses in Table 2. This group does not describe itself as being particularly religious, although they do score higher on the spirituality measures. Nonetheless, we might not have predicted that two-thirds of these students would report praying.

Table 4

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Do you pray?</b>									
Yes	99	97	-2	97	95	-1	69	67	-2
No	1	3	2	3	5	1	31	33	2
<b>Students report "frequently" praying:</b>									
For help in solving problems	81	86	5	78	74	-4	61	61	1
To be in communion with God	78	78	0	77	74	-3	54	52	-1
To express gratitude	81	85	4	79	79	-1	60	66	6
For emotional strength	76	78	2	72	73	1	56	62	6
For forgiveness	73	74	1	75	70	-5	59	56	-3
To relieve the suffering of others	52	71	19	59	64	5	49	54	5
For loved ones	78	86	8	78	80	3	69	72	3
For wisdom	72	73	1	62	72	10	45	53	8
To praise God	77	77	0	74	71	-3	54	50	-4

Many themes are found in the prayers of Westmont students. Praying for the needs and suffering of others increases during college (Table 4), particularly by Westmont women (Table 5).

Table 5

Westmont College	Men			Women		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Students report "frequently" praying:</b>						
For help in solving problems	83	91	9	81	84	3
To express gratitude	78	78	0	83	87	5
For forgiveness	61	70	9	78	76	-2
To relieve the suffering of others	61	65	4	49	73	24
For loved ones	87	70	-17	75	92	18
To praise God	74	65	-9	78	81	3

Table 6 summarizes the frequency of a number of spiritual and religious behaviors performed by students.

Table 6

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>HOW OFTEN DO YOU ENGAGE IN THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES</b>									
<b>Self-reflection</b>									
Daily	36	52	16	25	37	12	22	31	10
Several times/week	32	33	1	33	34	1	25	28	3
Once/week	18	9	-9	20	16	-5	17	18	1
Monthly	9	5	-5	9	7	-2	11	10	-1
Less than monthly	3	1	-2	9	5	-5	14	8	-6
Not at all	1	0	-1	4	1	-2	11	5	-6
<b>Prayer</b>									
Daily	73	58	-15	71	60	-11	29	25	-4
Several times/week	18	32	14	20	27	7	19	21	2
Once/week	6	6	0	4	7	3	13	12	-1
Monthly	2	1	-1	2	2	0	8	7	0
Less than monthly	1	2	1	2	2	1	9	11	2
Not at all	0	1	1	2	3	1	23	23	1
<b>Meditation</b>									
Daily	5	6	1	8	8	-1	4	4	0
Several times/week	15	15	0	19	19	1	7	9	3
Once/week	7	17	10	16	18	3	11	10	-1
Monthly	13	8	-5	9	9	1	8	9	1
Less than monthly	15	17	2	14	14	0	14	16	2
Not at all	47	38	-9	35	32	-4	57	53	-4
<b>Religious singing/chanting</b>									
Daily	13	10	-2	21	13	-8	4	3	-1
Several times/week	47	67	20	42	43	1	8	9	1
Once/week	30	9	-21	21	25	4	18	15	-3
Monthly	2	2	0	3	4	2	7	6	-2
Less than monthly	1	5	4	3	4	1	9	10	1
Not at all	7	7	0	11	11	0	53	56	4
<b>Reading sacred texts</b>									
Daily	32	26	-6	32	26	-6	6	5	-1
Several times/week	33	43	9	30	34	4	8	9	0
Once/week	16	17	1	14	18	4	14	12	-2
Monthly	7	7	0	6	9	3	7	7	0
Less than monthly	3	6	2	6	7	1	15	17	2
Not at all	8	1	-7	13	7	-6	50	51	1
<b>Other reading on religion/spirituality</b>									
Daily	16	7	-9	12	8	-5	3	2	-1
Several times/week	30	32	2	26	25	-1	8	7	-1
Once/week	21	25	5	21	22	1	11	9	-2
Monthly	13	21	8	16	18	2	9	11	2
Less than monthly	13	13	0	13	17	3	21	22	1
Not at all	9	3	-6	11	10	-1	48	49	1

Westmont students demonstrated they are not afraid to ask tough questions and acknowledge their feelings (Table 7). Students admit they have felt distant, even angry with God. They struggle to understand the evil and suffering they observe in the world and they question their religious beliefs. Life is not sugar-coated. By the junior year, 99% of Westmont students feel life is filled with stress and anxiety. Nonetheless, they also report feeling loved by God and indicate they have been able to find meaning in times of hardship.

Table 7

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Please indicate how often you have:</b>									
Participated in community food or clothing drives	74	75	1	67	68	1	63	56	-7
Helped friends with personal problems	100	100	0	98	99	1	95	99	3
Donated money to charity	82	94	12	77	85	8	70	75	5
Felt distant from God	94	95	1	84	90	6	64	66	2
Struggled to understand evil, suffering, and death	77	95	19	70	83	14	64	70	6
Questioned your religious/spiritual beliefs	66	86	20	60	75	15	56	61	5
Felt loved by God [1]	80	75	-5	79	77	-2	45	45	-1
Disagreed with your family about religious matters	57	75	18	51	61	11	50	47	-3
Spent time with people who share your religious views	99	100	1	98	98	0	84	86	2
Felt angry with God	58	66	9	54	66	11	45	43	-3
Felt that your life is filled with stress and anxiety	86	99	13	89	94	5	83	92	8
Been able to find meaning in times of hardship	97	99	2	95	97	2	84	91	7
Expressed gratitude to others [1]	66	75	9	63	67	4	52	56	5
Felt at peace/centered [1]	49	42	-7	46	41	-5	31	29	-3
Explored religion online	26	44	18	35	43	8	28	32	4
Attended a class, workshop, or retreat on matters related to religion/spirituality	86	94	8	82	90	8	47	42	-5

[1] Percentage marking "Frequently" only. All other results in this section reflect the percentage marking "Frequently" or "Occasionally."

Although by the junior year, Westmont men and women respond in similar ways on items dealing with understanding evil, personal religious beliefs and the experience of stress and anxiety, they don't appear to enter college thinking the same way on these issues (Table 8). A larger percentage of women than men begin college already confronting these issues but the men catch-up to the women by the junior year.



Table 8

Westmont College	Men			Women		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Please indicate how often you have:</b>						
Struggled to understand evil, suffering and death	57	91	35	84	97	13
Questioned your religious/spiritual beliefs	57	83	26	69	87	18
Felt angry with God	48	48	0	62	73	12
Felt that your life is filled with stress and anxiety	74	100	26	90	98	8
Been able to find meaning in times of hardship	87	100	13	100	98	-2
Felt at peace/centered [1]	39	35	-4	53	45	-8

[1] Percentage marking "Frequently" only. All other results in this section reflect the percentage marking "Frequently" or "Occasionally."

Trying to find meaning and purpose in life is a common experience for college students and at Westmont; it is an almost universal value (Table 9). It characterizes both men and women and becomes a commitment held by an increasing number of men during college (Table 10).

Table 9

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student engages to "some" or "a great extent" in the following activities:</b>									
Searching for meaning/purpose in life	83	96	13	87	92	5	75	80	5
Trying to change things that are unfair in the world	69	94	25	72	80	9	67	71	3
Accepting others as they are	99	100	1	98	99	1	94	98	4
Having discussions about the meaning of life with my friends	87	95	8	87	90	3	73	73	0

The theme of making the world a better place repeats itself throughout the survey and it is one on which Westmont students score high. We saw this expressed in students' prayer life (Table 4). In Table 10, both men and women express they are already engaged in activities oriented towards the disadvantaged. This quality is more pronounced in Westmont students than the general college population (Table 9). Later, we will see this theme again as it relates to students confronting pain and suffering in the world (Table 11).

Table 10

Westmont College	Men			Women		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student engages to "some" or "a great extent" in the following activities:</b>						
Searching for meaning/purpose in life	65	91	26	90	98	8
Trying to change things that are unfair in the world	70	96	26	69	94	24

**Items focused on beliefs and values.**

Additional examples of Westmont students' other directedness are found in Tables 11 and 12. In large numbers students affirm the desire to assist in reducing human suffering in the world. This quality increases during the college years and it is pronounced in both men and women (Table 12).

Table 11

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Spiritual objectives noted as "essential" or "very important"</b>									
Reducing pain/suffering in the world	56	85	29	60	73	14	55	67	12
Attaining inner harmony	51	57	6	47	50	3	49	63	14
Attaining wisdom	86	90	4	85	86	1	77	85	8
Seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually	93	89	-5	88	84	-4	45	52	6
Seeking beauty in my life	73	71	-2	55	66	11	54	66	13
Finding answers to mysteries of life	43	32	-10	42	34	-8	44	38	-6
Becoming a more loving person	89	99	10	85	93	9	67	83	15
Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life	93	88	-6	87	82	-5	40	41	1
Improving the human condition	71	77	7	60	71	12	53	64	10

Table 12

Westmont College	Men			Women		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Spiritual objectives noted as "essential" or "very important"</b>						
Reducing pain and suffering in the world	56	88	32	56	84	28
Attaining inner harmony	42	63	21	55	55	0
Improving the human condition	64	68	4	73	81	8

Many of the items previously considered centered on spirituality as practiced at a personal level. In the next several sections questions tend to address spiritual and religious beliefs that extend beyond the individual.

As can be noted in Table 13, some views on spirituality are shared by the majority of college students, whether they are particularly religious or not (Ex. "Love is the root of all great religions" or "We are all spiritual beings"). These items are good examples of how a person might express responses that are "spiritual" but not "religious". Compare the high percentages among the All Institution group on many of these Table 13 items with the low percentage rates of the same group for religiousness (Table 1). These students are not committed to or engaged in religious practices in the same way evangelical students are but they understand many aspects of their world in spiritual terms.

Table 13

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student agrees "strongly" or "somewhat"</b>									
Love is at the root of all the great religions	54	63	9	69	68	-2	72	72	0
All life is interconnected	71	88	17	71	81	11	81	87	7
Believing in supernatural phenomena is foolish	15	8	-7	23	14	-9	28	26	-2
We are all spiritual beings	85	92	7	82	87	5	71	73	3
It is futile to try to discover the purpose of existence	28	9	-19	27	20	-7	38	36	-2
People can reach a higher spiritual plane of consciousness through meditation or prayer	74	75	1	76	79	3	69	74	6
The evil in this world seems to outweigh the good	38	24	-14	50	41	-9	41	37	-3
Most people can grow spiritually without being religious	31	46	15	33	48	16	63	75	12
People who don't believe in God will be punished	72	67	-5	79	75	-4	35	29	-6
Non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers	80	92	12	78	87	10	84	91	7
Pain and suffering are essential to becoming a better person	68	68	0	74	76	2	63	64	1
The universe arose by chance	1	1	0	5	3	-3	25	25	1
In the future, science will be able to explain everything	3	3	0	9	6	-3	30	27	-3
While science can provide important information about the physical world, only religion can truly explain existence	93	86	-7	90	83	-7	54	48	-6

We can also see in Table 13 the presence (or absence) of religious beliefs. If college students' responses are similar on items dealing with love and unity, the responses of evangelical and

non-evangelical groups differ greatly on religious concepts such as God’s judgment. As was stated in the introductory section, the framers of this research project consider spirituality and religiousness as distinct qualities and a person can possess one quality without the other. Here are examples of Westmont students scoring high on items that are part of the religiousness scales and spirituality scales but the All Institution students are only scoring high on the items that are part of the spirituality scales.

The majority of students (70%) enrolling at Westmont arrive believing science and religion can function in a collaborative fashion (Table 14). Three years later, 84% of Westmont students hold this view. Very few students express a view that compartmentalizes science and religion and the few who do indicate they are on the side of religion in the conflict between science and religion. This is a very different view of science and religion than held by the national population of students in the study.

Table 14

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>For me, the relationship between science and religion is one of:</b>									
Collaboration; each can be used to help support the other	70	84	15	60	75	14	39	46	7
Independence; they refer to different aspects of reality	12	8	-5	12	14	1	30	32	2
Conflict; I consider myself to be on the side of science	1	0	-1	1	1	-1	13	13	0
Conflict; I consider myself to be on the side of religion	17	8	-9	26	11	-15	17	8	-9

Westmont students describe themselves as interested in spirituality, seeing life as sacred, connected with God and express a belief in life after death (Table 15). Students are neither disillusioned with their religious upbringing nor do they feel obligated to affirm the religious practices of their parents. Students in large numbers describe life as a gift and express gratitude for life events that have transpired.

There was a 14% decline in the positive affirmation by Westmont women for “*Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed*” (Table 16). In no other group studied was such a large decline noted. It is important to note that this decline was relative to the initial high level of affirmation to this statement by Westmont first-year women (76%), so the lower score in the junior year was typical of other evangelical college juniors. The 2004 score was atypically high; the 2007 score was like other Christian college students.

Table 15

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student scored "high" on the following factor scores:</b>									
Having an interest in spirituality	83	83	0	77	77	0	32	37	5
Believing in the sacredness of life	70	78	8	64	75	11	34	44	10
Feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters	15	23	8	13	20	7	14	17	2
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed	72	63	-9	62	60	-2	50	51	2
Feeling a sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends my personal self	64	67	3	65	64	-1	30	30	0
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity	11	35	24	13	25	12	14	20	6
Feeling disillusioned with my religious upbringing	3	12	8	4	8	4	7	10	3
Having an interest in different religious traditions	10	17	7	9	14	5	15	16	1
Being committed to introducing people to my faith	51	37	-14	44	36	-8	14	11	-3
Believing in goodness of all people	19	29	11	27	29	2	31	32	2
Being thankful for all that has happened to me	74	80	6	70	73	3	52	61	9
Seeing each day, good or bad, as gift	64	70	6	60	63	4	39	46	7
Believing in life after death	88	87	-1	85	87	2	50	52	2
Feeling obligated to follow my parents' religious practices	2	2	0	6	5	-1	8	8	-1

Table 16

Westmont College	Men			Women		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>The following statements describe the student "to a great extent"</b>						
Having an interest in spirituality	72	72	0	87	87	0
Believing in the sacredness of life	64	64	0	73	84	11
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed	60	64	4	76	62	-14
Feeling a sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends my personal self	48	64	16	70	68	-2
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity	8	36	28	13	35	22

Students were asked to characterize their experience with God. On this survey item multiple responses were permitted. Descriptions of God were multi-dimensional for all college students. For a number of descriptors, Westmont students' portrayal of God changed more during the college years than observed for other college students (Table 17).

Table 17

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Which of the following best characterizes your conception of or experience with God?</b>									
Creator	90	99	9	85	91	6	58	61	4
Love	96	95	-1	86	92	5	57	61	4
Protector	82	86	3	80	80	0	50	53	2
Father-figure	79	85	6	75	80	5	37	41	5
Supreme Being	78	85	7	68	76	9	44	51	7
Teacher	76	80	4	72	77	5	40	45	5
Judge	68	80	12	66	70	4	33	35	2
Divine Mystery	39	67	29	35	47	12	28	33	4
Part of me	53	40	-13	57	51	-6	37	39	2
Mother-figure	11	37	26	10	17	7	10	10	0
Nature	28	33	6	24	30	6	23	31	8
Universal Spirit	26	30	3	33	32	-2	34	38	5
Enlightenment	24	22	-2	30	28	-2	28	32	4

One of the interesting outcomes involved the description of God as “mother-figure.” Westmont students increased in number reporting experiencing God as a mother more than any other group in the study and Westmont women reported a larger change than Westmont men (Table 18). It is interesting to speculate to what degree this gender difference reflects experiences and teaching encountered in church, the Westmont classroom or to what extent it reflects developmental processes associated with the mother-daughter relationship.

Table 18

Westmont College	Men			Women		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Which of the following best characterizes your conception of or experience with God?</b>						
Father-figure	65	77	12	85	88	3
Mother-figure	23	39	15	6	37	31

Just as college students have a multi-dimensional perception of God, they report having spiritual experiences in a variety of settings (Table 19). Note that although there is not the intensity of responses from the “all institutions” group as there is from Westmont and other evangelical college students, the pattern of responses is remarkably similar as to where students have spiritual experiences.

Table 19

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: [2]</b>									
In a house of worship	98	98	0	95	95	0	64	66	2
Listening to beautiful music	86	95	10	87	91	4	58	67	8
Viewing a great work of art	39	67	28	43	56	13	33	38	5
Participating in a musical or artistic performance	63	78	14	63	64	1	35	38	2
Engaging in athletics	40	55	15	44	46	2	31	31	0
Witnessing the beauty and harmony of nature	94	98	4	87	93	6	63	74	11
Meditating	50	73	23	61	73	13	36	45	8

[2] Respondents marking "Not applicable" were not included in the calculation of these results.

Most college students believe in the existence of God (Table 20). This is consistent with national studies and polls that find agnostics and atheists in small numbers in the U.S. population. The belief in God, however, does not make a person religious or spiritual (compare Table 20 with Table 1).

Table 20

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Do you believe in God?</b>									
Yes	99	95	-4	97	97	0	77	74	-3
Not sure	1	5	4	3	3	0	16	17	2
No	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	9	1

The core of a longitudinal survey study is that the same survey items are used over time. The response choices that were on both the 2004 and 2007 surveys for the question "what has strengthened your religious/spiritual beliefs" are presented in Table 21. What are missing here are three additional choices that were only on the 2007 survey. It is these items to which Westmont students responded to the most: Interaction with faculty (88%), course content (87%) and student/peer interactions (87%). It is encouraging that students identify the academic program (faculty and course content) as two of the primary agents in their religious/spiritual development at Westmont.

Table 21

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student reports the following experiences "strengthened" his/her religious/spiritual beliefs: [2]</b>									
Romantic relationship	48	69	21	42	56	14	35	36	1
Personal injury or illness	56	56	1	47	35	-11	35	20	-15
Parent's divorce or separation	35	25	-10	33	24	-9	18	6	-12
Death close friend or family member	55	58	3	58	56	-2	47	35	-12
Natural disaster	31	27	-4	35	42	7	22	25	3
The war in Iraq	21	14	-7	33	19	-14	26	16	-10

Tables 22 and 23 results are also only from the 2007 survey administration (3<sup>rd</sup> year students). These survey items would not have been applicable on the 2004 survey administered to enrolling first-year students.

Faculty can have a significant role in the spiritual and religious development of college students. This is acknowledged by Westmont students in a number of ways and by a larger percentage of Westmont students than students at other evangelical colleges (Table 22). The All Institution results for issues of religion and spirituality are as expected. Perhaps not as expected is how few students at these institutions report their faculty having a role in their developing self-understanding or in exploring questions of meaning and purpose.

Table 22

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
<b>Professors at your current college frequently:</b>									
Encouraged exploration of questions of meaning and purpose	77	88	84	50	54	52	16	22	20
Enhanced your self-understanding	50	41	43	33	36	35	13	20	17
Encouraged discussion of religious/spiritual matters	92	80	83	56	60	58	5	7	6
Encouraged personal expression of spirituality	65	52	56	43	47	46	4	6	5
Encouraged discussion of ethical issues	85	70	74	52	56	55	20	25	23
Acted as spiritual models for you	54	61	59	47	53	50	4	6	5

Students are satisfied with how Westmont provides them opportunity for religious and spiritual reflection (Table 23). Although a majority of Westmont students (69%) indicated they experience a respect for religious diversity, students at the other evangelical colleges responded positively to this survey item in even larger numbers (79%).



Table 23

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
<b>Students indicating they were "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with each aspect of campus life listed below:</b>									
Opportunities for religious/spiritual reflection	100	98	99	93	93	93	81	75	78
Respect for diverse spiritual/religious beliefs	69	69	69	79	79	79	85	82	84

Westmont students believe events in their life may be determined by supernatural forces. They also express difficulty in reconciling their belief in a loving God with pain and suffering in the world (Table 24). This difficulty in dealing with evil is expressed stronger later in college than as first-year students, particularly with Westmont women (Table 25).

Table 24

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student agrees "strongly" or "somewhat"</b>									
What happens in my life determined by forces larger than myself	89	91	2	85	85	0	63	63	0
Whether or not there is a Supreme Being doesn't matter to me	0	2	2	5	3	-2	25	24	-1
I gain spiritual strength by trusting in a Higher Power	98	94	-4	94	94	0	65	65	0
It doesn't matter what I believe as long as I lead a moral life	2	8	6	10	11	1	51	58	7
I have never felt a sense of sacredness	19	6	-13	17	11	-6	30	27	-3
I find religion to be personally helpful	98	94	-4	93	93	-1	69	68	-1
It is difficult to reconcile the existence of a loving God with all the pain and suffering in the world	17	42	25	25	33	8	35	35	0

Nearly a quarter of Westmont men agreed with the statement, "It doesn't matter what I believe as long as I lead a moral life" (Table 25). This attitude developed significantly in a number of male students during college, but was almost nonexistent in women.

Table 25

Westmont College	Men			Women		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>Student agrees "strongly" or "somewhat"</b>						
It doesn't matter what I believe as long as I lead a moral life	9	22	13	0	3	3
I have never felt a sense of sacredness	38	13	-25	12	3	-8
It is difficult to reconcile the existence of a loving God with all the pain and suffering in the world	25	33	8	15	45	31

Students were asked to describe how they viewed their own religious/spiritual condition. Multiple responses were allowed (Table 26). Students indicated possessing the dual traits of feeling secure in their spiritual condition but also having an attitude of seeking. Attitudes of being in conflict and doubting were far less prevalent.

Table 26

All Respondents	Westmont			Evangelical Insts			All Institutions		
	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG	2004	2007	CHG
<b>How would you describe your current views about spiritual/religious matters?</b>									
Conflicted	8	17	9	10	14	4	15	15	0
Secure	74	73	-1	67	70	3	43	52	9
Doubting	6	12	7	6	8	2	10	12	3
Seeking	42	53	11	34	43	8	23	29	6
Not interested	1	0	-1	2	2	0	16	18	2

## Findings and Conclusions

### Westmont students.

As first-year students matriculate at Westmont, they already score high on measures of spirituality and religiousness. Their spirituality is particularly marked by interest in big questions and seeking meaning and purpose in life (quest), expressions of connectedness to humanity and having a sense of calm in times of stress (equanimity), and a stated commitment to the value of helping others in time of need and suffering (ethic of caring).

In the three years of this study, some measures of spirituality changed. Westmont students scored modestly higher on the quest measure as juniors. Scores on the ethic of caring scale were markedly higher in the junior year for both men (+32%) and women (+36%). A longitudinal gender difference may be present on the equanimity measure. The percentage of males scoring high on this measure increased by 9% (57% to 65%), whereas the percentage of women scoring high decreased 10% (72% to 62%). By the end of the junior year, men and women scored comparably on this scale but they appear to have had different attitudes entering Westmont.

Two measures of religiosity are particularly high in first-year Westmont students. The religious engagement scale, determined by participation in church services, praying and reading sacred texts, is high with men (68%) and women (81%) and rises further during college. Westmont's required chapel program probably accounts for some of these results. Survey items asking about whether religious teachings are followed and whether personal strength is experienced by trusting in a higher power (religious commitment) generated a distinct gender difference. In first-year students, 54% of men and 93% of women scored high on the commitment scale. In the junior year, 71% of the men (+17%) and 75% of the women (-18%) scored high. The two genders had similar scores in the junior year but they started in very different places as first-year students.

Essentially the same gender response pattern was observed on the religious/social conservatism scale (connection between religious values and life style choices). Higher scores on this scale for men moved from 40% to 56 (+16%) and for women scores went from 70% to 57% (-13%).

Westmont scores on the two religiousness scales, struggle and skepticism, were both low. The skepticism scale primarily measures what students "believe." By the junior year, the percentage of Westmont men and women with high scores was 0%. Items forming the religious struggle measure focus more on students' "experiences" (rather than belief). During college, women scoring high on this scale increase from 5% to 31% (+26%), while the men scoring high remains unchanged at 17%.

The HERI research team believes spirituality is not just a quality of religious behavior but spirituality represents beliefs and values that permeate life, regardless of ones religious orientation. The survey results obtained from Westmont students is not inconsistent with this premise. Furthermore, we saw that Westmont students do not compartmentalize their religious and spiritual development only to religious events. Students believe the faculty and the curriculum have a powerful impact on their spiritual development. (It would have been nice if the survey had included items dealing with a chapel program but there were no survey items addressing religious programming by the institution.)

It is with some timidity I make the following observation. Over a number of years we have noticed in the results of other HERI surveys that Westmont women describe themselves in less positive terms than male students on traits related to self confidence, competence, and physical and emotional health. In working with the CSBV survey data, it was difficult to avoid the impression that the college years are a time of greater change for women than men in some aspects of their religious and spiritual beliefs and experiences. It is not that change is bad or to be avoided but rather to acknowledge that humans often find being in the midst of change emotionally demanding and stressful. If in fact Westmont women are more acutely (than men) dealing with belief, value and self-perception issues during their college years, we should be aware of this and appropriately responsive to the situation.

Overall, survey results indicate most Westmont students arrive interested in their spiritual and religious side of life and these interests persist through college. Student responses on particular survey items may be cause for concern and may suggest areas where additional educational efforts are appropriate but taken in the whole, survey results are quite positive.

## **The National Study.**

In the introduction I mentioned Westmont's use of the CSBV was part of a national study being conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Their study includes examining the results of the CSBV survey with data gathered from HERI sponsored CIRP and CSS surveys. You are familiar with both of these. The CIRP is the first-year student survey and the CSS is the senior survey Westmont has used multiple times. The HERI research team is trying to connect what is already known about college students' beliefs and values on the non-spiritual dimension with what they are learning about college students' religious behavior and spirituality. The HERI research effort is taking a holistic view of human experience, one which is quite compatible with Christians' view of humanity and the mission of Westmont College to educate the whole person.

Later this year Jossey-Bass is scheduled to release the book, Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives, a book based upon this comprehensive study. Although the book is not yet available, here are some examples of the conclusions being drawn from the study (from several sources found at <http://spirituality.ucla.edu/>):

- Students show the greatest degree of growth in the five spiritual qualities if they are actively engaged in "inner work" through self-reflection, contemplation, or meditation.
- Students show substantial increases in spiritual quest when their faculty encourage them to explore questions of meaning and purpose or otherwise show support for their spiritual development.
- Growth in equanimity enhances students' grade point average, leadership skills, psychological well-being, self-rated ability to get along with other races and cultures, and satisfaction with college.
- Educational experiences and practices that promote spiritual development - especially service learning, interdisciplinary courses, study abroad and self-reflection - have uniformly positive effects on traditional college outcomes.

Perhaps these conclusions are not surprising to Westmont faculty who embrace a holistic view of the student and the educational experience. What perhaps is unexpected is that these statements are being made by researchers at UCLA.

## Appendix A

### College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Factor Scales Table

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#### Spirituality

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Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Integrating spirituality into my life

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Having an interest in spirituality

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Believing in the sacredness of life

Self-rating<sup>f</sup>: Spirituality

On a spiritual quest<sup>e</sup>

Belief<sup>b</sup>: People can reach a higher spiritual plane of consciousness through meditation or prayer

Spiritual experience while<sup>d</sup>: Listening to beautiful music

Spiritual experience while<sup>d</sup>: Viewing a great work of art

Spiritual experience while<sup>d</sup>: Participating in a musical or artistic performance

Spiritual experience while<sup>d</sup>: Engaging in athletics

Spiritual experience while<sup>d</sup>: Witnessing the beauty and harmony of nature

Spiritual experience while<sup>d</sup>: Meditating

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#### Spiritual Quest

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Engaged in<sup>q</sup>: Searching for meaning/purpose in life

Engaged in<sup>q</sup>: Having discussions about the meaning of life with my friends

Close friends<sup>k</sup>: Are searching for meaning/purpose in life

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Finding answers to the mysteries of life

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Attaining inner harmony

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Attaining wisdom

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Seeking beauty in my life

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Developing a meaningful philosophy of life

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Becoming a more loving person

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#### Ecumenical Worldview

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Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Having an interest in different religious traditions

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Believing in the goodness of all people

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Feeling a strong connection to all humanity

Self-rating<sup>f</sup>: Understanding of others

Engaged in<sup>q</sup>: Accepting others as they are

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Improving the human condition

Belief<sup>b</sup>: All life is interconnected

Belief<sup>b</sup>: Love is at the root of all the great religions

Belief<sup>b</sup>: Non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers

Belief<sup>b</sup>: We are all spiritual beings

Belief<sup>b</sup>: Most people can grow spiritually without being religious

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### **Ethic of Caring**

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Engaged in<sup>q</sup>: Trying to change things that are unfair in the world

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Helping others who are in difficulty

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Reducing pain and suffering in the world

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Helping to promote racial understanding

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Becoming a community leader

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Influencing social values

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Influencing the political structure

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### **Charitable Involvement**

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Hours per week<sup>l</sup>: Volunteer work

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Participated in community food or clothing drives

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Performed volunteer work

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Donated money to charity

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Performed community service as part of a class

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Helped friends with personal problems

Personal goal<sup>a</sup>: Participating in a community action program

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### **Equanimity**

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Experience<sup>h</sup>: Been able to find meaning in times of hardship

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Felt at peace/centered

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Being thankful for all that has happened to me

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift

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### **Religious Commitment**

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Personal Goal<sup>a</sup>: Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life

Self-rating<sup>f</sup>: Religiousness

Belief<sup>b</sup>: I find religion to be personally helpful

Belief<sup>b</sup>: I gain spiritual strength by trusting in a Higher Power

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Feeling a sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends my personal self

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Felt loved by God  
My spiritual/religious beliefs<sup>g</sup>: Are one of the most important things in my life  
My spiritual/religious beliefs<sup>g</sup>: Provide me with strength, support, and guidance  
My spiritual/religious beliefs<sup>g</sup>: Give meaning/purpose to my life  
My spiritual/religious beliefs<sup>g</sup>: Lie behind my whole approach to life  
My spiritual/religious beliefs<sup>g</sup>: Have helped me develop my identity  
My spiritual/religious beliefs<sup>g</sup>: Help define the goals I set for myself

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### **Religious Engagement**

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Experience<sup>h</sup>: Attended a religious service  
Experience<sup>h</sup>: Attended a class, workshop, or retreat on matters related to religion/spirituality  
Activity<sup>j</sup>: Reading sacred texts  
Activity<sup>j</sup>: Religious singing/chanting  
Activity<sup>j</sup>: Other reading on religion/spirituality  
Activity<sup>j</sup>: Prayer  
Do you pray?<sup>m</sup>  
Hours per week<sup>l</sup>: Prayer/meditation  
Close friends<sup>k</sup>: Go to church/temple/other house of worship

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### **Religious/Social Conservatism**

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Belief<sup>b</sup>: People who don't believe in God will be punished  
Belief<sup>b</sup>: If two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time (reverse coded)  
Belief<sup>b</sup>: Abortion should be legal (reverse coded)  
Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Being committed to introducing people to my faith  
Close friends<sup>k</sup>: Share [my] religious/spiritual views  
Conception of God<sup>o</sup>: Father-figure  
Reason for prayer<sup>i</sup>: Forgiveness

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### **Religious Skepticism**

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Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Believing in life after death (reverse coded)  
Relationship between science and religion<sup>p</sup>: Conflict; I consider myself to be on the side of science  
Belief<sup>b</sup>: The universe arose by chance  
Belief<sup>b</sup>: In the future, science will be able to explain everything  
Belief<sup>b</sup>: I have never felt a sense of sacredness  
Belief<sup>b</sup>: Whether or not there is a Supreme Being doesn't matter to me  
Belief<sup>b</sup>: What happens in my life is determined by forces larger than myself

Belief<sup>b</sup>: It doesn't matter what I believe as long as I lead a moral life

Belief<sup>b</sup>: While science can provide important information about the physical world,  
only religion can truly explain existence (reverse coded)

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### Religious Struggle

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Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters

Self-description<sup>c</sup>: Feeling disillusioned with my religious upbringing

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Struggled to understand evil, suffering, and death

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Felt angry with God

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Questioned [my] religious/spiritual beliefs

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Felt distant from God

Experience<sup>h</sup>: Disagreed with [my] family about religious matters

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<sup>a</sup>Personal goal measured on a 4-point scale, "Not important" to "Essential"

<sup>b</sup>Belief measured on a 4-point scale, "Disagree strongly" to "Agree strongly"

<sup>c</sup>Self-description measured on a 3-point scale, "Not at all" to "To a great extent"

<sup>d</sup>Spiritual experience measured on a 3-point scale, "Not at all" to "Frequently"  
("Not applicable" recoded as "Not at all")

<sup>e</sup>Being on a spiritual quest measured on a 2-point scale, "No" or "Yes"

<sup>f</sup>Self-rating measured on a 5-point scale, "Lowest 10%" to "Highest 10%"

<sup>g</sup>My spiritual/religious beliefs measured on a 4-point scale, "Disagree strongly" to "Agree strongly"

<sup>h</sup>Experience measured on a 3-point scale, "Not at all" to "Frequently"

<sup>i</sup>Reason for prayer measured on a 3-point scale, "Not at all" to "Frequently"

<sup>j</sup>Activity measured on a 6-point scale, "Not at all" to "Daily"

<sup>k</sup>Close friends measured on a 4-point scale, "None" to "All"

<sup>l</sup>Hours per week measured on an 8-point scale, "None" to "Over 20"

<sup>m</sup>"Do you pray?" measured on a 2-point scale, "No" or "Yes"

<sup>n</sup>Community service/volunteer activity measured on a 2-point scale, "No" or "Yes"

<sup>o</sup>Conception of God measured on a 2-point scale, "No" or "Yes"

<sup>p</sup>Relationship between science and religion measured on a 2-point scale, "No" or "Yes"

<sup>q</sup>Engagement measured on a 3-point scale, "Not at all" to "To a great extent"

<sup>r</sup>Ultimate spiritual quest measured on a 2-point scale, "No" or "Yes"

<sup>s</sup>Expectation for this college measured on a 4-point scale, "Not important" to "Essential"

<sup>t</sup>Reason for attending college measured on a 3-point scale, "Not important" to "Very important"

<sup>u</sup>State of current views about religious/spiritual matters measured on 2-point scale, "No" or "Yes"