

Purity Culture Survey

1,328 Participants

Clothing must conceal secondary sexual features.

Heterosexual, monogamous, married sex is the only acceptable sexual expression.

All other sexual expression is framed as dangerous, sinful and transgressive. Sexual desire must be controlled.

60 Item Survey

Dichotomous (yes/no) Questions

- Did you have a purity ring?
- Did you make a formal vow or promise to remain pure until marriage?
- Have you ever sought counseling or therapy...?

Open-Ended Text Response Questions

- If you had answered these questions five years ago, in what ways would your answers have been different?
- Lots of "Please explain/specify."

Relationship Satisfaction Scale used by Ashdown

- I feel satisfied with my sex life
- My sexual relationship is close to ideal.
- I wish my sexual relationship was better.

Mosher's Modified Sex-Guilt Scale

- Masturbation helps one feel eased and relaxed.
- Sex relations before marriage are good, in my opinion.
- Unusual sexual practices don't interest me.

Demographics

- Religious affiliations
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sexuality and Relationship Status
- Counseling/Therapy Experience

- High sex guilt
- Higher in trans/nonbinary folks
- Especially high for those in “transgressive” sexual relationships
 - Same-sex relationships
 - Unmarried relationships
 - Non-monogamous relationships

Anticipated
Outcomes

Pearson's Correlation

Correlations Between Sex Guilt and Religious Change

Group(s)	Cis/Hetero <i>n</i> = 385				Cis/Minority <i>n</i> = 325				TGNB/ Minority <i>n</i> = 61			
Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
1. Sex Guilt	23.60	7.52	-		17.98	5.22	-		15.89	3.76	-	
2. Religious Change	1.63	1.77	-.579**	-	2.72	1.49	-.329**	-	2.69	1.60	-.112	-

Note: Cis/Hetero=Cisgender & Heterosexual identifying; Cis/Minority=Cisgender & Minority Sexuality identifying; TGNB/Minority=Transgender/Non-Binary & Minority Sexuality identifying. Mean scores for entire sample: Sex Guilt = 25.11 (SD 7.75); Religious Change = 1.52 (SD 1.66); Total Correlation Between Sex Guilt and Religious Change = -.516**

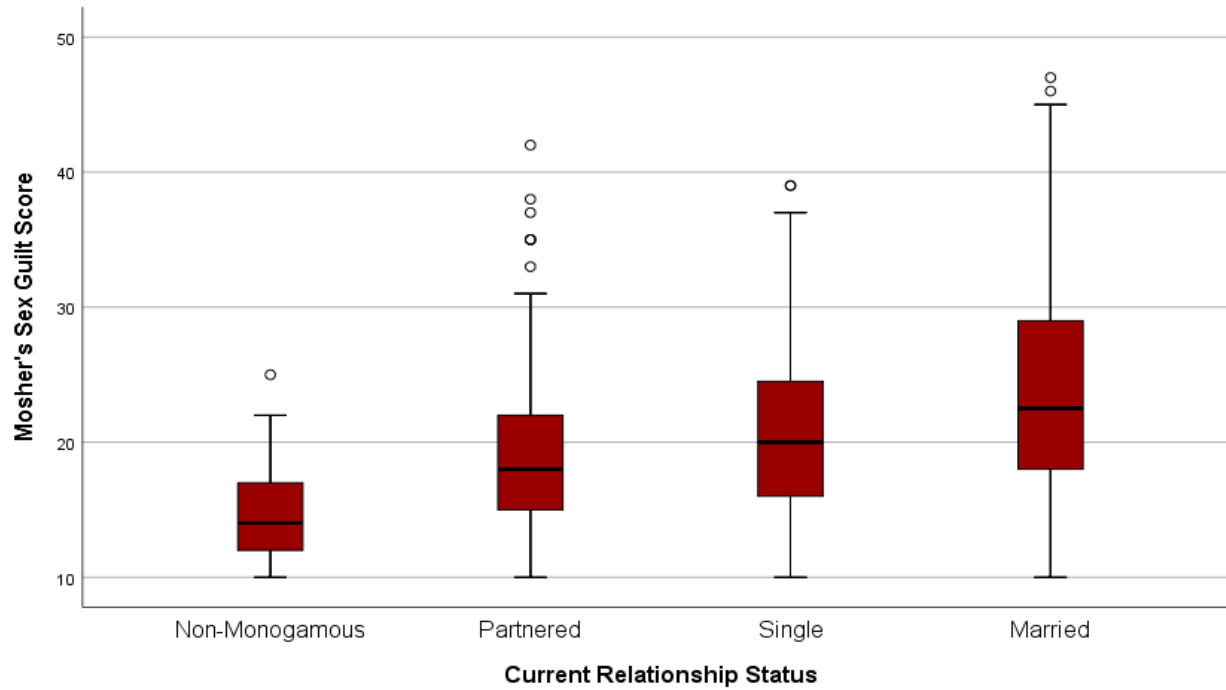
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

To what degree do you agree with this statement:

“I believe that the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.”

Higher agreement correlated with higher sex guilt ($r = .49$, $p < .001$)

Positive correlation between religious
fundamentalism and sex guilt.



One-Way ANOVA on Relationship Status

Sex-Guilt scores ranged from 10 (low guilt) to 50 (high guilt).

Deconstruction

Leaving
one's
church or
religion of
origin,
changing
one's
beliefs
within your
religion of
origin.

Deconstruction Experiences of Participants

- Baptist
- Non-Denominational
- Pentecostal (A/G)
- Nazarene
- Salvation Army

Evangelical
Christian

1

- Just Catholic.

Roman Catholic

2

- Anglican
- Episcopal
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Protestant
- Disciples of Christ
- Wesleyan

Mainline
Protestant

3

- Jehovah's Witness
- LDS/Mormon
- 7th Day Adventist
- Unitarian
- Church of Christ

American
Christian
Movements

4

- Agnostic
- Atheist
- Nones
- Nothing in Particular
- Write-ins like: I love Jesus but I just can't with church"

Non-Affiliated

5

- Pagan
- Wiccan
- Buddhist
- Write-ins like:
 - Nature worship
 - Druidic
 - Hedge witch

Non-Theistic
Spiritual
Practices

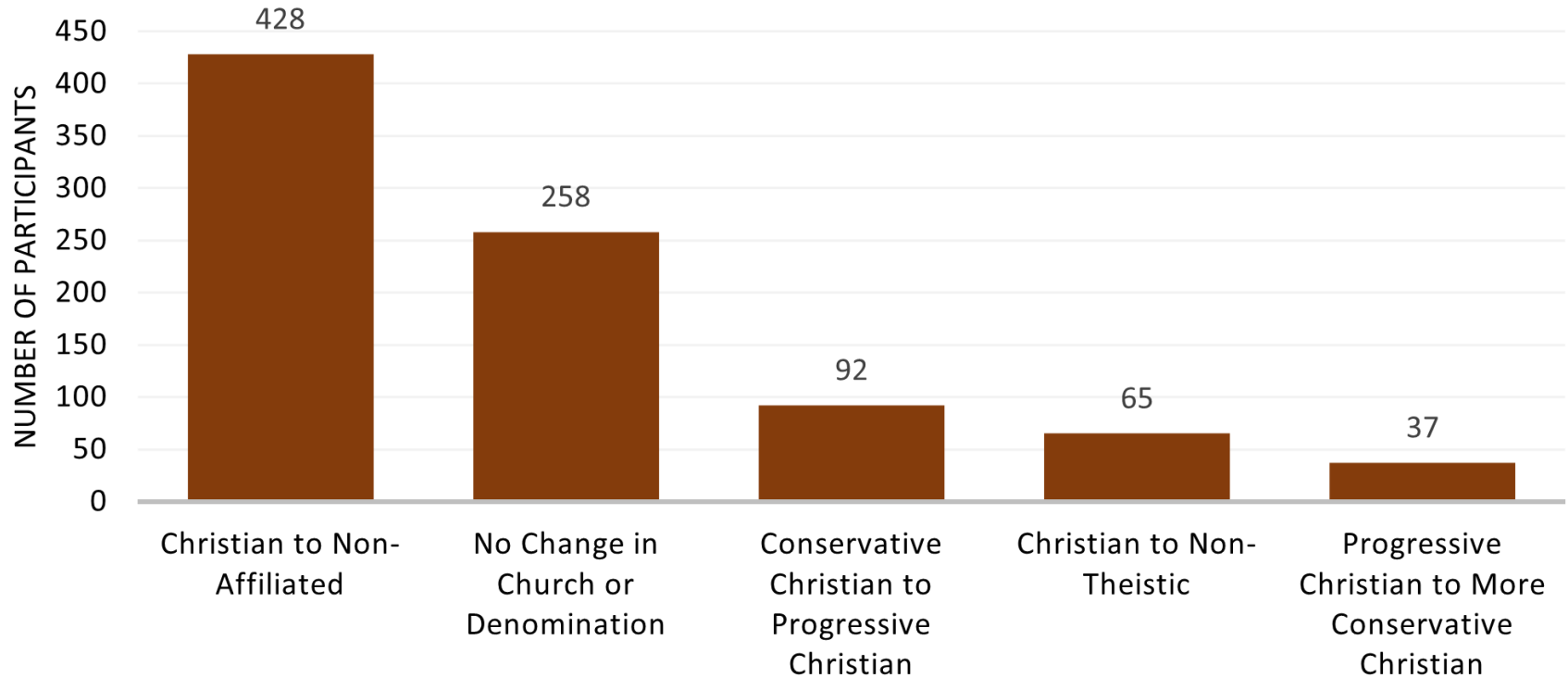
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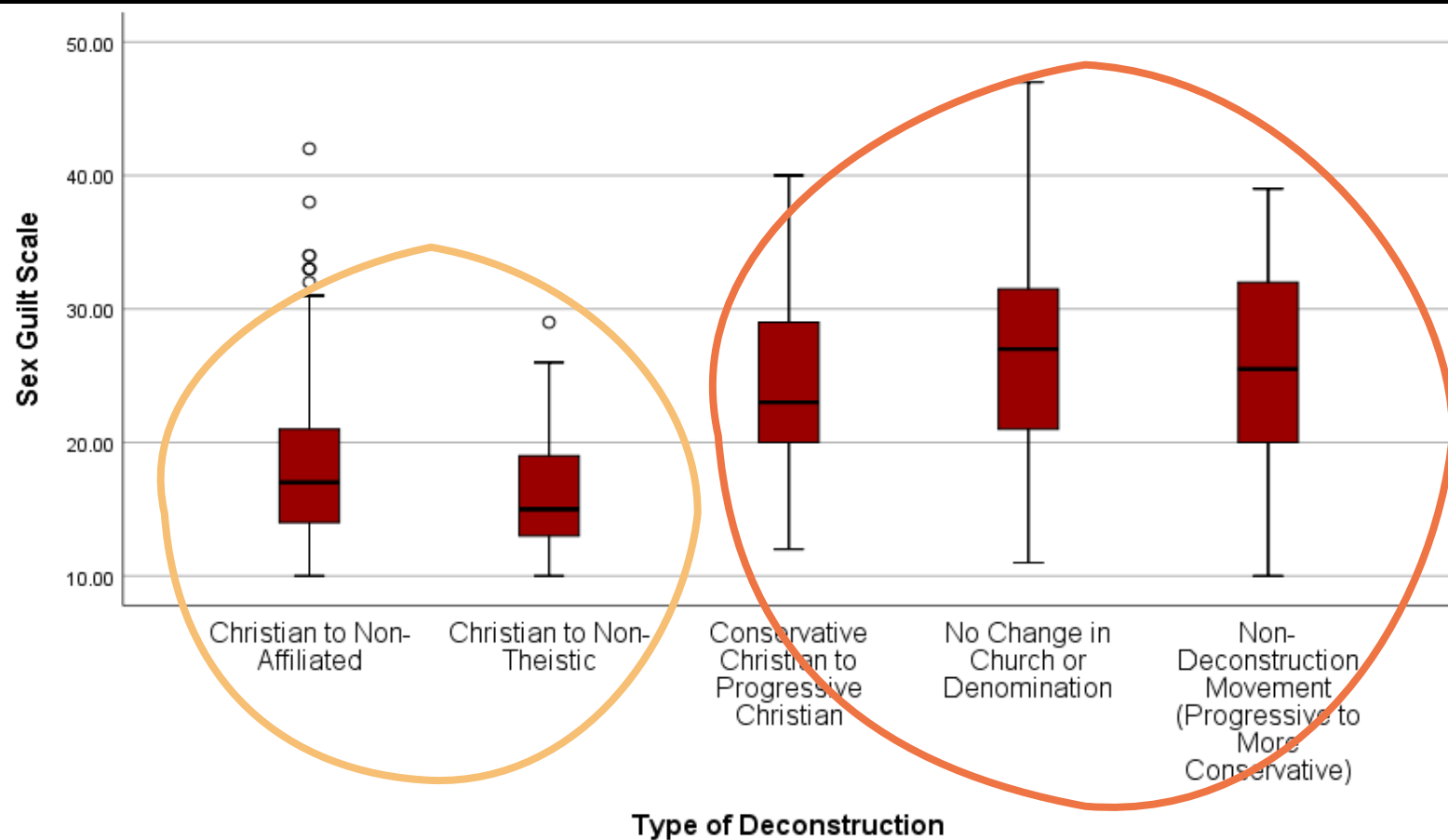
- Islam
- Judaism
- Write-Ins include:
 - Messianic Judaism
 - Nation of Islam

Other
Abrahamic
Religions

7

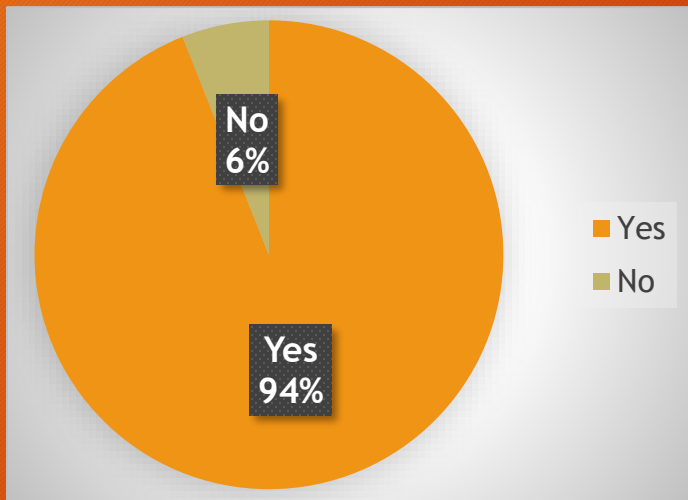
Religious Deconstruction: Change in Church or Denomination



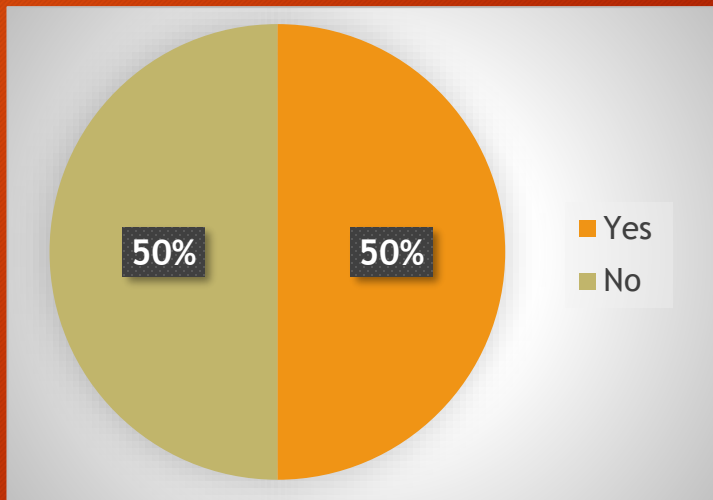


Additional Findings

Q: Have you ever experienced guilt, shame, sexual aversion or some other negative emotion which you feel is related to your experiences in purity culture?



Q: Have you ever sought counseling, therapy or other help with issues you feel were related to your experiences in purity culture?



54.78% indicated that sexual struggles contributed to the end of at least one of their committed relationships or marriages.

Conclusion

Low Sex Guilt:

- Reduction in religiosity
- Low religious fundamentalism
- Deconstruction from Christianity to unaffiliation or non-theistic practices
- Non-monogamous
- Transgender
- Sexual minority folks

High Sex Guilt:

- Married
- Cisgender, heterosexual

Higher Sex Guilt

- Those who have not experienced a significant deconstruction movement.

Recommendations

- Work to encourage therapy for those who experience challenge due to purity culture
- Practitioners working with clients who report evangelical/conservative Christian background should explore whether sexual shame or relationship conflict may be linked to purity culture.
- Increased education is needed for practitioners on this topic, especially:
 - Understanding of how purity culture has impacted their sexuality
 - Be ready to support clients' slow shifting of belief systems, which may be required before comfort and confidence in one's sexuality and orientation can be attained.

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Ongoing updates on this work available at www.puritycultureoutcomes.com

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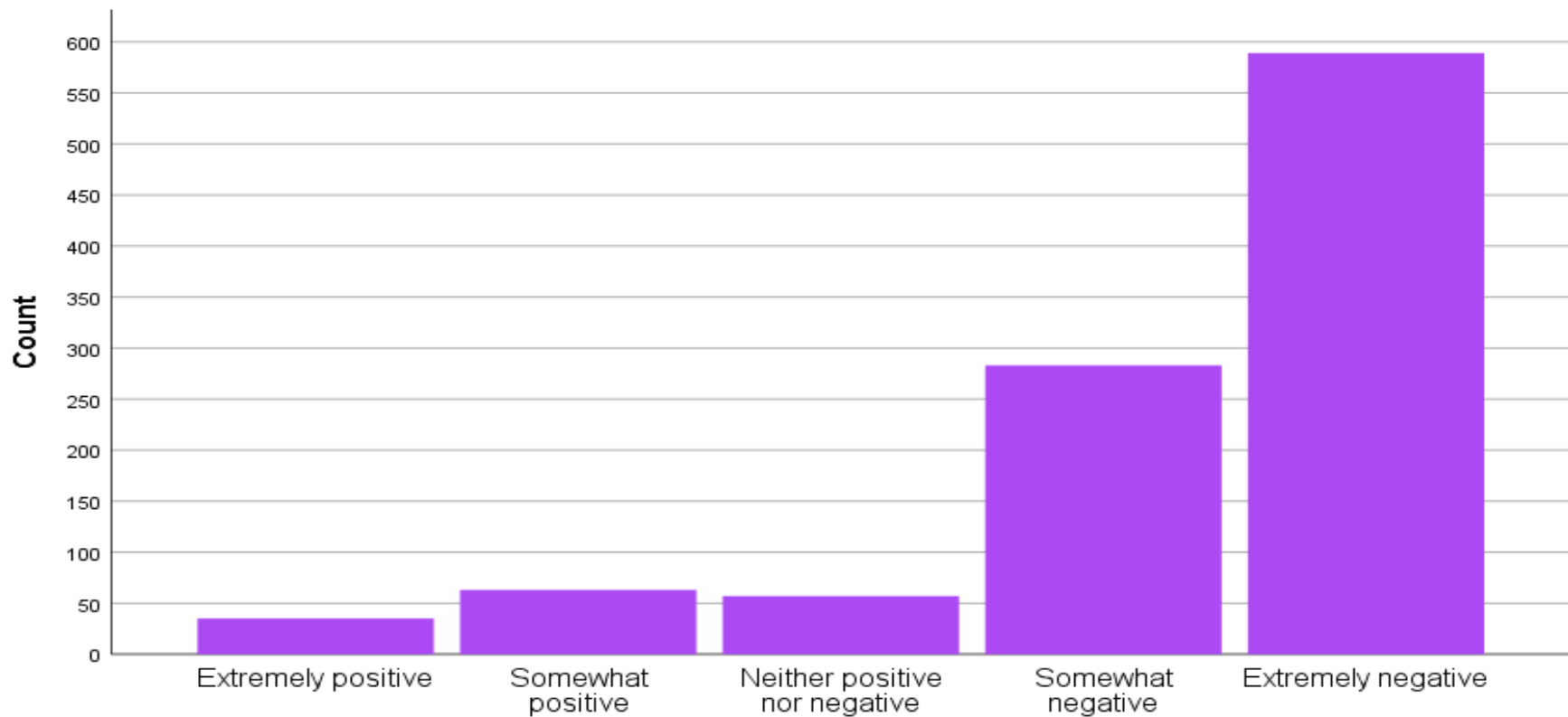
Scales under discussion:

Mosher's Sex-Guilt

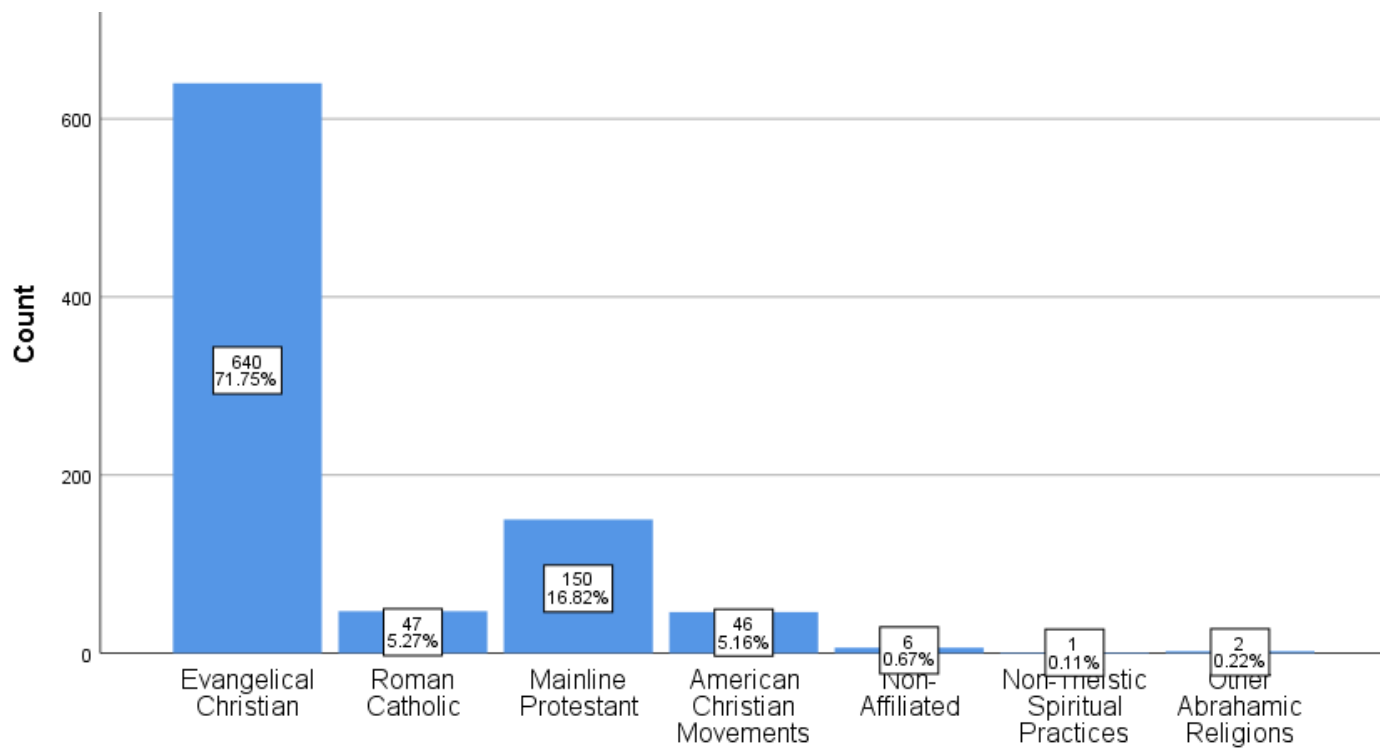
1. Masturbation helps one feel eased and relaxed.
2. Sex relations before marriage are good, in my opinion.
3. Unusual sex practices don't interest me.
4. When I have sexual dreams I try to forget them.
5. "Dirty" jokes in mixed company are in bad taste.
6. When I have sexual desires I enjoy them like all healthy human beings.
7. Unusual sex practices are dangerous to one's health and mental condition.
8. Sex relations before marriage help people adjust.
9. Sex relations before marriage should not be recommended.
10. Unusual sex practices are all right if both partners agree.

Relationship Satisfaction (Ashdown)

1. I feel satisfied with my sex life.
2. My sexual relationship is much better than others' sexual relationships.
3. I wish my sexual relationship was better.
4. My sexual relationship is close to ideal.
5. Our sexual relationship makes me very happy.
6. My current sexual relationship does not fully satisfy my sexual needs.
7. Our sexual relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.



Would you consider your experience of purity culture to have been mostly positive or mostly negative for you?



What church or religion were you raised in?