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in the perceptions of the personality of Jesus

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### Abstract

Oishi et al. (2011) demonstrated that Christians living in Korea and Christians living in the United States differ in their perceptions of Jesus, in a manner that is aligned with cultural values. The present study examined differences in the perception of Jesus within the United States, examining agnostics, atheists, Catholics and nondenominational Christians, specifically assessing perceptions of his personality traits and moral foundations. Differences were observed between Christian groups and religiously unaffiliated groups, especially on the perceived levels of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and respect for Authority. However, among Christians, nondenominational Christians perceived higher levels of Conscientiousness, Openness, and respect for Authority than Catholics did. Finally, agnostics perceived higher levels of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Compassion and lower levels of Neuroticism than atheists did.

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**Introduction**

Oishi, Seol, Koo, and Miao (2011) demonstrated that Christians in Korea and Christians in the United States differed in their descriptions of Jesus. Despite basing their religious beliefs on a common text, when Korean Christians engaged in free association about Jesus, they commonly generated both positively-valenced themes (e.g., love) and negatively-valenced themes (e.g., pain and suffering), while American Christians primarily emphasized positively-valenced themes. Furthermore, when Christians in each country were asked to describe Jesus on measures of personality, American descriptions of Jesus were more extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, open to experience, and happy than Korean descriptions were. This suggests that broad cultural differences may affect Christians' perceptions of Jesus.

However, Oishi et al. (2011) noted that non-Christian respondents might have radically different perceptions of Jesus than Christians do. Because one interpretation of their data suggests that Christians perceive Jesus' personality as a representation of a cultural ideal, non-Christians might have a lower tendency to project these cultural values onto him. If this is the case, the American cultural perception of Jesus may be experiencing a shift as Christian self-identification declines. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), the proportion of religiously unaffiliated Americans has risen dramatically in recent years (i.e., from 16.1% in 2007 to 22.8% in 2014), aligning with a dramatic decrease in the proportion of Americans professing a Christian faith (from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014). Similarly, the proportion of Americans reporting that they believe in God dropped from 71% in 2007 to 63% in 2014, and responses to questions about sources of guidance on right and wrong across this time span

showed a decrease in reliance on religion and increases in reliance on common sense and science. These data suggest that the religious landscape in the United States is experiencing a notable decrease in religious belief (particularly Christian). This might affect general perceptions of Jesus within the United States.

Moreover, Christianity is not a monolithic belief system, and diversity exists even within American Christendom (Wuthnow, 2004). Christianity branches into a wide array of denominations, and these differing beliefs systems have direct impacts on several psychological characteristics (Keller, 2014), including well-being and values. If, as suggested by Oishi et al. (2011), Christians tend to impose their ideals on their perception of Jesus, differences in these perceptions may be observed even among Christians within the same culture and basing their beliefs on the same text.

### **Perceptions of the Personality of Jesus**

**Personality traits based on the Five Factor Model.** The research literature includes many examples of studies that have used standardized personality measures to explore perceptions of the personality of Jesus; however, none have explored group differences based on self-identified religious affiliation. Most of the previous studies on the perceptions of Jesus' personality traits utilized the Five Factor Model (FFM), which includes extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. For example, Piedmont, Williams, and Ciarrocchi (1997) asked 115 American Christians to complete an adjective checklist, identifying which of 300 adjectives best described Jesus' personality. Because these adjectives had been previously linked to the FFM personality traits, Piedmont and colleagues documented a high level of perceived agreeableness and a low level of perceived neuroticism; in other words, these Christians perceived Jesus as being emotionally warm and

concerned about the well-being of others, while also being emotionally stable and well-adjusted. These same 300 adjectives could be used to derive personality scales not associated with the FFM; Piedmont and colleagues documented high levels of perceived Nurturance, Ideal Self, and Nurturing Parent, all of which suggested that the respondents perceived him as being sympathetic and supportive of others.

As described above, Oishi et al. (2011) obtained measures of Jesus' perceived FFM trait scores by asking American and Korean Christians to describe his personality on a 44-item Likert-format measure. Here, however, the focus was not on comparing the scores to a normative standard but rather to compare the American and Korean perceptions to each other; therefore, a "personality profile" was not presented for Jesus. Rather, Oishi and colleagues found that higher scores were obtained for Americans' perceptions of his level of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, relative to the Korean Christians.

Using the FFM to evaluate differences in Christians' perceptions of the personality of Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit, Sharp, Rentfrow, and Gibson (2017) showed that self-identified Christians ascribed more positive personality adjectives to God and Jesus than they did to the Holy Spirit, but they also ascribed more negative personality adjectives to God than they did to Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Using a ten-item Likert-based measure of the FFM, the respondents indicated a perception of Jesus as having high levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness and low levels of neuroticism. These perceptions did not differ between Catholic, Orthodox, and other Christians.

Strawn and Alexander (2017) asked a sample of college students (both Christian and non-Christian), protestant pastors, and protestant laypeople to complete a 240-item measure of the FFM twice, once to describe their own personality traits and once to describe the personality

traits they perceived in Jesus. However, the focus of this research was not to examine group differences in the mean level of the personality test scores but rather to examine whether perceptions of Jesus and perceptions of self were correlated; in fact, there were so few non-Christian students that an analysis of variance between the four groups would not have had sufficient experimental power. Strawn and Alexander demonstrated that Christians' ratings of Jesus were correlated with their ratings of themselves for extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience; however, the self-Jesus correlations were not significant for any of the FFM traits for the non-Christian students.

**Personality traits based on other model of personality.** Rather than utilizing the FFM for creating a profile of Jesus' perceived personality, Francis and Astley (1997) based their assessment of the personality of Jesus on Eysenck's model of traits, which posits three primary personality trait dimensions (i.e., extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism). Three large samples, including early adolescents, late adolescents engaged in the academic study of religion, and self-identified adult Christians, completed a measure of these traits once for themselves and once to describe their perceptions of Jesus. Similar to the results obtained by Strawn and Alexander (2017), Francis and Astley found substantial correlations across all three samples between the respondents' own trait levels and those perceived in Jesus.

Howell (2004) asked Christian college students to describe their perceptions of Jesus using a personality test based on the Jungian model of personality. The majority of the participants perceived him to be an extravert rather than an introvert, and the majority of the participants perceived him to be a feeler rather than a thinker. This suggests that these students perceived him to be energized by the environment and others, and that he sought harmony in decision-making.

In order to examine the differences between Christians' perceptions of Jesus' personality and their perceptions of God's personality, Cummings et al. (2017) asked 272 Christians to complete an adjective checklist twice, once to describe Jesus and once to describe God. Several of these adjectives were rationally clustered by the researchers to provide measures of perceived warmth, sternness, and transcendence. The perceptions of God's and Jesus' personality did not significantly differ for warmth or transcendence, but the respondents used more stern adjectives in their descriptions of God's personality than they did Jesus' personality.

In summary, four main questions have been addressed in the assessment of Jesus' personality. First, some researchers have attempted to obtain an estimate of Jesus' personality by having modern-day Christians complete standard psychological tests, not describing their own personality but instead using these measures to describe their perceptions of Jesus (Howell, 2004; Piedmont et al., 1997). These studies have yielded personality descriptions that emphasized interpersonal and emotional warmth, emotional stability, and extraversion. Second, other researchers have explored the degree to which participants' descriptions of Jesus on standard psychological tests correlate with their own scores on the same tests (Francis & Astley, 1997; Strawn & Alexander, 2017). These studies suggest that the respondents (most of whom were Christian) perceive Jesus to have traits very similar to their own. Third, other researchers have examined whether Christians perceive differences in the personalities of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit by having Christian respondents respond to the same personality test for each deity (Cummings et al., 2017; Sharp et al., 2017). These studies resulted in more stern and emotionally distant personality descriptions for God than for Jesus. Fourth, Oishi et al. (2011) examined cultural differences among Christians in their perceptions of Jesus, finding that Korean Christians and American Christians differ in their perceptions in a manner than aligns with



cultural norms and expectations. To date, however, no research has examined whether Christians and religiously unaffiliated individuals perceive the personality of the historical Jesus differently; the present study was conducted to examine this unaddressed question.

### **Psychological Differences Between Christians and Religiously Unaffiliated**

The research literature also includes many examples of studies that differentiated between Christians and religiously unaffiliated individuals on a wide range of characteristics, as summarized by Streib and Klein (2013). For example, Simpson and Rios (2016) showed that Christians and atheists differ on the degree to which the foundations of their moral beliefs were grounded on the five dimensions comprising Moral Foundations Theory; for Christians more than atheists, a determination of right and wrong was grounded on the extent to which an action reflected loyalty, purity and sanctity, and respect for authority, but differences were not observed on the basis of either caring compassion or reciprocal fairness. Differences between Christians and religiously unaffiliated individuals have also been documented on the recollection of positive emotions about positive interpersonal experiences (Burriss & Petrican, 2011), the enjoyment of videogames (Burriss & Redden, 2012), preferences for different types of humor (Schweizer & Ott, 2016), emotional and interpersonal linguistic style on Twitter (Ritter, Preston, & Hernandez, 2014), reports of sadness in response to reading tragic news articles (Burriss & Redden, 2012), the implicit positivity of the recognition of one's own face (Ma & Han, 2012), and the tolerance for contradiction (Uzarevic, Saroglou, & Clobert, 2017).

### **Rationale for the Present Study**

Although the research literature has examples of studies that have explored the perception of the personality of Jesus and other studies that explored personality and behavioral differences between Christians and atheists, no studies have explored the ways in which perceptions of the

historical Jesus vary both within and between religiously unaffiliated and Christian samples. The purpose of the present study was to explore differences in perceptions of Jesus among Americans. Specifically, this study sought to explore perceptions of Jesus' personality and his moral belief foundations, examining whether differences can be observed between Christian and religiously unaffiliated Americans, and whether differences can be observed between Christians from different religious affiliations.

## **Method**

### **Screening Survey**

A screening survey was created to be administered within the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform; more information about MTurk is provided by Rouse (2015). Demographic information (including religious affiliation) was provided by 2,000 MTurk workers located in the United States, each of whom was paid \$0.05. The most common religious self-identifications were agnostic ( $n = 237$ ), atheist ( $n = 226$ ), Catholic ( $n = 258$ ), and nondenominational Christian ( $n = 181$ ). A separate MTurk Qualification Level was set for each of these four groups, allowing separate surveys to be available to each group.

### **Measures**

Four identical surveys were created to be administered within the MTurk platform; the four forms of the survey required previous self-identification as (respectively) agnostic, atheist, Catholic, or nondenominational Christian. The surveys began with informed consent information, followed by demographic questions, questions about frequency of religious behaviors, and beliefs about the historicity and divinity of Jesus.

Next, survey respondents were instructed to think about the personality of Jesus, whether or not they believed that he was a historical figure and whether or not they believed that he was

supernatural or divine. They were then asked to describe his personality using the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), a measure of the FFM dimensions: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to experience. Each of the five scales includes two items, one of which is positively keyed (e.g., “Extraverted, enthusiastic” for Extraversion) and one of which is negatively keyed (e.g., “Reserved, quiet” for Extraversion). The ten TIPI items were presented on a 7-point scale, with options anchored at 1 (i.e., “Extremely inaccurate description of Jesus”) and 7 (i.e., “Extremely accurate description of Jesus”). Scores were obtained by reversing the scale for the negatively keyed items and averaging the two item responses.

Respondents were also asked to describe Jesus’ ethical beliefs using the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham, Nosek, Haidt, Iyer, Koleva, & Ditto, 2011), a measure of the tendency to base one’s morality on the themes of Authority, Compassion, Fairness, Loyalty, and Purity. The MFQ begins with 15 items (three for each of the five scales) describing principles that might be related to a person’s sense of right and wrong (e.g., “Whether or not someone suffered emotionally” for Compassion). These items were presented on a 6-point scale, with options anchored at 1 (i.e., “Not at all relevant to Jesus’ ethics”) and 6 (i.e., “Extremely relevant to Jesus’ ethics”). The MFQ also includes 15 items (three for each of the five scales) that assess the degree of agreement with various ethically relevant statements (e.g., “Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue” for Compassion). These items were presented on a 6-point scale with options anchored at 1 (i.e., “Jesus would strongly disagree”) and 6 (i.e., “Jesus would strongly agree”). None of the MFQ items are negatively keyed, so the five scale scores were obtained by averaging the six items for each scale.

The survey ended with an Opt-In/Opt-Out item, as recommended by Rouse (2015) for MTurk research. This item asked respondents whether or not they had answered the survey attentively and accurately and therefore whether or not their data should be included in analyses, assuring the respondents that they would be paid regardless of their response and that their response would not affect their MTurk ratings. Rouse (2015) demonstrated that the inclusion of this item yields MTurk data reliability comparable to that observed in community samples.

The survey is archived and publicly accessible at <http://osf.io/qhcn3>; since each of the forms were identical with the exception of the individuals prequalified to take it, only one form has been archived. The four survey forms allowed responses from 80 pre-qualified agnostics, atheists, Catholics, and nondenominational Christians, and all 320 participants were paid \$1.75 for the completion of the 51-item survey.

### **Participants**

Participants would have been excluded if their response on the Opt-In/Opt-Out question indicated that their data should be excluded, but all participants indicated that their data should be retained. Participants were excluded from analyses if their religious affiliation self-description did not align with their response on the screening survey. This resulted in four samples of individuals who consistently identified as agnostics, atheists, Catholics, or nondenominational Christians. The data set is archived and publicly accessible at <http://osf.io/qhcn3>

**Agnostic sample.** On the form of the survey for which previously self-identified agnostics were prequalified, 63 respondents continued to self-identify as agnostic; 39 identified as female, 23 as male, and 1 as transgender female. Ages ranged from 22 to 71 ( $M = 36.94$ ,  $SD = 11.49$ ). The sample was overrepresented by those identifying as Euro-American or White ( $n = 52$ ), but included those identifying as African-American or Black ( $n = 4$ ), Asian-American ( $n =$

4), and Latino/a or Hispanic ( $n = 3$ ); participants could make multiple racial/ethnic self-identifications. The median and modal response to a question concerning whether they believed Jesus was divine or supernatural was “Probably not”, but the median and modal response to a question concerning whether they believed that Jesus was a real historical figure was “Probably so”. The median and modal response to questions about frequency of praying, reading a Bible, and attending a formal religious service was “Less often than once a year” for all three questions.

**Atheist sample.** Of the individuals prequalified to complete the atheist form of the survey, 72 respondents were retained for the final sample, including 35 respondents who self-identified as female, 34 as male, 2 as transgender male, and 1 as gender-nonconforming. Ages ranged from 23 to 72 ( $M = 35.39$ ,  $SD = 10.38$ ). The participants self-identified as Euro-American or White ( $n = 59$ ), Asian-American ( $n = 9$ ), Latino/a or Hispanic ( $n = 4$ ), African-American or Black ( $n = 2$ ), Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ( $n = 1$ ), and Native American ( $n = 1$ ), with one participant who opted not to provide a racial/ethnic self-identification. The median and modal response to a question concerning whether they believed Jesus was divine or supernatural was “Definitely not”, but the median and modal response to a question concerning whether they believed that Jesus was a real historical figure was “Probably so”. The median and modal responses to questions about frequency of praying, reading a Bible, and attending a formal religious service was “Less often than once a year” for all three questions.

**Catholic sample.** The Catholic sample included 72 respondents comprised of 43 participants who self-identified as female and 29 who self-identified as male, with ages ranging from 19 to 79 ( $M = 44.68$ ,  $SD = 15.96$ ). Participants self-identified as Euro-American or White ( $n = 60$ ), Asian-American ( $n = 6$ ), Latino/a or Hispanic ( $n = 4$ ), African-American or Black ( $n = 1$ ), and Other ( $n = 1$ ), with one participant who opted not to provide a racial/ethnic self-

identification. The median response to the question regarding Jesus' divinity was "Probably so", but the modal response to this question was "Definitely so". Both the median and modal response to the question regarding Jesus' historicity was "Definitely so". The median and modal response for the frequency of praying was "More than once a week". Although the modal response for the frequency of church attendance was "Less often than once a year", the median response was "More than once a year". The modal response for the frequency of reading the Bible was "Less often than once a year", but the median response was "Once a year".

**Nondenominational Christian sample.** The nondenominational Christian sample included 58 respondents, 44 of whom self-identified as female and 14 of whom self-identified as male, with ages ranging from 21 to 73 ( $M = 42.26$ ,  $SD = 11.48$ ). Participants self-identified as Euro-American or White ( $n = 48$ ), African-American or Black ( $n = 9$ ), Asian-American ( $n = 2$ ), and Latino/a or Hispanic ( $n = 2$ ). The median and modal responses to both the question regarding Jesus' divinity and the question regarding Jesus' historicity were "Definitely so". The median and modal response to the question about the frequency of praying was "Once a day or more". For the question about the frequency of attending church, the modal response was "Less often than once a year", but the median response was "More than once a year". For the question about the frequency of reading the Bible, the modal response was "Less often than once a year", but the median response was "More than once a month."

## Results

On the MFQ, the Authority and Fairness scales initially had internal consistency estimates lower than .70; however, each of these scales had one specific item that detrimentally impacted reliability. These items were removed from these two scales, and the scores were recalculated. As noted by Gosling et al. (2003), TIPI scores often yield reliability estimates lower

than the levels generally desired, because internal consistency estimates have limited applicability for two-item scales, and eliminating one item from a two-item scale would be detrimental; therefore, these five scales were not adjusted. Descriptive statistics for the MFQ and TIPI scales for the whole data set and the four samples are provided in Table 1.

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) suggested that the four groups differed on TIPI scores ( $F = 3.99, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .07$ ). Because of the significant overall effect, follow-up Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were performed for each of the five scales. Although differences in perceived Extraversion were not statistically significant ( $F = 1.65, p = .18, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ ), differences were significant for Conscientiousness ( $F = 14.66, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .15$ ), Agreeableness ( $F = 9.97, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .10$ ), Neuroticism ( $F = 8.24, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .09$ ), and Openness ( $F = 4.35, p = .005, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .05$ ). The results of post hoc LSD paired comparisons are presented in Table 2.

A MANOVA suggested that the four groups differed on MFQ scores ( $F = 3.99, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .07$ ). Follow-up ANOVAs did not identify significant differences on perceived Fairness importance ( $F = 2.51, p = .06, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ ), but differences were significant for the perceived importance of Authority ( $F = 11.17, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .11$ ), Purity ( $F = 6.18, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .07$ ), Loyalty ( $F = 5.98, p = .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$ ), and Compassion ( $F = 3.44, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .04$ ). The results of post hoc LSD paired comparisons are presented in Table 2.

### **Discussion**

Although Oishi et al. (2011) noted several cultural differences in the perception of Jesus, the results of the present study demonstrated that differences also exist within the American culture. Consistently, both Christian groups were more likely to perceive Jesus as having high levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and to perceive that his morality was grounded

on respect for Authority than the unaffiliated groups did. Less consistently, general trends were also observed in that the Christian groups were more likely to perceive his morality as being grounded in concerns for Loyalty and Purity, and the unaffiliated groups were more likely to perceive him with a high level of Neuroticism.

As noted above, however, American Christianity is not a monolithic belief system, and differences were also observed between the Catholics and nondenominational Christians. Nondenominational Christians tended to perceive Jesus as having higher levels of Openness, Conscientiousness, and morality grounded on respect for authority than the Catholics did.

Less expected were the differences observed among religiously unaffiliated groups. Agnostics were more likely to perceived Jesus as having high levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and a morality grounded on Compassion, whereas atheists were more likely to perceive him as having a higher level of Neuroticism.

As noted by Oishi et al. (2011), Jesus is widely known within the American culture; in fact, all four groups were generally in agreement that he was an actual historical figure. However, even within one culture, the self-identification of religious affiliation was strongly related to perceptions of his traits and moral foundations. Oishi et al. hypothesized that non-Christian Americans would have less positive perceptions of him since he would be less likely to be perceived as a self-ideal; this prediction is supported by the lower levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and the generally higher levels of Neuroticism perceived by the atheists and agnostics relative to the Christians. However, these results also uncovered differences among Christians, so future research should be conducted to determine whether these differences in the perceptions of Jesus are systematically related to differences in self ideals between different Christian affiliations. Although it is not intuitive to expect that the differences between atheists



and agnostics would be related to differences in self ideals, additional research should be conducted to examine differences in the worldviews of religiously unaffiliated individuals to examine the reasons for systematic differences in the perceptions of Jesus.

The results of the present study do not undermine the observation of cultural differences reported by Oishi et al. However, they add information about intra-cultural variance, both across a divide of Christian belief and disbelief, and even within similar belief systems. Although perceptions of Jesus are ultimately based on one single textual source, the results suggest that personal religious belief systems may have a dramatic effect on perceptions of his personality and morality system.

As with all studies, there are limits to the generalizability of these findings. Most notably, this study only contrasted four religious affiliation groups and therefore fails to fully represent the diversity of religious belief systems in the United States. These four religious affiliation groups were selected because they were the largest subsets of the initial screening survey, the only ones large enough to reasonably expect sufficient participation in the follow-up survey. Although Catholics and nondenominational Christians represent two distinctly different branches of the Christian belief system, one would not expect these two affiliations to fully capture the diversity of Christianity. Additionally, the Pew Research Center (2015) demonstrated that among religiously unaffiliated individuals there is a growing number who self-identify not as agnostic or atheist but simply as “nothing in particular”. Similarly, there were not enough participants who self-identified with other religious belief systems to include a religious non-Christian perspective. Nevertheless, these four groups represent distinctly different religious worldviews, and demonstrate the variability in perceptions of Jesus associated with religious affiliation.

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Table 1

*Means (and standard deviations) for perceptions of Jesus on the Moral Foundations Questionnaire and Ten Item Personality Inventory scales for the full data set and the four religious affiliation samples.*

Scale	Full	Agnostic	Atheist	Catholic	Nondenom.
Extraversion (alpha = .62)	4.47 (1.39)	4.79 (1.34)	4.29 (1.57)	4.38 (1.31)	4.47 (1.26)
Neuroticism (alpha = .74)	1.81 (1.00)	1.88 (0.96)	2.22 (1.27)	1.63 (0.79)	1.43 (0.65)
Agreeableness (alpha = .55)	6.02 (1.10)	5.91 (1.08)	5.52 (1.24)	6.35 (0.73)	6.35 (0.88)
Conscientiousness (alpha = .76)	6.37 (0.91)	6.26 (0.79)	5.91 (1.27)	6.56 (0.61)	6.84 (0.29)
Openness (alpha = .62)	5.42 (1.28)	5.43 (1.35)	5.06 (1.37)	5.40 (1.22)	5.86 (1.02)
Authority (alpha = .74)	2.45 (1.07)	2.16 (0.98)	2.12 (1.02)	2.56 (0.96)	3.04 (1.12)
Compassion (alpha = .73)	4.17 (0.76)	4.22 (0.77)	3.96 (0.80)	4.35 (0.66)	4.15 (0.74)
Fairness (alpha = .76)	3.70 (0.90)	3.77 (0.96)	3.50 (0.86)	3.89 (0.77)	3.64 (1.01)
Loyalty (alpha = .70)	2.44 (0.92)	2.33 (0.83)	2.14 (0.81)	2.71 (0.85)	2.63 (1.08)
Purity (alpha = .84)	3.47 (1.09)	3.39 (1.13)	3.08 (1.20)	3.61 (0.97)	3.84 (0.88)

*Note.* “Nondenom” = Nondenominational Christian

Table 2

*Effect-size  $d$  values (and significance levels) for group contrasts among four religious self-identification groups on perceptions of Jesus*

Scale	Agnostics & Atheists	Agnostics & Catholics	Agnostics & Nondenom.	Atheists & Catholics	Atheists & Nondenom.	Catholics & Nondenom.
Extraversion	0.34 (.04)	0.31 (.09)	0.25 (.19)	-0.06 (.70)	-0.13 (.48)	-0.07 (.73)
Neuroticism	<b>-0.30 (.04)</b>	0.28 (.14)	<b>0.55 (.01)</b>	<b>0.56 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>0.78 (&lt;.01)</b>	0.28 (.23)
Agreeableness	<b>0.34 (.04)</b>	<b>-0.48 (.02)</b>	<b>-0.45 (.02)</b>	<b>-0.82 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.77 (&lt;.01)</b>	0.01 (.99)
Conscientiousness	<b>0.33 (.02)</b>	<b>-0.43 (.04)</b>	<b>-0.97 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.65 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-1.01 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.59 (.02)</b>
Openness	0.27 (.09)	0.02 (.90)	-0.36 (.06)	-0.26 (.11)	<b>-0.66 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.41 (.04)</b>
Authority	0.04 (.81)	<b>-0.41 (.02)</b>	<b>-0.84 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.44 (.01)</b>	<b>-0.86 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.46 (.01)</b>
Compassion	<b>0.33 (.04)</b>	-0.18 (.32)	0.09 (.60)	<b>-0.53 (&lt;.01)</b>	-0.25 (.15)	0.29 (.13)
Fairness	0.30 (.08)	-0.14 (.43)	0.13 (.43)	-0.48 (<.01)	-0.15 (.37)	0.28 (.11)
Loyalty	0.23 (.22)	<b>-0.45 (.02)</b>	-0.31 (.07)	<b>-0.69 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.51 (&lt;.01)</b>	0.08 (.62)
Purity	0.27 (.09)	-0.21 (.25)	<b>-0.44 (.02)</b>	<b>-0.49 (&lt;.01)</b>	<b>-0.72 (&lt;.01)</b>	-0.25 (.20)

*Note.* Positive  $d$  values indicate the first group had a higher mean than the second group. Statistical significance levels are based on LSD post hoc contrasts ( $p \leq .05$ ). Statistically significant contrasts that were observed in the context of significant overall effects are presented in boldface in order to aid in the observation of trends. In the absence of statistically significant overall effects, group contrasts for the Extraversion and Fairness scales should not be interpreted, but they are presented for completeness of information. “Nondenom” = Nondenominational Christian