Current Studies in the Sociology of Religion

Edited by
Kent R. Kerley

Printed Edition of the Special Issue Published in *Religions*

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Current Studies in the Sociology of Religion

MDPI

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Editor's Introduction to
"Current Studies in the Sociology of Religion"

The study of religion as an academic discipline is a rather recent development in colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. Although French sociologist Émile Durkheim wrote extensively about the role of religion in public life in the early 1900s, it was not until the 1960s that researchers from social science backgrounds, predominately sociology, began the formal, empirical study of religion as a social force that may impact a wide range of individual and societal outcomes.

This special issue of *Religions* brings together scholars from around the world who use diverse methodologies to study the impact of religion on a broad range of outcomes. The issue thus provides a unique snapshot of current work being done in the sociology of religion. In these 18 articles, readers will find a great mix of data-driven studies (both quantitative and qualitative) and conceptual/review papers. The articles also reflect a diversity of authors, locations, topics, and faith traditions. I am pleased that many of the papers include undergraduate and graduate students as co-authors. These collaborations are important for maintaining the continuity of high-quality research over time.

One final feature is that I asked authors to include a section at or near the end of each article on how their work fits into the sociology of religion literature and how others may contribute. It is not uncommon for authors to conclude their studies with only a passing reference to overall significance for the field, future directions in research, or policy implications. Given the deeply personal and public aspects of faith, it is crucial that we think carefully about the implications of our work.

Section I is entitled *Empirical Research on Congregations and Denominational Variations*. The eight papers in this section address important sociological topics such as infant mortality, religious participation, fertility, racial segregation, marital naming, congregational strictness, housing preferences, and marriage timing. These topics are analyzed within the context of faith congregations and denominational differences on the topics. In all of these studies, the authors used well-respected data sources, such as the Baylor Religion Survey, General Social Survey, Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey, and the World Values Survey.

Section II is entitled *Empirical Research on Social Institutions and Deviance*. The five papers in this section focus less on specific denominational variations in particular outcomes, and more on how religion impacts the lives of adherents. The authors address how religiosity – an attitudinal and behavioral commitment to a faith tradition – may impact foster care and adoption decisions, crime desistance, recovery from drug addiction, fear of crime, and faith-based schooling.

Section III is entitled *Conceptual and Review Papers*. Rather than data-driven papers as in the previous sections, this section contains in-depth reviews of these five religion-oriented topics: prayer, politics, faith-based prison programs, varieties of religious and spiritual practice in prison, and Hinduism in India. The review papers include cogent summaries of academic and, where applicable, popular literature.

I hope that readers will be pleased with the breadth, depth, and diversity of these 18 papers. I thank the authors for these important works, as well as editors and staff members from *Religions* and MDPI. May we all be proud of this project.

Kent R. Kerley
Guest Editor

Section I: Empirical Research on Congregations and Denominational Variations

Religion and Infant Mortality in the U.S.:
A Preliminary Study of Denominational Variations

John P. Bartkowski, Xiaohe Xu and Ginny E. Garcia

Abstract: Prior research has identified a number of antecedents to infant mortality, but has been focused on either structural (demographic) forces or medical (public health) factors, both of which ignore potential cultural influences. Our study introduces a cultural model for explaining variations in infant mortality, one focused on the role of community-level religious factors. A key impetus for our study is well-established religious variations in adult mortality at the community level. Seeking to extend the growing body of research on contextual-level effects of religion, this study examines the impact of religious ecology (*i.e.*, the institutional market share of particular denominational traditions) on county-level infant mortality in the U.S. Analyses of congregational census and Kids Count data reveal that a high prevalence of Catholic and most types of conservative Protestant churches are associated with lower rates of infant mortality when compared with counties that feature fewer Catholic and conservative Protestant congregations. However, communities with a large proportion of Pentecostal churches exhibit significantly higher infant mortality rates. After discussing the implications of these findings, we specify various directions for future research.

Introduction

Infant mortality, or the number of infant deaths among children one year-old and younger per 1,000 live births, has long been recognized as a preeminent indicator of the overall health among nations [1,2]. As a cross-cultural and historical marker of social development, the infant mortality rate (or IMR) is a critical component of quality of life indices. Such indices are regularly used by international and domestic governmental agencies, as well as prominent nonprofits concerned about the welfare of children, to rank nations, regions, and states in terms of their social development and their dedication to the well-being of their most vulnerable citizens.

The United States presents a vexing dilemma with respect to infant mortality. Although the U.S. maintains a remarkably high per capita income, its IMRs are disproportionately elevated when compared with other developed nations in the West [1,3]. The infant mortality paradox in the United States continues to generate concern among public health officials and policymakers, many of whom have called for immediate action to reduce the unusually high IMRs in the U.S. [1,4].

Rather alarmingly, the most recent efforts to reduce U.S. IMRs have yielded less than stellar results. As part of its *Healthy People 2010* initiative, the U.S. had been aiming to reduce its IMR to 4.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births [5]. However, most of the first decade of the twenty-first century came and went with little significant change in the U.S. infant mortality rate. The U.S. IMR was 6.89 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 and had dropped only slightly to 6.86 in 2005,

and such stagnant results have not been observed since the 1950s [1]. Quite tellingly, the U.S. has now revised its 2020 objectives to aim for an IMR of 6.0 per 1,000 live births [6].

This study explores the potential effects of religious ecology (that is, community-level denominational market share) on this important social indicator. Why might community-level religiosity be expected to influence the infant mortality rates observed across U.S. counties? Perhaps most notably, the respective market shares of various faith traditions have been shown to influence adult mortality and morbidity patterns across the U.S. [7,8]. Moreover, religious institutions often act as advocates for the well-being of families and children [9,10], such that family ministry programs play a central role in the work of many congregations [11]. Given such prior research, we surmise that religious ecology might influence county-level infant mortality rates in the U.S.

We begin our investigation of this phenomenon with a review of the literature on infant mortality. We then proceed to expand on our rationale for examining how religious ecology might influence infant mortality, arguing for a cultural model to explain IMRs net of structural factors. Next, we describe the population-based sources of data used for the this study, including Kids Count Data, the Glenmary Census of Churches, and select U.S. Census data from the year 2000. After reviewing the results of our investigation, we conclude by considering the implications and limitations of our study while also specifying directions for future research.

Infant Mortality: Summary of Key Antecedents

Scholars have long examined health disparities across social groups (communities, states, nations) [12-17], and the study of infant mortality has extended this line of research to explain differentials in live birthrates. One avenue of research pursued by demographers studying this issue has explored cross-national patterns in infant mortality [3,14,18-19]. In general, these studies have linked high rates of infant mortality to differential access to socioeconomic resources, unsanitary living conditions in developing countries, and restricted health care access [3,19].

Another line of research, more germane to our investigation, has focused on infant mortality differentials within the United States [3,20-21]. Scholars focused on the U.S. have pinpointed three community-level factors associated with inordinately high infant mortality rates. First, and not surprisingly, infant mortality is highly correlated with social inequality, primarily in the form of income and racial stratification [3,22-25]. Concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage has been well documented to create a standard of living that threatens the welfare of families and the well-being of children [26]. Poverty constricts resources that might otherwise be used to promote preventive and, quite significantly in this case, prenatal health care. Within the U.S., infant mortality rates are significantly higher in regions, states, and counties marked by concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage.

In addition, infant mortality varies by locale [24,27]. Although one might expect that rural areas would have higher infant mortality rates due to the lack of a health care infrastructure, metropolitan areas typically exhibit higher rates of infant mortality [27]. This pattern is explained by the concentrated poverty (compromised health facilities, overcrowded housing, and disadvantaged neighborhoods) that marks many urban core areas in the United States [28,29].

Finally, and not unrelated to the foregoing point, health care access has also been linked to infant mortality [3,15,24]. Infant mortality tends to be significantly greater in communities marked by a lower number of hospital beds and physicians per capita. While the links between health care inaccessibility and higher infant mortality rates are again intuitive, there are several possible mechanisms at work here. The provision of preventive prenatal and infant care may be limited by a restricted health care infrastructure. Moreover, when health complications arise during deliveries and postpartum, the ability for successful medical intervention may be hampered in communities lacking a sufficient health care infrastructure.

Religious Ecology and Infant Mortality: Toward a Cultural Model

What is religiosity? To most Americans and many scholars, religiosity is conceptualized in terms of individual beliefs, convictions, and practices. In this sense, religiosity is commonly defined in terms of a person's beliefs about God or sacred scripture (e.g., images of God as authoritative father *vs.* loving friend, views about the inerrancy of the Bible), the subjective importance of religion (e.g., religious salience with respect to major life decisions), or an individual's religious practices (e.g., frequency of attendance at weekly worship services, affiliation with a particular denomination). This study is founded on the insight that religion is not solely an individual attribute. It can also function as a group property that influences the climate and quality of life in a community.

Taking a cue from previous research, we use the term "religious ecology" to examine the community-level character and influence of religion [7,30-33]. Religious ecology can be defined in a number different ways. Perhaps the crudest measure of religious ecology is the raw number of congregations (e.g., churches, synagogues, and mosques) or congregants in a given community, adjusted for the population of that community. More sophisticated measures of religious ecology examine the "market share" of different types of congregations (e.g., conservative Protestant *vs.* mainline Protestant *vs.* Catholic), the prevalence of civically engaged denominations (*i.e.*, a combination of religious groups that are outreach-oriented), and even the presence of faith-based organizations (e.g., religious nonprofit social service agencies) in a community, again with respect to the size of the local population.

The review of prior scholarship featured above demonstrates that, to this point, scholars have utilized either demographic or public health models to explain infant mortality rates. In explaining IMR differentials, demographic models analyze the influence of socioeconomic disadvantage while public health scholars examine gaps in health care provision and access. By pointing to the possible influence of religious congregations on IMRs, we argue here for a cultural model. This cultural model recognizes that religious congregations can influence collective norms whose force is evident in contextual-level outcomes, including health outcomes such as IMRs. It is this insight that drives a great deal of the research on the role of religion in forming moral communities [31,33]. Congregations can create a moral ethos in communities that, in a very Durkheimian fashion, yields distinctive social outcomes, including those related to community-level morbidity and mortality patterns.

Beyond the complement that a cultural model might offer to existing approaches, why might community-level religiosity influence infant mortality? Three possible reasons are immediately apparent. First, a great deal of research has demonstrated a clear linkage between religion and health. At an individual level, religious involvement is inversely associated with morbidity and mortality [34-40]. Scholars who have observed this relationship have argued that religious people adhere to healthier lifestyles and practices, experience enhanced social support, and have greater coping resources than their non-religious counterparts [41,42].

The robustness of such findings notwithstanding, survey-based studies on religious differences in individual health are insufficient to warrant an ecological investigation of religion and infant mortality. As demographers are quick to point out, patterns that are observed at one level of analysis (*i.e.*, among individuals) cannot be presumed to operate identically at another (*i.e.*, among whole populations). So, what additional evidence is there that might justify an ecological investigation of religion and infant mortality?

As it turns out, community-level religiosity has been linked to collective mortality patterns (population-based death rates). A recent study by Blanchard and colleagues [7] documented that mortality rates were significantly higher in conservative Protestant communities than in counties dominated by other faith traditions such as mainline Protestantism and Catholicism. Blanchard *et al.* explained these differences by arguing that the otherworldly, anti-institutional characteristics of conservative Protestantism led to a diminished investment in community infrastructures that promote this-worldly pursuits such as health care. Interestingly, Blanchard and colleagues also performed decomposition analyses to examine mortality rates across communities characterized by different types of conservative Protestant churches, namely, fundamentalist, Pentecostal, evangelical, and other conservative Protestant congregations, with the last of these a residual category for Bible churches not clearly situated in any of the first three subgroups. Blanchard and colleagues found that communities characterized by a larger number of fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches had higher mortality rates than those dominated by their evangelical and other conservative Protestant cousins. They explained these findings by arguing that although evangelical and Bible churches are careful to distinguish themselves from the secular world, their desire to attract converts entails maintaining a degree of engagement with the surrounding culture. It is this same secular culture that is more thoroughly shunned by their fundamentalist and Pentecostal counterparts. The especially high rates of mortality evident in Pentecostal communities are likely also a product of the centrality of faith healing within this subgroup and a concomitant distrust of conventional medicine.

Beyond the literatures on religion, health, and mortality, there is also plenty of scholarship underscoring the potential benefits of religion on family life. A primary focus of religious congregations is the provision of services to families, youth, and young children [9-11]. This scholarship underscores the "pro-family" character of religion, with congregations prioritizing family ministry programs over much of the other work they undertake. Moreover, recent research has revealed that strong linkages between religious institutions and families can be beneficial for child development [10]. Taken together, these bodies of research demonstrate that attention needs to be given to the influence of cultural factors, such as religion, on infant mortality.

In light of the foregoing research, and particularly scholarship on denominational market share and adult mortality patterns, we offer the following hypotheses about religious ecology and infant mortality.

H1: Counties with a greater proportion of Catholic and mainline Protestant congregations will exhibit lower infant mortality rates, while those with a greater proportion of conservative Protestant congregations will exhibit significantly higher infant mortality rates.

H2: Among conservative Protestant faith traditions, counties with a greater proportion of fundamentalist and Pentecostal congregations will exhibit significantly higher infant mortality rates, while those with a greater proportion of evangelical and other conservative Protestant congregations will have significantly lower infant mortality rates.

Data and Methods

The data enlisted in this study are derived from three different sources. Kids Count data were used to generated our dependent variable, namely, infant mortality rates. These rates are available through Kids Count, and were not calculated by the authors. Where possible, year 2000 Kids Count data were used to construct this variable. It is worth noting that Kids Count data provide infant mortality rates for a restricted number of counties, namely, those in which at least one such incident occurred during a given year and those which reported infant mortality data to the federal government. No incident counties and unreported data counties reduce the number of counties available for analysis and thereby compromise these data somewhat. Given clusters of county-level case attrition in the Mountain West, we supplemented infant mortality data for three states (Montana, New Mexico, and Wyoming) through an interpolation method. Missing year 2000 data were interpolated for 56 counties in Montana, 33 counties in New Mexico, and 23 counties in Wyoming by using an average of infant mortality rates from later years (ranging from 2001 through 2005). The combination of available data and interpolated data produced a study region of 1,900 counties. The 112 counties for which data were interpolated do not threaten the validity of our study because these counties constitute a small proportion of our sample (5.89 percent of all counties in our study region).

Our primary independent variables reflecting county-level religious ecologies, the Glenmary Census of Churches (2000), were retrieved from the Associated Religion Data Archive. Religious denominations in this dataset were coded consistent with the framework developed and utilized in Blanchard *et al.* [7]. First, major faith traditions were coded into four categories: conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant, Catholic, and other. A series of denominational variables were then created to reflect the number of congregations per 1,000 residents for each denominational family in a county. (Standardizing this measure as the number of denomination-specific congregations per 1,000 county residents creates a comparable baseline of comparison across counties of different sizes.) This coding scheme allows for aggregate analysis of the effects of religious ecology on infant mortality for broad denominational families. In our analysis, each denominational tradition is treated as a continuous variable, such that a specific change (standard deviation increase or decrease) for the denominational variable is associated with a specific change (standard deviation increase or decrease) for the infant mortality rate. When discussing the results of these analyses, we

report standardized regression coefficients. Second, to conduct our decomposition analyses, we recoded the conservative Protestant category into four subcategories: fundamentalist, evangelical, Pentecostal, and other conservative Protestant (the last category serving as a residual category that did not fit into the first three categories). The analytical strategy used in this phase of the investigation (that is, unit change in the denominational variable compared with unit change in the infant mortality rate variable) is the same that was used for the major faith traditions. Here again, denominational families are treated as continuous variables.

In light of the previous literature on this subject, we control for three key ecological factors known to influence infant mortality rates. To control for concentrated disadvantage and account for the connection between poverty and race-ethnicity in American society, we include the following covariates (generated through 2000 county-level Census data) in our regression models: percent of population under 18 living below the poverty line, and the percent of the population under age 18 that is black. Given spatial variations in infant mortality, we control for region of the country: Northeast, Midwest, West, and South, with the last of these serving as the reference category. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to conduct these analyses.

Results

The results of our analyses are reported in Table 1. As can be observed from the table, our study captures nearly two-thirds of the counties in the U.S. Therefore, we use a study sample of 1,900 U.S. counties (from a total of 3,143) to conduct both aggregate analyses (major denominational groupings, Model 1) and decomposition analyses (conservative Protestant subgroups, Model 2).

Recall that Hypothesis 1 predicted lower infant mortality rates for counties with a greater proportion of Catholic and mainline Protestant congregations coupled with higher infant mortality rates for conservative Protestant counties. Our results in Model 1 lend only partial support to this hypothesis. Counties with a high proportion of Catholic congregations have a significantly lower level of infant mortality than counties with fewer Catholic churches. This finding is consistent with our hypothesized effects. However, there is no effect for mainline Protestant counties, which were expected (like Catholic counties) to have a significantly lower infant mortality rate. Moreover, although we expected conservative Protestant counties to exhibit a significantly higher infant mortality rate, the findings in Model 1 do not support this hypothesis. The conservative Protestant variable is not statistically significant.

Next, we turn to our decomposition analyses, which estimate the net effects of our conservative Protestant subgroup variables. Recall that we hypothesized that counties with a greater proportion of fundamentalist and Pentecostal congregations would have significantly higher infant mortality rates, while evangelical and other conservative Protestant counties were expected to exhibit significantly lower rates. These findings, we expected, would mirror religious influences on adult mortality.

Table 1. Standardized Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression Estimates Predicting Infant Mortality, n = 1,900 counties.

	Model 1	Model 2
Congregations per 1,000 residents		
Conservative Protestant	-0.052	
Fundamentalist		-0.165***
Evangelical		-0.109*
Pentecostal		0.232***
Other Conservative Protestant		-0.091*
Mainline Protestant	0.091	0.136*
Catholic	-0.103**	-0.082*
Other	-0.011	-0.020
Adjusted R^2	0.122***	0.134***

Note: The following variables are controlled: percent of population under age 18 who are below poverty (2000); percent of population under age 18 that is black (2000); and region (Northeast, Midwest, West, and South). Dependent variable: infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

As the coefficients in Model 2 of our table indicate, this hypothesis is strongly supported. Based on previous findings related to adult mortality, we expected significant inverse effects for evangelical and other conservative Protestant counties. These expectations were generally met. Counties with a high proportion of evangelical congregations exhibit a significantly lower infant mortality rate, as do counties with a higher proportion of other conservative Protestant congregations. The effects for the Pentecostal variable also support our hypothesis, given that we expected significantly higher infant mortality rates among Pentecostal counties. Our expectations regarding effects for counties with a high proportion of other conservative Protestant congregations were also substantiated. Counties with a large proportion of other conservative Protestant congregations (e.g., Bible churches) exhibit a significantly lower infant mortality rate when compared with counties that have relatively few of these types of congregations. The only finding that runs contrary to our expectations pertains to counties with a high proportion of fundamentalist congregations, which exhibit a significantly lower infant mortality rate. Comparing Models 1 and 2, we observe persistently significant effects for the Catholic variable, which remains significant in the decomposition analyses (Model 2). Contrary to our initial expectations, counties with higher proportions of mainline Protestant churches are more likely to exhibit high infant mortality rates in Model 2, though this relationship was insignificant in Model 1.

Discussion

This study examined the effects of religious ecology (that is, community-level denominational market share) on infant mortality. We argued that community-level religiosity may influence infant mortality rates in U.S. counties because (1) adult mortality is affected by the social ecology of religion in communities, and (2) congregations and denominations position themselves as pro-family institutions. Several significant findings emerged. In most of our regression models, higher levels of community religiosity were linked to lower infant mortality rates. However, this

pattern was not uniformly observed for all denominational families. In what follows, we summarize and explain our findings. Thereafter, we highlight limitations of our study and identify some promising directions for future research.

Consistent with patterns for adult mortality [7], we found that counties with a higher proportion of Catholic congregations were characterized by lower infant mortality rates. This pattern can be explained by many of the same arguments enlisted by Blanchard and colleagues [7] in which civically engaged denominations can be distinguished from their civically insular counterparts [31,33,43]. Catholic congregations are civically minded, externally oriented institutions that place a premium on the creation of community-level care. This argument is consistent with the Catholic theological commitment to "subsidiarity," that is, caring for persons not just as individuals but as groups situated within communities. Contrary to the findings of Blanchard and colleagues, there were inconsistent effects observed for counties characterized by a high proportion of mainline Protestant congregations. Although this pattern is difficult to explain in any definitive fashion, it is possible that the especially strong Catholic commitment to subsidiarity distinguishes Catholic counties from their mainline Protestant counterparts.

Interestingly, the aggregate analyses examining overall conservative Protestant effects on infant mortality did not meet our expectations. Thus, while conservative Protestant counties have produced significantly higher rates of adult mortality, no effects surfaced in such counties where infant mortality is concerned. This non-finding was followed by decomposition analyses that estimated the effects of various conservative Protestant subgroups on infant mortality. These subgroups included fundamentalists, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and other conservative Protestant congregations. Decomposition analyses could reveal subgroup variations that might be masked among conservative Protestants at large. And, indeed, our decomposition analyses did just that.

The decomposition analyses revealed lower rates of infant mortality in counties with higher proportions of fundamentalist, evangelical, and other conservative Protestant congregations. Previous findings on community-level religious variations in adult mortality [7] led us to expect that evangelical and other conservative Protestant counties would exhibit lower infant mortality rates, while fundamentalist and Pentecostal counties would exhibit higher infant mortality rates. Thus, the key difference between infant mortality and adult mortality, where religious effects are concerned, is found in counties that feature a large proportion of fundamentalist churches. Why would three of the four conservative Protestant subgroups (that is, all of them except Pentecostals) create community climates that are less conducive to infant mortality? Conservative Christian churches are not just generic pro-family institutions. They are also pronatalist, and are especially vigorous at exhibiting what they argue is a "defense" of those who cannot protect themselves, namely, the young. Nowhere is this position more evident than in their opposition to abortion. It is quite possible that the pro-life stance taken by many conservative Protestant congregations make their communities particularly attentive to threats to the welfare of the young. The rhetoric and programs in these congregations may privilege the well-being of the young in a way that is quite different from the manner in which adult well-being is treated. In the individualistic worldview of conservative Protestantism, adults may be expected to take care of themselves in a way that children could not be expected to do so.

Why, then, do counties with a higher proportion of Pentecostal congregations run counter to this pattern that is so evident among the three other subgroups of conservative Protestants? One of the key elements of the Pentecostal faith tradition is a commitment to faith healing [44]. It is possible that in such communities, a collective wariness toward medical interventions leads to an ethos in which prenatal or postpartum care is institutionally and normatively deemphasized. Perhaps both preventive care and medical intervention in the face of complications are collectively defined as a demonstrated lack of faith in God. Although more research is clearly needed on this front, the much higher rates of adult mortality (previous research) [7] and infant mortality (our study) in counties with higher proportions of Pentecostal congregations lend credibility to this interpretation.

This study is not without limitations. First, we cannot establish direct causal connections between religious ecology and infant mortality in this study. In a preliminary investigation of this sort, we have included only select control variables. Future research could control for a wider array of factors, such as health care access, to determine if such factors mediate or moderate the relationship between religious ecology and infant mortality. Moreover, in this cross-sectional investigation, we cannot presume the direction of causality. We view it as reasonable to presume that religious ecology exerts an influence on infant mortality, but cannot dismiss arguments about reverse causality without additional data. It is possible that communities with lower rates of infant mortality are more receptive to religious institutions because the faith of their residents is not "tested" in the same way as communities marked by higher infant mortality rates. Consequently, a longitudinal analysis using 2000 and 2010 data presents itself as a promising direction for future research. Such a follow-up investigation would be valuable for introducing more contemporary data, but also for trying to determine possible causal connections between religious ecology and infant mortality. That investigation would require different methods and statistical techniques than we have used here (e.g., controlling for changes in religious ecology over time) and, as such, is beyond the scope of our current investigation.

Second, as mentioned in our methodology section, the dependent variable for this study was drawn from Kids Count data and, therefore, reflects a restricted sample of counties in the U.S. Some of these counties were characterized by no incidents and others simply seemed not to report data on this vital statistic. Therefore, while the findings presented here are the product of rigorous analytical procedures and statistical tests, these data limitations lead us to call for more research on religious variations in infant mortality. Given the fact that our study is predicated on a restricted county sample, the effort undertaken here must be treated as a preliminary investigation into the phenomenon. Additional research is needed with the full universe of U.S. counties to determine if the findings generated with our more restrictive sample of counties hold across all U.S. counties.

Third, as illustrated by our literature review, a good deal of current research on infant mortality adopts a comparative perspective by exploring cross-national patterns and trends. Our study was limited inasmuch as it focused on infant mortality in one country, namely, the United States. Additional research is needed to explore the ecological effects of religion on infant mortality across national borders. There is much to gain from broadening the investigative lens with cross-national comparisons, as there may be peculiarities associated with particular traditions in the U.S. context that may not be observed elsewhere in the world. For example, the Catholic penchant for

community engagement and its association with lower rates of infant mortality may be due to the minority status and historic marginalization of Catholicism in the United States, a predominantly Protestant country.

Fourth, there are some fruitful alternative means of defining religious ecology that we did not explore here. For example, previous research has demonstrated that a preponderance of civically engaged denominations, as initially operationalized by Tolbert and colleagues [43], often produce salutary community outcomes [31,43]. The influence of these types of denominations on infant mortality is quite worthy of investigation. In addition, infant mortality rates could vary in terms of the religious diversity exhibited in local communities. Because religious competition and commitment may be greater in communities characterized by a high degree of denominational diversity, the use of an index of religious dissimilarity presents an intriguing prospect for further specification of the relationship between religious ecology and infant mortality. Once again, this last avenue of inquiry could be quite fruitfully examined not only with U.S. data, but with international data as well.

These limitations and promising directions for future research notwithstanding, our investigation adds significantly to the literature on infant mortality. To this point, explanations of infant mortality differentials have been dominated by either demographic or public health approaches. Demographers have enlisted a structural model that emphasizes, among other factors, how poverty and concentrated disadvantage contribute to higher infant mortality rates. By contrast, public health approaches utilize a medical model to explain infant mortality. The medical model examines how factors such as health care access (e.g., physicians per capita) may contribute to infant mortality rates. This study represents a first step toward examining a cultural model of infant mortality. Central to this cultural model is the moral ethos that religious institutions can create in communities, and the way in which this ethos can produce real-world effects on population health, in this case, infant mortality. While there is much additional work to be conducted on this topic, our study demonstrates that cultural factors should no longer be ignored in exploring the determinants of infant mortality in the U.S.

Conclusions

This study revealed that the social ecology of religion (denominational market share) is associated with county-level infant mortality rates. Using data from the year 2000, we found that counties with a high proportion of Catholic churches are significantly more likely to have a low infant mortality rate. This finding is best explained by the emphasis that Catholicism places on creating a vibrant civic infrastructure, particularly one focused on promoting population health and well-being. Although our general measure of conservative Protestant market share did not produce any significant effects in a preliminary model, our follow-up decomposition analyses compared the respective influences of different types of conservative Protestant congregations (fundamentalist *vs.* evangelical *vs.* Pentecostal) on county-level infant mortality rates. The decomposition analyses demonstrated that counties with a high proportion of fundamentalist, evangelical, and other conservative Protestant congregations (Bible churches) have significantly lower infant mortality rates, while those with a high proportion of Pentecostal churches have significantly higher infant

mortality rates. It is quite likely that the pronatalist tendencies of fundamentalism and evangelicalism (advocacy for children and the unborn) contribute to significantly lower infant mortality rates in areas where these churches enjoy a large market share. Pentecostalism presents an interesting deviation from this pattern. We suspect that Pentecostal suspicion of conventional medicine and its reliance instead on faith healing accounts for the higher infant mortality rates in counties with many of these congregations. Our study is, of course, a preliminary investigation of this phenomenon. However, these findings meaningfully extend previous research on religion and health while suggesting future opportunities that are ripe for investigation.

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Bringing the Congregations Back in: Religious Markets, Congregational Density, and American Religious Participation

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Abstract: We draw on the organizational ecology tradition to frame the relationship between the religious environment of a community and local religious participation. Prior research linking religious environments to religious participation downplays a key organizational aspect of religion: the congregation. Following the organizational ecology usage of density, we argue that *congregational density*—the number of congregations per person within a community—impacts religious involvement by providing opportunities for participation and by fostering social accountability networks within congregations. Drawing on data from the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey, we test the hypothesis that congregational density in a locality is associated with greater religious participation by residents. Our findings indicate that persons residing in congregationally dense communities are more likely to be members of churches, to attend church regularly, to participate in church-based activities, to participate in non-church religious organizations, to volunteer for religious work, and to give to religious causes. These findings hold while controlling for an array of individual and contextual-level variables. This notion of congregational density suggests that local factors transcend broader theological and/or denominational boundaries, resulting in variations in religious participation and commitment.

1. Introduction

Sociologists have a longstanding interest in identifying the determinants of American religious participation. For some researchers, variation in religious participation is explained by individual-level demographic and socioeconomic traits. Others have focused on how the relationship between those individual-level traits and religious participation may vary across communities. Still other researchers have studied how religious participation and other social and economic outcomes are linked to the local religious ecology as defined by the presence of specific denominations. Some researchers have conceptualized the religious ecology as the mix of religious denominations present in the community and the extent of interdenominational competition. In virtually every case, the local religious ecology is conceptualized and measured in terms of religious denominations.

These various approaches have proven valuable in explaining the role of the local religious ecology on community welfare. However, these conceptualizations of the religious ecology neglect the local congregational population that may mediate the relationship between a denomination's theological program and the individual religious adherent. To be sure, prior studies have devoted

a great deal of effort to understand how congregations work, why some differ from others, and how congregations may interact with the broader community. Though, only rarely have researchers investigated the effect of the local religious ecology's *congregational population* on religious participation. This omission highlights an important research question: why are congregations overshadowed by denominations in macro-level explanations of religious commitment and participation?

Drawing on organizational ecology theory, we develop an explanation of how the local population of congregations influences participation in religious activities. Instead of focusing exclusively on denominations, we consider the embeddedness of religious participation within a local congregational population. Our central argument is that *congregational density*—the number of congregations relative to the local population—impacts the relative size and structure of congregations in a community. We hypothesize that a dense population of congregations will increase the likelihood of participation among community members. In contrast, people living in communities with a small number of churches relative to the local population will be less likely to participate in religious activities.

Our analyses test for the effect of congregational density on individual-level religious participation controlling for personal attributes known to affect the likelihood of religious participation such as age, gender, religious affiliation, and socioeconomic status. We employ several measures of individuals' religious participation: church membership, service attendance, participating in church activities, nonchurch-based religious organizational membership, volunteering for religious organizations, and giving to religious entities. We also specify potentially confounding local market factors, such as socioeconomic disadvantage. The models are also specified to minimize model endogeneity that can pose a challenge to analyses such as this one. It could be argued that highly religious areas may produce more churches. We posit just the opposite, but recognize that causal direction is not a trivial issue. We will return to a discussion of it after we develop our research hypotheses below.

2. Rethinking the Religious Environment: From Denominations to Congregations

The study of religious markets and religious participation finds its roots in Durkheim's assertion that religion is a primary integrating force that engenders social solidarity [1]. Berger [2] extends Durkheim's perspective by arguing that markets where all community members adhere to a single theological orientation yield a greater level of religious participation and social integration. More recently, Stark, Finke, Iannaccone, and others [3,4] have provided evidence that a wide variety of religious choices within a community (*i.e.*, religious pluralism), rather than a single denomination, increases rates of religious participation. This approach is based on three key propositions: (1) unregulated religious economies will tend to be pluralistic; (2) pluralistic religious environments engender firm specialization; and (3) specialization generates religious participation. Thus, the lack of regulation in the religious marketplace permits the development of a wide array of faith traditions that become tailored to specific population segments [5,6].

Within the religious pluralism literature, the religious economy is organized by denominations—what Stark and others refer to as religious "firms" [3]. Although the pluralism literature contains occasional references to congregations and church leaders as actors in the history of the U.S. religious marketplace [6], religious congregations are largely absent from the empirical measurement of the religious economy. The degree of religious pluralism is measured using an index of denominational market concentration, the Hirschman-Herfindahl Index, which summarizes the concentration and/or dispersion of adherents across denominations in a given community. In this way, the religious establishment is equated with a denomination. Implicitly, congregations within a local religious market area are assumed to be uniform representatives of a denomination. Left veiled by such a measure is the variation of congregations within denominations across space.

Just as business establishments vary within parent corporate enterprises, congregations vary within denominations in important ways. First, regardless of denominational affiliation, congregations are socially embedded in communities that shape congregational life. Prior studies highlight the importance of the culture and social context of a locality in shaping a congregation [7,8]. Catholic congregations, for example, are strongly influenced by the composition of the parish population served by the church. This is reflected in empirical findings indicating that the activities of predominantly black Catholic churches differ from predominantly white Catholic churches [9].

Second, theological innovations and variation that generate sectarian movements do not always result in the creation of new denominations or splinter groups. In the case of Catholics, who account for over one-third of U.S. religious adherents, the development of religious orders provided an outlet for sect-like activity that was contained within the Catholic Church [10]. More importantly, Protestant congregations that can adapt traditional teachings to apply to local conditions are more capable of maintaining vitality among church members and minimizing the possibility of congregational splits [11]. These findings suggest that theological variation exists among congregations within a denomination.

Finally, in post-war America, adherents who shift theology find less need to switch denomination and may simply join a different congregation within the same denomination [12,13]. Recent research has further questioned the notion of socioeconomic, demographic, and geographic homogeneity within denominations [14]. This line of study argues that the greatest degree of population heterogeneity occurs between congregations rather than within them. Congregations, regardless of denomination, possess a greater level of homophily along a variety of dimensions. For example, Reimer [15] finds that social class is a significantly stronger predictor of congregational membership than is denominational affiliation. Another indicator of increasing denominational heterogeneity is seen in recent statistics indicating that 15 percent of Southern Baptist Convention congregations are majority nonwhite congregations [16]. This portends a striking transformation of a once homogenously white religious denomination.

3. Bringing the Congregation Back in: Conceptualizing Congregations as an Organizational Population

Though denominations do influence certain practices in constituent congregations, churches have the capacity to act as autonomous organizations [17]. Even so, only two studies have utilized congregations to measure the religious environment and its link to religious participation. Examining intriguing historical data on rural congregations collected by Brunner [18], Finke and Stark [6] note that the number of congregations per 1000 persons is associated with higher community levels of religious participation. Welch [19] finds that more than one Catholic congregation in the local community influences religious participation among Catholic members. Building on these seminal studies, we contend that the organizational ecology tradition can be drawn on to further explicate the relationship between the religious environment and participation by adherents.

Indeed, others have made similar theoretical connections. For example, Stark and Finke [5] employ the concept of the niche to explain why some denominations have grown in the U.S. and others decline. One of the first adaptations of this perspective to religious congregations linked the concept of niche width to understanding the worship practices of congregations [17]. In a similar vein, Scheitle [20] and Scheitle and Dougherty [21] examine the relationship between niche competition and congregational population dynamics, such as congregational foundings and net change in the size of a denomination. Others have applied organizational ecology to explain historical fluctuations in membership size for specific denominations [22].

Although prior studies have focused on the creation of niche religious markets, researchers have yet to incorporate the concepts of *organizational density* and *density dependence* to explain the working of religious economies. Organizational density refers to the size of an organizational population in a given environment. For us, religious congregations comprise the organizational population of a religious economy. Organizational ecologists posit that the dynamics of an organizational population are dependent on the density of the population [23]. Density dependence occurs because the level of density in an organizational population determines the level of competition between organizations. In turn, competition reduces the rate of organizational founding (the creation of a new organization) and increases the mortality rate of organizations.

Density dependent processes are important because they have important consequences for the composition of an organizational population. Barron [24] notes that organizational density has a direct effect on the average size of organizations. As an organizational population reaches a peak level of density, high levels of organizational founding lower the average organizational size due to the large number of small organizations. As organizational density declines from its peak, average organizational size increases due to the "liability of smallness" [25]. The "liability of smallness" refers to the higher rate of mortality experienced by smaller organizations in dense, highly competitive organizational populations. Thus, low levels of organizational density result in a propensity of large organizations. In contrast, high levels of density result in a large number of small organizations and a smaller average organizational size.

4. Institutional Effects of Congregational Density on Religious Participation

We draw on the notion of organizational density to define our concept of congregational density. Congregational density is defined as the number of local congregations relative to the local population. Our application of organizational ecology posits that a high level of congregational density will result in smaller average congregation size due to density dependent processes. The concept of congregational density is especially useful for framing the individual's religious participation as embedded in the local population of congregations in a religious environment. Density impacts participation by conditioning two aspects of congregational life: participatory structures and social networks.

4.1. Participatory Structures

An important result of smaller organizational size is that congregations develop fewer authority hierarchies and a smaller division of labor [26]. This enables members of smaller organizations to participate more directly than members of larger organizations. In the small congregational setting, this means that members may participate more in decision-making and problem-solving activities. In large congregations, the absence of direct participatory involvement occurs in part because of formalized roles and a greater division of labor among members. Hierarchies are created to manage the large number of activities of the larger congregation. This may result in the establishment of leadership positions filled by additional clergy or lay members, increasing the social distance between rank-and-file members and the congregational leadership. Efforts to minimize this distance using small groups do not eliminate the negative effect of large size on participation and social support [27,28].

Variation in participatory structures has important implications for religious participation. Research on voluntary associations has demonstrated that organizational commitment is directly associated with three aspects of an organization's authority structure: participation of members in decision-making activity, frequency of communication between leadership and members, and the distribution of power within the organization [29]. In turn, the capacity for members to participate in decision-making strengthens the effectiveness of a voluntary organization [30]. Active church participation in terms of service attendance, membership in church groups, and the degree of communication with other members is also correlated with the amount of control and the distribution of control in the congregation [31]. In sum, congregational density results in religious participation through greater organizational commitment created by more participatory structures.

4.2. Social Networks

A second mechanism through which size influences participation is social networks. A number of writers have utilized social network explanations to link the theological orientation of the congregational population to a variety of social outcomes [32–35]. Yet, the impact of congregational density on social networks is less developed. Theories of social organization posit that increasing organizational size erodes group consensus on norms, reduces communication among members, and increases deviance from group norms [26]. In small organizations, strong

shared consensus among members provides an accountability structure to regulate members. In addition to social regulation, small size limits the organization's capacity to accommodate differentiation among members [36]. The lack of differentiation results in a homophilous membership base where members share social ties with similar members [37]. Shared norms and homogeneity within the organizational membership also facilitate the development of bonding social capital that may isolate members from the broader community and generate network closure among members [38].

In the congregational context, the homogenous nature of small congregations creates something of a boundary between the congregation and the broader community. As a consequence, congregations foster a high level of network closure, providing a means to develop trust and accountability [39]. One important institutional effect of congregational density is the local primacy given to religion. Network closure makes religion a more vital and central institution in the community because social networks will be disproportionately based on intracongregational ties. A second effect of network closure is the capacity for social control. No matter the norms of denominations, congregations hold expectations for members' participation in church activities [40]. When members are embedded in social networks with dense ties to other congregation members, levels of participation may increase because members mutually reinforce norms of participation [41]. In larger congregations, the capacity for social control of members is weakened because interactions between members become more impersonal.

5. Hypothesis: Congregational Density and Religious Participation

Rather than focus on the distribution of adherents across denominations, we apply organizational ecology theory to understand the local implications of the size of the congregational population. We propose a *congregational density thesis* and hypothesize that the number of congregations relative to the residential population of a community encourages religious participation. This hypothesis is distinct from denominational approaches because it focuses on the institutional effects of religious organizations. Organizational density exerts a downward pressure on the size of congregations due to the density dependence. In turn, congregationally dense religious environments with an abundance of small congregations take advantage of two institutional mechanisms: participatory structures and network closure.

Congregational density enhances participation through horizontal authority structures of smaller congregations. A lack of bureaucratic structure and more direct channels of communication between leaders and members results in higher levels of participation. Participatory structures enhance commitment to the congregation, and members are more likely to become religiously engaged. In addition, network closure increases religious participation because the capacity for social control and accountability among members is enhanced. The greater focus of network ties on religious congregations promotes the salience of religion in community life and underscores the importance of identifying with a congregation for community residents.

6. Data and Methodological Section

To evaluate our hypotheses, we analyze data from the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) merged with religious environment measures from the 1990 and 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study (RCMS). The RCMS provides county-level counts of the number of congregations and adherents for 149 religious denominations and religious bodies [42] [1]. The SCCBS data were collected in 2000–2001 using random digit dialing telephone interviews and devised by the Saguaro Seminar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University [43]. Prior studies using these data have focused on topics including social capital, volunteering, financial giving, and public health [44–48].

We link county-level information on the congregational population and contextual population data to the communities of individual respondents. Our analytic sample is limited to 20,723 respondents [2] nested in 258 communities [3]. All analyses use person-level sampling weights.

6.1. Dependent Variables: Religious Participation

The outcomes in our analysis gauge an individual's religious participation across a number of dimensions. Researchers in the sociology of religion have examined the relationship between religious pluralism and religious adherence at the ecological level [49–52]. Our approach extends this prior work and differs from it by employing a multilevel design to test whether community-level religion variables influence individual-level religious participation. This strategy allows us to evaluate the importance of the community level in relation to the individual level, rather than limiting ourselves to inferring individual-level processes from aggregate measures. Only one study to our knowledge has hierarchically linked community-level data on religion to data on individual religious participation. Borgonovi [44] examines the relationship between denominational pluralism and religious participation. In that study, religious participation was measured using three indicators: weekly attendance at religious services, religious volunteering, and religious giving.

We build on this measurement strategy by incorporating six measures of participation: (1) volunteering for a religious charity (26%), (2) membership in a non-church religious organization (15%), (3) church membership (55%), (4) participation in church activities such as choir, prayer meetings, and bible study (38%), (5) weekly worship service attendance (41%), and 6) charitable giving to church or religious causes (67%). Our focal dependent variable is a summary index ($\alpha = 0.84$) of the standardized scores on each of the six indicators [43]. We also perform separate analyses for binary measures of each individual item to assess the strength of our findings.

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[1]   An approximate census of U.S. religion, the RCMS data provide the most thorough record available of religious adherents and congregations by counties. The RCMS was sponsored by the Association of Statisticians of Religious Bodies in America (ASARB).

[2]   Missing values on the individual-level measure of household income were imputed using conditional mean imputation.

[3]   Rural South Dakota is excluded because geographic identifiers are not present for these respondents.

6.2. Contextual-Level Independent Variables

The independent variables in our analysis include characteristics of individual survey respondents and community-level variables. All measures are from the year 2000 unless otherwise indicated. The key community-level independent variables in our analysis are measures of the religious environment. These are derived from the 1990 and 2000 RCMS in the U.S. data [42]. We calculate three measures from county-level tabulations of religious congregations and adherents: congregational density, denominational pluralism, and the percent of population that is a church member.

We measure congregational density as the number of religious congregations per 1000 county residents. Our exploratory analyses identified skewness in the distribution of congregational density. Therefore, a natural log transformation was performed on this variable to induce normality. Our denominational pluralism measure is based on the Hirschman-Herfindahl Index of concentration. Denominational pluralism is calculated as:

$$DP = 1 - \sum_{i=1} p_i^2 \tag{1}$$

where p_i is the proportion of all religious adherents that belong to a given denomination. Large values of the denominational pluralism index indicate that religious adherents are dispersed across a number of denominations and low values signal that a specific denomination has a large market share of adherents.

We account for potential endogeneity in our models by controlling for community-level church membership in 1990. This variable comes from the 1990 version of the RCMS and is calculated as the number of religious adherents in the county divided by the total community population. We include this measure to address the potential reverse causation in our models due to the possibility that high levels of religious involvement among community members may result in a large number of congregations per person.

To control for socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the county, we combine several items from the 2000 Census of Population and Housing and the Office of Management and Budget. We construct a summary measure that captures socioeconomic diversity in the composition of the county population. It is based on the Gini coefficient of family income inequality, the percentage of the population aged 25 and older with a high school diploma, and the percentage in poverty. Due to high correlations among these four variables, we summarize them using a factor score we refer to as a Socioeconomic Disadvantage Index ($\alpha = 0.87$). We control for socioeconomic disadvantage because individuals' religiosity may be higher in contexts experiencing large socioeconomic disparities and insecurities [53,54]. Disadvantage should also positively relate to religious charity activities because in a highly disadvantaged community, congregations may be more involved in social welfare activities [55].

To be sure, we account for major theoretical concepts at the community level intentionally using only a few variables. However, this parsimonious specification of models reduces the potential for multicollinearity at the community level [4].

6.3. Individual-Level Control Variables

Our individual-level control variables capture demographic, socioeconomic, and religious characteristics associated with religious participation in the literature [55–59]. To account for demographic variability in religious participation, we include a continuous measure of age in years and binary indicators for the respondent's gender, race-ethnicity, marital status, and the presence of children under the age of six in the household. Our measure of race-ethnicity includes categories for persons of Hispanic origin, Nonhispanic White (reference), Nonhispanic Black, and Nonhispanic persons of other race groups. At the individual level, the socioeconomic control variables in our models include measures of education, household income, and labor force status. Education is measured using four categories: less than high school diploma (reference), high school graduate, some college-associate degree, and college graduate. Labor force status is classified as employed, unemployed, and not in the labor force (reference). We classify religious affiliation using a coding scheme based on the Steensland *et al.* [60] typology of religious adherents (*i.e.*, Conservative Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Other). Predominantly black denominations are classified as Mainline Protestant due to the small number of persons identifying affiliation with this group. We pooled these categories because our models control for race-ethnicity which is strongly correlated with membership in a predominantly black denomination. To account for geographic differences in religious participation we control for southern residence (South = 1). Researchers have noted regional variation in church attendance, especially between the South and other regions [61–63]. Summary statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

	Mean	**S.D.**	**Min.**	**Max.**
Community Level				
Congregations per 1000 (LN)	0.339	0.635	−0.979	1.935
Denominational Pluralism Index	72.493	15.797	16.314	92.408
Lagged Percent Church Members	50.110	16.718	15.415	137.839
Socioeconomic Disadvantage Index	−0.438	0.736	−1.964	2.052
Individual Level				
Age	44.581	17.260	18	99
Female	0.523	0.500	0	1
Married	0.565	0.496	0	1
Presence of Children Under 6	0.305	0.461	0	1
Labor Force Status				
Employed	0.660	0.474	0	1

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[4] No evidence of multicollinearity was found upon examination of a correlation matrix with our community-level independent variables. All bivariate Pearson correlations are less than 0.50 (see Appendix). Variance Inflation Factors are below 1.5.

Table 1. *Cont.*

	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Unemployed	0.029	0.167	0	1
Not in Labor Force (Ref.)	0.311	0.463	0	1
Household Income (in thousands)	51.118	25.549	10.653	100
Educational Attainment				
High School Graduate	0.275	0.447	0	1
Post High School Education	0.608	0.488	0	1
Less than High School (Ref.)	0.117	0.321	0	1
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic	0.713	0.453	0	1
Nonhispanic Black	0.083	0.277	0	1
Nonhispanic Other	0.126	0.332	0	1
Nonhispanic White (Ref.)	0.075	0.263	0	1
Denominational Affiliation				
Evangelical Protestant	0.106	0.308	0	1
Mainline Protestant	0.262	0.440	0	1
Catholic	0.323	0.468	0	1
Other Religious Tradition	0.169	0.375	0	1
No Affiliation	0.141	0.348	0	1
South	0.292	0.455	0	1
Composite Religious Participation Index	−0.086	0.746	−1.110	1.517
Volunteer for Religious Charity	0.263	0.441	0	1
Member of Nonchurch Religious Organization	0.151	0.359	0	1
Church Member	0.547	0.498	0	1
Participate in Church Activities	0.382	0.486	0	1
Weekly Church Attendance	0.406	0.491	0	1
Donate Money to Religious Charity	0.669	0.468	0	1

Note: Individual-level data are weighted.

6.4. Analytical Strategy

Due to the nested structure of the data, we use multilevel modeling to test our hypotheses regarding the effect of congregational density on religious participation [5]. Multilevel modeling is ideal for our hypotheses and data because the technique takes into account dependence of individual-level cases nested within the same contextual-level unit and properly estimates standard errors and cross-level relationships in hierarchical data [64]. Models are fitted using HLM 6. Our first model examines the composite religious participation measure. This model includes our lagged measure of church membership from 1990. In addition to providing a robust test of our hypotheses, this model assesses the degree to which reverse causation may impact our findings. We then estimate separate hierarchical logistic regressions for each of the six components of the

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[5] Prior to estimating multilevel models with predictors, we examined an unconditional model to confirm the presence of significant variation in religious participation across communities (ICC = 0.0436; χ^2 = 1538.52481, $P < 0.001$).

religious participation index (religious volunteering, non-church religious organizations, church membership, church activities participation, weekly service attendance, and religious giving). These supplementary models demonstrate the degree to which our hypothesized congregational density effect occurs across a diverse set of religious participation indicators.

7. Results

In Table 2, we report regression coefficients predicting the composite religious participation measure. This model tests the notion that congregational density (the number of congregations per 1000 persons) is positively associated with religious participation. The results are consistent with our expectations. At the community level, an increase in the number of churches per 1000 persons is significantly associated with a higher score on the composite religious participation measure (b = 0.083; P < 0.001). By including a time-lagged measure of religious membership, the percentage of the population belonging to a church in 1990, this model also assesses the possibility that the relationship between congregational density and religious participation is due to reverse causation, such that more religiously involved communities contain more churches per 1000 persons. We find that the coefficient for congregational density remains positive and significant net of lagged percent church members. This finding suggests that the effect of congregational density is robust and cannot be attributed to the level of religiosity within a community.

Table 2. Multilevel model predicting composite religious participation index.

Variables	Coefficient
Community Level	
Congregations per 1000 (LN)	0.083 ***
Denominational Pluralism Index	0.003 ***
Lagged Percent Church Members	0.004 ***
Socioeconomic Disadvantage Index	0.010
Individual Level	
Age	0.005 ***
Female	0.079 ***
Married	0.151 ***
Presence of Children Under 6	0.130 ***
Labor Force Status	
Employed	−0.080 ***
Unemployed	−0.120 **
Not in Labor Force (Ref.)	
Household Income (in thousands)	0.003 ***
Educational Attainment	
High School Graduate	0.179 ***
Post High School Education	0.331 ***
Less than High School (Ref.)	
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	0.003
Nonhispanic Black	0.207 ***

Table 2. *Cont.*

Variables	Coefficient
Nonhispanic Other	0.043
Nonhispanic White (Ref.)	
Denominational Affiliation	
Evangelical Protestant	0.499 ***
Mainline Protestant	0.349 ***
Catholic	0.362 ***
Other/No Affiliation (Ref.)	
South	0.064 **
Intercept	−0.692 ***
Between community variance	0.0054
Within community variance	0.4453
Deviance	48677

Note: Community N = 258; Individual N = 20,723; Individual-level data are weighted; * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests).

To assess the relative strength of significant relationships, we use the standard deviations of county-level means to calculate standardized coefficients. Of our two focal county-level indicators, the magnitude of the congregational density effect is clearly the largest: the standardized effect of congregational density is 0.335 ($0.083 \times 0.635/\sqrt{0.0247}$) and denominational pluralism is 0.303 ($0.003 \times 15.797/\sqrt{0.0247}$).

Other significant community-level effects are also present. In this model, we also test the denominational pluralism hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that increases in denominational pluralism are associated with higher levels of religious participation. The denominational pluralism index is positively and significantly associated with religious participation. This relationship provides evidence that persons residing in denominationally heterogeneous communities are more highly religiously involved. Inconsistent with insecurity theorists [53], socioeconomic disadvantage does not have a significant positive association with religious participation. Religious participation is not a function of community-level disadvantage and insecurity in these data. This finding is interesting because it demonstrates that the effect of socioeconomic status is limited to the individual level, where, as we will see below, increased individual-level socioeconomic status is positively related to religious participation.

This model also includes our set of individual-level control variables and we observe a number of statistically significant effects. We find that older individuals, females, married persons, and those residing in households with a child under the age of six exhibit higher levels of religious involvement. The effects of these demographic measures on religious participation are consistent with those of Alston and McIntosh [65] and Cornwall [66]. In contrast to Alston *et al.* [65] and Hoge *et al.* [67] who find little effect of socioeconomic status on religious participation, our results indicate that employment status is negatively related to religiosity, whereas household income and education have positive relationships with religious involvement. The coefficients for educational attainment indicate that persons with post high school education are more likely to participate in religious activities than high school graduates and those not graduating from high school. In terms

of race and ethnicity, our findings echo those of Ellison and Sherkat [61] who report higher rates of religious participation among Nonhispanic African Americans.

In Table 3, we further evaluate the congregational density thesis by fitting hierarchical Bernoulli logit models for each indicator comprising our composite religious participation index. For brevity, only the coefficients for the congregational density, denominational pluralism, and the lagged church membership variables are presented. The estimates for these variables are largely consistent with those in Table 2. The first thing to note in Table 3 is that congregational density exhibits a consistent effect across all six dimensions of religious participation, even when holding other factors constant. Illustratively, compared with residents of the most congregationally sparse context, people in the most congregationally dense community are 2.4 times ($e^{1.935 \times 0.296}/e^{-0.979 \times 0.296}$) as likely to volunteer, 1.6 times as apt to belong to a religious organization, 2.3 times as likely to be a church member, almost twice as prone to participate in church activities, one and a half times as likely to attend weekly, and 1.6 times as liable to financially give to religious charities. We also find that denominational pluralism has a significant positive effect on four of the six outcomes. Pluralism does not influence church membership or religious giving. This latter set of results dovetails with Borgonovi's [44] recent observation of a positive relationship between county-level religious pluralisms and religious volunteering, but is not consistent with her observation that pluralism is significantly associated with giving but not service attendance. The lagged percent church members control variable is significantly and positively related to all six dependent variables.

Table 3. Hierarchical Bernoulli Logit models of items comprising religious participation index.

	Volunteer for Religious Charity	Nonchurch Religious Organization	Church Member
Community-Level Religion Predictors			
Congregations per 1000 (LN)	0.296 ***	0.167 **	0.288 ***
Denominational Pluralism Index	0.008 ***	0.006 **	0.016
Lagged Percent Church Members	0.010 ***	0.006 **	0.016 ***
	Participate in Church Activities	Weekly Church Attendance	Religious Giving
Community-Level Religion Predictors			
Congregations per 1000 (LN)	0.197 **	0.139 *	0.167 *
Denominational Pluralism Index	0.007 ***	0.007 **	0.004
Lagged Percent Church Members	0.007 ***	0.009 ***	0.010 ***

NOTE: Models also include community-level socioeconomic disadvantage index. Individual-level data are weighted and measures controlled are: age, sex, marital status, presence of children under age 6, labor force status, household income, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, denominational affiliation, and southern residence; * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests)

Calculating the magnitude of our focal county-level variables again reveals congregational density to have a stronger effect than denominational pluralism. A one-standard-deviation increase in congregational density is associated with a 20.7% ($e^{0.007 \times 0.15.797}$) boost in the odds of religious volunteering, whereas a one-standard-deviation increase in pluralism is associated with a 13.7% ($e^{0.008 \times 15.797}$) increment in the odds of volunteering—a substantial difference in odds (7%).

Congregational density has a standardized effect of an 11.2% increase in the odds of non-church religious organization membership and pluralism 10.8%. For participation in church activities other than worship service, the standardized effects are 13.3% (congregational density) and 12% (denominational pluralism). The magnitude of the effect of congregational density on individual-level church membership is also considerable (20%). However, pluralism is not significant for church membership; people are just as likely to be a member of a congregation in a denominationally heterogeneous community as a community with a relatively high level of religious monopoly. In the case of weekly church attendance, pluralism has the stronger effect: a one-standard-deviation increase in pluralism is associated with a 12.4% and density a 9.2% increase in the odds of weekly church-going. As density goes up by one standard deviation, religious giving's odds also rise by roughly 11%. Pluralism has no significant influence on giving. Over and above the influence of community-level factors such as religious pluralism and individual-level characteristics, not only does congregational density play a significant role in all of the religious behavior outcomes, but with the exception of one indicator, congregational density has the strongest effect of our two focal community-level predictors.

8. Conclusions

Two lines of argument in the sociology of religion tradition have suggested that the distribution of adherents across denominations affects local levels of religious involvement [2,4,68]. Implicit in the use of denominations is the assumption that denominations act as religious establishments themselves and adapt to fit the needs of population segments in a community. Instead, we suggest that, regardless of the local denominational composition, the number of congregations within a community will largely determine the level of competition.

The empirical evidence presented here for a congregational density perspective is reasonably compelling in three key ways. First, after accounting for a variety of individual and contextual-level covariates, congregational density remains a significant predictor of religious participation. This relationship holds after controls are introduced for demographic, socioeconomic, and spatial factors. Second, individual-level covariates have a substantial impact on the level of religious participation. This is a critical finding, because with one exception [44], all tests of the religious economy argument have utilized aggregate data. Our findings suggest that the analysis of aggregated rates of participation that do not adjust for individual-level attributes may be incomplete. Third, our findings regarding congregational density are obtained after accounting for the effect of denominational pluralism. Unlike recent research that suggests no relationship between religious pluralism and religious participation [44], we find support for the religious economies perspective forwarded by Finke and Stark [6]. Our models also indicate that congregational density has an effect independent of denominational pluralism and suggests that our congregational density argument makes a unique contribution to explanations of religious participation [6].

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[6] We note that the communities included in the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey were not randomly selected. Thus, the sample may not reflect the entire national population.

An important contribution of the congregational density approach is that it bridges the denominationally based approach of religious economy scholars and the emerging line of study on congregations [69]. The congregational density argument derived from organizational ecology theory is largely compatible with many of religious economy propositions on group dynamics and competition (for a complete list, see Appendix of Stark and Finke [5]). To be sure, Stark, Finke, and colleagues note the role of congregational size and recognize the consequences of social organization on member commitment.

Despite these similarities, our approach differs on three key aspects of religious economy theory. First, our congregational density perspective does not rest on a sect-church differentiation in which congregations can be placed along a continuum of tension with the broader society. We do not condition religious commitment and participation on the degree of tension between the congregation and the community. Our argument focuses on the relationship between the size of the local congregational population and the social organization of congregations. The results here show that congregational density exerts a significant influence on religious participation that is independent of denominational pluralism or levels of religiousness from prior decades. The congregational density approach differs with religious economy theory in a second way by emphasizing the importance of the organizational environment. The key environmental factor for religious economy theory is the level of regulation exerted on the religious marketplace by political forces. Beyond state regulation, there is limited discussion of features of the organizational environment that might explain the level of religious participation in a given community. Our density based approach begins to address this issue. Finally, we argue that the assumptions underlying our congregational density approach are not influenced by ongoing changes in U.S. denominational affiliation. Although survey data on religious affiliation point to a decline over the past few decades, the number of congregations in the U.S. between 1980 and 2000 grew at a rate of 14.2% as compared to that of the U.S. population (13.2%) during this time (ARDA).

The results presented in this paper also point to an important avenue for future research. Although researchers have used denominational measures of the religious environment, such as the percentage of the population adhering to a conservative protestant religious tradition (for examples, see Beyerlein and Hipp [32]; Ellison, Burr and McCall [70]), much less is known about the relationship between congregations and measures of community welfare. The concept of congregational density is promising because it provides an institutional explanation of how the religious environment influences nonreligious sectors of community life. It also raises an important question. Given that an organizationally dense congregational environment fosters the development of participatory structures, is the religious environment associated with the local civic culture and democratic participation in community governance? We suspect that the social organization of the religious sector covaries with a participatory environment within nonreligious voluntary associations and other community problem-solving structures. Thus, congregationally dense communities may be better equipped to address the needs of local residents in terms of a broad array of health, safety, and socioeconomic well-being factors. These may be promising topics for further inquiry.

Author Contributions

The authors jointly conceptualized, analyzed data, and produced this manuscript.

Appendix

Table A1. Bivariate correlations for community-level variables.

	1	2	3	4
Congregations per 1000 (LN)	1.000			
Denominational Pluralism Index	0.080	1.000		
Lagged Percent Church Members	0.116	−0.442 ***	1.000	
Socioeconomic Disadvantage Index	0.310 ***	−0.336 ***	0.206 ***	1.000

Note: * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Go Forth and Multiply: Revisiting Religion and Fertility in the United States, 1984-2008 [†]

Casey Borch, Matthew West and Gordon Gauchat

Abstract: Many studies on the fertility differential by religion have considered both Catholics and Protestants to be equally homogenous groups. Contrary to these studies, we contend that Protestant fertility must be studied in the context of heterogeneous groups. Specifically, conservative Protestantism, with its beliefs about artificial birth control mirroring Catholic teaching, should be examined separately from other Protestant traditions. Using data from the General Social Survey we find that conservative Protestants and Catholics had about the same level of fertility, while mainline Protestants have a fertility rate that is significantly lower than that of Catholics. We also examine the changes in these differences over time.

1. Introduction

Membership in a religious tradition or denomination can affect fertility [1,2]. Historically, much research has aimed to describe the intersection of religion and fertility in the United States [3-7]. This research has focused on the differential fertility of Protestants and Catholics, but has largely ignored the difference between Protestant sub-groups. In particular, there has been very little research looking at the effect of being a conservative Protestant on fertility compared with other religious groups. Following the work of Woodberry and Smith [8], we use the term "conservative Protestant" in place of Steensland *et al.*'s [9] "evangelical Protestant." Since "conservative" Protestant includes evangelicals as well as fundamentalists and Pentecostals, it is a more inclusive categorization of the Protestant sub-groups of interest to us.

Conservative Protestantism represents the largest religious tradition in the United States, which corresponds to roughly 30% of the U.S. population [8,10]. Hout and Fischer [11] found that conservative Christians tend to have higher fertility than non-conservatives, and thus predicted a growth of conservative religious traditions over time, which includes conservative Protestants. One prominent study looking at the fertility differences between U.S. Protestants concluded that evangelical Protestants will be the next promising arena for the study of American fertility behavior ([6], p. 542):

> Recent surveys have found an increase in religious interest in the United States, probably due in part to the so-called evangelical movement. Yet almost nothing is known about the fertility consequences of this phenomenon. As Catholic and Protestant fertility levels continue to converge (Westoff and Jones), this and other dimensions of Protestant life seem promising choices as new arenas for the study of American fertility behavior.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the association between conservatism and fertility in the United States. Are the higher levels of fertility found among conservative Protestants due to intrinsic components of their religious tradition, or are they a statistical artifact created by an underlying demographic structure? That is, does religious affiliation explain their high levels of fertility, or does the characteristic hypothesis—which asserts underlying demographic characteristics are the primary predictors of fertility—provide more accurate predictors of their fertility?

By examining this association, we will add to the literature in two important ways. First, currently there is little research applying multivariate models to explain the relationship between conservative Protestants and fertility behavior. This study hopes to re-open research on religion and fertility in the U.S. specifically focusing on conservative Protestants. Second, this study will explore future fertility trends of conservative Protestants, which will have implications relating to the future of the U.S. religious and political landscape. Future fertility trends are important because of conservatives' influence as a religious and political movement, and their growth may affect their efficacy as a social movement [12].

2. Background

Religious affiliation and fertility were formerly at the forefront of demographic research in the United States. Pearce [13] posits that, given the many studies demonstrating that the number of children in a family varies from religion to religion, it is reasonable to assume that there is a connection between religion and fertility. Most research in this tradition emphasizes the discrepant fertility patterns between Catholics and Protestants [14,15]. These studies, along with those focusing on the Jewish population (e.g., [16]), found Catholicism to be more highly correlated with high fertility rates compared to Protestants, Jews, and the non-religious. One of the strongest suggested reasons for high fertility among Catholics was the Church's teaching on contraception and abortion, which strongly prohibited artificial birth control (excluding the rhythm method). Westoff and Jones [7] found that Catholic and non-Catholic fertility rates in America were slowly converging until the baby boom occurred. During the 1950s and early 1960s, Catholic fertility skyrocketed compared to other religions, significantly widening the gap not previously seen in the 19th century. By the time Vatican II occurred and the papal encyclical on birth control became public, about one-third of American Catholic women were on the birth control pill [14]. Lenski [17], among others (e.g., [18]), found that the extent to which church members are willing to reform their birth control practices changed the way Catholic leaders thought about "authority" and "dissent." It is at this time when the Catholic Church began to intervene in the sexual behaviors of the married faithful. This led parishioners to begin to disobey church teaching on contraception, among other things.

The final outcome of these changes was Catholic fertility rates matching that of other religious denominations. Westoff and Jones ([7], p. 209) pinnacled this phenomenon with a paper entitled "The End of 'Catholic' Fertility," concluding that, although Catholics in the mid 20th century had slightly higher fertility than their non-Catholic counterparts at this time, towards the mid-1970s "the two trends nearly come together," effectively ending a uniquely Catholic fertility rate. With the apparent end of a "Catholic" fertility having thus occurred, interest in religious affiliation and

how it affects fertility withered away as discrepancies in fertility levels between religious groups approached zero.

Along these lines, work by Bartkowski, Xu, and Levin [19] and more specifically Mahoney *et al.* [20] suggests that "sanctification theory" helps to explain the convergence. Mahoney ([20], p. 222-223) notes that believers "view family relationships as sacred… Judeo-Christian religions portray the burdens and pleasures of parenting as opportunities to model and deepen one's understanding of God's love, patience, and commitment, and frame the parental role as a sacred calling that requires personal sacrifices." Both the Catholic and conservative Protestant faiths have strong emphases on child-rearing as a vocation, responsibility, and calling from God to do their duty and treat children as a gift. By having more children, then, it may be perceived that a couple is being a "good Christian." This is particularly true for conservative Protestants because of their strong belief in the Bible as the literal word of God and the various Biblical commands to "multiply," populate the earth, and the like (as well as God's anger at those who attempt birth control, such as Onan's withdrawal). Thus, more conservative denominations likely place more emphasis on the Bible and its pronatalist worldview. Scripture, along with sin and salvation, constitute Bartkowski's "three S's" that differentiate conservative Protestants from all others [21]. The authors note that while sanctification of the family may be good in that it promotes social cohesion, it can also prove negative in situations such as the family whose parents are of differing religions.

Past research comparing Protestant and Catholic fertility tended to lump all Protestants together much in the same way as Catholics are lumped together—that is, as one unitary Protestant Church similar to the one Catholic Church—and thus did not pick up the higher levels of fertility occurring for conservative Protestants [3,4,7]. This collapsing of Protestant denominations into one conceptual group risks the validity of studies comparing fertility rates by religion. For example, Bean *et al.* ([22], p. 91) lamented how past studies typically classify respondents as "Protestants, Catholics, and Jews; these categories are not homogenous enough to provide a fair test of the relation between religion and fertility" which was particularly problematic with their sample of Utah Mormons. In addition, Pearce ([13], p. 20) notes that "within Protestantism, studies show substantial variation in fertility across affiliations." Possible explanations for such variation include demographic transition theory and the minority status hypothesis (for a comprehensive review, see [13]).

When conservative Protestants are distinguished from the rest of mainline Protestants, their fertility consistently remains higher than that of mainline Protestants and Catholics. Figure 1 shows the average number of reported children for conservatives, mainline Protestants, and Catholics. All three denominations witnessed a drop in the average number of reported children over the last three decades. This result is consistent with prior research that finds all major religious communities in the United States witnessed a drop in the expected family size as the second demographic revolution occurred [23,24]. Conservatives have largely maintained a higher average number of reported children since 1984 than Catholics and Mainline Protestants. Indeed, this mirrors Hout and Fischer's [11] work that finds that the vast majority of conservative Christian growth is due to higher fertility and not conversion. As Greeley [25] hypothesized in his monograph *Religion in the Year 2000*, growth of a particular religion or denomination will most

certainly be determined by the number of present-day adherents' children, not by conversion rates. If conservative Protestants have large families with many children, while Mainline Protestants have smaller families, then conservatives should theoretically have the advantage of numbers in the proceeding generation. This is especially true for conservatives who begin parenting at markedly younger ages than mainline denominations, thus allowing more time for family growth early in the life course [26].

2.1. Who are the Conservative Protestants?

Conservative Protestantism is flourishing in the United States while liberal Protestant church membership is in decline [27]. The literature tells that conservative Protestantism acquires and maintains members because they demand complete loyalty, unwavering belief, and rigid adherence to a specified way of life [28,29]. Conservative Protestantism is said to have developed in the 1970s as a reaction to the social revolution which occurred in the previous decade. Conservative Protestants believe that the greater personal freedoms in gender roles and sexuality which became prevalent in the previous decade were undermining their core values [30]. Also, Christian Right activism and evangelical growth focused on resistance to moral relativism in the surrounding culture. Indeed, as Emerson and Hartman ([31], p. 127) write: "Without modernization and secularization [of this century] there would be no fundamentalism…" Membership in evangelical groups has risen significantly since the initial push for activism initiated in the 1970s, with conservative Protestants making up more than a "quarter of the American population" in 1998 and varying from many Americans in their unique opinions on "…gender-roles, childrearing styles, [and] political orientation…" ([8], p. 25). Shibley [32] outlines three components for defining contemporary conservative Protestantism: (1) Have had a born-again experience resulting in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, (2) Accept the full authority of the bible in matters of faith and in daily conduct, and (3) Are committed to spreading the gospel by bearing public witness to their faith. These three components provide the common thread for all conservative Protestants.

2.2. Conservative Protestants and Fertility

Theory on religious influences on fertility coupled with prior research on conservative Protestants suggests that there are good reasons to believe that the religious beliefs and practices of conservatives influence their fertility. Current theory on religion and fertility states that there are three components that allow religion to influence fertility behavior [1]. First, religions articulate behavioral norms that have linkages to fertility outcomes (e.g., directive on contraception or teachings related to gender roles and family life). Second, religious groups possess the means to communicate its teachings to its members and enforce compliance. Lastly, members with a strong sense of attachment to the religious community will likely adhere with its norms and teachings. By comparing previous literature studying conservative Protestants with the aforementioned theory on fertility and religion, a strong case can be made to infer that conservative Protestantism influences fertility.

The first component is present with contemporary conservative Protestant churches advocating strong prohibitive norms concerning sexuality, gender roles, and family values [8,32]. Also, conservatives look to the Bible for matters of faith and daily conduct, in which there is considerable evidence that the Bible advocates having numerous children. For example, Genesis 1:28 states "Have many children so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control." The second component highlights communication and enforcement of general norms. Again previous research has found conservative Protestants largely possess these means as they acquire and maintain members by demanding loyalty, unwavering belief, and rigid adherence to a specified way of life [28,29]. The last component requires a strong sense of attachment to the religious community, which conservative Protestants possess as evident by the popularity of their new market oriented places of worship [32]. In addition, evangelicalism is a religious movement created by feelings of alienation from what they view as an increasing secularized world. These feelings of alienation coupled with numerous popular congregations, in which like-minded individuals attend, provide compelling evidence that many conservative Protestants will feel a strong sense of attachment to their religious community. Overall, there is reasonable evidence to suggest that conservative Protestantism will influence fertility.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Data

The data come from the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is based on a probability sample of the adult civilian population of the United States, stratified by region and metropolitan *versus* non-metropolitan residence. The GSS continues to use in-person interviews, and sampling techniques and response rates are well documented [33]. A major advantage of the GSS is that most of the questions keep the same wording from year to year, so data can easily be compared longitudinally or pooled across years. As per the suggestions in the GSS technical information, sample weights were not used in our analyses. This is because from 1984-2002 the data were taken from a full probability sample of households in the U.S., thus making the GSS self-weighting. Also, as suggested, we did not include data from 1987, because of an over-sample of Blacks. After 2004, weights are necessary only if the data are analyzed within year. Thus, since our focus is longitudinal and we include dummy variables for each year in our models, we do not have to include sample weights in our models.

3.2. Variables

The dependent variable is self-reported fertility. The GSS asked respondents the following question [GSS mnemonic = CHILDS]: "How many children have you ever had? Please count all that were born alive at any time (including any you had from a previous marriage)." The response categories ranged from zero to eight or more children. This question was asked in 17 years over the period 1984 to 2008.

The following independent variables were included in the models. We measured sex as a dummy variable for *female*. Although the original dataset included white and an "other" category, we measured race as a dummy variable distinguishing *black* from all other races. *Age* was measured continuously by the GSS with a range of 18 to 89 years old. To account for expected non-linearity in the effect of age on fertility, we also included *age-squared* in the models. *Education* was included as a continuous variable that ranged from 0 to 20 years of schooling. Marital status is a dichotomous variable that distinguished those *married* were from those unmarried. We treated household *income* (in real 2000 dollars) as a continuous variable. A dummy variable to distinguish respondents living in the *South* from those living elsewhere was created and included in the models. The specific delineation of the states into these regions was determined by the way in which the GSS partitioned the states into regional categories (see Davis *et al.* [33] for further explanation). We also compared those living in *rural* areas from those living elsewhere (non-rural). As differentiated by Tuch [34,35], rural included the following areas: Not within an SMSA or standard metropolitan statistical area, (within a county) and—a small city (10,000 to 49,999); a town or village (2,500 to 9,999); an incorporated area less than 2,500 or an unincorporated area of 1,000 to 2,499; open country within larger civil divisions, e.g., township, division. Finally, we use Steensland *et al.*'s [9] typology to place GSS respondents into religious groups. These groups are as follows: *Catholics*, those with *no religious affiliation*, those claiming religious faiths *other than Christian*. The Protestant group was further separated into *conservative Protestants*, *Black Protestants*, and *other Protestants*. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all the variables discussed above along with means by decade and correlations with time.

3.3. Analytic Strategy

Since the dependent variable is a count variable (*i.e.*, number of children), the most appropriate method of analysis is negative binomial or Poisson regression. The model takes the following form: $\log(m) = a + bx$, where the dependent variable (y) and the mean of y (m) are related by the Poisson distribution (error). Unlike ordinary regression, however, the variance of the error term is fixed. In an ordinary regression, the error variance is estimated from the model. With the Poisson distribution, the error variance is equal to m (the mean). If the Poisson distribution is appropriate, the deviance will have a chi-square distribution with N-k degrees of freedom, where N is the number of cases (not the total number of events) and k is the number of parameters fitted. In effect, Poisson regression is a log-linear model because it uses the log link.

The restriction of variance = mean ($\sigma^2 = \mu$) is often hard to satisfy. In fact, our data are what is known as "over-dispersed." This occurs when the variance is greater than the mean ($\sigma^2 > \mu$), see Table 1. Running a Poisson model on over-dispersed data can produce unreliable results. If the error is uncorrelated with independent variables, the estimates of the parameters will be unbiased and consistent. However, the standard errors will be underestimated. To avoid this pitfall, methodologists suggest that the negative binomial model is the most appropriate method of analyzing count data that are over-dispersed. The coefficients from negative binomial are interpreted the same as those from Poisson regression: $(e^B-1)*100$, for percent change, and e^B, for estimated counts. Negative binomial assumes that the systematic part is $\log(m) = a + bx + u$, where

u is a random variable with a gamma distribution. The relationship between m and y is again given by a Poisson distribution. The combination of these two assumptions gives you a particular distribution, the negative binomial. The assumption of a gamma distribution for u is somewhat arbitrary. Basically, the assumption is made because it gives a reasonably simple and well known distribution when combined with Poisson. In sum, using the negative binomial model will give more efficient estimates when the distribution is over-dispersed.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for all Variables in the Models, 1984-2008 (N = 36,020).

	Range	1984-08 μ or %	1984-89 μ or %	1990-99 μ or %	2000-08 μ or %	Corr. w/ time
Number of Children	0–8	1.87 (1.72)	2.01	1.84	1.84	-0.024*
Married	0–1	50.4 %	53.6 %	50.1 %	48.9 %	-0.047*
Female	0–1	56.1 %	56.8 %	56.5 %	55.2 %	-0.018*
Education	0–20	13.1 (3.07)	12.4	13.2	13.4	0.036*
Income / 1000	0–141	26.8 (29.3)	26.7	27.4	30.5	0.121*
Black	0–1	13.9 %	17.0 %	13.2 %	13.8 %	-0.004
Urban residence	0–1	40.6 %	45.0 %	41.7 %	43.6 %	-0.077*
South	0–1	36.1 %	35.7 %	35.7 %	37.9 %	0.021*
Pre-New Dealers (<1909)	0–1	1.8 %	4.8 %	1.1 %	0.3 %	-0.129*
New Dealers (1909-21)	0–1	7.4 %	13.8 %	7.7 %	2.5 %	-0.169*
WW II generation (1922-29)	0–1	7.4 %	10.5 %	7.7 %	4.8 %	-0.089*
Cold Warriors (1930-45)	0–1	18.7 %	21.9 %	19.3 %	16.5 %	-0.057*
Early Boomers (1946-54)	0–1	17.9 %	20.2 %	18.6 %	15.7 %	-0.049*
Late Boomers (1955-65)	0–1	24.8 %	24.7 %	26.6 %	22.9 %	-0.021*
Generation X (1966-77)	0–1	16.7 %	4.0 %	18.2 %	24.1 %	0.205*
Generation Y (1978+)	0–1	5.3 %	-----	0.7 %	13.3 %	0.265*
Age	18–89	45.8 (17.3)	45.3	45.5	46.6	0.036*
Church attendance	0–8	3.7 (2.69)	3.9	3.7	3.6	-0.061*
Catholic	0–1	25.2 %	25.5 %	25.1 %	25.2 %	-0.006
Protestant	0–1	57.8 %	62.9 %	58.3 %	53.9 %	-0.075*
Mainline Protestant	0–1	22.9 %	23.7%	23.4 %	21.4 %	-0.032*
Conservative Protestant	0–1	21.7 %	22.9 %	22.7 %	20.0 %	-0.036*
Black Protestant	0–1	9.0 %	12.1 %	8.5 %	8.1 %	-0.029*
Other Protestant	0–1	4.2%	4.1 %	3.7 %	4.4 %	-0.001
Other religion	0–1	5.1 %	4.3 %	5.6 %	5.1 %	0.016*
No religion	0–1	11.9 %	7.3 %	10.9 %	15.7 %	0.111*

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$

4. Results

4.1. General Trends

Figure 1 displays annual change in mean reported fertility by religious group. Fertility is simply the number of children reported by respondents; it ranges from zero children to eight or more children. The ceiling of eight children was set by the GSS; however this does help to alleviate some of the skew in the variable (skewedness = 1.107; Kurtosis = 1.174). Reported fertility (hereafter,

we will use "fertility" in place of "reported fertility") decreases steadily from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s before rebounding after the turn of the century; particularly among Catholics.

Figure 1. Average Reported Number of Children by Year and by Religious Group.
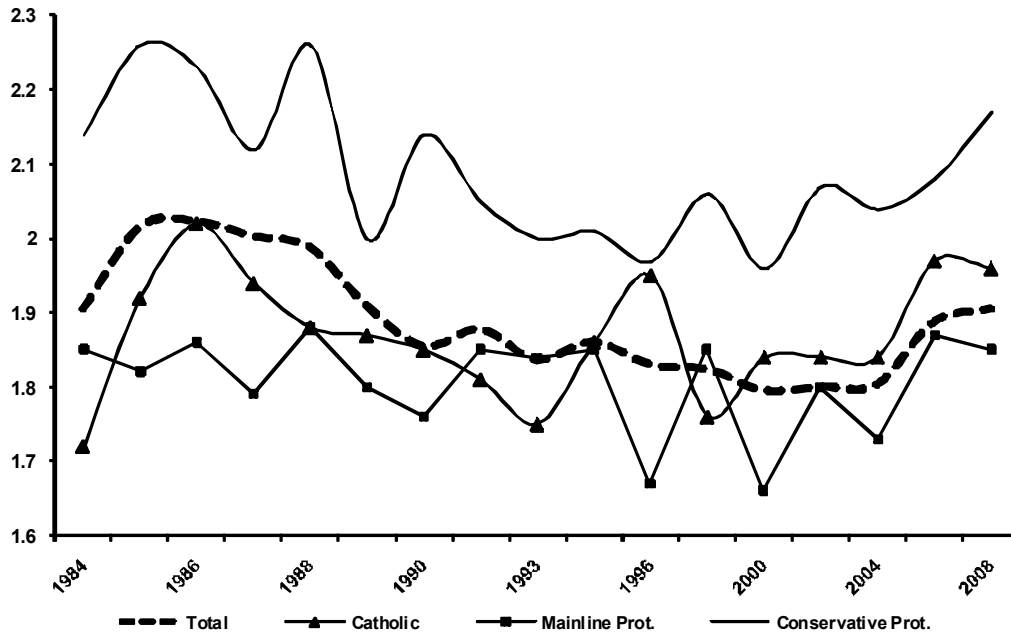
The trends by religious group basically follow the trend of overall fertility (*i.e.*, higher fertility in the early period and lower fertility until late in the period); however, there are two noticeable differences. First, the trend for Catholics is lower than that for Protestants. This realigning of fertility rates by religious group has been documented in other demographic research and thus our results reaffirm that work (e.g., [7]). Secondly, the fertility rates of conservative Protestants are higher than that of both Catholics and other Protestant groups. This trend is especially clear in the early- to mid-stages of our analysis period. In the next section, we explore in more detail these trends.

4.2. Regression Models

Table 2 shows parameter estimates and fit statistics from three different models. The first model includes period effects (dummy variables for each year) and demographic variables with no interactions between them. The estimated effects of the demographic variables are reported in Column 1, while the period effects are omitted to save space.

The results in Column 1 show that married people, females, blacks, and those who live in rural areas, and those who attend religious services regularly all report having more children than their specific counterparts. On the other hand, the more educated, the more affluent, and Southerners report having fewer children than those in the alternative groups. The cohort variable shows the expected pattern of those born in the earlier eras have significantly more children than those from Generation Y (born after 1978). The effects of age were non-linear. Specifically, the results suggest that additional years of age increase fertility (effect of age = 0.088, p < 0.001) at a decreasing rate

(effect of age-squared = −0.001, p < 0.001). Hence, the age effects take on the expected inverted U shape.

Table 2. Results of Three Negative Binomial Models Predicting Self-Reported Fertility.

IV	Model 1 *Main Effect*	Model 2 *Main Effect*	Model 3 *Main Effect*
Intercept	-1.919*** (0.069)	-1.866*** (0.069)	-1.881*** (0.069)
Cohort			
Pre-New Dealers (before 1909)	-0.239* (0.105)	-0.240* (0.108)	-0.244* (0.108)
New Dealers (1909-21)	-0.173 (0.091)	-0.178 (0.091)	-0.183* (0.091)
World War II (1922-29)	0.031 (0.230)	0.024 (0.081)	0.019 (0.081)
Cold Warriors (1930-45)	0.151* (0.069)	0.143* (0.069)	0.137* (0.069)
Early Boomers (1946-54)	0.150** (0.043)	0.143* (0.057)	0.138* (0.057)
Late Boomers (1955-65)	0.223*** (0.049)	0.216*** (0.049)	0.212*** (0.049)
Generation X (1966-77)	0.272*** (0.042)	0.269*** (0.042)	0.266*** (0.042)
Generation Y (1978+)	----	----	----
Age	0.088*** (0.003)	0.088*** (0.003)	0.088*** (0.003)
Age*Age	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)
Married	0.357*** (0.010)	0.356*** (0.010)	0.356*** (0.010)
Female	0.155*** (0.009)	0.154*** (0.009)	0.154*** (0.009)
Education	-0.056*** (0.002)	-0.054*** (0.002)	-0.053*** (0.002)
Income (divided by 10,000)	-0.003* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Black	0.280*** (0.013)	0.292*** (0.013)	0.284*** (0.019)
Rural	0.084*** (0.013)	0.087*** (0.013)	0.086*** (0.013)
South	-0.046*** (0.010)	-0.040*** (0.010)	-0.046*** (0.010)
Religious Service Attendance	0.020*** (0.002)	0.016*** (0.002)	0.015*** (0.002)
Protestant	----	-0.058*** (0.011)	----
Other Religion	----	-0.170*** (0.024)	-0.172*** (0.024)
No Religion	----	-0.139*** (0.019)	-0.139*** (0.019)
Catholic	----	----	----
Mainline Protestant	----	----	-0.097*** (0.012)
Conservative Protestant	----	----	-0.014 (0.013)
Black Protestant	----	----	-0.039 (0.023)
Other Protestant	----	----	-0.035 (0.024)
Deviance	38624.2	38651.6	38650.6
LR χ² (Δ from null model)	3992.5*** (35)	3965.1*** (38)	3966.1*** (41)
N	33,587	33,587	33,587

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. Standard errors are in parentheses. Dummy variables for each survey Year were omitted to save space. Coefficients were not transformed by exponentiation for presentation. LR χ² = deviance$_{null}$ - deviance$_{fitted}$, with the number of parameters for the significance test in parentheses.

Model 2 adds predictors for religious affiliation to the period effects and demographic predictors found in Model 1. Specifically, we added dummy variables for Protestant, those claiming other religious faiths, and those reporting no religious ties. The reference group is Catholics. The inclusion of the new predictors did not significantly change the direction or significance of the

estimates noted in Model 1. The second model addresses the difference in fertility between the two largest religious denominations, Catholic and Protestant. As expected, on average and net of other predictors, Protestants reported significantly fewer children than Catholics. In fact, our models suggest that Protestants have about $(e^{.058}-1)*100 = 5.6\%$ fewer children than Catholics. Also, those of other religious faiths and no religion had significantly lower fertility than Catholics—however, these groups have fewer respondents in them.

Model 3 further separates the Protestant denomination into four categories—Mainline Protestants (e.g., Presbyterians, Episcopalians, *etc.*), Black Protestants (e.g., National Baptist Convention, National Missionary Baptist Convention, *etc.*), conservative Protestants (e.g., Church of Christ, Pentecostals, *etc.*), and "other" Protestants (Lutherans, Methodists, *etc.*). Again, Catholic is the reference group. Theory and research predicts that conservative Protestants should have lower fertility than Catholics, but higher fertility than mainline Protestants or any of the other Protestant groups. The results for Model 3 support this assertion. Specifically, on average and net of all other predictors, mainline Protestants have significantly lower fertility than Catholics. To explain further, mainline Protestants have about $(e^{.097}-1)*100 = 9.2\%$ fewer children than Catholics. Importantly, the fertility of conservative, Black, and other Protestants was not significantly different than that of Catholics.

With respect to comparing across the religious groups, our results suggest that membership in the different religious groups had differential effects on fertility. Specifically, an F-test for class variable comparison showed that the coefficients for at least one of the religious groups differed from the others $F[6,35896] = 20.58$, $p < 0.001$. Subsequent analyses revealed the differences to be mainly associated with the fertility of mainline Protestants. Over the entire time-period the fertility of mainline Protestants was about 1.85 children, while the fertility of conservative Protestants was significantly higher at about 2.03 children. The fertility of Black Protestants was also significantly higher than that of mainline or conservative Protestants at about 2.38 children. Thus, the results show that the fertility of conservative Protestants was significantly *higher* than that of mainline Protestants, but significantly *lower* than that of Catholics or Black Protestants.

The results presented so far are not unique and coincide with many other studies of religion and fertility. However, one area that is largely understudied is the trends in fertility of each religious group over time. According to previous research, conservative Protestants have higher fertility than other groups and that this is what is driving their increasing numbers [6,36,37]. This suggests that fertility rates by religious group should show conservative Protestant fertility to be moving away from that of mainline and other Protestant sects.

In order to test the hypothesis that in the last few decades the fertility rates of conservative Protestants have moved away from that of mainline Protestants and Catholics, it is necessary to include interactions between the key independent variables representing religious denomination and some function of time. The most general form of interaction would treat year as a class variable. Since this approach would involve estimating a large number of parameters, it would have relatively low power. Consequently, it is desirable to use some simple function of time in the interaction term. Since we are interested in gradual shifts, the most obvious possibility is a linear trend term increasing from 0 in 1984 to 24 in 2008. Interactions involving a trend term imply a

steady divergence or convergence of groups over the whole period. In reality, change might take more complex forms—for example, the difference between groups might grow for a period of time, but then remain constant. However, the linear trend model provides a useful analytic starting point.

Estimates from a model including interactions with a linear trend are shown in the first and second columns of Table 3. The main effects are shown in the second column, while the interactions are shown in the third column. Our theoretical argument implies that the interactions between religious denomination and trend will be non-zero; that is, the fertility of conservative Protestants is growing relative to Catholics. In contrast to this expectation, the interaction with conservative Protestant is negative and not significant (B = −0.003, p > 0.05). A non-significant coefficient means that the trends in fertility rates for Catholics and conservative Protestants are moving in parallel. Said another way, over time, the gap between Catholics and conservative Protestants has remained the same. However, the gap between Catholics and those with other religious affiliations and those with no religious affiliation is growing larger (B = −0.007, p < 0.05 and B = −0.005, p < 0.05, respectively). This means that, the negative effects of no religion and other religion on fertility are growing stronger over time; said another way and relative to Catholics, those with no religion and other religions are having fewer children over time. The interactions involving the other religious dummy variables were non-significant. That is, although these variables may affect fertility, there is no indication that the effects have grown or declined over time.

Table 3. Negative Binomial Models Predicting Self-Reported Fertility over Time.

IV	Model 4	Trend
	Main Effect	
Intercept	-4.223*** (0.356)	
Trend	0.131*** (0.018)	
Cohort		
Pre-New Dealers (before 1909)	0.961** (0.171)	-0.053** (0.020)
New Dealers (1909-21)	0.659 (0.354)	-0.034* (0.017)
World War II (1922-29)	0.777* (0.353)	-0.035* (0.017)
Cold Warriors (1930-45)	1.066** (0.350)	-.050** (0.017)
Early Boomers (1946-54)	1.326*** (0.346)	-0.066*** (0.017)
Late Boomers (1955-65)	1.347*** (0.065)	-0.054*** (0.017)
Generation X (1966-77)	0.695* (0.344)	-0.011 (0.017)
Generation Y (1978+)	----	----
Age	0.150*** (0.006)	-0.004*** (0.000)
Age*Age	-0.001*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Married	0.338*** (0.010)	
Female	0.149*** (0.009)	
Education	-0.054*** (0.002)	
Income (divided by 10,000)	-0.003 (0.002)	
Black	0.276*** (0.018)	
Rural	0.085*** (0.013)	
South	-0.045*** (0.010)	

Table 3. *Cont.*

Religious Service Attendance	0.015*** (0.002)	
Other Religion	-0.091* (0.046)	-0.007* (0.003)
No Religion	-0.078* (0.038)	-0.005* (0.002)
Mainline Protestant	-0.077*** (0.024)	-0.002 (0.002)
Conservative Protestant	0.009 (0.023)	-0.003 (0.003)
Black Protestant	-0.023 (0.033)	-0.001 (0.002)
Other Protestant	0.001 (0.044)	0.075 (0.005)
Catholic	----	----
Deviance		38439.4
LR χ^2 (Δ from null model)		4177.4*** (55)
N		33,587

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Standard errors are in parentheses. Coefficients were not transformed by exponentiation for presentation. LR χ^2 = deviance$_{null}$ - deviance$_{fitted}$, with the number of parameters for the significance test in parentheses.

The interactions involving age and several of the cohort categories were also statistically significant. The results for age are more complicated and suggest that the inverted U shape seen in Model 3 is "flattening out" over time. That is, in later years, an additional year of age is predicting fewer children than it did in the early period. The results from the Cohort variables echo this conclusion, as people in the later generations are having fewer children than those from the older generations.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

In general, the results presented in this paper confirm many of the findings available in the current literature. For example, we found that marriage increases fertility, as does being black and living in rural areas. On the other hand, additional years of schooling and higher incomes reduce the fertility of respondents in our sample. Importantly, we also found that those who attend religious services more regularly have higher fertility than those who do not attend services as often. This effect, although slightly attenuated, holds true even when religious denomination is controlled for.

The results of our cross-sectional analysis also confirm work that suggests Protestants have fewer children than Catholics. Traditionally, this gap has been attributed to the relatively stronger position on artificial birth control taken by the leadership of the Catholic Church compared to the stance held by the leaders of the various Protestant sects. We also found that Catholics have higher fertility than those who claim "other" religious affiliations and those who claim to have no religious affiliation. This, too, confirms previous research in the area of fertility and religion.

What is unique about our study is the focus on the fertility of the various Protestant sub-denominations. Thanks to work by [9] we were able to separate out the individual Protestant traditions and compare their fertility both to each other and to Catholics. Due to the ideology of

some of the more fundamental Protestant sects, particularly conservative Protestants, which closely mirrors the Catholics' views on birth control, we expected that the fertility of conservative Protestants would be significantly higher than that of mainline Protestants and would even rival the fertility of Catholics. That is exactly what we found. When Protestants were separated into four categories (mainline, conservative, Black Protestants, and "other" Protestants) we found that only mainline Protestants reported significantly fewer children than did Catholics, controlling for a host of religious and demographic factors. This suggests that Protestants should not be considered one large homogeneous group. While our results underscored this point with regards to fertility, it is likely that the assumption that Protestants are a homogeneous group will not hold for a number of other outcome measures. For example, it is possible that topics fundamental to the study of religion in society such as religious participation and giving would benefit from studying them in light of the individual Protestant sects.

It is also possible that Catholics are not a homogeneous group. Westoff and Marshall ([38], p. 441) found that Hispanics have higher fertility than other ethnic groups and are more likely to be Catholic. This suggests that within the Catholic religion there may be a difference in fertility along ethnic lines. We leave this topic for future research. Another interesting avenue for future research would be to decompose the "conservative" Protestant group into its various components. That is, using the work of Blanchard *et al.* [39] as a guide, one could examine the fertility of evangelicals, fundamentalists, and Pentecostals separately. It is possible that these groups would show markedly different rates of fertility. As the within-conservative Protestant differences were not the focus of this paper, we also leave that for future research.

In addition to treating Protestants as a heterogeneous group, we also looked at the fertility trends of the various religious denominations over time. For the last few decades, researchers have documented a steady growth in the number of people claiming to be members of religious groups that we would classify as "conservative" Protestant. A number of scholars have attributed this growth to the greater fertility of the people in these groups along with (although to a much smaller degree) conversion and outreach by pastors and laypeople designed to increase membership numbers in specific churches. This argument suggests that the fertility of Protestants should be converging with (growing towards) that of Catholics and that the fertility of conservative Protestants in particular should be diverging (growing away) from that of Catholics.

In general, convergence/divergence implies two possible scenarios: First, the fertility of the specific groups are moving towards each other or away from each other at equal rates over time; that is, one group is having more/less children, while the other is having less/more children. Second, the fertility rates of one group are moving toward the other group, while the rates of the other group remain constant. Third, if two groups are becoming similar over time, then the rates of one group could exhibit a steeper slope than the rates of another group. That is, for example, the rates of Catholics may exhibit slope X, while the rates of conservative Protestants may exhibit a steeper slope, 2X. Thus, the fertility rates of conservative Protestants are "catching up" to the fertility rates of Catholics. It is these ideas that we tested with our trend analyses.

Although not presented in Table 3, we found no evidence for the converging of the fertility of Catholics and the fertility of Protestants. In fact, over time, there was a significant and negative

interaction between a dummy variable for Protestant and our linear trend term. This means that the number of children reported by Protestants is growing smaller over time, relative to Catholics. Hence, we found a divergence and not a convergence in our results. As we cautioned above, however, it is probably a mistake to treat Protestants as one large homogeneous group. When Protestants are separated into their respective components and reentered into the model, the effect of time disappears. We found no significant trends in the fertility of mainline, conservative, Black Protestants, or other Protestants relative to Catholics. This means that our second proposition, that the fertility of conservative Protestants is surpassing that of Catholics and growing away from them, was not supported either. It seems as though the fertility rates of the various groups have not changed much over time. The exceptions to this were the fertility of those who claimed "other" religions and those who claimed "no religion." Over time, they both had significantly fewer children, on average, than Catholics.

One of the key implications of these findings is that conservative Protestants are a growing political force in American politics, not only because of the resonance of their movement's message but because of their high fertility rates. The prominence of the "religious right" in the contemporary conservative movement is one reason for its increased political and cultural power. Future research should explore the political implications of conservative Protestant fertility more directly. For example, are children born to conservative Protestant parents more likely to embrace conservative political identifications, vote for conservative candidates, and participate in elections? Additionally, are conservative Protestants' political orientations stable over time, or are there significant age, period, or cohort effects within this group? Conservative Protestant cohorts represent a particularly fruitful avenue for future study. Specifically, one key issue is whether higher fertility rates are translating into greater cohort sizes or, conversely, are a large number of children born to conservatives "leaving the flock." Moreover, it would be interesting to examine the political orientations of conservative Protestant cohorts and whether or not cohort size engenders greater political unity or diversity. Altogether, there is no doubt that conservative Protestants are a major political force in the U.S., however, their relatively high fertility may well ensure that they remain powerful for years to come.

In sum, this paper asked two fairly straightforward questions: 1) Are there differences in the fertility of the Protestant sub-denominations (particularly that of conservative Protestants)? And, 2) Does the growth in the number of conservative Protestants in the United States mean that the gap between Protestant and Catholic fertility is shrinking over time? Our findings suggest that there are indeed differences in fertility among the individual Protestant sects, but that those differences are not growing (or shrinking) over time. Additionally, the gap between Catholics and Protestants is not getting smaller and, especially among mainline Protestants, is getting larger.

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The Connection between Worship Attendance and Racial Segregation Attitudes among White and Black Americans

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Abstract: The present study finds that, for Whites, worship attendance is associated with heightened support for racial segregation. This has much to do with the fact that the individuals that attend worship service the least, secular and young adults, tend to be more racially progressive. That is, the extent to which secular and Generation X and Y individuals attend worship services as often as others, worship attendance is associated with weakened opposition to racial segregation. Conversely, worship attendance, religious affiliation, and age cohort are largely unrelated to Black racial segregation attitudes.

1. Introduction

All major religions promote a common kinship of humankind, in which all people are neighbors and equally valuable in the eyes of the creator. At the same time, religious doctrine has often been used by dominant groups to reinforce hegemony. This dialectic is well exemplified by the Civil Rights Movement where prophetic clergy and lay persons successfully challenged laws and behaviors that, they argued, violated universal and God-given human rights [1-3]. On the other hand, it was not uncommon for White church members to reject the political appeals of their civil rights oriented clergy [2,4,5]. A number of studies suggest that White church members were more heavily opposed to civil rights than were others [4-7]. The conflicting nature of the association between religion and prejudice is also seen in empirical studies that, at times, suggest that worship attendance heightens prejudice among dominant group members while other studies call these relationships into question [6,8,9].

Given that religious congregations are, in many ways, America's central civil societal institution, it is important to investigate their capacity to inform racial attitudes. Nearly two centuries ago, French philosopher Alex De Tocqueville [10] argued that the potential of American religious congregations to inspire independent thought lies in the free space it provides citizens to deliberate in small groups about their roles in protecting and extending their freedoms and opportunities. This is still true today as more Americans are members of, volunteer for, and donate money to congregations than any other non-profit organization [11]. Religious institutions are also one of the top three institutions in which Americans hold a high level of confidence [12,13].

Despite the potential importance of religion in informing American political attitudes, the degree to which worship attendance informs American attitudes about racial segregation has not been well established in survey research. And, the extent to which religious congregations are associated with the willingness of racial/ethnic minorities to live and function within racial/ethnically diverse settings is even less clear. Past studies on religion and out-group attitudes have generally

investigated the connection between the dominant group's religion and their tolerance of minority racial/ethnic and immigrant groups [6-8]. While tolerance is a prerequisite for members of diverse social groups to view their life chances as inter-dependent, in isolation, it makes no such assumption [14]. Alternatively, a willingness to live and send one's child to school with members of racial/ethnic out-groups moves one closer to viewing race/ethnicity as an artificial social construct. The current study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by assessing the relationship between worship attendance and racial segregation attitudes among Black and White Americans.

2. Religion and Tolerance among Whites

A majority of Mainline Protestant clergy believe that churches should engage in social justice including reducing racial prejudice, and roughly a fifth of White Mainline, Catholic and Evangelical clergy classify their congregations as maintaining a commitment to social justice [15,16]. Similarly, social justice tends to inform the political behavior of both Mainline and Catholic clergy [15,17]. Congregants are seemingly aware of such discourse, as over half of church-attending Whites report hearing messages about the importance of improving race relations at least once a year in their houses of worship [18]. Over forty percent report that their congregations have hosted or sponsored a program to improve race relations [18].

Nonetheless, few survey and experimental studies find an association between worship attendance and reduced racial prejudice among Whites. Rather, some studies find frequent worship attending Whites--those that attend once a week--to be less prejudiced than individuals that attend between once or twice a year to once a month, but no different than those that never attend [6-8]. Allport [19] explains this relationship by making a case that religious intent informs worship attendance patterns. That is, moderate attendees, those that attend between once or twice a year to once a month, do not truly believe in the core religious tenets of universal love as they attend worship services just enough to satisfy social norms or for self interest reasons. Alternatively, the intrinsically religious attend worship services regularly out of their genuine interest in living a religious life which, in part, emphasizes a universal love of all God's children [19]. However, other studies challenge Allport's [19] argument that distinctions in the religious motivations of the intrinsically and extrinsically religious account for the relationship between worship attendance and attitudes of prejudice. These studies suggest that worship attendance is either unrelated or associated with increased prejudice towards and a desire to maintain distance from racial/ethnic out-groups [6-8,20,21].

The inconsistency in the relationship between worship attendance and racial attitudes may, in part, be linked to the exclusion of secular individuals from many religion and tolerance studies. Given that over three-quarters of secular adults were reared in a religious faith and then became unaffiliated at some point during adulthood implies a questioning of the role that religion plays in their lives and, potentially, of its broader societal importance [6]. Subsequently, secular individuals are more likely than others to question the dominance of a given faith relative to others and the accuracy of religious texts [22,23]. For dominant members, such questioning may lend itself to also questioning social constructions of race/ethnicity historically based upon dominance and marginalization. It follows that secular Whites tend to hold less stereotypical and prejudicial

attitudes towards racial/ethnic out-groups than do others [6,8,24]. The fact that only two-thirds of secular individuals report never attending worship services suggests that a substantive number of these individuals are questioning hegemony while attending houses of worship [25]. By excluding such individuals, many religion and tolerance studies are somewhat limited in their ability to explain the connection between worship attendance and racial attitudes. Worship attendance may associate with prejudicial attitudes because secular individuals attend less than do their religiously affiliated counterparts. However, the degree to which secular individuals attend worship services at a similar rate as others may weaken and even reverse the relationship between worship attendance and racial prejudice.

Accounting for cohort effects may add further clarity to the connection between worship attendance/involvement and out-group attitudes. Whites that came of age during the post-civil rights eras of the mid to late 1960s and early 1980s and the Reagan and Bush eras of the early 1980s to the mid 1990s tend to hold less stereotypical attitudes of Blacks [26]. Younger cohorts of Whites also tend to have more positive evaluations of racially integrated neighborhoods and schools and are more likely to support polices that outlaw racial segregation than previous generations [26]. Along these lines, the Religion and Politics Study [22] suggests that younger Whites are more likely than older Whites to be concerned about racial discrimination. Like secular Whites, younger White cohorts that question racial inequality may also raise larger questions about hegemony which includes looking to dominant religious institutions as the primary source for moral instruction. Moreover, in the same way that younger cohorts of Whites tend to question the basis of racial inequality, they are also more likely than others to question the inerrancy of the Bible, believe that all religions contain some truth, and that all religions are equally good ways to relate to God [22]. The fact that young adults attend worship services less often than do older cohorts may partially explain why worship attendance rarely contributes to racial progressive attitudes among Whites.

3. Religion and Tolerance among Black Americans

It is unlikely that cohort effects, worship attendance or religious affiliation have the same impact on Black racial attitudes as it does for Whites. Given that marginalized groups tend to be restricted from opportunity structures, they are unlikely to face the same moral dilemma over the extent to which institutions should allow for increased opportunities for all social groups. The reasoning follows that because Blacks are socio-economically disadvantaged, racial integration tends to reduce concentrations of these groups in communities with few social economic resources in the form of jobs, quality education, health care facilities, and other qualities of life [27-29]. The socio-economic benefits of racial integration for racial/ethnic minorities likely contributes to Blacks of disparate age groups and religious affiliations maintaining relatively high levels of support for racial integration. Such an outlook may, in part, explain why Black clergy and laity were over-represented in civil rights demonstrations during the 1950s and 1960s [1,2]. Relative to Whites, there was also much greater support among Blacks for open housing campaigns and civil rights efforts more generally [25].

The vast majority of Blacks continue to support racial integration and policies that encourage neighborhood and school racial/ethnic diversity [30,31]. In addition, Blacks remain more supportive than Whites of religious institutions participating in political movements and in fighting poverty and Blacks are more supportive than Whites of religious institutions fighting racial discrimination [22]. Such attitudes may explain why Blacks are more likely than Whites to hear sermons about poverty and why Blacks are more likely than Whites to hear sermons about racial discrimination [22]. Along these lines, Black congregations are over-represented in faith-based community organizing firms that are committed to improving the quality of life within poor communities via interracial grassroots political coalitions [32]. Moreover, while secular and younger individuals may partially explain the relationship between worship attendance and racial attitudes among Whites, this is not likely the case for Blacks. This leads to the following research question: to what extent does religious affiliation and age cohort explain the relationship between worship attendance and racial segregation attitudes among White and Black Americans?

4. Sample

This study relies upon the 1972-2008 General Social Survey (GSS) cumulative data file. In most years since 1972, the National Opinion Research Center conducted the GSS via face to face interviews, computer-assisted personal interviews, and telephone interviews [33]. The GSS is a national representative sample of adults 18 years and older living in non-institutionalized settings within the U.S. [33]. This study is the largest project receiving funding from the National Science Foundation's Sociology Program. Outside of the U.S. Census, this data is more heavily analyzed than any other source of social science data. For the purpose of replication, many of the demographic and attitudinal questions have remained constant since 1972 to allow for longitudinal studies and the replication of previous results. A number of studies also contain questions of special interests, such as religion in 1991, 1998, and 2008. And, while the exact wording for some questions has changed from survey to survey, the cumulative data file retains consistency across surveys [34]. In total, the 1972-2010 GSS has roughly 5,400 variables, time-trends for nearly 2,000 variables, and 257 trends with over 20 data points.

Up until 1994, 1,500 was a typical sample size. After 1994, the GSS became biennial and sample sizes increased to 3,000. Response rates vary between 74 and 82 percent [33]. Depending upon the years in which the dependent variable questions were asked, the Black sample ranges from 263–2,173 and the White sample from 1,685–16,468.

5. Measures

5.1. Dependent Variables: Racial Segregation Attitudes

To get as complete a picture as the General Social Survey allows on Americans' racial segregation attitudes, this study relies upon a number of racial segregation variables asked between 1972 and 2008. Between 1972 and 2008, opposition to open housing was assessed by the extent to which respondents would support a policy that allowed them to decide to whom they are willing to sell their house, even if they preferred not to sell to (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans). Between

1972 and 1996, support for homeowner discrimination was assessed by the extent to respondents believed that White people have a right to keep (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) should respect that right. Between 1988 and 2008, opposition to living near Blacks was assessed by the extent to which respondents were opposed living in a neighborhood where half their neighbors were Black. This same question was asked about Whites between 2000 and 2008. Between 1972 and 1996, opposition to sending one's child to school with [Whites/(Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans)] was assessed by the extent to which respondents were opposed to the idea of sending their child to a school in which half of the children are [Whites/(Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans)]. Between 1972 and 1996, opposition to busing was assessed by the extent to which respondents opposed the busing of (Negro/Black/African-American) and White school children from one school district to another to integrate the schools. The varying years in which these racial segregation variables are included in the analyses presented below are based upon the years in which the GSS presented those questions on their survey.

5.2. Independent Variables: Worship Attendance, Religious Affiliation, and Age Cohort

5.2.1. Religious Affiliation and Worship Attendance

This study relies on Steensland *et al.*'s [35] classification of religious denominations. Membership status in national religious organizations such as the National Council of Churches and the National Association of Evangelicals are used to classify various Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian denominations into Evangelical, Mainline, and historically Black Protestant traditions. Respondents were divided into the nominal categories of Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Black Protestant, Other Protestant, Other-Faiths, and Secular. The secular category includes those who do not identify with or affiliate with a religion. Because of sample size considerations, there are slight differences in the denominations/faiths represented among the varying racial/ethnic groups included in this study. There are no separate dummy variables of Black Protestant Churches in the White American analyses. Jewish and other Protestant dummy variables are not included in the African American analyses. Such individuals along with followers of many other faiths are instead grouped in an "other faith" category. This study relies upon a standard worship attendance variable that assesses the frequency to which individuals attend houses of worship on a scale that ranges from 1—never attending, to 8—attending more than once a week.

5.2.2. Age Cohort

This study borrows Schuman *et. al.*'s [26] coding of age cohorts in which the youngest persons included in the pre-civil rights age cohort are persons that reached age 18 in 1953, a year before the Brown *vs.* Board of Education Supreme Court Decision. The civil rights cohort includes those individuals that came of age during the successful civil rights struggle between 1954 and 1965. The post civil rights cohort came of age during the mid 1960s to early 1980s (1966-1980), Generation X came of age between 1981 and 1995, and Generation Y came of age after 1995. Because small

samples of individuals from Generation Y were asked many of the racial segregation questions, they were grouped with Generation X to form the Generation XY cohort.

5.3. Control Variables

The current study controls for the standard demographic factors of college education, family income, gender, children in the household, party identification, and living in the South.[7] This study also takes into consideration the years during which the racial segregation attitude questions were asked.[8]

6. Results

6.1. Religion, Age Cohort, and Racial Segregation Attitudes among White Americans

In all cases but one, the analyses presented in Tables 1 through 3 suggest that both religious affiliation and age cohort serve as lurking variables that impact the relationship between worship attendance and White racial segregation attitudes. Because secular and younger Whites attend houses of worship less often and are more likely to oppose racial segregation than others, worship attendance, on average, contributes to heightened support for racial segregation. However, the extent to which secular and younger Whites attend at the same rate as others, attendance contributes to increased opposition to racial segregation to the point that previous effects are nullified or reversed such that attendance reduces opposition to racial segregation. In addition, the likelihood ratio tests suggest that the addition of religious affiliation and age-cohort significantly improves the fit of the models presented in these analyses.

Table 1 indicates that religious affiliated and older cohorts of Whites are more likely than others to attend worship services. The reduced model of the opposition to open housing analyses suggests that worship attendance heightens opposition. However, taking into account age-cohort weakens the relationship between worship attendance and open housing attitudes to the point that worship attendance is no longer associated with such preferences. Although worship attendance still heightens opposition to open housing in the religious affiliation model, accounting for religious affiliation weakens this relationship. The full model indicates that worship attendance is unrelated to open housing attitudes. These analyses also indicate that the pre civil rights, civil rights, and post civil rights cohorts are more opposed to open housing than are generation XY cohorts. In addition, Evangelicals, Mainliners, and Catholics are more likely than are secular Whites to oppose open housing policies.

The reduced model of the support for homeowner discrimination analyses, also reported in Table1, suggests that worship attendance heightens support. However, taking into account age-cohort and religious affiliation weakens this relationship to the point that worship attendance is unrelated

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[7]   Missing values for family income, age cohort, and church attendance were imputed from an imputation procedure that organizes missing cases by patterns of missing data so that the missing-value regressions can be conducted efficiently. The imputations did not significantly or substantively alter the analyses.

[8]   These analyses are weighted to account for non-respondents within the sampling design [33].

to support for homeowner discrimination in the age cohort and religious affiliation models. The full model indicates that worship attendance actually reduces support for homeowner discrimination. These analyses also indicate that the pre civil rights, civil rights, and post civil rights cohorts are more supportive of homeowner discrimination than are generation XY cohorts. In addition, Evangelicals, Mainliners, and Catholics are more supportive than are secular Whites.

The reduced model of the opposition to living near Blacks analyses reported in Table 2 suggests that worship attendance is unrelated to such preferences. Worship attendance nearly reduces such opposition when age cohort and religious affiliation are respectively accounted for in the age-cohort and religious affiliation models. When both religious affiliation and age cohort are accounted for in the full model, worship attendance does reduce opposition to living in integrated neighborhoods with Blacks. These analyses also indicate that the pre civil rights, civil rights, and post civil rights cohorts are more opposed than are generation XY cohorts. In addition, Evangelicals, Mainliners, Catholics, Jews, and other Protestants are more opposed than are secular Whites. Contrary to the other cases, Table 2 also reports that age cohort does not explain the relationship between worship attendance and opposition to living near Hispanics. These analyses also indicate that Evangelicals are more likely than are secular Whites to oppose living near Hispanics.

The reduced model of the opposition to school integration reported in Table 3 suggests that worship attendance is unrelated to such preferences. Taking into account age-cohort and religious affiliation strengthens this relationship to the point that worship attendance reduces opposition in both the age cohort and religious affiliation models. In the full model, worship attendance continues to reduce opposition to school integration. These analyses also indicate that the pre civil rights, civil rights, and post civil rights cohorts are more opposed to school integration than are generation XY cohorts. In addition, Evangelicals, Mainliners, Catholics, Jews, and Other Protestants are more opposed than are secular Whites. The reduced model of the opposition to busing analyses, also reported in Table 3, indicates that worship attendances increases opposition. Although worship attendance continues to heighten opposition in both the age cohort and religious affiliation models, the relationships are weakened. In the full model, worship attendance is no longer associated with opposition to busing. These analyses also indicate that the pre civil rights, civil rights, and post civil rights cohorts are more opposed to busing than are generation XY cohorts. In addition, Evangelicals, Mainliners, Catholics, and Other Protestants are more opposed than are secular Whites. The predicted probability estimates listed in the appendix further illustrates that worship attendance reduces support for racial segregation attitudes as age cohorts and religious affiliation are taken into account. Overall, Tables 1 through 3 also suggests that college graduates, non-southerners, women, and individuals that were interviewed more recently tend to oppose racial segregation.

Table 1. Impact of worship attendance, religious affiliation and age cohort on White racial attitudes: Logit Regression Analyses.

	Attend.	Open Housing-Reduced	Open Housing-Cohort	Open Housing-Religion	Open Housing-Full	Housing Discrim.-Reduced	Housing Discrim.-Cohort	Housing Discrim.-Religion	Housing Discrim.-Full
Attend.	---	0.037***	0.011	0.023**	-0.001	0.025**	0.000	0.005	-0.018*
		(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Evan.	2.962***	---	---	0.506***	0.402***	---	---	0.822***	0.680***
	(0.045)			(0.072)	(0.073)			(0.109)	(0.111)
Mainline	2.340***	---	---	0.423***	0.246***	---	---	0.624***	0.410***
	(0.043)			(0.068)	(0.070)			(0.106)	(0.108)
Catholic	2.899***	---	---	0.271***	0.188***	---	---	0.630***	0.501***
	(0.043)			(0.070)	(0.071)			(0.109)	(0.110)
Jewish	1.667***	---	---	0.081	-0.139	---	---	0.306	0.100
	(0.071)			(0.127)	(0.129)			(0.183)	(0.185)
Oth.Faith	2.101***	---	---	0.062	0.054	---	---	0.102	0.068
	(0.067)			(0.119)	(0.120)			(0.192)	(0.194)
Oth, Prot.	2.647***	---	---	0.185*	0.107	---	---	0.349**	0.223
	(0.053)			(0.084)	(0.085)			(0.128)	(0.130)
Pre C.R.	0.695***	---	1.111***	---	1.084***	---	1.331***	---	1.294***
	(0.035)		(0.065)		(0.066)		(0.111)		(0.111)
C. R.	0.213***	---	0.486***	---	0.457***	---	0.860***	---	0.818***
	(0.035)		(0.066)		(0.066)		(0.116)		(0.116)
Post C.R.	0.036	---	0.141*	---	0.124*	---	0.456***	---	0.436***
	(0.031)		(0.062)		(0.062)		(0.112)		(0.113)
College	0.461***	-0.482***	-0.394***	-0.445***	-0.355***	-0.949***	-0.868***	-0.889***	-0.805***
	(0.025)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.067)	(0.068)
Income	0.041***	0.001	0.002	-0.000	0.003	-0.068***	-0.073***	-0.069***	-0.072***
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)

Table 1. *Cont.*

South	0.193***	0.423***	0.457***	0.356***	0.396***	0.469***	0.360***	0.402***
	(0.023)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.049)
Female	0.389***	-0.230***	-0.253***	-0.243***	-0.257***	-0.053	-0.075	-0.066
	(0.020)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.044)
Children	0.230***	-0.331***	-0.001	-0.331***	-0.011	-0.014	-0.330***	-0.033
	(0.023)	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.052)	(0.046)	(0.052)
Democrat	-0.176***	-0.137***	-0.203***	-0.130***	-0.196***	0.163***	0.081	0.144**
	(0.022)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Year	-0.003*	-0.049***	-0.034***	-0.049***	-0.034***	-0.053***	-0.034***	-.036***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
L.R. Test [9]	---	563.9***	81.86***	616.9***	---	312.9***	87.15***	379.0***
N	32201	16468	16468	16468	16468	12816	12816	12816

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses: *< 0.05; **< 0.01, ***< 0.001 (two-tailed tests)

Table 2. Impact of worship attendance, religious affiliation and age cohort on White racial attitudes: Logit Regression Analyses.

	Live w/ Blacks-Reduced	Live w/ Blacks-Cohort	Live w/ Blacks-Religion	Live w/ Blacks-Full	Live w/ Hispanic-Reduced	Live w/ Hispanic-Cohort	Live w/ Hispanic-Religion	Live w/ Hispanic-Full
Attend.	0.007	-0.016	-0.020	-0.039**	0.005	-0.014	-0.012	-0.030
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Evan.	---	---	0.527***	0.463***	---	---	0.521*	0.490*
			(0.108)	(0.109)			(0.217)	(0.218)
Mainline	---	---	0.557***	0.439***	---	---	0.424*	0.386
			(0.105)	(0.107)			(0.208)	(0.210)
Catholic	---	---	0.533***	0.484***	---	---	0.328	0.332
			(0.104)	(0.105)			(0.211)	(0.212)

9 The Likelihood Ratio (L.R.) Test represents the change in the log likelihood between the reduced and nested models.

Table 2. *Cont.*

Jewish	---	---	0.533**	0.410*	---	---	0.575	0.484
			(0.193)	(0.197)			(0.358)	(0.363)
Oth.Faith	---	---	-0.075	-0.030	---	---	0.188	0.253
			(0.167)	(0.168)			(0.314)	(0.316)
Oth, Prot.	---	---	0.442***	0.409**	---	---	0.223	0.277
			(0.128)	(0.129)			(0.256)	(0.257)
Pre C.R.	---	0.964***	---	0.914***	---	0.666***	---	0.627***
		(0.087)		(0.088)		(0.167)		(0.169)
C. R.	---	0.477***	---	0.433***	---	0.255	---	0.226
		(0.087)		(0.088)		(0.176)		(0.177)
Post C.R.	---	0.206**	---	0.178*	---	0.068	---	0.046
		(0.074)		(0.074)		(0.151)		(0.152)
College	-0.398***	-0.345***	-0.372***	-0.314***	-0.512***	-0.480***	-0.487***	-0.451**
	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.129)	(0.130)	(0.132)	(0.133)
Income	0.016	0.027	0.015	0.027	0.064*	0.074**	0.063*	0.074**
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.029)
South	0.249***	0.256***	0.222***	0.235***	0.143	0.144	0.091	0.098
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.117)	(0.117)	(0.122)	(0.123)
Female	-0.089	-0.115*	-0.105	-0.126*	-0.070	-0.090	-0.079	-0.096
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.107)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.108)
Children	-0.306***	-0.021	-0.296***	-0.029	-0.152	0.087	-0.141	0.087
	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.114)	(0.129)	(0.115)	(0.130)
Democrat	0.007	-0.056	-0.010	-0.067	0.073	0.012	0.070	0.015
	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.114)	(0.116)	(0.116)	(0.118)
Year	-0.066***	-0.055***	-0.063***	-0.054***	-0.076***	-0.069***	-0.075***	-0.069***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
L.R. Test	---	133.0***	48.1***	165.7***	---	20.0***	8.1	25.8**
N	6613	6613	6613	6613	1685	1685	1685	1685

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses: *<0.05; **<0.01, ***<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

Table 3. Impact of worship attendance, religious affiliation and age cohort on White racial attitudes: Logit Regression Analyses.

	School Integra.-Reduced	School Integra.-Cohort	School Integra.-Religion	School Integra.-Full	Busing-Reduced	Busing-Cohort	Busing-Religion	Busing-Full
Attend.	-0.010	-0.022**	-0.028**	-0.039***	0.038***	0.024**	0.026**	0.013
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Evan.	--	--	0.583***	0.525***	--	--	0.433***	0.350***
			(0.110)	(0.111)			(0.085)	(0.086)
Mainline	--	--	0.495***	0.401***	--	--	0.323***	0.200*
			(0.105)	(0.106)			(0.079)	(0.080)
Catholic	--	--	0.554***	0.511***	--	--	0.251**	0.193*
			(0.108)	(0.108)			(0.081)	(0.082)
Jewish	--	--	0.495**	0.412*	--	--	0.209	0.103
			(0.170)	(0.171)			(0.137)	(0.139)
Oth.Faith	--	--	0.352	0.330	--	--	-0.193	-0.222
			(0.190)	(0.191)			(0.141)	(0.142)
Oth, Prot.	--	--	0.330*	0.281*	--	--	0.319**	0.258*
			(0.129)	(0.130)			(0.100)	(0.101)
Pre C.R.	--	0.736***	--	0.716***	--	1.039***	--	1.022***
		(0.109)		(0.109)		(0.078)		(0.078)
C. R.	--	0.496***	--	0.477***	--	0.865***	--	0.851***
		(0.113)		(0.113)		(0.082)		(0.082)
Post C.R.	--	0.299**	--	0.291**	--	0.545***	--	0.543***
		(0.108)		(0.108)		(0.074)		(0.074)
College	-0.287***	-0.250***	-0.248***	-0.210***	-0.331***	-0.286***	-0.291***	-0.251***
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Income	0.032**	0.030**	0.030**	0.029**	0.095***	0.087***	0.096***	0.088***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)
South	0.243***	0.250***	0.219***	0.230***	0.498***	0.508***	0.446***	0.463***
	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.049)

Table 3. *Cont.*

Female	0.003 (0.046)	-0.004 (0.046)	-0.008 (0.046)	-0.010 (0.046)	-0.121** (0.041)	-0.136** (0.041)	-0.133** (0.041)	-0.142** (0.041)
Children	0.017 (0.047)	0.160** (0.052)	0.015 (0.047)	0.153** (0.052)	0.048 (0.042)	0.194*** (0.046)	0.045 (0.042)	0.182*** (0.046)
Democrat	-0.014 (0.047)	-0.051 (0.047)	-0.034 (0.048)	-0.072 (0.048)	-0.282*** (0.041)	-0.339*** (0.042)	-0.281*** (0.042)	-0.340*** (0.042)
Year	-0.017*** (0.003)	-0.006 (0.004)	-0.016*** (0.003)	-0.006 (0.004)	-0.064*** (0.003)	-0.048*** (0.003)	-0.064*** (0.003)	-0.049*** (0.003)
L.R. Test	---	79.1***	36.5***	109.7***	---	209.8***	42.2***	239.2***
N	13655	13655	13655	13655	15333	15333	15333	15333

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses: *<0.05; **<0.01, ***<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

Table 4. Impact of worship attendance, religious affiliation and age cohort on Black racial attitudes: Logit Regression Analyses.

	Attend.	Open Housing-Reduced	Open Housing-Cohort	Open Housing-Religion	Open Housing-Full	Housing Discrim.-Reduced	Housing Discrim.-Cohort	Housing Discrim.-Religion	Housing Discrim.-Full	Live w/ Whites-Reduced	Live w/ Whites-Cohort	Live w/ Whites-Religion	Live w/ Whites-Full
Attend.	---	0.003 (0.025)	-0.007 (0.025)	0.003 (0.025)	-0.009 (0.027)	0.103** (0.039)	0.079 (0.040)	0.095* (0.042)	0.075 (0.043)	-0.007 (0.054)	-0.002 (0.055)	0.006 (0.059)	0.012 (0.060)
Evan.	3.386*** (0.123)	---	---	0.019 (0.283)	0.051 (0.284)	---	---	0.147 (0.512)	-0.024 (0.516)	---	---	-0.272 (0.545)	-0.272 (0.546)
Mainline	1.981*** (0.149)	---	---	-0.608 (0.414)	-0.642 (0.417)	---	---	0.662 (0.562)	0.456 (0.569)	---	---	-0.272 (0.845)	-0.161 (0.862)
Catholic	2.163*** (0.135)	---	---	-0.086 (0.332)	-0.058 (0.334)	---	---	-0.473 (0.592)	-0.614 (0.595)	---	---	0.267 (0.640)	0.313 (0.646)
Blk. Pro.	2.348*** (0.109)	---	---	-0.127 (0.253)	-0.120 (0.255)	---	---	-0.027 (0.464)	-0.213 (0.469)	---	---	-0.199 (0.482)	-0.169 (0.483)

Table 4. *Cont.*

Oth.Faith	2.533***	---	-0.743	-0.659	---	---	-0.462	-0.562	---	---	0.324	0.292
	(0.178)		(0.466)	(0.468)			(0.752)	(0.757)			(0.687)	(0.690)
Pre C.R.	0.967***	0.189	---	0.218	---	1.192**	---	1.190**	---	-0.840	---	-0.855
	(0.088)	(0.203)		(0.206)		(0.397)		(0.401)		(0.774)		(0.787)
C. R.	0.539***	0.268	---	0.300	---	0.790	---	0.825*	---	0.091	---	0.082
	(0.084)	(0.196)		(0.198)		(0.415)		(0.417)		(0.475)		(0.485)
Post C.R.	0.221**	-0.257	---	-0.232	---	0.704	---	0.735	---	-0.285	---	-0.265
	(0.069)	(0.174)		(0.175)		(0.386)		(0.388)		(0.352)		(0.353)
College	0.385***	-0.031	-0.039	-0.006	-0.578	-0.550	-0.612	-0.582	-0.269	-0.272	-0.329	-0.338
	(0.077)	(0.206)	(0.206)	(0.207)	(0.367)	(0.369)	(0.371)	(0.372)	(0.501)	(0.502)	(0.508)	(0.509)
Income	0.047***	-.077***	-.082***	-.078***	-0.063*	-0.059	-0.066*	-0.062*	-0.103	-0.102*	-0.099*	-0.099*
	(0.009)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.046)*	(0.046)	(0.047)	(0.047)
South	0.563***	0.549***	0.522***	0.551***	0.550**	0.548**	0.527**	0.532**	-0.364	-0.350	-0.366	-0.364
	(0.050)	(0.122)	(0.123)	(0.124)	(0.184)	(0.185)	(0.185)	(0.186)	(0.296)	(0.298)	(0.299)	(0.301)
Female	0.629***	-0.198	-0.203	-0.195	0.069	0.061	0.068	0.061	-0.000	0.017	0.016	0.034
	(0.052)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.196)	(0.197)	(0.197)	(0.198)	(0.311)	(0.313)	(0.313)	(0.315)
Children	0.062	0.092	-0.015	0.089	-0.236	-0.031	-0.223	-0.027	-0.099	-0.186	-0.105	-0.189
	(0.053)	(0.132)	(0.123)	(0.133)	(0.185)	(0.204)	(0.186)	(0.205)	(0.305)	(0.322)	(0.307)	(0.325)
Democrat	0.217***	-0.073	-0.034	-0.054	-0.589**	-0.684**	-0.605**	-0.692**	-0.554	-0.526	-0.491	-0.470
	(0.061)	(0.146)	(0.146)	(0.147)	(0.205)	(0.208)	(0.207)	(0.211)	(0.310)	(0.314)	(0.319)	(0.322)
Year	0.009**	0.001	-0.002	0.001	-0.043*	-0.022	-0.044*	-0.024	0.065	0.056	0.067	0.059
	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
N	5337	2112	2112	2112	1791	1791	1791	1791	691	691	691	691

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses: *<0.05; **<0.01, ***<0.001 (two-tailed tests).

Table 5. Impact of worship attendance, religious affiliation and age cohort on Black racial attitudes: Logit Regression Analyses.

	Live w/ Hispanic-Reduced	Live w/ Hispanic-Cohort	Live w/ Hispanic-Religion	Live w/ Hispanic-Full	School Integra.-Reduced	School Integra.-Cohort	School Integra.-Religion	School Integra.-Full	Busing-Reduced	Busing-Cohort	Busing-Religion	Busing-Full
Attend.	0.040 (0.062)	0.043 (0.065)	0.044 (0.067)	0.043 (0.070)	0.038 (0.057)	0.041 (0.059)	0.037 (0.061)	0.037 (0.062)	-0.028 (0.019)	-0.024 (0.019)	-0.048* (0.020)	-0.044* (0.021)
Evan.	---	---	0.092 (0.745)	0.128 (0.752)	---	---	-0.034 (0.738)	-0.030 (0.738)	---	---	0.666** (0.242)	0.688** (0.243)
Mainline	---	---	-1.788 (1.245)	-1.725 (1.269)	---	---	0.058 (0.863)	0.073 (0.865)	---	---	0.078 (0.281)	0.127 (0.283)
Catholic	---	---	-0.624 (0.850)	-0.477 (0.861)	---	---	0.473 (0.722)	0.473 (0.722)	---	---	0.411 (0.250)	0.431 (0.250)
Blk. Pro.	---	---	-0.494 (0.672)	-0.433 (0.672)	---	---	-0.237 (0.654)	-0.229 (0.656)	---	---	0.390 (0.208)	0.422* (0.210)
Oth.Faith	---	---	-0.414 (0.939)	-0.461 (0.953)	---	---	0.735 (0.823)	0.754 (0.824)	---	---	0.282 (0.317)	0.279 (0.317)
Pre C.R.	---	0.159 (0.513)	---	0.260 (0.530)	---	-0.285 (0.475)	---	-0.183 (0.481)	---	-0.307 (0.184)	---	-0.318 (0.187)
C. R.	---	-0.704 (0.578)	---	-0.675 (0.590)	---	-0.215 (0.468)	---	-0.155 (0.472)	---	-0.296 (0.183)	---	-0.300 (0.185)
Post C.R.	---	0.410 (0.414)	---	0.366 (0.421)	---	-0.326 (0.427)	---	-0.304 (0.430)	---	-0.226 (0.171)	---	-0.232 (0.171)
College	-0.736 (0.531)	-0.788 (0.535)	-0.747 (0.534)	-0.816 (0.540)	-0.551 (0.615)	-0.547 (0.616)	-0.577 (0.617)	-0.567 (0.618)	0.074 (0.155)	0.075 (0.155)	0.095 (0.156)	0.094 (0.156)
Income	0.000 (0.062)	-0.000 (0.065)	0.003 (0.064)	0.008 (0.067)	-0.107* (0.044)	-0.104* (0.044)	-0.111* (0.044)	-0.107* (0.045)	0.019 (0.016)	0.020 (0.016)	0.020 (0.016)	0.020 (0.016)

Table 5. *Cont.*

South	0.019	-0.086	0.046	-0.053	-0.118	-0.120	-0.025	-0.024	0.117	0.114	0.129	0.123
	(0.314)	(0.321)	(0.320)	(0.328)	(0.277)	(0.278)	(0.283)	(0.284)	(0.090)	(0.090)	(0.092)	(0.092)
Female	0.248	0.258	0.320	0.325	0.109	0.104	0.159	0.156	-0.128	-0.132	-0.124	-0.130
	(0.325)	(0.332)	(0.335)	(0.342)	(0.300)	(0.300)	(0.302)	(0.302)	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.095)
Children	-0.595	-0.743*	-0.735*	-0.836*	0.113	0.103	0.111	0.128	-0.032	-0.058	-0.048	-0.075
	(0.327)	(0.349)	(0.340)	(0.357)	(0.279)	(0.303)	(0.280)	(0.304)	(0.090)	(0.096)	(0.091)	(0.097)
Democrat	-0.307	-0.305	-0.308	-0.318	-0.410	-0.385	-0.353	-0.345	0.281*	0.304**	0.289**	0.311**
	(0.329)	(0.334)	(0.338)	(0.342)	(0.312)	(0.318)	(0.316)	(0.322)	(0.110)	(0.111)	(0.111)	(0.112)
Year	-0.067*	-0.068*	-0.067*	-0.067*	-0.010	-0.017	-0.014	-0.019	0.014*	0.010	0.014*	0.010
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
N	263	263	263	263	1498	1498	1498	1498	2173	2173	2173	2173

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses: *<0.05; **<0.01, ***<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

6.2. Religion, Age Cohort, and Racial Segregation Attitudes among African Americans

The analyses presented in Tables 4 and 5 largely suggest that, for Blacks, age cohort and religious affiliation play a very limited role in explaining the connection between worship attendance and racial segregation attitudes. It appears that religious affiliation and age-cohorts weaken the relationship between worship attendance and support for homeowner discrimination among Blacks in Table 4. It also appears that religious affiliation strengthens the relationship between worship attendance and opposition to busing such that worship attendance weakens opposition to busing. In all other cases, religious affiliation and age-cohort do not further explain the association between worship attendance and Black racial segregation attitudes[10]. Age cohort and religious affiliation are fairly inconsistent predictors of Black racial segregation attitudes. Demographic factors also do a poor job in predicting such attitudes among Blacks.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This current study suggests that the connection between worship attendance and White racial attitudes is largely a function of religious affiliation and age-cohort. For Whites, worship attendance is associated with more conservative racial attitudes because the religious affiliated and older cohorts attend more often and are more supportive of racial segregation than are secular persons and younger cohorts. Moreover, when the worship attendance gap is eliminated between secular and religious affiliated Whites and between younger and older Whites, attendance weakens support for racial segregation. These findings are consistent with research that suggests that secular and younger adults maintain more tolerant and progressive attitudes towards out-groups [6-8]. The same desire to understand the meaning of life that drives such individuals to question religious doctrines also likely fuels a desire to understand constructions of race/ethnicity that contributes to separation and conflicting interests between Whites and non-Whites. As such, the presence of secular and younger age cohorts of Whites within houses of worship are key to understanding the degree to which worship attendance is associated with support for racial segregation in residential and school contexts.

These findings may suggest that the attitudes attendees bring to their worship services reinforce existing racial attitudes. This is not to suggest that clergy have no influence over congregant racial attitudes. A number of studies suggest that clergy are capable of influencing congregant political attitudes and ideologies [36-40]. At the same time, clergy are particularly sensitive to member preferences as religious congregations are voluntary associations that are almost completely dependent upon congregants for money, gifts, and volunteers [4,5]. As such, even in instances in which Mainline, Evangelical, and Catholic clergy are more racially progressive than their congregants, they are unlikely to push too hard against entrenched attitudes. At this point, however, claims about the capacity of congregants relative to clergy to inform racial attitudes are merely

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[10] Because the likelihood ratio tests were non-significant in all but 1 model within the Black analyses, it is not included as part of their analyses in Tables 4-5. For the same reason, the probability estimates for Blacks are not included in the appendix.

speculative. The present study is not able to assess the degree to which congregants are exposed to discussions about race from; clergy, other religious leaders, congregants, and/or if they are taking part in such discussions in their houses of worship. Future research in this area is necessary to make more definitive claims about how the source of race discourse within houses of worship may inform the connection between worship attendance and White racial attitudes.

Conversely, for Blacks, attendance of worship services, religious affiliation, and age cohorts are largely unrelated to racial segregation attitudes. Such findings are understandable given that Blacks are under-represented among the American middle class and over-represented among the poor. Moreover, it is conceivable that both worship going and non-worship going blacks have a compelling interest to support racial/ethnic integration as a means to improve their individual and group life chances. This may explain why worship attendance is largely unrelated to Black racial segregation attitudes. However, at this point, the provided explanation serves, again, as only speculation. Further research is required to determine if perceptions of racial inequality and opportunity structures largely explain the connection between religion and racial attitudes among Blacks. That being said, these findings are consistent with Brown's study that found religious and non-religious Blacks to maintain similar positions on the importance of racism and economic barriers in explaining racial inequality [41].

In sum, for Whites, questions about dominance and marginalization among the secular and young adults likely contribute to their more progressive racial attitudes. The fact that these groups also tend to possess more critical attitudes about religious institutions likely contributes to their lower attendance rates, which, in part, explains why worship attendance is associated with increased support for racial segregation among Whites. Alternatively, the fact that racial integration extends social-economic opportunities to Blacks likely contributes to age cohort, religious affiliation, and worship attendance maintaining a limited relationship with their racial segregation attitudes.

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Appendix

Table A1. Predicted Probability Estimates of the relationship between Worship Attendance and White Racial Segregation Attitudes: Probability Estimates are based upon analyses within Tables 1-3.

	Open Housing-Reduced	Open Housing-Cohort	Open Housing-Religion	Open Housing-Full	Housing Discrim.-Reduced	Housing Discrim.-Cohort	Housing Discrim.-Religion	Housing Discrim.-Full	Live w/ Blacks-Reduced	Live w/ Blacks-Cohort	Live w/ Blacks-Religion	Live w/ Blacks-Full
Never Attend	0.4305	0.4554	0.4436	0.4663	0.2175	0.2277	0.2296	0.2387	0.2904	0.3040	0.3082	0.3198
Attend Once a Week	0.5041	0.4767	0.4891	0.4648	0.2540	0.2280	0.2363	0.2142	0.3014	0.2774	0.2756	0.2567

	Live w/ Hispanic-Reduced	Live w/ Hispanic-Cohort	Live w/ Hispanic-Religion	Live w/ Hispanic-Full	School Integra.-Reduced	School Integra.-Cohort	School Integra.-Religion	School Integra.-Full	Busing-Reduced	Busing-Cohort	Busing-Religion	Busing-Full
Never Attend	0.3552	0.3700	0.3690	0.3833	0.1897	0.1995	0.1994	0.2042	0.7546	0.7677	0.7643	0.7753
Attend Once a Week	0.3639	0.3436	0.3462	0.3276	0.1772	0.1662	0.1684	0.1587	0.8068	0.7999	0.7992	0.7934

Marital Naming Plans among Students at Four Evangelical Colleges

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Abstract: Despite increasingly egalitarian gender roles in the United States, when the wedding bells ring for heterosexual couples, husband and wife still commonly emerge sharing the man's last name. Largely missing from previous studies of marital name change is the influence of religion. We examine the marital naming plans of 199 students from four Evangelical colleges. Nearly all these students planned to marry and more than 80% planned to follow the traditional naming pattern for their gender. Bivariate correlations and logistic regression models reveal that private prayer and more literal views of the Bible correspond to plans for a traditional marital surname. Yet, only a small minority of students evoked religious language to justify their surname choice. Gender roles, identity, and tradition were dominant themes in their explanations. Whether recognized or not, personal religiosity and the model of marriage cultivated in religious families guide the marital naming intentions of Evangelical students. Thus, religion operates as an invisible influence shaping ideals of marriage and family within Evangelical subculture.

1. Introduction

"It is my privilege to introduce to you for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. [insert male name here]." These are the closing words of countless church weddings for generations in the United States. Although, like church weddings, the practice of U.S. women taking their husband's last name remains common, it is now far from universal.

Marital naming conventions hold important implications for individuals and societies. Surnames trace descent and speak to patterns of familial and societal authority. Changing attitudes toward marital surnames in heterosexual marriages is a subject of substantial research. Known correlates to progressive marital naming views include gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender ideology. Remarkably little previous research delves into the influence of religion and religious contexts in shaping marital naming choices. It is a striking omission given the association of religion to issues of gender, marriage, and family [1–4].

The purpose of this study is to explore marital name change plans among students at four Evangelical Christian colleges. Evangelicals have been on the front lines of culture war battles over marriage and family [5]. Local churches and parachurch organizations like Focus on the Family are recognizable proponents of Evangelical ideals of marriage and family. Evangelical colleges and universities are foundational to the Evangelical subculture. While surveys of college students on the topic of marital name change are common, no previous research looks within Evangelical colleges specifically. We extend prior research by concentrating on the marital naming plans of students in Evangelical colleges and examining a wider array of religion variables.

2. Marital Naming Patterns

The social expectation placed on women to take their husband's surname has a long history. Until overturned by a Supreme Court ruling in 1975, many states had laws that required women to adopt their husband's surnames at marriage. Even without a legal requirement, the adoption of a husband's surname remains the most common naming option for brides in America [6–10]. More than nine out of ten U.S. women take their husband's last name at marriage [7,8]. Nearly three-fourths of American adults agree that it is generally better if a woman changes her name when married and half believe that marital name change for women should be legally required [11]. Even college students show remarkable consistency over the past two decades in their marital naming intentions [12].

Varied explanations have been put forward for why American women continue to take their husband's last name. Some see it as a drift toward more conservative values in the society as a whole [13]. Others contend that empowered to choose a surname at marriage many women choose their husband's surname as a matter of convenience or tradition [14,15]. In essence, the maiden name is no longer a political issue. One journalist memorably summarized the decision-making of contemporary women: "[W]hich name do you like the sound of? What do you feel like doing? The politics are almost incidental…in a mundane way, having the same name as your children is easier." [16].

Over the past two decades, social scientists strived to understand the surname choices people make, particularly women. Gender, ethnicity, education, and gender role ideology consistently appear as influences on marital naming choices [7,8,10,11,14,17–22]. Only a handful of studies on marital naming considers religion, and even fewer employ more than one or two religion variables. These studies yield mixed results. In a random sample of adults from one Midwestern state, church attendance was negatively associated with tolerance for a woman keeping her maiden name at marriage [20]. In other studies, church attendance showed no relationship to marital naming choices [8,9]. Similar conflicting findings surround religious traditions. Some find Catholics to favor traditional marital surnames [15,18], whereas others find no difference among Catholics, Protestants, and persons with no religious preference [20]. In one other study, people who favored more literal readings of the Bible held more traditional attitudes toward marital name-change, even when controlling for numerous sociodemographic variables [11]. No study has tested whether literal views of the Bible actually predict marital naming choices however. Furthermore, none of the aforementioned studies have focused specifically on Evangelicals, despite the cultural and political prominence of this segment of American Christianity.

3. Gender and Marriage among Evangelicals

Evangelicals, also referred to as Conservative Protestants, often are seen as vocal proponents of traditional views on marriage and family. Evangelicalism is a branch of Protestant Christianity that emphasizes salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the authority of Biblical scripture, and the centrality of evangelism. More than a quarter of American adults are counted as Evangelicals [23,24]. A dominant discourse within Evangelicalism is an essentialist view of gender

in which men and women are inherently different [25]. Men and women are understood to inhabit separate spheres in social life, with men filling public and provisionary roles and women overseeing domestic responsibilities. This language of divinely-ordained gender differentiation features prominently in the Conservative Protestant dialogue on gender and family [2,25,26]. It is a view maintained and reinforced through places of worship, religious education, publications, and relationships with co-religionists [2,25,27,28].

Correspondingly, compared with adherents to other religious traditions, members of Conservative Protestant denominations report more traditional views of gender, including support for a patriarchal family structure [29] and agreement that there are proper roles for men and women in society corresponding to the public and private spheres [30,31]. Gender role ideology for Evangelicals is couched in a language of headship and submission in which leadership and authority in the family are ascribed on the basis on gender. These concepts, however, are not interpreted uniformly—traditionalists endorse the patriarchal order of *wifely* submission, while other Evangelicals use the language of *mutual* submission to describe marriage as a non-hierarchical partnership [32].

Despite these ideological distinctions, for both traditionalist and egalitarian Evangelicals, family life operates according to a pragmatic egalitarianism in which decision-making and domestic work are a function of who has the most time, opportunity, and expertise in a particular area [2]. Although there are exceptions to this pragmatism—chiefly in childrearing—utilizing a language of submission and headship is largely symbolic. By assigning familial headship and authority on the basis of gender, Evangelicals on either side of the divide simultaneously identify themselves with the values of a distinctive religious subculture and solidify men's role in the family. Subject to the same economic shifts as other Americans, most Evangelical families are now dual-earner couples that depend on the economic provision of both the male and female partner to support the household. Enacting a traditional script ensures that men continue to play a central role in the family through spiritual provision and leadership even as their role in breadwinning wanes [33].

Given these findings, how might young Evangelicals view and talk about marital naming choices? Based on the traditional gendered scripts prominent in Evangelicalism, we expect marital naming plans among students in Evangelical colleges to reflect this tradition. Specifically, we anticipate that both young men and young women on these campuses will favor the male surname for marriage and that religious influences will shape surname choice.

4. Research Setting

College campuses are popular sites for studying marital naming patterns [12,19,22]. College serves as a formative setting in which a young person sharpens long-term goals and preferences related to work and family [34]. This maturation process entails the development of attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding gender roles [35]. Young adults' place in the life cycle—prior to marriage and childbearing—and the identity formation that takes place during the undergraduate years together provide a unique opportunity to analyze marital naming choices as they reflect the social and environmental factors that influence personal aspirations and expectations.

Young adulthood is also a time of religious transition for many marked by a decline in aggregate levels of religious belief and practice [36]. Evangelical colleges stand out as a startling contrast to this developmental trend. Students at Evangelical colleges show high levels of religiosity [37,38]. Attitudes toward marriage and family in these settings likewise favor tradition. In a study of nine U.S. Evangelical colleges, researchers found "a sizable percentage of students continue to support traditional concepts of marriage and female roles" ([37], p. 95). Over half of those sampled agreed that a husband has primary responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of the family; more than two-thirds agreed that a woman should put her husband and children ahead of her career. Among female students surveyed at a separate Evangelical college in the Midwest, the majority preferred a complementarian view of gender—a position that advocates male headship and female submission as complementary roles established by God for the operation of family and society [39]. While this ideology argues for equality of worth between men and women, it states that men and women have differing and unequal roles. Hence, Evangelical colleges, like Evangelical churches, are an organizational context in which ideas about gender, marriage, and family get reinforced. We step inside this organizational context to examine the marital naming plans of students.

5. Method

We surveyed students enrolled in introductory sociology courses at four colleges affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), an international association of 119 intentionally Christian colleges and universities. To belong, schools must have a Christian mission, Christian curricular and extra-curricular programming, and hire only professing Christians as faculty and administrators. We partnered with sociology faculty at four CCCU schools: one in the West, one in the Midwest, one in the South, and one in the Northeast. The schools ranged in size from 1500 to 3400 students. The theological and denominational backgrounds of all four colleges place them squarely within the Evangelical Protestant tradition.

A web-survey was administered between 7 February and 5 March 2011. The survey had questions on marital naming plans, religion, family background, and demographics. Cooperating faculty sent the survey URL to students in their introductory sociology courses. At our prompting, faculty sent two email reminders to students roughly two weeks apart. The survey was restricted to unmarried students aged 18 and older. In the end, 199 students completed the survey. Because these students represent a convenience sample, we are unable to generalize to any larger population. Nevertheless, this snapshot of students permits us to examine perceptions of marriage and marital roles in a unique religious context. In keeping with prior research and given the prevailing values of the Evangelical subculture, our study centers on monogamous heterosexual marriages.

Our dependent variable comes from the question: "If you marry, do you plan to…" Response options included taking a spouse's last name, hyphenation, keeping one's last name, taking a spouse's last name while keeping a birth name as a middle name, other, and "I do not plan to marry." Our analysis begins with a simple frequency distribution by gender for all of these response options. For subsequent analyses, we created a dichotomous variable to distinguish respondents who plan to follow the traditional naming pattern for their gender (*i.e.*, women who

plan to take their husband's last name and men who plan to retain their surname from birth, coded 1) from those who do not (coded 0).

We employ a wider range of religion variables than considered in previous research on this topic. We inquired about religious service attendance at age 12 and at present. The first is a measure of religious socialization. The second is a common marker of public religiosity. Both variables had a nine-point scale from 1 = never to 9 = several times a week. Two other variables pertain to private religiosity. The survey asked respondents, "About how often do you pray?" There were seven response options, which we coded from 1 = never to 7 = several times a day. Another question asked, "Outside of attending religious services, about how often do you read the Bible?" We treated these options in similar fashion with 1 = never to 9 = several times a week or more. In addition to variables of religious practice, we include measures of religious belief and self-perception. A customary belief measure is biblical literalism. Students selected a statement indicating their personal beliefs about the Bible from a list of four ordered options ranging from "The Bible is an ancient book of history and legends" to "The Bible means exactly what it says. It should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects." Higher values indicate more literalist orientations. Finally, to gauge respondent's perception of their religiosity, we asked, "How religious do you consider yourself to be?" Students chose from four options: not at all religious (coded 1), not very religious (coded 2), somewhat religious (coded 3), and very religious (coded 4).

Demographic and family background characteristics serve as control variables in our statistical analysis. Building on previous research on marital naming choices, we control for gender (1 = female), race (1 = white, Non-Hispanic), age (in years), college, mother's last name (1 = mother had same last name as father), mother's level of education (from 1 = less than high school diploma to 5 = graduate degree), mother's employment status during respondents' childhood (1 = homemaker), and parents' marital status (1 = divorced). In addition to these customary control variables, we add two others. We test perceived family expectations regarding martial names (for a comparable variable in a study of offspring surnames, see [40]). A question on the survey asked: "If you marry, what does your family expect you to do?" Response options included taking a spouse's last name, hyphenation, keeping one's last name, taking a spouse's last name while keeping a birth name as a middle name, and other. We created a dichotomous variable to differentiate respondents who believe their family expects them to follow the traditional naming pattern for their gender (coded 1) from those who do not (coded 0).

Respondents were 73% young women and 27% young men. The majority was White (72%). As would be expected for introductory courses, students tended to be young. The average age was 19.59. The number of respondents varied considerably across the four CCCU colleges due to differences in the number of introductory sociology classes being taught and class sizes. Over half (56%) were from the Northwest CCCU college, 24% were from the Midwest college, 11% were from the South college, and 9% were from the Northeast college. Respondents were religious. Median values indicated that they attended religious services weekly, read the Bible about weekly, and prayed daily. They held orthodox views about the Bible as well. Three-fourths (74%) believed that "the Bible is perfectly true, but should not be taken literally, word-for-word", while 17% supported the view that the Bible "should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects". In terms

of self-identification, 36% of these students considered themselves very religious and another 46% described themselves as somewhat religious. By and large, respondents came from traditional families. Less than a quarter (22%) had divorced parents. For 35%, mom was at home for part or all of their childhood. The marital surnames of parents followed traditional gender scripts. Nine out of ten respondents (88%) had mothers who took her husband's last name. Equally telling, 83% of respondents believed that their families expect them to follow the same tradition if they marry.

We present our findings in three stages. First, we describe the marital naming plans of female respondents and male respondents in our sample, and we compare these stated intentions to the results of previous studies based upon students at non-religious colleges. Second, we test the relationship between religion and martial naming plans using bivariate and multivariate analysis. We report correlation coefficients and logistic regression models, which regress plans to follow the traditional naming pattern (yes/no) on religion variables and control variables. Third, we consider students' explanations for their martial naming plans. An open-ended survey question asked respondents to explain in their own words their planned naming choice: "Why do you plan to use the last name you do, if you marry? Briefly explain." One hundred and eighty-nine respondents (95% of the total sample) did. We conclude our analysis with thematic coding of these qualitative responses.

6. Marital Naming Plans

Table 1 displays the marital naming plans by gender for our sample. Among female students, 81.4% reported that they would change their last name to that of their spouse. A hyphenated name, cited by 9.0% of female respondents, was the most prevalent alternative. Approximately five percent said they would take their spouse's last name and keep their family surname as a middle name. Another 3.4% of female respondents selected "other". A text-box in the survey allowed respondents to clarify what other naming option they would pursue. Several female respondents indicated that their choice of a marital surname would depend on their spouse's last name or how her first name would sound with his last name. Only one female student planned to keep her surname from birth. One other female student said that she did not plan to marry.

Table 1. Marital Naming Plans of Respondents.

Marital Naming Plan	Female Students ($n = 145$)	Male Students ($n = 54$)
Change last name to that of spouse	81.4%	7.4%
Hyphenate	9.0%	7.4%
Retain surname from birth	0.7%	85.2%
Take spouse's last name and keep birth name as middle name	4.8%	0%
Other	3.4%	0%
Do not plan to marry	0.7%	0%

The young men in our sample were spread across fewer response options. Eighty-five percent of male respondents planned to retain their surname from birth when married. Seven percent planned to hyphenate their name. An equal percentage said they would change their last name to that of

their spouse. Not a single male student in our sample planned to use his last name as a middle name or use some other surname option. All planned to marry.

We see in Table 1 the high emphasis placed on heterosexual marriage in the Evangelical subculture. Only one student out of 199 selected "I do not plan to marry". When they do marry, over 80% of men and women in our sample planned to stick with marital naming tradition. Male respondents and female respondents expect to share the husband's last name. There was no statistically significant difference between men and women in this regard (Chi-Square = 0.39, $p = 0.53$).

It is difficult to know whether Evangelical students in our sample are any more or less likely to follow traditional marital naming customs than are students at non-religious colleges and universities. No national data on college students' naming intentions exist. The best that we can do is to compare our findings to previous studies conducted at other colleges and universities. In a 1990 random sample of students at a small residential college in the Midwest, 81.6% of female students planned to take their husband's last name, if they married, and 7% planned to hyphenate their name [19]. These percentages are very close to the percentages for female students in our sample, in which 81.4% planned to take their husband's last name and 9.0% planned to hyphenate. Male students at the same Midwestern college and at a large Eastern university were even more prone to traditional marital naming [12]. In 1990, 97.9% of men interviewed at the small Midwestern college planned to keep their family surname, if they married; sixteen years later on the same campus, 96.9% of men interviewed gave the same response [12]. A 2006 convenience sample of 369 students from a large Eastern university found that 100% of male respondents planned to keep their birth surname, if they married [12]. By comparison, 85.2% of men in our sample intended to keep their birth surname when married. It is important to note that neither the small Midwestern college nor the large Eastern universities were identified as religious. While it is risky to make comparisons across samples collected in different ways and at different points in time, the limited evidence that we do have counters our expectation that Evangelical students are dramatically more traditional in their marital naming plans. When it comes to marital surnames, tradition seems to be popular on religious and non-religious campuses. Next we consider the role of religion in upholding marital naming traditions on Evangelical campuses.

6.1. Religious Influences

Table 2 is our first look at potential religious influences on marital naming choices. We test for significant zero-order correlations for each religion variable in relation to a respondent's plan to follow with the traditional naming pattern for her/his gender. In this highly religious sample, church attendance is not significantly correlated with plans for a traditional marital surname. Neither is private Bible reading. The only religious practice variable that is significant is prayer ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$). Respondents that pray more frequently are more likely to say that they plan to follow the marital naming convention for their gender. Biblical literalism is also significant ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$). More literal views of the Bible correlate with taking a traditional marital surname. Self-rated religiosity ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$) is significantly correlated with plans for a traditional marital name as well.

Table 2. Religious Influences on Plans to Follow Traditional Marital Naming Pattern.

Religion Variables	Correlation with Plans for Traditional Marital Surname
Church attendance at age 12	0.10
Church attendance	−0.06
Prayer	0.18 *
Bible reading	0.08
Biblical literalism	0.21 **
Self-rated religiosity	0.20 **

$* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$ (Pearson's Correlation Coefficients).

Table 3 tests the influence of religious variables on plans for a traditional marital name when controlling for family background and demographic characteristics. We build upon our bivariate findings by testing only the religion variables that had a significant zero-order correlation with traditional marital naming plans. We test the influence of prayer, Biblical literalism, and self-rated religiosity in separate models, since these three religion variables are significantly correlated with one another and including all three in the same model would violate a regression assumption. We present our results as odds ratios. Values greater than 1.0 indicate increased odds of following a traditional naming pattern, while values less than 1.0 denote reduced odds of following this pattern. Model 1 regresses plans for a traditional marital name upon prayer and control variables. More frequent prayer is associated with a greater likelihood of following a traditional marital naming pattern (odds ratio = 1.39, $p < 0.05$). In Model 2, Biblical literalism shows a similar effect. More literal views of the Bible significantly and strongly predict support for a traditional marital surname (odds ratio = 2.99, $p < 0.05$), holding constant other family and demographic influences. Adding the control variables renders self-rated religiosity non-significant. The correlation between self-rated religiosity and traditional marital naming plans observed in Table 2 seems to be explained away by other characteristics.

Most of the family and demographic control variables are not significantly related to traditional marital naming plans in our sample. Mother's education, mother's employment, divorced parents, gender, race, and age were not statistically significant in any model of Table 3. Differences in martial naming plans across the four colleges also did not appear significant in Table 3. Two control variables did stand out. Respondents whose mother took her husband's last were over five times more likely to say they would follow the same tradition in their marriage. An even stronger relationship existed for family expectations and plans for a traditional martial surname. Respondents who believed that their family expected them to adhere to traditional marital naming customs were 17 to 20 times more likely to state that would follow this pattern.

Table 3. Religious, Family, and Demographic Influences on Plans to Follow Traditional Marital Naming Pattern.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Religion			
Prayer	1.39*		
Biblical literalism		2.99 *	
Self-rated religiosity			1.63
Family			
Mother changed name	5.86 ***	5.66 *	6.37 **
Mother education	0.87	0.95	0.92
Mother at home	1.13	1.62	1.10
Divorced parents	2.18	2.73	2.54
Family expects traditional naming	20.33 ***	19.88 ***	17.36 ***
Demographic			
Female	0.47	0.82	0.72
White	1.71	1.88	1.50
Age	0.94	0.92	0.88
Northwest college [a]	1.47	1.32	1.51
Midwest college [a]	3.61	2.49	3.63
Northeast college [a]	0.40	0.45	0.40
Constant	0.09	0.01	0.28
N	197	182	197

Logistic regression odds ratios; [a] Contrast category is South CCCU college; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

6.2. Student Explanations

Three dominant themes emerged for why most students intend to adhere to marital name change custom: gender roles, identity, and tradition. Although only five students (one man and four women) mentioned God or the Bible directly, students' comments illuminate the foundation religion provides for guiding individual choices. We describe each theme and provide representative examples below.

Gender roles stood out as a prevalent theme guiding students' marital naming plans. Nearly a quarter of students referenced gender roles in their explanations. Men and women are inherently different, respondents contended. Furthermore, the success of marriages and societies depends on men and women playing their gender-specific roles. These ideas about distinct male and female roles align with a complementarian gender ideology, which Colaner and Warner found to be prevalent in another Evangelical college [39]. Illustrated in the following comments, male students claimed a dominant position, ordained by God, as the provider in marriage, while female students championed their future role as the devoted and dutiful wife.

"Because I am the man in the relationship. God has placed me at the head of the household and it's a huge role. I think it is important for the woman to take the last name of the man because it shows that the two of them have become one." (male student)

"The man is the head of the household. Woman in the Bible aren't [sic] mentioned in Genesis that often because the man carries on the last name of the family. When it comes down to it a name is just a name, but not taking your husband's last name is in a way disrespectful and not submissive." (female student)

"I plan to use my last name because I am a man and the woman taking the name of the man in marriage is a sign of her acceptance of her role in marriage." (male student)

Identity was a dominant theme expressed by about a third of students, both male and female. However, different from the idea of preserving individual identity or creating a new shared identity as described above, these respondents linked identity to traditional gendered expectations surrounding marriage. The basis of identity differed by gender. Young men tied personal identity to their family of origin. Extending their family name (*i.e.*, patrilineal descent) was important to them, as we heard in responses such as these:

"My last name means a lot to me and my family. Me, being a male, I have the privilege to pass down my name to my kids and also my wife." (male student)

"Because my name means a lot to me and it is part of my identity and I would like to keep my name going. I also believe it shows who I am." (male student)

These comments draw attention to a patriarchal orientation that assumes male lineage and masculine identification. The explanations of these young men reflect the way in which patriarchy both shapes and normalizes their choice to keep their name upon marriage.

We heard something different from the young women in our sample. For many, identity after marriage was defined in relation to a husband rather than a family of origin. Sacrificing their family surname was a marker of this natural transition. They invoked religious language to justify the transition. They spoke of "becoming one" with a male spouse, which is a reference to biblical passages such as Matthew 19:4–6 that describe God's intent for a man to leave his father and mother and unite with his wife to become "one flesh".

"I think that it is important for me to commit to my future husband by taking his last name. I also believe it's important for the whole family, husband, wife, and children to have the same name. Husband and wife are called to become 'one flesh,' and for me the last name is a part of that." (female student)

"I want to use the last name of my spouse because I want to show that I'm committed to him and it represents the oneness of our marriage." (female student)

Tradition was a third recurring theme in students' explanations. Tradition is a common reason given for marital name change by women [22]. Religion seems to accentuate the importance of tradition in this regard [15]. The appeal of tradition was evident within the highly religious sample of students in our study. More than 30% alluded to tradition as guiding their plans for traditional marital name change. Students referenced cultural norms and familial expectations. Several poignant examples were:

"I plan to change my last name when I get married to that of my spouse's because it is tradition. My mother did it, my grandmother did it, my great-grandmother did it, *etc.* I think it is nice and traditional for the woman to change her name." (female student)

"It has always been that way. It is just tradition that she will take my name and respect the tradition of my family. Why alter the tradition?" (male student)

"I just feel that it is the 'norm' in our society and I would feel weird if I didn't take his last name when we got married." (female student)

Even in the absence of explicitly religious language, these students reveal the religious influences at work in their decision-making. They plan to marry a spouse of the opposite sex and follow traditional naming practices. They justify their support for marital name change on the basis of gender roles, identity, and tradition. Their responses hint at shared moral boundaries governing gender, marriage, and family. Moral boundaries defining appropriate patterns of behavior are a hallmark of American Evangelicals [41]. In line with their Evangelical upbringing and present location in Evangelical colleges, students articulate values, morals, and ideals of their subculture.

7. Conclusions

Marriage and family are contested terrain in American society. The purpose of this study was to examine marital naming plans among students in Evangelical colleges. Changing views on marital surnames in heterosexual marriages has been a topic of research for several decades. In an extension of previous research, we focus more directly on religion and religious context. Our survey of 199 introductory sociology students at four Evangelical colleges across the United States makes clear the ubiquity of heterosexual marriage in the Evangelical subculture. Only one out of 199 students did not plan to marry. Marriage is an anticipated rite of passage for these students. Choosing to attend an Evangelical college may be an intentional step toward this rite. Finding a spouse may not be in the promotional materials, but it is a selling point for these colleges.

When the wedding does arrive for these students, they plan to follow the naming pattern of their parents and larger society. Male and female respondents in almost equal percentages planned to follow a traditional naming pattern when married. Surprisingly, based on limited comparison data, students in our sample did not appear more traditional in their marital naming plans than students at other non-religious colleges. Like the desire to marry, husband and wife sharing the man's last name is a tradition that continues to appeal to many students. Our interest was whether religious beliefs and behaviors make patrilineal descent more appealing to students at Evangelical colleges. We tested a wider range of religious influences than considered in previous research. Our findings singled out two religion variables as important to students' marital naming plans: prayer and view of the Bible.

Students in our sample who reported praying more frequently indicated an intention to follow the marital naming custom for their gender. This is an interesting finding that contrasts the conflicting results over religious service attendance in previous studies. Unlike church attendance, prayer is a measure of private religiosity. Prayer connects an individual to God in a personal way. The influence of prayer then rests heavily on how individuals conceive of God and the will of God.

For Evangelicals, the conception of God is as an authoritative presence who acts to ensure that humanity follows divine ideals [42]. These ideals include a gendered order to reality. Evangelicals who pray regularly might be understood as being most invested in upholding the created order. Consequently, it may be that young men in our sample are praying for someone to take their last name, while young women pray for a name to take. Our survey data do not tell us the content of prayers. Given the nearly unanimous desire to marry among these highly religious students, it is not an unreasonable speculation.

A belief in the gendered order of reality likewise helps explain the significance of Biblical literalism in predicting marital naming plans for students at Evangelical colleges. Students in our study who stress the inerrancy of Christian scripture envision a future for themselves in which they take a traditional marital surname. The relationship between view of the Bible and traditional marital surnames is significant and strong, even when controlling for other influences. Our findings in this regard are a logical extension of previous research that shows literal views of the Bible associated with more traditional views of gender [25,43,44] and more traditional attitudes toward marital name-change [11]. Our findings on Biblical literalism are important for another reason. They demonstrate that differing beliefs about the Bible have implications even within a single religious tradition. Evangelicals as a religious category have a strong emphasis on the authority of Scripture, but the views of Evangelical individuals are not uniform. Beliefs about the Bible, in particular, are a salient feature shaping individual's opinions within and across religious contexts.

What is perhaps most notable in our findings is the absence of religious language in students' explanations of their marital naming plans. Most of these highly religious young adults did not directly attribute their preferred marital surname to God, the Bible, or their churches. Instead, we see evidence of an invisible religious influence guiding these students' martial name-change decisions. Regnerus developed a typology of religious influence to account for the ways that religion impacts the sexual beliefs and practices of American teens [45]. One of the most common forms of religious influence in the lives of teens is what he called "invisible religion" ([45], pp. 194–96). In contrast to "intentional religion" in which individuals recognize and articulate the ways that religion directs behavior, invisible religion refers to the way that religion can guide human thought and action unbeknownst to an individual. A teen may explain her decision to postpone having sex by mentioning concern for her reputation or a desire not to disappoint her parents. These are not explicitly religious reasons, but her behavior does align with religious norms. The comments we heard from students regarding their marital naming plans similarly reflect religious origins. Concepts of gender roles (*i.e.*, headship) and identity (*i.e.*, becoming one) were prominent in students' explanations. Young men expected to keep their surname at marriage because "I am the man". Young women willingly planned to take on a male surname as a sign of "becoming one". Tradition is appealing to these students. In all of these ways, the explanations speak to an understanding of gender and family promoted within the Evangelical subculture.

Regnerus pointed to religious families as a prominent source of invisible religious influence [45]. Here again, our findings concur. Students in our study came, by and large, from religious families. Their choice of an Evangelical college speaks to their religious heritage. Not coincidentally, the family of origin for these students conformed to traditional patterns. Mother and father were

married and shared the same last name. This model of family life molds students' expectations. Mother's surname was significantly related to plans to follow a traditional naming practice, even after controlling for other religious and demographic variables. As modeled by their parents, these Evangelical college students expect to marry and they expect to share the husband's last name. The belief that one's family expects such a naming pattern increases the propensity for a student to say that this is their intent. It is so taken for granted that some students don't perceive a choice. "I've never been taught that there was another option", wrote one female respondent. Through religious families, religious ideals for marriage and family get passed on. These ideals are formative. They do not come exclusively from prior religious socialization however. Present religious practices and beliefs are formative for individuals as well. Taking past socialization into account, private prayer and view of the Bible still stand out as significant predictors of marital naming plans in our multivariate analysis. Religious socialization past and present elevates the influence of religion, even if invisible.

We acknowledge limitations in our study. Our sample is not representative of all college students or all students in Evangelical colleges. More detailed analysis across religious traditions represents a fruitful direction for additional research. Likewise, we acknowledge the limitation of cross-sectional data for testing implied causal relationships. We argued that religion is a source of worldview that helps shape how individuals understand gender and marriage, but we recognize that these realms of social life and human identity are likely mutually reinforcing. Disentangling the causal order of religion, gender, and marriage is not something we can accomplish in this study. We hope future research will. Given the focus on heterosexual marriage in our study and others, another useful extension of this research will be to explore surname choices within same-sex marriages.

Although we cannot generalize from our convenience sample to all CCCU schools or all CCCU students, our findings suggest that traditional views of marital naming are common on these campuses. Like family, peer groups are powerful agents of socialization. The small, residential colleges in our study pride themselves on fostering tight-knit campus communities. Students become part of a campus culture with shared beliefs, values, and practices. These shared ideals guide individuals, as seen in regard to student religiosity. At a time in life when many young adults distance themselves from religion [36], students in our sample remained devout. We believe similar socialization occurs for gender and marriage on these campuses. By surrounding an individual with others who embrace more traditional views of gender and marriage, Evangelical colleges presumably lead students to conform to traditional gender scripts. The vast majority of students surveyed plan to follow traditional marital naming customs. Consequently, it may be hard for the minority who desire an alternative marital name to find a like-minded mate among their classmates. Future research should explore peer expectations as well as differences between religious colleges and non-religious colleges in the choice of marital surnames. Our guess is that many progressive-minded students in Evangelical colleges end up adhering to custom. In this way, Evangelical colleges work in tandem with Evangelical churches to perpetuate traditional ideals of marriage and family.

Acknowledgments

Author Contributions

Kevin Dougherty designed the study, coordinated data collection, and conducted statistical analysis. Melanie Hulbert participated in data collection and conducted qualitative analysis. Ashley Palmer created the survey instrument. All three authors contributed to writing the manuscript.

Abbreviations

CCCU: Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The Optimal Level of Strictness and Congregational Growth

Todd W. Ferguson

Abstract: Beginning with Kelley's and Iannaccone's foundational studies, scholars have examined how strictness impacts congregational outcomes. This paper seeks to further develop the strict church thesis by examining Iannaccone's concept of "optimal level of strictness", an idea that there are limits to strictness. Using Stark and Finke's theoretical framework of religious niches and data from the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey and the 2000 Faith Communities Today survey, I find that only prohibitions that are in line with a congregation's religious niche have an impact on growth. To be beneficial, prohibitions must match the pool of potential members' preferences.

1. Introduction

In the 1960s and early 1970s Liberal and Moderate Protestants were struggling to find a reason why their churches were declining in numbers. For much of the history of the United States, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists were at the center of American religious life. Yet, in the mid-twentieth century, these denominations found their churches losing members and losing prominence. At the same time, churches in conservative denominations, such as the Church of the Nazarene, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Assemblies of God, were growing both in number and in their percentages of the total population. To help understand this change, Dean Kelley, a researcher with the National Council of Churches, proposed the strict church thesis. Going against the predominant assumption that modern individuals would gravitate toward an open-minded and tolerant religion, Kelley put forward the opposite. Strict congregations—those with more rules and more exclusive claims—are stronger because they are better than the more lenient churches at offering meaning for their members [1].

Laurence Iannaccone [2] furthered Kelley's theory by incorporating economic mechanisms to Kelley's cultural argument. He defines strictness as "the degree to which a group limits and thereby increases the *cost* of nongroup activities" ([2], p. 1182, emphasis in original). Religious groups vary in the ways they create strictness, and this diversity can be seen in how Seventh Day Adventists avoid eating meat, Orthodox Jews wear side curls and yarmulkes, and Jehovah's Witnesses reject blood transfusions. Iannaccone suggested the reason why strict congregations are strong is because they reduce the problem of free-riders. Religion can be viewed as a commodity that is produced with others in community. The satisfaction an individual derives from religious practice depends on the quality that others produce. Free-riders are those who do not add anything to the collective religious product but nevertheless reap its benefits. Free-riders, therefore, lower the benefits-per-individual in the congregation. Strict congregations reduce free-riders because they raise the cost of participation. These churches "penalize or prohibit *alternative* activities that compete for members' resources" ([2], p. 1187, emphasis in original). These prohibitions serve as entry fees for participation

and screen out members who might not fully add to the collective religious product. Consequently, strict congregations have fewer free-riders, have higher benefits-per-individual, and experience more congregational strength.

Although Kelley's [1] original book was titled "Why Conservative Churches Are Growing", neither Kelley nor Iannaccone [2] focused on congregational growth. Growth was only a by-product of strength. Yet further research has shown that strictness and congregational growth are indeed linked. Iannaccone, Olson, and Stark [3] use the theoretical framework of resource mobilization to understand the connection between strictness and growth. Religious congregations can grow only if they have a surplus of resources, specifically time and money. Strict congregations are better able to have surpluses of time because they restrict their members from engaging in alternative activities [2]. These members are more likely to focus on congregational activities because they have few other options. Similarly, these congregations often limit where members can spend money, and so there is more likely to be a surplus of financial resources. Strict congregations are better able to accumulate surpluses of time and money and therefore are more likely to grow. Thomas and Olson [4] confirm this finding that, even when accounting for fertility, congregational strictness significantly and positively affects growth.

Yet are there circumstances where strictness and congregational outcomes are not linked together? Kelley proposed that there are no limits to strictness; he states, "strong organizations are strict…the stricter the stronger" ([1], p. 95). Yet Iannaccone disagrees. Strictness "displays diminishing returns" ([2], p. 1201). There is a point in which an increased level of strictness will not see an accompanying level of either strength or growth. This is the "optimal level of strictness", which is based upon the characteristics of the congregants ([2], p. 1202). Going beyond the optimal level of strictness means that religious groups may build strictness around behaviors or attitudes that do not match the congregants' preferences. Congregants perceive these prohibitions as excessive, which inhibits growth. Therefore, strictness must be at its optimal level in order to affect congregational growth. This paper seeks to further the strict church research by examining the optimal level of strictness for congregations. I use the theoretical framework of niches to understand when the diminishing returns of strictness occur.

2. Religious Niches

The optimal level of strictness corresponds to the preferences of the individuals within congregations. Individual members are the most important resource for religious organizations [5–8],[1] and they vary in their demand for religious goods and services, or their preferences [11,12]. Some prefer very strict religious organizations, while others lean toward more liberal congregations. Thus, individuals may be grouped into theoretical categories, or *religious niches*, based on their preferences for strictness. A religious niche is the "market segment of potential adherents sharing

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[1] Individual members are the constituent resource for religious organizations because they not only are the suppliers of time and money that influence congregational growth [3], but they also impact ritual density, an important factor in sustaining religious communities [9,10].

particular religious preferences (needs, tastes, and expectations)" ([12], p. 195).[2] Figure 1 shows Stark and Finke's [12] conceptualization of religious niches based on individual preferences for strictness. A major assumption is that these niches are stable over time because the demand for various levels of religious strictness is constant within the population ([14], p. 5). As shown in Figure 1, this assumed distribution of preferences may be thought of as a normal curve, with most of the population desiring some level of strictness that is neither too lenient nor too severe. This does not imply that *individual* preferences are nonmalleable. Individual preferences are culturally shaped and therefore, changeable. However, at the aggregate, preferences are assumed to follow a normal distribution.
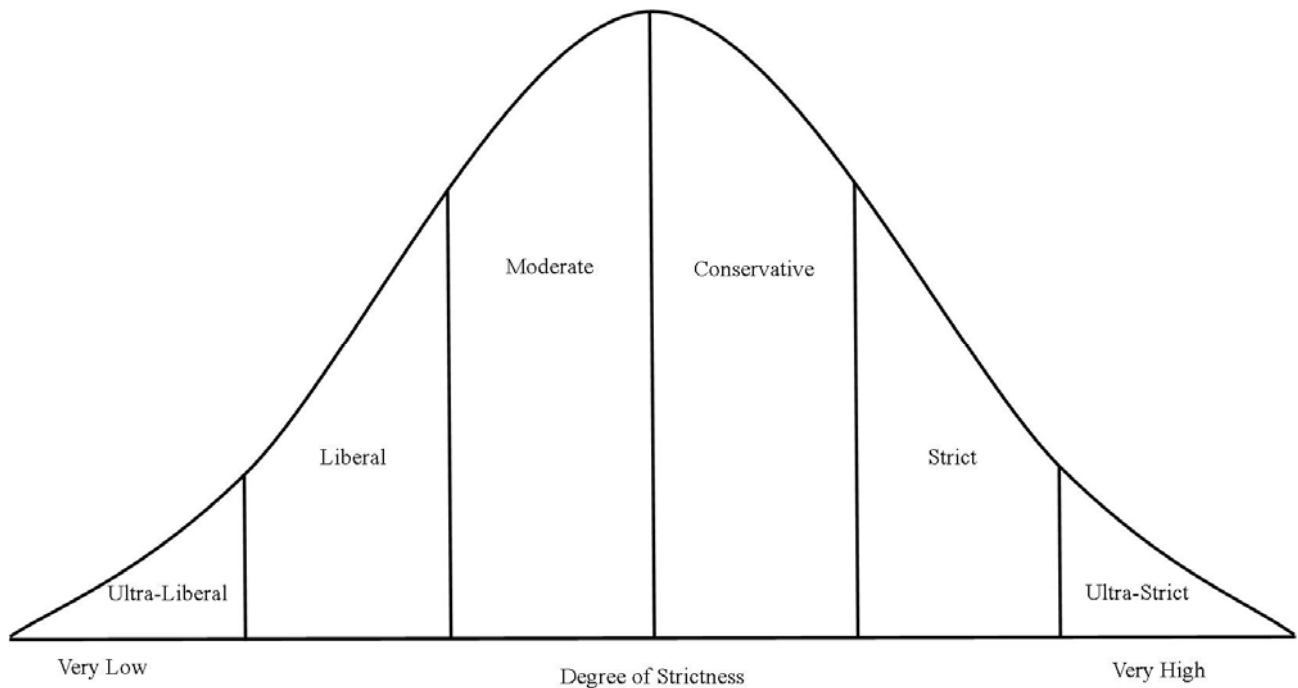
Congregations and their denominations form around these niche categories to serve the religious demand [7]. Thus, they compete for resources, *i.e.*, members [6,8,13,15]. It would seem to follow that if a congregation's level of strictness does not match the individuals' preferences within a given niche, the congregation would necessarily recruit members from another niche. Yet the nature of congregations complicates this view. Congregations are more nuanced than aggregations of individuals that compete for potential resources [16]. They are "instantiations of larger institutions" ([5], p. 207). They are carriers of denominational culture, which shapes a congregation's level of strictness. Denominations are associated with certain levels of strictness, even though they exhibit considerable amount of internal diversity within themselves [12,15,17].

These denominational assumptions of strictness are, in turn, ascribed to the congregations. Even non-denominational congregations that do not formally connect with a group are still subject to prevailing expectations associated with larger religious traditions, most notably Conservative Protestantism. Thus, congregations are not entirely free to respond to the religious marketplace's demands from individuals. Many are constrained by their denominational culture and its assumed level of strictness.

Religious traditions are a useful way to represent niches within the American landscape. These are broader groupings of denominations that have similar beliefs, practices, and histories [18–20]. Their constituents have similar preferences in matters of strictness [12]. Though the division is contested, I follow Roof and McKinney [21] to categorize religious groups into eight religious traditions in the United States: Catholics, Jews, Conservative Protestants, Moderate Protestants, Liberal Protestants, Black Protestants, Other religious groups, and "Nones" (those without religious affiliation) but see [18,19]. While religious traditions are not entirely coterminous with niches in the American landscape, this categorization of religious groups as representing niches is useful and easily accessible.

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[2] This is a slightly different understanding of niche than Popielarz and Neal ([13], p. 68), which they say is "the set of environmental states in which [a species] needs to survive." In this present study, niches are built around individual preferences, following Stark and Finke [12]. The definitions are most similar at the organizational level, since members, which are organized around preferences, are considered the resources necessary for congregational survival.

Figure 1. Religious Niches. Source: Stark and Finke [12].

Moderate   Conservative

Liberal   Strict

Ultra-Liberal   Ultra-Strict

Very Low   Degree of Strictness   Very High

The first two traditions are eponymous, as these groups consist of all Catholic and Jewish groups. Protestants fall into four groups. The Conservative Protestant tradition is comprised of groups that are more sect-like, which emphasize Biblical authority, missionary activity, and individual conversion [20,22,23]. The Liberal Protestant tradition focuses more on "an accommodating stance toward modernity, a proactive view on issues of social and economic justice, and pluralism in their tolerance of varied individual beliefs" ([19], pp. 293–94). Moderate Protestants fall in between these two, as these denominations have congregations that lean toward both of these categories [21]. Black Protestants are the groups that have been shaped by the African-American experience [24]. "Other religious groups" consist of Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. Religious "nones" are a growing category which scholars see as an emerging, distinct group [25–28].

3. Religious Niches and Congregational Growth

In order for a congregation to grow, it must gain new members. Potential members are most likely to come from within the congregation's religious niche and not from another niche. This is because people are less likely to move out of their current religious tradition and join a congregation in another [11]. Most people join religious congregations that are very similar to their previous one or match their desired level of preference [12]. There is a "homophily of preferences", and so individuals retain as much religious capital as they can by choosing a new congregation ([12], p. 195). A move to another religious niche would cost too much religious capital, and so individuals usually stay within congregations that are similar in strictness. As a result, the pool

from which congregations draw potential members is most likely the congregation's very own religious niche.

Therefore, it is possible that a congregation's level of strictness could be suboptimal if it is disconnected from its own religious niche. That is, there could be a mismatch between potential members' preferences for strictness and the congregation's own practices. When a congregation's level of strictness is outside the preferences of potential members, then growth is less likely to occur because the congregation is less likely to be attractive within its religious niche. Based on this, I offer the following hypothesis: *Strictness increases the likelihood of congregational growth when it is in line with the preferences of the individuals within the congregation's niche.*

4. Testing the Hypothesis

The relationship between strictness and congregational growth is contingent upon the preferences of those within a religious niche. In order to test this hypothesis, I follow a two-step process. First, I ascertain how people within religious traditions vary in their preferences on an issue of strictness. In essence, I am mapping the contours of religious niches for a specific issue of strictness. Second, I test to see if these preferences affect the relationship between strictness and congregational growth.

For this present study, I examine three religious traditions within American Protestantism (Conservative, Moderate, and Liberal Protestants) and their preferences regarding two historically important issues: alcohol and premarital sex. Protestants do not hold a single view on these two subjects. Their preferences vary, which create distinct religious niches indicating different levels of desired strictness. This offers a useful basis to test the relationship between religious niches and strictness.

5. Religious Niches for Alcohol and Premarital Sex

Following the end of the Civil War, many Protestants, especially Methodists and Baptists, turned their attentions to reforming the misuse of alcohol [29]. They created temperance movements across the country and succeeded in pushing for the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution which prohibited alcohol in the United States. Although the Twenty-first Amendment overturned the Eighteenth, the trajectory initiated by the temperance movement still remains in much of American Protestant life. Protestant religious beliefs about alcohol are changing, but there continues to be a wide variation within these beliefs. Some Protestants consider all alcohol use to be wrong, although others do not think drinking alcohol is an issue [30].

In order to examine strictness preferences within religious niches, I use the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey (BRS), which is a useful data set to determine how individuals view alcohol. This survey is a national random sample of 1721 individuals in the contiguous United States which the Gallup Organization administered using a mixed-mode method in October and November 2005. Bader, Mencken, and Froese [31] outline the full methodological information. Others have used this survey successfully to understand how various religious groups differ in their views of moral issues [32]. For this study, I examine whether individuals within a religious tradition have significantly different preferences about an issue when compared with those without a religious

tradition. This allows me to estimate the boundaries of the religious niche in terms of a single issue of strictness. Others have used a similar method with national surveys of individuals to outline religious niches [8].

Figure 2 shows how Americans in three Protestant traditions—Liberal, Moderate, and Conservative [3]—compare with Americans with no religious affiliation when answering the following question on the BRS: "How do you feel about the consumption of alcohol?" Individuals could respond (4) Always wrong, (3) Almost always wrong, (2) Only wrong sometimes, and (1) Not wrong at all. Following conventional niche measurements, the mean responses plus or minus 0.75 standard deviation are displayed [6,8]. Although the responses for each religious tradition show both diversity within and niche overlap between traditions, a post-hoc analysis of an ANOVA test using Scheffé's method reveals that Conservative and Moderate Protestants hold significantly different views than individuals without religious affiliation on alcohol consumption, thus indicating different religious niches. Stated differently, the potential members for Conservative and Moderate Protestant churches are located within religious niches that desire some level of strictness surrounding alcohol. Liberal Protestants, however, are not significantly different than those without religious affiliation, indicating that those within this religious tradition do not prefer strictness on this issue. They are located within a religious niche for which alcohol is not an issue.

Premarital sex is also another relevant issue for American Protestants. Traditional Christian teaching has placed sexual activity within the confines of heterosexual marriage. However these boundaries have been challenged beginning in the late 1960s with the sexual revolution. Figure 3 shows how individuals without religious affiliation and Protestants from Liberal, Moderate, and Conservative denominations answered the following question from the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey: "How do you feel about sexual relations before marriage?"

Figure 3 shows the ordering of the groups' beliefs about premarital sex is the same as alcohol. The average responses for people without religious affiliation and Liberal Protestants are lower than Moderate Protestants, who in turn, are lower than Conservative Protestants. The difference between beliefs about alcohol and premarital sex, however, is that all three religious groups—Liberal, Moderate, and Conservative Protestants—are significantly more likely to classify premarital sex as wrong, than those without religious affiliation. Therefore, each tradition is within a religious niche that prefers some strictness surrounding the issue of premarital sex.

To summarize the first step for testing the hypothesis, individuals within all three Protestant traditions have preferences for strictness surrounding premarital sex when compared to those

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[3]   I created religious tradition categories to match the religious traditions in the Faith Communities Today (FACT) survey, which will be used in the analysis below [33]. For BRS data, Liberal Protestants (n = 173) are Congregational, Episcopal/Anglican, Presbyterian, Unitarian Universalists, and United Church of Christ. Moderate Protestants (n = 273) are: American Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Mennonite, United Methodist, and Reformed Church of America/Dutch Reformed. Conservative Protestants (n = 393) are Assemblies of God, Southern Baptist, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Church of the Nazarene, Seventh-day Adventist, and Non-denominational Christian. There are 192 respondents without religious affiliation. I had to omit Black Protestants from analysis because FACT data did not contain the necessary variables for this religious tradition.

without a religious affiliation. They are within religious niches that prefer strictness for premarital sex. On the other hand, only Moderate and Conservative Protestants have distinct preferences for strictness surrounding the issue of alcohol. Thus, those within the religious niche for Liberal Protestants do not desire strictness for this issue.

Figure 2. Individual Views on the Consumption of Alcohol (Means of responses ± 0.75 standard deviation). All differences are significant at the 0.05 level except *No Affiliation—Liberal Protestants* and *Liberal Protestants—Moderate Protestants*.
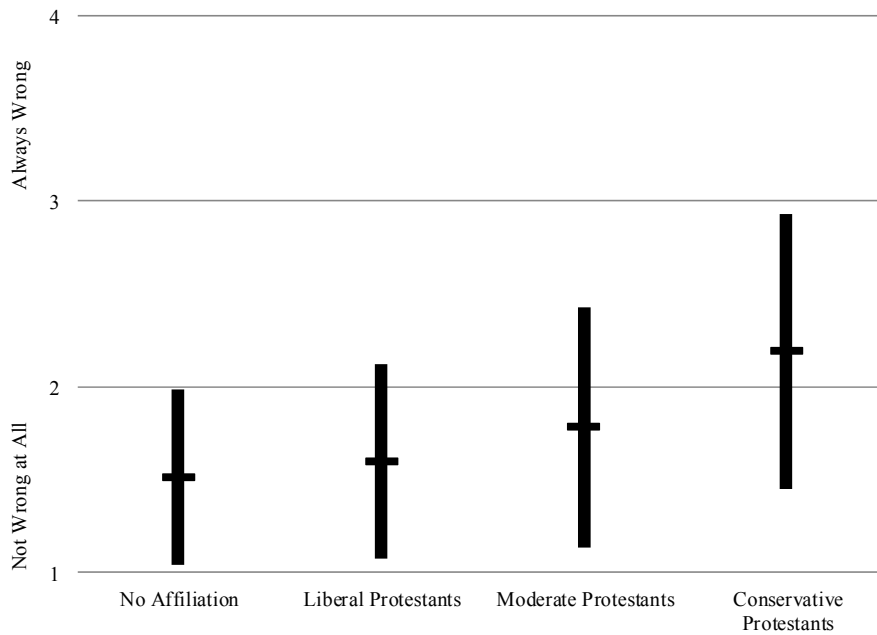
Source: Baylor Religion Survey, 2005.

Figure 3. Individual views on Premarital Sex (Means of responses ± 0.75 standard deviation). All differences are significant at the 0.05 level.
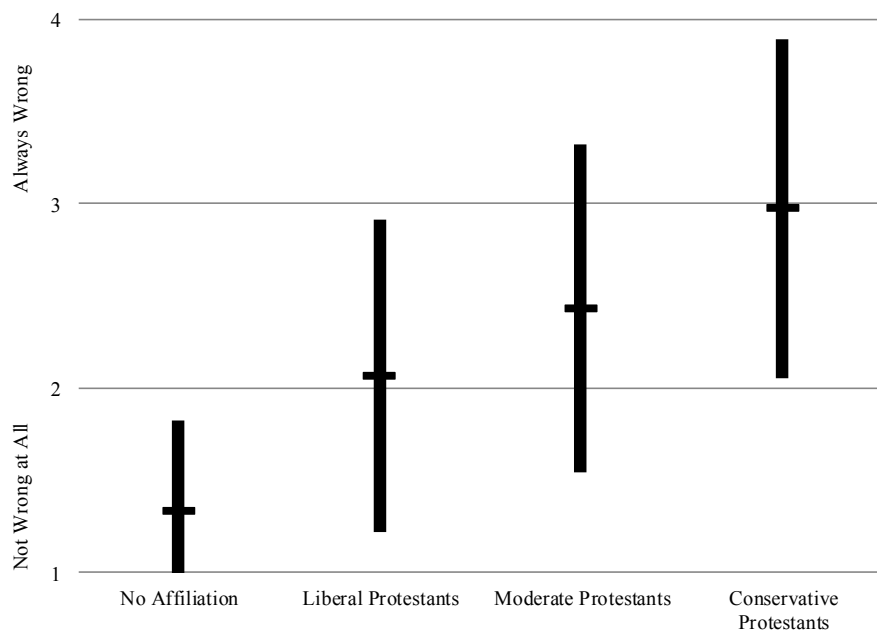
Source: Baylor Religion Survey, 2005.

6. Testing Optimal Strictness

The next step in testing my hypothesis is to see if there is an optimal level of strictness for congregations and growth. In other words, my goal is to see if the relationship between strictness and growth continues in circumstances when the religious preferences of a congregation's potential members (its religious niche) do not line up with congregational practices.

To do this, I use the Faith Communities Today (FACT) survey from 2000, which I obtained from the Association of Religion Data Archives [34]. Coordinated by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, this survey is the largest study ever conducted on congregations in the United States [33]. FACT data represent 41 denominations and faith groups. Each faith group's survey included core questions on six areas of congregational life and structure: worship, location, programs, leadership, participants, and finances. An informed respondent, usually the senior clergy person, filled out the survey. The survey response rate for the denominations averaged just over 50 percent. A total of 14,301 congregations completed surveys.

FACT divides religious congregations into six categories similar to Roof and McKinney's [21] categories: Liberal Protestant, Moderate Protestant, Conservative Protestant, Historically Black, Catholic/Orthodox and Other. Because of the limited nature of the congregational discourses used to create measures of strictness (discussed below), I remove the Catholic/Orthodox and Other categories from the sample. Furthermore, the survey instrument for Historically Black Protestant congregations unfortunately did not contain many of this study's variables. Therefore, I restrict my analysis to Liberal, Moderate, and Conservative Protestants. Liberal Protestants are Episcopal Church USA, Presbyterian Church USA, Unitarian-Universalist, and the United Church of Christ. There are 2565 Liberal Protestant responses. Moderate Protestants are American Baptist Churches, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, Mennonite, Reformed Church in America, and the United Methodist Church. There are 3263 Moderate Protestant congregations in the study. Conservative Protestants are Assemblies of God, Christian Reformed Church, Church of the Nazarene, Churches of Christ, Independent Christian Churches (Instrumental), Mega-churches, Nondenominational Protestant, Seventh-day Adventist, and the Southern Baptist Convention. There are 3610 Conservative Protestant responses. The FACT 2000 public data file from the Association of Data Religion Archives did not include a denomination variable. Therefore, I am forced to use categories described above.

FACT data are useful to test my hypothesis. First, these data are from a very broad sample. While not all faith groups in the U.S. participated, most of the largest denominations are included. Because of this breadth, FACT represents 80% of all U.S. congregations [33]. Second, FACT is a survey of some depth. Each congregation reported on church growth, how much they address social issues, how active they are at outreach, and the demographics of the congregants. In addition to the congregational questions, FACT includes United States Census data at the ZIP code level for 1980, 1990, and 2000. This allows me to control for the surrounding ecological influences for each congregation that might influence growth, such as a growing community population.

Third, this analysis requires a high number of responses from Liberal Protestant congregations who have either anti-alcohol or anti-sex discourses, which is not possible with the other national

congregational surveys, such as the National Congregations Study and the U.S. Congregational Life Survey.

6.1. Dependent Variable: Congregational Growth

To measure congregational growth, FACT asked each congregation, "Since 1995, has the number of regularly participating adults: Decreased 10% or more; Decreased 5% to 9%; Stayed about the same (plus or minus 4%); Increased 5% to 9%; Increased 10% or more?" I create a binary church growth variable for (1) congregational growth of 5% or more and (0) congregational stability or decline. The appendix shows the descriptive statistics for each variable.

6.2. Independent Variable: Congregational Discourse on Alcohol Use and Premarital Sex

Congregational strictness is measured by the level of discourse surrounding alcohol use and premarital sex within a church. The FACT survey asked, "How much does your congregation, in its worship and education, emphasize the following home and personal practices?" Practices included personal prayer, family devotions, fasting, observing a special diet, abstaining from alcohol, observing a weekly holy day, displaying icons, and abstaining from premarital sex. I focus on abstaining from alcohol and premarital sex because of their relevance to American Protestants. Each congregation could respond "Not at all", "A little", "Some", Quite a bit", or "A great deal". Tables 1 and 2 show how congregations in each Protestant tradition responded. The distributions of anti-alcohol and premarital sex discourses within congregations mirror the individual responses to these prohibitions. Conservative Protestant churches are the most likely to actively emphasize anti-alcohol and premarital sex messages. Liberal Protestant churches are the least likely.

Table 1. Congregational Discourse on Abstaining from Alcohol.

Amount	Liberal Protestant		Moderate Protestant		Conservative Protestant	
	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*
Not At All or A Little	88.4	*2219*	62.1	*1985*	28.3	*1005*
Some	8.8	*222*	20.5	*655*	23.1	*820*
Quite a Bit or A Great Deal	2.8	*69*	17.5	*558*	48.5	*1721*
Total	*100*	*2510*	*100*	*3198*	*100*	*3546*

Source: Faith Communities Today (2000). Totals do not equal exactly 100% due to rounding.

In the analysis that follows, I create binary, *prohibition discourse* variables for anti-alcohol and anti-premarital sex to measure congregational emphases on these two behavior issues. Coding is (1) Congregations that emphasize the topic "Quite a bit" or "A great deal" and (0) congregations that emphasize the topic at the other levels.

Table 2. Congregational Discourse on Abstaining from Premarital Sex.

Amount	Liberal Protestant		Moderate Protestant		Conservative Protestant	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Not At All or A Little	62.9	1574	28.3	908	8.2	292
Some	21.9	549	30.1	965	19.7	702
Quite a Bit or A Great Deal	15.2	379	41.6	1334	72.1	2566
Total	100	2502	100	3207	100	3560

Source: Faith Communities Today (2000). Totals do not equal exactly 100% due to rounding.

6.3. Congregational Control Variables

I control for other congregational factors that might contribute to church growth. The age of a church is held constant by using the year founded. Congregation size is measured by the natural logarithm of the number of adults (18 years and older) who regularly participate in religious life at the congregation, whether or not they are members. I also control for the demographics of a church by holding constant the percentage of younger adults (under 35), older adults (over 60), and females participating in church life. These three variables range from 1 to 7 with the responses being (1) None 0%, (2) Hardly any 1%–10%, (3) Few 11%–20%, (4) Some 21%–40%, (5) Many 41%–60%, (6) Most 61%–80%, and (7) All or nearly all 81%–100%. Because the responses 1 through 7 are not meaningful as a numeric scale, I use the midpoints of each response (0, 5, 15, 30, 50, 70, and 90) to create interval variables.

I also control for congregational outreach activities. The FACT survey asked: "In addition to the outreach activities of your denomination, did your congregation do any of the following during the past 12 months to reach out to new or inactive participants, or to make your congregation better known in your community?" I control for three types of marketing approaches: newspaper ads, radio and television ads, and direct mail promotions. Each of these is a binary variable: (1) Yes, done in the last 12 months and (0) No.

6.4. Community Control Variables

In addition to the internal factors within a congregation, I also control for a congregation's surrounding community. I control for ZIP-code population in 2000 (natural logarithmic transformed) and the percentage change in ZIP-code population from 1990 to 2000. This variable is a discrete, 1 percent interval measure of the percentage change (e.g., −12% or 5%). The upper and lower ranges are capped off at "−20% or lower" and "30% or higher" (coded as −20 and 30, respectively). Finally, region of the country is held constant by a series of binary variables, with South as the comparison group.

7. Method

Binary logistic regression is the most appropriate method because the dependent variable of church growth is dichotomous. Because of the high correlation between anti-alcohol and

anti-premarital sex discourses ($r = 0.52$), I separate these independent variables in the models. I estimate six models, separating the three Protestant traditions by how anti-alcohol or anti-premarital sex discourses affect church growth.[4] I expect significant positive estimates for the relationship between growth and a congregation's strictness on an issue for religious traditions whose pool of potential members have distinct strictness preferences (e.g., the issue of alcohol for Conservative Protestants or premarital sex for Liberal Protestants). On the other hand, I expect non-significant estimates for the relationship between congregational growth and an issue of strictness when a religious tradition's potential members do not have preferences of strictness that are distinct from the unaffiliated.

8. Results

Table 3 shows the results from six binary logistic regressions predicting a congregation growing 5% or more. As hypothesized, only the congregational discourses about strictness that match its niche's preferences are the ones that are associated with increased odds of being a growing congregation, while the one that does not match does not affect the likelihood of growth.

Models 1, 3, and 5 show anti-alcohol discourse affects the probability of congregational growth in both Moderate and Conservative Protestant churches, but *not* in Liberal Protestants congregations. Liberal churches that actively emphasize anti-alcohol messages are no more likely to grow than those who do not maintain this prohibition. By comparison, Conservative churches with high levels of anti-alcohol discourse are 73% more likely to grow, and Moderates with the same level are 55% more likely.

Other congregational characteristics also affect church growth. Churches founded more recently and larger congregations (*i.e.*, those with more regularly participating adults) are more likely to grow. Churches from all traditions with higher percentages of older adults have lower odds of growth, as do Liberal and Moderate Protestant congregations with more females. Advertising through radio, television, and mail outs only affects growth for Conservative congregations. Liberal and Conservative churches in areas with greater ZIP populations have lower odds of growth, but a growing ZIP code population increases the odds for all three traditions. Liberal and Conservative churches in the Midwest are less likely to grow compared to Southern Liberals and Conservatives.

Unlike anti-alcohol discourse, which did not affect congregational growth in all traditions, anti-premarital sex discourse does. Models 2, 4, and 6 in Table 3 show Liberal, Moderate, and Conservative Protestant congregations that have high levels of anti-premarital sex discourse are 55%, 34%, and 54% more likely to grow, respectively. Like the other models, newer churches and larger churches are more likely to be growing, while the percentage of older adults lowers the odds of growth for all three traditions. The percentage female only lowers the odds of growth in Liberal Protestant congregations.

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[4] I also estimated the models using an OLS regression. I used 0.10, 0.07, 0.00, −0.07, and −0.10 for the measurement of congregational growth. The results were the same as the binary logistic regression. The tables are available upon request.

The gender ratio has no effect in Moderate and Conservative churches in these models. Advertising through radio, television, and the mail increases the odds of growth in Conservative congregations, but has no effect for Moderates and Liberals. Community variables also affect the odds of congregational growth. Liberal and Conservative Protestant churches in ZIP codes with large populations have lower odds of growth. ZIP code population does not make a difference for Moderate congregations. However, the growth in congregational ZIP codes does affect the odds for all three traditions. For each percentage increase in ZIP code population change, the odds that a church is growing increase by either 1% or 2%. Finally, congregations in all traditions are less likely to grow if they are located in the Midwest as compared to the South.

Table 3. Binary Logistic Regressions Predicting Congregations Growing 5% or More (Odds Ratios Shown).

Variables	Liberal Protestant		Moderate Protestant		Conservative Protestant	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Prohibition Discourse						
Anti-Alcohol	1.36	-	1.55 ***	-	1.73 ***	-
Anti-Premarital Sex	-	1.55 **	-	1.34 ***	-	1.54 ***
Congregational Variables						
Year Organized	1.00 **	1.00 **	1.00 **	1.00 **	1.01 ***	1.01 ***
# Regular Adults (Log)	1.97 ***	1.93 ***	1.36 ***	1.34 ***	1.68 ***	1.58 ***
% Young Adults	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
% Older Adults	0.98 ***	0.98 ***	0.99 ***	0.99 ***	0.99 ***	0.99 ***
% Female	0.98 ***	0.98 ***	0.99 *	0.99	1.00	1.00
Newspaper Ads	1.08	1.09	1.02	1.02	0.95	0.93
Radio/TV Ads	1.17	1.15	1.17	1.15	1.25 *	1.31 **
Mailout Ads	1.23	1.21	1.13	1.13	1.28 *	1.29 **
Community Variables						
ZIP Population (Log)	0.84 ***	0.84 ***	1.04	1.04	0.88 ***	0.89 **
% ZIP Population Change	1.02 ***	1.02 ***	1.02 ***	1.02 ***	1.01 ***	1.01 **
Region						
South	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*
North	0.92	0.939	1.11	1.09	1.24	1.21
Midwest	0.58 ***	0.58 ***	0.79	0.77*	0.80 *	0.76 **
West	1.01	1.035	0.82	0.79	0.90	0.87
N	2170	2163	2535	2548	3113	3119
-2 Log Likelihood	3007.37	2998.11	3486.92	3504.46	4313.10	4321.43
Max-rescaled R^2	0.21	0.21	0.11	0.11	0.16	0.15

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Source: Faith Communities Today (2000).

9. Discussion and Conclusions

This study seeks to better understand the relationship between congregational strictness and growth. I have done so by showing evidence for the idea that strictness must be in line with the congregation's religious niche, its source of potential members. As others have found before, *strictness still matters* [1,2,4,12]. The boundaries that churches create by establishing rules raise the costs of being a member. These increased costs allow the church to generate higher levels of resources, which in turn increase the chances for growth [3]. Moreover, strictness is not a factor for only Conservative Protestants; it is important across all three Protestant traditions.

More importantly, this study modifies the classic strict church thesis. It helps shed light on what Iannaccone [2] meant by an optimal level of strictness. Strictness is not *always* associated with congregational growth. That is, a congregation cannot prohibit any behavior and expect this increase in strictness to increase the likelihood of growth. Instead, growth via strictness is contingent upon potential members' preferences for strictness on an issue. This is why the Liberal Protestant congregations that have high levels of anti-alcohol discourse are not more likely to grow.

These churches, by definition, are stricter churches than their fellow Liberal congregations, but this strictness does not affect growth. Those in their religious niche, the greatest source of potential members, do not want a church with rules about drinking. Thus, the costs incurred by prohibiting alcohol are too high for Liberal Protestants. Potential members are unwilling to pay this price of membership because they do not prefer a level of strictness on this issue.

The prohibition of alcohol does affect growth for Moderate and Conservative congregations, though, because the costs incurred are much lower. In fact, this restriction might actually be a benefit because it lines up with the preferences of their religious niches. Therefore, the prohibition of alcohol in these congregations may be viewed as both a cost and a benefit. It is a cost that restricts alternative behavior and frees up other resources conducive for growth, but it also creates a favorable cost-benefit ratio for its potential members by lining up with their niche preferences.

These findings also support the idea that there is a "spiritual marketplace" in American Protestant Christianity [35,36]. Religious niches are essentially constructed around consumer preferences, and congregations market and supply the religious goods to these niches. If a congregation is out of step with its niche (*i.e.*, its practices and discourses used to construct its level of strictness do not match the demands of the religious marketplace), then it will not attract new members from the niche. For this reason, Liberal Protestant churches who emphasized not drinking alcohol were not likely to be growing congregations.

This study has some limitations. FACT is not a random sample of congregations throughout the United States. Instead, it is a very broad survey of participating faith groups. Positively, this means that the number of congregations and denominations in this study is quite high [37]. Negatively, it means that, while strongly suggestive of how strictness works within congregations, these findings are not nationally representative of all American Protestant churches.

The main drawback of the 2000 FACT survey is its limited scope. The survey asked about only two prohibitive discourses that are salient for Protestant Christians in the United States: alcohol and premarital sex. These are by no means the only relevant issues for Protestants, and Protestantism is

by no means the only religious tradition. This study could be strengthened by examining congregations in other countries and looking at other issues, such as theological beliefs, economics, race, gender, or sexuality. It could also be strengthened to see where the line for optimal strictness is in other congregationally-based religious traditions, such as Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism. Furthermore, these findings open up the possibilities to examine how optimal strictness, as delineated by religious niches, impacts congregational *strength*, the main focus of Kelley [1] and Iannaccone [2].

Future research in the sociology of religion needs to account for the idea that strictness is a multifaceted concept. It does not uniformly affect other congregational outcomes. An organization's niche matters, and the population from which the congregation draws new members responds differently to numerous issues used to create congregational strictness. Scholars continuing to explore the strict church thesis must take this into account when they explore how a religious organization's rules and regulations impact congregational life.

This study advances the classic strict church thesis within the sociology of religion by illuminating what optimal strictness is for congregational growth. Congregational prohibitions do not automatically increase the likelihood of growth. Effective prohibitions are contingent and defined by the congregation's religious niche (*i.e.*, its potential members). By lining up its congregational practices with its religious niche's preferred level of strictness, a congregation increases its chances for growth.

Acknowledgments

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix

Descriptive Statistics for Variables.

Variables	Liberal Protestants				Moderate Protestants				Conservative Protestants			
	N	Mean	Std Dev	Range	N	Mean	Std Dev	Range	N	Mean	Std Dev	Range
Dependent Variable												
Growing Church	2565	0.48		0–1	3263	0.44		0–1	3610	0.51		0–1
Independent Variables												
Anti-Alcohol	2510	0.03		0–1	3198	0.17		0–1	3546	0.49		0–1
Anti-Premarital Sex	2502	0.15		0–1	3207	0.42		0–1	3560	0.72		0–1
Congregational Variables												
Year Organized	2429	1897	66.52	1629–2000	2836	1911	57.21	1642–2000	3504	1945	38.55	1735–2000
# Regular Adults (Log)	2525	4.63	1.05	−0.69–8.85	3219	4.52	1.18	−0.69–8.52	3515	4.55	1.30	−0.69–9.62
% Young Adults	2481	33.92	19.14	0–90	3144	34.65	18.58	0–90	3496	36.91	17.73	0–90
% Older Adults	2523	40.55	18.28	0–70	3158	40.32	18.19	0–70	3508	34.95	17.48	0–70
% Female	2530	55.55	10.64	0–90	3185	54.53	10.50	0–90	3520	51.87	10.69	0–90
Newspaper Ads	2565	0.78		0–1	3263	0.70		0–1	3610	0.63		0–1
Radio/TV Ads	2565	0.17		0–1	3263	0.22		0–1	3610	0.31		0–1
Mailout Ads	2565	0.26		0–1	3263	0.29		0–1	3610	0.35		0–1
Community Variables												
ZIP Population (Log)	2435	9.57	1.10	3.40–11.58	3122	9.18	1.38	1.39–11.63	3431	9.53	1.18	2.40–11.56
% ZIP Population Change (90–00)	2435	6.99	12.05	−20–30	3122	5.96	11.75	−20–30	3431	10.16	12.41	−20–30
North	2565	0.29		0–1	3263	0.24		0–1	3610	0.07		0–1
Midwest	2565	0.28		0–1	3263	0.45		0–1	3610	0.34		0–1
West	2565	0.15		0–1	3263	0.10		0–1	3610	0.23		0–1
South	2565	0.26		0–1	3263	0.20		0–1	3610	0.34		0–1

Source: Faith Communities Today (2000).

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Neighbors Like Me? Religious Affiliation and Neighborhood Racial Preferences among Non-Hispanic Whites

Stephen M. Merino

Abstract: Research on racial residential segregation has paid little attention to the role that social institutions play in either isolating or integrating racial and ethnic groups in American communities. Scholars have argued that racial segregation within American religion may contribute to and consolidate racial division elsewhere in social life. However, no previous study has employed national survey data to examine the relationship between religious affiliation and the preferences people have about the racial and ethnic composition of their neighborhoods. Using data from the "Multi-Ethnic United States" module on the 2000 General Social Survey, this study finds that white evangelical Protestants have a significantly stronger preference for same-race neighbors than do Catholics, Jews, adherents of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated. Group differences in preferences are largely accounted for by socio-demographic characteristics. Negative racial stereotyping and social isolation from minorities, both topics of interest in recent research on evangelical Protestants and race, fail to explain group differences in preferences.

1. Introduction

Understanding and explaining racial residential segregation, which is thought to affect the range of opportunities available to minorities, remains an important task for researchers [1,2]. Explanations of racial residential segregation have generally focused on economic differences between racial and ethnic groups that influence residential options, [3-5], discriminatory practices in economic institutions and in the housing market that create and maintain segregation [1,6-8], and preferences people hold about the racial composition of neighborhoods in which they want to live [9-13]. Interestingly, little attention has been paid to the role that social institutions play in either exacerbating or ameliorating racial residential segregation. Given their important role in community and civic life, religious organizations are uniquely poised to influence intergroup relations.

Scholars have noted the potential for religious organizations to facilitate civic participation and community building [14-16]. There are indications that religious congregations sometimes play a role in supporting and facilitating racial integration in American communities [17,18]. However, religious congregations represent one of the most racially segregated institutions in the United States. The vast majority of congregations are essentially uniracial [19]. This deep racial divide has led some scholars to suggest that religion has the potential to consolidate racial division elsewhere in social life [20-22].

A recent study highlights the need for scholars to consider religion in research on racial residential segregation. Based on an analysis of county-level data from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study, Blanchard [23] reported that the number

of evangelical Protestant congregations per 1,000 non-Hispanic whites was positively associated with levels of black-white residential segregation in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. This key finding was confirmed using measures of two different dimensions of residential segregation and shown to occur across all regions of the United States. Blanchard's 'closed community thesis' contends that while religious institutions sometimes foster bridging ties that link groups and promote social integration, white evangelical Protestant congregations' strong network closure and internal orientation prevent them from doing so.

Blanchard's study is an important call for more research on the role that religion and religious institutions play in facilitating or inhibiting social integration in communities. While Blanchard's study provides insight into how religious institutions may help integrate or isolate groups in a community, it does not directly examine the relationship between individuals' religious affiliation and their preferences about the racial and ethnic composition of their communities. While the roots of racial residential segregation are complex, there is strong evidence that neighborhood racial preferences are a significant contributing factor. Studies have consistently demonstrated that whites have a stronger preference for same-race neighbors than do minorities [8], and whites' avoidance of predominantly black or racially mixed neighborhoods is thought to uphold segregation [24-26]. While neighborhood preferences measured by surveys likely have an imperfect relationship with behavior, they are nonetheless useful in assessing individuals' willingness to live in integrated neighborhoods. Using data from the 2000 General Social Survey, this study will examine the relationship between religious affiliation and neighborhood racial-composition preferences among non-Hispanic white Americans. Furthermore, it will assess whether white evangelical Protestants' racial attitudes and social networks, both topics of study in recent research on race and religion, explain any observed distinctiveness in their neighborhood preferences.

2. Religion and Race

While workplaces and public institutions have become increasingly integrated, religious congregations remain deeply segregated along racial and ethnic lines [27]. Emerson and Smith [20] contend that this segregation is due in part to the nature of the American religious market, which fosters competition, specialization, and individual choice. In addition, the authors contend, social psychological forces tend to push congregations toward internal similarity in order to facilitate the creation of symbolic boundaries and social solidarity. However, while segregation is the norm across religious traditions, there is some notable variation. Religious market share size plays a role [27]. The larger a religious tradition, the less racially diverse are its congregations. The lack of diversity is due to that fact that the more choice individuals have, the more exact they can be in realizing their preferences. Studies find multiracial congregations to be more common in Catholicism and non-Christian traditions than in Protestant denominations [27-29].

But does racial division within American religion have broader implications for society? Emerson and Smith [20] argue that it contributes to the racialization of America:

> We claim that these patterns not only generate congregational segregation by race, but contribute to the overall fragmentation of American society, generate and sustain group

biases, direct altruistic impulses to express themselves primarily within racially separate groups, segregate social networks and identities, contribute to the maintenance of socioeconomic inequality, and generally fragment and drown out religious prophetic voices calling for an end to racialization (p. 154).

Furthermore, the authors contend that the "stronger" the religion, the more it contributes to the racialization of society. Hence, their work focuses primarily on white evangelical Protestants' racial attitudes and beliefs [20,30].

Despite the important role that religious congregations play in local communities, little research has examined ways in which these social institutions may either challenge or maintain racial residential segregation. While Blanchard's study [23] provided evidence that the extent of racial residential segregation in a community is related to its congregational composition, it did not examine a factor thought to contribute to segregation: individuals' preferences about the racial composition of their neighborhoods [9-13]. How might religious affiliation affect neighborhood racial preferences? This study will focus on two ways in which religion could contribute to the racialization of American society. First, religious affiliation is thought to affect the racial composition of individuals' social networks, as well as the amount of interracial contact they experience. Second, religious traditions endow individuals with cultural tools that influence how they understand and interpret aspects of the social world, including race. By affecting individuals' opportunities for interracial contact and by influencing individuals' racial beliefs and attitudes, religion could shape the preferences people hold about the racial and ethnic composition of their neighborhoods.

2.1. Social Networks

Emerson and Smith [20] contend that American religion contributes to the racialization of society by creating and reinforcing racially distinct social networks. By contributing to the separation of social life along racial lines, religion may reduce opportunities for developing intergroup social ties and bridging social capital. Furthermore, they contend that the "stronger" the religion, the greater the effect. The authors note that, during their interviews, they were "struck by how racially homogenous the social worlds of most evangelicals are" ([20], p. 80). Evangelical Protestant congregations tend to foster strong in-group ties that limit members' non-group activities and create dense intra-group social networks [31-34]. Evangelical Protestant congregations are also less involved in the provision of social services and offer fewer community outreach programs than congregations in other religious traditions [35-37]. The strong inward orientation of evangelical Protestant congregations could to lead to spatial and social isolation from minorities [20]. Conversely, individuals in traditions with more racially diverse congregations or greater civic involvement may have more opportunities for meaningful interracial contact.

The relationship between religious affiliation and social network diversity may have consequences for neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Spatial and social isolation from minorities lead to more negative racial attitudes and stronger in-group preferences. Oliver and Wong [38] find that individuals living in more racially homogeneous neighborhoods express more racial resentment than those living in more diverse neighborhoods. Significantly, even when

controlling for neighborhood preference, the negative effects of greater neighborhood racial homogeneity on out-group attitudes remain. In other words, self-selection into neighborhoods does not fully explain variations in out-group attitudes. Furthermore, individuals' prior experiences with interracial contact shape their future racial preferences. In short, racial isolation may breed future racial isolation, since people tend to choose what they have chosen or been assigned previously, a phenomenon known as the status-quo bias [39]. For example, those with prior interracial contact in schools and neighborhoods are more likely as adults to have more racially diverse general social groups and friendship circles [40,41]. Thus, to the extent that religious affiliation structures individuals' opportunities for interracial contact and friendship, it may affect their neighborhood racial-composition preferences.

2.2. Racial Attitudes

In addition to shaping the composition of individuals' social networks, religious traditions provide individuals with cultural tools that they use to organize experiences and interpret reality [42]. For many Americans, beliefs and assumptions rooted in their religious faith are central to informing their views of the social world, including race. The key to understanding how cultural tools acquired through religion can impact racial attitudes is to recognize that tools or schema are transposable [43]. That is, they are transposed or extended beyond the context in which they were learned to new and diverse situations. Differences in racial attitudes between religious groups may translate into real differences in neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Numerous studies have linked whites' negative stereotypes about and negative attitudes toward minorities to a stronger preference for same-race neighbors [9-13].

Because religion is so central to the lives of many evangelical Protestants, Emerson and Smith [20] contend that three features of their cultural "tool kit" directly shape their attitudes toward race and racial inequality: "accountable freewill individualism," "relationalism," and "anti-structuralism." These cultural tools, according to the authors, are rooted in evangelical Protestant theology. Theological understandings portray individuals as responsible for their own behavior and fate; the importance of a "personal relationship with Christ" for salvation is translated into emphasis on the potential positive or negative impact of interpersonal relationships; and claims that macro-level structural dynamics shape human outcomes are deemed incompatible with accountable individualism. According to this account, evangelical Protestants' cultural 'tool kit' both prevents them from acknowledging social structural causes of racial inequality and leads them to blame perceived dysfunctional social relations among blacks for their own disadvantage [20,30]. Emerson and Smith do not contend that an emphasis on individualism—and an accompanying wariness toward structural explanations of inequality—is unique to evangelical Protestants, rather that their culture and theology lead them to hold these beliefs more strongly than other white Americans.

A long tradition of research in social psychology has suggested that conservative Protestants, particularly fundamentalists, are racially prejudiced [44-46]. Emerson and Smith focus not on racial prejudice, however, but rather on how supposedly race-neutral beliefs drawn from their cultural 'tool kit' lead to problematic and inaccurate views of racial inequality. Greeley and Hout [47] similarly reject the notion that evangelicals are racially prejudiced, echoing earlier assertions that

opposition to race-related policies may be based on "principled conservatism" [48]. Drawing on over twenty years of GSS data, Putnam and Campbell suggest that white evangelicals' racial attitudes have become less distinctive over time [29]. Tranby and Hartmann [49] offer an alternative view. As others have argued [50], they insist that conservative views of racial inequality and racial policy are not easily disentangled from racial resentment and anti-black bias. Based on a reading of Emerson and Smith's interviews with evangelicals, the authors argue that evangelical Protestants routinely engage in group-based negative stereotyping to explain racial inequality. Furthermore, because the norms and values that form evangelicals' idea of "American-ness" are implicitly white, they come to see demands for increased recognition of and assistance for minority groups as a threat [49].

Emerson and Smith's research has sparked a new debate about whether white evangelical Protestants' racial attitudes differ significantly from those of other whites [49,51-54]. Evidence for the distinctiveness of evangelical Protestants' attitudes is mixed, however, and these studies have varied widely in their methodological approaches to the question. Whether their racial attitudes are distinct from other whites depends both on how one measures evangelical Protestantism and to whom one compares them [55,56]. Emerson and Smith's work, for example, focuses on the roughly 8 percent of whites who self-identify as "fundamentalist," "evangelical," or "Pentecostal" *and* express a belief in the Bible and in an afterlife. Taylor and Merino [55,56] report that, even after controlling on background characteristics, these self-identified conservative Protestants are more likely than other religious groups to cite motivation or will power as reasons for black-white inequality and less likely to cite structural causes like discrimination or access to quality education. However, only in their high levels of opposition to spending on blacks do these Protestants show distinctive racial policy opinions. In contrast, the roughly 30 percent of whites whose denominational preference is evangelical Protestant are less distinctive in their racial attitudes. When region, education, and other background characteristics are controlled, these white evangelicals are statistically indistinguishable from mainline Protestants and Catholics in their explanations for racial inequality and differ on only one racial policy issue.

Other religious traditions may foster beliefs and attitudes that are more sympathetic toward racial and ethnic minorities. Scholars have noted that the stratification beliefs of white Protestants and Catholics are generally more individualistic and less structuralist than those of Jews, adherents of other non-Christian faiths, and the religiously unaffiliated [57,58]. Hunt [58] writes of a status hierarchy among religions, with Protestants and Catholics the dominant groups, other faiths and non-affiliates being "minority" religious traditions. Members of dominant groups may be more likely to be exposed to the dominant ideology regarding race and racial inequality. In contrast, religious groups outside the Protestant/Catholic mainstream are minorities of a sort and may share a "religious underdog" perspective that positively inclines them toward other "out-groups" [58] Indeed, Taylor and Merino [55,56] find that the primary attitudinal divide among whites is between Christian groups and the more racially progressive non-Christians. In sum, if religious tradition helps to shape white Americans' racial attitudes, it may also contribute to their neighborhood racial preferences, as numerous studies have linked negative stereotypes about and negative attitudes toward minorities to a stronger preference for same-race neighbors [9-13].

2.3. Socio-demographic Characteristics

A number of socio-demographic characteristics have been linked to neighborhood racial preferences, including age, educational attainment, income, marital status, and size of community [9,12,13,59]. To the extent that white evangelical Protestants differ from whites in other religious traditions on these socio-demographic characteristics, they may be distinctive in their neighborhood racial preferences. Notable differences in socioeconomic status and educational attainment continue to exist between religious groups in the United States [60,61]. Individuals that grow up in evangelical denominations continue to attain lower levels of education than other whites, resulting in somewhat lower levels of education among white evangelicals as a whole [61]. In addition, marriage, childbearing, and homeownership tend to occur earlier for evangelical Protestants than for other groups [62-64]. Significantly, scholars have suggested that homeowners or those with children in the home hold a greater stake in their neighborhoods and may have particular preferences about neighborhood composition and quality [13,59]. Finally, white evangelicals are relatively concentrated in the South, where whites generally have more conservative racial attitudes. Carefully analyzing the relationship between religious affiliation and socio-demographic characteristics is critical to understanding how religion might affect racial attitudes. As discussed earlier, white evangelical Protestants' beliefs about racial inequality and their views of racial policies are largely indistinguishable from those of other Christians after accounting for their socio-demographic characteristics [56]. This study will examine the extent to which white evangelical Protestants differ from other whites on these socio-demographic characteristics and how any observed differences relate to their neighborhood racial preferences.

Using a uniquely suited survey item from the 2000 GSS, this study will examine the relationship between religious affiliation and neighborhood racial-composition preferences among non-Hispanic whites in the United States. The analysis will proceed in two major steps. First, it will examine the bivariate relationship between individuals' religious tradition and their preferred neighborhood racial composition. Second, using OLS regression, it will determine whether religious group differences in preferences persist after controlling for socio-demographic factors. In addition, the multivariate analysis will examine whether differences between religious traditions are attributable to differences in two key areas shown to be important for neighborhood racial preferences: stereotyping about and social isolation from racial and ethnic minorities.

3. Data and Methods

The General Social Survey (GSS) is administered biannually to stratified, multi-stage samples of non-institutionalized English-speaking Americans over the age of 17 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. The sampling technique is designed to identify a nationally representative sample of households. The key variables in the current study come from the "Multi-Ethnic United States" topical module administered on the 2000 GSS. The current study employs a sub-sample of non-Hispanic whites. The decision to limit the sample to non-Hispanic whites was guided by two main considerations. First, beginning with Emerson and colleagues' work [20,30], much of the recent research on religion and race has focused on white

evangelical Protestants, including Blanchard's study linking the size of a community's white evangelical institutional base to its level of black-white residential segregation [23,51,52]. Second, because whites' majority status and avoidance of racially mixed neighborhoods are thought to contribute to and uphold residential segregation, much of the research on neighborhood racial preferences focuses on whites [8,26]. Understanding how religious affiliation shapes non-whites' neighborhood racial preferences is certainly worthy of attention, but beyond the scope of the current study. Table 1 contains descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables used in the current study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables.

Variable	Description	*N*	Mean	*SD*
Dependent:				
Percent white	Percent white in preferred neighborhood	878	0.538	0.29
Independent:				
Evangelical Protestant	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.286	
Mainline Protestant	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.182	
Catholic	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.242	
Jewish	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.028	
Other faith	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.040	
Unaffiliated	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.164	
Female	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.55	
Age	Age in years (18–89)	878	46.3	17.7
Education	Years in education	878	13.5	2.7
Total family income	1 = under $1000 to 23 = $110000 or over	878	15.1	6.3
South	1 = lives in South	878	0.338	
Size of community	1 = open country to 10 = city>250,000	878	6.61	2.7
Married	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.498	
Owns home	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.445	
Children in home:				
Under 6 years old	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.149	
7 to 12 years old	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.189	
13 to 17 years old	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.142	
"Personally knows":				
African Americans	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.864	
Hispanics	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.747	
Asian Americans	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.605	
Percent white in current community	Estimate of percent white in R's community	862	0.729	0.223
Racial stereotyping	Index, −6 to 6	873	0.375	0.84

3.1. Dependent Variable

Participants of the "Multi-Ethnic United States" topical module were shown a card depicting a single house surrounded by fourteen other houses. They were instructed as follows: "Now I'd like you to imagine a neighborhood that had an ethnic and racial mix you personally would feel most comfortable in. Here is a blank neighborhood card, which depicts some houses that surround your own. Using the letters A for Asian, B for Black, H for Hispanic or Latin American and W for White, please put a letter in each of these houses to represent your preferred neighborhood where you would most like to live. Please be sure to fill in all of the houses." In the data set, each household is coded individually, allowing for a calculation of the racial and ethnic composition of respondents' preferred neighborhood composition. The dependent variable in the current study is the percentage of households that respondents filled in as "white." Preliminary analysis in SPSS indicated that OLS regression is appropriate to use in this case. Despite some clustering at one end of the distribution (roughly 19% of non-Hispanic white respondents prefer an all-white neighborhood), the mean (0.55) and median (0.50) are similar and the skewness (0.40) and kurtosis (−1.1) values are near zero.

3.2. Independent Variables

Religious tradition is determined using the RELTRAD scheme that classifies individuals on the basis of their stated denominational preference into one of seven major categories: "Evangelical Protestant," "Mainline Protestant," "Black Protestant," "Catholic," "Jewish," "Other," or "None" [65]. The "Other" category is residual and includes adherents of Eastern religious traditions as well as several non-traditional Western traditions [66]. The very small number of non-Hispanic whites in the Black Protestant category necessitates its omission.

This study employs a racial stereotyping measure used in several prior studies of neighborhood racial preferences [8-13]. It is scaled from −6 to +6 and is constructed from five survey items in which respondents were asked to rate each of the four major racial or ethnic groups (white, black, Asian, Hispanic) on a given characteristic (intelligence, laziness, violence-prone, committed to strong families, committed to fairness and equality for all). High (positive) scores indicate unfavorable ratings of out-groups relative to one's own group; low (negative) scores indicate favorable ratings of out-groups; 0 indicates no perceived difference. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.62.

Social isolation from racial and ethnic minorities is measured by three separate survey items in which respondents were asked: "Do you personally know any" "Hispanics or Latin Americans," "Blacks," and "Asian Americans?" Each item is coded such that "0" indicates that the respondent reports not personally knowing anyone from the group, while a score of "1" indicates that the respondent reports knows a member of the group. The current study also employs a measure of racial homogeneity in respondents' communities. Studies have indicated that the racial composition of individuals' current communities affects their neighborhood racial preferences [59]. Furthermore, spatial and social isolation from ethnic outgroups is associated with more negative outgroup

perceptions [38]. Respondents were asked to estimate the "percentage of the people who live in your local community" that are white.

Socio-demographic variables include sex, age (in years), total family income, and years of education. Dichotomous variables indicate whether the respondent is married, is a homeowner, has children in the home, or lives in the South. In addition, this study uses the variable XNORCSIZ, which is a measure of the size of a respondent's place of residence, ranging from 1 (open country) to 10 (city greater than 250,000).

4. Results

Table 2 compares non-Hispanic white evangelical Protestants to whites in other religious categories on key socio-demographic variables. Several significant differences are worth noting. Evangelical Protestants are most different from the non-Christian groups—Jews, adherents of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated. Compared with these groups evangelicals are older, less educated, live in less populated areas, and are more likely to live in the South. Evangelicals tend to be older than Catholics and far more likely to live in the South. Compared with mainline Protestants, they are less educated and more likely to live in the South. The religiously unaffiliated are less likely than evangelical Protestants to be married or own their home.

Table 2. Comparison of Evangelical Protestants to Other Groups on Key Socio-Demographic Variables.

| | Age (years) | Educ. (years) | Lives in South | Comm. size (1–10) | Owns home | Married | Children in home | | |
							0–6 yrs.	7–12 yrs.	13–17 yrs.
Evangelical Protestant	48.6	12.8	54.7%	6.0	45.7%	55.0%	17%	23%	16%
Mainline Protestant	50.9	14.0**	29.8%**	6.2	50.3%	48.5%	11%	14%*	13%
Catholic	45.0*	13.2	17.5%**	6.8*	46.5%	49.1%	16%	19%	14%
Jewish	45.0	15.7**	26.9%**	8.6**	38.5%	50.0%	15%	15%	12%
Other faith	41.4*	14.6**	31.6%**	8.3*	44.7%	55.3%	16%	16%	8%
Unaffiliated	40.6**	13.9**	27.3%**	7.1*	33.8%*	41.6%*	14%	15%	15%

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; N = 878; * Difference from evangelical Protestants statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, 2-tailed); ** $p < 0.01$, 2-tailed

Table 3 compares evangelical Protestants to the other religious categories on the focal independent variables in the current study: social isolation from minorities and racial stereotyping. Again, differences between evangelical Protestants and the three non-Christian groups are most notable. Compared with these whites, evangelical Protestants are significantly less likely to report personally knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans, and more likely to hold negative stereotypes about minorities. Evangelical Protestants show little distinctiveness from Catholics and mainline Protestant, however. The only significant difference is evangelicals' greater likelihood of knowing blacks compared with Catholics.

Table 3. Comparison of Evangelical Protestants to Other Groups on Key Independent Variables.

	"Personally knows":			Percent white in community	Racial stereotyping (−6 to 6)
	Blacks	**Hispanics**	**Asian Americans**		
Evangelical Protestant	89.0%	69.5%	54.1%	73.3%	0.452
Mainline Protestant	85.3%	73.6%	60.2%	77.2%	0.514
Catholic	80.2%**	72.6%	58.9%	71.0%	0.423
Jewish	95.6%	84.6%*	76.9%*	70.0%	−0.080**
Other faith	86.8%	93.0%**	81.6%**	74.9%	−0.060**
Unaffiliated	90.8%	81.9%**	66.0%**	70.0%	0.196*

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; N = 878; * Difference from evangelical Protestants statistically significant (p < 0.05, 2-tailed); ** p < 0.01, 2-tailed.

Table 4 shows the neighborhood racial-composition preferences of non-Hispanic whites by religious tradition. Evangelical Protestants prefer the most racially homogeneous neighborhood, with an average of roughly 60 percent white [67]. Mainline Protestants prefer only slightly more diverse neighborhoods, with an average of 57.7 percent. Catholics (53.5%) and Jews (53.7%) both prefer neighborhoods in which slightly over half of all households are white. Only those of "other" faiths and the unaffiliated prefer, on average, a neighborhood in which whites do not make a majority. Those of "other" faiths have the weakest preference for same-race neighbors with an average of 42.8 percent. The religiously unaffiliated prefer a neighborhood in which about 49 percent of households are white [68]. All groups except for the "other" faith group prefer a neighborhood that is between 15 and 17 percent black. Differences in percent Asian and Hispanic are a bit more noticeable. Evangelical Protestants prefer the lowest percentage of both Asians and Hispanics, followed by mainline Protestants. Those of "other" faiths and the unaffiliated prefer the highest percentage of Asians and Hispanics.

Table 5 contains results from an OLS regression analysis of the percentage of households that respondents filled in as white. Model 1 compares non-Hispanic white evangelical Protestants to whites in each other religious tradition [69]. Results reveal that, before accounting for socio-demographic characteristics, evangelical Protestants' preference for same-race neighbors is significantly greater than that of every religious group but mainline Protestants. Model 2 introduces socio-demographic variables. Results indicate that group differences in socio-demographic characteristics largely explain the distinctiveness of white evangelical Protestants' neighborhood preferences [70]. Net of these controls, evangelical Protestants' preference for same-race neighbors is significantly greater than only those in the "other" faith category.

Table 4. Neighborhood Racial Preferences among Non-Hispanic Whites, by Religious Tradition.

	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian
Evangelical Protestant	60.3	16.0	11.3	12.2
Mainline Protestant	58.1	15.8	12.6	13.4
Catholic	53.5	17.1	15.5	13.9
Jewish	53.7	17.1	13.4	14.0
Other faith	41.8	21.3	19.1	17.8
None	49.2	17.0	16.4	15.4
All whites	55.3	17.0	13.9	13.7

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; N = 878

Table 5. Preference for Same-Race Neighbors Among Other White Religious Groups Compared to White Evangelical Protestants.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Religious Tradition[a]					
Mainline Prot.	−0.020	−0.002	−0.021	−0.024	−0.026
	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.024)
Catholic	−0.063*	−0.016	−0.053*	−0.055*	−0.035
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Jewish	−0.084†	0.020	−0.037	0.002	0.009
	(0.058)	(0.056)	(0.054)	(0.051)	(0.052)
Other faith	−0.198**	−0.113*	−0.152*	−0.116*	−0.105*
	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Unaffiliated	−0.099**	−0.031	−0.068**	−0.050**	−0.030
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.025)
"Personally know(s) any":					
Blacks			−0.059*	−0.027	−0.019
			(0.028)	(0.021)	(0.028)
Hispanics			−0.095**	−0.079**	−0.068**
			(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Asian Americans			−0.101**	−0.064**	−0.055**
			(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.020)
Percent white in community			0.002**	0.002**	0.002**
			(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Racial stereotyping				0.102**	0.095**
				(0.011)	(0.011)
Age		0.004**			0.002*
		(0.001)			(0.001)
Education		−0.018**			−0.005
		(0.004)			(0.004)
South		0.048*			0.041*
		(0.019)			(0.019)

Table 5. *Cont.*

Size of place	−0.007*				0.001
	(0.003)				(0.003)
Children in home	−0.053*				−0.066*
13 to 17 years old	(0.026)				(0.025)
Constant	0.602	0.556	0.625	0.521	0.470
R−squared	0.031	0.143	0.165	0.259	0.284
N	859	859	859	859	859

Source: 2000 General Social Survey;

Unstandardized coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses.

† p < 0.10; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

[a] Reference group is evangelical Protestants

Note: Models 2 and 5 also control for family income, sex, marital status, home ownership, and the presence of children aged 0–6 or 7–12 in the household. None of these variables approach significance, so for simplicity they are not reported.

Models 3 and 4 introduce measures of social isolation from racial and ethnic minorities, as well as negative stereotyping, in the absence of socio-demographic variables. Model 3 demonstrates that the measures of social isolation from minorities used in the current study only partly explain group differences in preferences. While differences between groups are diminished somewhat, evangelical Protestants still prefer a significantly higher percentage of white neighbors than do Catholics, those of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated.

Likewise, Model 4 indicates that white evangelical Protestants' stronger preference for same-race neighbors is not well explained by a greater propensity to hold negative stereotypes about minorities. Again, differences between evangelicals and other groups shrink somewhat, particularly for the "other" faith category and the unaffiliated, but remain statistically significant. Model 5 presents results from the full model, which includes socio-demographic variables. The pattern of group differences in Model 5 is highly similar to the one in Model 2. While stereotyping and isolation from minorities partially explain evangelical Protestants' distinctiveness, Model 2 demonstrates that socio-demographic characteristics alone render insignificant the differences between evangelicals and all other groups but the "other" faith category. Overall, these results suggest that while socio-demographic characteristics explain white evangelical Protestants' stronger preference for same-race neighbors, racial stereotyping and racial isolation do not.

As other studies have found, several socio-demographic characteristics are significant predictors of neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Birth cohort is a strong predictor for non-Hispanic whites. In Model 2, each additional year of age is associated with a .4 percentage point increase in same-race households. Compared with non-Southerners, whites living in the South prefer a neighborhood with a significantly higher percentage of whites. Respondents from more populous areas have a weaker preference for same-race neighbors, as do more educated whites. Each additional year of education is associated with a nearly 2 percent decrease in preferred same-race neighbors. Household composition has an effect on preferences. In Model 2, those with children

between 13 and 17 prefer fewer white neighbors. In the final model, however, residing in the South and having children between 13 and 17 are the only significant socio-demographic variables.

Generally speaking, non-Hispanic whites that report personally knowing members of minority groups have a weaker preference for same-race neighbors. However, compared with personally knowing African Americans, knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans has a stronger effect on neighborhood preferences. Net of controls for stereotyping and socio-demographic characteristics, only knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans is predictive of a weaker preference for same-race neighbors. Respondent's estimates of racial homogeneity in their current communities matter as well. The estimated percentage of whites in the respondents' community is significantly positively associated with a preference for same-race neighbors. Finally, like numerous other studies [9-13], this analysis finds that holding negative stereotypes about minorities is a strong predictor of neighborhood racial preferences for non-Hispanic whites. A one-unit increase on the stereotyping scale is associated with a roughly ten percent increase in percent white.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Prior research on the causes of racial residential segregation has focused on the role of economic and financial institutions and on the preferences of individuals regarding the racial composition of their neighborhoods. The role that social institutions, such as religion, might play in influencing intergroup relations and either isolating or integrating racial and ethnic groups has gone largely unexplored. Emerson and Smith [20] have argued that the segregation of American religion along racial lines contributes to the racialization of American society. This study examines the relationship between religious affiliation and neighborhood racial-composition preferences among non-Hispanic whites. Evangelical and mainline Protestants have the strongest preference for same-race neighbors, while those of various "other" faiths and the unaffiliated have the weakest. This finding closely mirrors the general pattern observed for a range of whites' racial attitudes, in which Protestants have the most conservative attitudes, religious minorities (Jews, other faiths, and the unaffiliated) have the most progressive, and Catholics are somewhere in between [55,56]. Interestingly, it also mirrors the racial diversity within each of these traditions, as Protestant congregations are the most racially homogeneous, followed by Catholic and non-Christian congregations [27,28]. Furthermore, this study finds that while socio-demographic characteristics largely account for white evangelicals' stronger preference for same-race neighbors, negative stereotyping and social isolation from minorities do not.

Emerson and Smith [20] have suggested that religion contributes to the racialization of American society by creating racially distinct social networks, thereby limiting opportunities for interracial bridging ties. In the current study, however, the extent to which respondents personally know members of minority groups only partly explained religious group differences in preferences. Furthermore, evangelical Protestants' concentration in the South and in less populated areas likely accounts for their lower likelihood of knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans, especially compared with Jews, those of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated. It is possible that more detailed measures of interracial contact and social network composition may better explain religious differences in neighborhood preferences. Examining the role of interracial contact at places of worship may be a

worthwhile strategy. There is evidence that such contact may be especially effective at improving racial attitudes [21].

Emerson and Smith argue that religion endows individuals with cultural tools that they use to interpret the social world. When applied to race, these cultural tools influence individuals' racial attitudes. However, in the current study, a measure of racial stereotyping did not account for white evangelical Protestants' stronger preference for same-race neighbors. Instead, controls for socio-demographic characteristics, particularly region and education, explained much of the distinctiveness of evangelical Protestants' preferences. It is possible that other measures of racial attitudes would better explain the religious gap in preferences. Additional research is necessary to determine how religious affiliation may affect racial attitudes, including preferences about neighborhood racial and ethnic diversity.

While Blanchard's study [23] found that the presence of mainline Protestant congregations is associated with lower levels of black-white residential segregation, the current study finds that mainline Protestants themselves are indistinguishable from evangelical Protestants in their neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Notably, Blanchard makes an *institutional* argument about the relationship between local congregations and interracial relations. Evangelical Protestant congregations tend to be less involved in providing community service and outreach than mainline congregations, thus missing opportunities to foster bridging social capital [35-37]. In addition, mainline clergy tend to be more liberal than the laity, which may be a contributing factor to the level and type of community involvement displayed by mainline congregations [71]. Despite the relatively conservative racial attitudes of their members, mainline congregations may nonetheless have a positive effect on community racial integration by fostering civic engagement and bridging social capital [72].

Emerson and colleagues' provocative publications [20,27,30] have spurred an important line of research about race and religion in the United States. However, their conclusions have not been universally echoed in other social science research [49,51,52]. This study and recent work by Taylor and Merino [55,56] indicate the need for important qualification to claims about the influence of religion on racial attitudes. Individuals whose denominational preference is evangelical Protestant have significantly more conservative racial attitudes than other white Americans and prefer more racially homogeneous neighborhoods. However, after accounting for their socio-demographic characteristics, this group loses much of its distinctiveness. This pattern of findings makes it less clear how religion influences whites' racial attitudes.

Why is it difficult to identify religious influences on racial attitudes? Perhaps because, as Bartkowski and Matthews suggest, "the very same constellation of religious beliefs and practices that can be used to eradicate racial stratification also can be enlisted to reinforce it" ([73], p. 164). For example, an evangelical theology that has been said to blind its adherents to structural racism and reinforce segregated churches and social networks also drives efforts at 'racial healing' and 'Christ-centered' race-bridging [74,75]. Such ambivalence is on display in Brown's [76] study using Detroit Area Studies data from the 1970s and 1990s. He reports that, despite their stronger denial of racial housing discrimination, white evangelical Protestants actually expressed significantly greater openness than other white Christians to living in racially integrated neighborhoods. Brown

situates these interesting findings within Detroit's own history of race relations and religious activism. His study also highlights the need to be attentive to the differing religious dynamics within local communities.

Additional research is needed to determine how religion works to either inhibit or foster bridging ties across racial and ethnic boundaries. Blanchard's [23] 'closed community thesis,' posited as an explanation for higher levels of black-white residential segregation in evangelical-rich communities, warrants further testing. Blanchard's thesis draws on two important areas of inquiry in the sociology of religion. First, several studies have suggested that religious traditions vary in the extent to which their congregations facilitate civic engagement and the development of bridging social capital in the broader community [15,37,72,77,78]. Second, there is growing interest in how religious involvement and beliefs structure individuals' social networks and their opportunities for intergroup contact [29,32,34,79,80]. Future research should examine how involvement in congregations and their religious subcultures shapes both opportunities for and preferences regarding social connections across racial and ethnic lines, particularly when religious culture contributes to racial identity [81]. As Edgell and Tranby suggest, "if religious subcultures are shaped in the context of highly salient racial boundaries, they may in fact be about race" ([51], p. 284). In addition, the cultural tools individuals acquire through participation in religious subcultures color their experiences with racial and ethnic diversity [51,75,82,83]. The task of researchers will be to better understand how individuals draw on those cultural tools to bridge racial divides in their communities.

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67. When Emerson and Smith's criteria are used for defining conservative Protestantism (self-identifies as "evangelical," "fundamentalist," or "Pentecostal" and expresses belief in the Bible and in an afterlife), the resultant group (N = 121) has very similar preferences to the evangelical Protestant category used in the current study: 59% white, 17% black, 11% Hispanic, and 14% Asian.

68. Group differences in the likelihood of preferring an all-white neighborhood are a bit more noticeable. Roughly a quarter of Protestants, evangelical or mainline, prefer an all-white neighborhood. In contrast, 15% of Catholics, 12% of Jews, 13% of the unaffiliated, and 6% of adherents of "other" faiths prefer an all-white neighborhood.

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Religion and Marriage Timing: A Replication and Extension

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Abstract: Previous studies have revealed denominational subculture variations in marriage timing in the U.S. with conservative Protestants marrying at a much younger age than Catholics and the unaffiliated. However, the effects of other religious factors, such as worship service attendance and religious salience, remain overlooked. Informed by a theoretical framework that integrates the denominational subculture variation thesis and the gendered religiosity thesis, this study replicates, updates, and extends previous research by examining the effects of religiosity on the timing of first marriage among 10,403 men and 12,279 women using pooled cross-sectional data from the National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–2010. Our survival regression models indicate that: (1) consistent with previous research, Protestants in general, and conservative Protestants in particular, marry earlier than the religiously unaffiliated; (2) irrespective of denominational affiliation, increased frequency of worship service attendance decreases age at first marriage for both men and women, whereas religious salience is associated with earlier marriage only for women; (3) among Catholics, as worship service attendance increases, the waiting time to first marriage decreases; and (4) among Protestants, however, worship service attendance decreases age at first marriage for men who are affiliated with mainline and non-denominational Protestant churches, while for women the decrease in age at first marriage associated with worship service attendance is found for those who report a conservative Protestant affiliation. The complex intersections of denominational affiliation, frequency of worship service attendance, religious salience, and gender are discussed. Results suggest that religion continues to exert influences on marriage timing among recent birth cohorts of young Americans.

1. Introduction

The past several decades have witnessed a remarkable growth in scholarly research on marriage timing [1,2]. A particular stream of this burgeoning body of research has focused on the role of religion and documented denominational subculture variations in marriage timing in the U.S., with conservative Protestants marrying at a much younger age than Catholics and the unaffiliated [3–5]. Though previous studies have revealed notable religious subculture variations in marriage timing in the U.S., the effects of other religious factors such as worship service attendance and religious salience are understudied. Informed by a theoretical framework that integrates the denominational subculture variation thesis and the gendered religiosity thesis, this study replicates and extends previous research by examining the effects of religiosity on the timing of first marriage among recent birth cohorts of American young adults using pooled cross-sectional data from the National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–2010. In particular, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) Does religion continue to exert influences on marriage timing among recent birth

cohorts of young Americans? (2) If so, are there denominational subculture variations as exhibited in previous research net of other religious factors? (3) Are worship service attendance (*i.e.*, religious network integration) and religious salience (*i.e.*, the internalization of religious norms and values) associated with marriage timing? (4) If so, do these associations vary across diverse faith traditions as expected by the denominational subculture variation thesis? (5) And finally, do these religious effects on marriage timing, if uncovered, vary by gender?

This study makes significant contributions to family and religious studies in several important ways. First, denominational subculture variations in marriage timing as reported by previous studies are largely based on survey data collected in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The present study explores whether these denominational subculture variations are still present among young Americans who were surveyed in the 21st century. This replication effort is warranted in light of recent social trends. Young Americans are increasingly experiencing multiple life course transitions in union formation, especially pre-marital cohabitation, which is known to delay entry into first marriage [6]. In addition, religiosity in terms of worship service attendance, prayer, belief in afterlife, and scriptural literalism (or scriptural inerrancy) among American adults has steadily declined across birth cohorts [7]. Given the trends toward delayed marriage and away from religious involvement, it is important to examine whether or not previously documented relationships between religion and marriage timing are still at work in the population.

Second, there is a lack of critical and rigorous validity checks in previous studies on denominational subculture variations in marriage timing. Previous studies examining the influence of denominational affiliation on marriage timing used a measure of denominational affiliation during adolescence [3]. While the use of denominational affiliation in adolescence meets the criterion of causal reasoning, adolescent religious affiliation may not truly reflect individuals' religiosity at the time of first marriage. In effect, it may reflect individuals' parental expectations and/or family religious traditions [8,9]. Given these oversights, this study extends the denominational subculture variation thesis by using denominational affiliation in both adolescence and adulthood. This comparative and fuller approach provides an ideal test for the robustness of the denominational subculture variation thesis in the context of change and continuity in religiosity across the individuals' life course.

Third, the effects of worship service attendance and religious salience on marriage timing have been understudied. In fact, one of the frequently cited studies even overlooked other religious factors including worship service attendance and religious salience [5]. The current study fills this research void by investigating: (1) denominational subculture variations in marriage timing net of worship service attendance and religious salience; (2) independent or net effects of worship service attendance and religious salience on marriage timing after controlling for denominational affiliation; and (3) intersectional or multiplicative effects of worship service attendance and/or religious salience and denominational affiliation on marriage timing.

Finally, the current study explores the effects of religiosity on marriage timing by gender. Though previous studies have examined the links between religion and marriage timing separately by gender [3,5], no explicit and systematic efforts have been made to understand gender differences in marriage patterns. Informed by previous scholarship that deems both religion and family as

gendered institutions [10–12], this study examines the gendered effects of religious denominational affiliation, worship service attendance, and religious salience on marriage timing.

2. Review of Literature and Research Hypotheses

The denominational subculture thesis was initially developed by religion scholars to: (1) rank-order religious denominations along a liberal-moderate-conservative continuum; and (2) assess the consistency of these rankings across a range of "pro-family" issues, with special attention to both between-denominational differences and within-denominational homo/heterogeneity [13]. Utilizing this theoretical perspective, recent scholarship has highlighted distinctive denominational subculture variations in marriage timing. Mormons (the Latter-day Saints), moderate Protestants, and conservative Protestants marry earlier than Jews or their unaffiliated counterparts. Catholics fall right in the middle of this marriage-timing spectrum by differentiating themselves from the early marrying Latter-day Saints and conservative Protestants and the late marrying unaffiliated and Jews [3,5].

These denominational differences in marriage timing are often accounted for by their distinctive subculture variations in theological beliefs and religious norms pertaining to pro-family attitudes, fertility patterns, gender differences in educational attainment and labor force participation, as well as gender ideologies [3,5]. Mormons and conservative Protestants, for example, place a primacy on marriage and family life and emphasize family roles as a source of sanctification and fulfillment. The subcultural emphasis on traditional family life encourages and supports marriage at younger ages [3,5]. The average age of first marriage for Catholics falls between Protestants and Mormons on one end and Jews and the unaffiliated on the other. Like Protestants, Catholics also espouse a pro-family theology that might lead to earlier marriage. However, the fact that the average age of first marriage among Catholics is later than that of Protestants may be related to the contours of the Catholic respondents. Catholicism is viewed by many as an integral part of their cultural and family identity. These individuals may identify themselves as Catholic on a survey even if they are not religiously engaged, thereby being called "cultural Catholics." Individuals who were raised in a Protestant tradition but are no longer religious are less likely to maintain their Protestant identity and therefore more likely to move into the unaffiliated category. As a result, the Catholic category of respondents includes larger numbers of nominally religious respondents as compared to Protestants, and therefore Catholics may be less distinct from the religiously unaffiliated than Protestants [8].

Though the denominational subculture variation thesis is informative in identifying and explicating the multifaceted linkages between religion and marriage timing, this line of research is not without limitations. After carefully reviewing this body of literature, several weaknesses are noteworthy. First, previous studies relied heavily on respondents' denominational affiliation during adolescence [3,5]. This operationalization practice makes sense in temporal order but can be problematic and misleading. It has been argued that adolescent denominational affiliation may not accurately reflect individuals' religious identities and commitment as their religious identities and beliefs continue to be shaped and reshaped by their own discoveries as they age [8,9]. Therefore, denominational affiliation during one's upbringing or adolescence can result in inconsistent and inaccurate measures of the subcultural contexts that influence the marriage timing of young adults.

To rectify this research limitation, current denominational affiliation or, more ideally, denominational affiliation at first marriage should be used to serve as a critical check.

Second, by default, the denominational subculture thesis is predicated on the theological beliefs and religious norms of the religious traditions. As such, it overlooks possible denominational variations in other measures that gauge either public or private religiosity. Two such measures that can potentially affect marriage timing across various denominational families are worship service attendance and religious salience. As a measure of public religiosity, frequency of worship service attendance can shorten marriage timing in three significant ways: (1) those who attend worship services frequently can regularly receive a moral proclamation of the importance of marriage and other pro-family, pronuptial, and pronatal messages and teachings; (2) frequent attendance at worship services can provide opportunities to cultivate religious capital or networks through which one can interact with co-religionists to enhance their views of marriage and/or to dissuade or sanction those who stray from the religious teachings; and (3) frequent attendance at worship services can also serve as an indication of religious commitment, particularly commitment to marriage and family life. In a similar fashion, religious salience, as a measure of private religiosity, can affect marriage timing as well. Religious salience is a subjective measure of how important religion is to a person and the extent to which they have internalized the religious norms, values, and teachings of their religious community [14]. Individuals who report high levels of religious salience are more likely to internalize and adopt their religion's norms and values pertaining specifically to marriage and family life. They may also be more inclined to consult or use religious teachings to inform major life decisions. Religious salience is less tangible than worship service attendance in terms of religious commitment and the sacrifice of time, energy, or income. However, religious salience represents similar commitment based on subjective assessment of internalized importance of religion. There are good reasons to believe that both frequent worship service attendance and heightened religious salience can affect marriage timing directly. The mechanism of influence for each factor, however, is dependent upon the religious context where the individual is interacting with co-religionists or internalizing religious teachings. As such, attendance and salience may affect marriage timing differentially across denominational families because of different levels of strictness in religious ideologies, expectations, and practices. For example, these religious effects can be stronger for conservative Protestant denominations for their higher levels of biblical literalism, theological conservatism, and more frequent religious service attendance [13].

A third limitation of previous research is that in spite of the widely recognized gender differences in marriage timing and religiosity [5,10–12,15], prior studies on marriage timing have taken these differences for granted. Little, if any, attention has been given to the gendered effects of religion on marriage timing. This oversight is unfortunate because both marriage and religion have long been viewed as gendered institutions [10–12]. With reference to gendered marriage, the most widely canvassed explanation offered by Jessie Bernard is that there are two different marital realities, his and hers, such that marriage benefits husbands more than wives [16]. Recent scholarship continues to document gendered boundaries, segregated roles, and gender-differentiated meanings in marriage [10]. Turning to the gendered character of religion or religiosity, scholars of religion have concluded that women are more religious than men on a wide range of measures [11,12].

Scholars of religion offer three types of explanations for this gendered religiosity: (1) women are psychologically or naturally more inclined towards religion (psychological explanation); (2) women are predisposed to such religious values as nurturance, submission, and gentleness during their childhood socialization (socialization explanation); and (3) women's structural locations in society, such as childrearing roles, lack of labor force participation experiences, and their prioritization of family life, lead to a stronger religious orientation than their male counterparts (social location explanation). These two bodies of literature jointly suggest that denominational subculture differences and other religious variations in marriage timing can be different across the two gender groups.

Guided by the literatures reviewed above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Those who are affiliated with a faith tradition are more likely to marry at a younger age than those who are unaffiliated (Hypothesis 1A). Moreover, among Protestants, conservative Protestants will display the earliest entrance into marriage, followed by mainline Protestants (Hypothesis 1B). Catholics, on the other hand, are expected to be between the early marrying conservative Protestants and the late marrying religiously unaffiliated (Hypothesis 1C). Finally, denominational affiliation in adolescence will exhibit weaker and inconsistent subculture influences on marriage timing than denominational affiliation at young adulthood (Hypothesis 1D).

Hypothesis 2: Regardless of denominational affiliation, there will be a negative relationship between frequency of service attendance and marriage timing such that more frequent worship service attendance will be significantly associated with a younger age at first marriage (shorter waiting time to first marriage).

Hypothesis 3: Regardless of denominational affiliation, those who deem religion important in their lives will marry earlier than those for whom religion is viewed as unimportant.

Hypothesis 4: Worship service attendance and religious salience will affect marriage timing differently across faith traditions, with the strongest effects being observed for conservative Protestants.

Hypothesis 5: Given women's higher levels of religiosity and a stronger orientation towards family life, the religious effects on marriage timing will be stronger for women than for men.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Data

To test the hypotheses delineated above, this study used data from the 2006–2010 cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG 2006–2010). These surveys were designed to provide reliable national data on cohabitation, marriage, divorce, remarriage, contraception, infertility, and the health of women and infants in the United States. The pooled NSFG 2006–2010 sample was nationally representative of the civilian, non-institutionalized population, consisting of 10,403 men and 12,279 women ages 15–44. The NSFG has consistently surveyed young Americans aged 44 or younger because of its focus on reproductive health. This age truncation may limit the estimation of the religious effects on marriage timing due to its disproportionate inclusion of unmarried young respondents, thus hampering the potential to generalize the study findings to other populations (e.g., older populations). In spite of this limitation, however, the NSFG contains excellent life course transition questions pertaining to cohabitation and marriage, making the data suitable for the

current study. In addition, given the analytical focus of this study on early marriage among young Americans, especially those who are religious, the pooled NSFG data are well suited for this purpose.

The NSFG 2006–2010 used a complex survey design and oversampled underrepresented groups, including African Americans and Hispanics. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan, from June 2006 through June 2010 under contract from the National Center of Health Statistics. The merged public-use data and the codebook were downloaded from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by the first author.

3.2. Dependent Variable: Waiting Time to First Marriage

Taking a cue from previous research, this study used an event history approach to analyze the survey data [5]. Within this analytical framework, the dependent variable was conceptualized and operationalized as the waiting time to first marriage, which was constructed via two different procedures. First, for respondents who were ever married, the waiting time to first marriage was calculated by subtracting date of birth from date of first marriage (in century month = year × 12 + month). Second, for respondents who were unmarried, their waiting time was calculated by subtracting date of birth from date of interview (in century month calculated similarly as before). Respondents who were unmarried at the time of interview represent censoring cases in this study, which is one of the major advantages of using event history methods for data analysis. In other words, those who were not married at the time of interview will not be excluded from the current study because they may marry at a later time. As displayed in Table 1, the average waiting time for women is 24.4 years and for men 25.2 years, respectively, a year older for women and 3 years younger for men compared to Xu *et al.*'s study [5]. It is worth noting that one of the striking differences in this sample from Xu *et al.*'s study is the larger number of individuals who reported never being married at the time of interview. In this sample, approximately 55% of women and 64% of men reported never being married as opposed to 21% of women and 27% of men in their study based on the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics by Gender.

	Women		Men	
Variables	*n*	*Percentage*	*n*	*Percentage*
Waiting time	12,279	24.36 (M)	10,403	25.15 (M)
		6.31 (SD)		6.83 (SD)
Event				
Ever married	5,534	45.10	3,735	35.90
Never married	6,745	54.90	6,668	64.10
Adolescent Religious Affiliation				
Not affiliated	1,227	10.00	1,114	10.80
Catholic	4,138	33.80	3,681	35.50
Mainline Protestant	1,438	11.70	1,201	11.60
Conservative Protestant	3,030	24.70	2,296	22.10
Other Protestant	1,333	10.90	1,188	11.50
Other religion	1,090	8.90	882	8.50

Table 1. *Cont.*

Variables	Women		Men	
	n	*Percentage*	*n*	*Percentage*
Current Religious Affiliation				
Not affiliated	2,347	19.20	2,538	24.50
Catholic	3,127	25.50	2,728	26.30
Mainline Protestant	1,101	9.00	871	8.40
Conservative Protestant	2,610	21.30	1,843	17.80
Other Protestant	2,034	16.60	1,534	14.80
Other religion	1,031	8.40	856	8.20
Worship Service Attendance				
More than once a week	1,204	9.80	813	7.80
Once a week	2,553	20.80	1,719	16.50
2–3 times a month	1,519	12.40	1,092	10.50
Once a month	986	8.00	769	7.40
3–11 times a year	1,378	11.20	1,164	11.20
Once or twice a year	1,763	14.40	1,847	17.80
Never	2,865	23.40	2,989	28.80
Religious Salience				
Important	9334	94.10	7019	89.30
Not important	586	5.90	839	10.70
Race/Ethnicity				
White	6,301	51.30	5,448	52.30
Black	2,535	20.60	1,854	17.80
Hispanic	2,723	22.20	2,409	23.20
Other	720	5.90	692	6.70
Premarital Cohabitation				
Yes	6,450	52.50	4,758	45.70
No	5,829	47.50	5,645	54.30
Educational Attainment				
Less than high school	3,455	28.10	3,469	33.30
High School	2,946	24.00	2,529	24.40
More than high school	5,878	47.90	4,405	42.30
Employment Status				
Yes	7,722	62.90	7,319	70.40
No	4,557	37.10	3,084	29.60
Biological Two-parent Family at Age 14				
Yes	7,479	60.90	6,798	65.30
No	4,800	39.10	3,605	34.70
Family on Public Assistance				
Yes	4,503	36.70	2,643	74.60
No	7,776	63.30	7,760	25.40
Residence				
Metro	10,441	85.00	8,901	85.60

Table 1. *Cont.*

Variables	Women		Men	
	n	*Percentage*	*n*	*Percentage*
Non-metro	1,838	15.00	1,502	14.40
Year of Survey				
2006	3,106	25.30	2,504	24.10
2007	2,761	22.50	2,371	22.80
2008	3,142	25.60	2,657	25.50
2010	3,270	26.60	2,871	27.60
Total *n*	12,279		10,403	

3.3. Key Covariates: Religious Variables

In the current study, religious denominational affiliation, frequency of worship service attendance, and religious salience were used as covariates to replicate, update, and extend previous research on marriage timing. Consistent with previous research, denominational affiliation reported by respondents was employed to operationalize denominational subculture variations [5,13]. But due to possible changes in religiosity over the life course of respondents [8,9], two versions of the religious denominational affiliation variables were used: (1) respondents' denominational affiliation as an adolescent and (2) respondents' current (at the time of study) denominational affiliation. Because the National Center of Health Statistics did not release the original denominational affiliation variables with detailed denominational membership, the denominational affiliation variables available in the public use data filewere pre-collapsed, thus incongruent with previous studies that utilized detailed denominational membership. These variables were dummy-coded into five broader faith traditions: Catholic, conservative Protestant (Baptists and other fundamentalist Protestants), mainline Protestant (Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Episcopal groups), other Protestant (non-denominational or Protestant groups not listed in the survey), and other religions (Muslims, Jews, Latter-day Saints and Jehovah Witnesses) with the unaffiliated serving as the reference group.

The NSFG 2006–2010 also included frequency of worship service attendance and religious salience. Worship service attendance was recorded as an ordinal variable to indicate respondents' public religiosity, with seven response categories ranging from 1 = "never attend" to 7 = "attend more than once a week." For ease of interpretation in the models, worship service attendance was treated as a continuous measure (a categorical version of the variable was experimented but no difference surfaced). While previous research used frequency of worship service attendance at age 14 [3], this study made use of current worship service attendance instead because of excessive missing data in the adolescent worship service attendance variable (missing data were observed for the vast majority of respondents).

Finally, the NSFG 2006–2010 included religious salience. This measure was used to gauge respondents' private religiosity. The NSFG 2006–2010 asked how important religion was in respondents' daily life, which was dummy-coded with 1 = salient ("very important" and "somewhat

important") and 0 = not salient ("not important"). The category of "not salient" was used as the reference.

3.4. Other Covariates: Control Variables

To conduct the statistical analysis, the following control variables (covariates) were included to avoid possible spurious effects of religiosity on marriage timing. Race/ethnicity was dummy-coded into Black, Hispanic, and other race/ethnicity, with white serving as the reference category. Premarital cohabitation was also dummy-coded into 1 = "ever had premarital cohabitation" and 0 = "never had premarital cohabitation" (the reference category). Current educational attainment, in actual years, was dummy-coded into two variables: high school and more than high school with less than high school serving as the reference group. Because respondents' employment status at time of marriage was unavailable, current employment status was used and dummy-coded with 1 = employed and 0 = otherwise. Family structure at age 14 was used and dummy-coded into 1 = biological two-parent family and 0 = other family arrangement. Current family resources were measured by whether the family received public assistance, which was dummy-coded into 1 = "yes" and 0 = "no". Since region of residence was not provided in the public use data, metro statistical area was used and dummy-coded into 1 = urban and 0 = rural to control for marriage market differences. Finally, years of survey were dummy-coded into three variables: 2007, 2008, and 2010, with 2006 serving as the reference category.

3.5. Analytic Strategies

Following previous studies, the effects of the religious variables on marriage timing were analyzed by using a series of log-logistic parametric survival models (selected as the best fitting model among five different types of parametric survival models; not shown but available upon request). This modeling strategy has several advantages, including but not limited to: (1) censored observations for those who were not married at the time of study were incorporated into the analysis; (2) the waiting time to first marriage with flexible distributions was accounted for; and (3) fuller information was used for statistical modeling; and (4) a direct comparison with previous studies, such as Xu *et al.*'s study published in 2005, was possible.

To test study hypotheses, a nested modeling technique was used such that Model 1 was a replication model that included denominational affiliation and all of the control variables. Each model was run once with the adolescent affiliation variables and once with the current affiliation variables in order to allow a comparison of the two different measures of denominational affiliation. Models 2 and 3 were extension models that included worship service attendance and religious salience, respectively, while controlling for denominational affiliation and other covariates. Model 4 was the full model that combined all religious variables. It is important to note that these models were estimated separately for men and women in order to explore gender differences. In addition, the effects of worship service attendance and religious salience, along with statistical controls, were estimated separately for each of the five denominational families by gender. In essence, these models assessed complex moderating or intersectional effects of denominational subculture,

worship service attendance or religious salience, and gender on marriage timing. It should be noted that all of these models were estimated by using the complex survey and multiple imputation procedures in Stata 13 to adjust for design effects and missing values [17,18].

4. Results

4.1. Denominational Subculture Variations in Marriage Timing

Model 1 of Tables 2 and 3 show general support for Hypothesis 1A. Consistent with previous studies, the negative and significant regression coefficients displayed in survival regressions indicate that the waiting time until first marriage was shorter for those who were affiliated with any faith tradition than for those who were unaffiliated. In other words, religiously affiliated respondents were more likely to marry at a younger age. This pattern generally holds for both denominational affiliation during adolescence and adulthood as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

While all religious groups marry younger than the unaffiliated, Hypothesis 1B suggests that conservative and mainline Protestants will report the earliest entries into marriage, respectively. As shown in the tables (Models 2–4), net of worship service attendance, religious salience, and other statistical controls, conservative Protestants exhibit the most consistent and early marrying effects (the negative and significant regression coefficients are observed across both versions of the denominational affiliation variables). These findings offer partial support for Hypothesis 1B pertaining to distinctive conservative Protestantism. However, in contrast to Hypothesis 1B, mainline Protestants do not marry significantly earlier than the unaffiliated once all of the covariates are controlled for in the models. Hypothesis 1C statesthat Catholics will fall between the early marrying conservative Protestants and late marrying unaffiliated in marriage timing. As it turns out, Hypothesis 1C is supported only for current denominational affiliation but rejected for adolescent denominational affiliation (no statistical differences between Catholics and the unaffiliated are observed) if other religious factors are not considered (Model 1). Once additional religious factors are added to the models, however, there is no longer a significant difference in the marriage timing of Catholics and the religiously unaffiliated.

Hypotheses 1A–1D examined the denominational subculture variations in marriage timing. The results show that both adolescent and current religious affiliations are related to marriage timing, but as was expected, current religious affiliation is a stronger measure of the subcultural influences on marriage timing (somewhat consistent with Hypothesis 1D). In addition, the subcultural context that appears to have the most consistent and significant influence on early entry into marriage is that of conservative Protestantism.

Although we found some support for denominational subculture variation, some of these variations in marriage timing are mediated by both worship service attendance and religious salience (the ancillary regression analyses indicating significant mediating effects are not shown here but available upon request). In the case of current denominational affiliation for women, denominational subculture variations in marriage timing are completely mediated (or explained) away by religious salience (see Models 3–4 of Table 2). That is, after controlling for either worship service attendance or religious salience, denominational subculture variations in marriage timing become considerably

weaker or even completely nullified as compared to one of the earlier studies [5] (once again, the ancillary regression analyses confirmed these significant mediating effects).

Table 2. Maximum Likelihood Parameter Estimates from Log-Logistic Survival (AFT) Regressions of Waiting Time on Religious Variables for Women.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Adolescent Religious Affiliation				
Not affiliated (reference)				
Catholic	−0.022	−0.024	0.002	−0.001
Mainline Protestant	−0.039 *	−0.039 **	−0.012	−0.015
Conservative Protestant	−0.091 ***	−0.088 ***	−0.056 **	−0.057 **
Other Protestant	−0.061 ***	−0.061 ***	−0.034	−0.036
Other Religion	−0.084 ***	−0.085 ***	−0.057 **	−0.060 ***
Worship Service Attendance		−0.020 ***		−0.018 ***
Religious Salience			−0.112 ***	−0.079 **
Current Religious Affiliation				
Not affiliated (reference)				
Catholic	−0.040 **	−0.003	0.025	0.042
Mainline Protestant	−0.071 ***	−0.029	−0.005	0.016
Conservative Protestant	−0.118 ***	−0.067 ***	−0.049	−0.021
Other Protestant	−0.080 ***	−0.037 *	−0.012	0.010
Other Religion	−0.104 ***	−0.060 ***	−0.040	−0.017
Worship Service Attendance		−0.017 ***		−0.015 ***
Religious Salience			−0.105 ***	−0.080 **
Total *n*	12,279	12,279	12,279	12,279

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Race/ethnicity, premarital cohabitation, education, employment, family structure at age 14, poverty, urban-rural residence, and year of study are statistically controlled.

4.2. Worship Service Attendance, Religious Salience and Marriage Timing

Hypothesis 2 predicts that worship service attendance will be related to a shorter waiting time to first marriage. Models 2 and 4 in Tables 2 and 3 provide the opportunity to test this hypothesis as an extension of previous studies. As expected, the negative and statistically significant survival regression coefficients show that after controlling for denominational affiliation and other covariates, every unit increase in frequency of worship service attendance is associated with a younger age at first marriage (a shorter waiting time to first marriage). This robust pattern holds for both men and women, which strongly supports Hypothesis 2. Turning to religious salience as addressed in Hypothesis 3, Models 3 and 4 in Tables 2 and 3 suggest that those for whom religion was deemed salient married earlier than those who viewed religion as unimportant in their lives. The effects of religious salience are far more robust for women than for men. In Model 4, for example, religious salience is no longer statistically significant for men when worship service attendance is included in the model, but it continues to be significant for women. In light of these results, Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

Table 3. Maximum Likelihood Parameter Estimates from Log-Logistic Survival (AFT) Regressions of Waiting Time on Religious Variables for Men.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Adolescent Religious Affiliation				
Not affiliated (reference)				
Catholic	0.005	0.011	0.027	0.028
Mainline Protestant	−0.015	−0.006	0.012	0.015
Conservative Protestant	−0.093 ***	−0.082 ***	−0.053 *	−0.051 *
Other Protestant	−0.054 *	−0.042	−0.020	−0.017
Other Religion	−0.052 *	−0.042	−0.021	−0.019
Worship Service Attendance		−0.025 ***		−0.024 ***
Religious Salience			−0.058 **	−0.019
Current Religious Affiliation				
Not affiliated (reference)				
Catholic	−0.031 *	0.008	0.010	0.014
Mainline Protestant	−0.078 ***	−0.029	−0.054	−0.023
Conservative Protestant	−0.123 ***	−0.059 **	−0.096 **	−0.052 *
Other Protestant	−0.108 ***	−0.051 **	−0.082 **	−0.044 *
Other	−0.093 ***	−0.039	−0.068 **	−0.032
Worship Service Attendance		−0.022 ***		−0.022 ***
Religious Salience			−0.048 *	−0.015
Total *n*	10,403	10,403	10,403	10,403

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Race/ethnicity, premarital cohabitation, education, employment, family structure at age 14, poverty, urban-rural residence, and year of study are statistically controlled.

Turning to Hypothesis 4, we examine whether worship service attendance and religious salience operate differently across the different religious traditions in the study. Table 4 shows the coefficients for each of these two religious variables when the models are run separately by denomination and gender. The frequency of worship service attendance is systematically and negatively associated with time to first marriage for both male and female Catholics. Among Protestant groups, on the other hand, the negative association between worship service attendance and length of time to first marriage is not consistent across all of the models. Among conservative Protestants, there is a significant coefficient for attendance for females who were conservative Protestants in adolescence and those who are currently conservative Protestants. For the men, however, the relationship between attendance and marriage timing is only significant for those men who were conservative Protestant during adolescence. Among mainline Protestants, it is only the men for whom more frequent worship service attendance is significantly related to earlier marriage. Religious salience is significantly related to a shorter time to first marriage only for female mainline Protestants and male Catholics. Thus, the moderating effects involving religious salience are minimal and not systematic. Taken together, the survival models featured in Table 4 lend some credence to Hypothesis 4 pertaining to worship service attendance. It appears that the way in which worship service attendance influences marriage timing does vary across religious traditions. And while the effect of attendance for conservative Protestants was expected, we also found that attendance has a strong influence on marriage timing among Catholics. The support for Hypothesis 4 related to religious salience is generally weak and in most cases, statistically trivial.

Table 4. Maximum Likelihood Parameter Estimates from Log-Logistic Survival (AFT) Regressions of Waiting Time on Religious Variables By Denomination and Gender.

	Catholic	Mainline Prot.	Cons. Prot.	Other Prot.	Other Religion
Women					
Adolescent Religious Affiliation					
Worship Service Attendance	−0.016***	−0.012	−0.021***	−0.028*	−0.014
Religious Salience	−0.044	−0.140	−0.041	−0.067	−0.124
Total *n*	4,138	1,438	3,030	1,333	1,090
Current Religious Affiliation					
Worship Service Attendance	−0.010*	−0.008	−0.017**	−0.020	−0.015*
Religious Salience	−0.054	−0.087*	−0.058	−0.143	−0.157
Total *n*	3,127	1,101	2,610	2,034	1,031
Men					
Adolescent Religious Affiliation					
Worship Service Attendance	−0.021**	−0.026*	−0.015**	−0.032**	−0.031*
Religious Salience	−0.027	−0.007	0.002	−0.100	0.042
Total *n*	3,681	1,201	2,296	1,188	882
Current Religious Affiliation					
Worship Service Attendance	−0.016*	−0.028***	−0.015	−0.025*	−0.025*
Religious Salience	−0.046**	0.022	0.046	−0.012	−0.012
Total *n*	2,728	871	1,843	1,534	856

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Race/ethnicity, premarital cohabitation, education, employment, family structure at age 14, poverty, urban-rural residence, and year of study are statistically controlled.

4.3. Gender Differences

As was predicted in Hypothesis 5, several gendered religious effects on marriage timing emerged from this study. The noteworthy results can be stated as follows: (1) denominational subculture variations in marriage timing (especially conservative Protestant affiliation) are more prominent and systematic for men than for women after controlling for worship service attendance and religious salience; (2) religious salience, a measure of private religiosity, is more robust in affecting marriage timing for women than for men; and (3) for each of the five denominational families as depicted in Table 4, the early marrying effects of worship service attendance are more pronounced for men than for women. Based on these findings, there are noticeable gender differences in religious effects on marriage timing as was expected in Hypothesis 5. It appears, however, that private religious salience is more of an influence for women, while marriage timing among men is more consistently influenced by public religious practice (worship service attendance).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study was designed to replicate, update, and extend previous research on the relationship between religion and marriage timing using the National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–2010, a

nationally representative sample of young American men and women. As anticipated, a series of multivariate survival regression models revealed important religious effects on the waiting time to first marriage. In the pages that follow, these findings are summarized and highlighted.

First, consistent with Hypothesis 1A, respondents who were affiliated with all faith traditions exhibited shorter waiting time to first marriage than those who were unaffiliated. This finding undergirds the notion that pro-family and pro-marriage values that characterize virtually all faith traditions continue to play an important role in marriage timing. As pointed out by Uecker and Stokes [19], religion is responsible in part for much of the early marriages in recent birth cohorts. However, it is worth noting that denominational subculture variations documented in this study are less robust than previously reported, especially after other religious factors are simultaneously considered.

In support of Hypothesis 1B, conservative Protestants showed the most robust and consistent early marrying effects compared to the unaffiliated, which was followed by other Protestants (men). Given conservative Protestants' enthusiasm for pro-family values, traditional gender ideologies, and family life, these findings are highly anticipated. They underscore the subcultural uniqueness associated with conservative Protestantism that is highlighted by their distinctive biblical literalism and theological conservatism. On the other hand, inconsistent with Hypothesis 1C, those who were affiliated with the Catholic faith tradition were not statistically different from the late marrying unaffiliated once other religiosity measures (worship service attendance and religious salience) were included in the analysis. This result is consistent with the earlier discussion regarding the cultural identity of many Catholics who may identify as Catholic even thought their religious engagement more closely resembles the religiously unaffiliated. This conclusion is further supported by the findings regarding worship service attendance in Table 4. In the model for Catholics we found that those who did attend regularly were more likely to reflect the pro-family and pro-marriage stance of the Catholic Church with a shorter waiting time to marriage. Furthermore, it was difficult to conclude firmly if Hypothesis 1D was supported or rejected because the two versions of denominational affiliation exhibited different patterns in their effects on marriage timing across the two gender groups. But it seems safe to conclude that the results derived from current denominational affiliation tell "more interesting" stories.

Second, this study concluded that irrespective of denominational affiliation, as worship service attendance increased, the waiting time to first marriage became shortened, which lent strong credence to Hypothesis 2. In fact, attendance at religious services emerged as the most robust predictor of marriage timing. Moreover, worship service attendance also acted as a mediator, explaining away not only some of the denominational affiliation effects but also the effects of religious salience, which was particularly pronounced for men. These mediating effects are theoretically important for two reasons: (1) religious denominational affiliation can be nominal such that its effects on marriage timing will not matter unless it is manifested through religious practice, such as worship service attendance; and (2) in line with previous research on the linkages between religion and family life, public religiosity often exerts more pronounced net effects on marital dynamics, relationship quality, and other dimensions of marital well-being [20].

Partially consistent with Hypothesis 3, religious salience was also found to shorten the waiting time to first marriage. However, there were striking gender differences. For men, religious salience lost its statistical significance when worship service attendance was introduced, whereas for women religious salience was statistically important throughout the analysis. So why does the internalization of the religious pro-family and pro-marriage orientations and teachings matter for women but not for men? On the one hand, religious institutions tend to be gender-stratified, such that women have fewer opportunities to exhibit their religiosity publicly other than attendance at religious services. As a result, women tend to internalize their faith through such private acts as prayers and scripture studies. On the other hand, men have abundant opportunities to externalize their religious faith by serving as leaders or teachers, thus private religiosity seems to matter less for men than for women.

In partial support of Hypothesis 4, this study indicated that worship service attendance and religious salience affected the waiting time to first marriage differently across denominational families with the effects of religious salience being far less systematic than worship service attendance. Attendance at worship services mattered more consistently for Catholics than for various Protestant groups even though Catholics were not that different from the unaffiliated in marriage timing as reported above. So while Catholics as a group are not significantly different from the religiously unaffiliated, Catholics who attend regularly do in fact marry at a younger age than their less-attending or non-attending counterparts. This within-group heterogeneity was also noted for conservative Protestant women and mainline or other Protestant men. These patterns of within-group religious heterogeneity complement nicely the denominational subculture variations observed in marriage timing.

In general, this study found some evidence to support Hypothesis 5. The gendered effects of religious salience as a predictor and mediator for women, and the denominational specific effects of worship service attendance for men, supported the contention that like the institution of family or marriage, religious institutions are also gendered. In the context of marriage timing, these results echo broader forms of gender segregation in society by the well-known differentiation between the public (worship service attendance for men) and private (religious salience for women) spheres of life for both sexes.

While this study yielded some interesting and important findings, several research limitations and directions for future research need to be addressed and discussed. As noted previously, future research should utilize more refined religious denominational groups, which are less likely to be available in the public use data. Failure to separate denominational groups, such as the Latter-day Saints and Jews, from other faith traditions can make the interpretations difficult. As such, access to the original data is essential to use an appropriate classification scheme to group denominational families. In addition, with a growing number of Americans being self-classified as unaffiliated [21], further distinction of the unaffiliated group becomes necessary in order to examine properly the effects of this group on marriage timing. It is important to note that the unaffiliated group can consist of atheists, agnostics, and others who may classify themselves as unaffiliated because they tend to come from an inter-faith home, thus embracing different beliefs, values or norms. Furthermore, due to a large amount of missing data, the variable of worship service attendance in

adolescence could not be used in this study. Attention is needed in future research to better record respondents' retrospective responses. An event history calendar can be very helpful in probing and recording respondents' past religious practices. Likewise, in this study many covariates serving as statistical controls were not measured at first marriage. Instead, they were measured at the time of interview. As a result, no causal relationships and implications are suggested.

Additionally, as noted previously, the National Survey of Family Growth focuses on a young population with a narrow age range from 15 to 44. Given the increasing age at first marriage across the population [22], the current data include significant numbers of respondents who are not yet married. While these factors limit our ability to measure the eventual marriage patterns of these respondents, the data do allow us to examine the marriage patterns of young adults and the prevalence of early marriage within the population. Finally, we suggest that future research incorporate qualitative studies, which can help better understand the nuanced motivations or desires for earlier or later entrance into marriage.

In closing, this study makes several noteworthy contributions to family and religious studies. In spite of the declining religiosity across birth cohorts in the U.S. and the increasing age at first marriage in recent decades [7,22], this study documented continued and important impacts of religion on marriage timing among young Americans. Echoing previous research, the present study observed persistent denominational subculture variations in marriage timing, especially for conservative Protestants compared to other denominational groups. In addition to these notable religious subculture variations, this study also revealed accelerating effects of religious attendance and salience on marriage timing. While the impacts of religious attendance were noted for both men and women, the effects of religious salience were particularly pronounced for women. This finding pertaining to private religiosity underscores the gendered nature of both family and religious life in contemporary America. This gendered finding is also nicely complemented by the complex intersection of gender, denominational affiliation, worship service attendance, and religious salience, suggesting that future research should move beyond the denominational subculture variation thesis and bring gender into the study on religion and family life in general and religion and marriage timing in particular. Finally, it is recommended that similar theoretical and methodological approaches used here be considered to examine additional life course transitions such as the timing of premarital and post-divorce cohabitation, divorce, and/or remarriage.

Author Contributions

JJR and XX conceived of the study and preformed the statistical analyses. MLD and JPB provided theoretical guidance and helped to draft the manuscript. The authors jointly edited and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Section II. Empirical Research on Social Institutions and Deviance

The Empirical Ties between Religious Motivation and Altruism in Foster Parents: Implications for Faith-Based Initiatives in Foster Care and Adoption

Michael Howell-Moroney

Abstract: Amidst a crisis shortage of foster homes in the child welfare system, a number of innovative faith-based collaborations aimed at recruiting foster parents have recently emerged. It has been suggested that these collaborations offer a unique opportunity to recruit committed and altruistic parents as caregivers, providing much needed capacity to an overloaded child welfare system. This paper uses data from the National Survey of Current and Former Foster Parents to examine the associations between religious motivations for fostering, altruism and various measures of foster home utilization and longevity. The empirical results demonstrate that religiously motivated foster parents are more likely to have altruistic reasons for fostering, and scored higher than the non-religiously motivated group on an index of altruism. A separate empirical analysis shows that the interaction of high levels of altruism and religious motivation is associated with higher foster home utilization. No association was found between religious altruism and the parent's expressed intent to continue providing foster care. The implications of these findings for current faith-based collaboration in the child welfare arena are discussed.

1. Introduction

Occasionally, there are reasons why the State must step in to remove children from their biological parents or other caregivers. Reasons for bringing children into the foster care system range from abuse and neglect to cases where one or both parents is temporarily incapacitated by injury, or even the death of the parents. According to the most recently released data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [1] there were about 398,000 children and youth in foster care in 2012. Moreover, 47% of all children in foster care reside in family foster homes, with another 28% residing in relative family foster homes, making relative and family foster homes the frontline providers of the foster care system [1]. In fact, family foster homes used to comprise a larger percentage of placements, but it has become increasingly difficult to recruit new families to serve as caregivers and to retain the families that are recruited [2–5].

Recruitment and training of foster families is an expensive and time consuming undertaking that puts pressure on already limited federal resources for child welfare [6]. Consequently finding effective means to recruit and retain foster families is a central policy priority for ensuring the future of the child welfare system. Orme and colleagues sum up the urgency of the issue well when they describe foster families as, "…a critical, national resource that is in short supply" ([7], p. 307).

One strategy that has been widely discussed as a best practice for recruiting foster parents is promotion of foster care in local faith-based congregations [8–12]. A report from the Urban Institute found that 32 states had some sort of targeted faith-based recruiting efforts in place to recruit adoptive and/or foster parents [13]. Some state welfare bureaucracies have begun to devote some of their resources toward efforts to partner with individual faith congregations (or consortiums) for the purpose of recruiting families to provide foster care. For example, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services recently launched a program called Congregations Helping in Love and Dedication (CHILD).

Other collaborations with government have been initiated from the faith community side, where religious bodies or para-church organizations have approached child welfare officials to explore how they can become involved in recruiting and supporting foster families. A prime example of such an endogenous effort on the part of the faith community is Project 1.27 in Colorado, which was begun by a consortium of Christian churches that committed to providing adoptive homes for all of the children in the state foster care system for whom parental rights had been terminated. Project 1.27 has been replicated in Arizona and was the basis for a similar program in Arkansas as well. Other examples include the Dallas-Fort Worth Alliance of Adoption and Orphan Care Ministries in the Dallas Fort Worth area, a network of several faith-based congregations working cooperatively to encourage and support adoption and foster care. In Los Angeles, a similar interfaith consortium exists called Faith Communities for Families and Children [14].

Despite the growth of faith-based collaboration in the child welfare system, there is little *evidence-based* research to suggest whether they are successful. (In fact, there is very little research at all that deals with faith-based initiatives in child welfare.) This paper seeks to fill this gap by testing some empirical propositions that have implications for faith-based collaboration in the child welfare system.

This paper provides an empirical examination of the associations between religious motivation for fostering, altruism and various measures of foster family utilization and longevity using data from the National Survey of Current and Former Foster Parents (NSCFFP). After laying the groundwork for understanding the potential importance of the intersections between religiosity and altruism in the specific context of foster care, the next section describes the data from the NSCFFP. The following section presents empirical results examining the relationship between religious motivation and altruism. The paper then turns to an examination of the empirical relationships among religious motivation, altruism and substantive foster home outcomes. The paper then concludes with some insights, policy implications and recommendations for continued work.

2. Religiosity, Altruism and Fostering

Scholars suggest that the parent's motivation for fostering is crucial because it has an impact on outcomes for foster parents and their foster children. In particular, there seems to be widespread agreement that altruistically-motivated foster parents are among the most desirable [15–21].

But what is it about altruistic motivation that makes it such an attractive trait for foster parents? There are several explanations that we find in the literature. Scholars assert that altruism is a desirable attribute for potential foster parents because it may result in greater commitment to, and

hence, longevity in fostering [16,19]. Others propose that parents with altruistic motives are better able to cope with the inevitable difficulties that arise with foster children because their motivation is not solely contingent on circumstances [15].

Motivation theory has been used as a means to explain the importance of altruism. Researchers suggest that intrinsic rewards, such as those that accrue to those who act because they believe they are doing something of value, often will serve to motivate better than extrinsic rewards such as money or personal accolades.

> "…parents who are internally motivated to care for children, whether out of a perceived responsibility to the larger society or their knowledge of the harm that could come to the child if they were to continue living with their families, are more likely to stay with the job of fostering."([19], p. 1140).

Other work echoes this idea of intrinsic motivation. A recent study found that foster parents who stuck with foster care were often motivated by the intrinsic rewards of foster care such as making a difference in a child's life or fulfilling an obligation to society [22]. There also is some empirical support linking altruism and to foster parent quality and satisfaction. One study found that parents with altruistic motivation for fostering were more likely to have received higher ratings by their social worker [16]. Other work found that possession of an altruistic motivation for fostering was associated with higher reported levels of foster parent satisfaction [17], though a recent study of foster parents in Belgium found no relationship between foster parent motives and the number of years spent fostering [23]. It is also important to note that though altruism is seen as a desirable trait for foster parents, it is not all-sufficient. Research reminds us that financial and community supports are also important things to provide to foster parents [24].

Clearly, altruism seems to be a desirable attribute for foster parents to possess, but how does altruism relate to religious motivation? Why would local religious congregations, in particular, be places of interest for recruiting foster families? Other scholarly work has found that pre-service motives for fostering, such as religious motivation, are important determinants for the eventual decision to become a foster parent [25]. However, the specific idea of religiosity and its association with altruistic motives for fostering, though supported in an older study in Australia [18], has not received much attention since. Given the many faith-based collaborations that are appearing in state child welfare systems across the country, a re-examination of the specific effects of religious beliefs on substantive fostering outcomes is certainly warranted.

3. Data

This paper uses high quality survey data from the National Survey of Current and Former Foster Parents. Commissioned in 1990 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, the National Survey of Current and Former Foster Parents (NSCFFP) is the only nationally representative study of current and former foster parents. Before getting into the details of the dataset, it must be acknowledged that these are older data. Scholars have noted that there have been some shifts in the demographic composition of the foster parent population since the 1990s, so that is an explicit limitation in using this database. On the other hand, these are the only nationally

representative data of current and former foster parents, so for the purposes of this study, these data are the best we have available for the research questions posed here.

The actual surveying was carried out in 1991 using a complex multi-stage stratified sample design. In the first stage, states were stratified according to high, medium or low foster payment status and sampled according to child population. Nine states were selected at the first stage. Then counties within the states were stratified by unemployment rate and urbanicity and clustered. From this set of counties, sixteen were selected. In order to make this sample nationally representative, posterior weights were calculated and provided with the NCSFFP [26].

Even when the weights are employed to make the sample nationally representative, the multi-stage stratification design creates clustering and other design effects, which are not taken into account with conventional statistical algorithms. Ignoring these design effects in the calculation of standard errors used in a variety of statistical tests will produce erroneous results. In most cases, employing conventional standard errors (based on the simple random sampling assumption) will tend to underestimate the true variance of a given parameter. The NCSFFP provides jackknife replicate weights which are used to produce accurate standard errors.

This paper uses the Current Foster Parent data file for the analysis. The total unweighted sample for the Current Foster Parent data is 1056 cases. However, because the primary subjects of interest for this paper are family-based foster parents, the analysis is limited to currently licensed, family-based and kinship foster homes, so group homes are excluded from the analysis. After eliminating these, the remaining unweighted sample is 901 cases, although, depending upon the particular empirical application, additional cases were unusable due to missing data on one or more relevant variables.

4. Religious Motivation and Altruism

This section of the paper addresses the first proposition, that religiously motivated foster parents possess a higher incidence of altruism. The NCSFFP provides a menu of 27 possible reasons for fostering, one of which is "religious beliefs". Respondents were able to mark off any (or all) of the 27 reasons if they were pertinent to their own decision to become foster parents. Therefore, many of those that chose religious beliefs as a reason chose other reasons as well. The weighted percentage of respondents that listed religious beliefs as a motivation for fostering is about 13%.

The potential association between religiosity and altruism lends itself to a number of potentially empirically verifiable propositions Do people that foster for religious reasons score more highly on other altruistic motivations for fostering? And, on the flipside, do people that foster for religious reasons also foster for non-altruistic reasons as well? We begin with a straightforward approach, examining the differences in proportions in other reasons for fostering between foster parents who were religiously motivated and those that were not.

As mentioned earlier, the NSCFFP allowed respondents to check off up to 27 different reasons for fostering. Table 1 contains the percentages of respondents that selected each of the other 26 motivations for fostering, stratified by religious motivation. Simple t tests were performed to detect any differences between religiously and non-religiously motivated foster parents.

There are eight motivations where there are statistically significant differences between the groups. A cursory glance at the table reveals that not all of the motivations appear to be altruistic. To fix ideas, the discussion groups the eight motivations where there were statistically significant differences according to their degree of altruism.

There are two motives that stand out as clearly non-altruistic. Notably, the motivations, *child to help with business/chores*, and *wanted to increase family income* were all chosen more frequently by persons with religious motivation. And these differences were statistically significant. This suggests that not all religiously motivated foster parents possess solely altruistic motivations for providing foster care. This is important, for it suggests that there may be a more concentrated core of persons that possess *both* religious motivation and mostly altruistic motives.

Table 1. Reasons for Fostering by Religious Motivation.

Reason for Fostering	Not Religiously Motivated	Religiously Motivated	*t* Statistic
Am related to child	1.97%	4.01%	0.99
Child to help with chores/business	0.10%	4.20%	1.83 *
Companion for myself	12.24%	14.55%	0.58
Companion for own child	15.67%	13.79%	−0.44
Couldn't have children	27.64%	31.00%	0.42
Didn't want to care for infant	5.46%	10.30%	1.54
Foster parenting as a way to adoption	28.21%	34.28%	1.11
Give home to child who would've been in institution	65.52%	79.57%	3.50 ***
Had child who died	3.88%	7.48%	1.43[+]
Knew the foster child or child's family	11.32%	15.72%	1.01
Own children grown, wanted more	25.28%	26.58%	0.21
Single & wanted child	5.93%	6.08%	0.06
Thought child would help marriage	0.52%	3.01%	1.23
Wanted certain type of child	11.39%	19.37%	1.67[+]
Wanted larger family	29.79%	37.94%	1.01
Wanted to adopt, couldn't get child	12.44%	18.64%	1.01
Wanted to be loved by a child	44.75%	35.23%	−1.74[+]
Wanted to care for child, but didn't want permanent responsibility	15.14%	21.30%	1.10
Wanted to fill time	12.48%	15.95%	0.90
Wanted to help child with special problems	63.95%	68.65%	0.69
Wanted to help community/society	51.72%	83.56%	7.80 ***
Wanted to increase family income	5.86%	13.19%	2.02 *
Wanted to provide good home to child	94.14%	96.34%	1.02
Wanted to provide love to a child	95.07%	96.17%	0.45
Was a foster child myself	2.07%	3.81%	0.82
Was abused/neglected myself	7.07%	14.27%	1.49[+]

Note: *t* tests use jackknife standard errors to account for multistage cluster sample design; *** Two tailed $p < 0.01$ **$p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.1$; + One-tailed $p < 0.1$.

The second group of motivations where there are statistically significant differences is somewhat indeterminate in terms of being truly altruistic. Four of the motivations for fostering seem to fit in this "nebulous" category: *wanted certain type of child, wanted to be loved by a child, had child who died,* and *was abused/neglected myself.* For all of these motivations, the statistical evidence is weaker, as all only attain one-tailed significance at the 10 percent level.

Arguably *wanted certain type of* child could be altruistic (if a parents desired a special needs child) or it could be less so if the parent was unwilling to take children unless they had few special needs. While we cannot be sure exactly how altruistic this motivation is, the results show that religiously motivated foster parents are more likely to want a special type of child. Interestingly, religiously motivated foster parents are *less* likely to list *wanted to be loved by a child* as a reason for fostering. Certainly the rationale for why this is so calls for speculation, but perhaps religiously motivated families are less driven by loneliness as a reason for fostering. Moreover, while it would be difficult to make an unequivocal statement that the desire to be loved by a child is non-altruistic, it certainly is less altruistic than other possible motivations. Religiously motivated parents were also more likely to foster because they *had a child who died* or were *abused or neglected myself.* Again, these are not clearly altruistic or non-altruistic, but in both cases religiously motivated parents were more likely to choose these as reasons.

The two reasons for fostering where we see the most significant statistical difference, seem to also be those most clearly altruistic in nature. Just over 79% of religiously motivated foster parents chose the first motivation, *to give a home to a child who would've been in an institution*, which is 14% more than parents who were not religiously motivated. The second motivation, *wanted to help community/society*, also was chosen more frequently by the religiously motivated group, with 83.56% choosing this reason as opposed to only 51.72% of the non-religiously motivated group. The group differences on these last two items are the highest both in absolute magnitude, and in terms of statistical significance, lending support to the proposition that religiously motivated persons will possess altruistic motives for fostering in greater numbers.

Looking beyond simple exploratory analysis of all reasons for fostering, another approach sheds some additional light on the question of altruism. Among the 27 reasons for fostering there are several which seem clearly to be altruistic in nature. Specifically, *Wanted to provide love to a child, Wanted to provide good home to a child, To give a home to a child who would've been in an institution, Wanted to help a child with special problems* and *Wanted to do something for the community/society* all stand out as altruistic. A simple additive index of altruism can be constructed by adding each of these items into a single scale of altruism.

Before proceeding into analysis of the differences in the index, a natural question arises regarding the validity of combining these items into a single index; that is, do all of these reasons for fostering truly reflect a single dimension (*i.e.*, altruism)? We can employ a principal components analysis to investigate this. If the individual items that comprise the scale are multidimensional, a principal components analysis would result in the scale items loading on more than one factor. On the other hand, if all items load on a single factor, we have reason to believe that the scale items are related to a single underlying factor. Table 2 presents the principal component analysis results. A common rule of thumb in principal components analysis is to only retain factors that have an

Eigenvalue greater than or equal to one, and to discard factors that do not meet this threshold [27]; the actual statistical analysis resulted in only one factor with an Eigenvalue greater than one. This confirms that this subset of reasons for fostering is uni-dimensional. Moreover, each of the reasons for fostering in the index has a positive factor loading on this single dimension, showing that they are positively associated with altruism.

Now that we have confirmation of the validity of the additive altruism index using these measures, we can proceed to analyzing how index scores differ by religious motivation. Table 3 compares the values of the additive altruism scale by religious motivation. There are definitely differences between the groups. A much larger relative proportions of non-religiously motivated persons fell on levels two and three of the scale. In contrast, a much larger relative proportion of religiously motivated persons are at levels four and five of the scale. A simple chi square test confirms the basic difference between the groups, yielding a design-adjusted test statistic of 4.23, with a p value of 0.01.[1] Moreover, the mean score on the index for religiously motivated foster parents is larger (4.24) as compared to parents without religious motivation (3.69). And the difference of means is statistically significant ($p = 0.000$).

Table 2. Principal Components Analysis of Altruistic Reasons for Fostering.

Reason for Fostering	Factor Loading
Wanted to provide love to a child	0.688
Give home to child who would've been in institution	0.657
Wanted to help child with special problems	0.629
Wanted to help community/society	0.508
Wanted to provide good home to child	0.718
Eigenvalue	2.074
Percentage of Variance Explained	41.48

Table 3. Altruism Scale by Religious Motivation.

Altruism Score	Not Religiously Motivated	Religiously Motivated
0	2.21%	0.0%
1	3.28%	4.48%
2	12.06%	1.14%
3	19.39%	10.86%
4	31.56%	32.7%
5	31.49%	50.82%
Mean Score	3.69	4.24

Note: Each cell contains weighted cell counts, and within-column percentages in parenthesis below; Design-based chi square = 4.23, $p = 0.01$.

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[1] Though the chi square test confirms a difference between groups, statistically it cannot evidence a clear direction of association. Other measures of association such as the Gamma statistic can show such directional association, but unfortunately, the survey data analysis module in STATA does not offer these other measures of association. A simple alternative is to employ ordered logit regression which is appropriate for an additive index. The independent variable is the presence of religious motivation for fostering, coded as a dummy variable equal to one if religious motivation is present. The coefficient on the religious variable is positive (0.891) and statistically significant ($p = 0.001$), suggesting that religious motivation is positively associated with the altruism index.

In sum, the empirical investigation in this section demonstrates that there are differences in motivation between religiously motivated foster parents and their non-religiously motivated counterparts. Surprisingly, religiously motivated parents were more likely to choose two clear non-altruistic motivations (*child to help with business/chores,* and *wanted to increase family income*). However, the largest and most significant differences in motivation were found in two fairly non-ambiguous altruistic motives: *to give a home to a child who would've been in an institution* and *wanted to help community/society*. In both cases, religiously motivate foster parents were more likely to choose these as reasons for fostering. Moreover, religiously motivated persons had higher scores on the altruism index confirming that religious motivation is positively associated with altruism Taken together, these findings indicate that religiously motivated foster parents are, on average, more likely to possess altruistic motives for fostering. However, this comes with a caveat because there were some religiously motivated parents that had relatively higher incidences of non-altruistic motives as well. This suggests that religious motivation is not *always* coincident with altruism, a finding which turns out to be important when we employ religious motivation for fostering as an independent variable in empirical models.

5. Religious Motivation, Altruism and the Foster Home Outcomes

Knowledge of the association between religious beliefs and other altruistic motivations for fostering is useful, but do religious motivations for fostering translate into actual differences in substantive measures of foster parent utilization and longevity? We now turn to an examination of the relationship between religious motivation, altruism and some measures of foster home utilization and continuation.

Before going into the results themselves, it is necessary to explain how the effects of religious beliefs are modeled empirically here. In running preliminary exploratory models, it was somewhat of a surprise to find that religious beliefs *alone* almost never made a difference. This confirms the findings of earlier work using the NSCFFP, which failed to find any significant relationships between religious motivation for fostering and a variety of foster parent capacity outcomes [20]. Thinking back to the altruism results of the previous section, it became clear why religious motivation alone did not produce any significant result: not all religiously motivated people are altruistic, even though they are, on average, *more* altruistic than persons that are not religiously motivated.

Allport's classic work on the psychology of religion speaks of "mature religion" [28], a concept that has been further distilled and is commonly called *intrinsic religiosity* [29]. Intrinsic religious motivation is seen as more of an end in itself, reflective of a faith that permeates life and is not instrumental. In contrast, *extrinsic religiosity* has been described as one that, "serves an instrumental purpose, providing comfort or social reward, and is compartmentalized in the life of an individual, used as a means toward other ends" ([30], p. 430).[2] Research shows that extrinsic

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[2]   This paper does not even attempt to capture the rich literature on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. And it should be readily acknowledged the intrinsic-extrinsic conceptualization has been the subject of numerous methodological discussions since Allport's original work was introduced (See [29] for an excellent synopsis). Rather, the

versus intrinsic religious motivations matter for attitudes and behavior. In particular, those that possess an intrinsic religiosity have been shown to have a higher level of religious commitment and to have less prejudice. Scholars have also shown that people with extrinsic religious motivation are more prejudiced and are not altruistic [29].

The concept of intrinsic *versus* extrinsic religiosity provides a very useful framework to guide the empirical work in this study. That research shows that not all people with religious belief are altruistic; especially those that possess an intense extrinsic religiosity. This is consistent with the earlier section of this paper, which showed that some people with religious motivation for fostering had some decidedly non-altruistic reasons for so doing.

The concept of intrinsic religiosity can be aptly characterized as a religiosity that is coincident with less selfish motivations. Using the NSCFFP data, what variables could be used to best identify the group that possesses a more altruistic religious motivation? Most of the studies on intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity employ an array of attitudinal questions, but the NSCFFP survey did not focus on religious motivation in detail, it simply allowed respondents to check off "religious beliefs" as one of many possible motivations for fostering. One approach for identifying the subgroup that possesses more of an altruistic religious motivation would be to construct some sort of measure that more clearly demarcates them from the larger group of persons who may be religiously motivated, but are not necessarily altruistic. This is done by means of an *interaction* term of religious motivation and altruism.

The empirical setup for modeling the interaction of religious motivation and altruism requires a bit of explication. To begin, define three dummy variables: the first equal to one if the person fostered because of religious beliefs; the second equal to one if the respondent had a "perfect" altruism score (*i.e.*, selected all five altruistic reasons for fostering); and the third, a dummy variable that is the product of the other two. In other words, the third dummy variable is equal to one if the respondent had religious reasons for fostering *and* a perfect altruism score. Referring back to the altruism index in Table 2, this would be all of the cases with religious motivation and an altruism score equal to 5 in the bottom right hand cell.

The choice of the altruism score equal to 5 is not an arbitrary one. The results from Table 3 show that the *average* score for the religiously motivated group was 4.24. If it really does take an especially high level of commitment to be a successful foster parent, then it makes sense that we would want to isolate the marginal effects for the group with the highest level of commitment. That is, we would want to identify people with an above average altruism score, which in this case would be a perfect score of 5 (*i.e.*, 5 > 4.25). Moreover, Table 2 shows that over 50 percent of the religiously motivated group had an altruism score of five, so this subgroup is not a minority of religiously motivated foster parents.

Use of three separate dummy variables facilitates a nuanced understanding as to how different sources of motivation for fostering operate. In the equation below we can see this more clearly. The coefficient on the dummy variable for religious motivation (α) measures the marginal effect of religious beliefs and the coefficient on altruism (β) measures the marginal effect of altruism.

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intrinsic-extrinsic framework is introduced here as a means for explaining the varied underlying motivations for religiosity and their attendant outcomes as manifest in actual behavior.

Finally, the coefficient on the interaction term (δ) measures the marginal effect of being *both* religious and altruistic. For our purposes, this is the most interesting parameter because it will indicate the effect for the smaller group of foster parents who are religiously motivated and highly altruistic.

$$Total\ Effect\ (TE) = \alpha(Religious) + \beta(Altruism) + \delta(Religious * Altruism)$$

Consider some outcome measure, say, the number of foster children in the home. From an empirical standpoint, if it is true that religious altruists will have "better" foster parenting outcomes, we would expect δ to be positive. Furthermore, the total effect (which is the sum of the marginal effects, ($\alpha + \beta + \delta$) should also be positive, indicating a difference between those that are religious altruists and those that are neither religiously motivated, nor as altruistic.

The empirical analyses report the baseline results, using just the dummy variables described above alongside results that use a more extensive set of control variables used in other applied work [17,31–34]. The results are reported in this way so that we may see how robust the underlying relationships are with the central variables of interest (*i.e.*, religious motivation, altruism and their interaction). The control variables include the year the family began to foster, the mother's age and age squared (to account for eventual dropping out due to aging)[3], dummy variables for mother's race, family income (modeled as a vector of dummy variables)[4], marital status, urbanicity and the generosity of the state's foster payment levels (This last variable mirrors the three payment strata of high, medium and low used in the initial sampling design; low payment states are used as the excluded base case).

Before proceeding to the empirical results, there is one further matter that requires an explanation. As already noted in the previous discussion of the NSCFFP data, the design employed a complex, multi-stage cluster sample. When analyzing such data, traditional statistical methods break down, because they do not take weighting, design and clustering effects into account. The statistical software (STATA) has a series of commands that have been modified especially for complex survey data. Because of the uniqueness of complex survey data, traditional measures of goodness of fit employed with nonlinear models, such as the pseudo-r square, cannot be calculated [35]. However, a modified version of the F statistic can still be computed, providing a test of the null hypothesis that all coefficients in the mode are jointly zero. So, while no pseudo r-squared statistics can be computed (and hence be reported) the modified F statistic is provided in lieu of more traditional goodness of fit measures.

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[3] Father's age could also be used as in [17]. Use of father's age as a regressor comes at a price because it significantly reduce the effective sample size by 170 unweighted observations. Further, because single female headed households would have missing values, using father's age eliminates them from the sample as well. In auxiliary regressions where I used father's age, the coefficients were largely analogous.

[4] The NSCFFP does not have continuous data for income, but reports income as an ordinal variable across several income intervals.

5.1. Empirical Results for Utilization Measures

The first outcomes are basic measures of foster home utilization: the probability that a foster child is currently placed in the home and the total number of foster children currently placed in the home. Given that all parents in this sample are licensed foster parents, they are all *potential* foster homes, but not all homes had a foster child residing in them at the time of the interview. To the extent that there is normally an imbalance of children needing foster homes to available homes, this is a crucial utilization measure. If motivations do have an effect, then religious altruists might be more likely to be actively fostering by having a child in their home.

Table 4 compares the baseline results and those with the control variables for the first utilization measure, the probability that a foster child is currently residing in the home. Both of these models were estimated using logistic regression. The F statistic measuring global goodness of fit is only significant for the full model with controls though many of the individual coefficients are statistically significant.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Results for Presence of Foster Child in Home.

Dependent Variable: Probability that a Foster Child is Currently in the Home	Baseline	Controls Added
Marginal Effect of Religious Motivation (α)	−0.785 [+]	−0.808 [+]
	(0.509)	(0.545)
Marginal Effect of Altruism (β)	−0.279	−0.238
	(0.313)	(0.352)
Marginal Combined Effect of Religious Motivation and Altruism (δ)	1.72 **	1.73 *
	(0.793)	(0.829)
Control Variables	No	Yes
N	729	729
F Statistic	1.58	19.35 **
Linear Combination of Religious Motivation and Altruism (α + β + δ)	0.657 [+]	0.682 *
	(0.383)	(0.365)

Note: Table reports coefficients with jackknife standard errors in parenthesis below; *** Two tailed $p < 0.01$ **$p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.1$; + One-tailed $p < 0.1$.

In both models, the marginal effect of religious motivation is negative, as is the marginal effect for altruism. However, the marginal effect of being both religious *and* altruistic has a statistically significant and positive association with the probability that a foster child is currently in the home (δ is just over 1.7 in both models). To find the total effect for religious altruists, the individual coefficients must be summed. This linear combination of coefficients is reported at the bottom of the table. The linear combination is positive in each case, showing that religious altruists have a higher probability of having a foster child in their homes Using the estimate for the full model with controls of 0.682, this translates into an odds ratio of about 1.98 to 1 (*i.e.*, $e^{0.682} = 1.98$), meaning that the odds for religious altruists having a child in their home are nearly twice those for the base case (non-religiously motivated persons without a perfect altruism score). These results suggest that religious altruists are allowing their homes to be occupied by foster children on a more

frequent basis. Of course, this result may also be picking up the effects social worker selectivity; that is, some social workers may attempt to place foster children in the homes of religious altruists first before trying other homes.

The second measure of utilization is the number of foster children currently in the home. The results for this measure are contained in Table 5. These were estimated using negative binomial regression, which is often used with count data when there are no negative values of the dependent variable.[5]

Table 5. Negative Binomial Regression Results for Number of Foster Children in Home.

Dependent Variable: Number of Foster Children	Baseline	Controls Added
Marginal Effect of Religious Motivation (α)	−0.640 **	−0.656 **
	(0.270)	(0.273)
Marginal Effect of Altruism (β)	−0.126	−0.108
	(0.138)	(0.139)
Marginal Combined Effect of Religious Motivation and Altruism (δ)	1.09 **	1.08 **
	(0.388)	(0.399)
Control Variables	No	Yes
N	729	729
F Statistic	3.87 **	5.87 *
Linear Combination of Religious Motivation and Altruism ($\alpha + \beta + \delta$)	0.32 **	0.317 **
	(0.144)	(0.134)

Note: Table reports coefficients with jackknife standard errors in parenthesis below; *** Two tailed $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.1$; + One-tailed $p < 0.1$.

The results closely resemble those in Table 4: the individual effects of religious reasons for fostering and altruism are negative, but the marginal effect of the interactive term (δ) is positive and statistically significant, again underlining the importance of the two working in tandem. The overall effect for religious altruists (as computed with the linear combination of coefficients, ($\alpha + \beta + \delta$) is again positive and statistically significant; the baseline model result is 0.32 and the full model returns a value of 0.317. In a negative binomial regression the coefficients can be interpreted as the proportional change in the count for a change in the regressor [36]. This can be made even more interpretable by multiplying the coefficient by 100 to get the percentage change. Here the interpretation is that religious altruists are expected to have about 32% (*i.e.*, 0.317 *100) more children in their homes.

In sum, the results for the first set of models show that religious altruists are more likely to have at least one foster child residing in their homes. They also have a greater number of foster children.

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[5] Negative binomial models are preferred over Poisson models when over-dispersion is present in the data. The estimates of the dispersion parameter in the negative binomial regression evidenced the presence of slight over-dispersion. Accordingly, negative binomial regression was used. (The dispersion parameter, ln alpha, was equal to −1.47 in the full model, corresponding to a slight dispersion of 0.23).

This certainly has practical implications given the shortage of family foster homes. It appears that households with religious and altruistic motivations maintain a higher level of utilization.

5.2. Empirical Results for Intent to Continue Fostering

If it is true that religious altruism leads to greater fostering utilization, it also stands to reasons that religious altruists would be more likely to *continue* fostering. The NSCFFP asked all of the current foster parents the question, "Thinking ahead, over the next three years, do you intend to continue as a foster parent?" The response was coded as a dummy variable, equal to one if the answer was yes and zero if no. Therefore a positive regression coefficient would indicate an increase in the probability of continuing as a foster parent and a negative coefficient would indicate an increase in the probability of quitting.

Table 6 reports logistic regression results where the dependent variable is the respondent's stated intent to continue fostering in the next three years. The sample size is slightly smaller (659 *versus* 729) for these regressions because of missing data on the dependent variable. The F statistics for both regressions are very small, suggesting an overall poor fit.

Table 6. Logistic Regression Results for Intent to Continue Fostering.

Dependent Variable: Probability that Foster Parent Intends to Continue Fostering	Baseline	Controls Added
Marginal Effect of Religious Motivation (α)	−0.039	0.076
	(0.436)	(0.459)
Marginal Effect of Altruism (β)	0.153	0.152
	(0.357)	(0.33)
Marginal Combined Effect of Religious Motivation and Altruism (δ)	0.045	−0.126
	(0.942)	(0.893)
Control Variables	No	Yes
N	659	659
F Statistic	0.07	0.51
Total Effect of Religious Motivation and Altruism ($\alpha + \beta + \delta$)	0.159	0.102
	(0.76)	(0.763)

Note: Table reports coefficients with jackknife standard errors in parenthesis below; *** Two tailed $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.1$; + One-tailed $p < 0.1$.

It appears that religious motivation and/or altruism make little difference on intent to continue fostering. There is no statistically significant effect with any of the marginal components or even their linear combination. Of course, intent is not same as an actual decision to quit, so these findings are not definitive. But they certainly show that religious altruists did not have discernibly more expressed motivation to continue as foster parents.

To summarize, the results from the empirical analysis are somewhat mixed. They indicate that homes of religious altruists are more likely to be utilized at a higher rate among all eligible foster parents. Religious altruists are more likely to have a foster child in their home and to have a larger number of foster children. But there was no statistically significant difference between religious

altruists and others in terms of their expressed intent to continue fostering, a finding which fails to confirm the hypothesis that religiously motivated foster parents would have greater longevity as caregivers.

6. Conclusions

This paper has examined the empirical linkages between religious motivation, altruism and fostering. In a time where faith-based collaboration in child welfare systems is on the rise, understanding how and why religious motivations translate into substantive outcomes for foster homes is increasingly important for practitioners in child welfare. The research findings do have some important implications for child welfare practice.

First, though it is clear that religiously motivated parents are more likely to be altruistic, not all parents in this group are altruistic. This finding accords with the literature on extrinsic *versus* intrinsic religious motivation. It also implies that not all faith communities would be ready to engage in long-term child welfare partnerships. Accordingly, care must be taken when selecting faith communities to serve as collaborative partners and in the selection of individual foster caregivers. Perhaps appropriate pilot testing or other incremental steps could be taken by officials on the government side to assure that particular faith communities are indeed ready to serve as faithful long-term partners. In addition, social workers will need to pay close attention to prospective foster parents' motivations for fostering and not merely assume that because religious motivation is present that this equates to altruism.

Second, the association between religious altruism and foster home utilization is a very important one for social work practice. In a time of dwindling resources and greater need for foster families, finding parents in this religious altruist group could be a real boost to the operating capacity of the foster care system.

Third, the lack of association found between religious altruism and intent to continue fostering suggests that motivation by itself may not be sufficient to uphold foster parents over the long haul. This obviates the need for study of other auxiliary systems of support and nurture for foster parents to keep them motivated to serve as caregivers. It could be that some faith communities do, in fact, provide some of those needed supports. More study of the other ways in which faith communities work to support and aid foster parents could yield some interesting insights here.

There are also many questions that this research leaves unanswered and limitations which must be acknowledged. First, what does a religious motivation for fostering really amount to? The NSCFFP only provides the broadest of descriptions. "Religious beliefs" is a fairly sweeping and ambiguous umbrella term that leaves much to be explored—perhaps some religious motivations are different from others. Also, though it is certainly reasonable to propose that we would be more likely to find religiously motivated people in places of worship, we cannot infer much about the types of congregations in which religiously motivated foster parents are found. Are there certain religions or denominations where it is more likely that this group would be found? These questions merit further data collection and investigation.

Second, the NSCFFP represents the only nationally representative foster parent data that we have available, and while the data are high in quality they are more than 20 years old. This calls for

more data collection by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (or others). The findings might change with newer data. The findings here, though significant, undoubtedly will need further validation by scholars elsewhere using different data.

Third, the measures of foster home utilization employed in this research are, at best, an imperfect measure of foster home quality. It could be argued that just because some foster parents are more likely to take in one or more foster children, their motive are not necessarily altruistic. Social worker selectivity might also be at work here: perhaps they send children to certain households because they are less of a hassle for them, for example. Moreover having multiple foster children in a home might arguably decrease the quality of care available to each child (though the care received still might be better than the alternative). And so, while the data do establish a relationship between religious altruism and utilization, the ultimate question of the linkage between religious motivation and foster home quality remains unanswered.[6]

This initial empirical look at faith, altruism and fostering reveals many other intriguing questions in need of further research. For example, how do outcomes with recent faith-based initiatives in the area of child welfare square with the more general empirical associations found here? This calls for in-depth fieldwork on a more national scale. What is motivating local faith congregation members to provide foster care and/or adoption? Are their motives altruistic or not? Are these programs seeing success in terms of greater foster parent capacity and longevity? To conclude, this paper points to some interesting connections between religious motivation, altruism and fostering. Using a nationally representative sample of foster parents, this research provides some initial evidence that foster homes with parents that possess religious and altruistic motives provide a higher level of utilization as caregivers. As interest in foster care and adoption continues to mount from faith-based circles, the findings here suggest that such efforts may bear some fruit. These results point to the promise of further investigation into specific faith-based child welfare initiatives around the country in an attempt to understand if they do offer some unique and innovative potential for the foster care system.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Understanding Personal Change in a Women's Faith-Based Transitional Center

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Abstract: An impressive research literature has emerged that identifies linkages between religion and a wide range of attitudes, behaviors, and life events. We contribute to this literature by exploring how women undergoing difficult life circumstances—such as incarceration, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence, unemployment, and homelessness—use faith to cope with and change these circumstances. To address this issue we analyze semi-structured interviews with 40 residents of a faith-based transitional center for women in the Southern United States. The residents outline a narrative of change in which they distinguish between the "old self" and "new self." The narratives also specify the role of religiosity in facilitating change, the creation of a faith-based identity, and the strategies used for maintaining change. We conclude with implications for faith-based treatment programs, local pastors and religious congregants involved in social outreach ministry, sociology of religion scholars, and policy makers.

Introduction

An impressive research literature has emerged that identifies linkages between religion and a wide range of attitudes, behaviors, and life events. This research suggests that *religiosity*—a cognitive and behavioral commitment to organized religion—may operate as a social force for reducing negative behaviors and for increasing positive behaviors. Many investigators have found that religiosity and religious participation are significantly associated with: interpersonal friendliness, psychological and physical well-being, reductions in criminal and deviant behaviors, marital satisfaction, participation in politics and political movements, and volunteering in community organizations [1-9].

This literature on the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of those with high levels of religiosity in many ways assumes a neutral starting point in life (*i.e.*, non-traumatic or difficult life situations) for members of the general public. Less is known, however, about the role of religiosity in decidedly less sanguine situations. For individuals who find themselves in extreme circumstances, less is known about the role of religiosity in helping them cope with and change these situations. Such information could provide valuable insights into how better to design and implement faith-based rehabilitation programs. Our aim in this study is to determine how women in a faith-based rehabilitation center experience change, what they attribute this change to, and how they intend to maintain this change as they leave the center. More specifically, the key research question is: how do women undergoing difficult life circumstances—including incarceration, drug and alcohol

addiction, domestic violence, unemployment, and homelessness—articulate and maintain faith-based changes in their identity?

Two promising areas of inquiry inform the study of religion as a psychological coping mechanism for a myriad of life circumstances. Over the past two decades many investigators have examined religious coping methods and their implications for health and well-being. They have found that individuals and families often use religion to cope with many health issues, including asthma, cancer, cystic fibrosis, dementia, and surgery [10-16]. Overall, individuals with higher levels of religiosity and religious participation may exhibit greater problem-solving and stress management skills than less or non-religious individuals [17].

An alternative approach to understanding the relationship between religion and difficult life circumstances is to view religion as a social psychological tool for interpreting situations and making sense of one's life and self. The majority of this work is derived from ethnographies or qualitative interviews with individuals from evangelical Protestant backgrounds [18]. Among these religious adherents, there is a focus on having a conversion experience or singular moment of commitment to faith that is "accompanied by substantial changes in attitudes, thoughts, and self-understandings" [22]. This conversion is often conceived of as a "religious epiphany" or as being "born again" [19-21]. Indeed, religious epiphanies often create a shift in how the "saved" individuals define their past and current selves. Religious converts routinely construct a "prosocial narrative identity" that can account for why their prior actions are not true reflections of their core selves and why their present and future actions have new meaning and significance [18,22-24]. The narrative identity integrates disparate and shameful life events into a coherent, empowering whole, which provides converts with hope and a vision for the future. This new outlook is thought to be instrumental in the successful abstinence from drugs and crime and in the promotion of prosocial behaviors.

In terms of the juxtaposition between past and present, reinterpretation of the past among religious converts gives more meaning to the present and often allows them to cope more effectively with a variety of difficult life circumstances, including incarceration, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence, unemployment, and homelessness [23,25,26]. Moreover, religious conversions allow people to portray themselves as being in control of their current and future life directions, regardless of their past. Although they may still excuse their past behavior as being due to uncontrollable sources, their new self-discovery becomes empowering and allows them to uncover a "true self" or "new self" [22].

Although the religious epiphany is seen as a life-changing event, it is only the beginning and not the end of a spiritual journey [22,23,25]. New religious converts are typically counseled by religious leaders to get involved in religious activities to "keep their minds right" [18]. New converts are taught that no matter how bad their lives were prior to conversion, they now have the opportunity to create positive changes in their lives. Thus, research on religious inmates highlights the importance of conversion in creating a new sense of self to cope with prison life [22,24,25].

Despite people's best intentions, however, religious conversions may become less salient over time and fail to foster prosocial behavior, especially in institutional contexts such as jails or prisons. It is not uncommon for people to have an epiphany but then to eventually "backslide" and

return to the "old self" [25]. Kerley and Copes [18] examined this issue among male inmates active in faith-based prison programs. They found that the social support mechanisms of religion were important for allowing inmates to remain focused and to live "righteously" in the prison context. Specifically, they described four themes in the inmate narratives: (1) connecting with positive others while avoiding negative others, (2) practicing religion in a group context, (3) sharing religious faith and content with others, and (4) using "quiet time" to reflect and to chart courses of action.

Building on the work of Kerley and Copes [18], the present study explores how women undergoing difficult life circumstances experience change due to their newfound religious faith. Specifically, we analyze in-depth interviews with 40 residents of a faith-based transitional center to identify the changes they have undergone since arriving at the center, the characteristics of the center they think helped bring about these changes, and their plans for maintaining these pro-social changes once they leave the facility. Doing so will provide insights into how religion can be used in institutional settings such as prisons, halfway houses, and treatment centers.

Research Methods

To achieve our study goals, we conducted 40 in-depth interviews at a faith-based transitional facility for women in the Southeastern United States (hereafter referred to as The Center). In operation since 2002, The Center is an outgrowth of the work of a local parishioner who started with a small scripture study group in a women's prison. The parishioner then worked with the state department of corrections to create a transition program for inmates who were within one year of release. The Center now serves nearly 400 women and children. In addition to inmates still under state supervision, The Center also houses women who are there voluntarily because of drug or alcohol problems, domestic abuse victimization, and economic disadvantage.

We worked with staff members at the facility to recruit participants. Specifically, we asked staff members to make announcements during regular religious services and to post notices that volunteers were sought who were willing to discuss their experiences at the facility. Our only stipulations in recruitment were that volunteers should be at least 19 years old (the minimum age for adult status in the state) and have resided at the facility for at least two months. In compliance with Institutional Review Board guidelines, we informed all participants that the interviews would be conducted with a researcher not affiliated with the prison or state department of corrections, would be completely voluntary and confidential, and would not result in any special rewards for participating or punishments for declining participation.

We scheduled interviews with volunteers over the course of several weeks during the summer and fall months of 2010. All participants received oral and written summaries of the research project and were then asked to sign a consent form. We interviewed a total of 40 residents at The Center. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to investigate how women undergoing difficult life circumstances (including incarceration, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence, unemployment, and homelessness) articulate and maintain faith-based identities that allow them to reinterpret their past lives, give meaning to their current lives, and offer hope for the future. Each interview began with a discussion of the events leading to their admission to The Center.

Interviewees were then asked to describe the religious and educational programs at The Center and how they were able to adjust to the facility. In particular they were asked about how they had changed since admission to The Center and whether the religious programs played a part in that change. Interviewees were then asked to describe the current and previous difficult situations they encountered and whether religion helped them to cope with these situations. Each interview ended with a discussion of the future for each resident. Interviewees were asked about their prospects for the future and what role their faith and The Center would play in accomplishing their goals and avoiding further negative situations.

The interviews were semi-structured to avoid imposing artificial concepts and categories on residents, thereby letting participants speak freely using their own terminology. The interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and were audio-recorded with permission of each participant. Trained personnel transcribed all interviews, replacing identifying information (e.g., names) with aliases. Volunteers received $20 upon completion of the interview. This amount was chosen because it was enough to encourage cooperation, but not enough to coerce participation. It is also consistent with previous remunerations in similar types of research [26].

To ensure inter-rater reliability, all investigators read each transcript to identify common themes. The team then convened to determine the overarching themes that had been identified by all. Initially the relevant, predetermined research issues were broadly coded into "nodes" or categories. This broad coding scheme left a great deal of scope for a more detailed analysis directed toward establishing "within issue" variations from one concept to the next. We carried out this analysis by reading the text for each category and, for each one, creating sub-categories that captured distinctions recognized by the participants themselves as important.

The median age of those interviewed was 30.5 and ages ranged from 19 to 66. The racial composition was 82.5 percent White and 17.5 percent African American, which is consistent with the racial make-up of The Center. Nearly half of the interviewees had not yet completed a high school degree, and almost 60 percent worked full or part time prior to admission to The Center. On average interviewees reported approximately two felony arrests and one felony conviction. Among those arrests, nearly 60 percent were for drug offenses, about 20 percent were for property offenses, and only about 10 percent were for violent offenses. One quarter of interviewees were currently or previously incarcerated. About 80 percent of interviewees had been physically abused as children or adults, and about 60 percent had been sexually abused. Finally, for religious background, half of the interviewees attended church once per week or more as youths. Of those who attended church, nearly all were affiliated with a Protestant congregation, and about 75 percent attended a Baptist congregation. All but four interviewees reported a conversion or "born again" experience at some point in their lives. This level of exposure to and participation in evangelical Christian religion among interviewees was consistent with the religious background of all residents of The Center.

Making Claims of Change

Consistent with the work of Kerley and Copes [18] and Maruna *et al.* [22], we found that residents tended to redefine their past and current lives in terms of when they entered The Center. Most women offered a chronological narrative where coming to the Center was the start of a new period

in their lives. It was here that their "clock was reset" or that their "time started over." Throughout the narratives, participants made clear distinctions between the "old self" and the "new self."

Although the articulation of this change and its manifestations varied widely, there appeared to be unanimity in residents' claims that they made important changes in their lives. For the majority of them, the most important change they experienced while at The Center was an increase in self-respect and self-worth. This was the case especially for women who had been in prison. As Ellen noted, "The Center has helped me in so many ways. I feel like I am no longer just a piece of trash. No matter what anybody says to me I know that I am a woman of God now, and nobody can take that away from me." Beulah said that besides the physical bondage of prison, "I was in bondage within myself. I really hated life. I didn't feel worthy. I felt like I'll never amount to much of anything." Then asked whether this view of self had changed since coming to the facility, she replied, "Oh yeah, I've definitely overcome that. I love me!" Many residents claimed that The Center's concept of creating "women of God" gave them much-needed self-worth and empowerment to take control over their circumstances.

Some of the women claimed that they did not care about themselves or others before they began their treatment at the facility. Avita noted, "I've been here over a year and it's taken five relapses and getting kicked out for me to realize that I need to change. So I guess in the last two months I feel myself changing, because I just recently came back." When asked how she knew she had changed given this history of relapse, Avita explained:

> I can feel my heart softening. I'm not as quick to mouth off at someone. 'Cause I had a really bad attitude. I didn't care. I thought the world hated me and I hated the world, so I would just go off on people and it was one of my downfalls. If someone would look at me wrong I would say something. And now it just rolls off my back like water.

Similarly, Ursula summarized her ongoing change by noting that "I was hateful. I hated everyone and I can't say I'm completely over it, because I've only been here three months. But now I walk around smiling and talking to everybody. It's definitely softened my heart I guess you could say."

Beyond mere claims of change, it is important to explore the types of change described by residents. We found significant variation in the narratives concerning the type of change experienced. We categorized these changes as (1) spiritual, (2) emotional, and (3) social/behavioral. All interviewees claimed at least one of these types of change, and the large majority reported at least two. We begin with change linked to the faith-based mission of the facility.

Spiritual Change

One of the primary goals observed at the facility was challenging residents to become women of God. Although spiritual conversion, especially among evangelical Protestant adherents, typically is treated as a singular or epiphanous moment [27], most residents noted that their spiritual change was a gradual process. Failen's account of gradual spiritual change is illustrative:

> God works on you from the inside out. He doesn't do like an extreme makeover on you, you know what I am saying? Let's color your hair and put on some makeup and some new

> clothes and you are straight, it doesn't work like that. He is going to take you and try to work on you with your dirt on the inside—get all them skeletons out of your closet.

Hartley claimed that her change was linked to adopting a different view of a higher power. Instead of viewing God as distant and uncaring, she shifted to "believing that there's not nothing He can't do. You putting your all to Him, waking up every day praising God that you're here for another day."

In some cases residents admitted that because of their difficult circumstances, they had either abandoned their faith or believed that a higher power had abandoned them. This was the case particularly for victims of domestic violence. Patricia noted that "I never thought I would have faith again I really didn't. … Now it's like I have this awesome relationship with God." Moreover, nearly all of the women interviewed claimed that this newfound spiritual change was what allowed their growth and fostered their improvement in self-worth and self-respect. It was the foundation upon which all other pro-social change was built.

Emotional Change

Despite the faith-based nature of The Center, residents seemed to understand the comprehensive nature of the facility and how changes other than spiritual ones were an important part of the experience. Many interviewees explained how they were better able to manage their emotions during their treatment at The Center. Delia contended that: "You have to have love, patience, and humility, and that's something you have to have in everything you do." Although these attributes may have a spiritual root, residents came to view them as important apart from their faith. Keira provides the best in-depth summary of the broader changes she experienced while at the facility:

> I know I have a purpose in life now. Before, I thought I wasn't worth anything anymore. Basically, just lost my drive in life. … I was still a parent that was there but I wasn't the parent I wanted to be. You understand what I'm saying? I had dealt with a lot of health issues too and struggled with that. So now just with getting my medication and stuff corrected, and getting my relationship with God back in order. My relationship with my family has never been better. You know, all around just everything is better.

Others claimed that The Center helped them to adopt a different perspective that prioritized God and others, which helped them overcome their struggles due to their own selfishness. Candice summarized the issue this way:

> Well, for me, I knew about everything, but I was only living for me and my addiction. Once I opened myself up in here with what they were trying to drill in me with every class that I took was that if I didn't change my heart then it didn't matter because I wasn't going to be able to keep my sobriety unless I become a different person. So I started praying to God and eventually it was like I had a real relationship with him. Once that happened I just felt like a different person, I know that I'm not the same person I was when I got here.

Social/Behavioral Change

As we asked residents about the constituent elements of being women of God, we observed that they were taught both inward and outward manifestations. Beyond the spiritual and emotional changes that are internal, residents claimed important external changes in broad areas such as interpersonal relationships, lifestyle preferences, recreation, and attire. Some women noted change in their overall appearance, attire, and preferences. Quincy noted that "when I think of a woman of God I think of [the difference between] secular music and praise and worship music. I think of cursing and not cursing. I think of carrying yourself not trashy. You know, [being] respectful."

Many residents noted a significant improvement in the way they interacted with others. Anya stated that that "now I respect anybody I talk to, because they respect me as well. You got to give respect to get respect. And just before, I would just not even talk to anybody, and if I did I was snappy with them, and just rude. And I see how wrong that was." Lucy recalled a recent telephone conversation where her change in interaction style was evident: "I called my lil' girl's father the other day and I was like, 'hello, hey how are you doing,' and he was like, 'um are you alright?' I was like, 'yeah!' And I said, 'why you say that?' [And he said,] 'because you not hollerin', screamin,' and cursin.'"

Others observed not only changes in the quality of their interpersonal relationships, but also in the quantity. Felicity, for example, claimed to seek out more conversations with others, especially with those whom she knew were also dealing with difficult issues. She claimed that "My outlook on everybody else's life and what they've gone through, it's just changed. I'm not so stuck up anymore. I'll talk to people because you realize people just need someone to talk to sometimes."

Identifying the Center's Role in Their Change

Religious Emphasis

When asked how The Center played a role in their changes, residents routinely attributed it to the faith-based courses, chapel services, and small-group scripture studies. This is not surprising given the overarching emphasis on religious change at the facility. Keira claimed that the facility taught her the primacy of a relationship with a higher power. She noted that "The Center is who helped me to understand how important it is for my relationship with God. And how to be a healthy functioning, living adult." Carrie added that the programs "help me keep my connection with God. It keeps me on my toes. That and reading my Bible and studying the Word."

The majority of residents described the faith-based approach of the facility as saturation. Roberta explained life in the facility in this way: "[This place] helped me, yeah, because all they talk about is a spiritual program and all you hear when you walk around the hall is Christian music all the time. And the classes [are] spiritual and the people that come talk to us and the people that do the classes, they talk to you and break it down to you." Lydia reports a similar experience at the facility:

> Always you learning about the Bible, you know, you always learning about the Bible. You can walk around and you gonna learn about the Bible, but then you're learning about

yourself and other people and how to treat people. And you learning how to be a successful person after [you leave] this place and they tell you little things in that the Bible that, you know, correspond with your life.

Resources

Although The Center identifies itself principally as a faith-based treatment center, it was clear from the narratives that there are numerous secular resources emphasized as well. Residents are required to enroll in educational and vocational courses while at The Center. These courses were offered by licensed instructors and topics included: GED preparation, accounting, computers, life skills, child care, and drug treatment. For residents there on a voluntary basis, failure to attend a minimum number of courses could mean being asked to leave the facility. While completing their coursework, residents were linked with local businesses and required to work at least on a part-time basis. Through donations of time and materials from local professionals, The Center also operated a health and dental clinic, counseling center, day care center, and styling salon. After graduation in 9–12 months, the facility assisted residents in obtaining independent housing, insurance, driver's licenses, and full-time jobs. The Center's determination to change women's lives through faith and education was reflected in their promotional materials, in which they claim: "We refuse to be called a 'half-way house,' because there is nothing 'half-way' about it. This is a 'whole-way program.'" Helen described the resources available during her time in this way:

> When I came by I had no birth certificate, no ID, no social [security card] so they help with all that like doctor everything you need they schedule to get you back on the right track you know before you start working you know so you won't have to miss work. … They help you. They take you to your appointments. Everything you need is right here. You wanna go to college it's right here. You need to get on a computer we have a computer lab. Everything is in this building that you need we got career closet if you don't have interview clothes.

Social Support

In our analysis of the change narratives, it became apparent that a religious conversion was not in and of itself sufficient to bring about lasting change for the women. They recognized that they needed the support of others if they were to keep on the right track in their difficult situations. The narratives suggested that they relied on various social support mechanisms to keep themselves focused and inspired. In particular, they found it helpful to seek out assistance from others and to increase their social networks [28,29]. Felicity described the inspiration derived from interacting with women from similar backgrounds: "It was cool to see people. [then] you know you're not the only one that's been through this. 'Cause that's kinda how I felt. I felt like, you know, you start feeling like, God why'd you let this happen to me? But other girls have been through it to. So it was nice to see that." Beatrice recounted the uplifting nature of fellow residents during times of sadness and depression: "The other day I was just so sad. I was depressed and cryin' and every

time I turn around somebody tellin' me you're gonna be okay you just pray, just to have hope and faith. I mean, that helps you out a lot."

False Starts and Returns to the Center

For all of the narratives of success in transitional and rehabilitation centers often heard from facilities across the United States, the majority of narratives end with relapse and hopelessness. In making claims of substantive conversions, residents seemed cognizant of the fact that change is difficult and that many in the general public are doubtful of the possibility of dramatic change, especially among those who have served time in prison and have drug and alcohol problems. Skeptics abound of "jailhouse conversions" and sudden instances of individuals "finding religion" while experiencing stressful life events [18,22,30-33]. Residents of The Center seemed aware that their chances for success were in some cases a "long shot," and would be diminished with each relapse. Nevertheless, they seemed intent on their key goals of sobriety, responsibility, and faith. Tara explained that "I already been here before about two years ago but just like I said was coming for the wrong reasons. It really saved my life. I got saved and got baptized… I'm really tryin' to change my life for the better cause the way I was living, it's just not the way to live." Our interviewees seemed to address these criticisms directly, but not in a defensive manner as might be anticipated. In one sense they routinely praised The Center for its role in their recovery, yet made it clear that the only change they could explain and justify was their own. Almost on a quest to prove the skeptics wrong, Felicity noted, "I was a completely different person when I first came in here. I wanna show that girls here, they can change."

Delia shared a unique account of a cycle of short-term success followed by major relapse. She experienced multiple stints in prison and in various drug treatment facilities with only short periods of sobriety, but claimed that The Center had "broken the cycle." She explained that "If it was not the love and support that I had here I would not have come back, and if I would've come back, I wouldn't have come back clean. This is the first time that I've ever dealt with anything [in my] life that I've been clean."

Maintaining Their Change

Despite people's best intents, conversions may become less salient over time and fail to foster prosocial behavior. It is not uncommon for inmates to have an epiphany but eventually "backslide" and resort to their prior selves or the "old me" [25]. Thus, we thought it important to ask participants how they planned to maintain this change. Nearly all of the participants said they "knew" they would be successful because it was "God's will" for them to succeed. They did acknowledge, however, that they must take an active role in their recovery. Their primary strategies for staying straight were to avoid negative influences and to seek positive ones.

Residents at The Center often described their lives as a daily struggle between "Godly" and "worldly" influences. Many noted the difficulties of being a woman of God when faced with major temptations from the outside world. They believed that it was important for their transformations that they avoid any temptations, and often had very strict standards for conduct, language, and

relationships as a result. This approach is consistent with the important work of Iannaccone [34], who found that strict behavioral standards in fundamentalist congregations often fostered a stronger sense of accountability, identity, and cohesion than congregations with more open standards.

When asked what, if anything, she tried to avoid, Cordelia answered, "[I avoid] peoples, places and things. My old people, old places, old things, and old habits. … I had a friend in here, on her cell phone she has a song called "White Bricks"—that's talking about cocaine. Since I've heard that as her call tone on her phone, I don't associate with her now." Meredith provided a unique framework for maintaining a faith-based identity as she faced temptations. She stated repeatedly, "I don't even speak death. I don't do it." She elaborated on her future, "I'm gonna accomplish my goals. That's speaking that life thing, you know. You don't speak death. I'm not gonna start getting that doubt in my head. No, ma'am. I'm gonna succeed. I'm gonna reach my goals, and that's all I have to say about that." It was clear that her goal was to be so focused on her faith and newfound commitment to a drug-free and crime-free lifestyle that she would not even entertain the possibility of another arrest or relapse.

The other side of the coin observed from the narratives was the importance of associating with the "right people." As is typical among evangelical Protestant adherents, residents placed a strong focus on surrounding themselves with religious others. They believed that if they could surround themselves with other women of God, they would be less likely to end up at the facility again. Residents discussed their desires and attempts to rekindle dampened relations and to develop new ones with like-minded others who could provide positive support and encouragement. Asked her plans upon leaving The Center in a few weeks, Felicity noted, "I need a support group. And I wanna make sure I find the right support group [after I leave]. I don't wanna fall back into wanting a man to live with and stuff like that, but I think The Center has helped tremendously." This quote is reminiscent of Severance's [35] findings from her interviews with women about to be released from prison. Just as in that study, our interviewees understood that their main hope of success in the outside world was to have "somebody in my corner."

Discussion and Conclusions

The study of religion as an academic discipline is a rather recent development in colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. Beginning in about the 1960s, researchers from social science backgrounds (predominately sociology) have studied religion as a social force that may impact a wide range of individual and societal outcomes. Researchers from this sociology of religion tradition have studied the impact of religion on topics such as community involvement, coping with difficult life events, crime, drug use, environmental concern, family, health and mortality, interpersonal relations, political attitudes, psychological well-being, public life, and racial attitudes. A consistent finding is that religiosity operates as a social force for reducing negative behaviors and for increasing positive behaviors [1-9]. Historically, these studies have used quantitative methodologies such as surveys of the general public and of religious congregants, but increasingly investigators are using in-depth interviews, participant observation, and content analysis [e.g., 18,22].

To add to this growing body of literature that explores the lived experiences of participants, we interviewed women in a faith-based transitional facility about how they have changed for the better since their arrival. Overall, these women claimed that they had changed dramatically as The Center allowed them to become new people and to distance themselves from their old selves. By providing them with religious classes, social support, and social resources, The Center allowed them to develop a sense of self-worth and self-respect. Although the women noted many difficulties and poor choices in their lives prior to entering The Center, their level of exposure to and participation in evangelical Christian religion was extensive. As a result, they seemed well-acquainted with religious narratives of redemption and change. They attributed their ability to grow spiritually, emotionally, and behaviorally to The Center's emphasis on religion. In addition, they believed strongly that they would be able to maintain this conversion because with "God on their side" they would be able to avoid negative influences and to sustain or build positive ones. In short, their ability to become new people and to maintain this identity was due to their restored or newfound faith in God, which was fostered by their stay at The Center.

Our study contributes to the growing literature on how religiosity operates as a social force to reduce antisocial attitudes and behaviors and to increase pro-social attitudes and behaviors. We find that change is a combination of self-motivation, social support, and religion. Specifically, our study contributes to the sociology of religion literature in three ways. First, we extend the literature on how religion may be used as a mechanism for coping and changing difficult life circumstances. Investigators who study religious coping methods and their implications for health and well-being typically have used psychological theories and quantitative methodologies in their research. We use an alternative approach to understanding the relationship between religion and difficult life circumstances by viewing religion as a social-psychological tool for reinterpreting situations and for creating new identities.

Second, we chose as our research site a faith-based transitional center for women. This facility is unique in that its residents include women completing terms of incarceration with the state department of corrections, as well as those there on a voluntary basis because of drug and alcohol issues, socio-economic issues, and domestic violence victimization. Despite the clear faith-mission of the facility, it also operates intensive educational and vocational training programs. Scarce academic research exists on women's transitional centers, especially on those with a faith-based emphasis. In contrast to the use of psychological theory and quantitative methodologies in previous research, we employ social psychological theories and a qualitative methodology in this study. Doing so allows us to understand the "lived experience" of dealing with difficult life circumstances and time spent at a women's transitional center.

Third, our findings have important implications for identity research and narrative theory [18,22,23,25]. Consistent with the work of Maruna [22,25], the new faith-based identities of women residents of The Center may be associated not so much with being a certain type of person, but with engaging in a spiritual struggle. This perspective may illuminate the concept of being "born again" and may help to make sense of how identity work and evangelical Protestant traditions may coalesce to help individuals attempting to be reformed. Put another way, the women are not claiming that they are finished being "reborn" or transformed, but that they are better

prepared for the ongoing struggles of their lives. In this way, the backsliding of the past is recast as part of that spiritual struggle that is likely to continue [22,25].

Although our focus in this study was on the experience of change in a faith-based transitional center, our findings may have implications for understanding the impact of secular treatment centers as well. If faith-based programs can help individuals experiencing difficult life circumstances to create and sustain positive identities through social support mechanisms, it may be that educational, vocational, and therapeutic programs work in much the same way. Interviewees from our study appear to value the positive relationships created in religious programs as highly as the religious content of those programs. Future research might determine whether residents of secular treatment facilities who participate in educational or vocational programs feel similarly about the importance of making positive connections with their teachers and program sponsors. If that were the case, it would follow that all any treatment program designed to bring about cognitive transformation would benefit from an enhanced focus on social support.

As with any qualitative study using a non-random sample, readers must be careful to avoid generalizing our results to all residents of faith-based treatment facilities or to women undergoing difficult life circumstances. Although we might anticipate similar results in other regions of the United States with a similar concentration of women from evangelical Protestant backgrounds, additional research would be needed to confirm this. Future research might include studies of transitional centers in regions with a different configuration of faith traditions. Our hope is that sociology of religion scholars will continue to conduct research on identity, religiosity, and faith-based prison programs.

Acknowledgements

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Who is in Control? How Women in a Halfway House Use Faith to Recover from Drug Addiction

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Abstract: Religious adherents from most major faith traditions struggle in balancing their individual agency with divine leadership. While this issue of individual *versus* divine control is complex for those in free society, it becomes even more so when applied to those in correctional and treatment settings. For those attempting to recover from drug addiction, a common conclusion is that drugs have taken control of their lives, thus it is necessary for them to reclaim control. Via a narrative analysis of semi-structured interviews with 30 former drug addicts residing in a faith-based halfway house for women, we explore how the women make sense of losing control of their lives due to their drug use, but then being taught to regain control by surrendering to a higher power. We find strong evidence of Deferring and Collaborative religious coping styles and these coping styles structure how the women discuss the future and their strategies for success.

1. Introduction and Theological Background

Religious adherents from most major faith traditions struggle in balancing their individual agency with divine leadership. For those from Christian faith backgrounds, God's role in their lives has been the subject of much discussion among theologians, ministers, and lay members. The overarching question appears to be how God and the individual coexist to direct attitudes and behaviors. On the one hand, there is a clear Scriptural mandate to have a short-term and God-dependent mindset. This lengthy passage from Matthew's Gospel often is quoted among those who adopt this God-driven approach to life:

> Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry

about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6: 25–34, New International Version).

On the other hand, there is a clear imperative for people of faith to work hard, to be responsible, and to be focused. The Apostle Paul, for example, details the importance of adherents "running the race" and working diligently in all activities to the best of their abilities. Perhaps the exemplar in Paul's epistles of the need for individual agency among believers is found here:

> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (I Corinthians 9: 24–27, New International Version).

If this issue of individual *versus* divine control is complex for those in free society, it becomes even more so when applied to those in correctional and treatment settings. For those attempting to recover from drug addiction, a common conclusion is that drugs have taken control of their lives, thus it is necessary for them to reclaim control. The exact method for reclaiming control may vary by treatment program, but the end goal typically is for individuals to transition from external control (*i.e.*, drugs) to internal control (self). Well-known drug treatment programs often emphasize reclamation of self and individual control of life [1]. However, adding the additional complexity of turning control over to God may create conflict and confusion among those attempting to recover from drug addiction.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Background

The difference between internal and external locus of control was first distinguished by Rotter [2], who conceptualized internal control as perceiving an event to have occurred due to personal behavior or characteristics, while external control is attributed to luck, chance, fate, others, or other unpredictable and complex forces. Levenson [3] then separated the concept of external control into two categories: attribution of events to powerful others and attribution of events to chance. Because attribution to a higher power was not included in previous work, Welton and colleagues [4] added a new dimension they called the "God locus of control".

To explore the issue of how recovering drug addicts make sense of external and internal control of their lives in light of a divine other, first we review social scientific studies of how religion can be used to cope with difficult life circumstances. In this literature, researchers find consistently that religiosity, which is the cognitive and behavioral commitment to religion, often operates as a social force to increase prosocial behaviors and to decrease negative ones. Religiosity often has a significant impact on prosocial outcomes among those in free society, such as psychological well-being, health and wellness, and marital happiness [5–8]. Researchers report also that in prison environments,

religiosity may decrease the likelihood of arguments, fights, assaults, and other deviant behaviors among inmates [9–13].

Religious coping in the context of drug treatment remains a somewhat controversial topic because an internal locus of control may been seen as preferable for recovery. Indeed, well-known drug treatment programs tend to emphasize a stronger internal locus of control [1]. Programs with faith-based components, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), have been criticized on the basis that participants are more likely to develop external loci of control as opposed to other programs focused only on recovery [14]. However, spirituality has been found to increase confidence in recovering drug users [1] and to decrease external attributions for past drug use or future relapses [15]. Welton [4] classified a God locus of control as being neither exclusively internal nor external in nature, and thus not inherently disadvantageous. He found that advantages in coping skills were associated with either internal or God loci of control, hypothesizing that having both would provide the greatest benefit.

Pargament [16] agreed that religious coping was neither exclusively internal nor external in nature and provided strong empirical evidence that religion may serve as a positive coping mechanism for individuals dealing with a wide range of deleterious life circumstances, including divorce, unemployment, depression, illness, loss of loved ones, and war service [17–21]. In addition to highlighting the salutary benefits of religious coping, Pargament and colleagues [16,19] created a typology of three distinctive styles of religious coping and problem-solving: (1) *collaborative*, (2) *deferring*, and (3) *self-directing*. First, the collaborative coping style is one in which God and the individual are in partnership (*i.e.*, internal locus of control and God locus of control). This approach was found by Pargament *et al.* [16] to be the most common religious coping style. Second, in the deferring coping style, the individual defers the responsibility of problem-solving to God (*i.e.*, God locus control and external locus of control). The individual holds a passive role, while God takes an active role. Third, the self-directing style is one in which individuals take an active role, while God plays a passive role. As one participant interviewed by Pargament *et al.* [19] explained: "God put me here on this earth and gave me the skills and strengths to solve my own problems." With this coping strategy, the individual exhibits an internal locus of control, while also forgoing a God locus of control.

Regardless of the specific style used or the problem to be solved, religious coping at its core implies that individuals have ceded some level of control of their lives to a higher power. In the United States this could be a significant challenge given the cultural focus on autonomy, self-support, independence, and hard work. A drug recovery strategy centered on regaining control of one's life by ceding control to a higher power may seem counter-intuitive; however, there appears to be a clear basis in Scriptures for such a strategy. In Matthew's Gospel (16: 24–25), for example, he recounts a puzzling admonition from Jesus to his disciples: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." Matthew reports another conversation in which Jesus said, "Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it" (10:39). Thus, in this paper we explore how former drug addicts residing in a faith-

based halfway house make sense of losing control of their lives due to their drug use, and then being taught to regain control by surrendering to a higher power.

3. Data and Methods

To address the key issues described above, we conducted semi-structured interviews with residents of a faith-based halfway house for women (hereafter called The Center). The facility was located in the Southern United States, and housed over 400 women who were on "supervised release" from prison, on court-ordered probation for drug offenses, or who admitted themselves voluntarily. Our research team members worked with staff members at the facility to solicit volunteers for the study. Staff members at The Center posted notices that volunteers were sought who were willing to discuss their drug addictions. Our study criteria were that volunteers had a history of illicit drug addiction and were at least 19 years old, which is the minimum age for adult status in that state.

In compliance with Institutional Review Board protocol, we informed all participants that the interviews would be conducted with a researcher not affiliated with a prison or state department of corrections and would be voluntary and confidential. The interviews were semi-structured to allow the women to speak openly using their own terminology and so that the researchers could ask relevant follow-up questions as needed. Participants received $20 upon completion of the interview. This amount was chosen because it was enough to encourage participation, but not so much as to create undue influence for participation. It is also consistent with remunerations in similar types of research [22–24].

We interviewed a total of 30 residents of The Center. Most interviews lasted 40–60 min and were audio-recorded with the permission of each participant. Trained personnel transcribed all interviews and replaced identifying information with aliases, which we use in this paper to maintain confidentiality of the interviewees. To ensure inter-coder reliability, all investigators read each transcript to identify common themes. Our team then convened to identify emergent themes and were careful to move forward only with those themes articulated by the participants and agreed upon by the team. We completed the analysis by reading the text for each category and, for each one, we created subcategories that captured distinctions recognized as important by the participants.

The median age of participants was 39.5 years, and the age range was 19 to 56. The racial composition for the women was 7 African American, 22 White/Caucasian, and 1 Native American/American Indian. Seventy percent of the women had a high school degree or higher, and among those about one quarter had some college credit or beyond. Just over half worked full- or part-time jobs prior to admission, and their average income was under $20,000. In terms of criminal history, on average, interviewees reported four misdemeanor arrests, one felony arrest, and one felony conviction. Among those with felony arrests, drug offenses by far comprised the largest category. Although the demographics of our sample are similar to those for all residents of The Center, generalization to the entire population is not advisable given the non-probabilistic sample.

All but two of the women in our sample reported former abuse or addiction of drugs or alcohol. This is representative of the Center, in which about 85–90 percent of residents have a history of drug addiction. The most commonly abused drugs were methamphetamine (8 out of 30), crack or

powder cocaine (10 out of 30), or opiates, typically in pill form (10 out of 30). In the past, the women reported feeling "out of control" due to their drug use. The women attributed their past struggles either to external factors (e.g., drug addiction, the influence of others, or negative situations) or to internal factors (e.g., selfishness or poor decisions), which indicated differences in their loci of control. The women most commonly attributed their drug addiction to external factors. This drug addiction, as well as the influence of others and bad situations, was thought to have taken control of their lives and was to blame for most of their problems. However, this was their account of their past lives. Their current loci of control certainly had changed during their experience at the faith-based halfway house.

4. Introduction to Thematic Sections

Prior to entering The Center, the interviewees described how external forces—namely drug addiction, the influence of others, and socioeconomic disadvantage—controlled their lives. Particularly in the case of drug addicts, it was difficult for them to establish an internal locus of control or any sense of autonomy. Now working to reclaim their lives in The Center, most of the interviewees believed they would not go back to the same "out of control" lifestyles they had before their arrival.

The women used common narratives to explain their transition, and, typically, the women gave several reasons for their transformation. Most of the women described a feeling of being ready for or wanting to change. Oftentimes the women described hitting "rock bottom" and realizing that they could not fall any lower. Occasionally, others had an influence on the women's decision to change, either through seeing the successful lives of other recovered addicts or wanting to change for others (e.g., children and family members). As Jasmine explained, "if we were able to get clean for ourselves, we would've never damaged our health like we did… So doing it for somebody, to me… it makes it more worthwhile." Yet, the most commonly used reason for their transition out of drug addiction was not a relationship with others, but with God. Indeed, God was credited for the transition away from drugs for 25 of the 30 interviewees.

Nearly all of the interviewees considered themselves Christian converts, although some did not believe in God before coming to The Center. A few still doubted the existence of God, but the Center undoubtedly had an effect on the women's religious beliefs. Residents attended mandatory daily devotions and religious services, as well as classes on religion. Even in The Center's educational classes, staff members used a faith-based approach to the study of parenting, child rearing, employment, drug addiction, and crime.

The interviewees used their Christian belief system, newfound for many of the women, as their key approach for framing the problems and temptations they would face after release. The temptation to go back to their old lifestyles of crime and drug use was great, and it was important for the women to have some basis for resisting temptations and for solving problems. In short, the women claimed that they needed a way to prevent being "out of control on drugs" once again after release from the halfway house.

Yet, rather than being taught to take control of their own lives, the women instead were taught to cede control to a loving God. What appears to happen, then, is that women in the faith-based

halfway house are taught to transition from control by one external force (drugs) to control by another external force (God). This manifested itself in different religious coping styles utilized by the women in our sample. We found evidence for two of Pargament's [16,19] styles of religious coping (deferring and collaborative). The women held differing views about surrendering control to God *versus* relying on one's own actions and autonomy. In addition, several of the women seemed to still be transitioning to or in conflict with these views. These women, whom we refer to as conflicted or as "wrestling with God", did not employ a collaborative or deferring view.

In what follows we describe the deferring, collaborative, and conflicted religious coping styles identified in our interviews. We illustrate each coping style with a narrative example, and then present an analysis of emergent themes among participants with each style. Our format is consistent with other narrative work in criminology [25], and a narrative approach has been identified as valuable when studying the meaning of religious experience [26].

5. Deferring to God

Thirteen of the 30 interviews articulated a religious coping style generally consistent with Pargament *et al.*'s [16,19] deferring style. For these women, the relationship between God and themselves was not a partnership. Rather, the women conceived of a God who was all-powerful and had complete control over their lives. These women saw themselves as playing a passive role in controlling their lives, while God took an active role. Topanga explained the deferring style this way: "I just sit there and do, not what Topanga wants to do, but do what God wants [me] to do." Similarly, Sierra commented, "The only way I'm gonna live life in the fast lane is with God driving cause life in the fast lane didn't get me anywhere. Got me a lot of fines to pay, a lot of bail money. It got me nowhere. But this time, Jesus got the wheel."

Such a perception of God shaped the way that the deferring women made sense of their recovery. The recovery narratives described by these women all took a similar structure and reflected the submissive nature of their relationship with God. Like the other interviewees, the deferring women had a clear internal locus of control (controlled by selfishness or sin) or external locus of control (controlled by their addiction, others, or situations) prior to coming to The Center. However, these women viewed themselves fundamentally as selfish during the time of their drug addiction, before surrendering themselves to God. When describing her past self and her addiction, Kyrie stated, "It's a sin problem. It's a selfishness problem." For her, focusing on God instead of self was key to overcoming addiction. She elaborated, "[I am] letting go and letting God, because it's all in his hands. He already has everything planned out for you and all you got to do is walk it out. … I'm letting God lead."

5.1. Tabitha: A Narrative of Deferring to God

Tabitha provided what was perhaps the most comprehensive narrative on using a deferring coping style to overcome her addiction. Tabitha found herself in The Center as a result of manufacturing methamphetamine. She served only four years of a ten-year prison sentence, but then violated probation and was court-ordered to The Center. Although a meth manufacturing charge led

her to The Center, the real addiction with which Tabitha struggled was alcohol. When describing how her alcoholism took form, she explained, "My marriage fell apart, I had a 21-year marriage with two children, and my husband and I were having some difficulty, and I just started drinking. … But within two years I was a raging alcoholic and had lost everything, including my two children."

Tabitha and her husband were caught driving under the influence of alcohol, and they lost custody of their children. Although she realized the need to end her excessive drinking, she described having felt consumed by alcoholism, seeing it as a force that had control of her:

> I couldn't quit. And I didn't drink because I wanted to, I drank because I had to, my body got to the point, my tolerance level got so high so quickly, I mean I would literally have to drink to function each day. You know, I'd get sick from shaking, and that sort of thing. … [I had] probably a pint, sometimes more, of vodka per day, straight, not even bothering to get a cup. I mean, it was bad.

Tabitha then recalled the period in which she felt she had "hit rock bottom":

> When my husband divorced me and took my kids from me, I thought that was bottom. We were very wealthy, I was a corporate executive for a Fortune 500 company for many years, I made a lot of money, we had a big house, nice community, two children. So when I lost all that I thought I had hit rock bottom, but oh no. I had farther to go. I had to hit a personal level of low, because it's not just your possessions, when you lose them, that makes people hit bottom.

From there she went to a transitional home and attempted to overcome her addiction. Just like The Center, that facility was faith-based, and Tabitha attempted to draw on her faith to "get clean". She commented, "I dedicated my life to the Lord, you know, stayed in my Bible, and I really wanted to get well." Yet, despite her effort, Tabitha admitted that it was not the "right" relationship with God and was unable to maintain a life of sobriety. She elaborated:

> At that point in time I still wanted to do it Tabitha's way, so I was like "Okay, I'm gonna get my life back. Come on, God." So it wasn't "Father you lead me and I'll go." So when I came back it was like two years later and I tried to get things squared away, and I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it on my own.

Because of what she claimed was an inability to fully give herself to God, Tabitha fell back into her old drinking habits, got remarried, and was again sent to prison. She described more negative experiences that represented her "true rock bottom". Feeling hopeless, she believed she had nothing to live for and desperately turned to God again:

> I tried to die for two years. I tried to commit suicide several times, and the Lord would not let me die. So when I got to the point that I lost everything, I lost everyone, the Lord would not let me die. Satan wouldn't come get me like I kept calling out for him to do… I had nothing else, so I fully surrendered my will, and said "Show me why I'm here." And the Lord started showing me from that day forward. He really started

speaking to me at that point in time. I could have been in prison for 20 years and been happy, because I had never been happy like that in my life, it was just a joy for me inside.

In that critical moment, Tabitha described relinquishing total control over her life to God, and completely submitting herself to God's control. She saw this transition in control as transforming her entire life. She said that at this point she was no longer consumed by alcohol and commented that, "Jesus Christ is the only one that can deliver someone from their addictions." She was released from prison soon after this religious epiphany.

Tabitha claimed that she lived her life with God in the forefront. She described allowing God's will to guide her in every aspect of life:

I'm in love with the Father. It's a wonder I don't ask him each morning what I should wear. You walk in disobedience for a while, it's not pleasant. I would rather break the law than disobey God. But I'm always learning and always questioning and learn to follow him anywhere.

Tabitha said her relationship with God "increases every day", and she emphasized, "The more I seek Him, the more I find Him. It's true, just like it says in the Bible. It allows me to develop that personal relationship with Him." When asked if she faced any difficulties following her religious change, she said "Really none for me, honest to God, but I know a lot of people don't like their loss of freedom. But, that's a part of it."

Because she believed she had submitted herself fully to God's will, Tabitha did not describe any active plans for maintaining sobriety in the future. She conveyed confidence in her ability to remain sober simply because of her active relationship with God. She explained, "I have no cravings for [alcohol] at all. The Lord delivered me from that two years ago. I've been around it since then. I have friends outside that drink and I lived with my husband who was back to doing bad things but I was around it without doing it, but I just moved out." For Tabitha, strategies for success involved focusing on the power of God and reminding herself of her lack of control. She emphasized the importance of putting her life in God's control and not worrying about the future, "You have to be a firm believer that the Lord delivered you from that and He's not gonna allow you to be tested more than you can bear." She focused on keeping God at the forefront of her daily life, which also meant keeping Godly people around her.

Tabitha listed many disparate goals for her future, but emphasized that her achieving these goals would be up to God. She explained, "It's all up to the Lord though. When I plan, my plans fail so I don't plan anything above tomorrow. I let Him dictate where I go and what I do." In Tabitha's view, pursuing her own goals was pointless, as she believed her fate was ultimately in the hands of God. She elaborated:

If I plan to go to my hometown next weekend, if I don't ask, something will come up that will prohibit me from going. I am so much happier that way… If you look to the Lord, it clears our self, it supplies all our needs, you can hear the Lord's voice. I was just reading, in like Isaiah 26, I think during lunch time. It said, "When you make plans

without me I'll thwart them," and that may not be the exact words, but it's true. Why make plans that are not approved by the Lord? That only tends to walking in disobedience. You'll eventually go off the path if you don't consult the Lord which way to go.

5.2. The Deferring Perspective

Overall, the deferring women all described particularly powerful turning points when they accepted God's all-encompassing control, and turned themselves over to his will. These turning points were depicted as times when deferring women were able to transition from an internal or external locus of control to a locus of control focused entirely on God. The deferring women described this moment as a life transformation where they were finally able to overcome their addictions. In fact, the majority of deferring women believed their addictions were "cured" at this point. For instance, when describing the critical moment when she deferred to God's control, Sierra commented:

> I'm cured. As long as I keep God in my life and I keep doing what I'm supposed to be doing in his word, then my disease is taken from me. … You give your life to God and you turn your whole self around. God, he took all that from me. It's gone, it's taken. So, I don't have that disease anymore.

Sierra, like many deferring women, described a moment when she "gave her life to God", which she described as curing her "disease". Believing they were now cured, these women had optimistic views of their addiction.

After this transformative experience, the deferring women credited all positive life outcomes to God and to their faith in God. This included reinterpreting their past according to their new outlook. When discussing the events that led her to The Center, Ally recalled:

> I couldn't see it then, I realize that God had brought me up here and answered my prayer and kept me and my baby safe, which is way more than anything I could have imagined three and four months ago. I didn't see it then. I was mad because I had to come back to rehab. But now, looking back, I see that he was looking out for me. God did not want me to have my baby in prison, he wanted the same thing I wanted, and he made it happen for me.

They were also likely to depict themselves as selfish during the point in their lives where they had struggled with addiction. This view was likely a way of interpreting the moments where they had yet not fully relinquished control to God. They often recounted their failed experiences to get clean in light of this selfishness.

Likely as a result of their often extremely optimistic views, deferring women did not give much thought to developing strategies for maintaining sobriety after they left The Center. Instead, deferring women typically articulated that God would keep them clean, and described very weak or no concrete strategies for resisting temptation. Talia explained, "I'm just trying to get through this and yeah, I'm not trying to think a whole lot into the future … day-by-day." Those who did have strategies primarily described working on their relationship with God. As Kelsey detailed:

> I'm going to stand firm on the word of God, and I know that if I use it, use the word of God then that's the only offense weapon there is, the rest are defense weapons. I know the sword of the spirit is the word of God and I know that if I use that to fight these principalities and darkness and all this kind of stuff, I'll overcome.

Deferring women saw their future as "out of their hands" and for this reason, were not compelled to devise concrete strategies for their success.

6. Collaborating with God

Rather than exclusively seeing themselves as deferring to God's control, twelve of the 30 women in our sample had a more collaborative view. According to Pargament [16], those with a collaborative coping style consider God to be their partner, with mutual control over their situations. For those coming from a Christian faith tradition, a collaborative relationship with God involves following God and doing what God says is right as expressed through Scriptures and through internal promptings of the Holy Spirit. Although God strengthens, helps, and works through individuals, they must maintain an active role to solve problems [16]. As Shelby explains, "You, me and you, got to help our own self first before anybody can help us. So, it's not The Center, it's not them, it's them and God, that's how I feel about it."

Although the connection with God was described universally as strong by the women, the nature of that interaction did vary. Many women were like Jasmine, who said "I'm not Moses… I don't hear Him or nothing, but we communicate." Others were like Cameron, who explained:

> I've always heard God speak to me and guide me through my spirit. At times that I should've listened, I didn't, and let's just say I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and consequences happened and now I'm more aware of that conscience. When the Spirit tells me, "don't do that" I pay more attention to it. I listen to it because I know there are major consequences. He's been calling me for a long time and I listened this time. I had to follow that.

Through prayer, worship, reading Scriptures, and feeling the guidance of God through the Holy Spirit, the women with a collaborative coping style felt a strong partnership with God. This partnership allowed them to act in quasi-autonomous manner, but while perceiving the power and presence of God with them.

6.1. Sarah: A Narrative of Collaborating with God

Sarah was court-ordered to stay one year at The Center after being released from jail. Like many others, this was not her first time in a rehabilitation center. She first began using drugs when she was 18 and reported that her use worsened when she began nursing school. She then spiraled out of control after failing to complete the program. Sarah was a drug user for 15 years, primarily having used opiates and methamphetamine. Upon her release, Sarah felt tempted to use again:

I did not use after I got out of jail the second time… The only reason I didn't use right when I got out of jail was because my mom and them kept a real tight rope on me… I'm sure if I would've gotten out of jail and not had that family support that I would've been right back where I was… This time, I told the judge that I needed to go away for a little while where I could get it together. I needed this.

A week after arriving at The Center, Sarah claimed that her outlook on herself and her addiction had changed after she read a book and started a class on addiction. She credited this transformation to God and The Center's religious teachings. Before she took this class, she said she had no relationship with God, and no hope that she would overcome addiction. She explained, "I thought I was just screwed for life. I was going to be an addict for the rest of my life… Then, when I got here, that's when I realized that there was hope again. I can overcome this because there's something greater than me." She described her transition in very strong terms:

I didn't think I was a bad person when I had a "disease". When I had a disease it was like cancer, it was incurable. I was always going to be like this and I was probably going to die an addict because I have this disease. But now I've learned that I was a bad person that made bad choices and that's okay because God's saved me from that … Now I feel like I don't have a disease because God has set me free from it and I'm cured. I have a choice to go back to that… You got hooked on it, but you can let it go. God can take all that away, and that's when I realized that there was hope for me.

Now, with a new outlook on life, Sarah considered herself more adept at making decisions. She described her relationship with God this way:

I know that God and the Holy Spirit guide me and my choice, and I know that He is there to help me when my decision-making process is going haywire… Now I have that conscience saying, "That's not what God would do. That's not what Jesus would want you to do. He honestly loves and cares for you and He doesn't want to see you go down like that."

Sarah decided that she no longer wanted a life controlled by drugs and the people that consume them. However, she still experienced major temptations while visiting home on weekend passes. Here, Sarah details one such experience:

Well, the last time I was at home, I went to a pool party and yes, there was drugs there. And I prayed and I just said, "God, take the temptation away from me and help me to be strong and walk away from this situation", and I was able to walk away from the situation. I picked up the phone and called somebody and said, "I'm ready to be home. I don't want to be here." I feel like God had his hand in that.

After this experience, Sarah made new plans to help her succeed. She explained, "The future plan is to not be associated with people that have it [drugs]. I mean, that was just a stupid decision that I made to go over there… The next time I will be thinking rationally and I'll be able to make better decisions." Even as she planned for the future with her newfound faith, she also made it clear that she would have to make the tough decisions. Sarah decided not move back home, especially

since her family has easy access to drugs: "My mom's a nurse practitioner and my sister just got her doctorate in nursing. I mean, I just know that there would be some major temptations there. I'm not going to put myself in the devils playground like that."

Armed with her new faith in God and outlook on life, Sarah made some plans for the future to help her succeed and feels encouraged by others at The Center:

> Well, I'm ready to start school back. I've got 164 credits. I've got to do something so I'm getting ready to start school back and get a job. I'm not going to move back home because that's too close to my old playing field … [Others] have taught me not to give up, that I should go for what I want to do, and not to be ashamed of my past and get hung up on my failures and staying down… I can ask God to show me, close the doors that he doesn't want me to go down… I know that he's going to guide me in the directions that I need to go.

Overall, Sarah believed The Center and God helped greatly on her path to recovery. In fact, she did not believe that she could be clean without having this religious faith. She described the transition as complete, no longer considering herself an addict, "This has just filled a void in my heart… Now I have happiness, I have joy. Before this, I didn't have those. I'm proud to say that I'm sober now and I'm proud to say that I'm not an addict." She now viewed herself as being in a partnership with God.

6.2. The Collaborative Perspective

Overall, the women with collaborative viewpoints transitioned from feeling controlled by drugs to feeling that, through God, they possessed the power to change their lives. They no longer saw addiction to drugs as a disease outside of their control, as Sarah described above. Instead, they felt they could overcome their addiction through God, which was articulated as a very freeing and empowering realization by Anastasia: "They teach you at other rehabs that you're an addict. Here I'm not an addict. I struggle with addiction. … This place taught me that I don't have to be that anymore. I can be different." Although the women actively resisted the temptation to use drugs, they saw the strength to do so as coming from God. Celeste, in talking about her upcoming release, explained "I just got to keep pressing on and keep believing and keep asking him to keep me strong. And He will, if I sincerely mean it."

Not only do they see God as giving them strength to overcome their addiction now, but also they believe that they must continue to work with God towards a successful future. God is seen as in the passenger seat directing individuals where to go and the routes to take. The individuals, in turn, must listen to and complete the steps necessary to reach their goals. The belief that God will assist them and keep them strong does not mean that they take a passive role in their own future, and, as such, they develop many strategies for their future success, much like Sarah's future plans. Although one such strategy is to rely on their relationship with God, the presence of many other strategies suggests that the women still think about and plan for the future.

These strategies include avoiding people, situations, and places that are seen as barriers to success, developing goals for a successful future, and relying on others to help them or motivate

them to succeed. Sarah's decision to stay away from her home, situations, and others that tempt her to use drugs is an example of an avoidance strategy. Likewise, her desire to get a job and take additional college courses reveals that she has active goals for success. Her family's assistance and the things she has learned from others at the Center reflect some reliance on others to help her succeed. Yet, Sarah's most important strategy for success, like most other women with a collaborative style, is reliance on her relationship with God. They report that God, seen as far from a passive participant, is the foundation from which they draw the power to utilize the other strategies for success. Sally embodies the collaborative ideals when she says this, which is a reference to a New Testament scripture:

> I think that I have the real tools now to do what it takes, and a lot more understanding. I know a lot of times I will fail and make wrong decisions. In life you make mistakes constantly, but I feel like I'll be less likely to make as many, and especially some of the worst ones that destroy our lives. I feel like I can do all things through Christ, and He strengthens me.

7. Conflicted Relationship with God

As with any typology, there are times in which a case may not fit precisely into a certain category. We categorized 25 of the 30 women as using a predominately deferring or collaborative religious coping style. We did not find any women who used a predominantly self-directing style, but five women used some combination of the three styles. That is, five of the women in our sample described problem-solving styles that were not exclusively collaborative, deferring, or self-directing. Being an amalgam of multiple styles, we called this style "conflicted".

All of the conflicted women showed some evidence of Pargament's [16,19] self-directing style of religious coping. In the self-directing style, God is not relied upon for problem-solving, although His existence is acknowledged. Instead, the primary responsibility for resolving problems lies in the hands of the individual. According to this style, God has given individuals resources and abilities necessary to allow autonomous direction of their own lives. Yet, none of these women quite fit into the self-directing category. It seemed instead that these women struggled to balance The Center's mandate to surrender their lives to God with their own uncertainty about God and divine leadership. The conflicted women were hesitant to rely on God either because they did not believe in God, reported being angry at God in the past, or disliked the fact that religion was "forced on them" at The Center.

7.1. Jessa: Narrative of Conflicted Relationship with God

Jessa reported using many drugs, but her drug of choice was methamphetamine, which she used since age 12. She became pregnant with her first child at 13. She now had two children, both of which she lost custody of due to her drug use and criminal history. Although Jessa said she had "never seen [herself] as an addict", she described the dangers of an addictive personality: "When you're an addict, you have your personality, your person that you are, you have to have something.

For me, even when I was popping pills when I was 10, 11, I had to have something, it was never enough." She described struggling with this urge:

> There's still going to be that urge to do something different, to want more… I'm not saying that I'll never get out of it, that I'll never be delivered completely from it. That's what I hope and pray for every day, it's just, I know the reality. That there's only one way to do it and that's through God, honestly. And that's not because I'm here, that's because of what I know. I mean you have to really, you have to really, really believe in something, and He's a wonderful thing to believe in. And that's going to be about the only thing… because there's no doubt in my mind that if I was at home right now that I would get high.

Jessa was sentenced to The Center for manufacturing methamphetamine. She chose the facility instead of probation out of fear she would end up in jail if she did not keep herself away from the influence of drugs. She reported needing "something different… job experience. I needed to be able to get my feet on the ground". It was the job experience that drew her to The Center, and not the religious focus. She did not believe in God before she came to The Center, although that changed:

> The only other things were 28 day programs… They basically said I could get job training, that I'd be able to get work here. [That's] really the only thing that attracted me to here. Because before I came here, I was shooting up and I didn't even really believe in God. I mean I had lost a lot of, most of my faith in anything. So, that's not really what appealed to me. But I mean… when it comes to that I'm glad that I came here because my relationship with God has been renewed.

Although she described a newfound belief in God, she still struggled with feelings of inadequacy, stagnation, and self-governance. She described past friction in her relationship with God:

> I was the first to go, well, I don't deserve God, so I'm going to do whatever I want. And that was my excuse… I don't deserve God, so I can do whatever I want to do… I don't need God. I don't deserve Him. He don't deserve me. I'm going to stay away from Him. Cause I just hurt Him. But God's gonna love me regardless.

In accordance with this attitude, Jessa described as instance in which she would have relapsed if not for others. Back at home on a weekend pass, Jessa described going out with friends to a local bar:

> I was there dancing with this guy…and we were just having so much fun… and then out of nowhere he was like, "let's go shoot up! Let's do a shot." And it was like a big bear right in front of you. It was scary. Cause I knew I was that close and I knew that there wasn't going to be no going back… So my friends piled me into the car and buckled me down and took me back home… I was all, "I wanna get high, I wanna get high." As long as it's between us and not The Center, I was drinking that night. They was like no, my friends was like, not gonna happen. So, they took me back to the room, and I passed out, and that was over with.

Although Jessa reported many instances when she was reprimanded for behaviors deemed inappropriate at The Center, she did not feel that there was anything she could do to change her situation, and she concluded: "If it's God's will for me to go to prison, that sucks, but there's a reason for it. There's gotta be a reason." Her fatalistic view of the conflict was expressed this way:

> My motto is "it don't matter." You can do the best out of the best out of the best, and it don't matter… People will argue that with you. I just, it don't matter. You can believe and you can love unconditionally and you can give, you can hope, and pray and pray and pray, and if it's not… Now I believe if it's not God's will, then I believe it if ain't going to happen, it just ain't going to happen. Now I know that it's not God's will… I always said when I do my best I come out worse than if I hadn't tried at all.

Jessa reported that God and her fiancé would help her maintain sobriety and optimism in the future. She claimed that since God has already done so much for her, "it would hurt God so much for me to backslide." Although she described finding it hard to be hopeful, she said "I only am [optimistic] because my fiancé makes me be." Otherwise, Jessa did not describe many strategies for success and did not think The Center had prepared her well. She explained, "I don't think faith-based is the way to go for… people like us who are so good at screwing up." She did not see herself as abstaining from drugs in the future, especially in the case of marijuana. She did not seem to consider herself as having experienced positive change, although she expressed hope that she would change in the future:

> You can usually tell a person [who won't make it], and apparently, from the way people are talking, I'm one of these people… There's people that walk around here, that you can tell there's a change in their lives. I don't feel like that. I haven't gave up on myself. But there's people that you see that just don't, that aren't ready. People who haven't hit bottom yet.

7.2. The Conflicted Perspective

Jessa described not believing in God before coming to the Center. Other conflicted women shared this sentiment, were angry at God, or both. For instance, Caitlyn said, "I was like mad at God… I was like, where was God when I was going through this? … I know now that there is a God… I am still struggling with that part too, to be honest, but I know now that he has always been there and I am the one that left Him. He didn't leave me." Through Jessa's use of language (*i.e.*, there's *gotta* be a reason, you *have to* believe in something), she conveyed that she felt obligated to believe in God. She was not completely convinced, however, nor did she consider herself completely recovered.

For the five conflicted women, their limited faith in God, distrust in the Center, and stagnant circumstances led them to feel helpless, instead of helped. They did not trust that they had a strong relationship with God, that God would help them, or that God would give them the power to help themselves. Moreover, they did not trust that the Center would assist them in this process. This response was echoed by women with conflicted coping styles. Some showed a clear preference, seeming to be in the process of transitioning to the Center's beliefs or surrendering to God, albeit still struggling with the change. Others did not believe this faith-centered approach to rehabilitation

was right for them and may have been simply repeating the lessons and "mantras" taught to them at The Center in acknowledging God's power.

Due to the divergent nature of their problem-solving styles, the women did not form many, if any, strategies to ensure success—like Jacie, who asserted "I've gotta do myself right now", and "I've got to focus on me", when asked about God's role in her future. Unsure who to put their hope in, the women did not seem to place it either in themselves or in God, landing somewhere in between self-reliance and surrender. This led them to generally paint a very pessimistic view of their future.

The ultimate reason the women did not fit into either a collaborative or deferring viewpoint is unclear. Perhaps the emphasis on religion at The Center caused these women to refrain from a coping style that was self-directing. Another viewpoint is that the women were simply not ready to change or that they were in the process of changing, thus experiencing a clear conflict between their former beliefs and the beliefs being taught at The Center.

8. Discussion

Most women in our sample articulated a clear transition from their former coping styles and loci of control to a new, God-centered way to solve their problems. As they explained their transitions to sobriety, the women referenced factors such as hitting rock bottom, being inspired by others to succeed, finally wanting to change, and most prominently, a renewed commitment to faith. The women claimed that God was in control of their lives, which was consistent with what they learned in faith-based classes at The Center. Importantly, however, the women differed in discussing where God's leadership for their lives ended and where their own leadership began.

Pargament's [16,19] typology of religious coping/problem solving styles proved to be useful in how we categorized the narratives of our interviewees. The deferring and collaborative coping styles revealed that the women held differing views of surrendering control to God *versus* relying on their own agency and autonomy. Specifically, the women with a deferring style believed that, while God had an active role in their lives, their role was passive. Conversely, the women with a collaborative style believed that they and God shared an active role in their lives, including determining their future success. The conflicted women, in contrast with the majority of the participants from The Center, showed evidence of self-directing and nonreligious coping styles. Their narratives were underscored by the larger issues of experiencing conflict and "wrestling with God" in regards to surrendering control of their lives to a higher power.

As with any study, ours is not without limitations. First, because we used a non-probabilistic sample of women in a faith-based halfway house, we cannot make generalizations about our findings to all women drug users or to all women residents of halfway houses. Because in-depth interviews with drug addicts in recovery were the only reasonable methodological choice, this was not a major consideration. Second, because all of our participants were completing a faith-based recovery program at the time of the interview, it was unlikely that we would find strong evidence of all three religious coping styles identified by Pargament [16,19]. While there was ample evidence of the deferring and collaborative styles, we found no evidence of women who exclusively used the self-directing style. Because those who work at The Center typically consider

autonomy, self-direction, and self-efficacy as major factors in drug addiction in the first place, interviewees had been conditioned to avoid a self-directing coping style. Instead, The Center teaches a Scriptural view of God as a powerful participant, a view that can be seen as either collaborative or deferring depending on the women's interpretations of self as active or passive in solving their problems. We cannot speculate on whether the self-directing coping style is relatively rare in The Center, or if some residents simply may not feel comfortable with its articulation.

Also noteworthy from our analysis of collaborative and deferring coping styles is the relationship between coping style and plans for the future. Future planning has been identified as an important element of rehabilitation [27], and many of the women in our sample claimed that they avoided dangerous people and situations, bonded with Godly others, worked on their relationship with God, and developed plans for a successful future. Yet, we find that formerly addicted women with a deferring coping style may be unlikely to form future strategies for success or form only vague ones. While the deferring style may be preferred among those who work at The Center, it may have the unintended consequence of discouraging autonomous action in the future. Failure to make plans for sustaining sobriety may leave the deferring women unprepared to cope with future events, which, in turn, could lead to returning to former lifestyles and patterns of destructive behavior [27]. Thus, it seems that not all religious coping styles produce similar outcomes, which may have important implications for faith-based programs. Program organizers and staff should be aware of differences in religious coping styles and their potential influence on readiness for the future as they develop their curriculum.

Our findings are also in concert with Kerley's [28] recent discussion of active and passive resistance among religious inmates and those in recovery settings. He identified active resistance strategies, which mirror the strategies for success observed among the collaborative women in our interviews. This active resistance included plans to avoid crime and crime-inducing people, places, and situations. Passive resistance, in contrast, was found among individuals who internalized the concept of "one day at a time", and thus, did not make preparations for the future. Such a classification is consistent with the limited strategies for success used by the deferring women in the current study.

9. Conclusions

To conclude, we note that our findings, as well as those of Pargament and others, support the idea that the deferring religious coping style may pose risks for individuals dealing with difficult life circumstances (e.g., drug addiction). The nuanced distinctions between (1) a Scriptural worldview in which autonomous action is necessary and (2) a Scriptural worldview that encourages faith in God's control without action, create practical differences in the way individuals approach their futures. The identification of positive benefits from a collaborative coping style leads us to conclude that religious coping for drug addicts is not only acceptable, but also may be beneficial to individuals' problem-solving skills. Due to having both a God locus of control and an internal locus of control, the collaborative style of religious coping allowed the interviewees to plan for the future while perceiving the strength of God as with them, and as such, gave them greater hope for maintaining sobriety after release. Our hope is that the findings presented here catalyze additional

social scientific research on the nuanced relationship between faith and coping among the free and the incarcerated.

Author Contributions

The authors jointly conceptualized, analyzed data, and produced this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Does Religious Involvement Generate or Inhibit Fear of Crime?

Todd Matthews, Lee Michael Johnson and Catherine Jenks

Abstract: In victimology, fear of crime is understood as an emotional response to the perceived threat of crime. Fear of crime has been found to be affected by several variables besides local crime rates and personal experiences with victimization. This study examines the relationship between religion and fear of crime, an underexplored topic in the criminological literature. This gap is rather surprising given the central role religion has been found to play in shaping the attitudes and perceptions of congregants. In particular, religion has been found to foster generalized trust, which should engender lower levels of distrust or misanthropy, including that which is directed towards a general fear of crime. OLS regression was performed using data from the West Georgia Area Survey (n = 380). Controlling for demographic, community involvement, and political ideology variables, frequency of religious attendance was significantly and negatively associated with fear of *property* crime. This relationship remained even after a perceived neighborhood safety variable was introduced to the model. However, religious attendance was not significantly related to fear of *violent* crime, and religious orientation was unrelated to fear of property and violent crime. These results suggest that religious involvement conditionally reduces fear of crime, and the authors recommend that future research explore relationships between religion and fear of crime.

Abbreviations

WGAS: West Georgia Area Survey; OLS: Ordinary Least Squares; US: United States

1. Introduction/Background

The body of literature on religion and crime pays a great deal of attention to the role of religion in crime etiology and criminal justice practice [1]. In a recent article, Akers reviewed multiple studies showing negative relationships between religion and crime, noting that religious extremism, however, may be associated with increased crime [1]. Baier and Wright's meta-analysis of 60 studies showed that religious beliefs and behaviors moderately deterred criminal behavior [2]. However, victimological analyses of religion are largely missing from this literature. This oversight is surprising given the central role religion has been found to play in shaping the attitudes and perceptions of its adherents. The purpose of the current study, therefore, is to test whether religious involvement reduces fear of crime.

1.1. Fear of Crime and Religion

Ferraro and LaGrange defined *fear of crime* as "an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime" [3]. More specifically, individuals fear the harm or loss resulting from criminal acts, and not simply the existence of actions labeled as "crimes" [4]. This fear is produced by one's *perceived risk of crime*, which is "a recognition of a situation as possessing at least potential danger, real or imagined" [3]. It is important to distinguish between these concepts: *fear of crime* refers to an emotive state of being afraid of being victimized by crime while *perceived risk of crime* refers to a cognitive assessment of one's chances of being victimized. As measured variables, perceived high risk of crime should increase levels of fear of crime, although the two are not necessarily highly correlated. Some people, for example, may perceive high risk of crime but not be highly afraid of it [5]. Further, these concepts should not be confused with general concern over crime [5], which has more to do with recognition of crime as a social problem. General concern does not necessarily equate with fear and perceived risk. For example, a person can believe that a community or society has a significant crime problem without thinking that s/he has a significant chance of being personally victimized or being very afraid of crime.

Past research suggests that fear of both violent crime and property crime is widespread across the public and is a social problem separate from crime itself, although most people are not likely highly fearful of crime on a daily basis [6]. Zhao, Lawton, and Longmire [7] found that living in close proximity to crime events increased residents' fear of crime. Other research shows a lack of correspondence between fear of crime and official crime rates, with fear appearing to over- or under- estimate actual crime threats [8]. Regardless, it is apparent from research on fear of crime that such fear is not simply a reaction to area crime rates and personal experiences with victimization.

A number of studies suggest that fear of crime is also the result of several personal as well as ecological and community level factors [5,9]. While personal and demographic variables such as age, gender, income, education, race, health, and victimization are frequently studied, religious orientation or behavior variables are rarely included in models examining fear of crime. Previous research showed that religiosity is an important factor of public perceptions of criminal behavior in that the strength of religious belief is positively related to punitive and morally indignant responses to crime [10]. It appears that more religious persons may have more "tough on crime" attitudes, but how fearful do they tend to be of crime? This oversight in the literature is curious, given that religious affiliation ties persons to social networks offering resources that can be used to respond to threats to well-being such as crime. Additionally, and perhaps most crucially, religious affiliation has been found to build generalized trust (trust in others unknown to us) in participants [11-18]. This form of trust has been characterized as "the foundation of a civil society… (that) eases the way toward getting people to work together" [19]. Religious participation or affiliation is seen as a central pathway for the generation of such trust, a contention extending back in American social thought to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* almost two centuries ago. Contemporary scholars maintain that religious institutions play a vital role in the development of generalized trust today [16-18].

This trust in others beyond our immediate social milieu is critical in our complex, specialized world, reducing social risk and fears and enabling day-to-day social action to continue relatively unimpeded [20,21]. Excessive fear of external actors and social conditions, both known and unknown, would paralyze the modern social world, as individuals would be too fearful or mistrusting to engage in any sort of "risky" action. Thus, elevated levels of generalized trust should engender lower levels of distrust or misanthropy, including that which is directed towards a general fear of crime. Excessive fear of crime can cause such social paralysis, as it leads to significant changes in individual and collective behavior and can truly alter social relations. Despite the apparent link between religion, trust, and perceptions of crime, only a few studies examining the relationship between religion and fear of crime could be found.

Lotz tested for the relative impacts of experienced victimization *versus* indicators of resistance to social change that included religion and political conservatism [22]. In a sample of residents in Washington state in the US, Lotz found that religion and political conservatism were slightly associated with increased concern over but not fear of crime while victimization was slightly associated with increased fear of but not concern over crime. The results suggest that fear results from practical crime threats but concern results from socio-political ideology [22].

O'Mahony and Quinn tested if community-related factors explain fear of crime better than individual factors, including one's religious participation [23]. Prior research using national samples suggest that Protestants are more worried about terrorist attacks than Catholics in Northern Ireland. Using community-based survey data, however, O'Mahony and Quinn found in a multivariate model that community type and respondent satisfaction with the community significantly determined fear of crime while individual characteristics, including one's religion, did not [23]. It is important to recognize here that the community type measure they used is partly defined by religious composition (groupings included "Catholic Lower Working Class Urban," "Protestant Small Towns," *etc*.) [23]. Thus, while their study suggests that individuals' religious affiliation alone does not determine their fear of crime, it does not suggest that religion plays no part in determining fear of crime.

Sacco and Nakhaie included religiosity among several demographic variables in their analysis of age and crime-coping adaptations in a Canadian national sample [24]. The researchers argue for and used behavioral, rather than perceptual, outcome measures of fear of crime. These behaviors included "carrying something for self-defense, locking car doors when alone, checking the back seat of the car for intruders, planning their route with safety in mind, and staying at home at night because they are afraid" [24]. Results showed that among nonelderly respondents only, the religious (compared to the non-religious) were more likely to engage in some of the behaviors—lock car doors, plan a safe route, and stay home for fear. However, Sacco and Nakhaie's behavioral measures of fear of crime are controversial as they may actually indicate a separate subjective reaction to a crime construct, behavioral reactions to crime, and not fear of crime that is widely understood as an emotional state [24].

Mohammed, Saridakis, and Sookram included a dichotomous measure of religion (religious affiliation/no religious affiliation) as a control variable in their analysis of the impact of victimization upon fear of crime—also a dichotomous measure (fearful/not fearful of crime) in a

national sample from Trinidad and Tobago [25]. The researchers report that persons with a religious affiliation were more likely to be fearful of crime than those without a religious affiliation, a result they found to be counter-intuitive.

Clearly, more studies are needed if the relationship between religion and fear of crime is to be understood. Aside from being too few, religion was not the focus of prior studies and they used dated or questionable measures of fear of crime, such as those noted in the review above.

1.2. The Current Study

The current study tests for a possible association between religious involvement and fear of crime. Frequency of attendance at religious services and religious orientation will serve as the primary independent variables of interest in models examining fear of crime as an outcome. Because of the paucity and inconsistency of past research on religion and fear of crime, a positive or negative relationship between the two will not be hypothesized. Generalized trust is included to see if it has effects independent of religious attendance and religious orientation. Also, an index of civic engagement is included here, as those who participate more broadly in social life should also generally be more trusting and less fearful. Further, political orientation, community tenure, and civic participation are added as potentially competing independent variables. If religious involvement is associated with fear of crime, it will be important to explore the possibility that liberal *vs.* conservative identity or community ties in general, not religious activity specifically, are actually affecting people's fear of crime. As O'Mahony and Quinn point out, it may be the lived experiences within the community that determines fear of crime more than religion and other personal factors [23]. Finally, prior victimization is included as a potential independent variable, even though past research does not indicate that objective experience with crime is a strong predictor of fear of crime [5].

The models also contain a set of demographic control variables: age, gender, race, and education. Past research shows that fear of crime varies according to personal factors [5]. Two key factors here are age and gender. Earlier studies suggested that older persons have higher fear but more rigorous recent research has revealed complex relationships. For example, Ferraro found a curvilinear relationship with age: the young, not elders, had the highest levels of fear while middle-aged adults had the lowest [5]. Concerning gender, studies consistently show that women have higher levels of fear of crime, including crimes in which women are not more likely to be victimized [5]. It is possible that fear of sexual assault elevates women's fear of other crimes. Because women are at higher risk of sexual assault, it may operate as a master offense that increases their fear of other crimes, especially those with the potential to lead to sexual victimization [26]. Research by Ferraro [26] and Fisher and Sloan [27] supported hypotheses that women's fear of general crime shadows their fear of sexual assault. However, this research focused little on how risk shapes men's fear of crime. Reid and Conrad [28] found that women reported higher levels of fear of sexual assault but also that perceived risk had a greater cumulative impact on men's fear of robbery, a crime in which men are more likely to be victimized. The shadow effect in women's fear of crime appears to be part of a larger gender differences picture. As Schafer, Huebner, and Bynum's [29] research shows, men and women's experiences in fearing victimization

are likely determined by different factors. Also, gender differences may lie in the reporting itself. To protect masculine self-identity, men may under-report their levels of fear. Sutton and Farrall [30] found evidence that men's, but not women's, reports of fear of crime is influenced by social desirability. At any rate, in this analysis of the impact of religious participation on fear of crime, it is important to consider the impact of gender.

Finally, fear of crime could be an outcome of the extent to which one finds the neighborhood to be a safe place. Assessments of the presence of danger in the community, where people spend a great deal of time, are likely to influence fear of crime. Several studies find that neighborhood characteristics and perceptions of one's neighborhood affect fear of crime [see for example 7,9,31-33]. Further, like community tenure and civic participation, feeling safe in the neighborhood could be an indicator of community attachment—a "safe place" could be part of a favorable definition of a community. Thus, a measure of how safe one feels in the neighborhood will also be included. A total of four models will be tested: two examining fear of violent crime and two examining fear of property crime.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Data

In Fall 2010, the Survey Research Center at the University of West Georgia launched the *West Georgia Area Survey* (WGAS). The 2010 WGAS was a first of its kind social scientific phone survey of the seven county core of the West Georgia region, an area of roughly 650,000 people on the western fringe of the larger Atlanta metropolitan area. These counties were selected due to their geographical proximity and general demographic similarities with Carroll County, GA, which is the home county of the University of West Georgia. The WGAS was designed to follow from decades-long studies like the General Social Survey (National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago), the Houston Area Survey (Rice University), the Baton Rouge Area Survey (Louisiana State University), the Mississippi Poll (Mississippi State University) and other similar social science attempts to empirically assess attitudes and behaviors regarding topical issues of the day. Another study of particular influence was political scientist Robert Putnam's Social Capital Benchmark Survey. This study was conducted with a nationally representative sample and with dozens of communities across the United States. Topics and questions were drawn from these previous studies as appropriate to fit the purposes of the WGAS principal investigators.

A landline random digit dialing sample was generated for the Survey Research Center by Survey Sampling Incorporated, and the survey was administered using Computer Assisted Telephone Interview software over a six week period from late October to early December. The sample was first drawn proportionally from each of the seven counties, based on the most recent Census population estimates. Households were then randomly drawn from within each county. The most recent birthday was used as the final step in sampling individuals within the households contacted.

The survey contained questions on a wide range of topics, including: demographics and contextual variables; community life and social trust; civic involvement; environmental concern and water issues; and fear of crime and victimization. The average completion time for respondents

was approximately 20 minutes. The final number of completed surveys was 380, with a response rate of 22%. While the response rate was lower than ideal (though not excessively so today), non-response bias was counteracted by generating a true random digit dialing sample, utilizing refusal conversion, and matching our demographics to local Census estimates, weighting those that were significantly different (such as age). The final dataset was roughly representative of major demographic characteristics in the study region except for the age of respondents. This is a fairly consistent reality today for those who engage in landline-based telephone surveys, as older respondents tend to be more likely to both have a landline and to use it as compared to younger respondents. Thus the decision was made to weight the data based on the age of the survey respondent. It should be noted that the models were run by the researchers both with and without weighting, with no major differences emerging.

2.2. Measures

The dependent variables utilized in the regression models include an index of fear of property crime and an index of fear of violent crime. Ferraro points out that sound measures of fear of crime should (1) tap into the emotion of fear or worry, not judgments or concerns, (2) refer to the type of victimization, not "crime" generically, (3) take aim at the subject's everyday life, not hypothetical situations or ones subjects may intentionally avoid, and (4) avoid double-barreled items, asking what subjects hypothetically or actually do for example [5]. Also, to best measure fear of crime in survey research, multi-item measures are essential [5]. The current analysis uses the fear of crime measure developed by Ferraro and Lagrange to respond to these criteria [5].

Two indices were constructed from a series of ten statements where respondents were asked to rate their fear of each on a scale of 1–10, where 1 indicated no fear at all, and 10 meant that the respondent was very afraid. The indicators of fear of property crime included:

- being approached on the street by a beggar or panhandler
- being cheated, conned, or swindled out of your money
- having someone break into your home while you are away
- having your car stolen
- having your property damaged by vandals

The indicators of fear of violent crime included:
- having someone break into your home while you are there
- being raped or sexually assaulted
- being murdered
- being attacked by someone with a weapon
- being robbed or mugged on the street

The possible values for each index range from 5–50. The mean score for the property crime index was 22.02, and the mean score for the violent crime index was 23.19. Both indices exhibit a high degree of reliability: for the property crime index, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.831, while the Cronbach's alpha for the violent crime index was 0.935.

The demographic variables in the regression models include *race* (dichotomized to white and black/other); *education,* a six-point ordinal variable ranging from less than high school to graduate

or professional degree; *gender*; *political ideology*, which includes conservative, moderate, liberal and those who "haven't thought about it"; *years lived in community*, a six-point ordinal variable ranging from "less than one year" to "all your life"; a *civic participation index*, measuring participation in a wide range of community life, ranging from 0–15 types of activities; and *generalized trust*, recoded into two dummy variables ("people can be trusted" and "depends," with "you cannot be too careful" as the reference group). Descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the regression models, are found in Table 1.

The focal independent variables of interest include two measures of religious life often used by researchers, *frequency of religious attendance* and *religious orientation*. The frequency of religious attendance variable asked "(n)ot including weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?" Options ranged from every week to less often than once a year. Just fewer than forty percent of respondents reported attending religious services every week, while each of the other categories fell in the ten to twenty percent range. The variable was reverse coded for the regression analyses. The orientation question captured broad religious preferences, including Protestantism, Catholicism, another type of Christianity, Judaism, some other religion, or no religion. Protestantism was the most frequently cited preference, with 64.1% choosing this option. Other Christians were 15.5% of the respondents, while those with no religion were 9.3%, Catholics made up 7.5%, and those representing other religions were 3.6% of total respondents in the survey.

The other focal variables of interest for the researchers were *previous victimization* (either of a property crime or a violent crime respectively), and the respondent's *feeling of safety at night in one's neighborhood*. Over 42% of respondents reported having been a victim of property crime at some point in their lives, while 18.9% reported having been a violent crime victim. *Feeling of safety at night in one's neighborhood* is a measure that was used in earlier research to measure fear of crime, though Ferraro and Lagrange contend that it is likely a better indicator of perceived risk than fear [5].

While feeling of safety at night in one's neighborhood is moderately correlated with both the fear of property crime index and the fear of violent crime index, VIF diagnostics run for each regression model indicate no problems with multicollinearity. Slightly less than half of the respondents (45.2%) reported that they felt very safe in their neighborhood at night, while 41.2% felt somewhat safe, and only 13.6% reported feeling somewhat or very unsafe.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis is used to examine whether the frequency of religious attendance and/or the respondent's religious orientation are predictors of fear of property crime and fear of violent crime, net of the effects of the respondent's general feeling of nighttime safety in their neighborhood and of the demographic variables. As noted above, Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all variables included in the analysis. Table 2 includes two models displaying the results of the OLS regression of the predictor variables on fear of property crime. In Table 3, there are two models presented which show the results of OLS regression of the predictor variables on fear of violent crime. In both Table 2 and Table 3, the first model includes the demographic variables, the previous victimization measure and the respondent's feeling of safety. The second model in both tables incorporates the measures from the first model, while adding in religious attendance and religious denomination.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variables	Percent or Mean	N or SD
Property Crime index (Range=5-50)	22.4	11.3
Violent Crime index (Range=5-50)	24.8	15.1
Religious attendance		
Every week	38.5	136
Almost every week	11.9	42
Once or twice a month	15.0	53
A few times each year	18.7	66
Less often than that	15.9	56
Religious denomination		
Protestant	64.1	232
Catholic	7.5	27
Other Christian	15.5	56
Other Religion	3.6	13
No Religion	9.3	34
Race (1=Black or Other)	17.5	65
Education		
Less than high school	2.0	7
Some high school	3.1	11
Graduated high school/GED	19.1	71
Some college/AA/Vocational or trade school	43.2	161
College graduate	17.5	65
Graduate or professional degree	15.1	56
Gender (1=Male)	31.1	116
Political ideology		
Conservative	53.1	197
Moderate	19.9	75
Liberal	13.5	51
Haven't thought about it	13.5	51
Years lived in community		
Less than one year	4.3	16
One to five years	26.4	99
Six to ten years	20.8	78
Eleven to twenty years	16.3	61
More than twenty years	23.1	86
All your life	9.1	34
Civic participation index (Range=0-15)	3.2	2.6
Generalized trust		
People can be trusted	36.6	136
Depends	5.7	21
You can't be too careful	57.7	215
Victim of Property Crime (1=Yes)	42.5	159
Victim of Violent Crime (1=Yes)	18.9	71
Feeling of safety during night in neighborhood		
Very safe	45.2	168
Somewhat safe	41.2	153
Somewhat or very unsafe	13.6	50

2.3. Analysis

Table 2 includes the results of the OLS regression models of the predictors of fear of property crime. Model 1 focuses on the demographic variables, previous property crime victimization, and the respondent's feeling of safety. Several demographic variables emerge as significant predictors of fear of property crime in this model. Gender (β = −0.122, p < 0.05) displays a significant and negative relationship with fear of property crime, indicating that male respondents are much less fearful of property crime than female respondents, controlling for all other variables in the model. Also significant and negative is one of the comparison groups for political ideology, those who "haven't thought about" where they stand ideologically (β = −0.130, p < 0.05). Respondents in this category are much less afraid of property crime than the reference group of ideological conservatives. Years lived in community is also significant and negative (β = −0.123, p < 0.05), thus those respondents who lived in their community longer showed less fear of property crime than those who had been there a shorter time. Also, those who exhibit higher levels of trust were significantly less fearful of property crime than those who believe you cannot be too careful with others (β = −0.212, p < 0.001). Being the victim of a property crime was not statistically significant. However, the respondent's feeling of safety during the night in the neighborhood was highly significant and negative for both groups *versus* the reference group. Those who felt very safe (β = −0.457, p < 0.001) and those who felt somewhat safe (β = −0.225, p < 0.01) expressed lower levels of fear of property crime compared to those who felt somewhat unsafe or unsafe in their neighborhood at night.

Model 2 of Table 2 adds the respondent's religious participation and religious attendance to the predictors utilized in Model 1. Regarding the religious participation variables, religious attendance is significant and negative (β = −0.137, p < 0.05). Those who attend religious services more frequently exhibit less fear of property crime than those who attend less frequently, net of the other variables in the model. Further, Protestants (β = 0.239, p < 0.05) and Catholics (β = 0.162, p < 0.05) each reported significantly higher levels of fear of property crime when compared to the reference group of the non-religious. However, the inclusion of this variable did not reduce to insignificance the variables that were significant in the previous model. Gender (β = −0.138, p < 0.01) was again significant and negative, with male respondents displaying less fear of property crime than female respondents[1]. Those who "haven't thought about" where they stand ideologically were again less fearful of property crime than conservatives (β = −0.147, p < 0.05). Years lived in community was again significant and negative as well (β = −0.126, p < 0.05). Those who exhibit higher levels of trust were again significantly less fearful of property crime than those who believe you cannot be too careful with others (β = −0.210, p < 0.001). Finally, the respondent's feeling of safety during the night in the neighborhood was highly significant and negative for both groups *versus* the reference group. Those who felt very safe (β = −0.472, p < 0.001) and those who felt

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[1]   In response to reviewer comments, we also performed an analysis of violent crime where rape/sexual assault was excluded, as it was argued that the difference in fear between men and women may be due to the inclusion of this single item. We found that women in our sample were still more fearful of violent crime when rape/sexual assault was excluded from the index.

somewhat safe (β = −0.243, p < 0.01) again expressed lower levels of fear of property crime compared to those who felt somewhat unsafe or unsafe in their neighborhood at night.

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression of Predictors of Fear of Property Crime.

	Model 1				Model 2			
	b	Sig	SE	β	b	Sig	SE	β
Race (White reference)								
Black or other	-0.650		1.485	-0.022	-0.777		1.568	-0.027
Education	-0.263		0.534	-0.026	-0.174		0.557	-0.017
Gender (Female reference)								
Male	-2.956	*	1.210	-0.122	-3.397	**	1.301	-0.138
Political ideology (Conservative reference)								
Moderate	0.948		1.426	0.034	-0.373		1.556	-0.013
Liberal	-2.656		1.662	-0.083	-3.252		2.016	-0.090
Haven't thought about it	-4.400	*	1.783	-0.130	-5.110	*	1.961	-0.147
Years lived in community	-0.962	*	0.398	-0.123	-0.981	*	0.423	-0.126
Civic participation index	0.267		0.223	0.061	0.312		0.246	0.070
Generalized trust (You can't be too careful reference)								
People can be trusted	-4.933	***	1.180	-0.212	-4.936	***	1.237	-0.210
Depends	-3.414		2.346	-0.073	-2.157		2.536	-0.044
Ever Victim of Property Crime	-0.776		1.161	-0.034	-0.755		1.240	-0.033
Feeling of safety at night in neighborhood (Somewhat or very unsafe reference)								
Very safe	-10.227	***	1.717	-0.457	-10.717	***	1.862	-0.472
Somewhat safe	-5.084	**	1.683	-0.225	-5.563	**	1.876	-0.243
Religious attendance					-1.019	*	0.464	-0.137
Religious denomination (Non-religious reference)								
Protestant					5.780	*	2.822	0.239
Catholic					6.712	*	3.317	0.162
Other Christian					3.569		3.090	0.114
Other Religion					6.501		4.273	0.104
Constant	37.062	***	3.149		35.933	***	4.125	
R-Squared	0.224				0.247			

*Sig at p < 0.05; **Sig at p < 0.01; ***Sig at p < 0.001

The results of the OLS regression models of the predictors of fear of violent crime are found in Table 3. Again, Model 1 focuses on the demographic variables, previous property crime victimization, and the respondent's feeling of safety. Only gender, generalized trust, and feeling of safety at night in the neighborhood emerged as significant predictors of fear of violent crime. Gender (β = −0.278, p < 0.001) has a highly significant and negative relationship with fear of violent crime, displaying an even more powerful effect than it did on fear of property crime. Male respondents are much less fearful of violent crime than female respondents, controlling for all other

variables in the model. Those who exhibit higher levels of trust were significantly less fearful of violent crime than those who believe you cannot be too careful with others ($\beta = -0.184$, $p < 0.001$), while those who said that it depends were also less fearful of violent crime than the reference group ($\beta = -0.100$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, the respondent's feeling of safety during the night in the neighborhood was highly significant and negative for those who felt very safe ($\beta = -0.369$, $p < 0.001$) *versus* the reference group.

Table 3. OLS Regression of Predictors of Fear of Violent Crime.

	Model 1				Model 2			
	b	Sig	SE	β	b	Sig	SE	β
Race (White reference)								
Black or other	-2.509		2.018	-0.061	-3.430		2.183	-0.084
Education	-0.117		0.727	-0.008	-0.056		0.773	-0.004
Gender (Female reference)								
Male	-9.484	***	1.649	-0.278	-9.420	***	1.802	-0.272
Political ideology (Conservative reference)								
Moderate	2.314		1.957	0.059	2.089		2.178	0.053
Liberal	-1.509		2.265	-0.034	-0.963		2.829	-0.019
Haven't thought about it	-3.997		2.456	-0.084	-4.685		2.753	-0.096
Years lived in community	-0.971		0.544	-0.088	-1.074		0.587	-0.098
Civic participation index	0.003		0.301	0.000	-0.024		0.340	-0.004
Generalized trust (You can't be too careful reference)								
People can be trusted	-6.000	***	1.619	-0.184	-5.805	**	1.735	-0.176
Depends	-6.613	*	3.217	-0.100	-5.176		3.555	-0.075
Ever Victim of Property Crime	-2.136		1.899	-0.053	-0.864		2.053	-0.021
Feeling of safety at night in neighborhood (Somewhat or very unsafe reference)								
Very safe	-11.683	***	2.316	-0.369	-12.102	***	2.556	-0.378
Somewhat safe	-4.150		2.278	-0.130	-4.838		2.585	-0.150
Religious attendance					-0.382		0.646	-0.036
Religious denomination (Non-religious reference)								
Protestant					5.951		3.956	0.174
Catholic					3.959		4.628	0.068
Other Christian					4.762		4.338	0.107
Other Religion					7.363		5.956	0.083
Constant	42.422	***	4.318		39.096	***	5.776	
R-Squared	0.259				0.254			

*Sig at $p < 0.05$; **Sig at $p < 0.01$; ***Sig at $p < 0.001$

Model 2 of Table 3 incorporates the religious participation variables along with the predictors of fear of violent crime utilized in Model 1. Neither religious attendance nor any of the denomination variables are statistically significant. Gender remained highly significant and negative ($\beta = -0.272$,

p < 0.001), with male respondents once again displaying less fear of violent crime than female respondents. Those who reported higher levels of trust were again significantly less fearful of violent crime ($\beta = -0.176$, p < 0.01), and the respondent's feeling of safety during the night in the neighborhood was highly significant and negative for those who felt very safe ($\beta = -0.378$, p < 0.001) *versus* the reference group.

3. Conclusions

The current study offers preliminary evidence that religious involvement can reduce fear of crime, though not necessarily in the expected direction. Controlling for all other variables, increased religious *attendance* was associated with reduced fear of *property* crime. However, mixed findings emerged regarding religious *orientation*. Only Catholics and Protestants displayed differences when compared to the non-religious, and for these groups, they displayed higher levels of fear of property crime. This could be due to relatively small sample sizes in the case of Catholics and the non-religious. However, it is also possible that this finding relates to the specific composition of the types of Catholic and Protestant denominations in the study region. Unfortunately, this study did not examine specific religious beliefs or theologies, and thus this statement is speculation. Future research incorporating denominational variations and/or religious beliefs could better uncover explanations behind these seemingly anomalous nuances.

The religion variables were not associated with fear of *violent* crime. That religious attendance is related to fear of property crime but not violent crime is an interesting finding. Besides any methodological restrictions, one possible reason for this finding has to do with the nature of the sample used in this study. Perhaps property crime is a more salient issue for them, as 42.5% of respondents in the sample report having been a victim of property crime, while only 18.9% report having been a violent crime victim. Indeed, the fear of property crime in this sample is relatively high: the mean index score for fear of property crime was nearly as high (22.4) as that for fear of violent crime (24.8), though this is not necessarily unusual in studies of this sort [5]. Also, some specific property crimes had higher fear ratings than some specific violent crimes (for example, the mean for property vandalized of 4.54 *versus* the mean of 4.11 for robbed or mugged on the street). Another possibility is that the fear-reducing (or trust building) capacity of religion is simply limited, meaning that religious involvement offers enough comfort to reduce fear of property crimes but not the more frightening crimes against the person. As noted, those who report the highest levels of generalized trust are significantly less fearful of both property and violent crime, though individuals who are more muted in their general trust of others showed no significant differences *versus* those who exhibit the lowest levels of trust. This could extend to the forms of trust generated by religious involvement, which may or may not generally extend to areas of social life such as crime. Ultimately, the processes leading to fear of violent crime and fear of property crime may differ. At any rate, why religious involvement would reduce fear of property but not violent crime needs to be determined by further research that could explore how trust is generated within religious institutions, and how this trust is generalized beyond this arena of social life.

The effect of religious attendance was independent of political ideology, community involvement, and demographic variables. Conservatives did not significantly differ in fear of crime

from moderates or liberals, although individuals who seem to be apolitical—those who "haven't thought about" a political ideology—reported less fear of property crime than conservatives. The measure of years lived in the community was significantly and negatively associated with fear of crime across all models. This result could mean simply that residents will reside longer in neighborhoods in which they are less fearful of crime. However, like religious involvement, the length of community tenure potentially indicates the extent to which residents are tied to the community, so it was important to include it as a control. Civic participation was insignificant throughout all models. Regarding the demographic variables, consistent with previous research, men reported less fear of crime than women throughout all four models. Race and education were insignificant across all models.

Feeling safe at night in the neighborhood had the strongest impact upon fear of property and violent crime, and its inclusion greatly increased the R-square for each model. Religious attendance remained significant after adding feeling safe, though its impact slightly decreased. Thus, feelings of safety in the neighborhood may also mediate religion's impact upon fear of crime. Perhaps religious persons are more likely to feel safe in their neighborhood which, in turn, reduces their fear of crime, but in this study religious attendance has a clear direct effect controlling for several variables. In total, the results do not suggest that fear of crime among more religious persons can be explained at all by their conservatism or to a great extent by their attachment to the community or gender.

The results of this study differ from the studies reviewed earlier. Lotz found that religion was not associated with fear of crime at all, and the results of the current study run counter to Lotz's hypothesis that religious conservatives worry more about crime [11]. The current study also differs from Sacco and Nakhaie's conclusion that nonelderly religious persons are more likely to fear crime [13], and Mohammed, Saridakis, and Sookram's finding that persons with a religious affiliation were more likely than those without an affiliation to be fearful of crime [15]. Like O'Mahony and Quinn, the current study did not associate religious *affiliation* with fear of crime [12]. However, their study did not include a measure of religious involvement, which along with other methodological differences, makes it difficult to compare to the current study.

These divergent results from prior studies are quite possibly due to methodological differences. In addition to the use of a small sample that is quite different from those used in the other studies, and that religion was not a focal variable in the other studies, the current study employed different measures of religion and fear of crime. For example, Sacco and Nakhaie and Mohammed, Saridakis, and Sookram used dichotomous measures of religiosity [13,15], and Mohammed, Saridakis, and Sookram used a dichotomous measure of fear of crime [15]. These crude measures simply distinguish between the religious and non-religious and those who are fearful or not fearful of crime, which creates a severe precision problem as there is great variance in the degrees to which people are religious and fearful. Also, Sacco and Nakhaie used behavioral measures of fear of crime, consisting of crime safety behaviors [13], and the current study used the perceptual fear of crime measure developed by Ferraro and LaGrange [5]. Although Sacco and Nakhaie correctly point out that perceptual fear measures are problematic, their approach is also problematic in that they use overt behaviors to indicate an internal emotional state [13]. Crime safety behaviors may be

better viewed as behavioral reactions to crime that potentially affect and result from levels of fear of crime, rather than as a proxy for fear of crime.

3.1. Implications

As noted in previous sections of the manuscript, this study suffers from certain limitations. The sample size of 380 is acceptably large for many types of analysis, but it can create issues when attempting to examine variations across many categories, such as religious denominations. This limited the analyses of religious differences to those of major affiliations, which obscures important denominational differences, as noted in the previous section. For example, those Protestants that adhere to a more conservative theology may have quite different belief systems regarding fear of crime than rather liberal Protestants [34]. Relatedly, more in depth measures of religious beliefs could help more effectively elucidate differences in fear of crime, in a similar manner to recent research which has demonstrated differences in gender beliefs rooted in religious ideology [35].

However, the results reported here indicate that more frequent religious involvement, as measured by worship attendance, is inversely related to fear of property crime. This lends credence to the idea that religious activity provides individuals with access to social networks that provide fear-reducing resources and even facilitate higher levels of generalized trust. If this link is genuine, it represents another positive outcome of religious activity. As discussed earlier, such generalized trust is a crucial element of life in a complex, modern world [20,21]. Even though fear of crime may be beneficial to the extent that it motivates a person to take precautions against victimization, thereby increasing feelings of safety, fear is an undesirable emotion that potentially reduces one's well-being and quality of life [31].

In addition to further expanding our understanding of correlates with fear of crime, future research should examine other important victimization variables as well. It remains to be seen how religious involvement impacts other subjective appraisals of crime threats (e.g., perceived risk and general concern) as well as actual victimization. Also, more research is needed to specify what it is about religion that reduces fear of crime. The trust generated by participation in religious activities is one possibility, but other dimensions of religious life could also be involved in determining levels of fear. More personal religious activities such as prayer, meditation, and reading sacred texts, for example, may serve as routine activities that alleviate one's fears. Individualized religious coping activities such as prayer have also been found to reduce distress [36,37]. However, the current study does suggest that religious involvement is not spuriously related to fear of crime via community attachment or conservative identity. Future researchers should seek to explore the nuances of the general relationship between religion, trust, and fear of crime.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

At one time or another, most of us have experienced fear about becoming the victim of crime. Some crimes probably frighten you more than others. We are interested in how afraid people are in everyday life of being a victim of different kinds of crimes. Please rate your fear on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means you are not afraid at all and ten means you are very afraid. How fearful are you of...

being approached on the street by a beggar or panhandler

being cheated, conned, or swindled out of your money
having someone break into your home while you are away
having someone break into your home while you are there
being raped or sexually assaulted
being murdered
being attacked by someone with a weapon
having your car stolen
being robbed or mugged on the street
having your property damaged by vandals

How safe do you feel out alone in your neighborhood at night. Do you feel.

Very safe
Somewhat safe
Somewhat unsafe
Very unsafe
DON'T KNOW

Have you ever been the victim of a property crime?

YES
NO
DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

Have you ever been the victim of a violent crime?

YES
NO
DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have completed?

Less than high school
Some high school
Graduated high school/GED
Some college/Associate degree/vocational or trade school
College graduate
Graduate or Professional Degree (Master's, Ph.D., M.D., J.D., *etc.*)
REFUSED

Please stop me when I reach the category that best describes you...

White or Caucasian
Black or African American
American Indian or Alaska Native
Asian
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Two or more (SPECIFY)
Other (SPECIFY)

DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

Are you male or female?

Male
Female
Other
REFUSED

Which of the following best describes your political views?

Extremely conservative
Conservative
Slightly conservative
Moderate
Slightly liberal
Liberal
Extremely liberal
Haven't thought about it
DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

How many years have you lived in your community?

LESS THAN ONE YEAR
ONE TO FIVE YEARS
SIX TO TEN YEARS
ELEVEN TO TWENTY YEARS
MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS
ALL YOUR LIFE
DK
REFUSED

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?

People can be trusted
You cannot be too careful
DEPENDS
DK
REFUSED

Now I'd like to ask you about other types of groups and organizations. I'm going to read a list. Just answer 'yes' if you have been involved with this kind of local group in the past 12 months (other options are "no," "don't know," or "refused").

Any organization affiliated with religion
An adult sports club, league or outdoor activity club
A youth organization like the Scouts, 4H clubs,

Boys and Girls Clubs or youth sports leagues
A PTA, PTVO, or other school support or service groups
A veteran's group
A neighborhood, homeowner, or tenant association
How about a neighborhood crime watch group
A senior citizens or older persons group
A charitable organization that provides services to the needy
A labor union, professional, trade, farm, or business association
An environmental group
Service clubs such as the Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, a women's club or other service group
A support group or self-help program for people with specific illnesses, disabilities, problems, or
 addictions, or for their families
Ethnic, nationality, or civil rights organizations
Other public interest or political groups or party committees
A literary or art discussion group or a musical, dancing, or singing group
Any other hobby, investment, or garden clubs or societies

Not including weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Every week
Almost every week
Once or twice a month
A few times a year
Less often than that
DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, another type of Christian, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?

Protestant
Catholic
Other Christian
Jewish
Some other religion
No religion
DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

Schools and Communities of Norm-Awareness

Gabriella Pusztai

Abstract: The relationship between religiosity and educational attainment is an important question in the sociology of religion literature. It is widely contested whether the natural outgrowth of the spreading rational worldview and the increase of educated people can account for the decline of religious adherence. Is there any other explanation for the different opportunities of religious and non-religious societal groups to obtaining the highest educational level? After the political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, one of the most important challenges of restructuring the educational system was how different cultural groups would be able to infuse their own spirituality into their children's education after the domination of the totalitarian ideology. The Hungarian case is unique because of the mixed confessional landscape, the populous Hungarian minority outside the border, the alternating hard and soft periods of religious harassment. Recently, more than half of the Hungarian population can be described as religious in their own way, one sixth strongly affiliated with churches, and another sixth are atheists. However, several studies showed that basic indicators of social status were very strongly and negatively interrelated with religiosity. It turned out that preferred educational views, values, approaches and priorities regarding the norms at schools differ very sharply according to the religious views, and belonging to a religious network significantly supports educational careers. This paper is a comprehensive review of research on the educational functions of denominational schools and religious communities in contemporary Hungary.

1. Introduction and Background

The relationship between religiosity and educational attainment is an important question in the sociology of religion literature. It is widely contested whether the decline in religious adherence is a natural and unavoidable outgrowth due to a spreading rational worldview and the increase of educated people, which is known as the modernization process. Since the educational system plays an equally central role in status attainment, it is worth paying attention to dominant interpretations of religious views in educational institutions, and observing the association between a highly educated population and the level of several indicators of religious practice and belonging. In this respect, it is not obvious what a reliable explanation could be for the different opportunities of religious and non-religious societal groups to obtain the highest educational level. Our paper aims to address this question by summarizing the research findings about school careers of students from denominational schools and religious communities in post-communist Hungary.

Schooling was among one of the most important factors of education in Hungary, and up to the 20th century their value and norm systems were a consistent part of a comprehensive and more or less homogeneous religious culture. From the 11th to the 16th century, schools were maintained by units of the Catholic Church, and subsequent to the expansion of the Reformation, a few parallel

denominational school systems were started. However, from the 18th century, the government endeavored to control and operate the entire school system on the basis of the uniform principle. Contrary to the competitive and restrictive models, cooperation between churches and state was characterized by mutuality and the sharing of tasks, because the modern state invoked churches to help extend the institutional system in the first waves of educational expansion in the 19–20th century. After the Communist takeover in 1948 all schools were nationalized, religious associations and civil movements were eliminated from public life, and only 10 denominational secondary schools were allowed to exist under strict limits [1]. In the new state-controlled schools there was no place for religious instruction. Teachers and students were constrained to acquire and propagate the Marxist ideology [2]. It was a particular subject of instruction, yet aggressive atheism penetrated all elements of the curricular and extracurricular activities and youth movements. Different worldviews and ways of thinking, in particular faith-based world views, were declared to be a dangerous enemy of communism. For this reason, teachers and university lecturers had to report on students' world views before their entrance examinations and final university exams. Religious instruction continued within parishes, but it could attract very few children because, on the one hand, students who were affiliated with religious communities became stigmatized and, on the other hand, a number of clergymen were harassed who attempted to organize youth work. Religious students who expressed their religiosity were discouraged or excluded from applying for higher education. All in all, the disadvantages of religious people could appear similar to the phenomenon in Western Europe, but it was a more complex problem. While several forms of indoctrination and persecution continued until the 1990s, the so called soft dictatorship brought about a much more substantial religious change. It enabled the unambiguous religious revival after 1978 [2] and paved the way for "a reflex-like crude individualism aiming at the accumulation of material wealth and survival" [3].

2. Post-Communist Countries: The Exception or the Rule?

Although from the viewpoint of the sociology of religion, the cultural contrast between European and American religiosity seems to be the most significant present fracture, we can state that the multiple modernities that exist within Europe also have some consequences for the religious landscape and social status of religious people in the Hungary [4]. Euro-secularism, which, according to Berger and workmates [5], is an essential part of European culture, characterizes post-communist countries slightly less or in a different way. One special type of modernity was communist modernity, which mainly influenced previously pre-modern countries, and the changes brought about by this centrally controlled quantitative modernization affected only superficial spheres of society, such as urbanization and industrialization, but the deep structures of society and culture remained intact. There is no doubt that before communist rule, the German and Czech areas were economically the most modern parts of Eastern and Central Europe, and now they are characterized by a strong decline of involvement in the churches, thus showing similarities to Western European societies. In contrast, countries with a traditional social structure that went through socialist modernization are now also the most religious parts of this region, and the role of religion in the construction of personal and national identity is extremely important [6,7]. This seems to support the secularization theory. There have been very large social and economic differences in

Hungary, such as between habitants of the capital city, country towns and villages, and among western, eastern and south-eastern peripheral regions. However, as far as the objective and subjective dimensions of religiosity are concerned, people from developed regions, settlements and from higher strata proved to become more active than others with a lower social status [8].

The superficial socialist and pseudo-modernization era was accompanied by enforced atheism, and met mainly with passive and rarely active resistance from the churches. It is still unexplored to what extent church leaders—who worked under great political pressure—pretended cooperation or were corrupted ideologically, but societies in the region proved to be more religious in places where churches played a crucial role in the collapse of communism (e.g., Poland). It is unquestionable that the underground face of churches with vigorous lay participation in small communities, and in the "movement church" ensured the sole way of pluralization in ideological supply to the society [9]. It seems to confirm the supply-side theory [10]. Where churches yielded to the pressure of the state party, the first-generation separated their spiritual lives from political reality, but the second generation dropped out of churches. They did not become atheists, but they aspired to have advancement in education and careers, and as a result their social ties towards the local religious communities were injured or broken for a few generations. Consequently, after the alternating hard and soft periods of religious harassment, more than half of the Hungarian population can be described as religious in their own way, one sixth are engaged church members, and another one sixth are atheists. In this respect it seems to be consistent with the individualization approach [11]. However, after the fall of communism and following the adoption of a post-material value system, one part of the highly educated young generation turned towards the religious communities [12].

As we are dealing with the relationship between religiosity and educational careers, the focus of our interest is the religiosity of intellectuals, especially of teachers. According to the Euro-secular model, the most influential subculture of intellectuals seemed to be committed to the transmission of secular values also in Central and Eastern Europe, and this phenomenon remained a predominant feature in higher education in post-communist countries [13]. During the decades of communism promotions were awarded mainly on an ideological basis, and achievement was replaced by political reliability. Intellectuals and leaders mostly only took part in religious rites of passage ceremonies secretly, and drew away from regular churchgoing. After the political transformation, intellectuals with overtly alternative world views only very slowly collected enough cultural and social capital to come out from their catacomb-existence [1]. Religious and denominational affiliation counted—and for this reason still counts—as a private matter also in the whole of society [14]. As for the teaching profession, the core element of teacher training was the message that traditional communities (such as churches and also parents) turned children against the official ideology and teachers should keep a check on students not to fall under the influence of a "clerical political reaction" [1].

The confessional landscape is supposed to be an influential factor within the present religious setting in the Central Eastern European region. Secularization has been more intensive in partly Protestant countries, and the proportion of religious Protestants has declined. The most secularized culture is displayed in previous provinces of East Germany and the Czech Republic [15]. Although according to the supply-side theory, confessional pluralism stimulates religiosity, some researchers consider confessional diversity the weak point of resistance to state-facilitated secularization because

in this situation the representatives of the state-party used the "divide et impera" tactics effectively [16]. It is beyond question that confessional pluralism in Central and Eastern Europe has historical roots. The fundamentally mono-confessional blocks of Europe are replaced by the broadest and most manifold multi-confessional belt here: Catholics, Protestants, Orthodoxs and Muslims live close to one another. Ethnic and confessional factors are interrelated and religiosity is stronger in those regions where confessional affiliation functioned as a central component of identity. The Hungarian case is unique because of the mixed confessional landscape and the populous Hungarian minority outside the border. Since 1920 in Romania and Ukraine there have been compact Hungarian ethnic minorities in Romania[1] and in Ukraine. There is a significant gap within levels of religiosity in ethnic Hungarian communities and those in the home-country, the first group lives in a plural religious context and the latter is characterized by greater individualization. This border region is characterized by traditional multi-confessionalism, with a significant protestant presence. More than half of the Hungarian ethnic students belong to the Reformed church, so the proportion of Catholics is somewhat lower. Until recently, religion has been one of the pillars of ethnic Hungarians' national identity in reviving Orthodox context in Romania and in Ukraine. After the communists came into power, Hungarian denominational schools were nationalized also in today's Ukraine (which was the Soviet Union at that time) in 1945, and then simultaneously in Hungary and in Romania in 1948. At the time of the political transformation, the peripheral border areas in the region had an insufficient network of education, and they wanted to fill the gap by opening denominational schools. While in Hungary several denominational schools were opened or re-established, in Romania and in Ukraine there was no legal way for the churches to run schools and receive funding because the dominant Orthodox Church preferred not to run general education schools. Other denominations were not allowed to engage in activities that were incompatible with Orthodox tradition. As a consequence, denominational schools are run by foundations there.

3. Youth Religiosity

In the special tripartite structure of the religiosity of Hungarian society, ecclesiastical religiosity (people who practice their religion within a church) and non-religiosity are two smaller groups of about the same size, whereas the majority—almost every second person—claim to be religious in their own way [17], which is also known as patchwork religiosity. Essentially the same classification applies to young people as well. Tomka observed that basic indicators of social status are very strongly but negatively interrelated with religiosity, but in recent years the tendency seems to have weakened with respect to the frequency of churchgoing. For example, the most highly qualified people (with university degrees) follow the path of the least qualified people. Among young people, highly qualified parents are already overrepresented on both ends of the scale, and practicing young church members come from not only more educated but also economically higher-status

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[1] In Romania the number of Hungarians is 1.5 million living in two compact areas and in diaspora. Apart from the border area, the other compact Hungarian area is in the middle of Rumania in the very Eastern corner of the Carpathian basin. In Ukraine the Hungarian population of 150 thousand lives in a compact community along the border and also in diaspora.

backgrounds, especially in big cities [18]. Young people increasingly practice their religion in small communities, which often surpasses or even replaces their practice in the large community. All research done among young people unanimously contends that religion-based voluntary membership is by far the most popular organized activity among young people, even more popular than sport activities [19]. There are considerable differences between the ethnic Hungarian and home-country youths' religiosity, as more of those in the minority are practicing religiosity.

4. Data and Methods

This paper is intended to summarise a 15-year study of educational functions of denominational schools and religious communities students in post-communist Hungary. We used multiple data sources in our study. First, we used the European Value Survey (EVS) and the World Value Survey (WVS), which are longitudinal, cross-national survey programs. They were designed to investigate moral, religious, political, and social values. Their questionnaire, details about sampling, data collection and databases are available online. We used comparative data from both survey programs, and analysed databases of 4th wave of the European Values Study from 2008. This survey was conducted in 47 countries, and the Hungarian data file contains 1513 cases.

Second, we used data from the serial Hungarian Educational Public-opinion Research organised by Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development. Present analysis is based on the databases from 1999 (N = 1010), 2002 (N = 1000) and 2005 (N = 1278). We compared parental educational value preferences from the different school sectors.

Third, we identified data on denominational schools' students (Family and School Socialization among Pupils at Denominational Schools'1999, N = 1464) as well as on students from different sectors (paralells 2006, N = 1446). The 1999 research was extended to Hungary as a nationwide survey, investigating representative samples of school-leavers in denominational schools. We made a multistep stratified cluster sampling (according to denominations, regions, and the special position and the size of the places of residence). The students filled in the questionnaires by themselves with the help of the inquirer's instructions. In 2006 our study is based on data gathered in the border regions of three Central Eastern European countries, namely Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. As our aim was to detect the sector effect, the most appropriate method seemed to be to observe, just like in experiments, two students groups of approximately similar social backgrounds in different sectors. As we intended to examine the school careers of Hungarian students within and outside Hungary in denominational and non-denominational secondary schools, we picked the schools sampled by pairing each denominational school with a non-denominational one of similar status regarding their location and the students' social position. Thus, the list of sample schools consisted of pairs of schools chosen in the way described above. The students included in the survey picked from the 11th and 12th grades.

Fourth, we used data from a longitudinal survey program conducted by Center for Higher Education Research and Development among Hungarian-speaking higher education students in seven institutions of the above-mentioned border region, which is situated on the eastern edge of the European Higher Education Area. In 2003 freshman (Regional University I. N = 1500), in 2005 finals (Regional University II. N = 952), in 2008 undergraduate (The Impact of Tertiary Education

on Regional Development I. N = 1211) and in 2010 graduate students (The Impact of Tertiary Education on Regional Development II. N = 600) were surveyed. We used cluster sampling in which students were picked at all facilities based on student number and seminar groups were selected at random.

We have already validated our survey results with several methods, from various points of view and with various methodologies. We also compared the results obtained during the application of contextual and multilevel analysis techniques in our investigations to our earlier multivariable analyses [20,21].

5. Religiosity and Educational Values

After the political transformation, one of the most important challenges of restructuring the educational system was to offer the possibility to different cultural groups to pass their own spirituality on through their children's education in a school system affected by the domination of the totalitarian ideology. This was a common task for the whole of Central and Eastern Europe in the post-communist era. Although the previous decades had been characterized by state-supported secularism, after the political transformation, countries of the region were able to find different solutions in the educational field according to their confessional composition, history of religious culture, and educational traditions of churches. In Hungary, teachers' and politicians' views on the role of schools as conveyers of values were most powerfully shaped by the pluralism of values appearing in society and schools on the one hand, and by a liberal attitude to education as a reflexive response to pedagogy of communist period on the other. According to the liberal view, children have a high degree of autonomy in value choices and influences coming from actors traditionally involved in their upbringing (parents and teachers) should be limited in this respect.

According to the Aufbruch (2007) survey, it was a widespread view in post-communist societies that bringing up children is among those activities that are most strongly influenced by religiosity. Half of the respondents in the region thought religious people brought up their children better than non-religious people [22]. Yet the question whether religiosity makes education more effective seemed to divide religious and non-religious respondents. All this suggests that various social groups have sharply different principles on upbringing. International comparative value research shows that Hungary falls in the middle of the scale also with respect to the importance generally attributed to religious upbringing. It is considered more important in Poland, Romania and Slovakia; it is considered less important in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Germany. Between one fifth and one fourth of the population, predominantly but not exclusively those who practice their religion either individually or in a community, place the transmission of religion among the five most important goals of bringing up children in a family. The past two decades has seen the rise of a hard core that gives outstanding importance to religious education in schools. The issue was repeatedly examined in the Hungarian Educational Surveys on education. In 1999 24%, in 2002 18%, and in 2005 40% considered religious education in schools very important, and a further 30–40% considered it somewhat important.

Surveys rarely ask respondents to name components of religious upbringing, but much of it is revealed by the educational values religious people find important. Since the 1990s the difference

between religious and non-religious peoples' orders of educational values appears to be unchanged[2]. Both groups put good manners in the first place, but after that, religious people give more importance to hard work and respect for others, whereas non-religious people give priority to independence. The dominant axis of educational values seems to be the individuality *vs.* community scale, on which religious people are closer to the community pole, while for non-religious people the value of individual freedom overwrites solidarity with the community. The differences on the autonomy *vs.* outer control axis reveal that in the religious system of education, children are less emancipated and are looked upon as creatures needing protection and supervision in the charge of adults, whereas non-religious ideologies tend to accept children's moral autonomy and limited responsibility of adults.

The right of decision on upbringing is an index of ideological character. In the socialist era representatives of institutional education regarded parents as ideologically unreliable, but since the 1990s, parents' right to choose schools has been generally accepted. However, school users are divided as regards children's ability and right to decide. People attached to denominational schools give priority to schools' and parents' responsibility and right of choice. As for the relationship of the two, in accordance with the "in loco parentis" principle, schools can be looked upon as the "extended arms" of families responsible for the upbringing of their children. This idea is essentially different from the principles preferred by public schools, namely children's moral autonomy and their consequent autonomy in the choice of values and the restricted ideological influence of parents and teachers, the traditionally dominant actors of a child's upbringing.

At the same time, however, one has to keep in mind that there is no longer such a unified view on the upbringing of children among practicing religious people as previously, as there are remarkable differences—corresponding to the transforming religiosity of the particular groups—according to the level of schooling [23,24]. The most highly qualified religious people place a sense of responsibility in the first place and respect for others comes third, but good manners, hard work and obedience appears only later (Table 1). This reveals the trend that, while community values retain their priority, the importance of individual autonomy is on the increase in religious groups' educational value systems. The changes in educational values within religious groups might be related to the different types of religiosity among people of different social status. Of more importance, however, is that highly educated religious people's educational values do not become similar to the highly educated non-religious, and the differences become more distinct over time.

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[2]   The order of values were basically similar in the 2008 EVS data and the 1990s' WVS data. The question was about what qualities respondents considered important in child rearing at home.

Table 1. The five most important educational values among Hungarian respondents of various school levels (2008, N = 1513).

Order of Importance	Primary Education		Secondary Education		Higher Education	
	Non-religious	Religious	Non-religious	Religious	Non-religious	Religious
1.	good manners	good manners	good manners	good manners	independence	feeling of responsibility
2	hard work	hard work	independence	hard work	good manners	good manners
3	respect for others	feeling of responsibility	feeling of responsibility	feeling of responsibility	respect for others	respect for others
4	feeling of responsibility	respect for others	hard work	independence	feeling of responsibility	Independence
5	independence	Frugality	respect for others	respect for others	hard work	religious faith

Source: European Value Survey, Hungarian sub-sample

6. Research after Rebuilding Denominational Schools

Hungarian denominational schools are government-financed private schools maintained by a unit of churches and guided (in the spiritual sense) by a church or denomination. Most of our surveys focused on students of denominational schools, since our question was whether and how denominational schools can help overcome educational disadvantage among religious people. However, church adherents have been less qualified, have lived in the villages, and have worked in jobs of lower esteem. Because of their high university acceptance rate in Hungary it was widely believed that denominational schools are elite schools mostly attended by non-religious students of favorable social backgrounds. We found that denominational schools accept a mixture of students from various social and religious backgrounds. Many denominational schools are located in disadvantaged peripheral regions, and almost three-quarters of students in denominational schools come from villages or small towns. Apart from the capital city, where the neglected children of non-religious well-educated parents were in the majority, denominational schools students had an average and lower social status, similar to public secondary school pupils. However, we noted some differences in their social status in that there are fewer intellectuals in leading posts among pupils' parents in denominational schools. In spite of their higher qualifications, these parents do not work in jobs of the highest prestige but rather as subordinate intellectuals, which indicates that the effects of religious people's negative discrimination, typical in former times, were still detectable. There are a larger number of entrepreneurs and fewer unemployed workers among the parents. The reason why these people were driven to set up their own businesses was to avoid unemployment. The number of children per family was well above Hungarian average, and thus the per capita income was lower [1]. As for religious climate in their families, we separated mainly religious families and families who do not practice their religion. The first type is characterized by traditional, multigenerational and church-adhering religiosity, but a more modern type of micro-community worship is also significant. It is clear that the children's socialization is made more effective by the long-lasting unity of the value systems of families and friends. Almost half of all students live in a family characterized by

low-level institutional adherence and group membership, but the majority demonstrate some signs of religiosity.

Our research focused on the composition of school users, their expectations, and the fulfillment of those expectations [1]. We came to the conclusion that students have chosen a denominational school either in hope of direct religious upbringing and moral development or putting their trust in the school's careful and safe atmosphere, assumed because of its religious nature. Thus the main line of expectations is connected with either religiosity or some of its consequential dimensions. Besides this, however, we detected a further function that had been previously ignored, namely reducing inequalities of opportunity among students of culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools achieved that with the help of the social resources of school communities that are based on the safety of norms [1]. According to our results, students' educational careers were influenced—to a much greater extent than by all other explanatory variables—by the strong and organic relationship network within the community of school users. This includes a sense of belonging on the part of parents and children who followed similar norms and formed a community, and, most of all, by the school density of student groups with a circle of friends practicing religion [1,25,]. The same explanatory variables influenced denominational students to refrain from drugs and accept members of different ethnic groups [26]. This influence proved to be even stronger than that of cultural capital on school context. Students having a close circle of religious friends—a phenomenon typical of denominational schools in particular—provide such social capital in the school community that also inspires those who lack this resource themselves.

Whereas the hypothesis on denominational schools as functional communities producing social capital has been a matter of discussion since the 1980s in American research. In Europe it received attention after the turn of the millennium when a Program for International Student Assessment proved that denominational schools had better results than public schools in 14 of the 17 countries [27,28]. When Corten and Dronkers [29] tested the theory of social capital, he grounded his hypothesis on Coleman *et al.*'s concept [30] of a functional school based on shared values. In the original interpretation, the value system of a functional community consists of a coherent unity with a unified system of preferred values, such as: man's life in this and in the other world; man's mission in the world; the individual's dignity irrespective of abilities or social background; paying attention to the teacher and making a decent use of one's talents. These values support one another, forming an efficient and functional system for the community. Coleman emphasizes the cohesive nature of the network (closure) and that there is a general consensus on values in the school community, so he focuses on form and content alike. The existence of an intergenerational closure around the school is often not a measured, but a so-called assumed, variable in surveys concerning denominational students. Dronkers, who insisted on Coleman's formal criteria, found that European data did not support the fact that the functional school community came into being due to parents' frequent personal interaction within the same religious community.

We think that as long as the majority of those belonging to a denominational school community are involved in communal religious practice, we might assume a value consensus among the church adherents and among the members of small groups even without everybody knowing everybody else. Approaching the concept of the functional community from the content element of the structure of

relationships, we concluded that the unity of norms and behavioral patterns is an important element of a consistent value system. A functional community is characterized by harmony between everyday actions and religious norms within the school community. We found that the effectiveness of a denominational school can be explained by the density of religious students who function as a bridge between the school community and the religious community, thereby supplying their fellow students with important and seemingly novel (under modern school circumstances) information such as discipline, respect for the teacher's dignity and conscientious work [31]. In other words, the better achievement of denominational schools may be due to the fact that students do not only mobilize their internal achievement-stimulating norms to their own purposes, but they also make them available to the rest of the school community. The question is what proportion needs to spread new information in the community so that the spillover effect of stimulating norms can reach the other students.

7. An Attempt at Intersectoral Comparison

The next phase of research consisted of searching for answers to several further questions. Our first survey had been conducted only in denominational schools, and for intersectoral comparison we used identical or similar variables available in various national databases. However, those data were collected with different methodologies and often with different variables, so it was necessary to obtain data with the specific aim of intersectoral comparison. Since a populous Hungarian minority lives outside the border, by studying within different school systems it became possible for us to make international and intersectoral comparisons at the same time: to check whether a school community's communal resources with roots in religiosity function similarly in the education systems of three different states. Above all, we wanted to find out, whether there were any differences between the student populations which are seemingly similar in status in the two sectors. As regards students' religious backgrounds, there are considerable differences between the sectors of the school systems. Although all three types of religiosity are present among denominational school students' parents, more than double are practicing compared to public schools. However, it is our conviction that, when researching school processes, it is not sufficient to examine only the characteristics of individuals and families, since pupils connected via an organizational framework will obtain new and common characteristics. In this respect, we treated the religious practice of pupils as a characteristic of school communities. One fourth of the pupils attend schools where adherents of religion are in the minority, and almost one third of the sample attend schools where three fourths of the pupils are believers by personal conviction. Therefore, we could see that while pupils in non-denominational schools can study in very heterogeneous environments in this respect, the denominational school students are present in a predominantly religious environment. In connection with building friendships, the school itself provides the greatest source. Whilst in non-denominational schools, students make friends at places of amusement and during hobby activities, in denominational schools, it is the religious communities and the dormitory that prove to be the most determining source for making friends.

We have also concluded that even in the case of a student population having approximately similar socio-economic status indicators, there is a significant intersectoral difference, which is due

to the distribution of the students among the schools. Non-denominational schools turned out to be socially closed and segmented, compared to their denominational counterparts. Non-denominational students go to schools which can be classified socially into five different groups according to the social composition of the schools. On one end of the scale, we find schools where the rate of parents with degrees is only 10%, whereas on the other end this rate is over 60%. There are no such social cases in denominational schools. It confirms the thesis that if a school is organized on a religious basis, identification with the religious community overwrites the vertical structure of social status in recruiting students [32].

Besides this, we mainly focused on exploring the nature and effects of special contexts in schools. Using the various dimensions of achievement we created a summarizing index of achievement that included aspects such as taking on extra academic work (taking language exams, participating in competitions), planning one's future academic career (higher education) and a subjective element, namely the importance attached to academic activities. The aim of the dominant part of our study was to find what elements of the school context are able to moderate the reproductive effects of the school. According to our findings, school context strongly influences school performance. The individual-level influence of parental social status can be reduced by school context rates of parental education mostly in the denominational sector where the school system was less divided into social castes. The second source is students' personal religious practice enabling them to work persistently and ambitiously, act purposefully with strong self-control and respect the work of others (teachers and classmates). The third source is students' relationship networks developing predominantly along religious communities and appearing as an indirect consequence of religiosity in that cooperating students in the relationship network support one another's purposeful and disciplined academic work [33]. The school density of those linked to religious networks modifies the individual and context-level determinisms of social status, albeit in a very discrepant manner. Whilst in the non-denominational sector it has barely any effect, in the denominational sector it becomes the dominant compensating factor. It is likely that the members of religion-based networks need to be present in the school context in considerable density to be able to influence their peers coming from disadvantaged backgrounds for cooperation with the school and teachers, academic performance, and balanced work [34].

8. Norms Related to Studying in Denominational Schools

Here we summarize our findings not only about attitudes to academic achievement, but also to academic work itself. This is of utmost importance in our region according to the fundamental hypothesis that the high achievement of denominational schools might be due to the fact that the community of students generally accept norms related to the importance of studying and sense of duty, and these values are also supported by a transcendent set of arguments [35-37]. The same argument is present in the pedagogical documents of the surveyed schools, but it will produce real effects only if it appears in the personal opinions of the widest possible circle of students. In order to detect possible intersectoral differences, we asked students about the importance of various activities related to studying. The examined variables were school attendance, studying, receiving good marks, prospects of higher education and paying attention in class. To get a feel of the context, we also

wanted to know how important students thought those activities were to their friends, classmates and student hostel roommates. Having looked at the entire sample, we found that secondary-school students gave the highest priority to continuing to higher education and the lowest to paying attention in class. It was noteworthy that students, irrespective of sector, tended to group themselves more than their peers among those to whom school-related activities were very important. That is to say, their intended and realized attitudes to studying showed some discrepancy, as the majority seemed to be less devoted from the outside than they themselves claimed to be. That is why it became necessary to examine the peer environment. Our data enabled us not to base our analysis on self-evaluating individual-level answers, but on attitudes appearing on the context level.

In regards to attitudes attributed to friends, about one fifth of the students were helped by a uniformly supportive environment, and when evaluating their friends' attitudes to school activities, students came up with a wider range of attitudes than during the expression of their own opinions. On the whole, every tenth student attended a class where studying was important for everybody, whereas in the classes of at least every fourth student those who really wanted to study and get good marks were in the minority. We were surprised to find that half of the students spent their days in classes where the prevailing norm was not paying attention during lessons. It is only enough to imagine this learning environment in order to make sure it hinders students' achievement not only through its contextual influence but also in its physical reality. In contrast, classes in denominational schools were much more unanimous that it was important to pay attention in class and they were somewhat more homogeneous in their opinions on the importance of school attendance. These were the two variables that typically produced intersectoral differences. Instrumental and credentialist elements of school activities, such as getting good marks, going on to higher education and preparation for classes were regarded as indispensable also in the non-denominational sector, but school attendance and paying attention to the teacher in class was of utmost importance to students in the denominational sector. The reason why school attendance stands out from the other activities may be due to the great appreciation of involvement in the school community, which, as research shows, is one of the most frequent motives for choosing a denominational secondary school. It is an interesting question why denominational students give more importance to paying attention in class. Possible motives might be a kind of utilitarianism—to reduce home preparation time—or rather the acknowledgement and appreciation of, and tolerance towards, discipline in class and the teacher's work. We suppose the former is the result of home-acquired behavioral patterns, which correspond with the inner logic of the school system, whereas the latter may be a consequence of religiosity.

Our hypotheses about students coming from families with high cultural capital were not borne out, as they did not consider either school attendance or paying attention more important than average. On the contrary, it was exactly students whose fathers did not have a degree that seemed to take paying attention in class somewhat more seriously. Among pupils with high cultural capital, going on to higher education, getting good marks and studying was slightly but not remarkably more important than average. What we found significant was that there was a particularly strong correlation between religiosity on the one hand and school attendance and paying attention on the other. Religious students' attitudes to school activities were definitely better in all respects, regardless of whether they practiced individually or in a community (Figure 1). All this suggests that

the high density of students with religious practice in the school context may shift the prevailing studying-related norms of the school community in a favorable direction. That is to say, we have discovered a marked distinguishing feature of the learning environment of denominational schools [38].

Figure 1. Proportion of those who consider studying-related activities important within their circle of friends.
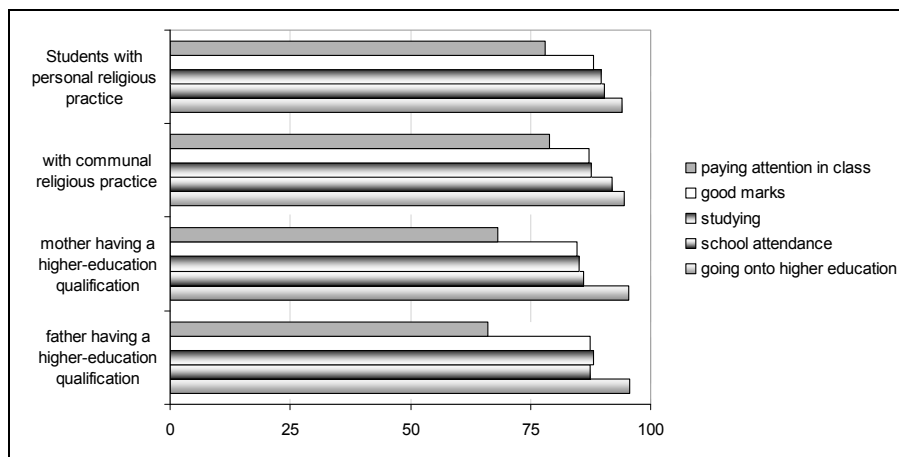
Source: Paralells'2006, N = 1446

9. Religious Interpretive Communities in Higher Education

We consider attitudes towards academic work to be a very important predictor of adult job attitudes and occupational status. Our research team has been conducting surveys for a decade among higher education students in the above mentioned border region. The focus of our research has been how religious students or students coming from denominational secondary schools are socialized and how well they achieve higher education. In this area one fifth of undergrad students and one fourth of master students belong to a religious small community (in 2008 and 2010).

During the communist decades not only were previous social identities discredited, but also moral consciousness and social cohesion. Dual morality was widespread in socialist countries: several generations grew up believing that "socialist ethics" and practical ethics were separable. After the transition to democracy, the system of norms was further challenged by the performance pressure post-socialist societies had to face both on individual and social levels in the process of joining the developed world [39]. The perception of the young generation, that fortune of the new economic and political elites was based not always on honest work, caused uncertainty in norms, anomie. This attitude seems to be all the more important in the status attainment process, because not only the politicians but the employers increasingly count on the development of dedicated attitudes to work, ethical awareness and self-improvement as the most important outputs of higher education [40,41]. The results of all of our surveys clearly showed that former denominational schools' students and members of religious communities had very favorable attitudes towards work [37,42-43]. Whereas our earlier results showed significant differences in future career plans, our recent findings also

contained considerable differences in the moral awareness of students' work between students with religion-based and other relationship networks.

Higher education, which is generally characterized by a relatively open goal-system, loose control-mechanisms and high fragmentation, serves as the first opportunity for students to work and organize their activities independently. According to our findings, fair academic behavior of students (for example reading obligatory and recommended literature, not buying their thesis, not using crib-sheet, not learning for money, attending all lessons, no plagiarism, working for diploma, learning hard) differ regarding the religious education and community experiences (Figure 2). We can state that it is a consequent trend that also formal, informal and non-formal types of religious education can prove standard norms and a high level of moral awareness.

Figure 2. Level of moral awareness of undergrad students according to religious environment.
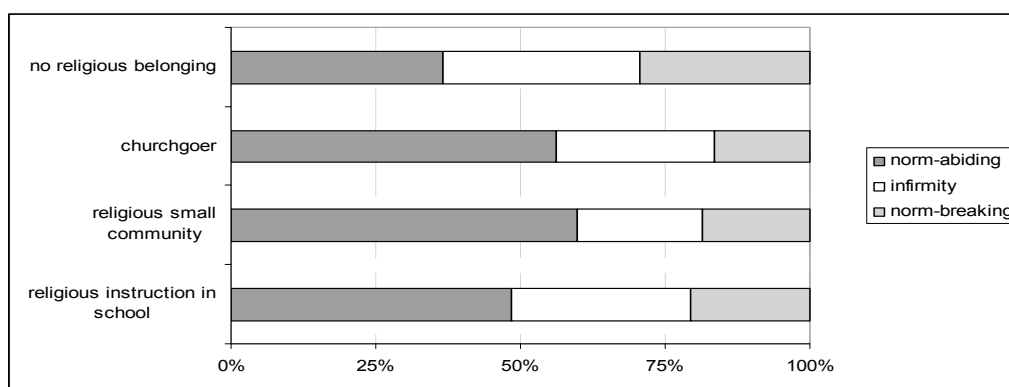
Source: The Impact of Tertiary Education on Regional Development I. N = 1211

During the social and economic restructuring, mass redundancy, a high level of unemployment and job insecurity became frequent phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, young generations are threatened by meaninglessness and they have to adapt to living with unemployment. The ways of how students enter and get along in the world of work reveal different attitudes. As for the positive attitudes towards socially useful work, there is more empirical evidence among students who take part in any kind of religious education. Interregional research has shown that they are determined to get a job and they can be outstandingly characterized by an altruist attitude towards work. They have a coherent image of work, in which the central elements are responsibility, helping others, social usefulness, dealing with people and team work. Students from other school sectors, however, consider advancement in career, prospects for promotion, and high salary important [37].

The process and main agents of student socialization seem to have changed, as the role- concept and the interpretation of norms and views about desirable learning outcomes are not clear-cut and purposefully transmitted. They depend on the meanings constructed in students' context. Since it is more effective than any curriculum or pedagogical method in higher education, the interpretive communities and the diffusions of different reality constructions within the student society at the individual campuses is worth highlighting. Religion-based interpretive communities have proven to be among the most influential agents in transmitting higher educational values. Perhaps the values and norms dominant in religious interpretative communities assists in reducing the

social disadvantage of religious people, and this is not only for their own benefit, but also for larger communities.

10. Conclusions

This article has given a comprehensive review of our research on the correlation between religiosity and school careers. We maintain that modernization took place in Central and Eastern Europe differently than in Western Europe. The so-called pseudo-modernization that the majority of the region underwent did not affect the deep structure of society. People did not cut ties with religious institutions due to their own spontaneous individual decisions. Under political pressure, the process took place only on the surface. As a result, however, the past decades have seen the appearance of a large social and demographic gap between religious and non-religious people. Looking at young people's religiosity 20 years after the political transformation one can see that religious practice, both personal and in communities, especially small ones, is more frequent among children of higher-status parents or young people studying at higher levels than among lower-status youths. In recent years we have demonstrated, in several analyses, the academic achievement advantage of those involved in religion-based relationship networks. In this study we have summarized our findings that belonging to a religious community constitutes a clear separation between educational values and attitudes to academic work both in schools and higher education, which foreshadows the probable future attitude to work. We have attempted to approach the problem of how—with what mediation—religion contributes to a successful school career, which is one of the key issues of the sociology of religion. The above results are very important and unique in the surveyed region, and call for further analysis and research. They shed light upon the fact that the correlation between academic career, social advancement, high status, and religiosity do not necessarily follow the Western European secular model. High status is not always accompanied by decreasing religiosity and individualism that seeks one's own accomplishment. Instead, there is another model in which dedication to community interests and high academic achievement can support social advancement, and be influenced by the interpretation of norms by a religious community based on cohesive relationships.

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Section III. Conceptual and Review Papers

Diffused Religion and Prayer

Roberto Cipriani

Abstract: It is quite likely that the origins of prayer are to be found in ancient mourning and bereavement rites. Primeval ritual prayer was codified and handed down socially to become a deep-rooted feature of people's cultural behavior, so much so, that it may surface again several years later, in the face of death, danger, need, even in the case of relapse from faith and religious practice. Modes of prayer depend on religious experience, on relations between personal prayer and political action, between prayer and forgiveness, and between prayer and approaches to religions. Various forms of prayer exist, from the covert-hidden to the overt-manifest kind. How can they be investigated? How can one, for instance, explore mental prayer? These issues regard the canon of diffused religion and, therefore, of diffused prayer.

The Idea of Diffused Religion

"Diffused religion" is a concept that requires clarification [1]. In this article the term "diffused" refers particularly and not only to Italy and is approached in at least two ways. First of all, religion is "diffused" in that it involves vast sectors of the Italian population and goes beyond the simple limits of ecclesiastical religion; sometimes it is even in evident contrast with church religion and religious motivation (see, for example, the keen debate about the referenda on divorce and abortion generated within Italian Catholicism). Secondly, it is widespread because it is the historical and cultural result of the almost bi-millennial presence of the Catholic institution in Italy and the outcome of its socializing and legitimizing action over time. The premises of present-day "diffused religion" in Italy were laid down many centuries ago and have evolved and changed down through the ages. As we have just said, "diffused religion" concerns broad strata of the Italian population. Numerous studies carried out over time appear to confirm this state of affairs. However, what strikes one most is the strength of the geographical and historical roots of Italy's most commonly practiced religion. It is the very strength of tradition, of practice, of family and community involvement which makes membership of the prevalent religion compelling, almost inevitable. Where socialization within the family fails to arrive, pastoral activity and evangelization, carried out in a capillary fashion by priests and lay parish workers, do.

The true significance and impact of "diffused religion" can be understood simply by observing its peculiarities. In a broader sense, its presence is clearly visible even in domains less obvious than the church, although its visibility may be somewhat intermittent at times. Some of the values widely shared by Italian society may be seen as manifestations of disagreement with canonical Catholic thinking. Because Italian society shows a peculiar tendency towards civil freedom and ethical pluralism, in terms of attitudes and behavior, Italians often appear to disagree with the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the Catholic perspective is dominant in many

areas, Italian society often opts for a different set of values, though not fundamentally in contrast with Catholic social doctrine. Italian society is like a separate sphere which promotes models of freedom and open discussion, not always in line with the official position of the Catholic Church. This leads to the creation of a public sphere, where religion is not the sole reference point, where other perspectives are brought into play, generating a defense mechanism against the influence of the Catholic Church and its capacity for religious socialization. In reality, diffused religion is spread both "in" (through) many channels of socialization and education (mainly schools and universities) and "by" (thanks to) specific structures and actions which represent and promote particular values. Furthermore, religion is also diffused "for" (in favor of) other religious groups and movements, given that—beyond the intentions of the so-called "church religion"—we may witness the spread of other creeds (easy proselytism by Christian organizations other than the Roman Catholic Church, like the "Jehovah's Witnesses", or by "sects" of eastern origin, *etc*.); it may also impact favorably on ethical and/or political involvement. In brief, it is also possible to consider "diffused" religion as acceptance of other religions at individual or group level, also because it represents a parameter capable of underscoring and evaluating and measuring moral and/or political choices within society.

The Role of Diffused Religion and Prayer

Diffused religion, seen, generally speaking, as a set of values, practices, beliefs, symbols, attitudes and modes of behavior which do not conform to official church-religion models, is typical, if not entirely, at least in large part, of substantial sectors of civil society. Diffused religion does not coincide perfectly with the whole of civil society although it certainly regards a statistically relevant part of it. In other words, it embraces large sectors of society and is representative of many of society's commonly-shared attitudes towards the Church (or churches). We can say, therefore, that civil society does not overlap diffused religion completely, seeing that it includes not only church-religion, but atheism, indifference and agnosticism as well. Nevertheless, diffused religion seems to underscore quite a number of essential issues, which achieve significance thanks to their influence on society on the whole. However, a distinction between diffused and civil religion is mandatory. It is not a question of adopting the idea Rousseau (1712-1778) expressed in his *Social Contract* (chap. VIII, book IV) or the more recent concepts advanced of Bellah [2]. Neither fit the Italian case. Rousseau's idea was developed in the eighteenth century, and was characterized by strong pedagogical-philosophical connotations.

Bellah's concept, although contemporary and sociological, regarded the United States, which is a nation with religious notions quite alien to those of Italians (concepts like those of "chosen people" or the centrality of Holy Scripture, for instance, are foreign to the Italian mentality). Above all, the idea that religion as such may be replaced by society would not be legitimized in Italy: religion is one thing, society quite another, at least as far as sociological analysis is concerned. Another difference between diffused religion and civil religion belongs to the domain of mass psychology. The religious element is often capable of producing unity and harmony among individuals or groups otherwise at loggerheads with each other. Thus, religious identity can at times compensate partially for lack of national identity. Seen from this point of view, civil religion is believed to have contributed significantly towards the birth and development of the United States of America. In Italy,

to the contrary, religious fervor impeded and delayed the achievement of territorial unity. At most, one may speak of a diffused type of religion within civil society, and even of a civil religion (to be redefined each time) within secular society.

On the other hand, the role of diffused religion is primarily that of providing a self-defense mechanism for non-conformist believers, for those believers who are not attuned to the doctrine and directives of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. One undesired effect of forms of diffused religion not particularly bent on ignoring or contesting official dogma which must be taken into consideration is a certain tendency to favor individualized thought and action, with the result that active participation in movements in favor of civil and political social betterment is slackened. If one presumes that the civil and political aspects of society are closely connected and mutually functional, one must say the same of diffused religion, which is capable of legitimating, though indirectly, the religious structures underscoring its own milieu. In conclusion, it is an 'inextricable intricacy': diffused religion supports the Church anyway, and both, together, support the civil society of which they constitute a significant part. Furthermore, the virtuous behavior of individuals can provide the *status quo* with considerable support, as compliance with existing norms by single citizens helps reinforce it significantly.

With the emergence of religious sociology or, more appropriately, of the sociology of religion, as an autonomous and non-confessional science, the problem of devising adequate indicators of religious phenomena and of individual and collective experience also emerged. At first, it was assumed that weekly attendance at religious services might be considered a reliable marker, as this practice could be regarded as a real and visible measure of attitude. Therefore, in questionnaires, the questions administered were mostly aimed at ascertaining the number of times interviewees attended the official rituals organized by the religion to which they belonged. Later, however, doubts emerged regarding the reliability of similar data, which were based more on the extemporary statements of the interviewees than on real, empirically verifiable practice. Above all, it was discovered that attendance at mass or any other form of worship might often depend on motivations not necessarily or strictly connected with religious conviction: this led to further heuristic interpretations, aimed at ascertaining the intensity of a creed and its related practice. The first qualitative research projects then began to allow interviewees to express themselves more openly, granting them greater freedom when organizing their discourse, providing accounts of their experiences and definitions of their religious feelings. New realities then emerged and other, more evident data resulted which permitted further interpretations to arise within the panorama of the sociology of religion.

More than the observance of feast days, what emerged was the impact of belief on everyday life, the importance of ordinary religious experiences, regardless of liturgical celebration and without the presence of officiants legitimated by other religious institutions. These experiences had a clear bearing on people's own values, to their choices, on their personal beliefs, on personal kinds of religiosity as against hierarchical expressions of religiosity typical of church religion, without creating any real fracture with them. Meanwhile, the development and affirmation of new, so-called "non-standard" or non-quantitative methodologies led to the discovery of numerous life histories, of attitudes and behavior styles which were not easy to access previously, when numerical dimension, percentages, statistical correlations were practically the only means used. Thanks also to the development of computer programs dedicated to qualitative analysis, it is possible to examine social-religious

phenomenology in greater depth, and to reveal personal life-paths, not always in compliance with classical, traditional parameters (that is, with Durkheimian and/or Weberian, conceptual categories) and whose independence from institutional religion may be seen as ushering in future developments. One must add that the importance of prayer of a mainly individual-connotation type had been pointed out by quantitative research too. The empirical information to this regard was clear: there are many more people who pray than those who go to church.

Currently it seems that although the rate of attendance at regular religious worship is decreasing, recourse to direct dialogue with the divinity (whether as a form of personal invocation or one based on formulae learnt during religious socialization, or a simple conversation with the supernatural interlocutor practically considered a peer) appears to remain stable. Each of the different modalities of interaction between human beings and the supreme being, whom people may call god, does not appear as the result of impromptu spontaneity, but rather as the historical consequence of a long-term radicalization process of practices and experiences, which in some cases are thousands of years old. The various, more or less formalized, religious organizations, operating down through the ages, have created the premise for a long and solid permanence of behavioral patterns which cannot be easily eradicated or marginalized. Prayer is an aspect of these patterns, the outcome of lasting and efficient action, which has led several, successive generations of social actors to avail of it in certain more or less predictable circumstances, which continue to appear fundamentally the same, despite the passage of time. It is by no mere fluke, therefore, that today there is a return, among Catholics, to the gestures one sees in the drawings and graffiti found in the catacombs, where those who pray are depicted with raised open arms, the same posture assumed again today by the congregation when reciting the *Lord's Prayer* during mass.

It is not difficult to imagine that many of the conventions concerning prayer have been handed down from century to century essentially as an underpinning of mnemonic recollection of sacred texts, of the most commonly used formulae, of continuously repeated ejaculations, of the rhymed, rhythmic formularies which act as a formidable aid to memorization and recall. Furthermore, the existence of stock formulae, which are also provided with the ecclesiastical *imprimatur*, or at least officially recognized by the hierarchy, constitutes a significant anchor for those individuals who are not overly familiar with personalized religious solutions, and are therefore inclined to take refuge in what has been transmitted orally or in small, pocket-size texts, easily to access and use. One should not forget that the basic catechism regarding rites of passage and access to the sacraments is taught mainly through reference to prayers, ritual formulae, the recitation of verses and brief sentences. It is no coincidence that the so-called "Pius X catechism" is a list of simple, concise questions and answers, easy to learn by heart and required to pass the exams foreseen for admission to the sacraments. This is why this portion and potion of diffused religion stands the test of time and resists almost everything, the weakening of belief and practice as well as the almost complete estrangement from the religious links of one's early social life.

Besides the church as an institution, the family also contributes significantly to the instruction of the new generations, both as far as exemplary conduct, and the theory and ideology underscoring their fundamental religious beliefs, are concerned. The religious scenario of the family is generally not foreign to the framework of norms that accompanies and orientates adolescents and young people

during their development and maturity. Finally, other institutions contribute in a similar manner, proposing pathways, systems, solutions, to be resorted to again in the future. Thus, prayer itself, although not always consolidated as a "habit of the heart" in Bellah's terms [3], surfaces once more even when other religious habits have been forsaken.

The Historical Roots of Prayer

The origins of prayer are still the object of study, mainly by historians, anthropologists and sociologists. Stemming, most probably, from the quest for a super-natural interlocutor, a variety of factors converge to produce the act we call prayer. Of considerable significance to this regard is the thesis of Ernesto de Martino, who wrote that: "in primitive civilizations and in the ancient world, a noteworthy part of man's technical endeavor aimed not so much at technical dominion over nature (where after all technology found only limited application), but at the creation of institutional forms capable of protecting his presence from the risk of absence from the world. Nowadays the need for this technical protection, constitutes the origin of religious life as a mythical-ritual order" [4]. The risks run by human beings in the ancient world were all pretty well defined: wild animals, unknown territories, lack of water and food, atmospheric phenomena, death of livestock, diseases.

Currently we are better equipped against such dangers, but the risk of one's own death or of that of a member of the family still persists. The threat is common to all generations and populations. There is, therefore, a diachronic line crossing the millennia, which, in the ancient world produced expressions like funeral mourning [5]. Furthermore de Martino adds [6], the sacred may be seen as a "mythical-ritual technique capable of protecting presence against the risk of absence from history". Ancient sacred funeral lamentation ritual converges with prayer: it may be expressed individually or as a collective act; it may be initiated and conducted by one or more alternating prayer-leaders; it may be accompanied by ritual gestures; it may follow a particular procedural order; it may contain responsorial forms; it may involve choral participation; it may avail of refrain; it may also contemplate free development or alternating recitation between groups of people; its character can be at once narrative, evaluative and interpretative; it may often lead to dramatic ritual gestures of resolution such as the tearing of clothes or self-inflicted bodily harm (a sort of final *amen* meaning "resting on", *i.e.*, "to have faith", in short, acceptance of the fact that things are as they should be, that belief is ill-suited to demonstrations of despair or infliction of self-punishment, unless as an expression of resignation, of surrender to a superior will, of implicit and joint recognition of the inanity of human action in the face of divine power: "this is so, because this is the way You want it to be").

The theme of death remains that most capable of creating parity between funeral lament and prayer. It provides a more or less conscious answer to some lacerating questions: why is life interrupted? Who is the real master of life? Why does the end of existence strike some, and not others? How can this lethal risk be faced? Or, how can the risk be made, after Luhmann [7], more tolerable through religious mediation? And after all, are not lamentations and prayers for the dead both inspired by the need to compensate the imbalance created in the social body by the death of one of its members? Lament and prayer are elaborations of the mourning process, or of the intention to attribute meaning to death and life alike. Rather than suicide, to which the survivors might wish to

resort, an alternative is available in ritual (whether crying or praying). Thus, "undoubtedly, rites capable of resolving the suicidal impulse through equivalent attenuated and symbolic acts, must be intended as dramatic measures, to be taken each time in the concrete event of single laments [...] On the other hand, the mimicry of the ritualized *planctus* appears in the ancient lament as oriented towards a progressive symbolic diminution of the current crisis, in the place of real suicide: passing from the incision of the flesh—in an established measure—to some less demanding forms of allusive annihilation, such as hitting oneself, plucking one's beard or hair, smearing oneself with dust *as if* buried, spreading one's head with soil *as if* cremated, allowing oneself to collapse on the ground *as if* fulgurated by death, and other mortifying and abject acts representing in relatively milder forms the *as if* of the will to die" [8]. At this point, it is possible to hypothesize that praying for the dead is itself a form of attenuation of the *cupio dissolvi,* of the desire to die, along with the loved one who has actually died. However, in a metaphorical sense also, prayer, even when not specifically related to death, has nonetheless a latent implication that refers to the ultimate moment of human existence: one prays to give thanks for being saved from danger; to overcome the risk of non-survival; as a form of *captatio benevolentiae*, that is to attract the special attention of the supreme being; one prays to be allowed to continue one's own existence; to praise the divinity and its benevolence; to obtain and experience danger-free situations. In ancient times, primeval acts of prayer, spontaneous exteriorizations of individual pain and fear of death, became social rituals because the death of the individual affected the whole community and not only the single mourner or mourners.

Generation after generation these ritual expressions of bereavement and grief were codified and transmitted socially by the family or the religious community or both. The repertoire of formulaic orisons was enlarged to embrace a vast range of human needs and handed down from parent to child, from celebrant to congregation. The prayers thus developed were learned and taught especially during infancy and childhood to all the members of a community, which custom can help explain why even lapsed believers, many years after they have rejected their faith and/or church, in moments of danger, stress, need, above all in the face of death, recur to prayer as a reaction, a strongly ingrained cultural reflex acquired when young.

An eloquent example of the social purpose of ritual prayer is provided by the still-practiced custom of blessing fields. In actual fact, it is on a good harvest that the life of single individuals and entire communities depends. The act of blessing the land contains the intention of banishing potential drought, destruction of seeds and crops. Given that much seems to be uncertain, or independent of human will, divine protection is invoked to avoid deadly risks. Also the precautionary and preventive action of blessing is complementary to the subsequent action of giving thanks (formalized in the USA as the national festivity of Thanksgiving Day). Not only do both practices relate to the main reference point, which is divine rather than earthly, but, above all, they do not exclude demands linked to the relationship between life and death, abundance and want, protection and danger, sowing and harvesting, between material and spiritual reward. The privileged connection between prayer and difficulty is demonstrated at biblical level by the so-called *Lamentations,* generally attributed to Jeremiah (650-586 B.C.), but, dating back in actual fact, to a community of Jews recalling the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The five "books" of *Lamentations* enter progressively into a rapport with the genre of remembrance, mourning, one might say, for the end of the holy city of

Jerusalem. Their recitation is both individual and collective: the topic is the demolished city, but there is also an invocation to the Lord, who is "just" (verse 18) and sees "how overwhelming is the anguish" (verse 20). So once more the lament becomes prayer, request for help, peroration (from the Latin verb *per-orare*), as it can be seen in the last verses of the fifth and final Lamentation: *Restore us to yourself, Lord that we may return; renew our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.*

Continuity and Contiguity of the Forms of Prayer

How can the connections between present-day and more ancient phenomenology be identified? Lévi-Strauss, as it is known, looked for these connections studying populations which had not yet been in touch with processes of modernization [8]. In our case, as far as the Euro-Mediterranean area of Greek and Roman funeral mourning is concerned, we can refer to the Sardinian culture of the *attittadoras* [9], the keening women who still participate in funeral rituals, and who present characteristics similar to those of keeners in Egypt, Greece, Romania, Lucania, Calabria, Campania (the latter with the peculiarity of the *ritornelli asseverativi*, that is the asseverative refrains where a chorus of women confirms what the chief keener says about the deceased, or the use of the *riepito battuto*, that is a vocal lament accompanied by the action of hitting oneself) [10]. Not dissimilar is the lamentation documented by Koppers [11] in the Yamana population, referred to by de Martino.

Being insular, the culture of Sardinia is a very useful source of diachronic analysis, as in a similar context it is possible to witness enduring features that in other places have been mitigated or have disappeared altogether. Such is the case of the *goigs* or *gosos*, religious hymns, most probably of Catalan origin and dating back to medieval times: "they are characterized by aspects of praise, and by narrative-emblematic and descriptive content, aimed at emphasizing the merits, virtues, sanctifying graces of Christ, the Virgin and the Saints". They might be considered as belonging to the laudatory category of prayer. Their structure is such that they are easy to transmit orally. Their form was originally ecclesiastical and cultured, but, as in the case of many other chants (for instance the *canto delle zitelle*, the chant of the spinsters performed at the Sanctuary of the Holy Trinity in Vallepietra) it has undergone a process of simplification due to popular intervention which reduces the role of the institutionalized clergy while the laity emerges as protagonist, innovating and proposing new chants and new prayers in honor of Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints.

In conclusion, if originally the *goigs* or *gogos* were dedicated, in the troubadour tradition, to women or to the knights' "madonnas", they were later modified to pay homage to the Mother of God (*Mar de Deu*) and therefore also to the Saints. The *Ave Maria* itself, sung in the various Sardinian dialects according to a consolidated popular tradition, when all comes to all, is not very different from the religious *gosos*. Besides, the *gosos* were also used to protest against both the religious and political establishment (as some events demonstrate clearly). The *goigs* became *gogos* with the Spanish domination in Sardinia; not only, they sought symbiosis with the more ancient Byzantine patterns already present in the island. Lastly, "in the *gosos*, as in the case of the *goigs*, the exemplary and thaumaturgical qualities of the Saints to which they were dedicated were exalted. The hymn concluded with an oration in the form of a plea to the Saint begging mercy for oneself, for one's relatives, for the community" [12]. The plea for mercy is a logical consequence of the series of praises

sung in honor of the saint: this way there is a transition from eulogistic prayer to pleading, an appeal for help. There is a further element which leads the *gogos* back to a single tradition: they are performed in rural contexts and at key moments of the agricultural cycle. A fact that ties in with the tradition of blessing fields and the act of giving thanks for a good harvest, as mentioned above.

The exorcistic, apotropaic character of some religious invocations belonging to the realm of prayer, is again to be found in Sardinia, that is, in a cultural context which more than others has maintained the traces of a centuries-old tradition, in exorcizing formulae—called and not by chance *preghieras* (prayers)—with which people talk to the saints, pleading for mercy. The rhetorical devices, the figures, the metaphors, the tropes constellating the *preghieras* are numerous; these compositions are rich in symbolic content peculiar to folklore, where for instance the expression "born with a shirt" (to be born lucky) is associated with "the symbol of the plea to the Madonna or to Jesus for the "gift" of luck auspicated in the form of protection. The future of even one day is always disconcerting for the individual and the community; and disconcert can become paralysis, without the intervention of prayer" [13]. In the Sardinian cultural tradition, there are also the *historiolae*, which have already been studied by de Martino [14] in *Sud e magia* (South and Magic). These are *exempla*, examples in form of tales that justify and reinforce certain behavior, including recourse to prayer as an effective solution in the face of difficulty. A modality quite close to that of the Sardinian *preghieras* is found elsewhere in Italy, for instance in Lucania [15], with reference to prayers to God, to the Madonna and the saints, in particular, Saint Nicholas [16]. Unique forms of prayer also exist: the wearable-hidden prayer and the overt-manifest prayer. The former is kept in a cameo or medal, hidden from the sight of others, worn underneath one's clothes; the latter is attached to a house window, or a vehicle, for protection from the evil coming from the outside world.

Perhaps the most meaningful contribution to the study of prayer is provided by Heiler's book, first published in German as *Das Gebet* in 1918 and afterwards in English as *Prayer* in 1932 [17] (by the way, it seems useful to remember that since 1909 Éditions Félix Alcan in Paris printed the thesis of Marcel Mauss on prayer but the author asked not to publish it even though he distributed some copies and quoted it many times). Heiler distinguishes between seven types of prayer: secular (spirituality), primitive, ritual, cultural (Greek), philosophical, mystical, prophetic. Each of them has a specific reference context and a number of characterizing features: secular spirituality is a conversation with god but within the world, that is to say, nature; primitive prayer concerns the risks of life, therefore fear and needs, but it goes beyond ancient cultures and reaches industrial societies too; ritual prayer is in line with Durkheim's approach (according to his definition of religion as a set of rites and beliefs) and is based on repetitive formulae which derive from superstition (and magic) and are aimed at obtaining results; Greek prayer stems from classical Greek culture and insists much more on ethical needs; philosophical prayer regards relationships between the deity and nature; mystical prayer communicates and converses with god; prophetic prayer is at the apex of relationship with god because it follows the biblical tradition where prophets are able to speak directly and personally to god, without intermediation, magic formulae or mnemonic prayer.

The Diffused Religion of Prayer

The practice of prayer, which, for Marcel Mauss [18], as we know, is at once belief and ritual, for Durkheim [19], the essence of religion, is certainly the most enduring and common aspect of universal religions [20]. These very same empirical studies, carried out with chronological and territorial continuity, demonstrate that prayer does in fact constitute the *fil rouge* of much religious behavior oriented towards oneself and/or towards others [21]. Equally important, a vast research project carried out by Poloma and Gallup [22] which has shown that prayer is important in the life of US citizens. The survey involved 1,030 subjects and clearly demonstrated that recourse to prayer represents a sort of challenge to the churches, and can have considerable influence on people's lives at political, moral and social level, especially as far as the ability to forgive and to be satisfied by life is concerned. Poloma and Gallup focused in particular, on typologies, religious experience, relations between personal prayer and political activism, between prayer and forgiveness, between prayer and religious approach. The most significant datum is that 88% of the interviewees admitted to praying, and that the subjects did not fall into the senior citizen, Afro-American, southern-states, female, or poorly educated social categories. Compared to the overall average percentage, that for the young was only slightly lower: 80%.

There are four types of prayer, according to Poloma and Gallup (from the least to the most participative): "*ritual*", "*petitionary*", "*meditative*", and "*conversational*". Thus, one prays as part of a ceremony, as a form of plea, as a kind of meditation, to converse with the godhead. But it is the meditative type of prayer that reveals the most direct relationship with the divinity. Also the outcome deriving from the experience is divided into five categories, where what prevails is a sense of peace and well-being. Poloma and Gallup also carefully examine the relations between prayer and politics. Another survey, the *Baylor Religion Survey*, carried out in 2005 to examine 1,721 cases, again in the United States, points out that women, African-American and low-income individuals, pray more than men, whites, and high-income individuals. "Petitionary" prayer is preferred by African-American and low-income and poorly educated people. Moreover, low-income individuals direct their prayers towards more spiritual ends, to obtain the favor of the divinity [23]. The data gathered by the "2004 General Social Survey", indicate that 89.8% of United States citizens pray at least sometimes, and three quarters of them pray at least once a day. Moreover, of those who pray, 67% think that their prayers are heard, and 95% that their requests are granted [24]. According to a survey carried out some years ago, prayer is not connected with the fear of death [25], but one should ask to what extent the sample used provided data allowing the results to be applied in other contexts, and whether the modality of the study was geared to produce in-depth knowledge of the relational dynamics between prayer and fear of death.

Other motivations why prayer is seen as a solution making a difficult condition more acceptable are provided on various occasions by the results of different surveys. The same can be said of the plea for divine favor, possibly in connection with admitting one's own faults, confessing one's own sins. According to Baker it is much more interesting and useful to look at the contents of prayers (rather than their frequency): economic security, health, confession and forgiveness of sins, spiritual relations with god. Amongst those who pray, according to what emerges from the "2005 Baylor

Religion Survey", 89.4% pray for their family, 75.3% for an acquaintance, 66.2% for a relation with god, 62.2% for the world, 61.2% to confess sins, 57.1% for health, 49.4% as a form of adoration (from the Latin verb *ad-orare*), 46.8% for unknown people, 33% for economic security. These rough data alone explain that a decrease in sacramental confession does not correspond to diminished awareness of having sinned. And, however, the data taken on the whole, present a picture that seems to disregard affiliation with a church, although to complete this discourse one must emphasize the fact that sensitization towards the action of praying derives, presumably, from the content of religious socialization within an ecclesiastic domain and the family and the social community, where prayer becomes a sort of permanent imprinting. In conclusion, it must be taken into consideration that Baker's analysis does not concern either ritual prayer, or group prayer, or even the prayer expressed in liturgical services. In other terms, personal and extemporary prayer recurs so much that it has become dominant compared to more standardized forms, managed at institutional level. One of the limitations to the interpretations provided by Baker is that the study refers to the Christian framework alone, thus disregarding modes typical of other forms of religion. Of Baker's study, the final passage, which comes after many statistical-quantitative analyses on the function of prayer, is particularly worthy of attention: "qualitative data on prayer content would also be an important advancement to the current understanding of prayer. Content analysis of individual prayer, assessing why people choose to pray about specific topics, and gathering extensive information about prayer habits are but a small glimpse into the issue that could be covered by qualitative research. When dealing with a topic as intensely personal and varied as prayer, certainly this approach deserves exploration".

Furthermore, philosophical in-depth explorations like the one carried out by D. Z. Phillips [26] can lead to new interpretations of prayer as a conversation, a "dialogue" with someone who does not understand, a dependency, a superstition, a divine voice, a community event. Some suggestions about the possibility of investigating mental prayer come from Archer's [27] analytical dualism concerning existing structures and future agents. This dualism is solved by analyzing the morphogenetic sequence which intervenes between the antecedent culture-structure and actions of agents, involved in a process of reproduction or transformation of previous cultural and structural contexts. There is a relationship affecting both structure and agency in terms of internal conversation, which takes place through the agent's evaluative reflexion (like *ruminatio Dei verbi*, rumination of the divine word, according to Augustine of Hippo) of the situation, and the agent's evaluation of his projects within the context of his situation. Archer has interviewed 20 people (including a nun) in order to understand their modes of reflexion: it can be communicative reflexive (extroverted: think and talk); autonomous reflexive (self-directed towards action: think and act); metareflexive (continuously critical: think and think); fractured reflexive (uneasy: think and talk, but with distress and confusion). Mental prayer is similar to metareflexion, but it also resembles autonomous reflexivity, even though it is present in fewer cases (communicative reflexivity does not exclude previous meditation, and fractured reflexivity includes different modalities of internal conversation). In any case the reflexivity of mental prayer can be understood as a meditation (not so different from Augustinian rumination, and from Archerian mediation of meditation), therefore a quest *in foro interno* for the meaning of life, of old age, for the solution of personal identity, and the evaluation of a situation.

Towards a Sociology of Praying

Different ways of praying offer sociologists an excellent opportunity to carry out non-conventional analyses, based on minimum indicators, on minute detail. How can one, for instance, investigate mental prayer? What are the signals to be taken into account when investigating it? Certainly only the social actors themselves possess direct knowledge of the experience. They and they alone can make it accessible to others by communicating motives and content. However, there are other ways of praying using the five senses and, in this area of investigation, noteworthy help is provided by the work of five Spanish theologians, all women, including two Catholic nuns. Extraordinarily rich and documented in form, the work concentrates on the bodily dimension of prayer, otherwise overlooked by the usual scientific and cognitive approach [28]: the basic assumption is that sense means pathway; human beings have five senses, five accesses or pathways open to reality. Pathways leading outwards, towards the world and the Other, and pathways leading back to the inner self, starting with the human being and reality. The difference between these roads is not irrelevant as far as perceived reality is concerned. Although in spiritual life everything resides within the intellect, the peculiarity of the senses in the configuration of the spiritual world is relevant".

This approach paves the way towards a more perceptive sociology of praying, to which Michele Colafato contributes with great attention, broadening horizons even further. Following the work of various specialists, he goes more deeply into the observation and understanding of the experience of prayer in Orthodox Christianity, of the individual and collective outlook of the *salat*, i.e. Islamic prayer, of Catholic prayer, of Buddhist prayer, in particular the *Lotus Sūtra*, and Jewish prayer (where the issue of the senses re-emerges: "taste: every time we taste something, we must utter a blessing", "smell: there are specific blessings for aromatic herbs such as rosemary and sage", "hearing: listening to any news, whether good or bad, must be accompanied by a blessing", "sight: the moment we meet a king, a peasant, or we see the sea, blossoming trees…we must pronounce a specific blessing", "sense of touch: the instrument through which the body enters into contact with and perceives all that surrounds it. The precept regarding women is particularly relevant in the Jewish religion: the woman must be immersed completely in a purifying bath, where she can strongly perceive the contact between her body and the water") [29].

The Situation in Italy

In Italy, Franco Garelli underlines the role of religious sentiment when analyzing the results of research into pluralism, statistically relevant at national level [30, pp. 88-92]. It is interesting to note that this survey indicates as the occasion most strongly associated with the desire to pray is "the funeral rite… suggesting that in our culture death is the event most closely associated with some form of religious meaning. In the collective imagination this extreme experience of "breaking away" must be accompanied by a religious ritual, the meaning of which undoubtedly changes according to the degree of religious conviction of those who require it. Death presents itself always as the human experience in the face of which even many non-believers accept the religious ritual, drawing in some way on a symbolic capital present in our culture to face questions difficult to answer from a secular

perspective" [30, p. 10]. This seems to confirm the generative impact of funeral rituals and lamentation (centered on the meaning of death and thus of life itself) on prayer.

On the other hand, the weight of the social-cultural context emerges from the datum concerning the contribution made by the inclusion of a weekly lesson on the Catholic religion in Italian school syllabi, aimed at teaching religious "literacy", seeing that this lesson "increases the knowledge of the Catholic religion by groups who have fewer opportunities of becoming acquainted with it, than those who have access to many more sources of socialization oriented in that sense. The specific knowledge provided by the teaching of Catholicism "reaches" the young in proportions higher than do sources of general religious knowledge. Teaching seems, therefore, truly capable of reducing, to some extent, the knowledge gap produced by non-scholastic socialization contexts" [31]. This too is an outcome of diffused religion, which produces, in turn, a knock-on effect as regards culture in general and the attitudes and behavior inspired by it, including attitudes towards praying.

It is significant that research carried out at national level on religiosity in Italy ascertained that "Italians between 18 and 74 years of age who declare having prayed at least sometimes during the year number 83%. Even non-believers pray, especially if they are in a "quest" mood (49%) and so do those who believe in a supreme being but do not belong to a specific religion (44%). Even among those who declare being atheists there is a quota, although small (8%) that prays". The motivations underscoring prayer coincide, point by point, with the classical typologies: the mystic, who aims at entering into direct relations with the divinity: 44%), the impetration-peroration type, bent on obtaining support in difficult moments (44%), the mixed-category person who wishes both to enter into a relationship with god and request his intervention; the thanks-giver (about 25%) who expresses gratitude as well as repentance for some offence; the traditional worshipper, whose prayers are the result of teaching; the supplicant who asks for personal favors; and, lastly, those who pray for a grace (which is apparently the least common in Italy: 10%). In conclusion, it appears that prayer is "a way of expressing one's religious feelings, still firmly rooted in culture and therefore destined to persist in time, even when circumscribed to a minority of the population". A similar minority character does not as yet present consolidated indicators for the future. Nevertheless, it is also true that "the generations closest to us and the best educated people shun inclusive behavior (pray because it is a duty or because this is the way they were taught) and tend to privilege more than the other interviewees the form of prayer best suited to contemporary people: prayer aimed at shedding light on one's innermost self" [32].

Recent research detects a similar tendency and confirms the typical modes of praying: thanksgiving, repentance; private-individual-separated/public-collective-united; orally-verbally expressed or silent-mental; laudation/peroration; trustful/imploring; spontaneous or based on scripture (the *Bible*—for instance the Psalms 1, 77, and 118; and the *Lotus Sūtra*—chapter XXV—that is an impetration to free oneself from all negativity). Despite this vast range of possibilities it is by no means certain that interviewees are always aware of the implications. For instance in the archdiocese of Urbino prayer took sixth place among the actions to be privileged by a believer: only 11% of the interviewees placed it first. Yet when we look at the question on the frequency of prayer, it emerges that 10.4% pray every day, 31.3% about once a day, 15% sometimes during the week, 10% sometimes during the month, 11.7% sometimes during the year and 21.6% never pray. And as rightly

observed, as a premise "the importance of analyzing prayer as used outside of religious rites derives from the fact that such behavior is present in all religions and often concerns even those who declare being non-believers".However, it must be stressed that "most of the interviewees, when they pray, use the traditional prayer formulae transmitted through processes of religious socialization and heard while attending various rites and practices" [33]. In conclusion, this datum falls, once more, within the canon of diffused religion and thus of diffused prayer. Also amongst young people the influence of previous religious socialization remains: if 30% never pray, 26% pray once or several times a day, 16.2% once or several times a week, and 13.4% more than once a month. "The procedure of praying is related mostly to reciting known formulae (59.2%), keeping silent, listening and contemplating (25%), but also reflecting on one's own life and on what happens around us (50%). Young people, compared to the overall total, privilege personal prayer and inner searching" [33, p. 304].

In the area of Chieti and Vasto, too, the percentages for the young are considerable: 27.56% pray often, 41.99% sometimes, 20.21% rarely, and 9.97% never pray. However, "they do not seem to be very much inclined to use ritualized and traditional modalities, except for those, a significant number, that may be identified as the nucleus of religious "fervent"" [34, p. 61]. The young people interviewed prefer "communication, contact with God" (27.75%), "dialogue either with God, or with the Saints, or with the dead" (14%), "reflection or personal meditation" (12.25%), "closeness to God" (11.5%). It must be noted, among these data, the presence of the dead as addressees of prayer, although the question that was posed, which included god and the saints, does not allow us to discern what the true significance of the data related to the dead contained in the answers may be. Lastly, the manner of praying must be taken into consideration: 29.66% use their own words, 23.36% the phrases or formulae of traditional prayers, 19.95% reflect on their own lives, 13.39% have an inner dialogue with god [34, p. 153]. In an inquiry carried out in southern Latium [35], the young people interviewed claimed recurring to faith in difficult moments, in varying proportions: always 29.3%, often 28.7%, sometimes 32.2%, never 9.8%. There is no explicit reference to prayer, but it appears to be implicit, also because the stratification of the intensity of the behavior corresponds in general to what has already emerged in relation to prayer amongst the young. In the diocese of Oristano in Sardinia [36] personal prayer occupies a relevant position as its frequency is "often (every day or almost every day)" for 45.4%, "sometimes" for 34.4% of the interviewees and "never" for 20.2% (in particular male subjects). The average rates registered in Italy in 2009 during research availing of a national sample, were slightly different (respectively 50.8%, 31.9% and 17.3%), and therefore the population of Oristano appears in some cases less "religious" than the general Italian population. As regards the motivations, however, religious feeling is higher: 47% pray to feel closer to god, and the same percentage to obtain support in difficult times, 31% are moved by the desire to thank and praise god, and 23% to repent and to perform an act of penitence. The weight of the teaching received stands at a mere 11% and that of praying as a duty at 14%, while the search for clarity within oneself reaches 18%. Reasons for requesting a grace stands at only 10%. In conclusion, instrumental prayer pertains to a minimum quota of the population but does not seem destined to disappear, seeing that it endures amongst the young although contained within the same percentages as those registered for the entire research sample.

Provokingly, Introvigne and Zoccatelli at the end of a sociological study on the Sicilian diocese of Piazza Armerina, ask whether "the Mass is over," whether, in fact, the most emblematic of Sunday and feast-day Catholic religious practices is not destined to decrease in importance or even disappear. A qualifying element in Introvigne and Zoccatelli's investigation is the verification of the difference existing between declarations of practice and actual practice, that is, the issue of over-reporting. In this specific case, attendance at the festive service (Catholic or other) regularly (once a week or more) on the basis of the answers provided, totaled 33.6%, yet monitoring of actual numbers of worshipers present brought the rate down to 18.5%. The authors, however, observe that "if the inquiries on over-reporting carried out during the years in the United States, in Poland and in Italy, can "demonstrate" something, it is precisely that declared practice is in fact "declared": it constitutes the measure of identity and also identification, but it does not measure facts and behavior" [37]. Thus, percentages like 33.6% or 18.5% should not be taken as evidence, as they are both partial and do not adequately represent the entire behavioral (and, not to be neglected, vocational) set. Furthermore, the research project in question makes no explicit reference to the phenomenology of prayer, but it may be inferred that data concerning Sunday practice and methodological reflections on over-reporting are applicable also to the sociological framework related to the frequency of praying in Central Sicily [38] and elsewhere.

We must proceed cautiously then, also in consideration of the data obtained thanks to an international research project on values carried out in Italy [39]. Salvatore Abbruzzese, denying the eclipse of the transcendent, recalls that "in the study carried out in 1999, 53% of the Italian interviewees declared praying outside of religious ceremonies and to do it more than once a week" [40], indicating "every day" (37.4%) or "more than once a week" (16.5%), against alternatives that proposed "once a week" (7.3%), "at least once a month" (5.7%), "many times a year" (5%), "seldom" (14%), "never" (12.7%), "do not know" and "does not answer" (1.5%). Out of the total answers to the question (which has remained unchanged since 1990) "How frequently do you pray to God, outside of religious ceremonies?" it emerged that around three quarters of the Italian population prayed, although with markedly different frequency.

In the *European Values Survey* of 1981 the question on prayer was not asked. In 1990 the answer "prays often" registered 33.5%, while in 1999 the answer "prays every day" reached 37.4%. Therefore it proved very useful in 1999 to change the options and make them clearer than the rather generic ones used in 1990 ("often", 33.5%; "sometimes", 32%; "almost never", 9%; "only in moments of crisis", 8.1%; "never", 16.8%; "do not know", 0.6%; "does not answer", 0%). The answer "never" is more easily comparable because it is identical in the two inquires of the *European Values Survey* of 1990 and 1999: at the beginning it stood at 16.8% and then came to 12.7%. With regard to this latter perspective, Italy (with Portugal) seems to reflect a reverse tendency compared to the overall sample; the number of those who pray has increased while in other European countries (above all in: France, 54.7%; Holland, 49.5%; Belgium, 37.9%; Germany, 27.8%; Spain, 25.3%) the rate of those who do not pray at all appears to have increased, thus confirming the secularizing trend. Nonetheless, the centrality of prayer in religions remains a constant feature, from Judaism to Christianity, from Buddhism to Islam, from Hinduism to Shintoism and so on. Also the migratory fluxes appeal to the patrimony of the cultural capital created by prayer, so much that they use that

term in their own denominations as in the case of *Bethel Prayer Ministry International*, which is active also in Italy [41].

The New Perspective of Qualitative Analysis

Even more than quantitative data one might expect qualitative results to provide corroboration concerning the nexus between diffused religion and diffusion of prayer. A convincing contribution is to be found in a recent qualitative study on the spirituality of the young. The chapter entitled "In the face of death and pain" must be stressed as strategic, as it shows that "today the event of death continues to play its anthropological role of connecting worlds, obliging those who experience this tragic event to wonder what lies beyond life, and urging many to refer to God in the attempt to formulate a plausible answer. This can happen to those who thought they had cut all their bridges with religion". And precisely "through the practice of prayer one can establish a connection with the radically Other: feel his/her embrace or rejection; or express one's own doubts or convictions on the existence or non-existence of something that goes beyond the human; it is possible to refer to one's belonging to one's own church or religious/ecclesial group with the possibility of diversifying the forms and roles of praying; and in conclusion, through prayer it is also possible to "exercise" one's own knowledge of the sacred texts.

Prayer represents, therefore, a point of potential convergence of the different dimensions of religiosity: practice, experience, belief, belonging and also knowledge" [42].

There are then various examples taken from the documents gathered during the qualitative research involving 72 young people from Vicenza, availing of the focus-group technique. Emblematically, an interviewee re-proposed explicitly the ultra-terrestrial dimension as a *locus* of interlocution: she used to address her dead grandfather because it was easier for her to do so by "recuperating and going beyond a long tradition transversal to religions". Further, obviously god and the saints are not missing as interlocutors: the series of abstracts from the declarations of the young people is long and articulated and proves the social character of prayer, "between obligation and personalization", although it is carried out in private and intimately.

The overall view that emerges from the research in Vicenza is a testimony of the level of incidence of prayer in the mental universe of the young: prayer is at the twenty-eighth place (followed by the Gospels, values, death and fear) in a list of "*full words* of medium frequency" starting with "God" and ending with "choices" and in its thematic area (seventh as regards frequency, after "sacred figures", "relatives", "mass", hereafter", "clergy", "church") there are "act of contrition, Ave Maria, Credo, Our Father, Lauds, praying, community prayer, prayers of praise, prayers of Thanksgiving, free prayer, morning prayer, evening prayer, psaltery, vespers and so on". In conclusion, the analysis of the convergences puts prayer in relation, above all, with sacred figures, the Word and the sacraments, and, at social level, with religious movements.

A new trend is now appearing, which is that of spirituality as a new form of religiosity expressed through the prayer [43]. And the prayer in groups is a relevant issue regarding some new attitudes in religious practice: it seems a common phenomenon in different religious experiences both traditional and innovative. Another novelty comes from the practice of prayer by unbelievers. Also the prayer in public arena [44] is a new trend that accompanies official ceremonies organized by lay institutions.

At the same time there is an increasing of prayer by young people in daily life but outside religious places. Finally the culture of prayer is typical of pentecostal and charismatic communities that are brought together in the act of praying.

According to Laura R. Olson, editor of *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* [45]: "the study of prayer is a growth industry in our field at the present moment. Some scholars are asking how it affects those who pray and are prayed for. The Social Science Research Council has undertaken a broad-based project on prayer that promises to stimulate new research crossing disciplinary boundaries and drawing upon a wide range of methods". The proofs of this new interest comes from the *Journal* itself that contains two articles by Shane Sharp on prayer failure [46], efficacy and utterance [47], a research by Hayward and Krause on older adulthood behavior [48], and a study by Schafer on intercessory prayer as interpersonal phenomenon, and source of optimism [49]. Therefore we are moving towards a more developed sociology of prayer [50].

However the sociological approach cannot forget other perspectives like prayer's psychological dimension which is a suitable solution to study, for instance, the relationship between prayer and health. In order to understand biopsychological issues linked to the prayer dynamics it could be necessary to analyse some transpersonal, spiritual, and deep layers of religious experience. Actually "from a psychological perspective, for the devoted believer, prayer might be a meaningful path that will help reincorporate health into one's life. Still, to various degrees, prior to actually performing the embodiment of health, the inner transformations related to the healing outcome could be cognitively processed by any believer as an alien, inaccessible experience of radical otherness" [51]. In short: once more the scientific study of religion requires an interdisciplinary point of view.

Conclusions

The multi-millenary "Karst system" that has allowed the tradition of praying to come down to us today, probably originated in conjunction with primordial existential crises, with the experience of other people's death and, consequentially, with the fear and the risk of one's own death. The presence of funeral lamentations aimed at overcoming the "crisis of presence" that starts at the moment of somebody's death, has presumably prompted mechanisms of narration that have later led also to mechanisms of more mature reflection on the meaning of life and therefore of death. This is the moment in which the problem of a presence other than human arises. A similar otherness leads to an attempt at dialogue, in the form of a request for help, that later becomes both praise and thanksgiving, but also much more: request for extraordinary intervention (the grace of a miracle that implies giving thanks for the favor received), invocation, repentance, public action, ceremonial action, expression of trust, private dialogue, mental prayer, sacred text and much more, in original forms, diversified according to the various religions, but converging in the functions exercised in the different cultural domains.

The diffusion of prayer is essentially the fruit of the socialization carried out by religious confessions through their educational and legitimating structures, which perpetuate forms and contents of praying, leaving room also for innovation. Far from eroding the existing patrimony, they re-motivate and re-adapt the proposals, for the benefit of a diffused religion that draws its strength from the contribution of whole generations who have preserved the testimonies in the course of time. It is not

out of place to try to imagine that even the resistance of the young against the use the pre-existing cultural capital reflects—in the long term—a need to preserve which cannot be guaranteed solely by the already operating structures. After all, even if we leave consolidated formulae aside, together with already accessible solutions, a religious and spiritual afflatus seems to preserve a habit which refuses to die because it is related to death itself, with which it continuously has to measure itself, through the screen/shield of the sacred figure that serves as a helpful interlocutor, even though it is considered artificial.

To what extent all this may be confirmed in the future too, is difficult to predict, but given its ancient and solid roots, its disappearance will not be sudden. If this were the case, in fact, it would probably mean that the problem of death had already been solved, and that the path towards a never-ending life had already been found.

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Religion and American Politics from a Global Perspective

Paul Froese

Abstract: Past findings and theory in the sociology of religion support two opposing perspectives concerning the influence of religion on American politics. Looking from within the United States, the commanding influence of religion on political rhetoric and voting patterns seems apparent. From a global perspective, the role that religion plays in American politics is less clear; in fact, one could argue that our political institutions are decidedly secular. I present support for both of these perspectives before turning to an international analysis of images of God using the Gallup World Poll. These data indicate the uniqueness of American religiosity and suggest that the ways in which religion affect politics in the United States is unusual for a post-industrial country. Namely, many Americans understand God as a political actor; because of this, American political culture mixes religious and political language with fervor, all while keeping church and state institutions separate.

"There is no attack on American culture more destructive and more historically dishonest than the secular Left's relentless effort to drive God out of America's public square."

Newt Gingrich

"God bless America."

President Obama; President Bush; President Clinton; President Bush; President Reagan; President Carter; President Ford; President Nixon; *etc.*

There are good reasons, when comparing the United States with other nations, to expect that religion will have little to no influence on American politics. However, when looking within the United States there seems to be a lot of evidence to the contrary. Is there something wrong with our theories about religious influence or are we exaggerating the evidence because it is not comparative? Perhaps a little of both is occurring depending on the political and theoretical bias of the observer. In general, American conservatives tend to feel that religion is embattled in contemporary American culture while liberals tend to feel that Evangelical Protestantism, specifically, has overtaken the political right. Similarly, social scientists are divided on the extent to which religion matters to American politics.

First and foremost, the claim that God has been expelled from America's public square, as made by Newt Gingrich and many other conservative pundits, is outlandish from a global comparative perspective. In fact, it seems that even conservatives who decry the left's attempts to destroy religion will simultaneously boast that the United States is one of the most religiously tolerant nations on earth. This boast is supported by some facts. The United States consistently ranks at the top of the most religiously tolerant nations according to the three most accepted measures of religious freedom (see The Association for Religion Data Archives.

Yet it remains an empirical question of how important religion is to politics within a culture of religious tolerance and freedom.

1. Why Religion Should Not Matter

Religious diversity and state funding of religion are both expected to determine the political influence of religion within a society. The level of state religious favoritism (in tandem with state regulation of minority religions) is the most direct indicator that state and church institutions cooperate and have shared interests. Anthony Gill offers an intricate theory of how these relationships develop and demonstrates that religion most directly influences politics in nations with historically dominant religious traditions [1,2]. In these contexts, we expect and have evidence to show that religious authorities provide elites with political legitimacy, in the form of religious-ideological support, in return for religious favoritism.

While many post-industrial countries still bolster "state religions" with tax dollars and the suppression of religious competitors, the United States reports some of the lowest levels of religious favoritism and religious regulation in the world. This suggests that no single church or denomination monopolizes the attention of political elites or holds exclusive access to the halls of power. The United States also has a legal separation of church and state which secures an institutional "differentiation" of religious and political organizations.

In addition, there are reasons to think that religious differences within the United States are less important that in other countries. Robert Wuthnow, among others, has argued that denominational divisions have lost their edge over the past 50 years [3,4]. Additionally, while many conservative religious groups successfully fight against a growing tendency towards ecumenicalism, an overarching culture of religious tolerance pervades the American landscape. The election of Roman Catholic John F. Kennedy provided evidence that Protestant discrimination against Catholics had dropped to low levels by 1960. The fact that Presidential candidate Mitt Romney won the Republican primaries in 2012 suggests that many American Christians may also be willing to elect a Mormon President, again supporting the idea that nominal Christian identity stifles denominational conflicts.

Instead of inter-religious conflict, public debates about religion tend to be framed in terms of *the secular versus the religious*. While disagreements over perceived levels of secularization have motivated citizens to debate public policy on such issues as prayer in schools or the display of religious symbols in public spaces, American churches tend not to attack one another. And this lack of religious tension suggests that political elites have no leverage in pitting religions traditions and denominations against one another.

In addition, researchers who study the activities of individual churches and denominations in the United States agree that is it rare for a pastor or minister to openly support a political candidate or make political demands of his or her congregants [5,6]. As a whole, this research suggests that it is actually liberal and African-American churches which most openly, although also rarely, make politically-charged appeals. These findings go against the popular perception of White Evangelical churches as GOP recruitment centers.

In sum, the religious culture of the United States appears relatively tolerant, peaceful, inclusive, and politically neutral within a global comparative perspective. These positive characteristics suggest that the American political system is unimpeded by religious demands from dominant churches and clergy. In addition, the declining significance of denominationalism along with the

largely apolitical activities of individual churches suggests that American religious diversity will not inspire inter-religious conflict anytime soon. Olson and Carroll summarize a common belief in the literature that "religion will not soon become a major axis of political conflict in America" and others have warned that the United States is not divided into clear "religious camps" with competing national agendas ([7];[8], p. 765). So why do we tend to think of American politics as dominated by concerns of faith?

2. How Religion Matters

Most obviously, American political candidates make a big deal of their "commitment to faith." In a systematic analysis of national political speeches, Domke and Coe find that religious rhetoric has steadily been on the rise among both Republicans and Democrats since the Nixon administration [9]. The religious language of our political leaders is so pervasive that it can inspire alarm when it is absent. Barrack Obama and Mitt Romney both had to address the concerns over their religiosity head-on; in both cases, they attempted to quell fears of their supposed religious deviance by maintaining that they are faithful Christians.

Religious social movements, usually trans-denominational in nature, have long attempted to influence public policy in the United States from both the left and right. Liberal and conservative activists sometimes employ a religious framing of social issues, most effective cases being the use of African American churches as the moral and institutional basis for the civil rights movement and, more recently, the various Catholic and Evangelical Protestant organizations which spearhead the pro-life movement [10–14].

In fact, religious issues are often at the forefront of national political campaigns. The courting of the "religious vote" is an often discussed strategy among pundits and the media, and pollsters can neatly predict conservative voting behavior based on religious participation and self-identity. While there is some evidence from Manza and Brooks that Evangelical Protestants have not become more conservative, most research confirms this perceived trend towards a "religious right" and the electoral success of George W. Bush among Evangelical Protestants is unquestionable [15–19]. Lydia Bean is researching the dynamics which have allowed the Republican Party to more successfully mobilize religious Americans [20]. Her research demonstrates that while conservative clergy are not more politically active, key members of their congregations tend to be and utilize the church space to informally spread support for the GOP. Bean argues that there are no equivalent Democratic Party activists within liberal churches.

Still, there is active debate among academics concerning the significance and reality of the James Hunter's "culture wars thesis"—the idea that American politics has shifted from class-based struggles to focus more on religious-cultural issues, such as abortion, gay marriage, and stem-cell research. Critics of this thesis analyze public opinion to demonstrate that Americans cannot be easily bifurcated into the social-cultural categories suggested by the thesis [10,11,21–27]. Nevertheless, Hunter's ideas regarding the importance of conceptions of moral authority are useful. For instance, Davis and Robinson utilize survey data concerning God's moral authority to distinguish between "religious traditionalists" and "religious modernists" and find that modernists are more likely to view individuals as personally responsible for their destinies [21]. Wayne Baker

also explains value differences within the American population with reference to basic variation in beliefs about moral authority [28]. This research suggests that religious concerns are preeminent in many voters' minds and are often the lens through which they understand policy proposals and debates.

In addition, Michael Lindsay demonstrates how Evangelical identity, in particular, has risen to become a useful resource in influential social networks [29]. Lindsay argues that Evangelical networks foster collaboration and proliferate throughout major institutions of power in the United States, namely on Wall Street, on Capitol Hill, in Hollywood, and halls of higher education. While these networks may not be focused on any religious agendas *per se*, they serve as a kind of "old boys club" in which fellow Evangelicals trust and hire one another to greater degree.

All of this research highlights two major findings. First, religion is a powerful force and salient political issue in American society. Second, the ways in which religion impacts politics in the United States is unique when considered within a comparative framework. It is not through the direct influence of religious leaders and churches on public officials but rather through religious framing of issues by politic elites and through embedded networks of Evangelicals in our major institutions that religion flexes its political muscle. Jonathan Fox notes this clear distinction between the legal *versus* the ideological authority of religion in the United States, which Daniel Philpott explained as the result of high levels of religious-political "differentiation" combined with widespread belief in "political theology" [30,31]. In sum, the legal and institutional differentiation of religious and political spheres (the separation of church and state) has not diminished the power of religious political rhetoric in the United States as it has elsewhere in the world.

As Philip Converse alerted political researchers in the 1960s, "there is fair reason to believe that [religious differences] are fully as important, if not more important, in shaping mass political behavior than are class differences" ([32], p. 248). In order to better understand the uniqueness of this relationship we must delve into how the United States is ultimately a religious exception to many worldwide trends, in particular, the continuing popularity of American political theology.

3. American Religious Exceptionalism

The United States is clearly a religious exception in the post-industrial world. Americans attend church more than Western Europeans, they have more religiously conservative sexual and social attitudes, and they link their theology to free market economics more directly [33,34]. Emerson and Smith describe American Protestantism as synonymous with economic individualism [15,35]. Smith explains:

"American individualism…prescribes that individuals should not be coerced by social institutions, especially by the government, and particularly not on personal matters; that freedom to pursue individual happiness is a paramount good; that people shouldn't meddle too deeply in other people's business; and that the government usually provides poor solutions to social and cultural problems" ([36], p. 211).

Davis and Robinson find the opposite relationship in 21 European countries and Israel [37]. They discover that "what theologically distinguishes modernists (including believers and secularists) from the religiously orthodox is their greater individualism" ([37], p. 1632). In this way, religious

Americans look very different from their religious counterparts in other post-industrial nations. Quite simply, religious Americans are more conservative morally, sexually, and economically.

Possibly the most telling difference is in how some religious Americans understand the separation of church and state. While nearly all Americans advocate this separation, a strong minority feel that that the United States is a "Christian nation" and that the government should actively promote "Christian morals." However, this is not just another measure of religiosity. American Christians who are very religious according to such indicators as worship attendance, prayer, religious donations and volunteerism, are not uniform in their sense how they understand the relationship between their religion and politics.

Distinct from the concept of religiosity is an American's belief in "sacralization ideology", a tongue twisting yet important concept. Stark and Finke explain that sacralization ideology means that "there is little differentiation between religious and secular institutions and that the primary aspects of life, from family to politics, are suffused with religious symbols, rhetoric, and ritual." ([38], p. 284). Sacralization ideology is the extent to which individuals feel that their religion should influence and be a part of public policy debates; Philpott calls this *political theology*, "the set of ideas that religious actors hold about political author and justice" ([31], p. 505). In many pre-industrial countries sacralization ideology or political theology appears very popular or at least is unquestioned in that it exhibits itself in Peter Berger's concept of a "sacred canopy". For Berger the pre-modern world is often imbued with religious traditions that are so "taken-for-granted" that they are woven in the fabric of social life [39].

The importance of sacralization ideology is most pronounced in the Muslim world, where Islamic theology asserts that political discussion should be guided to greater or lesser extent by Shariah Law. Conservative Muslims express sacralization ideology when arguing that all aspects of personal, social and political life should be governed by religious rules and regulations. However, there are diverse opinions regarding these matters within Muslim communities and these differences may underlie fundamental political and social divisions within Islam.

Modernization tends to bring with it a separation of religious and secular spheres and, in turn, the decline or disappearance of sacralization ideology. The separation of church and state in the United States is the primary example of how these spheres are conceptually and legally divided in the modern world. However, many Americans appear similar to pre-modern individuals in their attachment to sacralization ideology, or the common American notion that political decision-making requires consideration of "the sacred"—or in the case of American Christianity—God.

Carson Mencken and I found that sacralization ideology was the best predictor of whether an American thought that the Iraq War was justified [40]. In this instance, beliefs about the religious purpose of the Iraq War proved more important than political affiliations, identities, and Social Economic Status in determining whether an American supported the war effort. Figure 1 replicates part of this analysis and depicts the surprising strength of sacralization ideology. Of great interest is the fact that a "strong Democrat" was more likely to support the Iraq War than a "strong Republican" if he or she thought that religion *should* be part of the reason we went to war.

Why did sacralization ideology predict opinions about the Iraq War so well? Most clearly, President Bush framed the war effort in religious terms, often referring to a historic fight of good against evil [40].

In sum, Americans are simply more religious than most other citizens of post-industrial nations and are more likely to believe that religion *should* influence politics—the essence of sacralization ideology. Whether this kind of ideology is on the rise is unknown but past generations of conservative Christians were some of the least politically active Americans. This all changed in recent decades with more and more Protestant Evangelicals resisting the "individual-level privatization" of their faith in the public sphere [41]. Consequently, the rise of conservative religious politics does not necessarily reflect a rise in conservative religionists (they have always existed), but a change in their attitudes about the role of religion in politics.

Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of pro-war attitudes (by sacralization ideology and political affiliation).
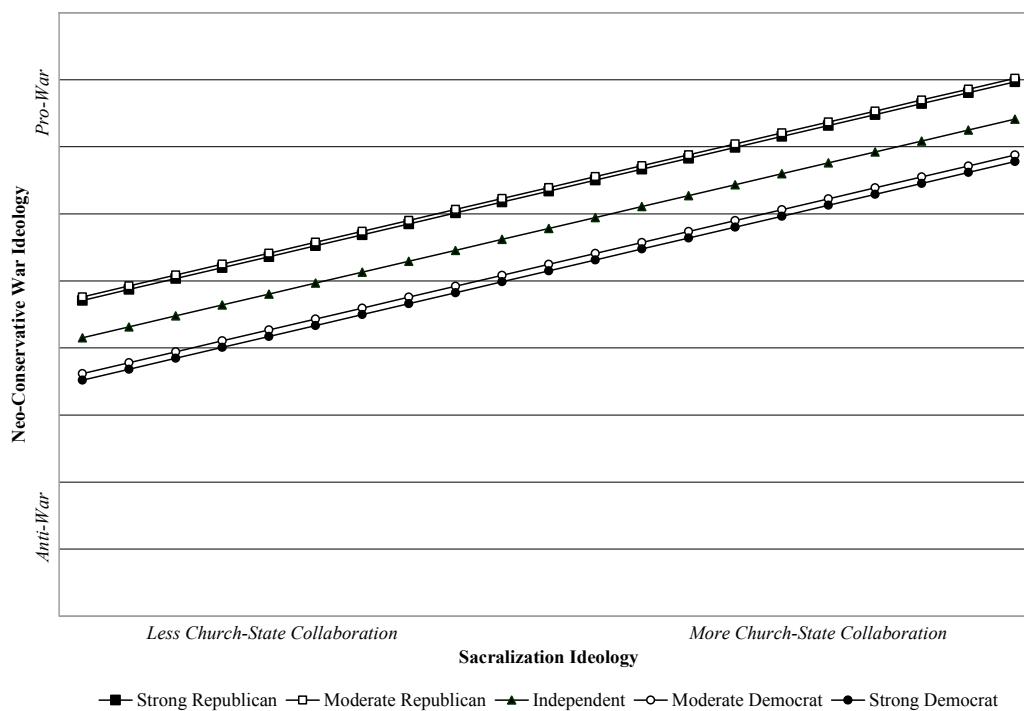
Source: Baylor Religion Survey [23].

To better explore this phenomenon and its importance in a comparative framework, we need to better understand the role of beliefs about God around the world and their relationship to politics. Images of God reveal something deep about the worldview of believers and provide a unique window into understanding how and when religion can be used politically [42].

4. God around the World

A universal trait of politics around the world is its reliance on symbols to communicate complex messages and principles to the masses. This ongoing process of building political legitimacy and

framing moral debates along policy dimensions relies on and draws from cultural and national traditions. In the world, there is no symbol or tradition more common than God.

If we treat the word "God" as a metaphor than we must know to what it is referring. Clearly, God means something different across religious traditions and denominational groupings, and between individuals. Our task is then to somehow measure this theological diversity to see if it is meaningful in some larger social or political sense.

Max Weber famously provides us with a four-fold typology of world religions—(i) other-worldly asceticism; (ii) inner-worldly asceticism; (iii) other-worldly mysticism; and (iv) inner worldly mysticism [43]. Of these, inner-worldly asceticism, Calvinism being an exemplar, is the religious ideology which best motivates social change because it links salvation directly to earthly ethical duties. While this is a helpful insight, Collins laments that Weber's typology "is still overgeneralized, since it includes not only economic self-discipline leading to rationalized capitalistic development, but also military crusades; among the latter we find Christian, as well as Muslim holy wars, Cromwell's armies, and, since Weber's day, modern instances including militant political mobilization among both Christian fundamentalists and the activist Christian left" ([44], p. 172). Collins' point is well taken and indicates an area in which we might be able to improve.

Rodney Stark's work builds on Weber's insights by more specifically analyzing how various forms of inner-worldly asceticism motivate believers. In general, this type of theology is monotheistic, which for Stark, makes all the difference. Specifically, Stark asserts that "the extent to which religion enters into either solidarity or conflicts appears to be in direct proportion to the scope of the Gods involved" ([45], p. 33). The underlying reason for this was hinted at by Georg Simmel who noted, "[a] deity that is subsumed into a unity with the whole of existence cannot possibly possess any power, because there would be no separate object to which He could apply such power"([46], p.53). In other words, it comes down to whether God is believed to be an independent actor/collaborator in world affairs. Armed with this image of God, we expect a religion to matter greatly in political and social change.

Stark has demonstrated that belief in God is associated with moral policy disputes across Europe and in India, Turkey, and the United States; but the relationship does not hold in China or Japan [47]. Stark concludes that God is politically unimportant in China and Japan because God is generally regarded as "unconcerned about morality, or as an impersonal essence" in these religious cultures ([47], p. 624). Similarly, majority monotheistic nations are far more likely to ban genetic research than countries with Hindu or Buddhist traditions. Molecular biologist Lee Silver speculates:

> [M]ost people in Hindu and Buddhist countries have a root tradition in which there is no single creator God. Instead, there may be no gods or many gods, and there is no master plan for the universe. Instead, spirits are eternal and individual virtue—karma—determines what happens to your spirit in your next life. With some exceptions, this view generally allows the acceptance of both embryo research to support life and genetically modify crops [48].

Looking specifically inside the United States, Andrew Greeley found that Americans with more maternal and gracious conceptions of God were more likely to vote Democrat, support "safe sex" education, support environmental protection, and oppose the death penalty [49–53]. Overall, Greeley finds significant correlations between viewing God as a mother, lover or friend and being politically liberal. Greeley's findings fit with more recent arguments by George Lakoff and Wayne Baker about the opposing moral cultures of American liberals and conservatives [28,54]. Lakoff asserts that liberals express a "Nurturant Parent" morality (similar to Greeley's loving motherly God) while conservatives reference a "Strict Father" morality—a prioritizing of obedience over independence. Perhaps President Clinton summarized this perspective best when he explained that "liberals want to fall in love, and conservatives want to fall in line". The general view is that conservatives tend towards a stricter moral absolutism while liberals tend towards flexible moral humanism, both of which are reflected in the kinds of gods they worship.

These theoretical and empirical extracts suggest that investigating the role of God in politics around the world may bear more fruit. Specifically, past research suggests that more active and engaged Gods (a) will inspire human sacrifice for religious causes, be they altruistic or militaristic; and also (b) inspire strict moral codes of acceptable behavior.

Still, this may get us little further than Weber's initial insight about the political potential of various theologies. In other words, we can identify which religious concepts are correlated with sacrifice and moral absolutism but can do little to predict what forms of sacrifice and moralism they inspire. It seems that the cultural and political context is primary. For instance, in a culture in which moral issue X is salient, we will expect religious believers in an engaged God to be more absolutist on this issue. The relationship between genetic research laws and monotheism around the world is one piece of supporting evidence. Or if nation Y is at war with nation Z, we would expect citizens with an engaged God to be more willing to fight unless they are part of a strictly pacifist tradition; and if one nation has a more engaged God, we might expect that nation to be more vicious and resilient in its war effort. In historical studies of Christian and Muslim intolerance, Stark has shown how external conflict is "inherent" to monotheisms [45]. To better explore these ideas, we require better data and more precise theories.

I suggest that a good place to begin is by looking at cross-cultural data on images of God. "God" tends to be a concept understood in many cultures, albeit in vastly different forms. Stark highlights the importance of a God's scope and responsiveness. The World Values Survey and the International Social Survey Program have some questions about God which may be of use. But I have been lucky enough to place a God item on the Gallup World Poll, one of the most inclusive international datasets including over 140 countries. While this is only a single variable, it provides a glimpse of God's scope and responsiveness—specifically, the question asks, "do you believe that God is directly involved in things that happen in the world?" By averaging responses to this question, we can classify nations by their popular image of God. On one end we have nations in which most individuals see God as a distant cosmic force and at the other end are nations in which the population thinks of God as active in world affairs. This is one of the best, albeit limited, indicators of whether theology can be used in political arguments; if believers think God is engaged in the outcome of political history, they are more apt to accept political rhetoric which appeals to God.

Figure 2 displays these mean God scores in relationship to the per capita GDP and the majority religion of each country. Three initial findings present themselves. First, majority Muslim countries tend to have much more active Gods than majority Christian nations. This may be a function of modernization, because, second, countries with lower per capita GDP tend to have more active Gods. And third, the United States stands as an outlier to these two general trends. Namely, the United States has one of the most active Gods in comparison to other majority-Christian nations and the most active God in comparison to nations with the highest per capita GDP.

Figure 2. God around the World (correlated with per capita GDP).
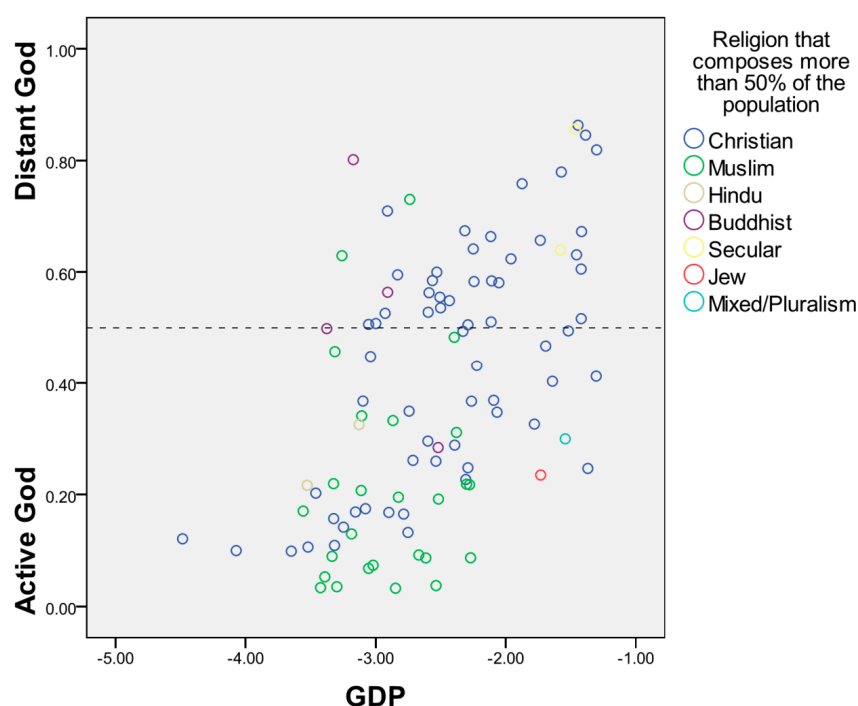
Figure 3 again highlights American exceptionalism by comparing the United States to other majority-Christian nations. The United States most closely resembles African Christian nations in their active images of God. Europeans stand in direct contrast with some of the most distant images of God; and this finding was replicated using God items from the International Social Survey Program [33,42].

This data provides many research possibilities. First, the clear relationship between a nation's type of God and its level of economic development suggests a causal pattern. Perhaps this is a new way to think about the process of secularization; it is *not* a transition from religiosity to secularity but rather a move from a theological tradition which asserts that God engages in the world to a theological tradition which voluntarily resigns the scientific, political, and professional realms to their own philosophical devices. Based on levels of affiliation and church attendance, the United States is often mentioned as an exception to a general trend toward secularization which is occurring in most postindustrial countries [55–58]. Figures 2 and 3 indicate that the United States is also exceptional because Americans believe in a kind of God which is mainly confined to pre-industrial and industrial societies.

Figure 3. God around the Christian World (correlated with per capita GDP).
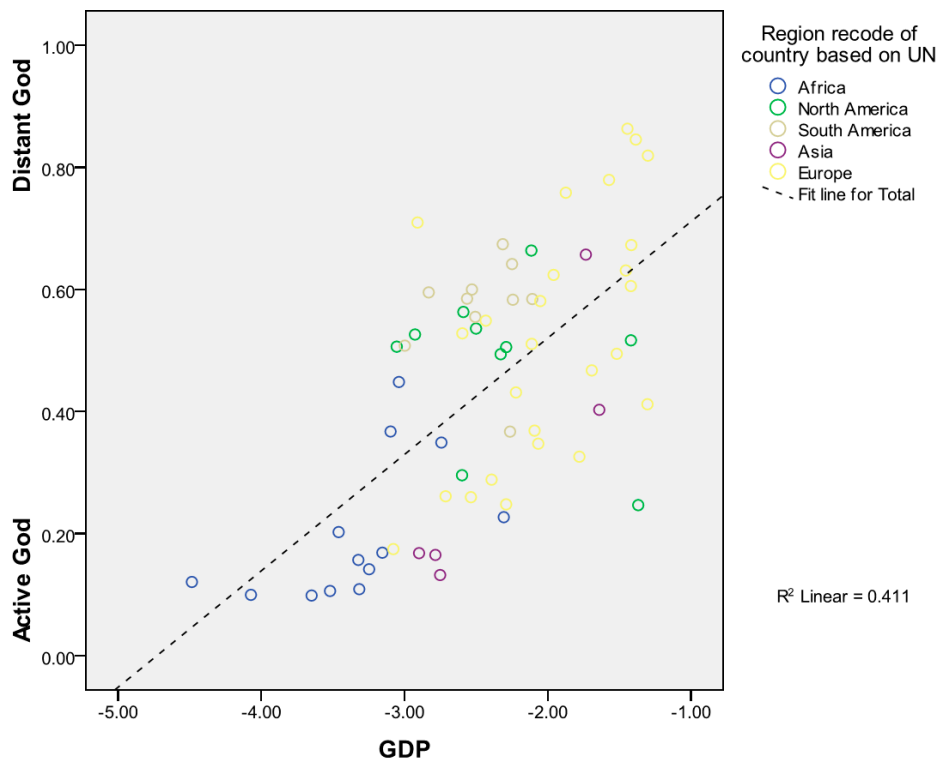
To put a finer point on this abstraction, I feel that images of God are really a measure of the extent to which believers feel that God is a political and social actor—in other words, it is a measure of sacralization ideology. Religions with active and engaged Gods demand a political say, while religions with "cosmic forces", "personal enlightenment", or countless deities will have little interest in religious politics outside of protecting their right to worship. If this is the case, then we can begin to see why religion continues to play an active role in American politics—American religion is politically important because many Americans think that God is actively involved in it and, in fact, guiding it.

5. God and American Politics

The book *America's Four Gods (2010)* is an attempt to understand the importance and meaning of Americans' images of God. In general, Chris Bader and I find that images of God are directly related to how an American understands sex, science, economics, and patriotism [42]. These issues are at the heart of contemporary American political debates and are especially relevant in the formation of identity politics.

While God is important, scriptural disputes surprisingly are not. Approximately 60 million Americans think the Bible "should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects"; in other words, these people are *Biblical Literalists*. However, simply reading of the Bible does not tell you what these Americans believe. This is because Biblical Literalism is first and foremost an identity and not a clear set of beliefs [59]. The main theological belief that is statistically associated with Biblical Literalism is faith in an active and engaged God. Simply put, Biblical Literalism is a group marker that mainly indicates that the person thinks God interacts with the contemporary world in

the same way He does in Biblical stories. It can be through wrath, love, or spoken revelation. In some paradoxical way, Biblical Literalists are less reliant on the Bible because its Divine author is thought to be always around and open to conversation.

Consequently, the political fervor and perspective of Biblical Literalists is less about carrying out the directives of scripture and more about allying with believers who share their image of God and their sense of His presence. For this reason, the political manipulation of these kinds of religionists takes the form of religious posturing and not theological dogmatism. A political candidate need not appear slavishly devoted to Biblical mandates but rather should appear in dialogue with God. In this way, political leaders do not have to link their policy ideas to scripture but, rather, need to successfully communicate that their decision-making is informed by heart-felt prayer. And American political leaders are eager to tell us that they are in dialogue with God. As Domke and Coe assert, "the substantial presence of God and faith in American politics over the past few decades did not occur by chance…The God strategy is operating in full force, and many, many Americans are on board" ([9], p. 33).

And between the only viable American political parties, the GOP is the undisputed champion of the God strategy. But why? I do not think that a conservative platform is philosophically more compatible with belief in an engaged God. Leftist social, economic, and foreign policy easily could be seen to be working with and through God. This is the belief system of religious socialists and communists known as "liberation theology"; this ideology asserts that God smiles approvingly on a controlled economy and a classless society. But this is certainly not the case in the United States.

An active American God appears unapologetically conservative on all counts. Domke and Coe find that Republican political leaders are much more likely than Democrats to "fuse God and country by linking America with divine will" ([9], p. 19). I expect that the Democratic Party is unwilling to employ such overt religious rhetoric for fear that it would sound too exclusionary, while the Republican Party appears to have no fear in this regards. They clearly define their enemies as "godless" which, in this usage, does not indicate atheism but rather that someone may hold a different image of God—a God which is not so closely allied with American national interests.

The aligning of conservative politics with an active God makes sense philosophically and politically. Philosophically, an active God takes sides in worldly affairs, favoring the good and condemning the bad. If this is the case, then believers naturally ponder which nations and citizens are God's favored; and the answer is obvious—us. In contrast, believers in a distant God do not think in terms of God's favored people; for these believers, God does not pick sides and therefore cannot be described as favoring one nation over another. Politically, the Democratic Party is also hoping to appeal to Americans of all religious and non-religious ilks. For this reason, they are careful to employ the most ecumenical religious language possible, which strikes many believers in an active God as insincere due to its avoidance of clear dividing lines.

In the end, this is how religion remains a political force in the United States. The Republican Party appeals to a certain type of religious believer—one who believes that God is a political actor. In turn, the GOP must address or at least appear to address religious issues which concern these believers. While abortion and gay marriage are the most salient of these issues, believers in an active God have also come to think of political leaders who fervently employ the God strategy as

having some holy mandate in *all* of their political dealings. Past support for the Iraq War is one of the clearest cases of this phenomenon [40]. In this instance, justification for this foreign policy was premised mainly on the narrative that America, with God's help, was fighting evil in the world. Americans that believed this framing never gave up on the war, while other conservatives abandoned it in droves as casualties mounted [40].

6. Conclusions

Images of God cannot fully explain the complex relationship of religion and politics around the globe. Research that stresses the institutional and historical interplay between religion and politics is pre-eminent in our understanding of this dynamic. That said, political theology is often given short shrift at great cost. I expect this occurs due to an understandable oversight. Namely, social scientists tend not to fully comprehend the deep influence and importance of theology for believers. Classical theorists tended not to make this mistaken even as they derided religious belief in general. But on the whole, the effect of religious belief is very difficult to comprehend if you do not share it. Reliable research can overcome this oversight and can be conducted from a position of belief or non-belief. This is another way of saying that we should continue to closely investigate ideology to understand group and individual motivation. Images of God are another way to measure ideological differences and I expect they will provide some more revelations about the exceptional ways religion influences politics in the United States.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The Resurgence of Religion in America's Prisons

Michael Hallett and Byron Johnson

Abstract: This article discusses the growing prominence of "faith-based" programs in American corrections and the historical context of penal regime change during periods of economic crisis. The article traces areas of overlap and divergence in recent discussions of penal reform in the U.S. The article suggests a new American penitentiary movement is emerging, noting central tenets of faith-based programs have salience for both conservatives and liberals: on the one hand, faith-based programs are largely paid for by church congregations and volunteers, which appeals to conservatives' desire to shrink government and get taxpayers out of the business of community building; on the other, faith-based programs demonstrate a recommitment to having at least some level of programming in prisons, which satisfies the left's view that community building and social capital ultimately lower recidivism. The paper documents several prominent faith-based correctional programs while articulating an agenda for research.

The religious influence on prison reform and penal policy remained a powerful one throughout the nineteenth century, as the work of Ignatieff and others has shown. Evangelicals were in the vanguard of reforming movements both in Britain and in the USA, helping to ameliorate conditions of captivity and to aid prisoners upon their release, later developing alternatives to imprisonment such as probation, which began as a form of missionary work funded by church-based temperance societies [1].

1. Introduction

In surprising ways, the history of prison reform involves first a detailed study of economic and social relations. Historians of punishment emphasize changing economic modes of production and how these relate to dramatic shifts in prevailing strategies of punishment. Durkheim emphasized how the emerging "division of labor" in industrial capitalism weakened social solidarity to bring about a rise in individualistic punishments over those performed in the public square; Foucault highlighted the "birth of the prison" amid the rise of market-focused "technologies of the soul" in the penitentiary itself; Dario Melosi and Massimo Pavarini [2], in their book *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System*, identify the architecture of the penitentiary system not just as a point of confinement and observation, but also as the point of instruction for a monastic-like work ethic to be applied in congregate factories. Historians of punishment often focus on the impact of economic social relations regarding transformations in penal strategy and changing sensibilities about punishment [3].

The prison itself, of course, first expanded as a humane alternative to the harsh public square punishments of the 17th and 18th centuries when the guillotine—first reserved for reasons of

"decency" to members of the aristocracy—was made "democratically" available to all capital defendants during the French Revolution [4]. As the scaffold came to be associated with riotous fighting and political rebellion—the prison followed soon after, allowing for more regulated sanctioning while avoiding the spectacle of harsh public square punishments.

In short, the birth of the prison corresponded to the rise of industrial capitalism, with changing economic and social relations rendering corporal punishment less effective for securing public order than more regimented punishments of the "soul". As Jonathan Simon puts it: "The prison permits a far more graduated system of sanctions, the better to encourage full enforcement of the criminal laws protecting property. It operates to enforce discipline and self-control on those subjected to its rigors without the need or occasion for unruly publics to gather." [5]. When speaking of the "birth of the prison" or "discovery" of the asylum or as we argue here, even the (re)invention of "faith-based prisons", criminologists and historians of punishment should revisit the observation of Rusche and Kirchheimer: "Every system of production tends to discover punishments which correspond to its productive relationships." [6]. As the current era of mass-incarceration breaks down under increasing criticism from both sides of the political aisle, it is important to examine the macro-level changes that might be driving the re-emergence of religion in American prisons.

2. The Unintended Consequences of Correctional Expansion

It is not surprising that penal institutions respond quickly and early to profound changes in political economy. As institutions that are largely bound to fail in their own terms at suppressing crime, and which are likely to come under particular stress and scrutiny during periods of social conflict, penal institutions are always about "reform"; either the existing ideals, still in need of proper implementation, or through proclaiming new ideals. "When something important changes in the political economy, throwing into question the practicality or relevance of existing assumptions about social stability, the legitimacy of institutions of punishment is likely to be seen as in crisis and requiring dramatic changes" [5].

America's massive correctional build up has taken a high toll not only on taxpayers in general, but especially on the plight of those residing within disadvantaged communities [7–13]. When one thinks of crime victims, children of prisoners, for example, do not typically come to mind. However, the many challenges facing children of an incarcerated parent make them one of the most disadvantaged groups in our society. Not surprisingly, children of prisoners go on to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system [14]. In addition to the estimated two million children of prisoners, add another roughly one million children of prisoners who may have a parent leaving prison each year. Over just the last five years, it is likely some seven million children have either had a parent in prison or recently released from prison. Further, these estimates do not consider the large number of children who have or have recently had a parent incarcerated in jail. [15].

When a parent is incarcerated, the lives of their children can be disrupted in many tragic ways. A change in the child's caregivers or the addition of a new member to the household can be quite traumatic [16]. For children who reside with a parent who becomes incarcerated, this may result in foster care placement and the introduction of new family members as well as reliance on nonparent

adults for care [17]. Repeated changes in family relationships are a common source of disruption in children's lives. The potential instability and insecurities surrounding caregivers can be devastating for children [18]. Consider that children of prisoners are more likely to observe parental substance abuse, perform poorly in school, and experience poverty and disadvantage [19]. Moreover, research suggests that because of social stigma and isolation, families often deceive children about the whereabouts of incarcerated parents [20,21]. Taken together, these toxic factors can lead children of prisoners into early and frequent contact with the criminal justice system. In fact, children of prisoners are at-risk for alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency and crime, gang involvement, and subsequent incarceration [22–24]. For some children of prisoners, a fatalistic attitude can emerge whereby they believe there is little hope for living a full life, and even an expectation of following a similar path as their incarcerated parent [25,26].

We know that the cycle of imprisonment among large numbers of individuals is increasingly concentrated in poor, urban communities that already have enormous social and economic disadvantages [27,28]. Most prisoners are ill-prepared to navigate the many obstacles awaiting them after leaving prison including housing, employment, transportation, and trying to re-connect with families. To state the obvious, most ex-prisoners are not returning to positive and welcoming environments [29,30]. So challenging for ex-prisoners is this reentry process that many fall prey to substance abuse and other major health risks [30]. In fact, a study of all inmates released from prison in the state of Washington from July 1999 through December 2003 found the risk of death among former inmates to be 3.5 times higher than comparable residents during a 1.9 year follow-up period. Even more striking, during the first 2 weeks after release from prison, the risk of death among former inmates was 12.7 times that among other state residents. The leading causes of death among former inmates are drug overdose, cardiovascular disease, homicide, and suicide [30], *et al.*

3. Unlikely Allies in Prison Reform

While it may be premature to invoke Victor Hugo's axiom "no army can stop an idea whose time has come" regarding prison reform, even a cursory examination of recent policy statements from both liberal and conservative leaders suggest harsh "warehouse" sentencing and massive prison construction may be coming to an end. Prison reformers on the left tend to highlight the cost-effectiveness of community-based rehabilitation programs for reducing offender recidivism when compared to long-term incarceration. Reformers on the right emphasize a sea change in how conservatives view criminal justice spending. As conservative reform advocate Grover Norquist recently put it: "Spending more on education doesn't necessarily get you more education. That's also true about national defense. It turns out it's also true about criminal justice and fighting crime." [31].

Insofar as getting "tough on crime" has been a defining issue for political conservatives, it has also created large government bureaucracies in policing, courts and corrections amid a largely federally funded "war on drugs" [32–35]. While consensus on the left has been that harsh prison sentences would lead to "institutionalization" and high recidivism, a newer movement away from harsh sentencing on the right connotes a deeper philosophical aversion to justice spending equivalent to that of other public sectors—as sources of high taxes and "big government". For

example, Dagan and Teles explore the roots of conservative efforts to scale back use of incarceration, suggesting failed prisons have become like failing schools—and correctional officer employee unions equivalent to teachers unions who resist attempts to measure their performance:

> "Once you believe that prisons are like any other agency, then it becomes natural to suspect that wardens and prison guards, like other suppliers of government services, might submit to the temptations of monopoly, inflating costs and providing shoddy service. And, of course, conservatives have long made such arguments to justify their pet project of bidding out incarceration to for-profit businesses. But the prisons-as-big-government critique has acquired a new force that makes the privatization debate almost irrelevant. Far from shilling for corporate jailers, conservatives now want to shrink the market. For fiscal hawks, the point now is not to incarcerate more efficiently or profitably, but to incarcerate less." [31].

In sum, while the left's concern about mass incarceration has been focused on the racially disproportionate impact of drug sentences and deleterious effects of long prison sentences, prison reformers on the right stress concerns about cost and return on investment.

However, the emerging contours of agreement between left and right on prison reform need to be closely examined. Nuances in cross-party support for prison reform belie deeper shifts in economic and social relations that better contextualize the debate. For example, the energy behind prison reform is anchored by agreement that harsh warehouse sentencing policies have failed taxpayers, but this consensus is not driven by wholesale agreement about what should come next. Heather Rice-Minus, a lawyer with the Justice Fellowship, the policy branch of Prison Fellowship, founded by the late Chuck Colson, sees traditional values at work. "We may use different language, but whether it's, quote, social or racial justice on the left, or quote, redemption and government accountability on the right, we're uniting on reform based on different but complementary values." [31].

Insofar as crime fighting has long been a core issue for conservatives, it has also carried high costs for taxpayers in prison construction, the hiring of more police officers, and maintaining custody and control of skyrocketing numbers of inmates [33,34]. While the vast majority of resources spent in the war on crime, of course, has gone to public and governmental agencies, a core impetus of faith-based programs is to re-direct government spending away from public agencies and funnel these toward private organizations outside of government. In the aftermath of the left's social welfare strategy for managing poverty and the right's subsequent zero tolerance strategy for managing crime, taxpayers arguably find themselves at the conclusion of two failed eras of modern social control, both of which required "big government" spending, but neither of which produced the longer-term transformations in social relations promised at the beginning.

Meanwhile, the needs of released prisoners returning to communities are in fact greater than ever before. According to Urban Institute: "In comparison to a decade ago, men and women leaving prison are less prepared for reintegration, less connected to community-based social structures, and more likely to have health or substance abuse issues." [36]. Hyper-incarceration weakened inner-city neighborhoods all the more, making them less able to successfully reintegrate

ex-offenders than before. This is not to suggest that full-scale agreement between liberals and conservatives has been achieved on the topic of faith-based prison programs. While many liberals fear faith-based prisons violate separation of church and state, especially for their captive audiences, many conservative evangelicals also emphasize the notion that to be truly "faith-based", religious organizations should disassociate themselves entirely from government [37].

In sum, much recent criminological scholarship examines the shift toward high incarceration over the past 35 years, especially as it corresponds to a dismantling of the welfare state and rise of a "big government security state" [34,35]. Ultimately, however, both arguably failed. First, social welfare programs trapped impoverished citizens in isolated "housing projects" removed from transportation and employment while providing fiscal incentives for childbirth that weakened family cohesion. Next, the subsequent incarceration boom further depleted urban centers of social capital, housed men inside prisons until they became institutionalized, while providing almost no aftercare upon release. By the mid-1990s, recidivism skyrocketed in a perfect storm of expanded blight and social disorganization, with the greatest increase in recidivism being in the very policy area that was the priority of the crackdown: drug crime [38,39]. To paraphrase the work of criminologist Loic Wacquant and others, from the vantage point of 2014, both the *war on poverty* and the *war on drugs* were, in fact, failed wars on the same people, designed not so much to transform the poor as to contain them, not so much to address "broken windows" as to simply displace those visibly breaking them [39,40].

4. A Just Measure of Faith: The New American Penitentiary Movement

In this paper, we argue a new American penitentiary movement is taking place and that a central tenet of faith-based programs helps explain its salience for both conservatives and liberals: on the one hand, faith-based programs are largely paid for by church congregations and volunteers, which appeals to conservatives' desire to shrink government and get taxpayers out of the business of community building; on the other hand, faith-based programs also demonstrate a recommitment to having at least some level of programming in prisons, which satisfies the left's view that community building and social capital ultimately lower recidivism.

By suggesting that program activities delivered by faith-based groups produce better results than similar programs run by the government, proponents of faith-based programs rely on claims of superior performance based on morality and caring—as well as the fact that many times these services are delivered by volunteers, at no cost to taxpayers. The argument frequently made on behalf of faith-based programs is twofold: first, that faith-based programs provide services at lower cost, but also that, second, faith-based programs provide services that government cannot provide at all—through the loving-kindness of volunteers motivated by agape and not a government contract or paycheck. The claim often made on behalf of faith-based programs is not only that they are cheaper, but that they are better [41]. The Preamble to Florida's enabling legislation authorizing the state's first "faith-based prison" demonstrates both the prioritization of private spirituality and fiscal conservatism in the faith-based prisons movement:

Whereas state government should not and cannot bear the sole burden of treating and helping those suffering from addictions and self-injurious behaviors, and, Whereas, faith-based organizations are "armies of compassion" devoted to changing individuals' hearts and lives and can offer cost-effective substance abuse treatment through the use of volunteers and other cost saving measures, and Whereas research has proven that "one-on-one" private and faith-based programming is often more effective than government programs in shaping and reclaiming lives because they are free to assert the essential connection between responsibility and human dignity; their approach is personal, not bureaucratic; their service is not primarily a function of professional background, but of individual commitment; and they inject an element of moral challenge and spiritual renewal that government cannot duplicate and Whereas, in an effort to transform lives and break the personally destructive and expensive recidivism cycle, Florida should increase the number of chaplains who strengthen volunteer participation and expand the pilot [faith-based] dormitory program that includes a voluntary faith component that supports inmates as they reenter communities. Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida.

—Preamble, 2001 Florida Criminal Rehabilitation Act 2001 Fl. ALS 110; 2001 Fla. Laws ch. 110; 2001 Fla. SB 912

Thus, when placing the emergence of a faith-based prisons movement into context, it becomes clear that calls for faith-based prison reform emerged at a time of broader shifts in economic and social relations, reflective of longer-standing historical patterns. As Beckett and Sasson point out regarding the "big government" of criminal justice programming, however: "Reduced welfare expenditures are not necessarily indicative of a shift toward reduced government intervention in social life, but rather a shift toward a more exclusionary and punitive approach to the regulation of social marginality." [33]. Coming out of the 1970s, with urban ghettos isolated and dysfunctional, featuring failing schools, entropy in family, and persistent high unemployment, poor black neighborhoods produced record numbers of prisoners. Middle class voters of the same period, removed from the travails of urban decline, endorsed "toughness on crime" and a "culture of control" [42]. Social inequality, civil rights and integrationist agendas faded from prominence while scaling back the welfare state even by left leaning politicians like Bill Clinton and Tony Blair translated into high incarceration.

Perhaps the most fundamental "cultural" divide in contemporary U.S. politics involves the question of personal responsibility *versus* that of opportunity, agency *versus* structure. The social construction of "deserving" *versus* the "undeserving" poor—changed over time, from "deserving poor" being a descriptor of rural white poverty during the Great Depression, to the moniker "undeserving poor" aimed at African-American urban poverty in the 1960s [33]. As Melossi and Pavarini point out, however, the distinction between "good poor" and "bad poor" dates back to the emergence of industrial capitalism itself, with merit being associated with one's capacity and willingness for labor and prisons becoming a place "for teaching the discipline of production" [2]. In short, it is a time of great transition in American criminal justice policy—prompting both a sense

of hope and fear among criminologists: "I think there is a general sense right now that we have built a beast that has to be un-built, and people are trying to figure out how we do it.…For criminologists who have been doing this for over 35 years, it is an exciting time, because the conversation has changed." [43].

Indeed, a central platform of the "compassionate conservative" movement on the right may now be coalescing with prison reform advocates on the left, in that both personal responsibility and providing opportunity through forgiveness is increasingly seen as both prudent and the right thing to do. As one of the nation's leading conservative proponents of prison reform, Texas Senator John Cornyn recently put it: "I've long despaired over the fact that we sort of gave up on people, or we have historically given up on people. Rehabilitation, alternative approaches, or at least giving people a second chance is the right thing to do, the humane thing to do, and it's a whole lot more cost-effective." [31].

5. Tracking the Scope and Evolution of Faith-Based Programs in American Prisons

The absence of a comprehensive list or index of all faith-based programs operating in American prisons belies the fact that these programs exist in all prisons and correctional facilities in the United States. Religious programs for inmates are not only among the oldest but also among the most common forms of rehabilitative programs found in correctional facilities today [44,45]. This high prevalence of use is confirmed by the U.S. Department of Justice, which reports representative data on America's prison population. After admission to prison, 69% of inmates report having working assignments, 45% report participating in some form of academic education, and 31% report attending vocational training. [1] Among all other types of personal enhancement programs offered in prison, religious activities attracted the most participation: 32% of the sampled inmates reported involvement in religious activities such as Bible studies and church services, 20% reported taking part in self-improvement programs, and 17% reported that they had been involved in counseling. This national survey verifies what many correctional practitioners and volunteers have observed for years; namely, that many inmates attend and participate in religious programs.

However, what is new is the way in which the reach and nature of religious programs have changed in prisons over the last several decades. For many, quite understandably, the term "prison ministry" is synonymous with prison evangelism. Many churches have a prison ministry as part of a congregation's overall outreach strategy. However, even more common than church sponsored prison ministries are "mom and pop" jail/prison ministries. These individual-led ministries are rarely organized, and often operate in complete isolation from other congregation-based outreach efforts to prisoners. Regular observers of American prisons—rural or urban, large or small, minimum or maximum security—will find that these mom and pop prison ministries tend to be small and insular and are primarily aimed at preaching and evangelism.

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[1] The Bureau of Justice Statistics conducted this study in the summer of 1991, conducting face-to-face interviews with 13,986 inmates from 277 correctional facilities in 14 states. The sampling design used a stratified two-stage selection process whereby the prisoners interviewed were selected from more than 711,000 adults held in state correctional facilities throughout the United States. Similar surveys were conducted in 1974, 1979, and 1986.

Perhaps, the earliest and largest organized effort toward prison evangelism can be traced to 1969 and the Bill Glass Evangelistic Association. Now known as Champions for Life (CFL), this prison ministry was founded by former National Football League football player Bill Glass, and purports to be the world's largest evangelistic prison ministry [44]. CFL's mission statement is to "assist the Church by equipping and igniting Christians to share their faith in Jesus Christ with the 'least of these'." Given this history, it is not surprising that prison ministries are viewed as simply evangelizing prisoners. Consequently, one might suspect that people driven to preach to prisoners would not really be very compassionate or have a more holistic vision for prisoner rehabilitation that prioritizes a host of non-spiritual or secular concerns related to prisoner needs like education, vocational training, life skills, and mentoring. Read the promotional material of some of these prison ministries and one will find plenty of assertions that would seem to reinforce this stereotype.

The reality is that contemporary prison ministry and faith-based prison programs are not simply evangelistic—far from it. For several decades, prison ministries have done far more than simply preach to prisoners. Instead of just going into correctional facilities to participate in an evangelistic service or lead a Bible study, faith-motivated volunteers as well as faith-based organizations have increasingly developed and implemented much more pervasive and comprehensive programs for prisoners, ex-prisoners, and even the families of those incarcerated.

Consider the aforementioned Champions for Life, known as the world's largest evangelistic prison ministry, has developed multiple programs that target other at-risk populations, and do so without an evangelistic focus. CFL and its various ministries are dedicated to promoting virtuous and prosocial behavior to children in public schools, especially inner-city schools, as well as providing long-term mentoring relationships to adjudicated youth coming out of the juvenile court system [44]. Thus, the organization known as the world's largest evangelistic prison ministry is actively supporting at-risk youth in non-proselytizing ways that seek to steer at-risk youth away from a life of crime.

Kairos Prison Ministry International, one of the largest prison ministries in the world, seeks to address the spiritual needs of incarcerated men and women, and their families, as well as those who work in the prison environment. According to the Kairos mission statement, "the people of Kairos are called by God to share the love of Christ with those impacted by incarceration". Drawing upon believers from a variety of Christian traditions, Kairos trains volunteers to work within one of three Kairos programs: Kairos Inside, Kairos Outside, and Kairos Torch [45].

Kairos Inside utilizes trained volunteer teams of men and women from communities in close proximity to an institution to present an introductory 3-day weekend, deemed "a short course on Christianity". This effort is mobilized in cooperation with the prison chaplain, and an organized follow-up is part of the weekend program. The Kairos Inside program currently operates in 350 prisons in 31 states in the U.S. and eight additional countries. More than 170,000 incarcerated men and women have been introduced to Kairos, since its inception and the current number of volunteers exceeds 20,000 per year [45].

Kairos Outside is a special weekend retreat designed to support the female loved ones of men and women who are incarcerated. It is a safe environment for women to interact with other women in similar situations. Women are encouraged to form small groups that can support them in dealing

with the many challenges facing the families of the incarcerated. The Kairos Outside program operates in 19 states, Canada, England, Australia and South Africa, and is active in 35 locations. Kairos Torch is a ministry that encourages young men and women who have experiences in the criminal justice system to participate in mentoring relationships. Kairos volunteers commit to a weekly mentoring process with these youthful offenders for six month following the initial weekend retreat. Currently, the Kairos Torch program is operational in 10 locations.

In sum, Kairos Prison Ministry utilizes an army of trained volunteers to work with and mentor male and female prisoners. Moreover, recognizing that correctional environments are stressful, Kairos volunteers also seek to encourage those correctional employees working within correctional environments. Though sharing the Christian faith is still central, Kairos volunteers provide all manner of assistance to prisoners whether through education, like skills, and ongoing mentoring. Additionally, Kairos is actively mentoring youthful offenders in an effort to prevent these same youth from ending up in the adult correctional system.

Launched in London, England in the late 1970s, the Alpha Course presents the basic principles of the Christian faith to new Christians. Over the last two decades, the course has expanded internationally and Alpha USA has also launched Alpha for Prisons which presently operates in 145 prisons within the United States. More recently, Alpha USA through collaborative efforts with other faith-based and community organizations is now offering prisoner re-entry services to the criminal justice system.

Founded in 2000, Horizon Prison Ministry works to restore prisoners and those formerly incarcerated to healthy purposeful living through mentoring, education, skill training, and spiritual growth. Horizon attempts to bring the larger community into the process of restoring offenders back to society. The Horizon program extends over a 12-month period. Inmates who volunteer to participate in Horizon are placed within a modified housing unit. The men come together as a community in a living and learning environment. Horizon has a focus on transition preparation and men receive mentoring and guidance from Horizon volunteers and a group of resident encouragers. Preliminary evaluation research of Horizon program shows promising results [46–50].

The Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP) is a Houston-based nonprofit organization that connects executives, MBA students, and leaders with convicted felons [48]. PEP was founded on the proposition that if inmates who were committed to their own transformation were equipped to start and run legitimate companies, they could succeed in business following release from prison. PEP sponsors entrepreneurship boot camps and re-entry programs for inmates. It started with a "behind bars" business plan competition that drew upon the entrepreneurial acumen of inmates. The initial experiment proved so successful that the Prison Entrepreneurship Program was established in 2004. The mission of PEP is to stimulate positive life transformation for business executives and inmates, uniting them through entrepreneurial passion, education and mentoring. Since the inception of PEP, over 700 inmates have graduated from the program. PEP graduates, on average, pay approximately $7000 annually in taxes following release from prison. PEP is growing quickly and now recruits prisoners from more than 60 prisons throughout the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). PEP is arguably one of the most innovative and promising correctional programs in the entire country.

Data provided to the authors by Prison Fellowship, America's largest non-profit organization offering religious programming in prisons, shows their systematic residential programs exist in nearly 30% of all U.S. prisons, while their ad hoc programs are offered in an astonishing 86% of all America's 1236 prisons. At this point, more than half the states have some form of residential faith-based programs operating in their prison systems, and, by Constitutional fiat, all U.S. prisons must allow for religious worship and free-exercise of faith. Nationwide, literally hundreds of thousands of inmates participate in Prison Fellowship (PF) programs each year. Angel Tree, a program that unites offenders with their children while they are incarcerated, particularly around the holidays, currently exists in 81% of American state prisons.

PF offers prisoners a variety of in-prison programs. Through one-to-three-day seminars and weekly Bible studies, inmates are taught to set goals that prepare them for release. Weekly Bible studies usually last an hour, and one-to-three day seminars might be offered several times a year at a particular prison. The level of prisoner exposure to such religious programs is probably no more than 50 h of Bible study and several days of intensive seminars annually—a relatively modest correctional intervention. Even so, preliminary empirical evidence indicates regular participation in volunteer-led Bible studies is associated with reductions in recidivism. For example, Johnson, Larson, and Pitts (1997) [50] found that prisoners from four different New York prisons who attended 10 or more Bible studies during a one-year period prior to release were significantly less likely to be arrested during a one-year post-release follow-up study. In a more recent study, tracking these same prisoners for an additional seven years, it was found that regular participation in volunteer-led Bible studies remains significantly linked to lower rates of recidivism for two years and even three years post-release [50].

In the 1990s, PF tried to locate a prison partner that would allow them to launch a new initiative that would replace occasional volunteer efforts with a completely faith-based approach to prison programs. The ultimate goal would be to reform prisoners as well the prison itself. The late Charles Colson, founder of PF, unsuccessfully pitched this idea to a number of governors, before finding in 1996 an enthusiastic partner in then-Texas governor George W. Bush [51]. The collaboration between the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and PF represented a first for Texas, if not the country. According to PF, the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) was different from traditional prison ministries in that it promotes adult basic education, vocational training, life skills, mentoring, and aftercare, while linking each of these components in a setting permeated by faith. IFI promotional material initially described the program as a "revolutionary, Christ-centered, Bible-based prison program supporting prison inmates through their spiritual and moral transformation beginning while incarcerated and continuing after release". Not surprisingly, this description fed the mistaken notion that religious programs like IFI were at odds with a treatment model. In reality, however, IFI established an approach that viewed religion and treatment as complementary [52].

IFI was officially launched in April of 1997, at the Carol Vance Unit, a 378-bed prison in Richmond, Texas. IFI is responsible for inmate programs and TDCJ is responsible for security and custody. Together, PF and the TDCJ formed a unique private–public partnership that would test the

proposition that this sacred–secular collaboration could achieve the civic purpose of reducing recidivism and thereby increase public safety.

Anchored in biblical teaching, life-skills education, and group accountability, IFI established a three-phase program involving prisoners in 16–24 months of in-prison biblical programs and 6–12 months of aftercare while on parole. Phase I of IFI lasts approximately 12 months and focuses on rebuilding the inmate's spiritual and moral foundation as well as providing educational and survival skills. A heavy emphasis is placed on:

- biblical education, GED, tutoring, substance abuse prevention, and life skills
- work (jobs are similar to those of other prisoners in the general population)
- support groups designed to increase one's personal faith
- support groups for enriching relations with family members and crime victims
- mentoring
- peer groups (Community Bible Study)

Phase II of the IFI program lasts 6–12 months and seeks to continue the educational, work, and support group aspect of the program. The main difference in Phase II is that IFI participants are allowed to perform community service work during the day at off-site locations, such as Habitat for Humanity. IFI members in Phase II continue with Christian-based education, Bible study courses, mentoring, and support groups, but with a special emphasis on leadership issues.

Phase III of IFI is the aftercare component of the faith-based program and lasts for an additional 6–12 months. The mission of the aftercare program is to assist participants in their reentry into society by helping with housing and employment referrals, facilitating the mentoring relationship, and making connections between the offender and local church communities that will provide a nurturing environment to continue the former prisoner's spiritual growth. Aftercare workers recruit new churches and volunteers to assist in the mentoring of IFI participants, and to help with other critical reentry needs such as housing, transportation, and employment.

Johnson and Larson utilized a quasi-experimental research design, and found that IFI program graduates had significantly lower rates of rearrest than a matched group of inmates (17.3% *vs.* 35%), and had significantly lower rates of reincarceration than the matched group (8% *vs.* 20.3%) [52]. The fact that IFI graduates are significantly less likely to be either rearrested or reincarcerated during the two-year period following release from prison represents initial evidence that program completion of this faith-based initiative is associated with lower rates of recidivism of former prisoners.

Modeled on Prison Fellowship's InnerChange Freedom Initiative in Texas, the Minnesota Department of Correction (DOC) established in 2002 the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (InnerChange), a faith-based prisoner reentry program located at the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)-Lino Lakes on the edge of the Twin Cities. MCF-Lino Lakes is a medium security facility. InnerChange is privately funded, and the program depends heavily on volunteers from local churches and religious organizations for the delivery of many of the services provided. InnerChange programs cover areas related to substance abuse education, victim impact awareness, life skills development, cognitive skill development, educational attainment, community reentry, religious instruction, and moral development.

The Minnesota DOC completed an outcome evaluation of the InnerChange program [53]. The evaluation assessed the impact of InnerChange on recidivism among 732 offenders released from Minnesota prisons between 2003 and 2009. The average follow-up period for the 732 offenders was a little more than three years. To evaluate the effectiveness of the InnerChange program for male inmates at MCF-Lino Lakes, the DOC examined recidivism outcomes among 732 offenders released from prison between 2003 and 2009. InnerChange participants had lower recidivism rates than the offenders in the comparison group. For example, 42% of the InnerChange participants had been rearrested for a new offense by the end of December 2011 compared with 51% of the comparison group offenders. The results also show that 25% of the InnerChange participants were reconvicted for a new offense compared to 34% in the comparison group. In addition, 9% of the InnerChange participants were reincarcerated for a new criminal offense compared to 13% of the comparison group offenders. The results from the multivariate statistical analyses, which controlled for time at risk and other rival causal factors, revealed that participating in InnerChange significantly lowered the risk of recidivism by 26% for rearrest, 35% for reconviction, and 40% for new offenses leading to reincarceration.

According to Duwe and King, there are likely several reasons why InnerChange reduces recidivism [53]. Though traditional Christian beliefs and doctrine promote living a prosocial and crime-free life, InnerChange also attempted to lessen the recidivism risk of those who participate by focusing on issues such as education, criminal thinking, and chemical dependency. Further, InnerChange participants receive a continuum of care that connects the delivery of programs in the institution to those found in the community. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, InnerChange expands offender social support networks by connecting participants to mentors and linking them with faith communities after their release from prison. The findings suggest that faith-based correctional programs can work if they incorporate elements of other correctional programs that are known to be effective. Additionally, a cost-benefit study by Duwe and Johnson finds that the Minnesota InnerChange program saves taxpayers approximately $8300 per participant [54].

Helping prisoners to rewrite their life narrative can be a powerful and redemptive experience, giving ex-prisoners the hope and purpose needed to start a new and positive life, while at the same time helping them to come to grips with the anti-social life they have left behind [55,56]. Preliminary evidence indicates that faith-based pre-release/reentry prison programs can be effective in reducing recidivism [57]. However, most faith-based programs do not last very long and one can readily argue that to have the biggest possible salutary effect, prisoners need a more substantial or sustained faith-based intervention to be effective. Moreover, the most serious offenders tend to have longer prison sentences and are typically ineligible for consideration when it comes to participation in programs.

However, two experimental programs are now ready to test the proposition that a four-year prison seminary can be effective with even the hardest of those criminals serving very long sentences—even life sentences—within our nation's maximum security prisons. The Darrington Unit (Rosharon, TX, USA) resembles most other maximum security prisons around the country, except for the fact that it now offers a four-year seminary within the prison. On 29 August 2011, 39 prisoners were formally installed as the first class of seminarians studying to become ministers

under a new program that operates within this maximum security prison. Referred to as the Darrington Seminary, it is an extension of the Ft. Worth-based Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The nondenominational program is carefully modeled after a similar initiative at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, often referred to as Angola. Initiated by warden Burl Cain, the Angola Bible College (which is an extension of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) has received considerable attention from religious media outlets since its inception in 1995. The unique aspect of these two seminaries is that they focus on enrolling "lifers" as well as those with extremely long prison sentences, so that the men, once graduated, will have many years to spend in sharing their faith and their moral convictions with others inside the prison [58].

Angola has a notorious and well-documented history as one of the most violent prisons in America. However, what an increasing number of observers have reported in recent years is a far less violent Angola. Many have suggested that Angola has undergone a total change in the prison culture during the last 20 years. Moreover, some credit this change to the fact that the Angola seminary graduates have remained inside the prison. Using this particular "lifer-student" approach, correctional leaders at Angola and Darrington are convinced they have the potential to not only rehabilitate prisoners, but to transform the prison environment itself.

Again, the difference in Angola and Darrington, where faith-based programs are concerned, is that these two seminaries will accept only those inmates with extremely long sentences, so the inmates can be returned to service inside the prison system, and therefore exert for many years an influence for moral change and spiritual renewal among the rest of the inmates. The most critical aspect of these two seminaries is their commitment to send their graduates out as "Field Ministers" to other prisons in their respective states. Angola has been sending out their graduates as "missionaries" for a number of years, and the Darrington Seminary now has approval from the highest levels of the TDCJ to follow this same approach [57].

The idea of placing a seminary within a maximum security prison is unprecedented within the field of corrections. However, the idea of placing seminaries in other prisons is already gaining traction amongst correctional leaders and key decision-makers. In fact, the Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) and Prison Fellowship have launched in the last several years more than 20 seminaries within California's prison system as well as that many in prisons outside of California [58]. Indeed, serious discussions are now taking place between TUMI/PF and officials from a host of states regarding the possibility of bringing these privately funded prison seminary programs to prisons across the country. If these discussions take root, we may well be observing a major shift within the American prison system within the next few years.

Since faith-based programs tend to be privately funded and largely staffed by volunteers, they come at little or no cost to taxpayers. In a time of shrinking budgets and program cutbacks, correctional administrators are increasingly open to the idea of volunteer led faith-based programs and even seminaries, especially if the evidence indicates that they can be effective in reducing recidivism.

6. The Need for More Research on Faith-Based Prison Programs

Despite the widespread presence of faith-based programs in American prisons, research on faith-based programs remains limited [59]. The field is in its infancy, beset by methodological and

implementation challenges as well as the broad diversity in scope and character of faith-based programs operating in American corrections. As the Urban Institute recently stated: "Basic but critical questions about the nature of faith-based programs and how they may improve offender outcomes, including recidivism and other reentry outcomes, remain largely unanswered" [36]. Unfortunately, little research in the way of a deep-level examination of the specific elements of religiosity as they relate to desistance appears in the social science literature [60,61].

In short, despite the fact that religious faith has long been a cultural proxy for criminal rehabilitation, social science research on the *specific connections* between religiosity and *criminal desistance* has been lacking. Social scientists have been reluctant to attempt to measure the impact of "faith" in correctional programs—for some very good reasons. First, federal agencies and private foundations have rarely funded or prioritized research on faith-based programs within the field of corrections. This oversight has been a deterrent to scholars looking to conduct research in this overlooked area. Second, in the United States, because Constitutional strictures surrounding the 1st Amendment require voluntariness and a complete lack of coercion when governing participation in custodial "faith-based" programs, the obvious problem of *selection bias* complicates all efforts to compare performance of volunteers for faith-based programs with that of those who did not. In other words, for comparison purposes, we are not able to randomly assign individuals into experimental (e.g., faith-based program) or control groups (those receiving no intervention).

Regarding selection bias, inmates who volunteer for faith-based programs may be already qualitatively different from the general population of inmates—possibly being easier to deal with, more habitable in general, and more amenable to behavioral change. Critics of faith-based programs suggest the assets of faith-based programs—offered by volunteers at almost no cost to correctional systems in the U.S.—often provide resources widely unavailable to the general population of inmates. In other words, there may be "false incentives" to proclaiming one's faith in the context of prison that mask true behavior change or spiritual growth. More seriously, any positive effects of religious programs may well be the byproducts of qualitatively "easier" inmates self-selecting into the program while being offered a richer menu of human contact and services. As a result, much of the research on faith-based programs is still qualitative and even sometimes anecdotal [62–68].

Selection bias may also run in the opposite direction. Namely, inmates with less than positive motivations may be quick to sign up for faith-based programs. In fact, this is exactly what Byron Johnson discovered in the evaluation of the Texas InnerChange Freedom Initiative, a faith-based prison in Texas [53]. In-depth interviews with inmates participating in the faith-based program revealed that many signed up for the program to get close to home (*i.e.*, Houston), not because they were religious or wanted to participate in a faith-based program. Likewise, interviews with chaplains and correctional staff at the same prison indicated a general distrust of inmates signing up for the faith-based program. Stated differently, correctional staff uniformly indicated that many of the inmates signing-up for the program were "cons" hoping to impress the parole board and earn an early parole for having participated in a religious program. In other words, the faith-based program would attract inmates that were anything but devoutly religious looking. Such inmates would look

for any angle to exploit that presents them in a better light before prison authorities and the parole board.

In order to address this gap in research, a number of studies utilizing exploratory "unstructured life-history narratives" have been produced and that help identify and investigate the subjective experiences of desisters, by way of "cognitive shifts", "identity changes", and attempts at "making good" described by successful ex-offenders [61–68]. As demonstrated in this previous research, religiously-anchored "redemption narratives" provide desisters with an important spiritual "toolkit" necessary for coping with what criminologist John Braithwaite calls "shame management" [69]. Offenders often characterize the resources provided by religiosity as often *more accessible* and *comprehensive* than those available through the justice system. Indeed, religiously-motivated desisters often describe themselves as empowered or "fired up" to meet the challenges associated with constructing pro-social identities after release [61–68].

For the reasons mentioned, much of the research on faith-based programs that does exist relies on qualitative narrative accounts. Religious spirituality has, in fact, been found to be a highly salient resource for many successful ex-offenders, especially under conditions of low emotional support and weak informal social control [61,62,70–73]. Phenomenological analyses of the desistance process reveal that religion and spirituality frequently help offenders construct stories of change that become vital to an altered sense of self.. More importantly, religiosity seems to help desisters undertake preliminary agentic moves that, while often not outwardly visible to family members or justice officials, are the beginnings of an evolving self-narrative that is both pro-social and provides a redemptive path [61,66].

Specifically, life-history narratives highlight agentic moves that draw upon stories of change emphasizing the ways religious practice and spirituality provide emotional, cognitive and linguistic resources employed by desisters in their daily lives. As Giordano *et al.* put it:

> "Thus, in addition to its relative accessibility, religion seems to have potential as a mechanism for desistance because many core concerns within religious communities and the Bible relate directly to offenders' problem areas. Even more importantly, religious teachings can provide a clear blueprint for how to proceed as a changed individual." [68], *et al.*

7. Conclusions

Rebuilding the lives of ex-offenders has proven exceedingly difficult. With national data showing a near 70% recidivism rate within three years after release from prison (by re-arrest) and a greater than 50% re-incarceration rate within five, America's correctional system has proven anything but the curative answer to the crime problem. Nearly 20 years of "prisoner reentry" research, moreover, has shown disappointing results—and in the comparatively few cases where desistance actually does take hold, desisters report succeeding *despite the system* rather than because of it [74]. For those few who do succeed after release from prison, the aphorism "you rehabilitate yourself" is what successful desisters report back [68]. Indeed, the high failure rate and sheer fiscal impact of American corrections draws resources away from related areas of concern

like education and tuition-free childcare that might lesson crime. Despite the longstanding prominence of religion as a supposed source of criminal desistance, however, systematic research on specific religious programs for offenders is surprisingly lacking. While most research on religious programming for American prisoners involves Christianity, numerous documentations of non-Christian religious practice as supportive of offender desistance also exist in the literature. Two excellent recent pieces explore the growing prevalence of Eastern religious practice among prisoners [75,76].

While crime is often disproportionately concentrated in economically impoverished neighborhoods, religiosity may provide a reflexive framework empowering to ex-offenders. Successful desisters frequently report that religiosity provides a *spiritual fortitude* useful for a path for longer-term desistance even in the context of structural inequality [61–65]. Faith-based programs in American corrections are growing in prominence and are likely here to stay.

Author Contributions

The authors jointly conceptualized, authored and produced this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The Sociology of Humanist, Spiritual, and Religious Practice in Prison: Supporting Responsivity and Desistance from Crime

Tom P. O'Connor and Jeff B. Duncan

Abstract: This paper presents evidence for why Corrections should take the humanist, spiritual, and religious self-identities of people in prison seriously, and do all it can to foster and support those self-identities, or ways of establishing meaning in life. Humanist, spiritual, and religious (H/S/R) pathways to meaning can be an essential part of the evidence-based responsivity principle of effective correctional programming, and the desistance process for men and women involved in crime. This paper describes the sociology of the H/S/R involvement of 349 women and 3,009 men during the first year of their incarceration in the Oregon prison system. Ninety-five percent of the women and 71% of the men voluntarily attended at least one H/S/R event during their first year of prison. H/S/R events were mostly led by diverse religious and spiritual traditions, such as Native American, Protestant, Islamic, Wiccan, Jewish, Jehovah Witness, Latter-day Saints/Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Buddhist, and Catholic, but, increasingly, events are secular or humanist in context, such as education, yoga, life-skills development, non-violent communication, and transcendental meditation groups. The men and women in prison had much higher rates of H/S/R involvement than the general population in Oregon. Mirroring gender-specific patterns of H/S/R involvement found in the community, women in prison were much more likely to attend H/S/R events than men.

Introduction

Prisons, by nature, are dangerous places. Prisons concentrate large numbers of people in crowded conditions with little privacy and few positive social outlets. Prisons hold healthy people dealing with issues of loss, fear, shame, guilt and innocence, alongside people with mental illnesses, varying levels of maturity, sociopathic tendencies, and histories of impulsivity and violence. The sense of danger and the generally oppressive nature of prisons make it all the more remarkable that prisons can also be places of reflection, exploration, discovery, change and growth. St. Paul, Henry David Thoreau, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Aung San Suu Kyi, and countless men and women have all used their time in prison for good.

Malcolm X dropped out of school after eighth grade and gradually got involved in prostitution, burglary, drugs, and firearms. In 1946, when he was 21, Malcolm was sentenced to 8 to 10 years in the Massachusetts state prison system for larceny and breaking and entering. During his first year in prison Malcolm was disruptive and spent quite a bit of time in solitary confinement. "I preferred the solitary that this behavior brought me. I would pace for hours like a caged leopard, viciously

cursing aloud to myself." ([1], p. 156) Then, a self-educated and well regarded prisoner called Bimbi - "he was the first man I had ever seen command total respect…with his words" - inspired Malcolm to take up education, study and learning ([1], p. 157). Malcolm became more and more interested in religion and was advised by a religious leader to atone for his crimes, humbly bow in prayer to God and promise to give up his destructive behavior. After a week of internal struggle, Malcolm overcame what he describes as a sense of shame, guilt and embarrassment, and submitted himself in prayer to God and became a member of the Nation of Islam. It was a turning point, the kind of 'quantum change' described by William Miller in *Quantum Change: When Epiphanies and Sudden Insights Transform Ordinary Lives* [2]."I still marvel at how swiftly my previous life's thinking pattern slid away from me, like snow off a roof. It is as though someone else I knew of had lived by hustling and crime." "Months passed by without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I had never been so truly free in my life." ([1], p. 173) This jail-house religious conversion experience set the direction for Malcolm X's lifelong journey of self, religious, racial, political, class and cultural discovery, and his profound influence on American life, which continues to be a topic of immense importance and debate to this day [3].

There are many similar prison stories of conversion leading to successful desistance from crime and a generous life of giving to one's culture, community, and country [4]. In their article "Why God Is Often Found Behind Bars: Prison Conversions and the Crisis of Self-Narrative", Maruna, Wilson and Curran (2006) make two important points. Their first point is the lack of social science knowledge about religion and spirituality in this unique context of incarceration. "The jail cell conversion from "sinner" to true believer may be one of the best examples of a "second chance" in modern life, yet the process receives far more attention from the popular media than from social science research." Their second point is that the discipline of "narrative psychology" can provide explanatory insight into the phenomenon of religious and spiritual conversion in prison. Prisoner conversions, they argue, are a narrative that "creates a new social identity to replace the label of prisoner or criminal, imbues the experience of imprisonment with purpose and meaning, empowers the largely powerless prisoner by turning him into an agent of God, provides the prisoner with a language and framework for forgiveness, and allows a sense of control over an unknown future." [5]

Todd Clear and a group of colleagues, such as Harry Dammer and Melvina Sumpter, explored the meaning and impact of religious practice in prisons throughout the US in a series of ethnographic and empirical studies. They found this practice helped people to psychologically adjust to prison life in a healthy way [6,7], and to derive motivation, direction and meaning in life, hope for the future, peace of mind, and make a shift in their lifestyle or behaviors [8,9]. High levels of religious practice and belief in a transcendent being were also related to positive post-prison adjustment in the community upon release [10]. Interestingly, Clear *et al.* argue that the main role of religion and spirituality in prison is not to reduce recidivism but to prevent, or at least ameliorate, the process of dehumanization that prison contexts in the U.S. tend to foster. Religion and spirituality in prison help to humanize a dehumanizing situation by assisting prisoners in coping with being a social outcast in a context that is fraught with loss, deprivation, and survival challenges [11]. Along these lines, Cullen *et al.* argue that criminologists must be more willing to help discover and support ways in which correctional institutions can be administered more

humanely and effectively [12]. The practice of religion and spirituality in prison is one way to foster humanity and support desistance in a social context that can be inherently inhumane.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) meta-analysis of the impact of rehabilitation programs on recidivism included six 'faith-based' or 'faith-informed' studies that met their standards for methodological quality or rigor, and concluded that the findings on the impact of faith-based interventions on recidivism were "inconclusive and in need of further research". Interestingly, four of the six studies in the meta-analysis failed to find an overall program effect on reducing recidivism, but two found a positive effect, one of which was also the study with the highest effect size (-0.388) for reducing recidivism, among the 291 evaluations that met the rigorous methodological criteria for acceptance in the meta-analysis. The study with the highest effect size was a study of a faith-informed program for very high-risk sex offenders in Canada called Circles of Support and Accountability or CoSA [13]. Additional research conducted by CoSA since the meta-analysis confirmed the strong effect size findings for the CoSA program. [14] Johnson's review of the broad literature on religion and delinquency/crime in the community and after prison is very helpful because it examines a wide range of outcomes for a wide range of religious variables, and includes a large number (272) of studies of varying methodological rigor. Johnson's conclusion, however, that "clear and compelling empirical evidence exists that religiosity is linked to reductions in crime" is not fully supported by the WSIPP meta-analytic findings about the impact of faith-based programs/religion on reducing crime for ex-prisoners [15, p. 172]. O'Connor *et al.* discuss the six studies included in the WSIPP meta-analysis along with some additional studies, and expand on the generally encouraging but inconclusive state of the research findings on recidivism from the corrections literature [16]. Dodson *et al.* also review some of the literature in this area of recidivism but do not include all of the relevant studies in their review [17].

Important new findings from a series of eight meta-analytic studies commissioned by the American Psychological Association (APA) are very relevant to this question of the connection between religion and corrections. These eight studies looked at whether or not it 'works' to adapt or match psychotherapy to eight individual client characteristics. In correctional terms, this APA research relates to the third of the three main principles of the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model of rehabilitation, namely the principle of responsivity [18]. The evidence-based principle of responsivity in corrections has two aspects to it. First, 'general responsivity' states that correctional interventions should use cognitive-behavioral modes of intervention as offenders respond best to this style of programming. Second, 'specific responsivity' states that interventions need to be tailored to the specific ways in which individual clients respond to treatment; a very shy person will not do well in groups, an illiterate person will not do well in programs that require a lot of writing *etc.* Responsivity is about adapting treatment to the particular ways in which the offender population in general, and individual offenders in particular, respond to treatment. The APA studies concluded that it was "demonstrably effective in adapting psychotherapy" to four of the eight factors studied: (1) reactance/resistance; (2) client preferences; (3) culture; and (4) religion and spirituality (R/S). The APA now counsels all of its members to incorporate a person's religion and/or spirituality into their treatment (regardless of the therapist's religion and/or spirituality), because doing so produces better treatment outcomes. "Patients in R/S psychotherapies showed

greater improvement than those in the alternate secular psychotherapies both on psychological (d = 0.26) and spiritual (d = 0.41) outcomes." [19].

The APA meta-analytic study on the outcomes of adapting psychotherapy to a patient's particular religious and spiritual outlook categorized these R/S outlooks into four different types of spirituality based on the type of object a person feels a sense of closeness or connection to: (1) humanistic spirituality; (2) nature spirituality; (3) cosmic spirituality; and (4) religious spirituality [20]. Many humanists, secularists and atheists *etc.*, however, do not like to use word "spiritual" to describe their perspective on life, so we prefer to collapse this fourfold categorization into a threefold classification based on a person's way of making ultimate meaning in the world and their affective connection to the world and the transcendent: (1) humanist; (2) spiritual (includes both nature and cosmic spirituality); and (3) religious. Humanists tend to find meaning in human life itself and do not relate to a transcendent being or spirituality beyond human life. Sometimes referred to as secularists or 'Nones' (no stated religious preference, atheists, agnostics), this group of people is growing and now accounts for 15% of the US public [21]. On the other hand, people who are spiritual and/or religious, (many people say they are both spiritual and religious) [22], find meaning in life precisely by relating to some being or force that transcends human life. However one categorizes the different types, it is important for Corrections to take note that the APA has recommended that all psychologists and counselors should integrate humanism, spirituality, and religion into their work in a way that matches each client's particular way of establishing ultimate meaning in life or feeling connected to something that is vitally important in their lives [19,20].

A new federal law, passed in 2000, called the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), has dramatically reduced the ability of prisons and jails to restrict humanist, spiritual or religious (H/S/R) accommodations because of security or practical concerns. Just as prisons and jails must provide inmates with access to health care, they must now provide inmates with the ability to express and practice their belief and meaning systems, unless there is a compelling government reason not to do so. The Supreme Court has consistently ruled that people do not lose their First Amendment constitutional rights to practice their religion, spirituality, or way of life, when they are incarcerated. Before RLUIPA, prisons had fairly wide scope as to what they would and would not accommodate. RLUIPA and a series of other US cultural and legal developments, have meant that the "topic of religion and the criminal justice system is now clearly on the national criminological agenda" [23]. These First Amendment rights and responsibilities extend beyond spirituality and religion into humanism. In 2005, the US Court of Appeal did not declare that atheism was a religion, but did decide that atheism was afforded the same protection as religion under the First Amendment, and ordered a prison in Wisconsin to allow an inmate to form a study group for atheists alongside the religious study groups they already allowed [24].

In his acclaimed book, *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor describes what it means to live in a modern secular democracy and a secular age. For Taylor, every person can now choose how they will create a sense of ultimate meaning for their life, and relate to the big questions of health, justice, suffering, evil, death and the purpose of life. The more traditional choice derives meaning from a diverse range of religious and spiritual traditions, which posit a transcendent source or ground of meaning, usually called God or the Divine. Now that we live in a secular age, people can

and do choose to make meaning in a way that makes no reference to a transcendent God/Divinity, but only to human life and the human condition. This purely secular or humanistic way of making meaning is new; historically, this choice has never been available on a broad societal level. Nowadays, people take this choice for granted [25]. Prison chaplains have a unique potential, by way of their training, prison roles, skills and interests, to work with all three ways of making meaning – humanist, spiritual and religious [16]. Working effectively with all three paths, however, is a challenge for some prison chaplains and prison chaplaincies. The legislative hearings for the RLUIPA act (above) in the US make it clear that RLUIPA was enacted, in large part, because various prison systems and chaplains were not equally or fairly accommodating the wide variety of humanist, spiritual and religious traditions and meaning-making represented in their prisons. Similarly, Beckford and Gilliat, devote a whole book to making the point that structural and sociological issues make it difficult for English and Welsh prison chaplains to provide "equal rights in a multi-faith society". The English and Welsh prison chaplains function in a social system that gives a privileged position to the Church of England, often referred to as the "national church". This meant that, until recently, a very large majority of the prison chaplains were from the Church of England/Anglican tradition. The dominant position of the Church of England chaplains increasingly caused problems of equal access and opportunity for a variety of non-Christian faiths as English and Welsh society became more multi-faith [26]. "The reason for highlighting the structural setting of religion in prison rather than the beliefs and actions of individuals was to expose the social, organizational and cultural factors which shape the opportunities for prisoners to receive religious and pastoral care."

To summarize: many people, like Malcolm X, undergo profound conversion experiences in prison that brings about a quantum change in the trajectory of their life; the practice of H/S/R in prisons and jails is constitutionally protected; and this practice has been found to help people adjust, psychologically and behaviorally, to prison life and develop personal narratives and identities that support desistance from crime. Further research will determine whether or not, and how, this practice is related to reductions in recidivism. Evidence from the field of psychology on the evidence-based responsivity principle of effective correctional programming, strongly suggests that treatment and correctional staffs in prisons, jails, probation and parole should incorporate a person's H/S/R into their correctional treatment and supervision practices. It is increasingly important, therefore, to have an accurate understanding of how H/S/R functions in a correctional setting and how to foster H/S/R in these unique contexts.

Understanding Humanism, Spirituality, and Religion in a Prison Setting

There are a few excellent ethnographic studies that seek to understand the meaning and role of H/S/R in the lives of prisoners [7,8, 27], but to our knowledge, there is not a single systematic or comprehensive description of H/S/R practice in prison. Maruna argues that researchers and practitioners who study correctional interventions often ask the question "What works?" but fail to ask the equally important question "How does it work?" [28]. O'Connor *et al.* review the literature on H/S/R in prisons and community corrections, and much of this literature is focused on the question of whether it works, rather than how it works [16,29,30,]. Most of the literature is also

focused on organized religion but, as we have argued above, this conceptual approach needs to make a shift to include all three ways of making ultimate meaning: humanism, spirituality and religion. In this paper, we describe the sociology of H/S/R in a correctional system, specifically the Oregon state prison system, and leave the question of H/S/R content and outcomes to future papers [31]. An important first step to answering the "how does it work" question is to describe and understand the phenomenon we are questioning. To put it simply: What does H/S/R look like in a prison context?

The Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) has a computerized scheduling system that helps organize and track the work and program involvement (education, cognitive, drug and alcohol treatment *etc.*) of the approximately 14,000 men and women who are incarcerated in 14 prisons around the state. Beginning in 2000, the department's Religious Services Unit began to add all of the events and services it organized to the scheduling system in each of the prisons. Gradually, the accuracy and completeness of the H/S/R data entry improved in each prison, and by 2004 the data was of sufficient quality to initiate the present study.

The Oregon Department of Corrections organizes what it calls the Religious Services unit in a different way than many other state prison chaplaincy systems. Chaplains in many U.S. state prison systems are hired by the prison where they will work, and are supervised by a deputy warden/superintendent or the head of prison programming. In Oregon, the Religious Services unit is part of a centralized Transitional Services Division that has responsibility for overseeing the intake assessment/classification center, and the education, drug and alcohol, H/S/R, and reentry services for all of the prisons. So the Religious Services unit has its own centrally-based senior manager or Administrator who sets the direction for the statewide H/S/R services at each of the prisons, and oversees the budget, goals/policies, and hiring, training and supervision of the chaplains and other staff in the Religious Services Unit. Tom O'Connor, one of the authors on this paper, held the Administrator of Religious Services position with the Oregon Department of Corrections from 2000 to 2008. Currently, there are 22 full-time chaplains, two half-time chaplains, and seven other staff members in the Religious Services unit [32]. The staff members in the unit serve the H/S/R needs of all inmates, and they come from several different faith backgrounds including: Zen Buddhist, Sunni Muslim, Presbyterian, Unitarian, Baptist, Foursquare Christianity, Lutheran, Shambhala Buddhist, Latter-day Saints, Methodist, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Greek Orthodox *etc.* When we collected the data for this study (2004 to 2005), the Religious Services staff makeup was basically similar to the current makeup, though slightly smaller and less religiously diverse.

The chaplains and other staff in the Religious Services unit are responsible for four kinds of programs or services: (1) the H/S/R services and programs in the 14 prisons; (2) a statewide faith and community-based reentry program called Home for Good in Oregon[33]; (3) a statewide volunteer program for about 2000 volunteers; and (4) a victim services program that includes the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) program and a facilitated dialogue program between victims of serious crime and their incarcerated offenders [32]. Almost all of the services and events organized by the ODOC chaplains are religious or spiritual in nature, however, the chaplains are increasingly involved in facilitating services that take place in a humanist or secular

context, without any religious or spiritual overtones, such as non-violent communication classes, social study groups, victim-offender dialogues, restorative justice programs, third level educational programs such as Inside-Out, and non-religious meditation programs such as Transcendental Meditation [34]. The chaplains also do a great deal of direct counseling, informal interacting, and death/grief work with inmates who do not have any religious or spiritual background or practice.

The Oregon prison chaplains would not be able to meet the diverse and widespread H/S/R needs of the men and women in prison without the help of a substantial cadre of volunteers. These volunteers are an indispensible part of the sociology we are examining, and many voices such as the Director of the National Institute of Corrections are now arguing for an expanded role for volunteers in corrections [35]. In this paper, we give a brief overview of these volunteers; a forthcoming paper will examine the volunteer program in depth [36]. The largest group of volunteers is related in some way to religious faith traditions or spiritualties. Approximately 75% of the almost 2,000 men and women who currently volunteer for prison and/or reentry programs with the Oregon Department of Corrections, are religious or spiritual volunteers who come from a wide variety of faith and spiritual traditions such as Native American, Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, Seventh Day Adventist, Latter Day Saints, Jehovah Witness, and Earth-Based or pagan such as Wicca. Ten per cent of the prison volunteers work in the area of drug and alcohol recovery, primarily from the Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous (AA and NA) traditions, and tend to fall into the "spiritual" category, along with some Native Americans, Wiccans, and Buddhists *etc.*, who prefer to think of themselves as spiritual but not necessarily religious. The AA and NA volunteers do not usually self-identify as 'religious' in the sense of belonging to an organized religion, but often consider themselves as spiritual because a "higher power" is a core part of their way of being and making meaning. McConnell recently did a series of ethnographic interviews with a diverse group of spiritually and religiously involved men in two of Oregon's prisons (a maximum security prison with a population of about 2,400, and a medium security prison with a population of about 800). Tony, one of the men interviewed by McConnell, who had a Native American ethnic heritage but no previous exposure to Native American spiritual practices prior to being in prison, expresses this identification with spirituality and not religion:

> The first sweat [sweat lodge ceremony] I went to, I still had a lot of the anger, and I went in, and I heard some of the stories that they told.... A lot of their history, combined with their - I wouldn't call it a "religion" - but their beliefs. And then, a lot of their personal things that they were kinda lettin' go of and what not. And I was able to just let go of a lot of my anger. And was reassured that things, you know, if you have a good heart, a good mind and what not, it doesn't matter if it's God or Great Spirit, but you will be rewarded in time. ([27], p. 255)

The final 15% of volunteers in Oregon tend to work out of a wide variety of humanist or secular contexts and help with high school and college education, cultural clubs, re-entry, communication skills, meditation, recreational activities, life-skills development and administrative tasks in the department. Some of these 'humanist' volunteers work out of the Religious Services unit, and some of them work out of other units such as Education and Activities. A good example of this humanist

or secular group would be many of the volunteers in the Inside-Out Prison Exchange program. Trained Inside-Out professors teach accredited college courses inside a prison, but half of the students in the class are inmates and half are outside students from a local university. Inside-Out has held nearly 200 classes with over 6,000 students, and trained more than 200 instructors from over 100 colleges and universities in 35 US states and Canada. The Inside-Out Program 'increases opportunities for men and women, inside and outside of prison, to have transformative learning experiences that emphasize collaboration and dialogue, inviting participants to take leadership in addressing crime, justice, and other issues of social concern.'[37]

These humanist, spiritual and religious volunteers are a huge resource for corrections and public safety; they are dedicated to making a difference in society and helping to lift people out of crime and into productive lives in the community.

The Sociology of Humanist, Spiritual and Religious Practice in a Prison Context

We turn now to describe the H/S/R background and involvement of people who spend at least one year in prison. The Oregon correctional system sends people to the state prison system when their sentence length is one year or longer. Those who are sentenced to less than a year serve their time in the county jail system. Not everyone who is sentenced to the state prison system, however, spends a full year in prison because their time in the County jail awaiting trial *etc.* is counted toward their sentence. The population for this longitudinal study was the 3,009 men (90%) and 349 women (10%) who entered the Oregon state prison system at any point during 2004 and who were still in the system one year later from their original 2004 date of intake into the system. We started collecting data on the H/S/R involvement of these men and women from their particular date of entry in 2004 and followed them all for a one-year period from that date.

Table 1 shows the basic demographics for both the men and the women. Compared to men, the women were more likely to be White, and Native American and less likely to be Asian, African American and Hispanic. Men were much more likely to be a gang member and to have committed a sexual offence than women. The average age of the men and women, however, was the same. So, demographically, the men in our study differ significantly to the women.

Oregon has one central intake or receiving center for men and women who enter prison. The intake center is located on the grounds of the only women's prison in Oregon. The women and men are held in separate parts of the intake center for about three weeks and then moved to the only women's prison in Oregon or one of 13 male prisons for the remainder of their sentence. The men might be moved several times between these 13 prisons prior to their release. The women can only move between the medium and minimum sections of the women's prison which are located in separate buildings on the same grounds as the intake center. During intake, the ODOC conducts a battery of criminogenic risk, need, and responsivity assessments, including security, education, drug and alcohol, health, dental and psychological assessments.

The department does not keep any data on the H/S/R self-identity or affiliation of the men and women in the state prison system, and generally permits anyone to attend whatever H/S/R service or activity might be of interest to them, regardless of their self-identity. In 2004, the Religious Services staff made a voluntary H/S/R self-report assessment available to each person coming

through intake, and 684 out of the 3009 men (23%) and 124 of the 349 women (36%) took the H/S/R assessment.

**Table 1.** Demographics of Study Population (N = 3009 males and 349 females).

	Male	Female
Race/ethnicity		
Caucasian	76%	87%
African American	9%	6%
Asian	1%	0%
Native American	2%	4%
Hispanic	12%	3%
Gender	90%	10%
Sexual Offence (yes)	25%	2%
Gang member (yes)	14%	4%
Average age	33	33

The first question in the survey was "Choose one statement that describes you the best." with four possible answers: (1) I am spiritual and religious; (2) I am spiritual but not religious; (3) I am religious but not spiritual; and (4) I am neither spiritual nor religious. The men and the women answered this question in a very similar fashion: 60% of the men and 66% of the women said they were 'spiritual and religious'; 23% of the men and the women said they were 'spiritual but not religious'; 9% of the men and 7% of the women said they were 'religious but not spiritual'; and 8% of the men and 4% of the women said they were 'neither spiritual nor religious'. So, most inmates consider themselves to be 'both spiritual and religious.' Almost a quarter, however, consider themselves to be 'spiritual but not religious', and relatively small percentages consider themselves to be either 'religious but not spiritual', or 'neither spiritual nor religious'. This is roughly the same pattern that has been found in the general community, although people entering prison in Oregon may be different than the general population of Oregon in how they answer this question. One study with a general community sample from another state found that 74% were 'spiritual and religious', 19% were 'spiritual but not religious', 4% were 'religious but not spiritual', and 3% were 'neither religious nor spiritual' [22]. The neither 'spiritual nor religious' group probably equates in some way to a humanist group that tends to find meaning within the boundaries of human life (and not in relationship to a transcendent realm or object). Obviously, more research needs to be done before we can make clear distinctions between these H/S/R categories, but these figures give us a good starting point.

Figure 1 shows the self-reported H/S/R affiliation for the 648 men and 124 women who voluntarily took the H/S/R assessment in 2004. Respondents could check multiple answers, and because 180 (23%) of the men and women did so, we tallied all of the responses for a total N of 998. So if a person listed one preference we counted that as one, and if a person listed 2, 3, or 4 preferences, we counted that as 2, 3, or 4 *etc.* Although these numbers are not representative of the entire intake population, they are the best estimate we have of the incoming H/S/R affiliation of the study population. Later in the paper we will see that the decision to voluntarily take the H/S/R

assessment at intake was a predictor of who would attend H/S/R events in prison, so our sample is biased toward people who are more actively engaged in H/S/R. The majority (48%) say they are Christian/Protestant, followed by 7% Catholic, 7% Native American, 7% Don't Know, 7% No Preference, 4% Other, 3% Latter Day Saint, 3% Earth Based, 3% Christian Scientist, 2% Jehovah Witness, 2% Seventh Day Adventist, 2% Buddhist and the remainder (6%) made up of very small numbers of Islamic, Agnostic, Jewish, Atheist, Hindu, Scientology, New Age, Confucian, Eastern Orthodox, and Hare Krishna (ISKON). Women were significantly more likely than men to say they were Christian/Protestant or Jewish, but equally likely to choose the other affiliations or self-identities. The unaffiliated 14% who said "no preference" or "don't know" are a fairly large group, and some of these may tend toward the humanist perspective. While 14% of our samples choose 'no preference' or 'don't know', only 4% said they were 'neither spiritual nor religious', so these terms are not synonymous. A 2008 study found that Oregon's largest religious group was Evangelical Protestant (30%) or Mainline Protestant (16%), followed by Catholic (14%), and Latter Day Saints (5%). This study also confirmed what other surveys have found, that Oregon has one of the highest percentages of religiously unaffiliated adults in the country: 27% unaffiliated in Oregon compared to 16% nationally [38]. On the face of it, therefore, the H/S/R self-identities of people entering prison in Oregon seem to differ from the general Oregon population in some respects (fewer unaffiliated and fewer Catholic), and not to differ in others (similar percentages of Protestant and Latter-day Saints).

Figure 1. Humanist, Spiritual and Religious Affiliation at Prison Intake (N = 998).
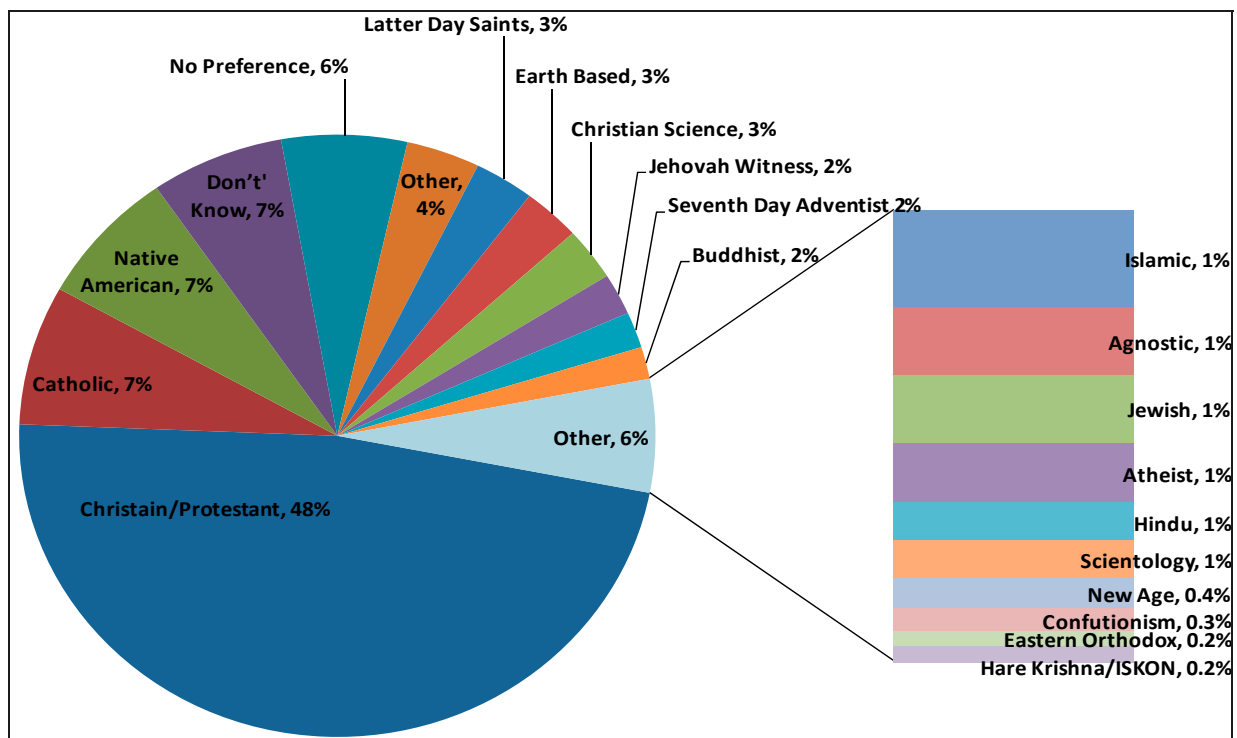
The H/S/R assessment at intake asked people how often they had attended a church, synagogue, mosque, sweat lodge *etc.* as a child, as a teenager, in the year prior to their arrest and in the year following their arrest. Figure 2 shows how the women and men responded to this question. We see

a similar pattern for both men and women of high levels of attendance as a youth, with progressively falling levels of attendance up to the point of arrest, and then a dramatic increase in attendance following arrest. The pattern, however, is even more pronounced for the women than the men. The women (70%) and the men (68%) were equally likely to have attended some religious or spiritual group as a child, and as a teenager (48% for both). The women (23%), however, were less likely than the men (30%) to have attended in the year prior to their arrest, and more likely (66%) than the men (54%) to attend in the year after their arrest. Findings like these, together with the higher rate of women voluntarily taking the H/S/R assessment at the intake center, soon led us to conclude that we needed to consider men and women separately in every analysis as there are significant gender differences in H/S/R behaviors in prison. In many cases these gender differences of involvement mirror similar gender differences of H/S/R involvement in the general community.

Figure 2. Religious/Spiritual Involvement (once a month or more) over Time for Females and Males (N = 772).
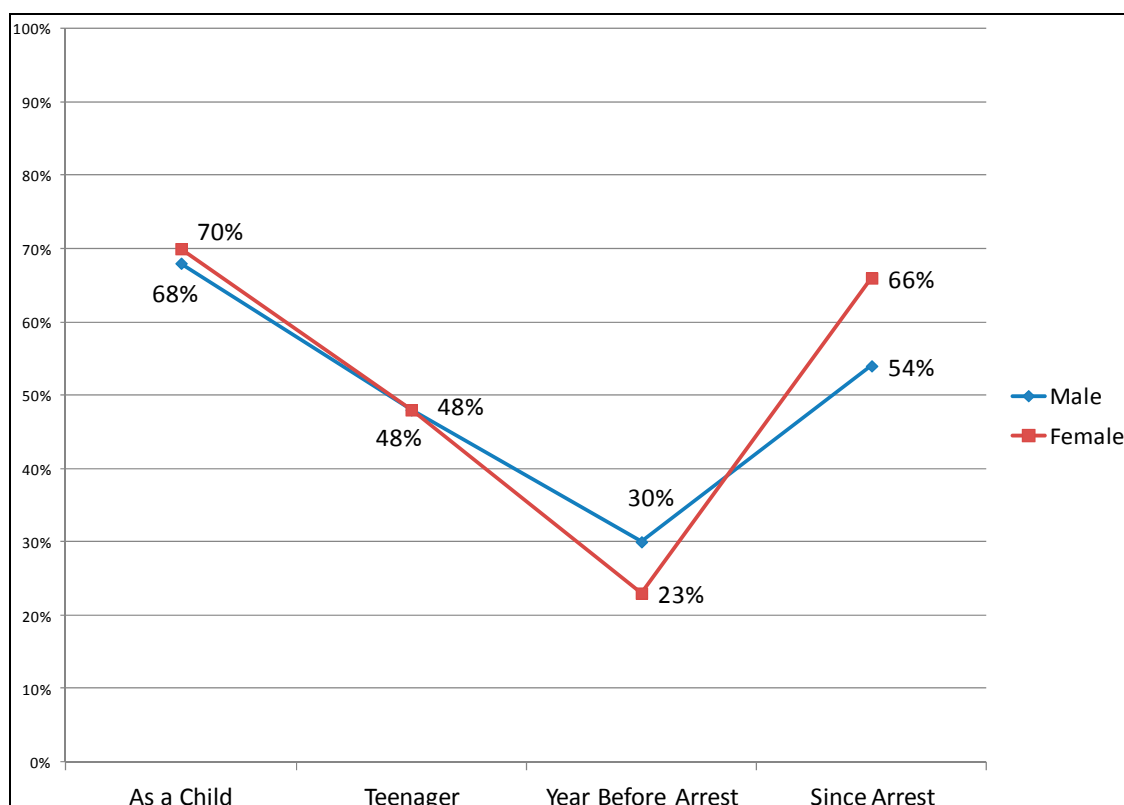
Research has shown that, in the general population in America, there is a similar drop in religious/spiritual attendance for most people from their childhood to their teen years. During their early adult years, however, as factors such as having children begin to come into play, their attendance level returns to a level that is higher than in their teen years but not quite as high as in their childhood years [39,40]. In other words, the normal pattern of religious attendance in the general population is similar to a U curve. For the offender population, however, the pattern seems to have more of an extended downward slope on the U, followed by a later upturn upon being arrested and entering jail or prison. Most likely, this delayed response is triggered by the fact that

people, once arrested, tend to be in institutions or situations with more time on their hands, more control and structure in their lives, their basic needs met, and less interpersonal conflict and substance abuse opportunities in their day-to-day lives. In this new context questions of meaning emerge in a new way. The following quotes from two Oregon inmates, first from Elijah, a Muslim, and second from Wayne, a Christian, nicely capture the influence of living in a structured environment on the exploration of personal meaning and introspection:

> One of the things, when I was on the street before I came to prison, is that there was so much, so much goin' on in my life, between school, my wife; we had a child. I didn't really have time to really look inward. And I don't know if I want to say "I didn't have time." I didn't take the time. And, I've been able to do that now a lot more. One of the things about prison is that you have time to look inward ([27], p. 243).

> I hadn't slowed down enough to do any readin' of the Bible or anything... You got a lot more time to just do nothing really. You either do something with your time when you're here or you don't... It [the Bible] is the only real thing that's here, as far as I'm concerned... My heart's not into goin' out and hurtin' people. My heart's not into goin' out and bullshitin' and tellin' lies, and just playin', tryin' to beef up myself to look better and good, and all this stuff ([27], p.248).

From the foregoing self-report information, we knew that a sample of men and women at the point of intake into the Oregon prison system were reporting much increased levels of engagement in religious and spiritual practices after arrest. Now the task was to explore, in a longitudinal manner, the actual patterns of H/S/R engagement from the point of intake forward into the first year of prison. First, we tracked each person in the 2004 intake population to discover the first and subsequent months they chose to attend any H/S/R event during their first 12 months of incarceration. For most of the first month of their incarceration, our subjects were at the intake center, and there are no H/S/R events or services at the intake center for the men. The women, however, are allowed to attend H/S/R events at the women's prison because it is directly accessible from the intake center. To our surprise, we found that 80% of the women attended an H/S/R event during their first month of incarceration. The equivalent for the men was 32% (counting the first two months for the men). Just as we found a different pattern of self-reported religious involvement for the men and women in the year prior to and after their arrest, we found a different pattern of actual involvement for the men and women during their first year of incarceration.

Figure 3 below shows the cumulative attendance rates over the first year for the men and the women. It is remarkable that by the third month, 91% of the women had attended at least one H/S/R service, and by the end of the year 95% of the women had attended. We do not know what the precise attendance level for these women was while they were in the community, but this level of attendance is probably higher than it would have been in the community. For the men, 49% had attended at least one H/S/R event by the third month, and 71% had attended by the end of the year; also a very high rate of attendance. The higher attendance rate among women mirrors a higher H/S/R attendance level and interest among women in the general US population [41]. In more than 49 countries around the world, studies have found a pattern of significantly higher interest in

religion and spirituality among women compared to men [421]. Therefore, the higher pattern of involvement for women seems to be a consequence of gender and not of the prison context itself. The overall high levels of re- engagement for both the men and the women, however, seem to be a consequence of the prior arrest and prison context.

Figure 3. Cumulative Attendance for Male (N = 3009) and Female (N = 349) Across Months of Incarceration.
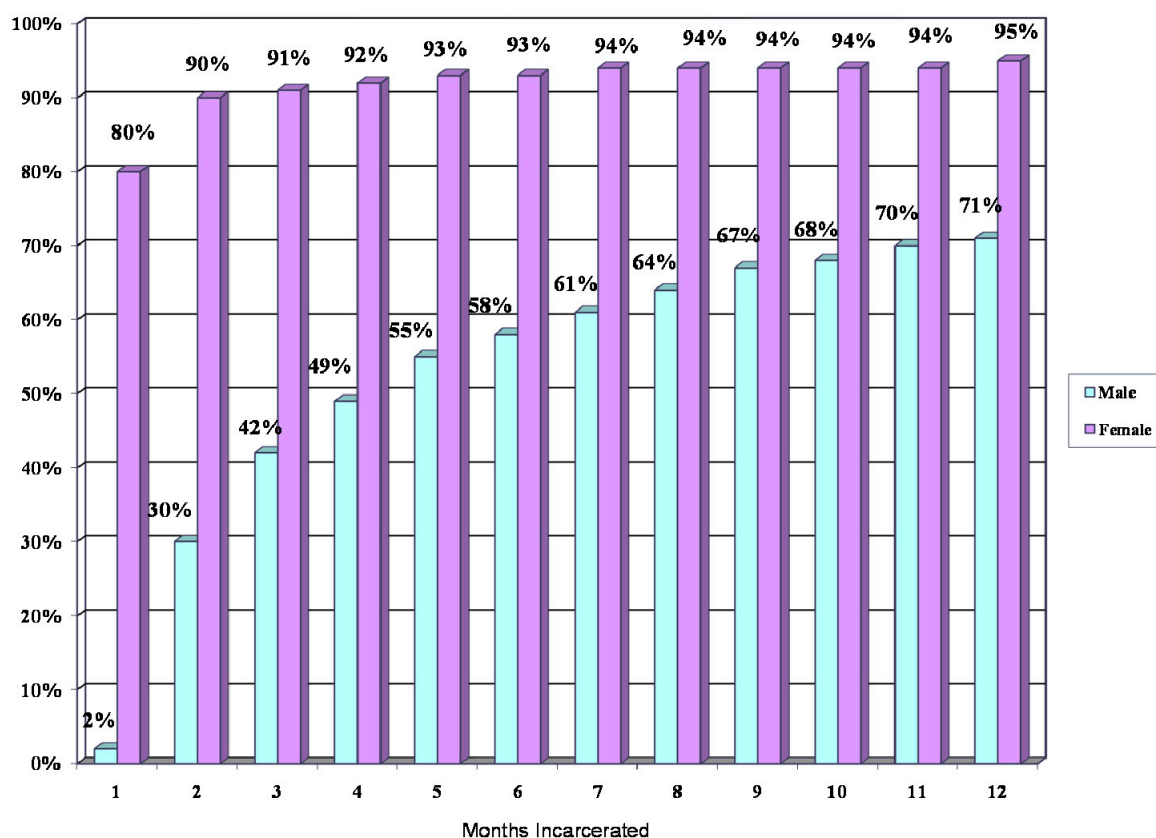
The fact that 95% of the women and 71% of the men, a very large percentage of the population, had attended at least one H/S/R event during their first year in prison raises the question of how often these men and women attended overall. We examined this question of "dosage" or level of attendance in two different ways. First, we checked to see the average percent of attendance each month for both the men and the women as a group. Figure 4 shows the average attendance rates by male and female for each of the 12 months of our study. For the women, the first two months have the highest average attendance rates, at 80% and 79%. In the third month this drops to 68%, and then gradually settles to about 58% of the women attending each month. For the men, once again, the pattern is different. Very few of the men could attend during the first month, so the average attendance is almost 0%. For the second month, the average attendance is 29%, and by the third month it settles into an average monthly attendance rate of about 33% of the population. This means that the prison chaplains in Oregon, with the help of their volunteers, are directly engaging a large proportion of the total male and female population every month. This finding, therefore, confirms an earlier finding across state prisons that religious programming is the single most common form of programming in state prisons [43].

Figure 4. Average Attendance for Male (N = 3009) and Female (N = 349) Across Months of Incarceration.
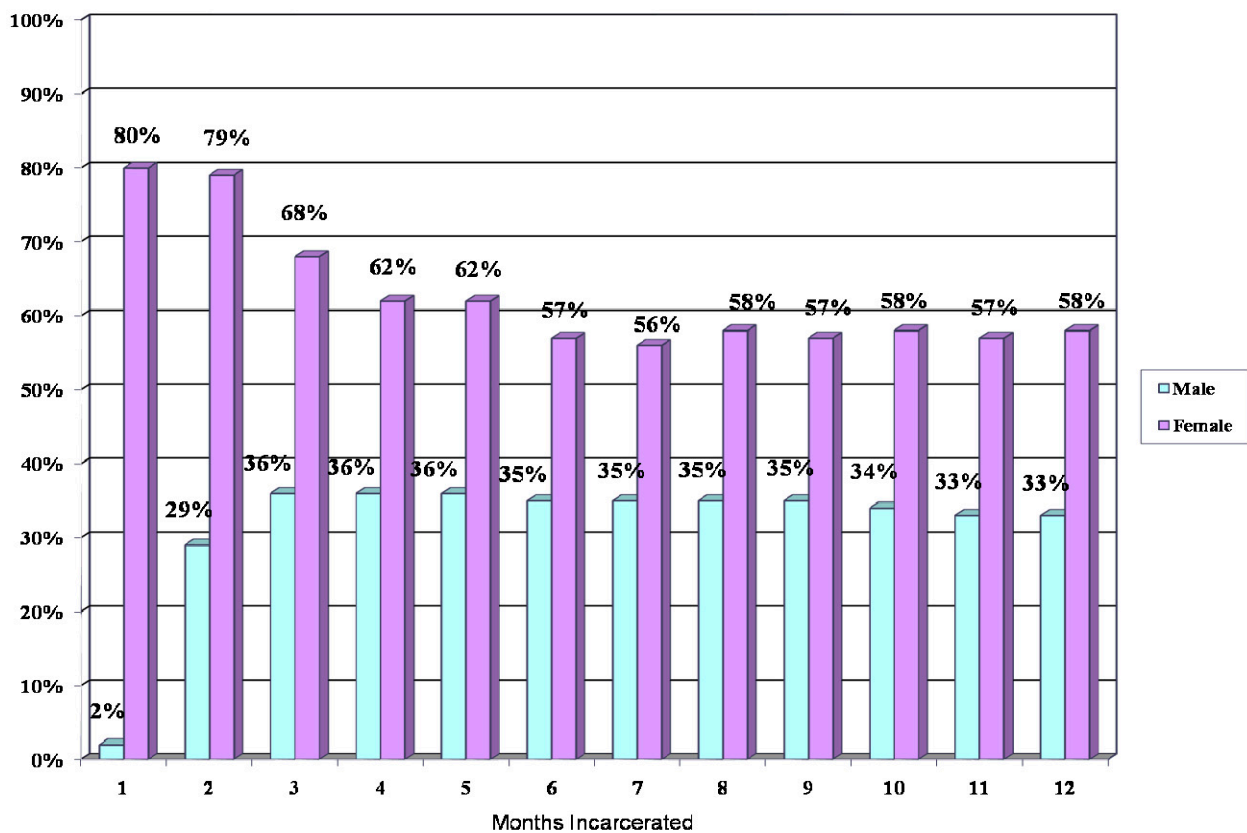
We found some very interesting religious and gender differences when we examined the kind of religious or spiritual service that people were attending. Protestant services (basically meaning any non-Catholic religious services) were at the top with 60.7% of men and 92.8% of women attending at least one Protestant service. Next was Seventh Day Adventist with 14.5% of the men and 28.9% of the women attending at least one service. The next highest was Catholic with 11.2% of the men and 18.3% of the women attending at least once, followed by a Native American with 6.6% of the men and 23.2% of the women. The pattern is clear (see Table 2): women are much more likely than men to cross-attend numerous types of religious and spiritual services. Also of note is the order of the religious or spiritual groups by size of participation - Protestant, Seventh Day Adventist, Catholic, Native American, Jehovah Witness, Latter Day Saints, Buddhist, Muslim and Earth-based/New Age for the men, and Protestant, Seventh Day Adventist, Latter Day Saints, Native American, Buddhist, Catholic, Jehovah Witness, and Muslim for the women. Clearly, therefore, the Protestant/Christian group, which represents a vast variety of different Christian groups, is by far the dominant group in terms of attendance for both men and women.

Next, we examined how often people were going to events. Figure 5 reveals, as expected, a different pattern of attendance by gender. A very large group of men (45%) never attend or only attend once or twice in their first year, compared to only 8% of the women. Compared to the men, women were 7 times more likely to have attended an H/S/R event at least once. The same percentage of men and women (21%) attend from 3 to 12 times a year (up to once a month), and thereafter the

women engage at much higher rates. It is important to note that a sizable percentage of both the men (24%) and the women (49%) attend at levels that approach weekly or more than weekly attendance. There is no easy way of comparing these levels of weekly or more attendance for inmates to the attendance levels for the general population in Oregon. In 2007, however, 32% of Oregonians said they attended religious services at least weekly, and the combined national US average was 39% with 44% of women and 34% of men self-reporting at least weekly attendance [38]. So it seems that women in Oregon prisons may be attending at slightly higher levels than women in Oregon communities, and men in Oregon prisons are attending at slightly lower levels than men in the community.

Table 2. Percent of Men and Women Attending Religious or Spiritual Groups.

Religious or Spiritual group	Male %	Female %
Protestant/Christian	60.7	92.8
Seventh Day Adventist	14.5	28.9
Catholic	11.2	18.3
Native American	6.6	23.2
Jehovah Witness	4.9	13.5
Latter Date Saints	3.2	24.4
Buddhist	2.1	19.8
Muslim	2.0	1.4
Earth-based or New Age	1.4	14.0

Table 3 shows the results of a linear regression analysis on total number of H/S/R attendances of any type by men. Six factors were included in the model: having a current sexual offence, age at intake, voluntarily taking a spiritual assessment at intake, risk of recidivism, non-Hispanic *versus* Hispanic identification, and gang membership. These six factors, in that order, were significant predictors of which men attended H/R/S events more often ($R^2 = 0.111$). The risk of recidivism score, which has been validated on Oregon inmates, ranges from 0 to 1. This score is automatically generated by the Department of Corrections at intake using a mathematical formula based on a person's score on the following seven risk factors: age, earned time, sentence length, prior revocation, number of prior incarcerations, prior theft convictions, and type of crime (person, property or statutory). Men who had committed a sex offence, who were older, who had voluntarily taken a spiritual assessment at the intake center, or who were Hispanic were significantly more likely to attend H/R/S events more often. On the other hand, men with a higher risk of recidivism and who were members of a gang were significantly less likely to attend more often. None of these six factors were predictors of how often the women attended H/S/R events, and we were unable to generate a meaningful model for the women using the variables available to us, perhaps because so many of the women are attending at high levels.

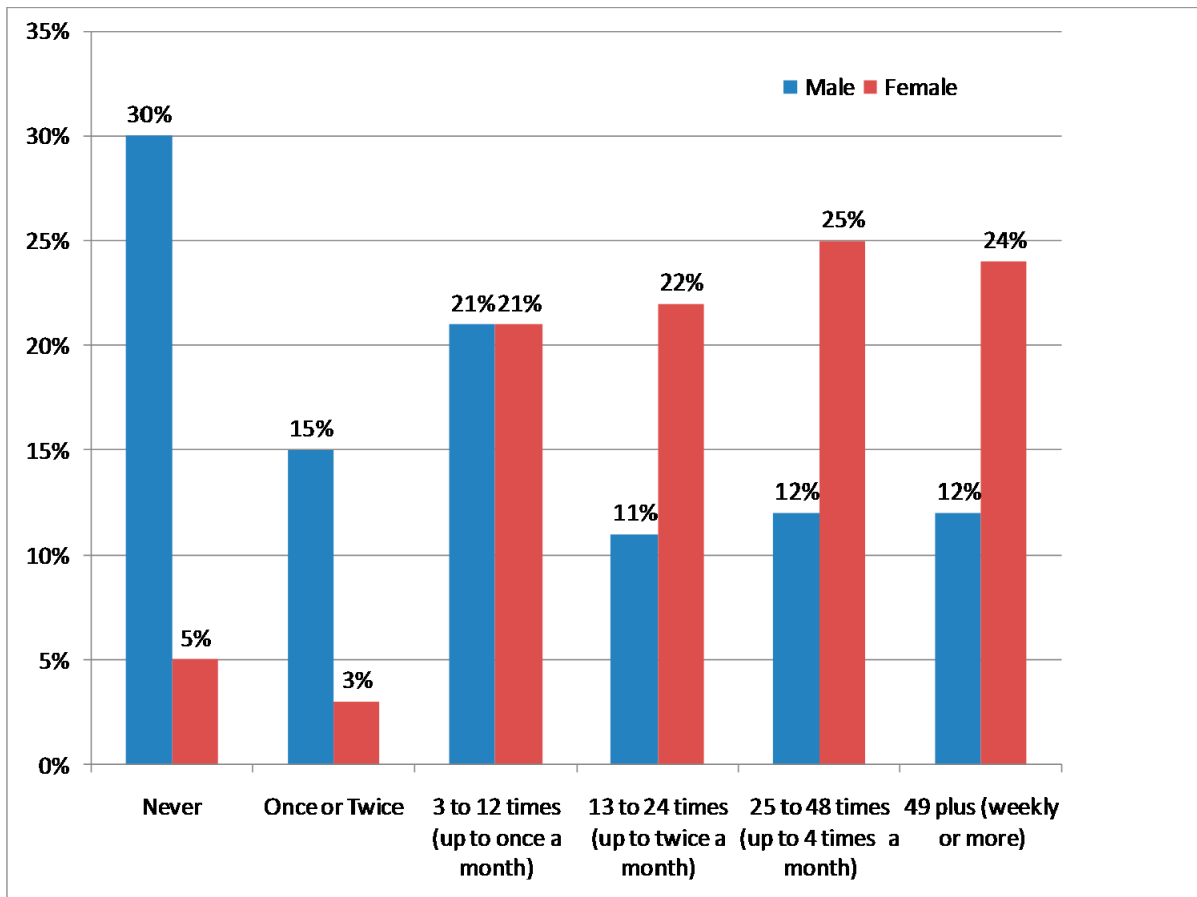**Figure 5.** Levels of Attendance During The First Year of Incarceration by Male (N = 3009) and Female (N = 349).

Table 3. Linear Regression Model Predicting Number of Attendances.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.858	1.837		3.733	0.000
Current Sex Offence - (no = 0, yes = 1)	10.330	1.100	0.172	9.389	0.000
Age at intake	0.267	0.044	0.112	6.103	0.000
H/S/R assessment - (no = 0, yes = 1)	8.415	1.090	0.135	7.723	0.000
Risk of Recidivism	-12.657	2.650	-0.091	-4.777	0.000
Non-Hispanic (0) *versus* Hispanic (1)	7.322	1.456	0.090	5.029	0.000
Gang Member - (no = 0, yes = 1)	-6.748	1.377	-0.090	-4.901	0.000

Dependent Variable: Number of H/S/R attendances over a year; Model F (6 df) = 61.380, p < 0.0001; Model R^2 = 0.111

It helps to interpret the linear regression results from Table 3 if we remember the finding from Table 2 above, namely that the Protestant/Christian group is by far the dominant group in terms of attendance for both men and women. So, the linear regression findings are heavily influenced by the people who are attending Protestant/Christian services. If we specified a linear regression model on people attending just Protestant/Christian or just Seventh Day Adventist services (the top

two groups for men) the model is basically the same except that Non-Hispanic/Hispanic drops out in favor of Non-White/White. So, Whites are more likely to attend Protestant/Christian are Seventh Day Adventist services more often, along with those who had a current sexual offense, are older, voluntarily take a H/S/R assessment at intake, have lower risks of recidivism, or are not a gang member. Hispanics, however, are more likely to attend Catholic services along with people who have a current sexual offense, and are not a member of a gang, but the risk of recidivism, the age and the H/S/R assessment variables drop out of the model. For Native American attendance, the picture looks very different; people who are Native American, who have higher risks of recidivism (not lower, as in the other religious groups) and who are not a member of a gang are more likely to attend more often ($R^2 = 0.148$), and the current sex offense, age and taking a H/S/R assessment at intake drop out of the model. Race and culture, therefore, have a big influence on who attends which religious or spiritual group, but in different ways for different groups. Similarly, having a current sexual offense, age, and risk of recidivism are important variables for attendance at most, but not all groups.

The final analysis we did on our data set was to look at what the H/S/R assessment information might tell us about the subset of 684 men and 124 women who voluntarily took the assessment at the intake center. We have already shown that the mere fact of taking this assessment predicts who will attend religious and spiritual services more often. A linear regression analysis number of attendances using this subset of men and women produced some startling results. Table 4 below shows the factors that came into a model to predict number of attendances for this 648 male subset of our population. The first variable into the model is called "Intrinsic Score". This variable comes from a 20 question intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity/spirituality scale [44] that was embedded in the H/S/R assessment. The scale asks questions to determine if a person uses their religion or spirituality in a more internal/intrinsic manner to make meaning, or a more external/extrinsic manner to create a social life. For example, one extrinsic oriented question in the scale asks people to respond (I strongly disagree, I tend to disagree, I'm not sure, I tend to agree, I strongly agree) to the following statement "I go to church (synagogue, mosque, sweat lodge *etc.*) because it helps me to make friends. A more intrinsic oriented question asks people to respond in the same way to the statement "It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer". The scale produces an "intrinsic" score and an "extrinsic" score. The fact that the intrinsic score is the first variable into the model indicates that men who are going more often are going for internal reasons of making meaning. In an earlier regression model which was significant but not as strong as the model we ended up with, the extrinsic score also came into the model with higher scores negatively predicting who would attend more often ($R^2 = 0.262$). The intrinsic and the extrinsic scores are not significantly correlated with each other for the men (they are weakly correlated for the women). The fact that both the intrinsic and extrinsic scores operate in this way shows that, contrary to often voiced sentiment, the men in the Oregon prison system who took a H/S/R assessment are attending services for largely internal, meaning driven reasons, and are not doing so to "get out of their cell", "get some cookies and refreshments", "to meet women volunteers" or "to hang out with and meet other inmates".

Interestingly, age at intake, having a current sexual offense and gang member still come into the model for this subset of men, but the risk of recidivism and the race variables drop out from the model. Furthermore, three other variables from the H/S/R assessment come into the model along with intrinsic score – attendance at a worship service in last six months, prayed with others in the last six months, and how important is religious or spirituality in your daily life now. The F (7 df) = 35.429 value for the model is very high and very significant (<0.0001) and the R^2 for the model is also very high at 0.290 (recall that R^2 for the model in Table 3 with the full population was much lower at 0.111). So this H/S/R assessment tells us a great deal about the people who take an H/S/R assessment, and their answers highly correlate with their future religious and spiritual behaviors in a meaningful way.

Table 5 gives the equivalent linear regression findings for the women who completed an H/S/R assessment. You will recall that we were unable to find a meaningful linear regression model for the women that would predict who, among all the women in our study, would attend more often. So it is very interesting to see that we were able to find a meaningful model using the subset of women who voluntarily took the H/S/R assessment at intake. Table 5 shows that three variables helped to predict which women would attend more frequently ($R^2 = 0.261$). These included the importance of religion or spirituality in their daily life (at time of assessment), the more they listened to religious programs on television or radio in the previous six months, and race (non-Whites attended more often than Whites).

Table 4. Linear Regression Model Predicting Number of Attendances for Men Who Took an H/S/R Assessment at Intake.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-48.986	6.210		-7.888	0.000
Intrinsic score	0.588	0.242	0.132	2.431	0.015
Attended a worship service in last six months (0 = never or a few times a year, 1 = about once a month, about once a week or more than once a week)	6.511	1.624	0.179	4.008	0.000
Age at intake	0.558	0.104	0.194	5.356	0.000
Current Sex Offence - (no = 0, yes = 1)	9.061	2.389	0.134	3.793	0.000
Prayed with others in last 6 months (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often)	4.318	1.828	0.110	2.362	0.019
Importance of religion or spirituality in daily life now/at intake (0 = not important, 1 = a little important, 2 = important, 3 = very important)	3.842	1.749	0.114	2.197	0.028
Gang Member - (no = 0, yes = 1)	-6.593	3.234	-0.074	-2.038	0.042

Dependent Variable: Number of H/S/R attendances over a year; Model F (7 df) = 35.429, p < 0.0001; Model R^2 = 0.290.

Table 5. Linear Regression Model Predicting Number of Attendances for Women Who Took an H/S/R Assessment at Intake.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.788	11.624		0.326	0.745
Importance of religion or spirituality in daily life now (0 = not important, 1 = a little important, 2 = important, 3 = very important)	8.385	2.928	0.250	2.864	0.005
Listened to religious programs on TV or radio in last six months (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often)	13.663	3.644	0.327	3.749	0.000
white non white	-20.953	7.366	-0.237	-2.845	0.005

Dependent Variable: Number of H/S/R attendances over a year; Model F (3 df) = 12.601, $p < 0.0001$; Model $R^2 = 0.261$.

Conclusions

In this paper we argue that the correctional system in the United States needs to take the humanist, spiritual, and religious self-identities of inmates seriously, and do all it can to foster and support those self-identities, or ways of making meaning. The meta-analytic findings from the studies commissioned by the American Psychological Association, together with the findings from ethnographic and some recidivism studies in prison, suggest that H/S/R pathways to meaning may be an important part of the evidence-based principle of responsivity, as well as the desistance process. The sociology of the H/S/R involvement of 349 women and 3,009 men during the first year of their incarceration in the Oregon prison system, and the extended pro-social network of chaplains, other staff and volunteers uncovered by our study, reveal a diverse and widespread human, social and spiritual capital that is naturally supportive of H/S/R responsivity and the desistance process for thousands of men and women in prison. In our view it is in the best interest of a more humane, effective, and less costly correctional system, not only to foster this capital, but also to integrate it more closely into the programming and treatment aspects of the correctional process.

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Hinduism in India and Congregational Forms: Influences of Modernization and Social Networks

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Abstract: In light of increased scholarly interest in the scientific study of non-Christian religions and societies, I review sociological research on Hinduism. Specifically, I focus on Hindu congregational forms, a phenomenon noted in social scientific literature. Drawing on existing theories from the sociology of religion, this article illuminates possible social sources of Hindu congregational forms. Two preliminary sources are proposed and possible mechanisms elaborated: (1) modernization and (2) social networks. I conclude by proposing several new directions for research on Hindu congregational forms. These arguments and proposals offer directions for expanding understanding of how theories in the sociology of religion might operate beyond Christianity and the West.

1. Introduction

Does congregational religion exist in Indian Hinduism?[1] If so, what are the social sources of Hindu congregational participation? Primers on Hinduism in India report that Hindu religious behavior typically consists of religious acts at temples, household shrines, and other sacred and ordinary places [1–5]. Common Hindu religious acts include prayer, conjoint sight of devotee and god (*darshan*), and various ritual practices. Popular ritual practices include, but are not limited to, meditations (e.g., *yoga*), service (e.g., *seva, puja*), festivals, pilgrimages, sacrifices, and domestic rituals [6]. Although Hindu religious practice is often embedded within communitarian social contexts such as extended family and caste, there is a great deal of individualism in Hindu religious practice. Hindus may engage in sacred acts in settings where other lay devotees are present, but significant regular social interaction with fellow lay devotees is usually not a necessary or central component of Hindu religious practice.[2] Sociologists of religion have described individualistic styles of religious behavior as noncongregational religion.[3] Noncongregational religion is

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[1] I derive the term "congregational religion" from sociologists' analysis of Christianity but use the term in a more general sense in this article.

[2] India researchers will appreciate that any generalizations about Hinduism will fail in some sense due to the enormous variety of religious life that proceeds under the banner of Hinduism in India across different regions, castes, and time periods [7]. Nevertheless, the brief introductory comments provided here serve to orient general readers and comports with similar efforts by India scholars to give a sense of Hindu religious life, especially along the lines that it differs from Abrahamic religions such as Christianity.

[3] While the sociology of religion literature often refers to noncongregational religious expressions as "unchurched religion" [8], this terminology is less appropriate for non-Christian religions and so this article uses the term "noncongregational religion."

understood to be anomalous or incipient in Western societies [9–15], though noncongregational religious expressions are normative in many non-Christian societies such as India [5]. Many non-Christian Asian societies and communities do not place emphasis on congregational forms [16], though these are hallmarks of Christianity—historically the primary focus of sociologists of religion [17].

Despite generalizations that religious practice in non-Christian non-western societies are not usually congregational in style, there are reasons to expect congregational forms to develop. This paper focuses on congregational forms in settings where noncongregational religion is normative. Specifically, I focus on congregational forms in Indian Hinduism, congregational participation among Hindus, and suggest possible sources of their development and Hindus' involvement in them. This article specifically builds the sociology of Hinduism literature by highlighting insights from diaspora research and elaborating the interaction of impacts from modernization and the role of social networks. The sociological study of non-western and non-Christian forms of religious practice—especially in major religions such as Hinduism and countries such as India—provide broader arenas for the refinement of theory in the sociology of religion and the development of empirical expectations.

2. Background

India is a drama of immense religious variation both between religious traditions in India and within Hinduism itself. In fact, some Hinduism scholars argue that there is just as much variation found between religious streams within Hinduism as found between major world religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism [18]. King [19] argues that: "[Hinduism] is often presented in a one-dimensional manner, giving the impression of an overall unity and coherence which this religious tradition never possessed. The various historical strands which went into the making of Hinduism include a great diversity of beliefs, rituals, and institutions which, strictly speaking, are often not comparable to those found elsewhere. The concept 'Hinduism' itself is such a wide umbrella-term as to be heuristically almost useless for analysis." At the least, to see Hinduism as a monolithic religion would be a flawed assumption. It is important to note Hinduism's expansive internal diversity when considering noncongregational as well as congregational Hindu religiosity.[4]

2.1. Hinduism

In some ways, relative to the size and complexity of Hinduism in India, there exists a great need for additional scholarly attention devoted to the sociology of Hinduism in India [23]. While there

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[4] Lorenzen (1999) provides a review of the invented Hinduism discussion. He argues for an eighteenth century Indian use of "Hinduism," and suggests a nascent unifying Hindu religious identity as early as 300 to 600 C.E. In contrast, many scholars point to a nineteenth century invention of the term "Hinduism" by British administrators to describe the diverse religious life that before that time had no overarching unity [20–22]. Lipner [7] favors the beginning use of "Hindu" as a cultural rather than "specifically *religious*" term and warns that accepting a religious essentialist understanding of Hinduism, among other dangers, leads to "undercutting the rich diversity of actual belief and practice."

exists a rich social anthropological literature surrounding Hinduism [for an overview, see 24], this foundational work could be complemented by bringing the insights of this literature into deeper conversation with recent theories and concepts developed among sociologists of religion outside of India, including those who study the Indian diaspora. Also, more could be done to synthesize insights and develop testable hypotheses for use in quantitative analysis [25]. This represents a step toward addressing the gap in quantitative sociological research on Hindu religious practice using nationally representative data sets that remains [26]. Considering research on the Hindu diaspora, the population of the diaspora is small in comparison to the population of Hindus in India, but considerable qualitative and quantitative sociological attention has been devoted to diasporic Hindu religion relative to its size. It is also in this immigrant religion literature that we find reports of strong Hindu congregational forms. These forms are by no means widely normative for Hindus in most contexts. In recent qualitative research among U.S. Hindus, a respondent noted that: "…Christians have the church as a support group, Hindus don't have anything" [27]. While it may generally be the case that Hindus tend not to form voluntary religious congregations, there are, however, exceptions to this generalization both in immigrant contexts [5,28,29], as well as in India [4,23].

2.2. Diaspora Hindus

Non-Christian immigrant groups in the United States, such as Hindus and Buddhists, are typically thought of as noncongregational in their style of religiosity. Cadge and Ecklund [30] find that non-Christian new immigrants to the United States, specifically Hindus and Buddhists, are less likely to attend corporate worship gatherings than Christian immigrants. The reasons for low non-Christian corporate worship gathering attendance are not well documented, but Cadge and Ecklund posit two possible reasons: (1) Non-Christians attend these gatherings less because weekly corporate gathering is not a norm in their religious tradition. (2) Hindu and Buddhist temples and religious worship centers are in sparse supply in the U.S. as compared with the abundance of Christian houses of worship (even if a Hindu in the U.S. wished to attend weekly worship gatherings, there are likely none available in the immediate vicinity because Indians are the most geographically dispersed ethnic minority in the U.S.). However, non-Christian immigrants of traditionally noncongregational religions have been observed to exhibit incipient and even elaborate congregational practice as they seek to perpetuate culture and adjust to the host country. Immigrant communities in the United States emulate American Protestant congregational forms in voluntary membership, lay leadership, expansion of services, organizational networks, ritual, worship times and format, clergy roles, and language [29,31,32]. These adaptations take place even among Hindus, Buddhists, and Parsis in the U.S. context, despite the fact that congregational forms are relatively rare among homeland co-religionists.

Regarding Hindus, Kurien [27] documents two tight-knit "subethnic organizations" among South Indians in the United States, the *satsang* and the *bala vihar*. Lay congregations such as these, as well as congregation-like temples, are used by Hindus in order to: gain legitimization, garner participation, re-create Hindu environments that transmit values to Hindu adults and children, and build social support among co-religionists [27]. Increasingly religious-oriented ethnic media is also

used within these processes to awaken religiosity among Indians and their children in the United States [33].

Yang and Ebaugh [29] reason that "immigrant religious communities in the United States are in a powerful position to exert influence in their countries of origin," including increasing the use of congregational forms. This position is particularly relevant for Hindus since second-generation Hindus may be more transnational than other immigrant religionists [34]. Kurien suggests precisely this notion, that diaspora congregations are playing a part in the increased popularity of congregations in India [5]. Yang and Ebaugh [29] stress the need for "further research in the immigrant home countries and other parts of the world." Such transnational research is of increasing importance considering religion's increasingly less confined situation due to shrinking barriers of time and physical distances [35]. Whether or not a new backward flow or revitalization of congregational religion from West to East is emerging, though critical, is beyond the scope of this paper. We must however take into account observations from diasporic Hindu congregations and consider it as one possible influence toward the existence of congregational Hinduism in India. Are there others that predate major international Hindu migration?

Congregational forms have been present in Indian immigrants' homeland in recent centuries, though the degree of foreign impetus for these structures is debated [36]. The *Brahmo Samaj*, a Hindu reform movement in nineteenth century Bengal, developed "patterns of worship on the model provided in the Protestant churches" [19]. Shah [23] records congregational tendencies among sectarian Hindus in the last 200 years as well as well as recent times, proposing a general increase in the phenomenon. Others conjecture that there has been an increase in these congregation-styled groups in recent decades [5].

2.3. Hindu Congregational Religion in India

In prior research, Hertel [37] explores the congregational nature of temples in North India. Hertel defines a congregation as a "well-defined body of people who share the same priest(s) for purposes of worship and/or for performance of rites of passage. Congregations are membership groups within churches and sects [37]. Four types of Hindu congregations are delineated, two of which are local temple congregations and temples with occasionally gathered satellite laity. Recognizing the ethnocentricity in only considering those groups congregations that have weekly meetings, Hertel extends the concept of the congregation to non-western religious life by jettisoning any particular units of time between meetings. He anchors his definition of a congregation to a body of people that meets with priests. Although helpful in building a foundation for the recognition of the congregation in Hindu religious life, the principle of priest interaction is not broad enough when taking into account the intimate Hindu religious groups that have no professional clergy (see Shah 2006). In this way only Hertel's concept of "membership groups" is a sufficiently flexible building block in constructing a guiding definition in the study of Hindu congregations.

More recently, sociologists of religion have developed specific definitions of religious congregations. Chaves [38] defines religious congregations as: "relatively small-scale, local collectivities and organizations through which people routinely engage in religious activity: churches, synagogues, mosques, temples." Stark *et al.* [13] describe the boundaries of

congregational religion by delineating churched and what he refers to as "unchurched religion," but what in this article is referred to as noncongregational religion:

> Although all religions are social, there is substantial variation in their organizational character so that some can be identified as 'churches', while others fall far short of any legitimate definition of that term. A churched religion has a relatively stable, organized congregation of lay members who acknowledge a specific religious creed—therefore, we include both 'sects' and 'churches' in churched religions. An unchurched religion typically lacks a congregational life, usually existing as relatively free-floating culture based on loose networks of likeminded individuals who, if they do gather regularly, do not acknowledge a specific religious creed, although they may tend to share a common religious outlook. Unchurched religions may or may not coalesce around leaders.

Essentially, Stark *et al.* [13] see congregations as "groups of *adherents* who *meet regularly* for religious reasons." The above definitions center on routine, small religious gatherings of members.

Although noncongregational religion represents the majority of Hindu religious behavior, this is by no means the case for all Hindus in India. Congregational activity is normative among some Hindu sects. Sectarian Hinduism generally has "exclusive social boundaries" and aspects such as each sect having its own sacred literature, elaborate social organization, restrictions on religious participation outside the sect, and variances in entirely ascetic or lay leadership:

> At the neighborhood level the lay members form groups such as *satsang, bhajan* or *kirtan mandal.* They often organize festivals and pilgrimages. Frequent interactions among followers lead to the formation of strong friendships. In arranged marriages, preference is give to members of the sect, and it has become common to mention this preference in matrimonial advertisements. Members of every sect now form associations at local, regional, national and international levels. There are also special associations of their women, youth, and senior citizens. [23]

Emotionality, music, worship ceremonies, and ritual food associated with Hindu congregations of sectarian or non-sectarian devotees:

> The devotees who gather together to worship by chanting *bhajans* or hymns are usually, but not necessarily, affiliated to a sect. The chanting, the music, the rhythm and the atmosphere of fervent devotion can produce a deep effect and some enter a state of trance. At these gatherings there is also sometimes an *arati* ceremony and the distribution of *prasada.* Groups who gather together in this way to worship through hymn-singing occur all over India and at most levels of society. [4]

Singer [39] analyzes the influence of modernization on Hindu religion. In his fieldwork in Tamil Nadu, in southern India, in the 1950s and 60s Singer encountered *bhajana* groups. *Bhajana* refers to a kind of prayer or devotional hymn sung within these congregational groups. Similarly, in modern *satsangs* participants often refer to their devotional songs as *bhajans*. Singer [39] gives a picture of the historical linkages and modern innovations of the *bhajana* congregations:

> In Madras City a form of congregational devotional worship—called *bhajana*—is becoming popular and seems to be developing into a Hindu cult that links the cults of temple and domestic worship. Superficially, the *bhajanas* resemble the older devotional cults (*bhakti*) within Hinduism, emphasizing

recitation of divine names and worship of personal deities. But the contemporary *bhajanas* show many features that are distinctive of the region within which they have developed, of the social groups that support the development, and of the problems confronting contemporary Hinduism as it tries to adapt itself to modern urban conditions. … Since the end of World War II, *bhajana* groups have multiplied rapidly in the city and have also become fashionable in smaller towns and villages. The meeting of a *bhajana* group usually takes place at a private home and is attended by a mixture of castes and sects, with middle-class professionals and Smarta Brahmans predominating.

These *bhajanas* gather with varied frequency. The weekly type is the most intimate, local, and common:

an evening gathering of relatives, friends, and neighbors in a private home for about three hours from 7:30 to 10:30 P.M.; Saturday night is the most popular choice, although some groups meet on Thursday or other nights of the week. The men of the group, usually about a dozen, sit in a circle or in rows on the floor and lead the singing, while the women and children sit to one side and join in the refrains. [39]

Though Singer found significant religious continuity in people's cultural and family backgrounds, there was also discontinuity and innovation. Along with individuals' *ishtadevata* (freedom to choose a personal deity), relative flexibility and innovation is latent in Hindu religious life. We should not be surprised by innovative reactions, adaptations, and competition with the forces of modernization. Singer's [39] *bhajanas* drew heavily from a caste with roots in ritual tradition yet: "they have felt the need to develop Krishna *bhakti* as an 'easier path to salvation,' since their middle-class and professional occupations, their Westernized education, and their increasing secularism have made the older and more difficult paths less accessible to them." Might there be numerous instances around India of modernizing forces drawing publics toward devotional Hinduism, including congregational forms?

Singer [39] proposes reasons for the *bhajanas'* development: fostering community in mass urban society, *noblesse oblige*, gaining local reputation, garnering spiritual merit, the Hindu *bhakti* (devotional) tradition, and following scriptural sanction. Finding scriptural rationale for contemporary innovation is similar to observations of religious strategies in immigrant contexts. Immigrants see their religious adaptations to new settings as returning to forgotten orthodoxies [29]. Not only are Singer's *bhajanas* groups of modernizing Hindus finding orthodox rationales for their adaptive needs in new conditions, but they are perhaps religious groups in competition with modernizing and westernizing forces. In more recent times these congregational developments could partially be a result of homeward diasporic influence [5]. Growth in the popularity of Hindu congregations in India may also be because they are fulfilling religious enclave functions similar to those in the diaspora context, but doing so in India—a society undergoing large scale modernization and cultural change.

Singer's *bhajanas* also mirror societal developments toward reducing communal and regional divisions. In this way, they are in continuity with elements of modernization, or they are at least a way of reconciling the worlds of fervent religion and modernization. They function as a vehicle for the adaption of devout Hindu religious life amid modernizing forces.

To be clear, in Hindu congregations (particularly Singer's *bhajanas,* but also many diasporic *satsang* accounts) we do not merely see fluid temporary associations, but rather informal organic congregations that often develop into more elaborate and formalized structures with financial accounts, social service projects, classes, citywide networks, and large scale festivals. Though often organic and varied in practice and leadership, these groups have the precedent of continuity, perpetuation, and formal organization largely accomplished by lay leaders who have other work and family demands on their time.

In this paper, congregations are understood, not as necessarily weekly meetings led by priests or groups with membership rosters and doctrinal statements, but rather social gatherings where lay worshippers interact with each other around religious belief and practice, with or without professional leaders. As cited by Shah [23], among the many religious gatherings that can be observed, *satsang* is a form of congregation found among sectarian and nonsectarian Hindus in India. In *satsang* there can be regular, scheduled worship and social interaction with fellow lay religionists, assigned leaders and organizers, but without necessarily a formal creedal document or necessarily other elements of an elaborate congregational life.[5]

2.4. Modernization and Congregational Forms

Indian scholars have noted that one of the impacts modernization is to cultivate "radical and lasting changes in Indian society and culture," stemming from "new technology, institutions, knowledge, beliefs and values" [40]. These causal sources of change can be grouped under two processes highlighted in the international sociology of religion literature: (1) institutional differentiation, and (2) rationalization.[6] Below I draw connections between these two sources and congregational forms.

A major way that modernization impacts religion is through institutional differentiation. Sociologists note that religion is frequently tied to kinship, regional location, and national identity [44]. This is especially true in developing agrarian societies such as India where society's various social institutions are thoroughly infused with religion such that it is difficult to separate out religion from cultural elements in society for example [40,45]. In other words, religion is not necessarily

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5   See Shah [23] for a description of congregational practices and group boundaries of sectarian Hinduism in India, and sects' growth.

6   In the thinking of eminent Indian social anthropologist M.N. Srinivas, these influences of modernization might best be labeled as Westernization. Another major source of social change in Indian civilization highlighted by Srinivas is Sanskritization, described by many as the "single most important contribution to social science scholarship from India" [25,41]. Srinivas [40,42] developed the idea that low castes "took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins," or embraced high status religious practices for the sake of manipulating their ritual standing and facilitating social mobility. Srinivas also suggested that Sanskritization may be at odds with Westernization. Caste structure is an important topic outside the scope of the main focus of this article. Suffice it to say that regions in India with strong anti-caste movements should be those where processes of Sanskritization have weaker sway [43]. It may also be the case that areas where high caste persons feel their traditional status under greater threat due to egalitarian elements of modernization are precisely those areas where high caste Hindus utilize the boundedness and potential exclusivity of congregational forms as a way to cope with and buffer change [for an extended discussion, see 26].

clustered in a distinct sector of social life but has considerable entwinement with other life spheres. One way modernization impacts religion is by more fully dividing society into specialized spheres and multiply organizational forms and units within spheres [44]. This way of conceiving of institutional differentiation as one of the ways that modernization impacts religion follows a considerable literature in the sociology of religion [46]. The differentiation of society and the desacralization of social institutions are processes that sociologists of religion have analyzed in various contexts around the world, including outside of Christianity [47,48]. Contemporary modernization theorists in the sociology of religion generally hold that religion does not necessarily die or decline in modernity, but that it transforms in modernity [49]. In drawing from developments in modernity, these theorists do not look mainly to modernizing processes such as urbanization or industrialization, but rather the separation of various social institutions from religion as part of a larger pattern of institutional differentiation in modernity [49]. Religion becomes increasingly distinct from other social institutions such as the state, the market, education, the polity, the family, and the mass media. Part of what this differentiation does is open up religious freedom and religious choice. One religious group cannot use (or cannot as easily) use the force of the state to coerce religious groups or people in their religious choices or style of religious practice. This situation invites religious pluralism and in such an environment religious innovators or entrepreneurs are subject to less state and societal coercion; they may organize, meet, teach, and recruit from the public with greater freedom.

Another major way that modernization impacts religion is through rationalization. At the organizational level, rationalization is seen in the way that interpersonal relationships are more bureaucratic and less formal, seen in view of science, and are linked through technology. For example, religious groups come increasingly to rely on pre-determined policies to handle disputes or leadership succession rather than through less formal means. Rationalization also deals with science. Science in many instances claims increasingly broader areas of life as the subject of its explanations that may have been previously the domain of religion. In this way science competes with religion. The effects of a Tsunami in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu can be explained with reference to tectonic plate shifts with no reference to a supernatural realm. But science also takes as its subject humans and their behavior. Patterns of religious involvement and the provision of material resources to religious groups can be explained and influenced through the use of scientific theories and the manipulation of physical spaces and organizational forms. The role of the supernatural in the human behavior is limited or at least transformed through such modernized forms of thinking [46]. In fact recent influential ethnographies of urban religiosity in India turn on this issue, discussing it under the heading of "disenchantment" [50].

While it is difficult to determine whether Hinduism is becoming more distinct from other social institutions in India or whether Hinduism is becoming more organizational in character, it is possible that the presence and efforts of Hindu organizations and their use of the congregational formats are a religious response to modernization. It is possible that religious groups in the religious marketplace are responding to the presence of new competitors in their midst. Various spheres of society undergoing differentiation from other spheres, including religion, come to follow their own logics and interests. Since these spheres are less entwined with religion, these spheres are

free to critique or compete against religion. The mass media is one example, as are various forms of entertainment and carousing scenes and lifestyle enclaves such as those surrounding night clubs. Youth scenes in India's metro areas and large cities also serve as an example. Compared to many advanced industrial nations where religion appears to have undergone considerable marginalization [16], India's modernization might appear mild. However, in a society as religiously saturated and integrated as India, signs of differentiation would be noticeable and troubling to many religiously devout Hindus. It should be no surprise that creative religious responses to the competitor of modernization might appear on the Indian landscape.

We can look to several examples of creative Hindu competition amid modernization in India. Burger [51] observes the trademarks, brandings, and consumer benefits of yoga as an Indian spiritual export product on the global religious market. Focusing on the religious consumption narratives of devotees, Warrier [52] reveals the competition between India's proliferating gurus, promoting their diverse religious wares on the Indian and global religious market. Technology, the ease of global dissemination, and a newly moneyed urban middle-class are resulting in "multiple choices in every sphere of life, including that of religion," thus cultivating a vigorous spiritual marketplace [52]. As one example of why Hindu organizations might utilize the boundedness and membership of congregational forms, organizations might see an emerging Indian middle class and seek to tap into this growing religious niche and its social and material resources [52]. Congregation-like characteristics, such as exclusivism, are visible in some sectors of Indian Hinduism. Though allowing for the "vastly diverse range of beliefs, practices, and movements" and the foreign origin and imposition of the term "Hinduism" as a surface level "conceptual unity" on Indian religious phenomena, some sociologists of religion still assume a basic congregationless and nonexclusive uniformity within Hinduism [53]. As reviewed above in this article, other scholars have outlined the increase of stricter sectarian Hinduism in the last 200 years [23]. These Hindu sects function in many ways as exclusive religious bodies utilizing congregational forms, exclusivist religious participation, exclusive social bonds, particularistic sacred literature, and in some cases entirely lay leadership [23,39]. Ethnographic findings support such distinctions. For instance, in the realm of guru-centered Hinduism, Warrier [52] proposes two main "*guru* orientations*," the inclusivist "tourist of gurus" and the exclusivist devotee:

> In terms of being "attached to a *guru,* however, [the exclusivists] remain exclusively loyal to their chosen one. Only in extreme circumstances, such as the passing away of the chosen *guru* or disillusionment with him or her, will exclusivists consider the option of attachment to a new spiritual mentor.

Exclusivity is not uncommon even in the fluid world of Hindu guru devotion. Characterization of Hindu religious life as uniformly non-exclusive and non-congregational is not compelling in view of such modern Hindu phenomena.

An additional religious response to the competitor of modernization in India can be seen in the energetic activity of Hindu revivalist organizations. Some of these organizations are exclusivistic and congregational. The arguments outlined above suggest that revivalist organizations may emerge and act out of a response to modernization. The religiously devout might see that old

cultural constraints are not holding people to the religion and traditions of their families and backgrounds because secular activities and sentiments are competing with religious devotion. They might see the need to actively compete with perceived competition stemming from modernization processes. In this way, the effects of modernization are moderated by the power of tradition, an issue examined in the social anthropological literature on Hinduism.[7] Similar to the interaction of tradition and social change seen in the religious adaptations of the Hindu diaspora, congregational forms may be useful for creating enclaves of nostalgic religious purity, reconstituting orthodoxy, and transmitting religious tradition to the next generation [5,33,54]. In these ways, the use of congregational forms by Hindus in India may represent the kinds of "innovative returns to tradition" seen in other parts of the world [55].

2.5. Social Networks and Congregational Forms

As a religious response to modernization, Hindu involvement in congregational forms turns on the benefits of religious social networks and the influence of religious social networks. Religious congregations that are comprised of regular gatherings of the same people often serve as a powerful form of social support in the face of a sense of uncertainty, a sense of rootlessness, and lack of social ties, characteristics of people in societies undergoing modernization [16,56,57]. However, participating in new religious activities, such as involvement in somewhat novel congregational forms, involves a certain level of risk and uncertainty in and of itself (Elster 1986). The bonds of trust found in pre-existing social networks, however, have been shown to smooth the path toward changes in religious behaviors and tastes [58–61]. The influence of social networks on changes in religious behavior may come in the form of direct constraints on behavior, or it may take place through fostering new behavior-guiding religious tastes [62]. For example, people's uncertainties about religious activities may be reduced by the testimony of trusted others and people may also adopt religious practices to avoid social penalties from others [63,64]. It is also important to keep in mind that the religious organization or group has an interest in reducing risk. The religious organization may reason that known persons already in their social networks are safer to recruit [65], and they may exert considerable energy and rely heavily on social bonds in recruiting and retaining such people in their religious activities.

Members of religious social networks may be influenced by a religious organization or they may be motivated by immediate family members, extended relatives, friends, or other social relations who might introduce opportunities to participate in novel congregational groups or even apply pressure to that end. Some people may reason that if their social network of peers is participating in a religious congregation then they should also. They may be motivated by pleasing others or gaining social rewards such as maintaining a reputation among peers [63,64]. Many aspects of sociological theories of religion that have been developed in Western and Christian contexts take for granted that the individual (regardless of his or her age or position in the social structure) is the

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[7]   This view can be categorized under the idea that tradition coexists with modernity in India, one of three approaches to tradition and modernity in India (the other two being: [1] modernity destroys tradition, and [2] tradition will prevent modernization [for a review of social science literature on tradition and modernization in India, see 25,39].

one who makes decisions about his or her religious behavior. In many non-Western contexts such as India, it is other people in society, especially in the family (e.g., the husband or senior male or female in the household), who makes many decisions for others, including religious decisions. At the least, the religious actor is under the consistent gaze of senior family members as a form of social influence. The issue of social constraints on religious tastes and choices [62] become critical when theorizing the social sources of Hindu congregational participation in the Indian context.

Social networks may operate as an influence toward *satsang* participation, for example. Traditional Hindu housewives may have additional religious motives for a wide array of religious fasts, rituals, and activities (including *satsang*) that may be above and beyond other people's religious investments. It is sometimes believed that wives' religious activities can gain merit and advantage the rest of the family in their health, lives, and pursuits [66,67]. Single women may similarly participate in religious activities in order to further their own concerns such as education or marriage [5]. Many respondents said they participate in *satsang* because of a sense of peace they feel during the gathering and for a time afterwards, a capability for dealing with life's challenges that is often facilitated in the context of social networks [68].

3. Discussion

A sociological literature on the religious lives of immigrants has documented how immigrants use religious congregational forms for ethnic formation, transmission of traditional values, protection from outside influences, social support and other goals regarding coping and adaptation to social change. In this article, I have tried to advance our understanding of how Hindus in India may use congregational forms in ways similar to immigrant religious communities. This paper sheds new light on the literature on the sociology of religion in India by considering how social developments fostered by modernization, such as rationalization and institutional differentiation might foster Hindu congregational forms. The arguments presented here suggest that Hindu groups may respond congregationally to impacts from modernization because congregational forms serve as effective buffers to outside competition and serve as effective receptacles for Hindus experiencing new levels of individual choice in the Indian religious market. I also bring into relief the importance of social networks in understanding the appeal of congregations, especially social support, and the processes by which individuals involve themselves in novel congregational forms. Specifically, the social embeddedness of religious choices comes to take on particular importance in India because people other than the religious actor, especially senior family members, have considerable influence on decisions for the individual, including religious decisions.

Insights from the social anthropological literature on religion in India give reason to believe that such changes in Hindu religious expression should be expected. In the diverse religious marketplace of contemporary India, it is not unreasonable to expect innovative responses as religious persons and groups face social change and cultural competitors, perceived or real. There are historical examples of such religious innovation. Sectors of Hindu religion in India underwent changes in the nineteenth century in response to Protestant congregations in West Bengal [19]. Some have argued that the emergence of Hinduism as a unifying religious identity—a "world religion"—has been an outgrowth of a religious response to British orientalism in the nineteenth century [69]. Similar

innovations might be going on in our time through the use of congregational forms by Hindu denominations, sects [23], and innovative revivalist organizations [70]. The use of congregational forms can be seen as responses to or the product of modernizing processes in India. We can envision various examples. Particular sects may see this as an opportunity to promote the expansion of their particular expression of Hinduism. Such organizations may leverage family and peer networks to shore up their recruitment. On the other hand, family, peer networks, and individual religious devotees themselves may have their own motivations, using their bonds of trust, credible testimony, and social pressure to assemble themselves and others into Hindu congregations.

Regarding the role of modernization and social networks in Hindu congregational forms, several potentially fruitful avenues of further inquiry present themselves. Further research should examine the degree to which the use of congregations by religious Hindus are innovative strategies for facilitating, adapting to, and competing with modernizing forces in contemporary India: differentiation, urbanization, international migration, increasing geographic mobility within India, waning of the salience of caste boundaries, and a growing differentiation and marginalization of religious traditions, particularly among emerging generations. The new wealth and opportunities of the India's middle class and changes in household structures and gender roles in urban India may also play roles [71]. Further research should also consider continuities between diasporic and homeland congregations, especially as a kind of cooperative transmission of religion and culture to children when any one child's parents cannot take on all of the transmission responsibilities. Along these lines, the participation of children and youth in these congregations should be compared in homeland and diaspora settings. Following the work of Singer [39], different kinds of *satsang* congregations should be categorized, and more light should be shed on their formalization trajectories, networked associations, and overall prevalence. This research should be conducted on an even more trans-sectarian and trans-regional level.

Social networks may also play an important role among both sectarian congregations as well as nonsectarian Hindus who utilize Hindu congregational forms such as the *satsang*. Social networks' various ways of directly or indirectly influencing individuals' styles of religious participation are documented in theorizing and qualitative research on religious recruitment and religious switching. One area for future research is to help sort out the degree to which congregational participation is due to direct social influence on participation or indirect social influences on changes in individuals' participation-guiding religious tastes [62]. The attractiveness of these congregations can be seen in the ethnic church functions described in immigrant religion literature as well as anthropological work in India [39].

Subsequent research directions, as introduced above, could also include investigations of relationships between social networks and specific forms of congregational participation such as *satsang* participation. Such research would serve to better understand how the role of recommendation, trust, recruitment, or other direct and indirect social network factors might be differently attributed to various forms of congregational participation. Collecting religion survey data on India would help systematically compare evidence for these various social influences as well as help estimate the pervasiveness of congregational forms in Hindu religious life. At present, scant quantitative religion data on India exists. The various consequences of Hindu congregational involvement is

also an area needing future research. For example, Singer [39] suggests that Hindu congregational groups have the effect of smoothing inter-caste relations in the workplace and other settings outside of the groups themselves, but the religious and demographic composition of the congregations themselves should be examined as a potentially important moderating factor [72,73]. Comparative analysis of *satsang* attendance between different regions of India and the various diasporic communities along all of the above avenues for research may expand our understanding of how the broader societal context shapes Hindu congregations.

Other more speculative sources of Hindu congregational forms may also prove worthy of study: mass movement toward *bhakti* Hinduism, responses to British colonial influences, and the influence of the Hindu diaspora back on religious life in the homeland in a time of increasing transnationalism. The diaspora are heavily influenced by sectarian Hinduism and so energetic sect activities may play a significant role in India and abroad. Diaspora Hindus' considerable financial resources are also a consideration, not simply for religio-political movements, but also for forms of religious practice [5].

Implicit in this article's discussion of the effects of modernization on religious forms is the notion that individuals may use religion as a resource for coping with life's difficulties, including social change. This idea maps onto a line of ethnographic work on how Hindus' sense of well-being may be diminished as globalization expands and potentially creates a disjuncture between Hindus' cultural goals and the material conditions that support those goals [74]. Regardless of whether Hindus participate in congregational forms to attain well-being, it remains to be seen whether the dynamics of Hindu congregational involvement in India are associated with the same increases in life satisfaction as found in other populations and whether similar social processes exist [75]. The impact of Hindu congregational participation on personal well-being (and relatedly, physical and mental health) represents an area in need of both qualitative and quantitative research in the sociology of religion.

More broadly, the information presented here comports with recent arguments from sociologists of religion [17] who contend that investigation of religious practices in increasingly influential non-Western and principally non-Christian societies will augment our understanding of larger portions of the world's religious life. Moreover, these streams of inquiry will broaden the global applicability of theories in the sociology of religion, thus helping the subdiscipline live up to its name.

4. Conclusions

In sum, I have proposed modernization and social networks as two preliminary sources of Hindus' involvement in congregational forms. Modernization subjects people to social change and posese new forms of competition to religion. Due in part to the sorts of social network ties forged or maintained in congregations, congregationally styled religious forms serve as effective buffers to outside competition and social change, including providing receptacles for Hindus experiencing new levels of individual choice in the Indian religious market. In the future, Hindus may increasingly turn to congregational forms to express their religiosity as members of a society in transition.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Phillip Connor, Kevin Dougherty, Paul Froese, Stephen Offutt, and Jerry Park for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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