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The Complexity of Religious Inequality

Edited by
Melissa Wilde

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Editor

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About the Editor

Melissa Wilde is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on what she calls "complex religion," how religion intersects with other structures of inequality, especially race and class, and how those intersections can help us understand views of sex, gender, poverty, and even politics today. In addition to her two books, she has published award-winning articles in the *American Sociological Review and the American Journal of Sociology*. Professor Wilde was the president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in 2015 and chair of the Section on the Sociology of Religion of the American Sociological Association in 2019. In her spare time, she enjoys any manner of outdoor activities, especially in the Adirondacks.

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Article

The "Right" History: Religion, Race, and Nostalgic Stories of Christian America

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Abstract: A wide range of right-wing movements are bound together by their adherence to a nostalgic vision of the United States as a "Christian nation," yet there are meaningful differences in the specific narratives promoted by these group. that are not fully understood. This article identifies two ideal-typical versions of this narrative: the *white Christian nation* and the *colorblind Judeo-Christian nation*. The two narratives share a common declension structure, but differ in their framing of how religion and race intersect as markers of American belonging and power. Although participants in right-wing movements often slide back and forth between the two narratives in practice, distinguishing between them analytically enables us to better understand how the two renderings of American history carry different meanings and perform different kinds of political work for participants in these movements. Theoretically, the analysis extends the insights of a "complex religion" approach to sites beyond organized religion, while also demonstrating how scholarship on Christian nationalism and on right-wing movements' use of national history could each be enhanced by greater attention to the other.

Keywords: Christian nationalism; right-wing movements; race; religion; nostalgia

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1. Introduction: The Christian Nation in Peril

Religion, Race, and Mythical Visions of American History

When people think of the role religion plays in right-wing social movements, they tend to focus exclusively on the Religious Right, a movement that mobilizes conservative Christians around issues explicitly linked to their faith. Yet religion plays important roles in *most* right-wing social movements in the United States, including many that are not explicitly "religious," such as the Tea Party movement, the patriot/militia movement, the sovereign citizen movement, the tax protest movement, and white supremacist movements such as the Ku Klux Klan. Most recently, members of far-right groups, such as the Proud Boys, deployed "Christian rituals, symbols and language" during their violent January 6th attemp. to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election in Donald Trump's favor (Dias and Graham 2021). Despite their many differences, these group. are loosely bound together by their adherence to a mythical vision of the United States as a "Christian nation" that must be protected and preserved (Braunstein 2017b, 2018; Gorski 2017a; Green 2015; Kruse 2015; Seidel 2019; Whitehead and Perry 2020).

The growing body of research on Christian nationalism has not been attuned enough to these complex and varied uses of the Christian nation myth in right-wing movements beyond the Religious Right. Meanwhile, although recent research has demonstrated how a nostalgic orientation toward American history is central to right-wing movements' cultures and guides participants' practices and attitudes (Aho 2016; Braunstein 2017b; Cooter 2013; Jackson 2020; McCann 2019), most work on the American right has, rightfully, focused on the role that race and racism play in this historical mythology. As such, researchers have not been sufficiently attuned to how religion intersects with race in these groups' construction of American history and ideal "Americanness" (Cooter 2013). Understanding the right's historical narrative through the lens of the Christian nation myth not only brings

religion's role in these movements to the foreground, but also reveals how religion is deeply entangled with these groups' racialized identities and attitudes.

In this article, I analyze previous research on right-wing movements using a "complex religion" approach (Wilde 2018), with a particular emphasis on how religion and race intersect in the "stories of American peoplehood" these movements deploy (Braunstein 2017b, 2018; Smith 2003). I find they draw on two competing ideal-typical framings of the Christian nation narrative: the *white Christian nation* (WCN) and the *colorblind Judeo-Christian nation* (CJCN). Structurally, both are narratives of original perfection, decline, and potential restoration. Yet this structural similarity masks variation in the content of the narratives that circulate on the right. An examination of how religion and race intersect in right-wing movements' ideal visions of Americanness and its enemies reveals meaningful differences that are not fully understood. Although participants in right-wing movements often slide back and forth between the two narratives in practice, distinguishing between them analytically enables us to better understand how the two renderings of American history carry different meanings and perform different kinds of political work for participants in these movements. In so doing, the analysis extends the insights of a "complex religion" approach to sites beyond organized religion, while also demonstrating how scholarship on Christian nationalism and on right-wing movements' use of national history could each be enhanced by greater attention to the other.

2. Literature Review: "Complex Religion" and Nationalist Narratives

2.1. "Complex Religion" beyond Organized Religion

By analyzing how religion and race intersect in right-wing movements' ideal visions of Americanness and its enemies, this article draws on and extends the burgeoning study of "complex religion" in America. Originally advanced by Wilde (2018, p. 294), this approach calls for greater attention to how religion "deeply intersect(s) with race, ethnicity, class, and, consequently, gender and sexuality" and to how "these relationship. have been reproduced over time." Wilde draws on theories of intersectionality to argue that religion should not simply be operationalized as a standalone "variable," but as one of many social characteristics that define a "cell": "what matters is not just religion or race or class—but it is the combination of these factors, and how they differ in those combinations . . . that matters" (p. 294). In recent years, researchers of religion and American politics have moved toward this approach in their recognition that religion cannot be considered apart from its intersections with social factors such as race (Wilde and Glassman 2016; Yukich and Edgell 2020). For example, recent research demonstrates that it is not religious conservatism alone that leads people to take conservative political views or support Republicans, since this is only true among majority white religious group. such as white evangelical Protestants, and not for those within "racialized religious traditions" such as Muslims, Black Protestants, and Latinx Catholics (O'Brien and Abdelhadi 2020; see also Edgell 2017; McDaniel and Ellison 2008).

The majority of research in the vein of complex religion has focused on individual-level religiosity or religious institutions such as denominations and congregations, and the extent to which the latter remain "a place of stark segregation by race, ethnicity, and class" (Wilde and Glassman 2016, p. 408). Yet this should not suggest these same dynamics are not present beyond personal and organized religion. Religion is part of the air that Americans breath; it is mixed into the soil in which American institutions, laws, ideas and practices have taken root and grown (Williams 1999), and this more amorphous public religion, too, is "raced" (Williams 2020). Americans' attitudes about religion's public roles—including the proper place of Christianity in public life and of religion in defining the boundaries of American citizenship—are also shaped by a combination of racial and religious interests and identity (Braunstein 2017b; Braunstein and Taylor 2017; Delehanty et al. 2018; Edgell et al. 2016; Edgell et al. 2006; Lichterman 2012; Whitehead and Perry 2020; Williams 2020). For this reason, Wilde and Glassman (2016, p. 409) are right to call

for greater attention to the place of "complex religion" within social movements, political culture, and nationalism.

Such an approach promises to enlarge our understanding of religion's role in "religio-racial projects" (Hill Fletcher 2017; see also Goldschmidt and McAlister 2004; Wilde and Danielsen 2014; Yukich and Edgell 2020). This concep. builds on Omi and Winant (2015) concep. of "racial projects" to account for how religion has been entangled in the project of defining and defending whiteness in America. While researchers have shown how such projects are advanced within specific religious communities (Jones 2020; Wilde and Danielsen 2014; Wilde 2018), less attention has been paid to how the religio-racial project of white Christian America mythology is promoted outside of "religious" spaces (cf. Joshi 2020). As this article shows, this mythology has been a key mobilizing tool for right-wing movements for more than a century, making these group. an important site in which to deepen our understanding of how religion and race intersect in Americans' contested understandings of the country and their place within it.

2.2. Christian Nationalism and Right-Wing Movements

This article does not address the question of whether America was in fact founded as a "Christian nation" (Green 2015; Seidel 2019) or whether Christianity and American democracy are compatible or not (Gorski 2020). Rather, it views the understanding that America is a Christian nation as one of many foundational "myths" that Americans draw upon to make sense of their place in the country's past, present and future, or as Gaston (2019, p. 1) puts it, to "dream America." Moreover, it takes these myths seriously, accepting Kammen (1991) conclusion that "what people believe to be true about their past is usually more important in determining their behavior and responses than truth itself" (pp. 38–39). Research on the American right reveals not only frequent references to American history, mythology, and nostalgia within right-wing social movements, but also the extent to which these groups' particular understandings of history guide participants' attitudes and behaviors (Braunstein 2017b; Cooter 2013; Jackson 2020; Smith 2003). This phenomenon is not limited to right-wing movements—an emerging body of research on the "Marley Hypothesis" suggests a lack of "critical historical knowledge" is associated with racist attitudes among the general public (Bonam et al. 2019; see also Nelson et al. 2013),[1] and history can play a similar role within progressive movements (Braunstein 2017b; Murphy 2008; Smith 2003).

Yet there has not been sufficient attention to variation in these historical understandings on the right. To the contrary, because the American right is so heterogenous (Blee and Creasap 2010; Diamond 1995), some scholars propose that what actually ties many of these group. together is their *shared* nostalgic orientation toward a "mythologized" American past (Cooter 2013, pp. 5–6; Jackson 2020, p. 12).[2] This is a helpful corrective to accounts that erroneously presume shared ideological or policy commitments across widely disparate groups. Yet this focus on what is shared occludes our ability to recognize meaningful differences between different framings of American history on the right.

Moreover, while scholars of right-wing movements have significantly advanced our understanding of racism and white identity politics in America (Blee 2002; McVeigh 2009; McVeigh and Estep 2019), this literature has largely treated religion as a descriptive feature of these movements rather than as an analytic category. This is curious when considering that even many group. on the "racist right" (Diamond 1995) are as likely to

[1] I wish to thank Samuel L. Perry for bringing this line of research to my attention.

[2] Defining what counts as a right-wing movement is not only analytically complex; it is also politically contentious, as the label "right-wing" is resisted by some movements due to its association with extremism (Blee and Creasap 2010). Nonetheless, a broad typology of the right like that offered by Diamond (1995) is useful in that it enables us to see continuities and connections between disparate groups, including those sometimes separated into "conservative" and "right-wing" movements despite the reality that "a single movement is likely to have conservative and right-wing aspects" (Blee and Creasap 2010, p. 271). Although Diamond (1995) typology would benefit from an update to reflect new developments, I follow its lead in defining the right broadly, and especially bringing the Religious Right into the same analytic frame as the racist right and other conservative, nativist and anti-government group. (see also Blee and Creasap 2010; Jackson 2019a).

reference Christianity as they are to reference whiteness in their definition of Americanness (Belew 2018; McVeigh 2009). Religion is also present in the descriptions of right-wing movements' imagined enemies: for example, Jews, Muslims, and "godless" communists. Yet religion itself is rarely an analytic focus unless right-wing movements involve *organized* religious constituencies or leaders, such as the role played by white evangelicals in the Religious Right (Ingersoll 2015; Kruse 2015; Whitehead and Perry 2020), or by "Christian Identity" churches in the racist right (Aho 2016; Baker and McMillan 2019; Barkun 1997). As a result, research on right-wing movements tends to underestimate how religion intersects with race in the American right's construction of ideal Americanness.

Race's deep entanglement with religion on the right comes clearly into view when we focus on these movements' invocation of the "founding myth" of America as a Christian nation (Seidel 2019). This myth is rooted in the idea that the country's exceptionalism and special favor from God are incumbent upon Americans' religiosity and shared religious values—America is "One Nation Under God;" "In God We Trust" (Kruse 2015). This myth is shared to varying degrees by Americans across the political spectrum (Green 2015; Kruse 2015; Whitehead and Perry 2020), but for group. on the political right it is the basis for a more specific historical narrative that frames the Christian nation as an ideal state that was achieved at the moment of the country's founding but has been in peril ever since (Braunstein 2018; Gorski 2017a).

Recent work on Christian nationalism has importantly demonstrated the political relevance of this myth for contemporary American politics, but has tended to focus on the Religious Right as its primary carrier (Gorski 2017a; Seidel 2019; Stewart 2020; Whitehead and Perry 2020). Historical work on the idea of Christian America has traced connections between the Religious Right and other right-wing movements, with a focus on anticommunist and libertarian group. (Gaston 2019; Kruse 2015; Marti 2020). Furthermore, research on the Tea Party movement finds that Christian nationalism operates as a symbolic bridge between religious conservatives and other group. on the right (Braunstein 2017b; Braunstein and Taylor 2017). However, generally speaking, the literatures on the Religious Right and other right-wing movements are not closely connected, and too little attention has been paid to the place of the Christian nation myth across different right-wing movements (cf. Baker 2011; Diamond 1995; Hardisty 1999). Moreover, given a dominant concern with distinguishing Christian nationalism from other related phenomena—including civil religion and competing visions of both Christianity and nationalism (Gorski 2017a, 2020; Seidel 2019; Whitehead and Perry 2020)—researchers have only begun to grapple with *variation in* Christian nationalism's expression. By variation I mean not just differences in intensity of support for ideas associated with this myth (Whitehead and Perry 2020), but also qualitatively different ways in which religion and race intersect in right-wing movements' framings of Christian America and its enemies.

2.3. A Narrative Approach to Nationalism

When people say that America is a Christian nation, they are making a claim about American national identity, identifying the criteria for full belonging, and marking the boundary between insiders and outsiders. Standard accounts of national identity focus on such visions of who "we" are as a nation (Bail 2008; Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Brubaker 2009; Theiss-Morse 2009) and encourage attention to group. whose "formal" or "substantive" citizenship is contested (Glenn 2002). A narrative approach to nationalism embeds static renderings of the national "we" in a broader "story of peoplehood" (Smith 2003), an account of the nation's history, character, and destiny. These kinds of stories not only offer an account of "who we are" as a nation, but also link a vision of a nation's past ("where we have been") to a vision of its future ("where we are going"). They work "as persuasive historical stories that promp. people to embrace the valorized identities, play the stirring roles, and have the fulfilling experiences that political leaders strive to evoke for them" (Smith 2003, p. 45). They often do so by embedding citizens'

personal stories of struggle and triump. within a larger, transcendent, narrative of national destiny (Bellah 1967).

Because stories of peoplehood embed each individual's biography within history (Mills 2000), they are likely to be most effective when they connect to what Hochschild (2016, p. 16) calls a particular group's "deep story," "a story that *feels as if* it were true," even if it is not based on one's actual experiences or material conditions (Polletta and Callahan 2017). This is especially (although not exclusively) true of nostalgic stories, which link individuals' idealized memories of their own childhoods to historical renderings of the country's "Golden Age" (Murphy 2009), and fears about their own "status devaluation" (McVeigh 2009) to accounts of the decline of the country as a whole (Braunstein 2017b).

Stories of peoplehood can play a critical role in political life, particularly when they take the form of *competing* versions of national history, as they do in the US. In recurrent battles over how to tell the story of America—collectively called "history wars"—an "angry swirl of emotions . . . surrounds public memory" (Linenthal and Engelhardt 1996). As one observer described of a 2014 skirmish over how to teach US history to high school students, "Navigating the tension between patriotic inspiration and historical thinking, between respectful veneration and critical engagement, is an especially difficult task, made even more complicated by a marked shift in the very composition of 'we the people'" (Grossman 2014). The latest battle in this ongoing war (Onion 2019) was set off by the publication of the *New York Times'* 1619 Project, which "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative."[3] This project struck deep into the heart of the nostalgic narratives of America's sacred founding that animate the American right, and particularly those who join right-wing movements in order to "make sure that their story of independence, patriotism and individual success is not 'repressed or obscured' by other, competing stories that are put forth as part of the national biography" (Cooter 2013, p. 5; see also Zubrzycki 2006).

Right-wing movements are not alone in this cause, as the mainstream resonance of the "history wars" makes clear. In defending their version of American history, right-wing movements often find common cause with more mainstream conservatives who share their nostalgic view of the past (Green 2015). PRRI (Public Religion Research Institute) finds that around half the country believes that "America's best days are behind us" and that "American culture and way of life" has mostly changed for the worse since the 1950s, while the other half believes the opposite (Jones et al. 2020). As group. of varying stripes coalesce around these rival historical narratives—one nostalgic and one critical of the country's past—these narratives shap. political alliances and have the potential to reshap. the political field as a whole (Smith 2003). Moreover, these narratives serve as prisms through which each group comes to interpret and understand the political world, including who their allies and enemies are, and what information and authorities are credible (Braunstein 2017b, 2018; Jackson 2020; Lepore 2010; Reed 2017). This can heighten misunderstanding and polarization between rival groups, but it can also bring "strange bedfellows" together and imbue their shared efforts with sacred meaning.

Narratives convey meaning through both their structure (plot) and their content (characters and events) (Polletta et al. 2011). As I will show, those on the nostalgic "side" of today's history wars agree on a common narrative *structure*, or plot, in which the country was once better and is now worse. Less is known, however, about the specific *contents* of this nostalgia narrative, and whether different versions feature different characters, events, and dramatic turning points. A narrative approach to nationalism provides useful tools for detecting this variation, because it enables an analysis that recognizes structural parallels between different narratives, even as the contents differ; or vice versa, narratives with similar content, but different narrative structures. A narrative approach also help. to bridge the conversations occurring between religion scholars studying Christian nationalism and

[3] See https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html (accessed on 29 January 2021).

scholars of right-wing social movements who are interested in the role of American history within these movements, as it recognizes Christian nationalism not merely as a set of beliefs but as a way of narrating American history. Finally, by recognizing the importance of symbolism, perspective and character, a narrative approach enables an analysis that is deeply attuned to "complex religion," and specifically the ways in which religion and race intersect in competing visions of Americanness and its enemies, and in claims about whose stories should be remembered and whose should be forgotten, in the name of patriotism.

3. "Christian Nation" Narratives on the Right

3.1. The White Christian Nation and the Colorblind Judeo-Christian Nation

Right-wing movements draw upon mythical visions of American history in order to help participants make sense of their place in the country's past, present, and future. Central to most of these historical accounts is the myth that America was founded as a Christian nation, and moreover, that ever since this moment of original perfection its Christian heritage has been under assault. Yet scholarship on this national mythology, and especially its role in right-wing movements, conflates two different versions of this narrative: the *white Christian nation* (WCN) and the *colorblind Judeo-Christian nation* (CJCN). Both of these narratives differ from the relatively generic and widely embraced idea, largely invented in the 1950s, that America is "One Nation Under God" (Kruse 2015), although they draw legitimacy from their alignment with it. They also differ from prophetic stories of the country's uneven journey toward a "more perfect union" (Braunstein 2018; Gorski 2017a; Murphy 2008; Smith 2017). Less recognized is that these narratives also differ from one another in subtle yet meaningful ways, even as they also feature significant continuities. In the following sections, I describe similarities in these ideal-typical narratives' *structures*; then outline differences in each narratives' *content*, with primary attention to the "complex" intersections of race and religion in their framings of Americanness and various threats to it.

3.1.1. Similar Structure: Perfection, Decline, Restoration

While specifics vary, most right-wing movements embrace a "declension" narrative in which American history can be broken down into the following components: original perfection, decline, and future restoration (Williams 2012). Scholars of the right routinely document a nostalgic orientation toward a "Golden Age" (Murphy 2009) or "mythologized" American past (Aho 2016; Braunstein 2017b; Cooter 2013). Whether it is explicitly identified or not, the Christian nation myth is often at the heart of this nostalgia. This mythology is not simply a nod to the fact that, demographically speaking, the US has been majority white and Christian for most of its history, although this is part of it (Jones 2016; Wuthnow 2005). It also conveys the belief that the United States is God's "chosen nation," its people a "chosen people," and its birthright to be a "city on a hill," a model for all the world to follow (Murphy 2009; Smith 2004; Van Engen 2020). The Golden Age to which right-wing movements refer was an age in which the country fulfilled this calling, through imagined widespread citizen adherence to traditional Christian (or Judeo-Christian) values and few challenges to the hegemonic power of these values (Gaston 2019).

Right-wing movements convey their nostalgia in a variety of ways. The Religious Right, for example, sacralizes the nation's founding through their references to the "Founders and virtuous ancestors" who "in the jeremiadic tradition . . . represent a standing reproach to degenerate present-day Americans" (Murphy 2009, p. 127). Group. from the radical anti-government Posse Comitatus to the Tea Party movement to the patriot/militia movement signal their reverence for the Constitution by framing it as divinely inspired, engaging in close study of the text, and insisting on an "originalist" approach to interpretation (Barkun 1997; Braunstein 2017b; Levitas 2002; McCann 2019). These same group. also engage in other rituals that enable them to reenact—through costumed role-play or militia exercises—the "purer" forms of patriotism they associate with this Golden Age (Cooter 2013; Jackson 2020; Lepore 2010). Finally, some movements' names are rooted

in a vision of themselves as modern heirs to the patriotic leaders of the founding era: for example, the Tea Party movement (Braunstein 2017b; Lepore 2010; Skocpol and Williamson 2012) or the Three Percenters.[4]

While the founding era looms large in right-wing movements' mythological understanding of American history, it is not the only moment for which participants are nostalgic. As Dionne (2016, p. 1) observes of conservatives more generally, those who share a nostalgic view of the past do not consistently reference a specific moment in US history that was "better" than today, but rather blend nostalgia for "the government and the economy of the 1890s, the cultural norms of the 1950s, and, in more recent times, the ethnic makeup of the country in the 1940s." What each of these eras share is their imagined status as moments of relative cultural "consensus," before the expansion of the federal government, social activism of the 1960s, and subsequent "culture wars" resulted in multipronged challenges to white Christian male power and privilege within American society (Gaston 2019, p. 5; Putnam and Campbell 2010).

Perfection does not last in the right-wing story of America. At the heart of any declension narrative is a pattern of decline or deterioration, of people backsliding or straying from the path of righteousness. In the right's story of America, the country as a whole suffers from this deterioration, which movement leaders evoke through vivid references to social breakdown and decay, political corruption, and economic collapse (Braunstein 2018; Murphy 2009). They attribute decline to a variety of factors, including demographic change (driven largely by immigration); rising support for racial equality, religious pluralism, and secularism; and communist influence on economics and politics. Although they depict the entire country in a state of decline, they frame some social group. (namely, nonwhites, non-Christians, and women) as benefitting from these new conditions at the expense of others (white Christian men) (Hochschild 2016). Meanwhile, the citizens on the losing end of this "decline" are sometimes framed as complicit in the crisis, as a consequence of their own religious backsliding. As Ronald Reagan once said, "If we ever forget that we're one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under." Other right-wing activists blame themselves for becoming politically complacent, and thus allowing loud minorities, elites, and "deep state" bureaucrats to take "their" country away (Braunstein 2017b).

Yet, it is in this way that the right's story of America also points to a hopeful path forward. If the country's decline can be attributed, at least in part, to the absence of God and ordinary citizens from public life, then it can be saved by faithful citizens if they mobilize to reassert themselves. Right-wing movements thus write themselves into their American story as the patriotic heroes who will alter the course of the country's decline by urging a return to the conditions of the past (Braunstein 2017b). The Religious Right, for example, has long promoted religious revival as the key to halting the country's moral and political decline (Murphy 2009). The Tea Party movement, meanwhile, sought to restore American greatness by calling the country back to its original Constitutional principles and Judeo-Christian values (Braunstein 2017b). Similarly, those who joined "constitutionalist" militias during the early 2000s "believe they are fighting to maintain personal liberties and a national identity that aligns with an originalist understanding of the Constitution and their interpretation of the Founding Fathers' vision for the country" (Cooter 2013, p. 4). And in early 2021, before marching on the U.S. Capitol in an attemp. to overturn the results of the 2020 election, members of the far-right group the Proud Boys "prayed for God to bring 'reformation and revival.' They gave thanks for 'the wonderful nation we've all been blessed to be in.' They asked God for the restoration of their 'value systems,'" (Dias and Graham 2021). In each version of the story, the country's historical trajectory takes the form of a circle—the path forward involves going back to an idealized moment of earlier perfection (Gorski 2017a, p. 27).

[4] See: https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/oath-keepers-and-three-ers-part-of-growing-anti-government-movement (accessed on 29 January 2021).

That said, there are some right-wing movements that are less optimistic about the possibilities of fixing what is broken about America, at least within the scop. of its current political borders or historical time. These groups—which Churchill (2009) calls "millenarian" in contrast to the "constitutionalist" group. described above (cited in Cooter 2013, p. 71)—tend to be more closely aligned with the racist right. As Belew (2018, p. 5) argues, the white power movement in the 1990s "was not dedicated to political conservatism aimed at preserving an existing way of life, or even to the reestablishment of bygone racial or gender hierarchies." Departing from the *political* approaches of other contemporary right-wing movements, and from the reactionary but ultimately *nationalistic* visions of previous white supremacist movements such as the Ku Klux Klan, the latter white power movement "sought revolution and separation—the founding of a racial utopian nation." In more recent years, secessionist group. have proposed founding, by violent means if necessary, a "Christian homeland populated by members of the Patriot movement" (Sottile 2019).

These visions of restoration are rooted in an apocalyptic worldview that is common among adherents of a radical strain of Christianity, called Christian Identity, that places white supremacy and anti-Semitism at its center (Aho 2016; Baker and McMillan 2019; Barkun 1997; Belew 2018, p. 6; Sottile 2019). Whereas conservative Christians have popularized the idea of an apocalypse marked by the peaceful rapture of the faithful from the world, the white power movement imagines the end-times as a race war in which "the faithful would be tasked with ridding the world of the unfaithful, the world's nonwhite and Jewish population, before the return of Christ" (Belew 2018, p. 6). Moreover, because many of these group. believe that the US government has been infiltrated by sinister forces, sometimes referred to as the Zionist Occupational Government or the New World Order, this apocalyptic race war is often imagined as a war *against* the US government (Belew 2018, p. 7). When members of these group. engage in paramilitary exercises and stockpile food and weapons to prepare for the coming war, they do so from a very different vantage than the "constitutionalist" militias described earlier. Yet they too are imagining themselves as the latest cast of characters in a story of national decline and potential restoration—the primary difference is that the nation they imagine in both the past and the future is not the actually existing United States; it is a mythical white Christian homeland.

3.1.2. Different Content: Americanness

While we have seen that there is subtle variation in the structures of right-wing movements' stories of American decline, the WCN and CJCN narratives are not clearly distinguishable when examining their structures alone. Where they reveal themselves as distinct narratives is when we turn our attention to their content: specifically, their central symbols; the identities of the stories' heroes; the characteristics of the society they fight for; and the perspective from which the stories are told. These features reveal how participants in these group. imagine an ideal form of Americanness.

In the WCN narrative, whiteness, Christianity, and American patriotism are explicitly fused, and Christianity is used to legitimize a vision of American society rooted in white supremacy (Marti 2020). Consider this narrative's use in the founding of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan. When the former Methodist preacher William Josep. Simmons led a group of followers to the top of Stone Mountain near Atlanta, Georgia on Thanksgiving 1915, he initiated his new group "with a flag fluttering in the wind beside them, a Bible open to the twelfth chapter of Romans, and a flaming cross to light the night sky above" (McVeigh and Estep 2019, p. 28). Such rituals—combining symbols of patriotism, Christianity, and racial terrorism—were common within the Klan, which "claimed to be a 'one-hundred percent American' organization and promised to unite white, native-born Protestants in a common cause" (McVeigh 2009, p. 3), in protection of a mythological white Protestant nation (Baker 2011). This symbolism was also central to the 1960s Klan that mobilized to resist the gains of the civil rights movement. Leaders framed regular cross burnings as religious rites and rallies resembled "tent revivals of the 1930s," complete with prayer,

hymn singing and fiery sermons depicting white supremacy as a righteous and patriotic cause (PBS 2015).

As it became less acceptable for Americans to openly cite race or ethnicity as a basis for national inclusion, it became less common for group. seeking mainstream political legitimacy to explicitly embrace the WCN narrative. As such, in recent decades it has primarily been referenced by "radical" or "extremist" (Jackson 2019a) group. such as the white power movement that brought Klan, neo-Nazi and other racist and anti-Semitic group. into common cause (Belew 2018; Blee 2002).[5] While scholars studying these group. have tended to focus primarily on how participants frame true Americanness in terms of whiteness (Blee 2002), many group. also weave white supremacy and Christianity together through a mythological story of the country's sacred founding by white Christian men. One source of this mythology is Christian Identity ideology, which draws on British-Israelism to assert that the white Anglo-Saxons who founded the US are the true "chosen people" of God. Although Christian Identity is generally viewed as "'Christian' in name only,"[6] it has offered right-wing group. a Biblical justification for both anti-Semitism and white supremacy, and has been used to sacralize a militant form of white Christian nationalism within group. such as the Aryan Nations and the Posse Comitatus (Baker and McMillan 2019; Barkun 1997; Levitas 2002; Sottile 2019).

Christian Identity plays a far less prominent role on the right today than it did during the 1980s and 1990s (Baker and McMillan 2019; Cooter 2013), but its explicit invocation of the WCN myth brings it into symbolic alignment with the more widely embraced idea of "Christian dominionism" (Aho 2016; Diamond 1995).[7] In "one of the Christian Right's most important texts into the 1990s" (Diamond 1995, p. 246), *A Christian Manifesto*, the white evangelical writer Francis Schaffer laid out an influential version of the dominionist perspective, which essentially argues that "America began as a nation rooted in Biblical principles," and that it has declined as these principles have been replaced by "secular humanism" (p. 246). Schaffer closes the book by advocating "the use by Christians of civil disobedience to restore Biblical morality" (p. 246). This worldview has been embraced by various group. within the Religious Right over the years, including most prominently the Christian Reconstructionist movement of the 1980s and 1990s (Diamond 1995, p. 246; Ingersoll 2015). Yet its influence is far more widespread: "the diffuse influence of the ideas that America was ordained as a Christian nation and that Christians, exclusively, were to rule and reign" is evidenced by the "wide following for softer forms of dominionism" (Diamond 1995, p. 248). Today, both "hard" and "soft" versions of dominionism continue to find adherents within and beyond the Religious Right: the former in far-right "Christian patriot" (Aho 2016) groups, including those who aim to create a theocratic white Christian homeland in the Pacific Northwest (Sottile 2019), and the latter in more visible group. such as creationists, Tea Party activists, and Donald Trump supporters who embrace white Christian nationalism (Ingersoll 2015; Whitehead and Perry 2020, pp. 10–12).

Each of these group. draws on the WCN narrative, in different ways, to define white Christians as central to the American story. Through the lens of this narrative, white Christians were the heroic founders of the nation and the authors of its sacred texts; white Christians alone embody the values on which a healthy democracy rests; and as such, white Christians alone are suited to hold positions of social influence and political power, or the country is destined to collapse.

Yet this is not the only version of this narrative that circulates on the right. For various reasons—including the declining acceptability of explicit racism in American society, a desire by many right-wing group. to distance themselves from the racist ideologies that fueled the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing (Barkun 1997; Jackson 2017), a longer-term move toward

[5] Notably, the white supremacist "Alt-Right" movement does not appear to embrace either Christian nation narrative (Baker 2016; Hawley 2017).

[6] See also https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/christian-identity (accessed on 29 January 2021).

[7] Whereas Sottile (2019) identifies an alignment between Christian dominionism and Christian Identity, Aho (2016, p. 85) classifies Christian Identity as a "more virulent typ. of Dominionism," compared to the more well-known Christian Reconstructionism (Ingersoll 2015).

the "Judeo-Christian" category starting in the 1940s and 1950s (Gaston 2019), and an effort to attract adherents beyond white evangelicals (Braunstein and Lawton 2019)—many right-wing movements today have embraced a related but distinct narrative: the CJCN narrative. This narrative is not always easy to distinguish from the WCN narrative, and indeed many who deploy it *implicitly* portray white Christian men at the center of the American story. For example, although participants in the Tea Party and "constitutionalist" militia group. insist they are *not* racist, the historical figures they lift up as exemplary citizens and models of what true patriotism looks like are almost always white Christian men—the Founding Fathers, prominent conservative politicians, patriotic military heroes, and for some, right-wing "martyrs" felled by state violence (Aho 2016; Belew 2018; Braunstein 2017b; Cooter 2013; Corcoran 1995; Jackson 2020).

Even so, these same group. *explicitly* promote the CJCN, meaning they emphasize the country's "Judeo-Christian" heritage and either ignore race or use colorblind language to describe ideal Americanness. Within the Tea Party, for example, a religiously diverse array of participants—including conservative Christians and nonreligious economic conservatives, libertarians and others—asserted their reverence for "Judeo-Christian values" as the foundation of a healthy society and democracy (Braunstein 2017b, p. 107; Braunstein and Taylor 2017. As a group. they engaged in practices that "highlighted the influence of Judeo-Christian values on the nation's founders" (Braunstein 2017b, p. 107) and promoted "strict adherence to the Constitution and a restored commitment to the Judeo-Christian values on which the country was founded" as the only way of saving the country from further decline (p. 93; see also Skocpol and Williamson 2012).

In relying on the idea that America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, the Tea Party continued a trend that began in the 1970s, when "with the rise of the religious right, a new generation of conservatives mobilized Judeo-Christian discourse to signal their intent to return America to the public piety and 'fighting faith' mentality of the early Cold War years" (p. 15), based on their "shared memory of the 1950s as a time of universal piety, traditional social norms, and religiously grounded harmony" (Gaston 2019, p. 16). This was a stark departure from the original meaning of "Judeo-Christian America," an idea that had emerged in the spirit of inclusivity when "after the revelations of the Nazi death camp. [of World War II], a phrase like 'our Christian civilization' seemed ominously exclusive" (Silk 1984, p. 69). It also diverged from the meaning implied by Judeo-Christian *pluralists* who used the phrase "loosely as a shorthand term for religious pluralism in general" (Gaston 2019, p. 8). When the Religious Right embraced this narrative in the 1970s, they embraced an *exceptionalist* variant of the term that promoted the idea that American democracy was rooted in and "requires specific theological and ethical resources that were unique to Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism—and [is] deeply threatened by tendencies toward pluralization and secularization in American public life" (Gaston 2019, p. 8). As this exceptionalist brand of Judeo-Christian rhetoric spread on the right, Judeo-Christian America came to look much like Christian America, rooted in "family values" (Gaston 2019, p. 8) and white privilege, although the latter now extended to Catholics and Jews, too. Even so, the power of this rhetoric is still found in its veneer of inclusivity (Seidel 2019, p. 3).

Many contemporary right-wing group. also use "colorblind" language to talk about American history, or highlight the country's racial progress while downplaying its history of white supremacy (Burke 2015; Taylor and Bernstein 2019). The contemporary patriot/militia movement and the Tea Party movement, for example, often cite the civil rights movement and leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. or Rosa Parks as important historical exemplars for their own activism, including their use of civil disobedience (Braunstein 2017b; Jackson 2019b). When Fox News host Glenn Beck faced criticism over his decision to hold a 2010 rally that attracted many of these activists to Washington, DC on the anniversary of King's "I Have a Dream" speech, he framed his rally as aligned with King's project: "We are on the right side of history. We are on the side of individual freedoms and liberties, and damn it we will reclaim the civil rights moment"

(Braunstein 2015, p. 364). More generally, participants in these movements promoted a racially inclusive image of their movements, and by extension their vision of ideal Americanness. For example, it was common within the Tea Party movement to prominently feature people of color as speakers during public rallies or events, even as the majority of participants were white (Braunstein 2015; Skocpol and Williamson 2012, p. 69). By engaging in these efforts to "deny, deflect, and distract from charges that activists are racist" (Taylor and Bernstein 2019, p. 137), the Tea Party resembled many other right-wing movements today that work to "reaffirm their anti-racist self-image" and "reenact a super-citizen vision of themselves and of an egalitarian America" (Cooter 2013, p. 145; see also Jackson 2017).

In sum, in contrast to those who draw on the WCN narrative to explicitly mark whiteness and Christianity as criteria for American belonging and power (Blee 2002), many right-wing group. today deploy the CJCN narrative in order to expand these boundaries. They do so by creating a broader religious category—Judeo-Christian rather than Christian—that folds Jews, Protestants, and Catholics as well as anyone else who lives according to Judeo-Christian "values" into their vision of Americanness. Meanwhile, they unmark race by using colorblind language and denying that race matters in their definition of Americanness. These strategies of widening America's religious and racial boundaries, respectively, are separate but not wholly unrelated; rather, they intersect in the movement's stories of American history, which suggest that America's heroes are not defined by race, but by their adherence to a narrow set of conservative values (e.g., freedom, individualism) framed as "Judeo-Christian." In this way, the CJCN narrative operates on the right as a form of symbolic racism (Cooter 2013, p. 133) or cultural nationalism (Diamond 1995, p. 259), even as many who reference it may believe they are promoting religious and racial inclusivity.

3.1.3. Different Content: Enemies

In the Christian America narrative, original perfection gives way to decline and heroes defend against villains. So just as these stories reveal how right-wing movements imagine the American "us," so too do they reveal who these movements view as enemies—those group. that threaten to tear down or takeover the right's America. Before delineating differences between the WCN and CJCN narratives, however, it is necessary to recognize that nearly all right-wing movements share a concern about the existential threat posed by communism. For this reason, Diamond (1995) singles out anticommunism as the "American right's dominant motif" (p. 9). The Christian America narrative was in large part invented as a way of presenting the US as "godless" communism's sacred other, and has been invoked against *external* threats posed by communist regimes; as well as to dramatize *internal* threats, including any perceived increase in the size, scop. or authority of the federal government, especially if it is perceived to primarily benefit non-whites (Belew 2018; Diamond 1995; Huret 2014; Kruse 2015; Martin 2015), or any perceived decrease in the power of white native-born Christians, whether due to rising immigration, the civil rights movement, or the election of the nation's first Black president (Marti 2020, p. 173; McVeigh and Estep 2019, p. 41; Parker and Barreto 2014). "Godless communism" is thus a symbolic thread running through both versions of the right's story of America, used not only to signal ideological concerns about collectivism, but also to mark a range of racial and religious "others" as threats (Baker and Smith 2015).

Beyond communism itself, the primary villains within the WCN narrative are Jews and Blacks (Blee 2002; Belew 2018; Cooter 2013). Jews, in particular, loom large in the narrative of white Christian America's decline. While white Christian men are foregrounded as this narrative's heroes, Jews lurk behind the scenes as "mythically and irredeemably evil" villains; they "control world history, dominating all others through an unseen conspiracy" (Blee 2002, p. 79). Anti-Semitism is central, for example, to Christian Identity ideology, animating concerns at one gathering that "the destruction of white Christian people will continue until the stranger ["almost certainly a code word for 'Jew'"] is removed from the position of being over His people" (Barkun 1997, p. 283). Even beyond Christian Identity

leaders, right-wing movements draw on anti-Semitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories to both frame many *individual* Jews as threats because of stereotypes of Jews as "communists and communist-sympathizers" or "figures of moral evil" (Blee 2002, p. 87), and to frame Jews *in general* as a source of "awesome, incomprehensible, and disembodied power" (p. 88). As women in the white power movement described, "Jewish control is absolute . . . They can grant, and revoke, all privileges of daily life" (pp. 87–88). In particular, some right-wing movements promote the idea that "Jewish control of politicians, schools, media, corporations, and banks has created . . . a 'Zionist-occupied government' (ZOG)" (p. 88). Other group. avoid this term, preferring more coded language such as the New World Order (Barkun 1997, p. 257; Belew 2018, p. 7) to imply that a shadowy cabal of Jews has secretly taken control of the country.

In sharp contrast, the CJCN narrative symbolically places Jews—or at least Jewish values—at the country's moral and religious center. Critics may argue that for group. such as the Religious Right, "'Judeo-' is a sop. a fig leaf, tossed about to avoid controversy and complaint. It is simply a morsel of inclusion offered to soften the edge of an exclusionary, Christian movement" (Seidel 2019, p. 4). However, this should not suggest there is *no* difference between these two narratives' renderings of Jews' place in America. Even if group. embracing the CJCN narrative do not view Jews as equal to Christians in their Americanness, neither do they frame them as subhuman villains. This is perhap. part of the reason why anti-Semitic extremism, despite experiencing an uptick in recent years, is still consigned to the radical fringe and is condemned by most group. on the right. This more inclusive stance toward Judaism has also facilitated deeper, albeit complicated, political ties between conservative Christians and Jews through the rise of Christian Zionism (Spector 2009).

However, this should not suggest that the CJCN narrative is without villains. Indeed, the embrace of a Judeo-Christian America on the right has often combined "anti-anti-Semitism" with anti-secularism (Gaston 2019, p. 17). This combination was exemplified by Ronald Reagan, who as president not only "became the most prolific presidential user of Judeo-Christian terminology in American history," but also "the first sitting president to use the terms 'secularism' and 'secularist' as pejoratives" (p. 16). Most importantly, the CJCN narrative also features an expanded focus on the threat of "radical Islam" (Gaston 2019, p. 4). Departing from the pluralistic ideal embedded in liberal references to a Judeo-Christian America (Gaston 2019, p. 8), right-wing movements reference the country's Judeo-Christian heritage in order to explicitly define Muslims as "outsiders, enemies and others" (Braunstein 2017a). This animates foreign policy through heightened right-wing support for the state of Israel, framed not only through the lens of Jews' and Christians' shared heritage, but also through shared focus on the threat of Islam. Domestically, too, right-wing movements routinely point to the country's Judeo-Christian character as a basis for framing Islam as one of the preeminent threats to American democracy. Within the Tea Party, for example, participants not only cited fears about terrorist threats posed by "radical Islamic extremists," but also concerns that Muslims sought to use sharia law in order to undermine the Constitution, and ultimately, the religious freedom of "real" Americans (Braunstein 2017b). Similarly, "many militia members understand the term 'Muslim Americans' to be oxymoron" (Cooter 2013, p. 154). As one put it, "And [the Constitution] is for all people. All people of all races, all creeds and all religions. But one thing you gots (sic.) to understand: the Muslim religion and our Constitution and our way of life cannot co-exist. They can't do it" (p. 154). Islam thus operates within the CJCN narrative as a singular cultural threat to Americanness.

Just as non-Christians occup. different places within these two narratives, so too do non-whites. As previously discussed, the WCN narrative draws on tenets of the racist and anti-Semitic Christian Identity church as well as Christian dominionist theology in order to frame white Christians as the only group suited to hold positions of social and political power in America. In particular, Christian Identity leaders claim that "whites were the true lost tribes of Israel and that nonwhites and Jews were descended from

Satan or from animals" (Belew 2018, p. 6). Through this lens, non-white racial minorities are viewed as inferior "others" whose very presence is a source of interpersonal danger (Blee 2002, pp. 78–79), and whose demands for greater power threaten to disrup. the racial and religious order on which America was built (Belew 2018; McVeigh 2009).

Meanwhile, the CJCN narrative is definitionally "colorblind," and those who deploy it deny viewing race as relevant to how they define America's enemies or others. As previously discussed, those who deploy the CJCN narrative also attemp. to present their movements as racially inclusive, particularly with respect to Black Americans. It is nonetheless important to recognize that these same group. typically depict Muslims as both religious *and* racial others. Within the Michigan Militia, for example, Cooter (2013, p. 132) finds that members viewed Muslims "as a racial, not just religious, outgroup." Similarly, within the Tea Party, participants likened Muslims to other non-white "illegal" immigrants who were viewed as threats to both Americans' safety and the "American" story itself due to a refusal to assimilate (Braunstein 2017b).

3.2. The Politics of the Gap. and Slippages between the Two Narratives

Contemporary right-wing movements use these two narratives to both understand their own place in American history (Braunstein 2017b; Jackson 2020) and to engage in "boundary-work" by aligning or distancing themselves from other groups, whom they use as "foils" to their own activities (Gieryn 1983, p. 791). Like many social movements, they work to frame their efforts as mainstream and to distance themselves from activities that could be cast as extreme or radical (Haines 1984).[8] These concerns are especially salient for contemporary right-wing movements, as changing public attitudes about race and multiculturalism have rendered many of these groups—and particularly those who frame America explicitly as a white Christian nation—increasingly out of step with mainstream society. This has left right-wing movements at a strategic crossroads: to downplay the contrast between their vision of America and the mainstream, or to heighten this contrast and embrace their identity as radicals. The WCN and CJCN narratives are key tools that right-wing movements use to navigate this tension. While use of the WCN narrative clearly marks those who reference it as outside the mainstream, the CJCN narrative has enough in common with mainstream conservative discourse that it can be deployed by group. seeking political legitimacy. Of course, it is also common for participants in right-wing group. to slip back and forth between the two narratives depending on the context and the audiences.

Below, I describe four ways that these gap. and slippages between the two narratives perform political work for right-wing movements: as coded language; as mainstreaming strategy; as expressions of aspirational nationhood; and as practices of forgetting.

3.2.1. Coded Language

Scholars have highlighted contemporary right-wing movements' use of racial code words, which allow them to "rely on messages that contain racial cues but are not perceived by most voters as racial" (Mendelberg 2001, p. 21) and to mobilize racists without sounding racist (Aho 2016; citing Bonilla-Silva 2003). The CJCN narrative is a useful tool for engaging in this kind of coded language on the right. As previously discussed, the WCN and CJCN narratives share a similar structure, yet have different content. The structural similarity between the two serves as a "bridging mechanism" (Barkun 1997, p. 287) between the racist right and right-wing group. that distance themselves from racism, by signaling a shared concern about the decline of "real" America. As such, even if group. use the CJCN narrative out of a genuine desire to be more racially and religiously inclusive, it nonetheless serves as a "dog whistle"—a signal only some listeners are primed to hear—to all other group. who embrace this decline narrative, including explicitly white and Christian supremacist groups. At the same time, the CJCN narrative's more inclusive framing of American history offers

[8] There are disagreements within some movements over whether to "celebrate" or "suppress" differences from the mainstream, particularly when communities wish to both encourage pride in these differences and demand social inclusion (Bernstein 1997).

these group. legitimacy and plausible deniability by bringing it into alignment with the widely held belief that America is "one nation under God" (Kruse 2015). Seidel (2019), for example, argues that "the term [Judeo-Christian] has the benefit of sounding inclusive to a broad audience while actually speaking directly to conservative Christians who hear only the second part of the term, 'Christian'" (p. 3). As a form of coded language, the use of the CJCN narrative can be viewed as part of a broader shift from biological to symbolic racism (Cooter 2013, p. 133), and from racist to cultural nationalism (Diamond 1995, p. 259).

At another level, even the WCN narrative involves some coded language. In particular, it uses Christianity—and religion more generally—as code for whiteness. Perry suggests that for many Christian nationalists today, "'Christianity" ... has virtually nothing to do with orthodoxy or character, but is merely an ethnic identity—a reverse dog whistle every bit as racialized as 'super predators,' 'illegals,' 'welfare queens,' or 'terrorists.' It's what Rogers Brubaker, talking about the European context, has called an 'identitarian Christianism' that marks and unifies 'us' (white, native-born, cultural Christians) against the 'them' (nonwhite, foreign, infidels)" (Gorski and Perry 2020). This coded meaning has a long history: for example, Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke "peppered his speeches and fundraising letters with references to Jesus and a 'Christian nation'" alongside other "coded race language" during his early-1990s forays in electoral politics (Diamond 1995, p. 271). This code is likely effective because while most Americans today would not feel comfortable openly defending their *white* privilege, they are less squeamish about defending *Christianity's* prominent role in public life. This help. to explain a growing trend within both the US and Europ. in which Christianity is framed as a marker of race or ethnicity and has become the basis for an "ethnic"-style vision of the nation (Brubaker 2016; Gorski 2017b).

3.2.2. Mainstreaming

Many contemporary right-wing movements seek to present themselves as "the carrier and guardian of mainstream American values" (Barkun 1997, p. 282). Although some movements advance this project of "mainstreaming" or "normalization" through the use of coded language (as previously discussed), they also do so by aligning themselves with mythical visions of American history. As Jackson (2018) explains:

> Referring to national history can be an effective way for extremists to gain wider support despite the radical nature of their goals and behavior. Heroes from national myths often carry tacit—even unquestionable—political legitimacy and moral authority. Far-right extremists ... may attemp. to claim some of this legitimacy and authority for themselves by ... depicting historical conflicts and crises as parallel to contemporary events, and themselves as the political descendants of the national heroes.

The CJCN narrative help. right-wing movements to do just this, by aligning them with a relatively mainstream story about America, while distancing them from racism and anti-Semitism. The Tea Party, for example, drew on this narrative in their bid for political legitimacy, and largely succeeded in normalizing the message that the country had fallen away from its "Judeo-Christian heritage" and that various enemies were to blame (Braunstein 2017b; Skocpol and Williamson 2012). By the time Donald Trump ran for president in 2016, these ideas had gained a sufficient foothold among mainstream Republican voters that he could "abandon the niceties of Judeo-Christian rhetoric altogether" (Gaston 2019, p. 5) and pivot more explicitly to a WCN narrative (McVeigh and Estep 2019; Whitehead and Perry 2020). In so doing, he has given permission to other right-wing group. to draw publicly on the WCN narrative. Perhap. the most high-profile example was the 2017 Unite the Right rally against the removal of a Confederate statue in Charlottesville, VA, which featured the chant, "Jews will not replace us." This chant, heard alongside shouts of "white power," "explicitly invokes what White supremacists and White nationalists call, 'White genocide replacement theory,' which falsely posits that there exists an organized plan to

wreak havoc on 'White Christian' civilization in Europ. and North America by flooding these continents with non-Christians and people of color" (Kaplan and Lipstadt 2020).

Not all right-wing movements, however, are well positioned to associate themselves with mainstream American ideals or historical figures—neo-Nazis, for example, are typically viewed as too closely aligned with anti-Semitism and one of the United States' greatest enemies to pull this off (Jackson 2018). Yet the Unite the Right rally, which prominently featured Nazi symbolism, revealed the extent to which the mainstreaming of some right-wing group. and ideas—such as the idea that the Judeo-Christian nation is in decline—can enable more extreme group. and ideas to flourish at the margins. Some of these group. do not actually seek to become mainstream, but rather thrive by heightening the contrast between their movement and mainstream values (Smith 1998), such as secularism, pluralism, and multiculturalism (Gaston 2019). Some do so by explicitly distancing themselves from the CJCN narrative, and by extension from these mainstream values. As a flyer designed to recruit women into "organized racism" put it, "White racially-conscious women, if you have any wits left about you, flee the Judaic and Judeo-Christian insanity and join the throngs of the Aryan women warriors" (Blee 2002, p. 121).

3.2.3. Aspirational Nationhood

The CJCN narrative is also used by participants in right-wing movements who appear to truly *believe* their movements are neither racist nor anti-Semitic, and who desire to imagine themselves as part of a racially and religiously inclusive story of America, however riddled with blind spots and exceptions their story may be (Braunstein 2017b; Cooter 2013; Marti 2020; McCann 2019). The idea of Judeo-Christian America has always been aspirational in this way. Since the 1930s, "when the term first captured America's political imagination," it "did in part describe burgeoning new realities on the ground," yet it also "represented fervent, even wishful, attempts to create such unity" (Gaston 2019, p. 2). Today, even as participants in right-wing movements idealize a "Golden Age" in which white Christian men had a monopoly on social and political power and openly villainize Muslims as enemies of America, they also take pains to present their movements and the country as racially and religiously inclusive. The statement on the Michigan Militia's homepage—"Everyone is welcome, regardless of race, creed, color, religion or political affiliation, provided you do not wish to bring harm to our country or people" (Cooter 2013, p. 138; see also Barkun 1997, p. 282)—may surprise some, but this same sentiment is expressed by the Tea Party movement, the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters, and a wide range of other contemporary right-wing group. (Braunstein 2017b; Jackson 2017; 2020, p. 33). While this racially and religiously inclusive self-presentation is part of a strategic effort to distance their movements from the extremism and violence of some white supremacist group. (Barkun 1997; Jackson 2017), many contemporary participants also express a more personal desire to cleanse the political values they hold dear—such as individualism, self-sufficiency, equality, and freedom—from the taint of racism (Cooter 2013; McCann 2019). By framing the heroic pursuit of these values as intrinsic to America's founding as a CJCN (and *not* a WCN), they engage in a "fervent, even wishful attempt" to bring this more inclusive yet freedom-loving nation they imagine into existence.

Meanwhile, right-wing movements also draw on the WCN narrative in the spirit of "aspirational nationhood." Indeed, Miller-Idriss (2018, p. 21) coined this term to describe "fantasy expressions of a nation that never existed but that is nonetheless aspired to" within racist right groups. In the US context, it may seem counterintuitive to argue that America was never a white Christian nation, in light of the fact that white Christians did in fact make up a demographic majority and exert hegemonic power over American culture for much of the country's history (Jones 2016; Wuthnow 2005). Indeed, the need to declare "the end of white Christian America" (Jones 2016) would seem to confirm that white Christian America previously existed. Yet, the US was never as white or as Christian, demographically or culturally, as the racially and religiously purified "white Christian homelands" that racist right movements seek to create (Manseau 2015). In this way, their use of this narrative can

also be viewed as a "fervent, even wishful attempt" to bring the highly exclusionary nation they imagine into existence.

3.2.4. Forgetting

Reflecting on the role history plays in right-wing movements, Aho (2016, pp. 44–45) writes, "The tempting thing about the mood of sentimental nostalgia/resentment/urgency is its precondition: forgetfulness. What Patriots forget is that the 'sister' of nostalgia (to use Carl Jung's term) is brutality . . . . Christian Patriots are blind to the despoliations, enslavements, rapes, and murders of the past that have provided them with the rights and privileges they enjoy today." Any rendering of American history that frames the country's founding as sacred and perfect is erasing the "brutality" of conquest and slavery on which the country was built (Braunstein 2018; Lepore 2018; Murphy 2008; Smith 2003). When right-wing movements promote these nostalgic historical narratives, they thus engage in different strategies of forgetting.

Those who promote the WCN narrative do so through the work of what Aho (2016) calls "fantasy," involving not only the projection of "aspirational" ideals onto the past (Miller-Idriss 2018), but also the elaborate construction of alternative theologies and world histories and the conjuring of conspiracies, demons, and revelations. In contrast, those who promote the CJCN narrative hew closer to verifiable historical characters, events and timelines, yet they too engage in two distinct forms of forgetting. In some cases, this involves the erasure of memories of how their own movements grew out of or were historically linked to explicitly racist or anti-Semitic movements on the right. Many Trump supporters, for example, are likely unaware (or refuse to acknowledge) that his references to putting "America First" and his promise to "Make America Great Again" draw from a century-old white nationalist playbook (McVeigh and Estep 2019). Similarly, many members of contemporary patriot/militia group. and of the sovereign citizens movement appear not to be aware of how much their mythical American history or their "fanatic, mystical understanding of the U.S. Constitution" can be traced to the racist, anti-Semitic and violent Posse Comitatus (McCann 2019, p. 41; see also Loeser 2015, p. 1124).

Meanwhile, they also indulge in what McCann (2019, p. 299) calls "historical amnesia." Unlike the "far-right fantasies" that fuel the WCN narrative, however, this amnesia was not manufactured by right-wing movements themselves, but was promoted by the founders and mythic heroes they so revere. Consider Thomas Jefferson, for example, who once declared to an audience of Native Americans, "It is so long since our forefathers came from beyond the great water, that we have lost the memory of it, and seem to have grown out of this land, as you have done." Upon finding these words inscribed on a 1993 sculpture of a white, rifle-wielding pioneer family in Portland, Oregon—called *The Promised Land*—McCann (2019, p. 299) points to the statue as a salient symbol of the "amnesiac" patriot movement's rendering of American history. Jefferson's pronouncement, he writes, not only "declared *historical amnesia* a national and racial condition," but "in doing so, it laid white claims to the American continent on that very condition of forgetfulness."

By recognizing how these repeated invocations to forget are embedded in the mythology of Christian America, it becomes clearer why calls to *remember* the brutality on which the country was founded—as the 1619 Project and other progressive stories of America promote (Braunstein 2018; Murphy 2008)—are perceived as deeply threatening. Forgetting and remembering also have implications for individuals. In particular, by promoting a version of the American story that rests on historical amnesia about the country's past, right-wing group. who draw on the CJCN narrative are—intentionally or not—promoting an "epistemology of ignorance" that "afford denial of and inaction about injustice" (Nelson et al. 2013, p. 213) and is associated with a lower capacity to recognize individual and systemic racism (Bonam et al. 2019; see also Mueller 2020).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This article brings together research on Christian nationalism and right-wing movements to argue that the idea that America is a Christian nation is central to right-wing movements' mythological understandings of American history. It then identifies two ideal-typical versions of the Christian nation narrative that circulate within contemporary right-wing movements—the WCN and CJCN narratives—and demonstrates that, despite their structural similarities, these narratives differ in their framing of how religion and race intersect as markers of American belonging and power. Finally, the article describes four ways that gap. and slippages between these narratives are used by right-wing group. in practice: as coded language; as a mainstreaming strategy; as expressions of aspirational nationhood; and as practices of forgetting.

My insistence on marking the difference between the WCN and CJCN narratives may appear to run counter to recent work that has demonstrated how Judeo-Christian discourse is used, particularly by group. on the right, in order to bolster the cultural power of whiteness and justify the exclusion of religio-racial minorities under the guise of pluralistic inclusivity—in short, that it is merely a coded version of the WCN narrative updated for the age of political correctness (Seidel 2019). However, this is not my intention; indeed, I have made versions of this critical argument myself (Braunstein 2017b, 2018). What I am arguing here is that we must recognize differences between these two ideal-typical narratives in order to understand why group. on the right draw on one rather than the other or move back and forth between the two, what these choices mean to them, and what political work these narratives perform. Moreover, building on recent scholarship on Judeo-Christian discourse that recognizes that it has advanced *both* exclusionary and inclusionary visions of American democracy (Gaston 2019), I have shown that it is not only liberal pluralists but also some members of right-wing movements who use this discourse in an aspirational, inclusionary way, even as they also engage in practices and support policies that implicitly center white Christianity. Attention to this subtle but meaningful variation in how the Christian nation myth is deployed in practice on the right thus contributes to a deeper understanding of the heterogeneity of right-wing movements and of how religion and race intersect in right-wing visions of American identity.

Through the lens of complex religion, religion never exists as a standalone variable, but rather is inextricably bound up with other forms of social inequality—primarily race, class and gender—requiring an analysis that is attuned to religion's contributions to a range of intersectional identities (Wilde 2018; Wilde and Glassman 2016). Although research applying a complex religion approach has primarily focused on formal religious organizations and affiliations, this article demonstrates its utility in understanding religion's more amorphous public roles. In so doing, it builds on scholarship that is attuned to how religion and race intersect in the contested social and moral boundaries that define American public life (Edgell 2017; Yukich and Edgell 2020). Examining the construction of these boundaries from the perspective of right-wing social movements offers new insights into a mythical vision of Americanness that explicitly empowers or implicitly centers white Christians. Both the WCN and CJCN narratives lift up exemplars of Americanness that are defined by their intersectional identities as white Christians, and name enemies who are defined by their status as either non-white/non-Christian others or threats to white Christian dominance. Yet by distinguishing between the WCN and CJCN narratives, the analysis also reveals variation in how this is understood and achieved within right-wing social movements. On the surface, the CJCN narrative *expands* the circle of Americanness to include racial and religious group. that are excluded in the WCN narrative, allowing participants in some contemporary right-wing movements to present themselves and their values as antiracist and religiously inclusive. At the same time, however, the CJCN narrative also *reframes* race and religion as sources of civic and cultural virtue rather than ethno-religious purity, enabling group members to justify strong negative attitudes toward racial and religious outgroup. in civic rather than ethnic terms, and thus maintain their inclusive self-image and public presentation (Braunstein 2017a).

This article also offers lessons to scholars of right-wing social movements, who have greatly advanced our understanding of how white supremacy is cultivated within and exported beyond these groups, but have not been as attuned to religion's role in this process. To the extent this literature has embraced an intersectional approach to analyzing right-wing movements, the emphasis has been primarily on how race and gender intersect in constructions of white masculinity or white womanhood (Belew 2018; Blee 2002; Cooter 2013). Yet these movements are also central to the production and defense of white Christian privilege in America (Joshi 2020), in large part through their promotion of Christian nation mythology. While this is acknowledged in research on the Religious Right (Whitehead and Perry 2020; Marti 2020) and in the small number of studies of the Christian Identity church (Aho 2016; Baker and McMillan 2019; Barkun 1997), more serious analytic attention should also be paid to religion within right-wing movements that are not explicitly "religious." To this end, the complex religion approach offers tools for more deeply theorizing the role religion plays on the right, and integrating these findings into broader understandings of American religion.

Finally, because the historical narratives developed within right-wing group. can spill beyond them, this article offers insight into the ongoing battles over American history that are playing out in the streets, in newsrooms, and in classrooms around the country. It is debatable whether the citizens of democracies ought to be overly attached to their own mythologized pasts (Kammen 1991), and whether any appeal to national identity can be compatible with values of "egalitarian inclusiveness" (Smith 2017). Still, Americans across the political spectrum are currently waging war over the right to control the country's story. The sides of this battle disagree about more than chronological accounts of the events that have shaped the country; in the characteristics of their heroes and villains, and their choices about what to remember and what to forget, their narratives reveal different visions of Americanness itself. The ideal America that the right imagines, defends, and seeks to recreate is deeply shaped by Christian nation mythology that, in both of its ideal-typical forms, justifies the preservation of white Christian privilege and views any challenge to this narrative as an attack on the sacred nation itself. We cannot understand this battle without close attention to religion's "complex" role in the right's narrative, as well as in rival renderings of the American story.

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How Religion, Social Class, and Race Intersect in the Shaping of Young Women's Understandings of Sex, Reproduction, and Contraception

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Abstract: Using a complex religion framework, this study examines how and why three dimensions of religiosity—biblical literalism, personal religiosity, and religious service attendance—are related to young women's reproductive and contraceptive knowledge differently by social class and race. We triangulate the analysis of survey data from the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life (RDSL) study and semi-structured interview data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) to identify and explain patterns. From the quantitative data, we find that all three dimensions of religiosity link to young women's understandings of sex, reproduction, and contraception in unique ways according to parental education and racial identity. There is a lack of knowledge about female reproductive biology for young women of higher SES with conservative Christian beliefs (regardless of race), but personal religiosity and religious service attendance are related to more accurate contraceptive knowledge for young black women and less accurate knowledge for young White women. From the qualitative data, we find that class and race differences in the meaning of religion and how it informs sexual behavior help explain results from the quantitative data. Our results demonstrate the importance of taking a complex religion approach to studying religion and sex-related outcomes.

Keywords: religion; race; social class; contraceptive knowledge; reproductive knowledge; complex religion

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1. Introduction

Even as teenage pregnancies decline, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have been on the rise across age groups, prompting scholars to continue investigating social and cultural factors shaping adolescents' knowledge of contraception and reproductive health (Martin et al. 2018). A great deal of research suggests that religious involvement during adolescence lowers the risks of early pregnancy and STIs (Burdette and Hill 2009; Jones et al. 2005); however, some elements of religion, such as conservative religious beliefs or affiliation, have been shown to elevate these risks (Coleman and Testa 2008; Harrington et al. 2014). When attention is paid to what might be the mechanisms for either the protective or the deleterious effects of religion, the focus is primarily on attitudes toward sex, although research suggests that knowledge about sex, reproduction, and contraception is important as well. This knowledge contributes to the formation of efficacious behavioral strategies. Thus, it is important to explore whether specific religious beliefs or practices might be related to the accuracy of one's reproductive and contraceptive knowledge.

Another largely unexplored aspect of the link between religion and sexual behavior is how social class and race modify the impact of religiosity on sexual behavior and knowledge (Pearce et al. 2019). White religious institutions in the United States, especially those

with more financial resources, have a long history of excluding people of color and the poor or less educated from participation and leadership. As a result, religious institutions are highly segregated by both race and social class today (Edwards 2008). Styles of worship and social issues of concern vary across different traditions and congregations (Nelson 2008). Therefore, messages, role modeling, stigma, and sanctions regarding sex, pregnancy, and contraception are likely to differ across religious traditions and congregations. In addition, social inequalities, including racism in health care that heightens levels of medical mistrust, have contributed to unequal access to sexual and reproductive knowledge and resources by social class and race (Gorry 2019; Jaiswal and Halkitis 2019; Kusunoki et al. 2016; Rocca and Harper 2012; Weitzman et al. 2017). Thus, it is likely that associations between religious beliefs or practices and reproductive or contraceptive knowledge are moderated by social class and race.

In this study, we use a complex religion framework to examine how young women's religious beliefs and public and private religiosity relate to their reproductive and contraceptive knowledge. By examining the intersection of religion, race, and social class, rather than simply controlling for the latter two, we can more precisely specify the unique impact of religion on reproductive and contraceptive knowledge (Wilde and Glassman 2016; Wilde and Tevington 2017; Wilde 2017). To analyze how religious influence might be moderated by social class and race, we examine religion's role separately by levels of parental education and by comparing White and Black women. Further, we examine religion's role across different combinations of parent education and race. We first present estimates of these relationships quantitatively, using survey data from the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life (RDSL) study. We then present results from a concurrent examination of qualitative data from in-person, semi-structured interviews with a similarly aged group of young women who participated in the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). In our discussion of the findings, we integrate the two sets of results for a fuller understanding of social class and racial complexities in how religious beliefs and practices are related to young women's understandings of sex, reproduction, and contraception.

2. Religion and Knowledge about Reproduction and Contraception

By age 20, 79 percent of all young women in the U.S. have had sexual intercourse, and 78 percent of the women who have had sex used a method of contraception the first time (Martinez and Abma 2020). Most youth—religious or not—hold positive attitudes toward contraception, and teenage contraceptive use has increased over time, although it remains inconsistent (Lindberg et al. 2016; Ryan et al. 2007). Few young adults oppose birth control on moral grounds, and many believe that people should use protection when having sex (Regnerus 2007). Religiosity is consistently related to important differences in sexual and contraceptive attitudes and behaviors, but we know less about how different aspects of religion shape reproductive or contraception knowledge—a unique and influential psychosocial factor shaping risk for unintended pregnancy and STIs.

Not all dimensions of religion appear to impact sex-related outcomes in the same way or to the same extent, suggesting that the operationalization of religiosity matters for understanding links between religion and reproductive and contraceptive knowledge (Burdette and Hill 2009; Burdette et al. 2015; Regnerus 2007; Rostosky et al. 2003). Below we focus on three commonly examined dimensions of religiosity—religious ideology, personal religiosity, and religious service attendance—and how each might be related to young women's understandings of sexual reproduction and contraception.

2.1. Religious Ideology

Research on religion and sexuality often focuses on beliefs associated with conservative Christianity, which tends to teach normative and moral ideas about sex, rather than information about safe sex or sexual health, and to emphasize the Bible as a source of moral authority (Burdette et al. 2015; Regnerus 2005, 2007). Conservative Protestants generally encourage sexual abstinence until marriage, heterosexuality, and procreation,

and implicitly discourage sexual activity in other contexts (Burdette et al. 2005; Pearce and Thornton 2007). Research consistently shows that holding conservative religious beliefs regarding family and sex predicts a delay in becoming sexually active for adolescents, but that delay rarely lasts until marriage (Adamczyk 2012; Jones et al. 2005).

Furthermore, upon becoming sexually active, religiously conservative adolescents are often less knowledgeable about reproductive and sexual health, putting them at greater risk of having unprotected sex (Harrington et al. 2014). Thus, although these adolescents nevertheless tend to support contraceptive use in the abstract, they are still at heightened risk of unprotected sex due to lack of knowledge, lack of preparation (i.e., because they did not plan to have sex, they may not be on birth control or have access to contraceptives), or ambivalence toward pregnancy (Coleman and Testa 2008; Frost et al. 2007; Kusunoki and Upchurch 2011; Manlove et al. 2007; Shattuck 2019). Finally, within Christian traditions, there is important variation in contraceptive use, suggesting that holding conservative beliefs does matter: Mainline Protestant youth report the highest level of consistent contraceptive use, with 78% saying that they use protection every time, compared to 62% of evangelical Protestants and 57% of Black Protestants (Regnerus 2007; see also Kramer et al. 2007).

One specific religious ideology that has been examined in relation to sexual behavior is whether one's religion serves as a primary source of moral authority. Regnerus (2010) found that the 11% of adolescents who say that they turn first to God or their religious scriptures for moral guidance report having sexual intercourse or oral sex, while 30% of adolescents who say that they make decisions based on their happiness are sexually active. Among adolescents who are sexually active, those who say that they turn first to God or to scripture report the lowest rates of consistent contraceptive use and are most likely to report never using contraception, compared to adolescents who say that they make decisions based on what they have learned from authority figures or what will make them happy (Regnerus 2007, 2010).

A related aspect of religious ideology that has yet to be examined in relation to reproductive or contraceptive knowledge is biblical literalism. A person who is a biblical literalist is someone who believes the Bible to be the inerrant word of God and, as a result, regards the Bible as a clear source of authority for determining what is moral and what is immoral (Hoffmann and Bartkowski 2008; Ogland and Bartkowski 2014); it is distinct from a measure of one's source of moral authority because it is operationalized as a continuum between believing the Bible to be the literal word of God and believing it to be a book of fables (Franzen and Griebel 2013). Religious traditions with a higher percentage of people reporting biblical literalist beliefs, such as evangelical Protestants, are more likely to be anti-premarital sex and anti-abortion, and to view procreation as the primary goal of sex (Burdette et al. 2005; Pearce and Thornton 2007). Thus, biblical literalism may also be correlated with reproductive and contraceptive knowledge: People who hold a literalist view may be less knowledgeable, given how biblical literalism shapes ideas about pregnancy and family formation.

2.2. Personal Religiosity

Personal religiosity, which includes a combination of private practices, such as prayer, and religious salience—or how important religion is in an individual's daily life—is often the most significant predictor of adolescent sexual activity and sexual health knowledge (Burdette and Hill 2009; Burdette et al. 2015; Regnerus 2007; Rostosky et al. 2003). This may be because, unlike with attendance and beliefs, which are often shaped by parental involvement and expectations, adolescents may have more control over the centrality of religion in their daily lives. Adolescents who report high levels of personal religiosity generally have more conservative attitudes toward sex and less objective knowledge about reproductive health and contraception (Coleman and Testa 2008; Crosby and Yarber 2001; Lefkowitz et al. 2004). Higher personal religiosity is also associated with delays in first sex and in non-intercourse sexual touching (Burdette and Hill 2009; Jones et al. 2005).

Personal religiosity may also tap into adolescent perceptions of how closely they follow their religion's teachings. Gold et al. (2004) find that adolescents who report that their religious beliefs impact their sexual behavior and contraceptive use were more likely to have conservative attitudes toward sex and to question the efficacy of condoms. However, this does not necessarily mean that adolescents take their religious beliefs into consideration when making decisions connected to sexual activity; when asked directly about how much religious beliefs play a role in such decisions, 47% and 56% report their beliefs do not affect decisions about sex or about preventing pregnancy, respectively (Gold et al. 2004). Therefore, reporting a high level of personal religiosity may not necessarily translate to lower levels of reproductive or contraceptive knowledge if, for example, adolescents do not necessarily see their religious beliefs and sexual practices as linked.

2.3. Religious Service Attendance

Religious attendance—both adolescent and/or their parents' attendance at worship services—is consistently found to predict primarily one sexual behavior: timing of sexual debut. Studies show that when adolescents and/or their parents attend religious services more frequently, adolescents are more likely to wait longer to have both first sexual intercourse and first non-intercourse sexual encounter (Burdette and Hill 2009; Jones et al. 2005). However, there appears to be very little direct effect on other behaviors relative to sexual activity, such as contraceptive use or number of partners (Jones et al. 2005; Kramer et al. 2007). Frequently attending religious services—particularly ones that talk about marriage, abstinence, or conservative sexual attitudes in general—may indirectly negatively impact contraceptive and reproductive health knowledge, given that adolescents may be implicitly encouraged to associate sexual activity with procreation and discouraged from learning more about regulating fertility (Borch et al. 2011; Gonsoulin 2010; Yancey and Emerson 2018).

3. Factoring in Complex Religion

Although repeatedly used and supported in prior studies, the general theories outlined above about how these three dimensions of religion might be associated with young women's reproductive and contraceptive knowledge incorporate little consideration of how these linkages might vary by social class or race. In fact, religious ideology and levels of personal and public religious practice and importance vary by social class and race, as do sexual attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors (Baunach 2012; Rocca and Harper 2012; Schnabel 2020; Schwadel 2011).

To enable us to examine more precisely the intersections of religion, race, and social class, we draw on an emergent framework in the sociology of religion—complex religion (Wilde and Tevington 2017; Wilde 2017). This framework urges the analysis of how race, class, and religion combine to influence outcomes rather than simply controlling for race and class in studies of religious influence (Wilde and Glassman 2016; Wilde and Tevington 2017; Wilde 2017). For example, focusing only on differences in socioeconomic status between religious traditions would overlook ways that Blacks and Whites in the same religious tradition nevertheless hold different socioeconomic positions (Wilde and Tevington 2017). Similarly, in the present study, looking only at how understandings of sex, reproduction, and contraception vary by religiosity would obscure how religion may shape Black adolescents' knowledge differently than White adolescents' knowledge. Using a complex religion framework allows a clearer picture of inequality, as we can intentionally look not just between groups (i.e., how Black Christian adolescents compare to White Christian adolescents) but also within groups (i.e., how do highly religious Black Christian adolescents compare to nominally religious Black Christian adolescents) (Schnabel 2020).

3.1. Considerations of Social Class

Religious affiliation and levels of some practices and beliefs vary by social class (Schwadel 2020; Wilde et al. 2018). Furthermore, some aspects of social class do not relate

uniformly to religiosity. For example, as education increases, the likelihood of believing the Bible to be literal decreases (Schwadel 2011); of those who believe the Bible to be the literal word of God, 56% have a high school degree or less, compared to only 11% who have a college degree (Pew Research Center 2014). However, as education increases, both religious salience and attendance are higher (Schwadel 2011).

Given the way religious characteristics vary by social class, it is likely that the effects of belonging to a more conservative religious group or having conservative beliefs vary by social class. When it comes to attitudes toward poverty or racial inequality and their remedies, scholars have found higher SES Protestants to be less supportive of structural solutions, yet, lower SES Protestants are more supportive of economic restructuring policies (Edgell and Tranby 2007; Hadden 1969). For example, Clydesdale (1999) finds that although there is a positive relationship between biblical literalism and support for systemic solutions to poverty, biblical literalists with a college degree or higher hold a more status-reinforcing perspective—that individuals should solve their own economic problems rather than rely on help from the state. Thus, we may find that among young women who are biblical literalists, those with higher SES backgrounds may be particularly invested in the personal responsibility a person holds for their own sexual morality.

In the general theorizing about religion and sex-related outcomes, scholars argue that more conservative religious traditions will portray premarital sex as wrong and thus downplay (even ridicule) the importance of youth having knowledge about reproduction or contraception (Miller and Gur 2002; Regnerus 2005). We should not, however, expect this emphasis on an 'abstinence only and thus no need for information' approach to exist unilaterally across levels of social class.

Scholars have found that growing up in poverty predicts a stronger desire for pregnancy, which might lead to a diminished perceived need for reproductive or contraceptive knowledge (Higgins and Browne 2008; Weitzman et al. 2017). Living in a social environment where early childbearing is destigmatized and supported by the community can indirectly encourage women to be less consistent in their contraceptive use, as the consequences of young childbearing are less pronounced. When women live in areas with high levels of poverty and few educational and career opportunities, teenage childbearing may have a minimal effect on their future prospects, resulting in lower motivation to use contraception consistently; in contrast, teenagers in well-resourced neighborhoods may face stigmatization from peers and may have reduced educational and occupational outcomes as a result of teenage pregnancy, suggesting they may have more to lose (Campa and Eckenrode 2006; Diaz and Fiel 2016; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Gorry 2019; Weitzman et al. 2017). This fear of stigmatization would be especially heightened for those who are a part of higher SES conservative religious communities or who have strong conservative beliefs themselves, for it would be a sign of failing to observe the perceived call from God to be abstinent before marriage, in addition to putting their futures in jeopardy.

Religious involvement and personal religiosity are also experienced in different ways by social class, which can then translate to different mechanisms of religious influence. In recent work, Lee and Pearce (2019) demonstrate unique relationships between religious involvement and educational outcomes by social class. Youth who have parents with higher education and income tend to view religion as more of a family affair or social activity, and one of a variety of social contexts in which they are safe and encouraged by adults to aspire to a college degree and beyond. For the most part, higher SES youth do not feel that there is anything particularly special about the role religious involvement plays in their lives. On the other hand, youth from less advantaged families emphasize the role of their religious faith as a motivator to strive for academic success and a coping mechanism for when challenges arise.

Similarly, religious involvement or personal religiosity might not be as influential over the reproductive or contraceptive knowledge of higher SES young women as for lower SES women. Higher SES women will have greater access to higher quality information in general, and holding the nature of one's belief in biblical literalism constant, religious

service attendance and personal religiosity, such as prayer or the importance of religion, are unlikely to encourage the seeking of knowledge any more or less. Then, for young women with more socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, although religious involvement and personal religiosity might encourage seeking knowledge to help protect against unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, the adults in their congregations may not have as accurate information to share. Indeed, most working-class women report using no contraception at first sex, whereas nearly all middle-class women report using contraception at first sex (Higgins and Browne 2008). Women at lower socioeconomic levels face more financial barriers and time disparities in acquiring contraception and the knowledge that goes along with it (Higgins and Browne 2008).

3.2. Considering Race

In addition to social class variance in the relationship between religion and understandings of sex, reproduction, and contraception, we must also consider race. At the intersection of race, religion, and sexuality, research consistently shows that Black adolescents are both more religious and more sexually active than their White peers (Blum et al. 2000; Regnerus 2010; Rostosky et al. 2004). Compared with their White peers, Black adolescents are more likely to report a high level of attendance and personal devotion during adolescence, with any religious decline more likely to occur in young adulthood (Lee et al. 2017). Black adolescents are also most likely to be affiliated with historically Black or evangelical Protestant congregations, and accordingly they may report high levels of biblical literalism: the Pew Research Center found that 60% of people affiliated with historically Black Protestant churches believe the Bible to be the literal word of God, followed closely by evangelical Protestants at 55%, while only 24% of Mainline Protestants report being literalist (Pew Research Center 2009). Furthermore, religious teachings around gender norms that encourage male headship may leave some Black women feeling unprepared or unable to navigate contraceptive use in their relationships; in response, some Black women are challenging their churches to destigmatize pregnancy outside of marriage and to empower women in their sexual decision making (Piper et al. 2020).

Black families attend religious services more frequently than others (Manlove et al. 2007; in 2014, 47% of Black adults reported attending at least once a week, and another 36% reported attending approximately monthly; in contrast, only 34% of White adults report weekly attendance, with 32% attending approximately monthly (Pew Research Center 2014). Black women report higher levels of religious salience than White women, with important variation by social class and sexuality (Schnabel 2018, 2020). Importantly, several studies show that religion appears to affect Black and White women differently. Manlove et al. (2003) find that more frequent parental attendance delays first sex for all racial and ethnic groups except for Black adolescents, and Regnerus (2010) finds that highly religious Black adolescents reported higher levels of sexual activity than their less religious Black peers and their highly religious White peers, while highly religious Whites reported lower levels of sexual activity than their less religious counterparts. However, for sexually active Black teenagers, religion may be a protective factor, as some young women reported better communication with partners and safer sex practices (McCree et al. 2003). Given this, a potential combination of religious stigma against teenage pregnancy and access to informal support and education within congregations may result in young religious Black women taking more steps to gain the knowledge necessary to avoid pregnancy and STIs.

Finally, when analyzing race and reproductive health and knowledge, we must consider how the long history of racism, prejudice, and discrimination in medicine produces health inequalities and contributes to high levels of medical mistrust among people of color (see Jaiswal and Halkitis (2019) or Prather et al. (2018) for recent comprehensive reviews on racism in medicine and medical mistrust). Furthermore, Black women seeking medical advice about reproductive health may experience particularly high levels of medical mistrust, due to a history of non-consensual experimentation and forced sterilization (Prather et al. 2018); studies also show that high levels of medical mistrust contribute to

Black women, more than White women, reporting that they feel uncomfortable discussing sexual health-related concerns with doctors (Rosenthal and Lobel 2018; Tekeste et al. 2018).

This history of racism and discrimination undoubtedly impacts any racial differences in contraceptive knowledge and use that exist between Black and non-Black women. Some studies show that Black and White women generally have similar levels of contraceptive knowledge, but they vary in their beliefs about contraception (Rocca and Harper 2012; Kusunoki et al. 2016). For example, Black women are more likely than White women to believe that hormonal contraceptives, such as the pill, negatively impact sex drive or pose health risks, although these differences largely disappear after controlling for social class and having health insurance (Guzzo and Hayford 2012). There is less agreement around potential differences in use; some studies find that Black women use contraceptives less consistently than White women (Rocca and Harper 2012), while others find that there is no difference in use, but rather differences in what methods are used (Kusunoki et al. 2016; Shih et al. 2011). Young White women prefer the pill, which is generally more effective at preventing pregnancy than the male condom, which young Black women prefer (Kusunoki et al. 2016). Thus, Black women may know more about condom use than White women. Given all this, we must recognize that racial differences in religiosity and in sexual practices may mean that religion differentially impacts Black women's contraceptive and reproductive health knowledge relative to White women's knowledge.

3.3. Considering Race and Social Class Simultaneously

The complex religion approach is motivated by complex inequality, or the idea that structures of inequality overlap, and the overlaps that characterize people's lives will shape their outcomes (Wilde and Glassman 2016; Choo and Ferree 2010). Thus, in our analysis, instead of just focusing on religion's intersection with one aspect of inequality, we examine two. We ask how religion, social class, and race interact to shape young women's understandings of knowledge about sex, reproduction, and contraception. We found no existing research on how race and social class might interact to further complicate the relationship between religion and sexual attitudes, knowledge, or behavior. However, it is useful to apply what is known from other studies of the intersection of race and social class in religion. One example is the work of Edgell and Tranby (2007) on racial attitudes. They find that the highest support for understanding racial inequality as a systemic problem comes from religiously active Black women with less education, while the lowest support for a structural perspective comes from more highly educated, conservative Protestant women who attend frequently. Thus, we also expect that comparisons that simultaneously consider religion, social class, and race will reveal differences in young women's reproductive and contraceptive awareness.

We expect that conservative beliefs such as biblical literalism might result in low levels of reproductive or contraceptive knowledge among women from higher SES families, and that this might be especially pronounced among White women. This is because issues of personal sexual morality (e.g., the virginity pledge movement) have been more predominant in White religious communities than in Black religious communities. When premarital abstinence is emphasized, parents sometimes block access to information about sex and contraception (Kumar and Brown 2016; Wilkinson et al. 2018). In addition, Black religious communities have a history of educating on public health issues such as HIV and promoting means of prevention. Further, socioeconomically disadvantaged youth have been shown to rely on religion to help them build human capital and avoid life events, such as unintended pregnancy, that might slow them down (Lee and Pearce 2019). Thus, greater religious involvement or importance among lower SES young, Black women may be associated with somewhat higher reproductive or contraceptive knowledge than less religious Black women with lower SES.

4. This Study's Approach

To address our research questions, we take a concurrent mixed methods approach, simultaneously analyzing two kinds of data. In one analysis, we use survey data to estimate relationships between religiosity and reproductive and contraceptive knowledge across and within different levels of parental education and race. This is based on predictions outlined above.

However, given the somewhat limited nature of theory and prior research on how religious influence on sexual behavior, attitudes, or knowledge might vary by both social class and race, we employ a concurrent analysis of qualitative data from interviews with young women, grounding those analyses in the concept of "sexual projects" (Hirsch and Khan 2020, p. xiii). In their book *Sexual Citizens*, Hirsch and Khan (2020) investigate power, sex, and sexual assault on college campuses, using the concept 'sexual project' to help explain how college students navigate their sexual desires and experiences in college. They define a sexual project as "encompass[ing] the reasons why anyone might seek a particular sexual interaction or experience" (Hirsch and Khan 2020, p. xiii); a sexual project may involve not only work to have sex in a particular context (i.e., in a relationship versus hooking up) but also work done to avoid sex. This concept usefully captures reasons people have for pursuing sex (or not), what they desire to gain from sex, their desired sexual partners, and more. It also encompasses what people experience and how they make sense of their experiences. At the same time, students are trying to accomplish other projects, such as a college project, which might include studying, partying, finding a soulmate, and more (Khan et al. 2018; Hirsch and Khan 2020). In our case, we focus on relationships between ongoing sexual projects and religious projects. We compare the ways these projects are intertwined (or not) for young women with different social class and racial experiences.

Below, we describe the data, methods, and findings for each type of data. We present the quantitative data and analysis first, and then the qualitative data and analysis. We conclude by synthesizing the findings from both investigations to offer more nuanced insights into the relationship between religion and young women's understandings of sex, reproduction, and contraception when factoring in social class and race.

5. Quantitative Data and Findings

5.1. Relationship Dynamics and Social Life (RDSL) Survey Data

The survey data we use come from the RDSL study and its baseline, in-person survey of young women (ages 18–19) from one county in Michigan in the period 2008–2009 (Barber et al. 2011). Participants were randomly sampled from the Michigan driver's license and personal identification card database and recruited to participate in an initial, face-to-face interview. The response rate for the baseline interview was 84 percent, resulting in a total of 1003 young women. We use these data because they include unique measurement of reproductive and contraceptive knowledge combined with measures of biblical literalism, religious service attendance, and personal religiosity. Using listwise deletion for any participants missing responses to any of the questions used in our analyses results in an analytic sample of 940.

Our dependent variables for the survey analysis are two indices—one measuring *female reproductive biology knowledge* and one measuring *condom knowledge*. Female reproductive biology knowledge is the sum of correct answers to the three true/false questions listed in Table 1 (range = 0–3). Condom knowledge is the sum of correct answers to the three true/false questions about condom usage listed in Table 1, but because so few participants got zero or one question correct, as compared to two or three, we merged the 0 and 1 categories together. Therefore, the range of values for condom knowledge is 1 to 3, with "1" representing those who missed at least two questions, "2" representing those who missed only one, and "3" representing all correct answers.

Table 1. True/False Questions Comprising the Survey Outcomes (RDSL; n = 960).

Reproductive Female Biology Knowledge	Percent Correct
• The most likely time for a woman to get pregnant is right before her period starts (*false*)	39%
• In general, a woman is most likely to get pregnant if she has sex during her period, as compared with other times of the month (*false*)	64%
• When a woman misses more than two days of birth control pills, she should use another birth control method (*true*)	68%
Condom Knowledge	
• Even if the man pulls out before he ejaculates, even if ejaculation occurs outside of the woman's body, it is still possible for the woman to become pregnant (*true*)	81%
• When putting on a condom, it is important to have it fit tightly, leaving no space at the tip (*false*)	61%
• As long as the condom fits over the tip of the penis, it doesn't matter how far down it is unrolled (*false*)	93%

Note: Correct answers in parentheses.

Our key independent variables are three measures of religiosity. First, we use a measure of *biblical literalism*. Participants were instructed to, "Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with this statement. The Bible is God's word, and everything happened or will happen pretty much as it says". Responses were coded so that a higher score indicated more agreement with the statement, or higher biblical literalism. Second, we use a measure of *personal religiosity* that is the average of responses to two questions—one about the frequency of praying alone and one about how important religious faith is to the participant. This variable is coded from a low of 1 to a high of 5. Finally, for religious service attendance, participants were asked, "How often do you usually attend religious services—would you say several times a week, once a week, a few times a month, once a month, less than once a month, or never"? Responses were coded from 1 = never to 6 = several times a week.

Because we are focused on how the relationship between religion and reproductive or contraceptive knowledge might vary by social class, we created a dichotomous measure of parental education that divides the participants into two groups—those who do not have a parent with a four-year college degree (71 percent), and those who do have at least one parent with a four-year degree (29 percent).

Our models include three control variables: age, race, and family structure. Most participants were either 18 or 19, but nine percent were 20 by the time of the survey interview, even though they were sampled at age 19. We therefore use all three yearly age categories. We use responses to a question asking which racial/ethnic groups best describe one's background to create a two-category race variable (0 = self-identified as White; 1 = self-identified as Black or African American). Given our focus on race differences, all of our analyses exclude any RDSL respondents who identified with another racial or ethnic group. Family structure is measured with a set of questions that asks with whom a participant has ever lived, and then which of those people they report living with, "the majority of the time when you were growing up". We use three categories—those who report living with two parents (biological, adoptive, or step), with one single, biological parent, or with others, for most of the time growing up. Because we are already considering multiple intersections (race, social class, and religion), we do not include sexual orientation in this study. Furthermore, we cannot provide insights into how gender may intersect with these other axes of inequality, as we have only women in our sample.

We use ordinary least squares regression to estimate the relationship between our religion measures and the reproductive and condom knowledge scores, looking for how these relationships might vary by parental education or race. To ease the interpretation of what amounts to two-way interactions in some of our analyses, we present models

separately by parental education level, and then test religion by race interactions within those groups. To indicate one aspect of social class, we rely on parental education. We divide the sample into two groups, those who have at least one parent with a four-year college degree or higher and those whose parent/s have less education.

For descriptive results regarding our key variables across the two levels of parental education, see Table 2. As indicated in the far-right column, there are six variables from our analyses that vary significantly between the two groups. For example, the young women who have a parent with a four-year college degree score significantly higher on the female reproductive biology knowledge measure than those who do not have a college-educated parent. However, there is no statistically significant difference in the condom knowledge score across the parental education divide. The young women with at least one college-educated parent also attend religious services more often, are more likely to identify as White (compared to Black or African American), and are more likely to have spent most of their childhood living with two parents than those who do not have a parent with a four-year college degree.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics by Parent Education Level (RDSL).

		Lower Parental Education (n = 669)		**Higher Parental Education (n = 271)**		
Variables	**Range**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Difference**
Female reproductive biology knowledge	0–3	1.65	0.90	1.87	0.96	*
Condom knowledge	1–3	2.35	0.68	2.40	0.71	
Biblical literalism	0–1	0.24		0.24		
Personal religiosity	1–5	3.28	1.21	3.30	1.19	
Religious service attendance	1–6	2.97	1.64	3.48	1.67	*
Age						
18 years	0–1	0.40		0.44		
19 years	0–1	0.51		0.47		
20 years	0–1	0.09		0.09		
Race						
Black (ref = White)	0–1	0.41		0.21		*
Family Structure						
Two parent family	0–1	0.45		0.71		*
Single biological parent only	0–1	0.45		0.25		*
Other	0–1	0.10		0.04		*

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

5.2. Findings

First, we test whether female reproductive biology knowledge is related to religious characteristics, and how that relationship varies by parental education and/or race (see Table 3). Our lone substantive finding from this table is that having a more literalist view of the Bible is negatively related to female reproductive biology knowledge for young women who have a parent with at least a four-year degree, but that relationship does not hold for young women in the lower parental education group. For each unit higher a young woman's value is on the biblical literalism measure, she has, on average, a 0.30 lower score on reproductive knowledge. Further, someone who strongly agrees that the Bible should be interpreted literally will miss, on average, one question more (out of the three) than someone who strongly disagrees.

Table 3. OLS Regression Models of Relationships between Religion Measures and Reproductive Knowledge Score, Separate by Parent Education, and Interactions with Race (RDSL).

	Reproductive Knowledge Score			
	Model 1		**Model 2**	
	Lower Parental Education (n = 669)	Higher Parental Education (n = 271)	Lower Parental Education (n = 669)	Higher Parental Education (n = 271)
Religion Measures				
Biblical literalism	−0.06	−0.30 *	−0.23	−0.19
	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.17)
Private religiosity	0.01	−0.02	0.02	−0.05
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Religious service attendance	−0.01	−0.01	−0.02	−0.02
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Religion and Race Interactions				
Biblical literalism * Black			0.28	−0.40
			(0.19)	(0.31)
Private religiosity * Black			0.01	0.18
			(0.09)	(0.15)
Religious serv attend * Black			0.03	0.05
			(0.06)	(0.10)
Control Variables				
Age (Ref: 18 years)				
19 years	0.14 +	−022 +	0.14 +	−0.22 *
	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.11)
20 years	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.09
	(0.13)	(0.19)	(0.13)	(0.20)
Race (Ref: White)				
Black	−0.40 ***	−0.41 **	−0.60 *	−1.17
	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.29)	(0.63)
Family Structure (Ref: Two parents)				
Single bio parent only	−0.27 ***	−0.02	−0.27 ***	−0.02
	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.13)
Other	−0.31 *	0.26	−0.32 *	0.31
	(0.13)	(0.28)	(0.13)	(0.28)
Intercept	1.91 ***	2.23 ***	1.93 ***	2.31 ***
	(0.12)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.19)
R-squared	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.11

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; + $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

For female reproductive biology knowledge, we find no interactions between religion and race. The biblical literalism finding does not seem to depend on the racial identity of the young women. Furthermore, neither private religiosity nor religious service attendance seem statistically significantly related to female reproductive biology knowledge for these women.

Table 4 shows the same models predicting a different outcome—condom knowledge. With this type of knowledge, biblical literalism does not play a role. In fact, none of the religion measures are statistically significantly related to condom knowledge for either level of parental education. However, Model 2, for both groups, suggests some interesting race differentials in how religion relates to condom knowledge. First, for young women who do not have a parent with a four-year college degree, religious service attendance is positively related to condom knowledge for Black women and negatively related for White women (See Figure 1). Second, for young women with at least one parent with a four-year degree, private religiosity is positively related to condom knowledge for Black women and negatively related for White women (See Figure 2).

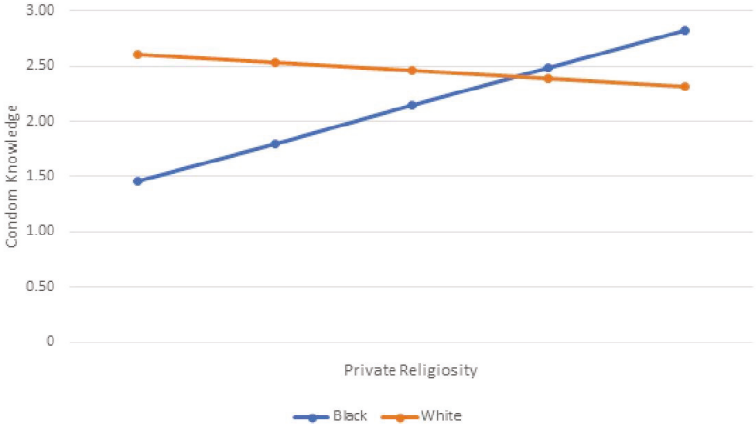

Figure 1. Associations between Private Religiosity and Condom Knowledge, by Race, among the Higher Parental Education Group (RDSL).

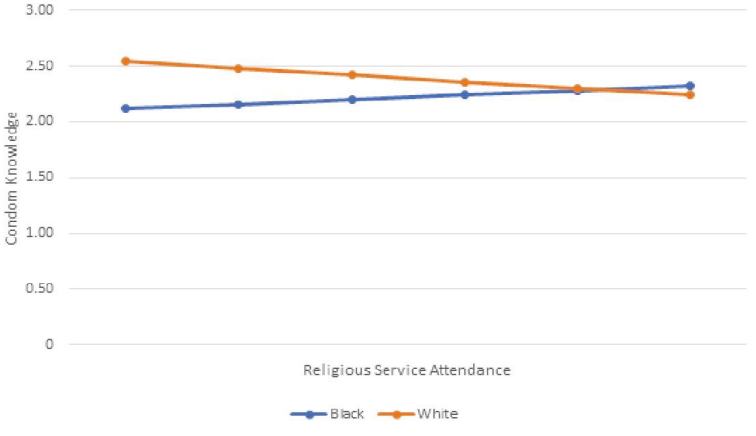

Figure 2. Associations between Religious Service Attendance and Condom Knowledge, by Race, among the Lower Parental Education Group (RDSL).

Table 4. OLS Regression Models of Relationships between Religion Measures and Condom Knowledge, Separate by Parent Education, and Interactions with Race (RDSL).

	Condom Knowledge			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Lower Parental Education (n = 669)	Higher Parental Education (n = 271)	Lower Parental Education (n = 669)	Higher Parental Education (n = 271)
Religion Measures				
Biblical literalism	−0.10	−0.05	−0.06	−0.02
	0.07	0.11	0.12	0.13
Private religiosity	−0.003	−0.0001	−0.01	−0.07
	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.05
Religious service attendance	−0.01	−0.03	−0.06+	−0.02
	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.04
Religion and Race Interactions				
Biblical literalism * Black			−0.05	−0.25
			0.15	0.24
Private religiosity * Black			0.06	0.44 ***
			0.07	0.11
Religious serv attend * Black			0.09 *	0.06
			0.04	0.08
Control Variables				
Age (Ref: 18 years)				
19 years	−0.04	−0.03	−0.04	−0.03
	0.06	0.09	0.06	0.08
20 years	−0.11	0.13	−0.11	0.17
	0.10	0.15	0.10	0.15
Race (Ref: White)				
Black	−0.19 **	0.03	−0.69 **	−1.81
	0.07	0.12	0.22	0.48
Family Structure (Ref: Two parents)				
Single bio parent only	−0.02	−0.14	−0.03	−0.15
	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.10
Other	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.10
	0.10	0.22	0.10	0.22
Intercept	2.53 ***	2.55 ***	2.66 ***	2.72 ***
	0.09	0.14	0.11	0.15
R-squared	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.08

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; + p <.10; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.

6. Qualitative Data Analysis and Findings

6.1. National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) Interview Data

The qualitative data we use to more broadly explore overlap in the sexual and religious projects of women from different social class and racial groups are the NSYR semi-structured interviews. The NSYR began with a nationally representative sample of U.S. 13–17 year olds in 2002 (n = 3290). Following the initial NSYR telephone survey, a quota sample of survey respondents (n = 267) participated in in-person, semi-structured interviews covering a range of topics. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The NSYR includes three additional waves of survey and semi-structured interview data (in 2005, 2008, and 2013), following these same participants' transition to adulthood. Our analysis focuses on female interview participants who were between the ages of 18 and 20 for their Wave 2 or Wave 3 interview. This puts them at the same ages, around the same time, as the RDSL survey participants (who were ages 18–19 in the period 2008–2009). One key difference between the two samples is that the NSYR interview participants come from across the U.S. while the RDSL survey participants resided in one county of Michigan. However, as described below, our analysis of the qualitative data focuses on comparing young women across groups sorted by religiosity, parental education, and race. We posit that although the one county in Michigan differs demographically from the entire nation, the experiences of young women within each subgroup is likely similar enough in other areas of the U.S. to make this analysis informative. We reflect further on potential limitations of the non-nested samples in the conclusion.

The interviews we analyzed come from 44 Black and White women from the NSYR, between the ages of 18 and 20, who identified as Mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, or Catholic at the time of their interviews. We closely read the entire interview transcripts to examine how these young women describe and enact their religious and sexual projects. By considering the entire interview, and not just the sections where interviewees are asked directly about their thoughts on sex, contraceptive use, pregnancy, and STIs, we can see how their religious and sexual projects emerge when discussing all aspects of their lives. We wrote detailed memos for each woman in which we described her social class, family experiences, religiosity, sexual behaviors and attitudes, and thoughts on contraceptive use, pregnancy, and STIs.

We then grouped women based on their race, parental education, and religious backgrounds, which resulted in six groups. Due to having few high SES Black women in the subgroup on which we focus our analysis, we do not examine religious and sexual projects at that particular intersection of identities. After rereading each subgroup closely, we identified the central sexual and religious projects that emerged for that particular set of women, which we summarize in Table 5. We did so by identifying and comparing patterns that emerged in four main areas: how they talked about contraceptive and reproductive knowledge, including common sources of information; how they describe their religious beliefs and practices; their perceptions of the relationship between religious teachings and their own beliefs/behaviors; and their thoughts on contraceptive use and sexual behaviors among their peers.

Important differences emerged between social classes, races, and levels of religiosity. For example, we observed that regardless of religiosity, high SES White women were similar in their sources for contraceptive knowledge (school and doctors) and in their unwillingness to impose their own values on others; in contrast, low SES White women rely more on knowledge gained from their peers or from becoming sexually active themselves. When we then look at religious differences within these groups, we see that religion acts differently, with highly religious, low SES women asserting that all teenagers should practice abstinence and highly religious, high SES women emphasizing abstinence is right for them but may not be embraced by everyone.

Table 5. Sexual Projects across Race, Parental Education, and Religiosity.

		Religious	Not Religious
Black women	Higher parental education	** Too few women in this subgroup to analyze	Sexual activity is connected to maturity and to adulthood project—must be able to understand risks (pregnancy and STDs) and to take them seriously.
	Lower parental education	Sexual activity is connected to maturity and to adulthood project, rather than to religious project (which is still salient).	Sexual activity is framed as risky, yet contraceptive use is inconsistent.
White women	Higher parental education	Abstinence for them to accomplish their own religious project, but choice and pregnancy avoidance for others.	Emphasis on choice (for themselves and others) in becoming sexually active and pregnancy avoidance.
	Lower parental education	Abstinence is understood in moral/absolute terms as part of their religious project, and birth control is viewed with skepticism.	Emphasis on choice (for themselves and others) in becoming sexually active and protection against STDs and pregnancy.

** Special Case.

To facilitate presentation of the full complexity in these young women's expressions of their sexual and religious projects, we constructed composite narratives, which allow us to describe one composite person to represent each group. Recently, scholars have used composite narratives as an additional step to protect participants' confidentiality and identity, particularly when studying public figures (Willis 2017) or vulnerable interviewees who could face serious harms should they be identified (Elizabeth 2017; Piper and Sikes 2010); however, this technique also facilitates more complete and holistic comparisons across groups, especially when the nature of the interview (in this case a highly structured, but open-ended, interview) results in shorter responses per question, but greater range across domains.

Willis (2019) identifies several key practices for methodically constructing composite narratives, which we follow here to ensure rigor, precision, and integrity in this form of data presentation. First, we ground each narrative in patterns observed across 3–7 interviews. Second, we include actual quotations from the interviews, so that readers can see firsthand the language used by participants. Third, we clearly distinguish between interviewees' interpretations of their lives and our own analysis. Although a relatively new way to present qualitative findings, we believe that this approach benefits us in several ways. For one, we can capture the complexity of these groups of women without relying on an ideal case, and we can thus avoid the rigidity of some typologies (Malvicini 1999; Willis 2019). For another, we can more thoughtfully go beyond details about their contraceptive knowledge and religiosity to include other aspects of their lives, which strengthens our analysis of their religious and sexual projects without obscuring the key comparisons (Elizabeth 2017; Upton-Davis 2015).

6.2. Findings

Our analysis of the broader linkages between religious and sexual projects, and how those vary depending on parental education level and race, reveals three interesting themes. First, regardless of social class or race, young women who are religious openly state an ideal of premarital abstinence. What differs is how attainable they view that ideal for themselves and the extent to which they are prepared to prevent pregnancy or STIs. We start by showing the role of religion for White women with college educated parents and then compare them to White women whose parents did not graduate from college. This reveals how connections between religious projects and sexual projects operate differently by social class. We then compare these experiences to Black women with parents who do not have a college degree, examining how religion plays a unique role in these women's lives compared with the previously discussed White women with parents who have no

college degree. Through these comparisons we illuminate racial variation in how religion operates in lower SES contexts.

6.2.1. White Women with Higher Parental Education: Religion Alters Personal Strategies

Rachel[1], a young White woman, is currently in her first year at college, for which her parents provide substantial financial help; after college, she anticipates either pursuing a professional degree or immediately beginning her career. Her parents have been married since before she was born, both have college degrees, and she gets along well with them. They participate in religious activities as a family, such as attending church and having occasional conversations about faith. Rachel reports having drawn on specific religious teachings to make decisions about what to do, and she explains that she tries to apply biblical lessons to her own life. She generally believes that her religion is the right one and appears uncomfortable wrestling with ideas of moral relativism, but she is hesitant to insist that her ideas of right and wrong are universally true:

> *I think, like, if you have like faith in God, in Jesus and like he rose from the dead, then I definitely think that you're going to have morals different than like a person that's secular, and I don't really . . . [pause] I know there's so many beliefs out there, I don't really, I don't know, just like to other people what's wrong is definitely not going to be wrong. But to me, like it would be wrong. I don't know how to describe it.*

Ultimately, her religious project is grounded in having the right beliefs and doing her best to embody those beliefs in her daily practices, although she believes there is room for improvement.

Accordingly, Rachel plans to wait until marriage to have sex, as this is what she believes her religion teaches. However, she is not particularly interested in imposing her values on others, explaining, "You can't force people to abstain from sex". She is a little concerned about the rise of casual sex, and in particular, the lack of contraceptive use: "I feel like people are being so stupid about [sex] . . . like not using a condom, not using any form of birth control even". She sees the value in sex education, and explains that most of her contraceptive and reproductive knowledge comes from schools and from doctors. Additionally, she believes her family and her church support her decision to practice abstinence, and she does not indicate having any plans of her own for contraceptive use. Rachel's sexual project is connected to her religious project; she practices abstinence as a way to accomplish her religious project, which teaches abstinence until marriage, by aligning her beliefs with her behaviors. However, she is not oblivious to the patterns of sexual activity around her, and she believes that others who choose to become sexually active should take steps to avoid pregnancy. Finally, although she feels positively about contraception for others, she may lack practical knowledge about both female reproductive and condom knowledge, given she does not currently perceive a need for that knowledge in her daily life.

Like Rachel, Emma is a White woman in her first year of college. She grew up in a suburban neighborhood, and frequently vacations with her married, college-educated parents. She is somewhat financially literate, evaluating potential college majors based on how quickly she could pay off any debt. Growing up, she had some religious exposure, attending occasionally with her parents. Now, her religious project can be characterized as nominal: she is happy to attend services for major holidays, and she identifies as Christian, but she explains that religion does not shape her daily life or her decisions.

Emma first became sexually active with her high school boyfriend; she explains, "You are ready to have sex when you are mature and can have safe sex". Indeed, this emphasis on maturity and responsibility surfaces frequently in the interview section on relationships, sex, and contraception, revealing a sexual project emphasizing choice in becoming sexually active and agency in pregnancy and STD avoidance. For example, when she noticed that

[1] As a reminder, we are presenting composite cases, comprised of the experiences and expressions of multiple women in each category, and as such, the names are pseudonyms.

she had become inconsistent in her condom use, she sought out birth control pills instead. Although both Emma and Rachel have consistent access to doctors for reproductive health care, Emma sees her doctor as a helpful resource for knowledge that is important to her sexual project, whereas Rachel relies more on her parents' normative ideas about sex, which are informed by their shared religion, to inform her sexual project. In contrast, Emma emphatically states that her ideas and knowledge around sex and pregnancy "did not come from my parents, that's for sure"; she views them as generally more conservative than she is, so she relies more on friends, her own research, and her doctor for information.

Rachel and Emma are similar in their support for knowledge and preparedness of those who choose to be sexually active; they also enjoy similar access to sex education via schools and the doctor's office. However, they differ in their own personal sexual projects: Emma is sexually active while Rachel is not. Their discussions of sex education classes in school, their access to the Internet for research, and their ability to see a gynecologist all speak to their shared high socioeconomic status and could easily translate to higher levels of reproductive knowledge than their lower SES peers. However, this SES advantage is somewhat eroded for women who are more religious, particularly those who may be biblical literalists. Although Rachel does not directly invoke her religious beliefs when sharing her thoughts on others' contraceptive use, she is very clear that she agrees with her religion's teaching on sex (abstinence until marriage), and since she is practicing abstinence herself, she may see no need to seek information about reproduction or contraception. This analysis suggests that her religious project, which reinforces her sexual project of abstinence, may be subtly and/or inadvertently discouraging her from seeking additional information.

6.2.2. White Women with Lower Parental Education: Religion Is Neutral When Misinformation Is High and Opportunity Costs Are Low

Lauren, a White woman living in an under-resourced area, recently graduated from high school. She now works a part-time job and aspires to attend community college, although she is unsure when she will be able to afford classes. She attends church regularly, usually with her mother (who is a single parent), and she tries to engage in some private practices, such as prayer. Her religious project emphasizes individual morality and doing what is right in the eyes of God; she mentions the Bible as a source of authority, and occasionally cites biblical teachings when talking about her decision-making processes. As a result, her sexual project is closely intertwined with her religion project, as Lauren believes that to be a good Christian is to abstain from any sexual activity before marriage.

Because she understands sex in moral terms, Lauren believes that ideally everyone should wait until marriage to become sexually active; the strong link between her religious and sexual projects means that in her mind, abstinence is not just the best choice for her: it is the best choice for everyone. She explains, "I think they have to wait 'til they are married . . . I'd say kissing [is okay]. And then, anything that's gonna leave you to wanting to have sex is wrong". Furthermore, her sexual project is reinforced by religious teachings about procreation and the centrality of sex to reproduction; as a result, she believes that ultimately "you are supposed to want to reproduce and have kids", and she is somewhat skeptical of the efficacy of birth control. She explains:

> *I'm actually on birth control right now, but, you know, it's just to try and get started on it. I don't really, I mean I see the need in it, but then I don't see the need in it I guess. I feel like if you're gonna get pregnant, you're gonna get pregnant.*

Valuing procreation may not necessarily translate to reproductive knowledge; in fact, because she closely connects sexual activity to reproduction, she may not feel motivated to learn more about pregnancy or contraceptives, given that pregnancy is perceived as somewhat unavoidable, even if on birth control pills. Thus, pregnancy is not necessarily something she will seek to avoid once sexually active. Furthermore, unlike the higher SES White women, Lauren cites neither school nor doctors as sources of contraceptive

knowledge; instead, she points to her own and her friends' experiences as providing useful insights into different types of birth control and STD risks.

Melanie, a young White woman, recently graduated from high school, where she averaged Bs and Cs. Due to her parents' divorce, she has experienced some instability in her housing, and she is currently living with her mom and her mother's long-term boyfriend. She works part time at a fast food restaurant as she figures out her next steps. Although she attended church intermittently with her family as a child, she does not attend now, and she does not believe that religion impacts her daily life. When asked about her beliefs, she provides short, generic answers that suggest a lack of reflection. Ultimately, she concludes after that section of the interview: "I guess I'm not very religious". At the same time, however, she does not reject Christianity, so her religion project could be characterized as Christian in name only; she provides a religious affiliation at each wave of the survey, but consistently says religion is "not very important".

Melanie became sexually active at 16 with her then-boyfriend. She says of sex, "I think if [teenagers] are comfortable with themselves then they should do what they want. You know, if they feel like they should have sex, then by all means go ahead and do it". However, she believes it is better to be in a relationship first, which is the only context in which she has had sex. In terms of contraception, although she thinks it is good and people should use it, particularly if they are having sex outside of a committed relationship, her own use is inconsistent, which led to a recent pregnancy scare. This scare initially prompted her to use contraception more consistently, but at the same time, she expresses ambivalence toward pregnancy, explaining: "we were going to try and use the condom as much as possible, because we both know that we're not mature enough to have a child. We're not, um, financially ready to have a child". They understand there is a chance of pregnancy, and that, "it may happen and when the time comes, and if it does happen, we will handle it responsibly and maturely". She explains that her knowledge comes from being sexually active, which echoes Lauren's observations. Thus, it may be that social class impedes access to contraceptive knowledge if under-resourced schools provide inadequate sex education or if young adults lack access to health care.

Although pregnancy is a primary concern, she also worries about STDs, which reinforces her commitment to having sex only when in a relationship. She explains: "You never know what you might catch from somebody, you never know who they've been with, and I'm a strong believer that if you sleep with one person it's just like sleeping with every person they've already been with". Overall, her sexual project emphasizes choice (for herself and for others) in becoming sexually active and prioritizing relationships as the context for having sex. The relationship is implicitly viewed as minimizing the consequences of unprotected sex, as she sees a monogamous male partner as less likely to have an STD and as able to communicate in the event of an unintended pregnancy; given this, consistent contraceptive use is not central to this particular sexual project.

6.2.3. Black Women with Low Parental Education: Religion as a Resource for Social Mobility

Monique is a 19-year-old Black woman who recently graduated from high school. She currently lives with her mother, with whom she reports a fairly good relationship, and she regularly visits her grandparents, who live across town. She works a part-time job as she thinks about her future; she hopes to attend college or to open her own business, but she does not have a concrete plan for achieving either goal. Monique attends church regularly with her extended family, saying "all my family goes to church" at a historically Black congregation. She enjoys attending and talking with some of the adult members. Furthermore, she believes that religion shapes her everyday life. Her religious project involves maintaining a personal relationship with God, attending church, and "calling on the Lord" as she goes about each day. Although she reports a high level of religious salience, she does not generally talk in terms of religious or moral absolutes.

When talking about sex, Monique notes that "like 99% of my friends are active", and she recently became sexually active because she felt she "was ready to accept any

consequences that might have come with my actions". However, she does not anticipate having consequences, because she will use protection to avoid an unintended pregnancy, which she views as a major issue for young women and as something that cannot be hidden from others (unlike an STD). These ideas reflect a sexual project that emphasizes maturity, responsibility, and safe sex. Recognizing that there are risks to having sex, and then taking steps to mitigate those risks, reflects maturity and suggests that one is ready to become sexually active. Finally, she believes that abstinence until marriage is impractical advice that is disconnected from contemporary realities, suggesting awareness that abstinence is a common religious teaching but that she does not directly encounter it. She also cites a range of sources for her contraceptive knowledge, including her own research on the Internet and conversations with trusted adults. Perhaps because she encounters a range of information, Monique does not personally experience conflict between her religion and her sexual projects. She is, however, somewhat vague in her discussions of contraceptive use, suggesting that at times her behaviors contradict her commitment to maturity and responsibility.

A 19-year-old Black woman, Naomi has an 18-month-old son; they both live with her mother and several extended family members in a single-family home. She recently earned her GED, and she is working part time while relying on family members to care for her son. She is no longer with her son's father, but he lives in the area and tries to stay involved in his son's life. She talks about potentially taking classes at a local community college, but cost is a major barrier. Naomi holds basic religious beliefs, such as belief in God and Jesus, but her thoughts on morality and decision making are not grounded in a religious framework. In terms of religious participation, she says, "I barely go to church". However, she is quick to explain that she does not doubt God's existence, suggesting a religious project of nominal Christian; maintaining the core "correct" beliefs is important, but she does not use religion as a resource in her life.

Unlike Monique and any of the other young women in the previously described groups, Naomi is actively worried about STDs, particularly HIV/AIDS, more so than about unintended pregnancies. Answering a question about how much pregnancy and STDs are concerns for teenagers, she says:

> *It's 100% [a] concern because disease is spreading fast and you can ask a person if they have something and they can lie to you and say they don't and they could have it all the while and you make the choice to do something like that and you expose yourself to catching it. So it's a concern to everyone, it's 100% concern.*

Although she repeatedly details this concern and claims that some people actively try to spread their STDs, she is less knowledgeable on how to safely protect herself, often portraying sex as inherently risky, even if one were to use condoms or birth control. She does not cite formal sources of knowledge (such as a doctor or a class), but instead references her own experiences and conversations with friends. She personally prefers condoms, although she uses them inconsistently, and she says, "I don't really know about birth control, but I heard about it". She expresses skepticism about the efficacy of all methods for preventing pregnancy, which contributes to her general ambivalence towards a second pregnancy. Accordingly, her sexual project views sex as a natural act that is inherently risky; combined with her skepticism around birth control and the absence of any sex education, her perspective that sex always carries risk likely contributes to her inconsistent contraceptive use and may make it less likely that she will seek additional information.

Comparing Monique and Naomi's lives to the White women whose parents also have no college education reveals how religious projects and their links to sexual projects vary by race, at this level of socioeconomic status. Monique, who is more religious, articulates a desire to avoid pregnancy, and she is confident in her ability to do so, suggesting a certain level of knowledge. Furthermore, at church she may encounter more emphasis on overall health and well-being than on premarital abstinence, which may somewhat encourage her to know more about reproduction and contraception. In contrast, Naomi

is more ambivalent toward pregnancy, and although she has had a child and is actively worried about STDs, her condom use remains inconsistent.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we have used a concurrent mixed-methods approach to analyze how religion plays a role in young women's contraceptive and reproductive knowledge and how that role varies by race and social class. Using survey data from the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life study and interviews from the National Study of Youth and Religion, we use a complex religion framework in which we consider race and class simultaneously to more precisely specify the impact of religion on these two types of knowledge. Building on these findings, our study offers three major contributions.

First, our study contributes to the existing literature showing that operationalization of religion matters for sex-related outcomes, as we find not only that distinct measures of religion were associated with reproductive and contraceptive knowledge differently, but that the associations further varied by race and class. For example, we found that biblical literalism was only associated negatively with reproductive knowledge for women whose parents had a college degree (regardless of race), and yet biblical literalism was not related to level of contraceptive knowledge for any of the groups we examined. Instead, what seems related to contraceptive knowledge were the two other religious measures—but which one was significant varied by level of parents' education, and the direction of the association varied by race. Among women whose parents had more education, attending religious services more frequently was associated with greater condom knowledge for Black women but less knowledge for White women, whereas among women whose parents did not have a college education, private religiosity predicted more knowledge for Black women but less for White women.

Thus, our findings reaffirm the importance of using multiple measures of religion and distinct scales for reproductive and contraceptive knowledge. Reproductive knowledge may connect more closely to biblical literalism given Christian messages about procreation, while condom knowledge may align more closely with personal religiosity and religious service attendance, and all three may result more from individuals' agency and efforts. Furthermore, at first glance, although social class may shape which measure of religiosity is most salient, without also examining race, we would mistakenly assume that religion similarly impacted all women who shared the same social class background. This nuance in the results speaks to the importance of a complex religion approach.

Accordingly, our second significant contribution is to the burgeoning complex religion literature. Situating our work in the complex religion framework required us to simultaneously consider overlapping identities. By considering the intersection of race and class among young women, we can more accurately specify the relationships between different dimensions of religion and both contraceptive and reproductive knowledge. Religion is not universally protective for women when it comes to this type of knowledge, and at times religious involvement is related to having less knowledge. Hence, a better understanding of how religion plays a role could help with interventions to minimize unintended pregnancies and to ensure women have the knowledge they need to engage in safer sex practices. To further develop the complex religion framework, future studies should consider a comparative historical approach that would facilitate a closer examination of how race has intersected with religion and contraceptive knowledge/use over time. Building on our research, two clear directions emerge: scholars might consider, first, how historical differences in Black and White religious organizations contribute to different approaches to sexual health and reproductive justice today, and second, how the history of discrimination and racism in medical communities (particularly when it comes to Black women's reproductive health) intersects with Black women's contemporary experiences of racism and their religious projects to inform their access to reproductive knowledge and health care (Prather et al. 2018; Rosenthal and Lobel 2018; Tekeste et al. 2018).

Finally, taken together, our quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest that looking more holistically at young women's lives will better reveal how they accomplish their religion and sexual projects. Our research reveals the need for future studies examining the relationship between religious and sexual projects; for example, we found that for White women with less educated parents, their sexual project of abstinence allowed them to accomplish their religious project of being what they consider a good Christian. Rather than asking only targeted questions about religion and sexual knowledge, researchers may want to investigate more broadly: to what extent do people experience their religious and sexual projects to be in conflict? How do people navigate and make sense of potentially conflicting messages from their religion, their parents, their peers, and more? Future studies would do well to investigate reproductive and contraceptive knowledge by inquiring more specifically about religious teachings on sex and contraception, and then contextualizing those messages in women's broader experiences and identities, including but not limited to race, social class, sexual orientation, friend groups, and cultural beliefs about sex.

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Perceived Group Deprivation and Intergroup Solidarity: Muslims' Attitudes towards Other Minorities in the United States

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Abstract: What is the relationship between the sense of perceived discrimination among members of a marginalized racial, ethnic, or religious group and their political attitudes towards other marginalized groups within their society? Research on minority groups in politics has established that the feeling that one's own group is socially deprived and discriminated against is generally associated with an increase in within-group solidarity, observable in members' stronger expressions of collective identity—also called "group consciousness" or "linked fate"—as well as their robust support for political parties and policies seen as directly benefitting members of their in group. Yet an underappreciated strand of this same research suggests that a strong sense of in-group deprivation may also lead to greater empathy and political support for *other* marginalized minorities, a phenomenon we refer to as *intergroup solidarity*. In this paper, we use the case of Muslim Americans to test the hypothesis that perceptions of group deprivation can lead to increased intergroup solidarity with other socially marginalized racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. We find that Muslims who feel that they have been discriminated against and/or who believe Muslims as a group are a target of discrimination are more likely to embrace the struggles of other groups and recognize the marginalization of other groups. Our findings suggest that in-group political consciousness raising may be a first step toward intergroup coalition building among those who suffer from discrimination and marginalization.

Keywords: discrimination; American Muslims; solidarity; political attitudes; racialization; group consciousness; group deprivation

1. Introduction

Political scientists and sociologists studying racial and ethnic minorities in American political life have repeatedly found links between a strong sense of group deprivation or disadvantage and a higher level of solidarity and political commitment among members of the in group (Dawson 1994; Espiritu 1992; Garcia Bedolla 2005; Gurin et al. 1980; Harris 1999; Masuoka 2006; Miller et al. 1981; Sanchez 2006; Tate 1993; Verba and Nie 1972). This strain of the literature on minority group politics has generally focused on two outcomes consistently predicted by perceived group deprivation and indicating a strong sense of in-group solidarity: increased feelings of shared group identity—also referred to as "group consciousness" (Verba and Nie 1972) or "linked fate" (Dawson 1994)—and political support for in-group-focused policies, parties, and candidates (Barreto and Woods 2005; Dawson 1994; Espiritu 1992; Padilla 1985; Tate 1993). As such, the extant literature on the politics of African Americans, Latinx Americans, Asian Americans, and, more recently, American Muslims primarily tells the story of how members of these groups who perceive themselves as members of a deprived minority are more likely to articulate a greater sense of political and social solidarity focused

on their own in group. Many of these same studies, however, include traces of evidence suggesting the possibility of a link between perceived group discrimination within these minorities and an emergent sense of positive social sentiment and supportive political attitudes extended towards *other* socially marginalized groups. A brief review of this literature will both demonstrate the extent to which previous studies have focused on the effect of perceived discrimination on increasing in-group solidarity while also highlighting how this same research suggests the possibility that group deprivation may also drive a stronger sense of intergroup solidarity, or empathy and support for the struggles of other social minorities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. African Americans, Perceived Group Deprivation, and Resulting Solidarities

African Americans are by far the most extensively researched racial group on questions of perceived group deprivation and its connection to greater levels of in-group solidarity (Dawson 1994; Gurin et al. 1980; Harris 1999; Jackman and Jackman 1973; Miller et al. 1981; Tate 1993; Verba and Nie 1972). In fact, it was through seminal studies of Black politics in the US that political scientists and sociologists established the importance of perceived group deprivation as a variable within objectively marginalized ethnic and racial groups in American society, and one that could therefore be used to examine the links between the sense of group deprivation among specific members of racial and ethnic communities and their political attitudes and behavior (Garcia Bedolla 2005; McClain and Stewart 2006; Miller et al. 1981; Tate 1993). As mentioned above, apart from political participation (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Miller et al. 1981; Verba and Nie 1972), the two outcomes of greatest interest to those studying the effects of perceived group deprivation on African Americans have been measures of solidarity focused on the in group—greater feelings of collective identity (often called "group consciousness" or "linked fate") on the one hand, and/or a high level of support for policies or political candidates directing social aid towards African Americans on the other.

Both earlier and later studies of Black politics in the United States found a strong link between the historical and ongoing experiences of discrimination of African Americans—and specifically the strong sense of perceived group deprivation this produced among most members—and a powerful feeling of social closeness to and political unity with other Black Americans (Dawson 1994; Gurin et al. 1980; Miller et al. 1981; Tate 1993; Verba and Nie 1972). As the central figures in the later wave of these studies, Tate (1993) and Dawson (1994) went on to show that, for most Black Americans, this sense of race-linked group deprivation was also tied to a robust support by African Americans—especially those with strong feelings of group deprivation—for "race-specific programs" (Tate 1993, p. 40) and "governmental racial policies" (Dawson 1994, p. 194). As such, the central finding of those who have examined the relationship between perceived deprivation among US Blacks and political outcomes is that this sense of group marginalization among African Americans produces social and political manifestations of *in-group solidarity* (Tate 1993, p. 45).

Yet evidence from some of these same studies, and other adjacent ones, suggests that the same sense of shared group marginalization that drives African Americans to turn their social and political energies inward may, in some cases, push them to express a broader, outwardly focused, intergroup solidarity. For example, Gurin, Miller, and Gurin's landmark 1980 study is most often cited as evidence of a strong in-group political solidarity among African Americans. But their evidence also reveals that Black Americans who had the strongest sense of shared deprivation were not only more likely to support pro-Black policies, but were also more likely to articulate political support for ameliorating the lower-status situations of women and poor people (Gurin et al. 1980, pp. 37, 40). Similar evidence of a potential "spill-over" effect of the in-group solidarity generated from shared group deprivation is present in Tate (1993) and Dawson (1994), who both find that deprivation-informed strong racial identities are linked to support for government policies and politicians aimed at helping minority groups in general—such as broad affirmative action, economic welfare programs, and universal health

insurance—rather than only those helping African Americans (Tate 1993, pp. 35, 45; Dawson 1994, p. 189). Together, these findings suggest the potential presence of an under-investigated intergroup solidarity outcome that may also be driven by a sense of perceived group deprivation among African American and other political minorities. In this paper, we look for evidence of such a phenomenon among American Muslims.

2.2. The Group Deprivation–Solidarity Link among Latinx and Asian Americans

Looking beyond African Americans, similar connections between a sense of shared group deprivation, strong collective identity, and support for in-group-targeted political change have been found among other socially marginalized racial and ethnic groups in US society. While overall results are more mixed, studies of Latinx Americans' politics still include a strong strain identifying links between the perception of discrimination of one's own group and a greater level of within-group solidarity. As with African Americans, Latinx Americans who feel a strong sense of group deprivation have been shown to express high levels of in-group solidarity through embracing a powerful sense of collective identity (Garcia Bedolla 2005; Golash-Boza 2006; Masuoka 2006) and/or articulating support for political positions that benefit the in group, such as bilingual education, liberal immigration policies, and Latinx-targeted programs and services (Barreto and Woods 2005; Garcia Bedolla 2005; Padilla 1985; Sanchez 2006).

In addition, and to a greater extent than has been investigated with African Americans, there are signs that Latinx Americans who feel a strong sense of group deprivation and discrimination are also more likely to exhibit a robust *intergroup solidarity*, expressions of allegiance with other marginalized groups and support for policies that would benefit these other groups. For example, Latinx Americans who feel a strong sense of group deprivation have been shown to be more likely to support the Democratic party and its candidates, who are more apt to push policies benefitting a broad range of minority groups (Bowler et al. 2006; Cain et al. 1991). In addition, a growing number of recent studies demonstrate that Latinx people who exhibit high levels of perceived group deprivation are more likely to perceive a greater commonality with African Americans in particular (McClain et al. 2006; Sanchez 2008). These findings align with previous studies on the potential for political coalition formation between racially disadvantaged groups, which have found that Latinx, Black, and Asian Americans who see their own group as structurally disadvantaged are also more likely to see members of the other groups as disadvantaged as well (Uhlaner 1991), and suggest that a shared sense of minority status can drive Latinx Americans to support programs aimed at helping African Americans (Garcia 2000).

When it comes to Asian Americans and questions of perceived group deprivation, in-group solidarity, and potential intergroup solidarity, findings have been more mixed (Cain et al. 1991; McClain et al. 2009). After all, Asian Americans in the aggregate have a different socioeconomic profile from Black and Latinx Americans, as well as a different history with processes of racialization and race-based discrimination (Junn and Masuoka 2008; Masuoka 2006). Even taking this into account, however, there is evidence that Asian Americans share some of the same links between perceived group discrimination and greater in-group solidarity that we have seen among Blacks and Latinx people, as well as the possibilities for intergroup solidarity we have noted in these other groups. For example, the findings of Masuoka (2006) and Junn and Masuoka (2008) suggest that, despite the differences in historical trajectory and social context both within their group and between their group and others, Asian Americans do demonstrate a strong sense of group consciousness, and this feeling is driven primarily by experiences of being subject to "racialized tropes" in US society and facing discrimination for being Asian (Junn and Masuoka 2008; Masuoka 2006). Further, though there is little quantitative work directly investigating the relationship between perceived group deprivation and support for in-group-targeted political change among Asian Americans, qualitative and historical work by Espiritu (1992) demonstrates how Asians of different backgrounds facing common stereotyping and discrimination became motivated to advocate for political and social change aimed at bettering

the status of Asians in the US. Along these same lines, and edging towards the central concerns of this paper, evidence in select studies demonstrates that feelings of group deprivation among Asian Americans are connected to the desire of members of this marginalized group to find common ground with other racial minorities and support politics and policies that benefit African Americans and Latinx people (Cain et al. 1991; Espiritu 1992; Uhlaner 1991). It is this intergroup solidarity driven by experiences of discrimination targeted at one's own in group that we seek to investigate in the case of Muslim Americans.

In summary, the existing research on the relationship between perceived group deprivation and forms of solidarity among the most "racialized" (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Omi and Winant 1986) minority groups in American life—Blacks, Latinx, and Asian Americans—has found that, with some variation across groups, a strong sense of perceived group disadvantage predicts a heightened sense of *in-group solidarity*, expressed as intensified feelings of collective identity and greater levels of support for politics and policies aimed at addressing concerns of the particular in group. In addition, our review of this literature has revealed signs that a sense of group deprivation may also be linked to a greater sense of *intergroup solidarity*, feelings of concern and support for members of *other* socially marginalized groups. As the next section will show, a growing literature on Muslim Americans and politics reveals a link between perceived discrimination and greater in-group solidarity quite similar to the pattern observed among the more commonly studied racial groups discussed above. Like this broader literature, though, research focused on Muslim Americans politics has largely marginalized the question of whether perceived group deprivation might lead members of racialized minority groups to develop a greater sense of *intergroup solidarity*, measured as concern and support for marginalized, racialized out groups. After reviewing the relevant literature on Muslim American politics, we will directly take up this empirical question.

2.3. American Muslims, Perceived Group Deprivation, and Solidarity

The relationship between perceived discrimination and solidarity among Muslim Americans has mostly been investigated using qualitative and historical methods, but the results are strikingly similar to those we have described from studies of the other three US minority groups discussed above—African Americans, Latinx Americans, and Asian Americans. First, as with those groups, research on Muslim Americans demonstrates a clear link between Muslims' strong sense of perceived group deprivation and a stronger sense of collective identity. Indeed, this relationship is key to the work on "racialization" of Muslim Americans (Selod 2015; Selod 2018), which, while acknowledging variation within Muslim Americans in terms of their personal experiences of discrimination, asserts that, in general, aggregated experiences of social marginalization among Muslims has led to a stronger identification with "Muslim American" as a collective and political identity among most members of this group (Cainkar 2002; Chouhoud et al. 2019; Naber 2005).[1] Second, the growing literature on Muslim Americans reveals a link between perceived group deprivation and another dimension of in-group solidarity—an increased support for policies, parties, and politicians seen as pro-Muslim rights. For example, political scientists have used both interviews and surveys to find that increased antipathy towards Muslims domestically and abroad by Republican governments drove Muslim Americans towards stronger support for the Democratic party, who they generally understood to be more supportive of US Muslim civil rights and liberties (Calfano and Lajevardi 2019; Jalalzai 2009; Ocampo et al. 2018). Similarly, sociologists and political scientists studying Muslim American grassroots

[1] As with African American, Latinx American, and Asian American, the category "Muslim American" encompasses a highly complex internal diversity yet has come to be seen and treated by the state, the media, and a significant portion of the American public as a singular and uniform racial group due to the social, legal, and political processes of "racialization" (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018; Omi and Winant 1986; Selod 2015). Also, like members of these other groups, Muslim Americans have—to varying degrees—undergone experiences of social marginalization and exclusion that have caused them to consider their own group to be a consistent target of discrimination and social deprivation (Braunstein 2019; Dahab and Omori 2019; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018; Selod 2015).

politics and organizations show how a growing sense of group deprivation under both the George W. Bush and Donald Trump administrations led to an increased participation by Muslim Americans in activism aimed at defending Muslim American civil rights and challenging particular policies such as Trump's "Muslim ban" (Love 2017; Oskooii 2016; Tekelioglu 2019; Yukich 2018).

As with previous research on Blacks, Asians, and Latinx Americans, the existing studies on Muslim Americans and politics both contain suggestions of a link between perceived group deprivation and increased intergroup solidarity and leave this question largely unexplored. One strain of this literature highlights consistent, though anecdotal, evidence that Muslim American activists and organizations reached out to others to form political coalitions and express intergroup support during the post-9/11 and Trump years (Tekelioglu 2019). In these works, we find accounts of Muslims forging partnerships with other racial, ethic, and religious minorities (Vali 2012), Black Lives Matter activists (Gibbons et al. 2015), and civil liberties advocates and organizations (Craun 2014). Another strain notes attitudinal shifts among Muslim Americans, especially when it comes to their increasing acceptance of homosexuality (Pew Research Center 2017b; Selod 2018). But, as with research focused on Black, Asian, and Latinx American politics, none of these studies has taken on the issue of *intergroup* solidarity as its outcome of interest. It is this outcome—and its relationship with perceived in-group deprivation—that we directly assess in this paper, using the case of Muslim Americans.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data

We use data from the Pew Research Center's repeated cross-sectional surveys of American Muslims, conducted in 2007, 2011 and 2017.[2] These data are the only known national, probability samples of this population and therefore provide our best chance at a representative sample. Center researchers stratified US counties based on the estimated density of Muslims within them and then conducted random digit dials of cell phones and landlines in all but the least dense stratum. Screening interviews were conducted until a large enough sample (over 1000 respondents) was gathered for each year (1050 Muslim adults in 2007, 1033 in 2011, and 1001 in 2017).[3] All samples were weighted to adjust for the differing probabilities of selection given the sampling frames and non-coverage of geographic areas with a low density of Muslims. Interviews were conducted by phone in English, Arabic, Urdu and Farsi, gathering information on demographic characteristics, household composition, political opinions, and religiosity (Pew Research Center 2007, 2011, 2017b). Parts of our analysis utilize all three years of the survey (N = 3084) and others focuses on 2017 (N = 1001), when new survey questions were introduced that are particularly relevant to this project.

3.2. Analytic Strategy

Do Muslims who feel marginalized *as Muslims* show greater solidarity with other identity groups? To answer this question, we use two proxies for sense of deprivation: respondents' experiences of being discriminated against as a Muslim and respondents' perception of discrimination against Muslims as a group. We test the relationship between these marginalization variables and a series of questions on attitudes towards other minority groups using logistic regressions. Our outcome variables encompass respondents' views on the status of Black Americans, lesbian and gay (LG)[4]

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[2] Data from all three survey years are publicly available on the Pew Research Center's website: www.pewresearch.org. Analysis was conducted using Stata 16, and all files associated with the project are available upon request.

[3] For more details on the sampling process for each survey, see the Pew Research Center's website and reports (Pew Research Center 2007, 2011, 2017b).

[4] As will be noted below, the survey questions inquire after homosexuality and the status of lesbian and gay individuals. To hue close to the data, we use the term LG instead of the broader term LGBTQIA+ when referring to our measures and results.

individuals, immigrants, Hispanics[5] and Jews. We present the full tables below and then calculate and graph predicted probabilities of each outcome at different levels of our two independent variables.

In separate analyses, whose results are included in Tables A1–A3 of Appendix A, we run bivariate regressions on each pairing of independent and dependent variable. The differences between the multivariate and bivariate models were largely trivial, so we focus our discussion on the results of the multivariate regressions. Where there was significant, observable overlap between one of the groups and the Muslim population (i.e., between Blackness and being Muslim), we conducted separate analyses for each group to ensure our results still held. We will discuss the results of these sensitivity tests in more detail below.

Since all of our control variables are categorical, we create a missing category for each control to minimize loss of observations. We then use listwise deletion to remove observations that are missing on either the main independent variable or dependent variable in each model. As a result, the number of observations varies from model to model.[6] This does not threaten our results, because we do not compare coefficients across models. Next, we discuss how each variable was constructed and discuss its distribution across the sample.

3.3. Measures

3.3.1. Independent Variables

Our two independent variables are experiences of discrimination as a Muslim and perception of discrimination as a Muslim. These two measures tackle the question of whether Muslims feel a sense of deprivation—individually or collectively.

Experiences of Discrimination as Muslims

In 2007 and 2011, respondents were told "I am going to read a list of things that some Muslims in the US have experienced. As I read each one, please tell me whether or not it has happened to you in the past twelve months. First, in the past twelve months, [randomized items] because you are a Muslim or not". The randomized items were "have people acted as if they are suspicious of you", "has someone expressed support of you", "have you been called offensive names", "have you been singled out by airport security, have you been singled out by other law enforcement officers",[7] or "have you been physically threatened or attacked". In 2017, the same prompt and response items were listed, but interviewers added "have you seen anti-Muslim graffiti in your local community, or not".

To create a measure of discriminatory experiences, we tallied the number of negative items respondents said had happened to them (whether the respondent received support was omitted). To keep the scale consistent across all three years of the survey, we omitted the 2017 graffiti item. The resultant scale ranged from 0 to 5. Since categories 4 and 5 had very few respondents, the variable was top coded such that 3, 4 and 5 were combined into category "three or more".[8] Three percent of observations on this variable were missing. As Table 1A shows, among those observed, the mean (across

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[5] The survey questions involved used the term Hispanic, but we acknowledge that the word and its derivatives have a problematic and contested history (Alcoff 2005). To maintain accuracy, we use the term when directly discussing the data but use Latinx in our broader discussions (Salinas and Lozano 2019; Morales 2018).

[6] To ensure that our results are not sensitive to listwise deletion of missing observations, we impute missing data using chained multivariate regressions (20 iterations) and re-run our analysis using the imputed observations. The resulting estimates (Tables A4–A6 in Appendix A) are nearly identical to those presented in the main text below. We use the non-imputed data in the main tables, because deriving predicted probabilities from imputed data is a cumbersome process that does not lend itself easily to replication by future scholars. For most models, the non-imputed data also give a slightly more conservative estimate of the association between our main variables.

[7] Targeting by airport security and targeting by law enforcement were separate items, but they were always mentioned consecutively.

[8] This coding choice did not substantially change our results, tables available upon request.

all three years) was 0.72.[9] The mean is relatively low because approximately 58.5% of respondents reported no experiences of discrimination. Approximately 20.5% reported having one experience, another 12% reported two experiences and 9% reported three or more. We were surprised by this distribution given the prevalence of marginalization in qualitative accounts of Muslim life in the United States (Cainkar 2009; Love 2017; Peek 2011; Selod 2018). As we will discuss below, this may reflect the difficulty of measuring marginalization in a survey setting.

Perceived Discrimination against Muslims

In 2017, respondents were asked "Just your impression, in the United States today, is there a lot of discrimination against [randomized items], or not? How about [next randomized item]?" The randomized items included Muslims, Jews, Blacks, gays and lesbians, and Hispanics. We created a binary variable for whether or not Muslims answered yes to this question, indicating a belief that Muslims do face a lot of discrimination in the US today. Approximately 2% of observations were missing, and as Table 1A shows the proportion of Muslims who answered yes to this question was 78%. Surveys of the general public on the same year show that 69% think Muslim Americans face discrimination (Pew Research Center 2017b). The discrepancy between the proportion of respondents who report experiencing specific Islamophobic incidents and the proportion who believe Muslims as a whole experience discrimination suggests that the marginalization faced by Muslims could be so normal as to be rendered invisible in daily life. One example of a quotidian form of marginalization that would not have been captured in the discrimination scale is the intensive surveillance by law enforcement of Muslim communities, what some activists have called "the feeling of being watched" (Bechrouri 2018; Boundaoui 2018; Selod 2018; Shams 2018).

Table 1. (**A**) Means and Standard Errors of Main Variables. (**B**) Means and Standard Errors of Controls.

(A) Main Variables		
	Mean	**Sample**
Independent Variables		
Experiences of Discrimination as a Muslim [0,3] *	0.72 (0.02)	2983
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims	0.78 (0.01)	978
Dependent Variables		
Change Needed for Equality for Black People	0.77 (0.01)	937
Perceived Discrimination against Black People	0.75 (0.01)	969
Homosexuality Should Be Accepted*	0.44 (0.01)	2694
Perceived Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians	0.65 (0.02)	906
Approval of Immigrants*	0.87 (0.01)	2858
Perceived Discrimination against Hispanics	0.67 (0.02)	926
Perceived Discrimination against Jews	0.42 (0.02)	897

[9] We have 2983 observations (out of 3084) for this variable which is reflected in the "Sample" column of Table 1A.

Table 1. *Cont.*

(B) Control Variables		
	(1)	**(2)**
	All Years	**2017 Only**
Age		
18–24	0.15	0.20
	(0.01)	(0.01)
25–34	0.23	0.24
	(0.01)	(0.01)
35–44	0.22	0.18
	(0.01)	(0.01)
45–54	0.20	0.17
	(0.01)	(0.01)
55–64	0.12	0.12
	(0.01)	(0.01)
65+	0.07	0.08
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Don't Know/Refused	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Gender		
Male	0.57	0.62
	(0.01)	(0.02)
Female	0.43	0.38
	(0.01)	(0.02)
Ethnicity, Race and Generation		
1st or 2nd Gen. MENA	0.29	0.25
	(0.01)	(0.01)
1st or 2nd Gen. South Asian	0.31	0.30
	(0.01)	(0.01)
1st or 2nd Gen. Non-Black Other	0.10	0.14
	(0.01)	(0.01)
1st or 2nd Gen. Black	0.09	0.09
	(0.01)	(0.01)
3rd Gen.+ Black	0.11	0.10
	(0.01)	(0.01)
3rd Gen.+ White	0.03	0.03
	(0.00)	(0.01)
3rd Gen.+ Other	0.03	0.04
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Don't Know/Refused	0.04	0.05
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Generation		
First Generation	0.68	0.63
	(0.01)	(0.02)
Second Generation	0.12	0.18
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Third Generation or More	0.17	0.15
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Don't Know/Refused	0.03	0.03
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Income		
Less than $30K	0.27	0.27
	(0.01)	(0.01)
$30K–Under $50K	0.16	0.16
	(0.01)	(0.01)
$50K–Under $100K	0.22	0.22
	(0.01)	(0.01)
$100K+	0.21	0.24
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Don't Know/Refused	0.14	0.11
	(0.01)	(0.01)

Table 1. *Cont.*

Mosque Attendance		
Never	0.15	0.14
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Seldom	0.08	0.06
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Few/Year	0.20	0.21
	(0.01)	(0.01)
1–2/Month	0.12	0.14
	(0.01)	(0.01)
1/Week	0.27	0.28
	(0.01)	(0.01)
>1/Week	0.17	0.17
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Don't Know/Refused	0.01	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Prayer Frequency		
Never	0.10	0.11
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Eid Only	0.06	0.06
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Occasionally	0.19	0.21
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Some/Day	0.20	0.19
	(0.01)	(0.01)
5/Day	0.43	0.42
	(0.01)	(0.02)
Don't Know/Refused	0.02	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Political Ideology		
Very Conservative	0.03	0.02
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Conservative	0.15	0.13
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Moderate	0.44	0.44
	(0.01)	(0.02)
Liberal	0.20	0.22
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Very Liberal	0.07	0.10
	(0.00)	(0.01)
Don't Know/Refused	0.11	0.09
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	3084	1001

Standard errors in parentheses. * These variables were observed in the 2007, 2011 and 2017 surveys. Other variables were only observed in 2017.

3.3.2. Dependent Variables

We gathered all variables in the surveys that indicated Muslims' views on the discrimination and deprivation faced by other groups. Of course, several of these groups have overlap with the Muslim population. By "other" here we do not mean that these groups represent mutually exclusive identities, but rather that they are groups defined by a different boundary than Muslimness—a boundary within which the respondent may or may not fall. Indeed, the interplay between Islam and Black Americans has been tremendously important for both the religious landscape of Black America and for the trajectory of American Islam (Abdul Khabeer 2016; Chan-Malik 2018; Jackson 2005, 2014; Karim 2009).

Equality for Black People

The first set of outcome variables pertains to the respondent's views on Black people's status in America. In 2017, respondents were asked which statement comes closer to their own views: "our country has made the changes needed to give blacks equal rights with whites" or "our country needs to

continue making changes to give blacks equal rights with whites". The order in which the statements were read by the interviewer was randomized. We created a binary variable, which we refer to as "change needed for equality for Black people", where those who chose the first statement receive a one and those who chose the second receive a zero. Approximately 6% of observations were missing. Seventy-seven percent of those who answered the question in the 2017 sample believed that change was still needed to achieve equality for Black people. This proportion among Muslims is larger than that of the general public, of whom 61% believed in the need for change (Pew Research Center 2017a).

As mentioned above, respondents in 2017 were also asked whether they believed Black people were subjects of a lot of discrimination in the US today. This is another binary variable we use as an outcome. Three percent of observations were missing, and of those who were observed, approximately three-quarters (76%) answered yes to this question. Again this is considerably higher than the proportion of the general public who answered yes to the same question (59%) (Pew Research Center 2017b).

Equality for LG People

In all three years of the survey, respondents were asked which statement came closest to their views. "Homosexuality should be accepted by society" or "homosexuality should be discouraged by society".[10] Those who chose "should be accepted by society" were assigned a one in our binary variable, whereas those who said discouraged were assigned a zero. One limitation of using this measure is that approximately 13% of respondents (across the three years) refused to answer the question. Of those observed, the proportion saying homosexuality should be accepted across the three years is 46%. As with the general population, however, responses to this variable changed considerably over the decade. In 2007, only 32% say homosexuality should be accepted by society (compared to 41% of the general public in 2006); in 2011, this proportion rises to 41% (45% in the general public); and by 2017, it is well over a majority of respondents at 61% (lower but comparable to the proportion of 70% among the general public) (Pew Research Center 2017a).[11]

We also use the item asking whether the respondent believes gays and lesbians are victims of a lot of discrimination in the US today—a question asked only in 2017. Approximately nine percent of observations were missing, but of those observed, 65% of respondents answered yes. This proportion is higher than that of the general public in the same year, which is at 56% (Pew Research Center 2017b).

Other Solidarity Questions—Immigrants, Jews and Hispanics

Across all three years of the survey, respondents were also asked to choose between the following statements "immigrants today strengthen the US because of their hard work and talents" or "immigrants today are a burden on the US because they take our jobs, housing and healthcare". The binary variable, "approval of immigrants", assigns a one to those who say immigrants strengthen US society and a zero to those who say immigrants are a burden. Seven percent of possible observations are missing on this question. Given the high proportion of the sample that is foreign born or born to foreign born parents (see Table 1B), it is unsurprising that 87% of our observed sample approves of immigrants. In the general public, only 50% approved of immigrants across comparable survey years (Pew Research Center 2017a).

Similar to the questions regarding Muslims, Blacks, and gays and lesbians, respondents were also asked whether in the US today, Hispanics and Jews faced a lot of discrimination. Seven percent of

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[10] In 2007, the wording was slightly different, asking respondents to choose between "Homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society" and "Homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society". Experiments conducted by the Pew Research Center suggested that removing the phrase "is a way of life" made no difference in the overall distribution of responses.

[11] In sensitivity checks, we explored the possibility of an interaction effect between experiences of discrimination and year. We did not find that the association between perceiving discrimination against one's self and accepting homosexuality is different across different years of the survey. Tables are available upon request. We could not conduct the same sensitivity analysis with our independent variable, perception of discrimination against Muslims, because that question was only asked in 2017.

respondents did not answer the question regarding Hispanics, but of those who did, 67% answered yes. The proportion among the general public in the same year was 56% (Pew Research Center 2017b). Approximately ten percent of respondents did not answer the question regarding Jews, but of those who did, 42% answered yes. This proportion is close to that of the general public, which is 38% (ibid.).

3.3.3. Control Variables

Table 1B shows means and standard errors on all controls from all three years in the first column and then separately from 2017 in the second column. Since all the controls are categorical, each is treated as a series of indicator variables. We control for age and gender as well as income. We chose income, rather than education, as a proxy for class, because returns on education depend on whether degrees were acquired domestically or abroad (Chiswick and Miller 2008; Friedberg 2000)—information the survey did not collect.[12]

We also control for ethnicity, race and migration through a composite variable. The Muslim American community is extremely ethnically and racially diverse. However, standard race measures can be misleading for this population (Mohamed 2020). The largest ethnic groups among American Muslims—Arabs, Central Asians and South Asians—are racially ambiguous for complicated, layered reasons (Gualtieri 2009; Maghbouleh 2017; Morning 2001). Unfortunately, ethnicity was not directly observed in the Pew Surveys. Further complicating the situation, approximately 20% of American Muslims are Black, but we cannot be sure just from the race measure whether these respondents are converts, immigrants or descendants of either—groups that have had different trajectories.

To create a variable that captures the cleavages of race, ethnicity and migration in this complex population, we rely on a combination of respondent's birthplace (or parent's birthplace if the respondent was born in the US) and the respondent's categorization of her or his race. The resultant categories are: 1st or 2nd generation[13] MENA region, 1st or 2nd generation South Asian, 1st or 2nd generation Non-Black Other, 1st or 2nd generation Black, 3rd generation (or more) Black, 3rd generation (or more) White, and 3rd generation or more Other. If both the respondent and her or his parents were born in the United States, the interviewers did not ask about their ancestry. We consider these respondents third generation or more, but we cannot be sure whether they are descendants of immigrants or descendants of converts. We further divide this category by their racial identification (Black, white or other). Since 1st and 2nd generation immigrants are combined in this variable, we also include a separate generation control.

In the United States, religiosity tends to influence social and political attitudes (Schnabel 2020) and the same has been found of American Muslims (Barreto and Dana 2008; Chouhoud et al. 2019; Ocampo et al. 2018). We include both frequency of prayer and mosque attendance as controls for religiosity. The former captures personal religiosity while the latter captures the special role of mosques (Dana et al. 2011).[14]

Lastly, one could argue that respondents who are more liberal would see themselves as more marginalized as well as pick up on the marginalization of other groups. To make sure we were not simply picking up a liberalism effect, we included general political ideology as a control in our models. Respondents were asked "In general, would you describe your political views as very conservative,

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[12] In a sensitivity analysis, we replace income with education. The coefficients on our independent variable of interest are nearly identical when we do. Results are available upon request.

[13] We use the standard sociological definition wherein those born outside the United States are considered first generation and those born in the United States whose parents are foreign born are second generation.

[14] Some scholars have noted that community embeddedness can influence Muslims' political leanings (Ocampo et al. 2018). In an earlier iteration of these analyses, we controlled for the proportion of the respondents' close friends who were Muslim. Including this variable did not substantially change coefficients on our independent variables of interest, though it occasionally had its own associations with the outcome variables net of other controls. While further exploring these relationships is beyond the scope of this paper, it could be a topic for future research.

conservative, moderate, liberal or very liberal". The category moderate has a plurality of the sample at 44%, with another 28% identifying as liberal or very liberal.

Where models included data from multiple survey years, we controlled for survey year as well. In earlier iterations of this analysis, we also included controls for sect and conversion status, but neither showed consistent, interesting relationships across models nor did their inclusion change the significance or magnitude of coefficients on our primary independent variables.

4. Results

We group our outcome variables topically, showing first attitudes towards Black people's position in America, then attitudes towards LG people, and finally attitudes towards Hispanics, Jews, and immigrants.

4.1. Equality for Black People

Table 2 shows results from multivariate regressions predicting—in models 1 and 2—belief that more change is needed to achieve equality for Black people and—in models 3 and 4—perceiving Black people as victims of discrimination. Models 1 and 3 use discrimination experiences scale as the primary independent variable whereas models 2 and 4 switch in perceived discrimination against Muslims as the primary independent variable. Both independent variables have positive, significant associations with each outcome.

To visualize these associations, consider Figure 1, which graphs the predicted probability of believing more change is needed to ensure equal treatment of Black people from models 1 and 2 (panels 1 and 2 respectively). On the left, panel 1 illustrates the increase in support for change as levels of experienced discrimination rise. Muslims who report three or more experiences of discrimination are approximately a fifth more likely than those who report no experiences of discrimination to support change (86% predicted probability compared to 72%). The influence of perception of discrimination against Muslims is even more stark. Believing that Muslims are discriminated against is associated with a 39% increase in the probability of believing that change is needed for to ensure equality for Black people.

Figure 2 graphs results from models 3 and 4, where the outcome variable is whether the respondent believes that in the US today, Black people face "a lot of discrimination". Again, both experiences of discrimination as a Muslim and perception of discrimination against Muslims as a group have a positive, significant association with also recognizing discrimination against Black people. Those who report no experiences of being discriminated against as Muslims are a third less likely to say that Black people face discrimination than those who report three or more experiences of discrimination. Recognizing discrimination against Muslims, both individually or as a group, is closely linked to recognizing discrimination against Black people. Those who perceive Muslims as a group as facing a lot of discrimination are nearly twice as likely to perceive Black people as also facing a lot of discrimination—the predicted probability jumps from 30% to 89%.

Table 2. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Black People.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Change Needed for Equality for Black People		Perceived Discrimination against Black People	
Discrimination Experiences Scale [0,3]	0.31 **		0.52 ***	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		−1.26 ***		3.39 ***
Age (Ref: 18–24)				
25–34	−0.22	−0.13	−0.65 *	−0.56
35–44	−0.10	0.02	−0.28	0.28
45–54	−0.07	0.06	−0.72 *	−0.33
55–64	−0.07	−0.04	−0.04	0.11
65+	−0.01	0.00	−0.63	−0.50
Don't Know/Refused	0.01	−0.06	−0.45	−0.70
Female	0.26	0.11	0.82 ***	0.55 *
Ethnicity, Race and Generation (Ref: 1st or 2nd Gen MENA)				
1st or 2nd Gen. S. Asian	0.50 *	0.51 *	0.01	−0.12
1st or 2nd Gen. Non-Black Other	0.75 *	0.82 **	0.47	0.56
1st or 2nd Gen. Black	0.86 **	0.74 *	0.96 **	0.91 *
3rd Gen. + Black	1.62 ***	1.32 **	2.05 ***	1.39 **
3rd Gen. + White	0.30	0.13	0.65	0.07
3rd Gen. + Other	1.54 *	1.39 *	0.97	0.31
Don't Know/Refused	0.15	0.05	0.86	0.89
Generation (Ref: 1st Generation)				
Second Generation	0.16	0.10	0.28	0.14
Don't Know/Refused	−0.06	0.07	−0.62	−0.28
Income (Ref: Less than $30K)				
$30K–Under $50K	0.33	0.35	0.39	0.28
$50K–Under $100K	0.28	0.13	0.80 **	0.57
$100K +	0.45	0.38	1.01 ***	0.96 **
Don't Know/Refused	−0.07	−0.00	0.20	0.18
Mosque Attendance (Ref: Never)				
Seldom	0.38	0.16	0.92 *	0.63
Few/Year	0.30	0.11	1.02 **	0.41
1–2/Month	0.47	0.25	0.60	−0.13
1/Week	−0.11	−0.33	0.46	−0.28
>1/Week	0.28	0.01	0.72 *	−0.12
Don't Know/Refused +				
Prayer Frequency (Ref: Never)				
Eid Only	−0.67	−0.58	−0.41	−0.39
Occasionally	−0.77 *	−0.57	−0.56	−0.03
Some/Day	−0.66	−0.42	−0.38	0.54
5/Day	−0.45	−0.24	−0.48	0.12
Don't Know/Refused ++			−0.89	−0.77
Political Ideology (Ref: Very Conservative)				
Conservative	1.58 **	1.54 **	0.08	−0.58
Moderate	1.80 ***	1.64 **	1.04 *	0.47
Liberal	1.53 **	1.32 *	1.28 *	0.60
Very Liberal	2.09 ***	2.01 ***	1.09	0.79
Don't Know/Refused	0.90	0.74	0.55	−0.14
Constant	−1.03	−1.48 *	−1.03 *	2.30 **
Observations	909	915	945	953

+ This category had too few observations and was therefore omitted from the analysis. ++ This category had too few observations and was therefore omitted from the analysis in models 1 and 2. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

Again, Black and Muslim are not mutually exclusive categories. Approximately one-fifth of the 2017 sample used in these models identifies as Black (see Table 1B). Both immigrant and non-immigrant Black people were significantly more likely than the reference group (non-Black immigrants from the MENA region) to believe in the need for change and to recognize discrimination against Black people. We wondered whether this relationship differs by whether the respondent her or himself is Black.

In results not shown, we run the same regressions after excluding any respondents who identified as Black, the results were substantially the same. Those who experienced discrimination as Muslims or who perceived Muslims to be discriminated against were more likely to believe in the need for change and to see discrimination against Black people.

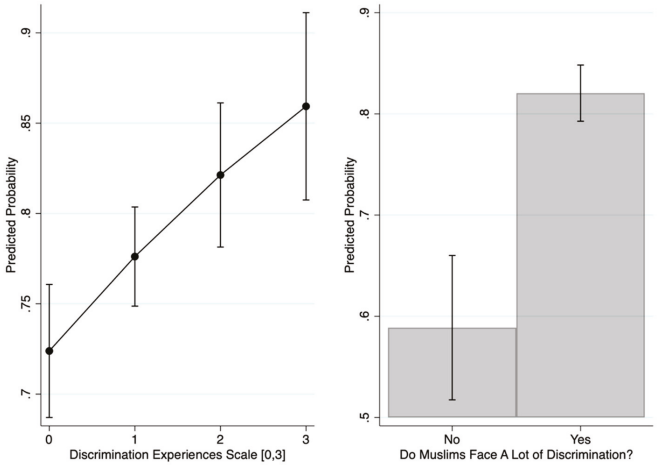

Figure 1. Predicted probability of believing change is still needed to achieve equality for Black people, computed from models 1 (left) and 2 (right) of Table 2, which utilize the 2017 data and include controls for age, gender, ethnicity, generation, income, mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and political ideology.

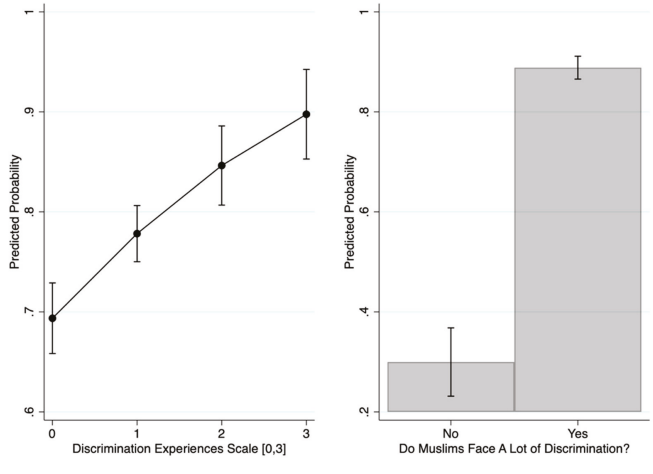

Figure 2. Predicted probability of perceiving discrimination against Black people, computed from models 3 (left) and 4 (right) of Table 2, which utilize the 2017 data and include controls for age, gender, ethnicity, generation, income, mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and political ideology.

4.2. Equality for LG People

Table 3 shows results from the questions of accepting homosexuality in society and whether gays and lesbians face discrimination. Similar to the set up in Table 2, we separate out models for each independent variable of interest. Experiences of discrimination as a Muslim serves as the main

independent variable in models 1 and 3, and it is swapped for perceived discrimination against Muslims in models 2 and 4.

Table 3. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Gays and Lesbians.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Homosexuality Should Be Accepted		Perceived Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians	
Discriminations Experiences Scale [0,3]	0.10 *		0.22 **	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		0.59 **		2.53 ***
Age (Ref: 18–24)				
25–34	−0.46 *	−0.35	−0.87 **	−0.77 **
35–44	−0.76 ***	−0.95 **	−0.86 **	−0.68 *
45–54	−1.09 ***	−1.21 ***	−0.60 *	−0.47
55–64	−1.01 ***	−1.36 ***	−0.57	−0.56
65+	−1.58 ***	−2.18 ***	−0.95 **	−0.80 *
Don't Know/Refused	−0.95	−0.85	0.98	0.84
Female	0.51 ***	0.58 **	1.02 ***	0.91 ***
Ethnicity, Race, and Generation (Ref: 1st or 2nd Gen MENA)				
1st or 2nd Gen. S. Asian	−0.02	0.43	0.17	0.25
1st or 2nd Gen. Non-Black Other	0.58 ***	0.92 **	0.15	0.02
1st or 2nd Gen. Black	0.36 *	0.45	0.76 *	0.75 *
3rd Gen. + Black	0.36 *	−0.01	1.27 ***	0.71 *
3rd Gen. + White	1.08 ***	1.85 **	1.38 *	1.26 *
3rd Gen. + Other	0.65	0.86	0.98 *	0.51
Don't Know/Refused	−0.14	0.20	2.26 *	2.44
Generation (Ref: 1st Generation)				
Second Generation	0.51 **	0.35	0.45	0.34
Don't Know/Refused	−0.24	−0.21	−2.71 *	−2.76
Income (Ref: Less than $30K)				
$30K–Under $50K	−0.04	0.10	0.37	0.34
$50K–Under $100K	0.14	0.32	0.69 **	0.58 *
$100K +	0.72 ***	0.93 ***	0.83 ***	0.85 **
Don't Know/Refused	0.20	0.67 *	0.27	0.25
Mosque Attendance (Ref: Never)				
Seldom	0.02	0.46	0.86 *	0.52
Few/Year	−0.25	−0.21	1.04 **	0.57
1–2/Month	−0.37	−0.28	0.60	0.33
1/Week	−0.38 *	−0.43	0.38	−0.03
>1/Week	−0.53 *	−0.89 *	0.66	0.19
Don't Know/Refused+	−2.24 *			
Prayer Frequency (Ref: Never)				
Eid Only	−0.18	0.23	−0.96 *	−0.92
Occasionally	−0.30	−0.25	−0.85 *	−0.64
Some/Day	−0.72 ***	−0.45	−0.30	0.09
5/Day	−1.24 ***	−1.17 **	−0.94 **	−0.70
Don't Know/Refused++	−0.52		−0.51	−0.55
Political Ideology (Ref: Very Conservative)				
Conservative	0.63 *	0.96	0.08	−0.16
Moderate	0.71 *	1.27 *	0.66	0.33
Liberal	1.20 ***	1.79 **	1.09 *	0.62
Very Liberal	1.42 ***	1.71 **	0.84	0.57
Don't Know/Refused	0.23	0.91	0.39	0.27
Year (Ref: 2007)				
2011	0.54 ***			
2017	1.25 ***			
Constant	−0.57	−0.56	−0.68	−1.94 **
Observations	2612	835	885	894

+ This category had too few observations and was therefore omitted from the analysis in models 2, 3, and 4. ++ This category had too few observations and was therefore omitted from the analysis in model 2. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

Experiences of discrimination have a positive relationship with both accepting homosexuality in society (model 1) and seeing LG people as victims of discrimination (model 3), though the magnitudes

of the associations are relatively small. On the left side panel of Figure 3, we can see that the predicted probability of accepting homosexuality rises from 43% to 49% as experiences of discrimination rise from zero to three or more—approximately a 14% increase. The left side of Figure 4 shows that those who have experienced the highest levels of discrimination as Muslims are approximately a fifth more likely than those who have had no such experiences to recognize LG people as victims of discrimination.

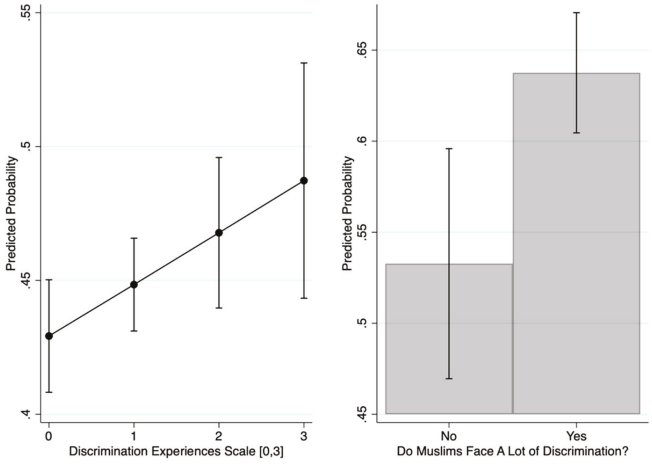

Figure 3. Predicted probability of believing homosexuality should be accepted by society, computed from models 1 (left) and 2 (right) of Table 3, which utilize all three survey years (2007, 2011, and 2017) and include controls for age, gender, ethnicity, generation, income, mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and political ideology.

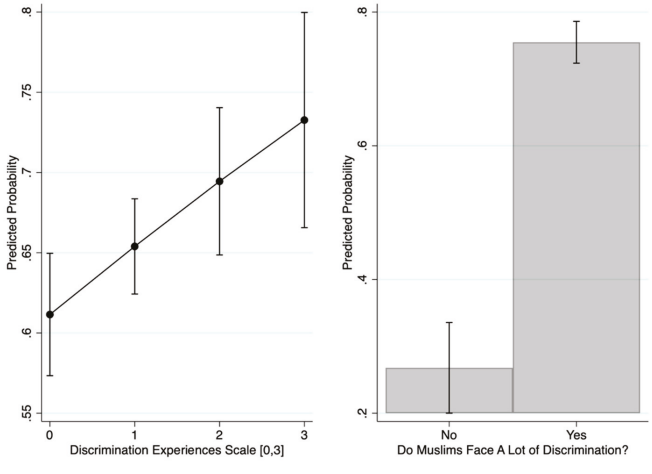

Figure 4. Predicted probability of perceiving discrimination against gays and lesbians, computed from models 3 (left) and 4 (right) of Table 3, which utilize the 2017 data and include controls for age, gender, ethnicity, generation, income, mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and political ideology.

When the predictor is whether one perceives Muslims as discriminated against, the positive correlation is stronger for both outcomes. The difference in predicted probability of accepting homosexuality between those who do and those who do not perceive Muslims as victims of discrimination is approximately 21% (11 percentage points). The magnitude of the association between perceived marginalization of

Muslims and perceived marginalization of LG people is much stronger—those see Muslims as victims of discrimination are twice as likely as those who do not to also see LG people as victims of discrimination.[15]

Coefficients on the controls in the models show that, in general, when it comes to both acceptance of homosexuality and perceived discrimination against LG people, younger Muslims are more tolerant than their elders at almost every age group. Women are more tolerant than men. Third-generation people were generally more tolerant than immigrants, among whom there were not consistent generational differences. Those in the highest income range are more accepting than those in the lowest. The most religious Muslims and the least religious Muslims differ significantly from each in their level of acceptance of homosexuality, but the negative association between religiosity and tolerance appears stronger in the frequency of prayer variable than in mosque attendance. This may suggest that religious Muslims' personal convictions are a stronger deterrent to accepting LG people than embeddedness in Muslim congregations, a hypothesis that future study could potentially test with more extensive data.[16] Evidence for an association between religiosity and perceived discrimination against LG people appears less clear. One interpretation of these divergent results could be that even while maintaining discomfort with homosexuality, Muslims may continue to see LG people as subjects of discrimination and therefore as an oppressed group. LGBTQIA+ Muslims have criticized mainstream Muslim community leaders for showing solidarity with Queer people outside the Muslim community but not within it (Graham 2016).

More politically liberal respondents were more accepting of homosexuality but not more likely to see discrimination against LG people. Finally, positive coefficients on survey year in model 1 reflect the rapid increase in acceptance for homosexuality among Muslims over the decade between the first survey (2007) and the last (2017).

4.3. Other Solidarity Questions—Immigrants, Jews and Hispanics

In the final table, we consider Muslims' views on immigration as well as whether they identify Jewish and Hispanic people as victims of discrimination in the United States—our final measures of intergroup solidarity.

The first two columns of Table 4 and the corresponding Figure 5 show results predicting approval of immigrants. As the left side panel shows, there is no significant increase in immigrant approval as Muslims experience more discrimination. Only perception of discrimination has the positive association we saw in other models, the magnitude is small and the coefficient is only significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. But as Figure 5 (and Table 1A) also shows, of all the outcome variables, approval of immigrants was the highest (87%). The lack of variation on this outcome could explain our weak findings here. Where we do have a significant association, in model 2 (right side of Figure 5), those who perceived of Muslims as facing discrimination had a 93% predicted probability of approving of immigrants, five percentage points higher than those who did not. The latter's approval of immigrants was still at a whopping 88%. Recall that among the general public, the average approval of immigrants across three corresponding survey years was only 50%.

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[15] Here too, we are considering a category that is not mutually exclusive with Muslim. Unfortunately, the survey questionnaire does not enquire about sexual orientation, so we are unable to distinguish LG Muslims from non-LG ones. That is a limitation of this study.

[16] We offer this potential interpretation with the caveat that scholars have cautioned against comparing the magnitude of coefficients across and within (between different groups) logistic regression models, since the constant varies from model to model (Cramer 2007; Kuha and Mills 2020; Long and Mustillo 2018). Again, we hope this observation can spark future research that could wield stronger evidence.

Table 4. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Immigrants, Hispanics and Jews.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Approval of Immigrants		Perceived Discrimination against Hispanics		Perceived Discrimination against Jews	
Discrimination Experiences Scale [0,3]	−0.00		0.39 ***		0.26 ***	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		0.73 *		3.15 ***		2.64 ***
Age (Ref: 18–24)						
25–34	−0.39	−1.04 *	−0.50	−0.34	−0.29	−0.17
35–44	−0.71 **	−0.84	−0.52	−0.21	−0.06	0.29
45–54	−0.78 ***	−1.08 *	−0.65 *	−0.41	0.20	0.32
55–64	−0.53 *	−0.58	−0.37	−0.41	0.09	0.14
65+	−0.22	−0.37	−0.59	−0.44	0.18	0.52
Don't Know/Refused	−1.05 *	−1.19	−0.48	−0.80	0.86	0.82
Female	0.17	0.71 *	0.62 ***	0.38	0.17	0.07
Ethnicity, Race, and Generation (Ref: 1st or 2nd Gen MENA)						
1st or 2nd Gen. S. Asian	0.40 *	0.81	0.14	0.30	−0.18	−0.12
1st or 2nd Gen. Non-Black Other	−0.07	−0.50	0.01	−0.00	−0.16	−0.16
1st or 2nd Gen. Black	0.71 *	2.04	0.75 *	0.62	0.93 **	0.87 **
3rd Gen. + Black	−1.22 ***	−1.32 **	1.21 ***	0.54	0.60 *	0.22
3rd Gen. + White	−0.17	−0.74	0.69	0.41	0.18	−0.00
3rd Gen. + Other	−0.88 **	−1.03	0.87	0.48	1.13 **	1.02 *
Don't Know/Refused	−0.33	14.08	−0.20	−0.40	0.49	0.17
Generation (Ref: 1st Generation)						
Second Generation	−0.19	−0.29	0.27	0.16	0.80 ***	0.73 **
Don't Know/Refused	0.00	−15.26	0.17	0.54	−1.16	−0.76
Income (Ref: Less than $30K)						
$30K–Under $50K	0.30	1.30 **	0.25	0.26	0.03	0.12
$50K–Under $100K	0.43 **	0.57	0.69 **	0.53 *	0.71 **	0.59 *
$100K +	1.02 ***	0.97 *	0.92 ***	0.94 ***	0.67 **	0.62 *
Don't Know/Refused	0.70 **	0.04	0.26	0.34	0.37	0.31
Mosque Attendance (Ref: Never)						
Seldom	0.19	0.77	1.05 **	0.83	0.78 *	0.59
Few/Year	0.01	0.00	0.93 **	0.58	0.71 *	0.55
1–2/Month	0.17	0.01	0.99 **	0.84 *	0.35	0.18
1/Week	0.04	0.16	0.52	0.26	0.37	0.22
>1/Week	0.13	0.36	0.75 *	0.37	0.43	0.27
Don't Know/Refused+	0.45		−0.29	−1.49		
Prayer Frequency (Ref: Never)						
Eid Only	−0.02	0.83	−0.72	−0.71	−0.68	−0.47
Occasionally	0.47	0.67	−0.59	−0.26	−0.61	−0.32
Some/Day	0.34	0.30	−0.37	0.13	0.04	0.44
5/Day	0.38	0.31	−0.36	0.10	−0.29	0.02
Don't Know/Refused ++	1.16		0.15	0.19	0.85	0.91
Political Ideology (Ref: Very Conservative)						
Conservative	0.52	0.62	0.08	−0.48	0.17	−0.15
Moderate	0.91 ***	1.17 *	0.65	−0.01	0.26	−0.16
Liberal	1.29 ***	1.25 *	1.29 *	0.70	0.37	−0.14
Very Liberal	0.82 *	0.67	1.14 *	0.76	0.89	0.56
Don't Know/Refused	0.76 *	1.76 *	0.28	−0.10	0.03	−0.37
Year (Ref: 2007)						
2011	−0.09					
2017	0.64 ***					
Constant	0.68	0.56	−1.05	−2.67 ***	−21.74 **	−3.50 ***
Observations	2775	914	905	918	877	885

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$. + This category had too few observations and was therefore omitted from the analysis in models 2, 5 and 6. ++ This category had too few observations and was therefore omitted from the analysis in model 2.

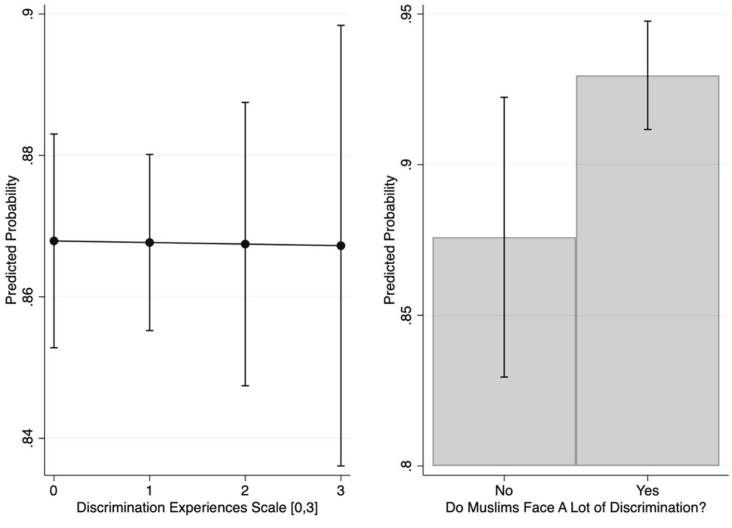

Figure 5. Predicted probability of approving of immigrants, computed from models 1 (left) and 2 (right) of Table 4, which utilize all three survey years (2007, 2011, and 2017) and include controls for age, gender, ethnicity, generation, income, mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and political ideology.

Models 3–6 use perceptions of discrimination against Jews and Hispanics as the outcome variables. Here again, both experiences of discrimination as Muslims and perceptions of discrimination against Muslims as a whole are associated with higher perceptions of solidarity against these groups. As Figure 6 illustrates, those who report no experiences of discrimination have a 62% probability of seeing Hispanics as victims of discrimination, a probability that rises to 82% among those who have had three or more experiences of discrimination as Muslims. Once again, perceived discrimination against Muslims is a stark dividing variable. Those who see Muslims as victims of discrimination are over three times as likely as those who do not to also identify Hispanics as victims of discrimination.[17]

While overall, Muslims are less likely to see Jews as victims of discrimination in the United States, the extent to which they do increases both with experiences of and perception of discrimination against themselves as Muslims. As Figure 7 shows, the predicted probability of seeing Jews as victims of discrimination is 45% higher for those who have experienced discrimination as Muslims (54%) than those who have not (37%). Further, yet again, the great divider is whether Muslims perceive themselves as marginalized. Those who do not only have an 8% probability of seeing Jews as facing discrimination, while those who do are at 51%—a difference of over five-fold!

Overall, our results suggest that Muslims who experience discrimination as Muslims or who perceive Muslims as facing discrimination are more solidaristic towards other identity groups. Intergroup recognition of solidarity was the strongest and most consistent result across our models, suggesting that the ability to recognize one's self as marginalized translates to also "seeing" other forms of marginalization.

[17] A small but growing number of Latinx people in the United States are converting to Islam (Cuartas 2020), but fewer than a hundred respondents across three years in our sample identified as Hispanic.

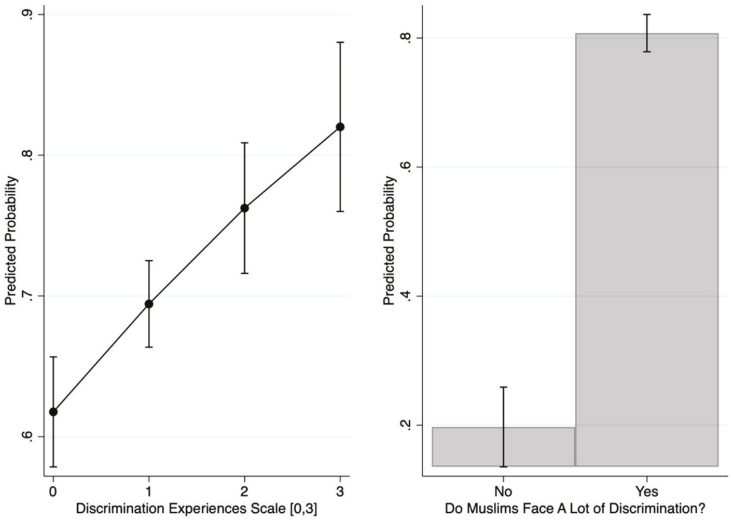

Figure 6. Predicted probability of perceiving discrimination against Hispanics, computed from models 3 (left) and 4 (right) of Table 4, which utilize 2017 data and include controls for age, gender, ethnicity, generation, income, mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and political ideology.

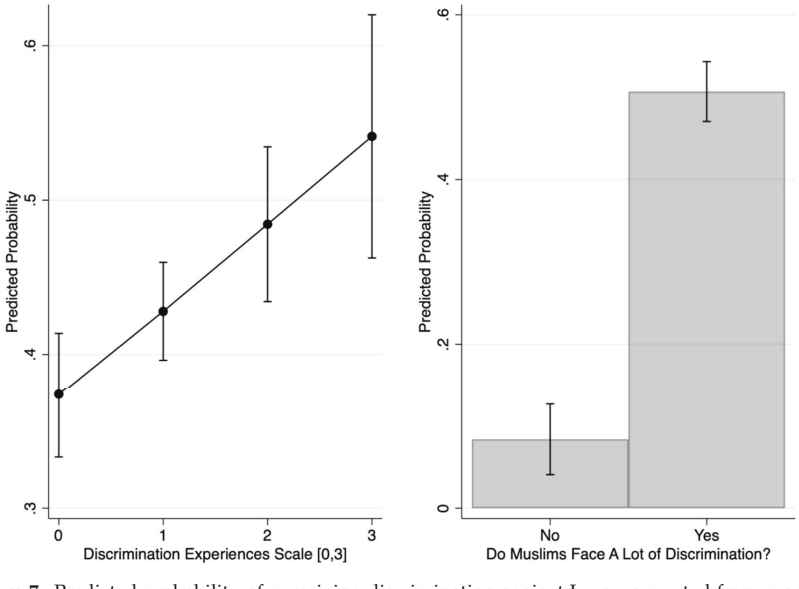

Figure 7. Predicted probability of perceiving discrimination against Jews, computed from models 5 (left) and 6 (right) of Table 4, which utilize 2017 data and include controls for age, gender, ethnicity, generation, income, mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and political ideology.

5. Discussion

Overall, our results suggest that Muslim Americans who experience individual discrimination based on their Muslim identity or who perceive Muslims as facing discrimination as a group show more attitudinal and political support towards other minority groups, including African Americans, immigrants, gays and lesbians, Jews, and Latinx people. This finding—that experiences and perceptions

of in-group deprivation also result in feelings of *intergroup solidarity*—has also been suggested, but not fully emphasized, in previous research on Black, Asian, and Latinx Americans (e.g., Cain et al. 1991; Espiritu 1992; Tate 1993; Dawson 1994; Sanchez 2008). While the great majority of research investigating the consequences of experiences and perceptions of in-group marginalization have focused on in-group solidarity as the outcome of interest, our findings suggest that intergroup solidarity is a phenomenon that deserves greater attention in studies of Muslim Americans and US minority groups in general.

While both of our measures of perceived deprivation—individual experiences of discrimination and the belief that Muslims as a group faced discrimination—predicted greater intergroup solidarity among our Muslim respondents, it was a sense of group discrimination that was a stronger and more consistent predictor of intergroup solidarity. In other words, seeing oneself as a part of an aggrieved *group* is more likely to lead Muslim Americans to support and empathize with members of other marginalized groups than are individual experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination. Notably, this finding is consistent with the few studies of intergroup solidarity among African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx Americans, in which a shared sense of group deprivation—called, alternatively, "group consciousness", "minority group status", "power discontent", or "perceived disadvantage"—has been a consistent predictor of expressions of concern for, support of, or commonality with other socially marginalized minority groups (Cain et al. 1991; Gurin et al. 1980; McClain et al. 2009; Uhlaner 1991).

Why would perceived group deprivation be a stronger predictor of intergroup solidarity than individual experiences of discrimination? From our perspective, it seems likely that group deprivation has a stronger association with feelings of intergroup solidarity than do individual experience of discrimination because the first two forms of cognition that involve seeing the social world primarily through the lens of "groups" (Brubaker 2004), and aggrieved groups in particular. If a person has learned to see oneself as a member of a deprived group, it seems logical that they could then extend this cultural cognitive template, or "schema", outward towards other groups who may seem similar in their social condition or situations (DiMaggio 1997; Sewell 1992; Swidler 1986). While individual experiences of discrimination also have some relationship with feelings of intergroup solidarity, we feel that the sense of being part of a group that faces discrimination may be a more powerful driver of cross-group empathy because both of these modes of thought are grounded in "groupness" (Brubaker 2004).

Our proposed explanation for the strong link between group deprivation and intergroup solidarity may seem more convincing and less abstract when it is connected to the particular mechanisms, or social processes, though which members of racialized minority groups might move from feelings of in-group deprivation to intergroup solidarity. Remaining with Muslim Americans as our empirical example, we can speculate that one tangible means through which Muslims could both gain a sense of themselves as members of a socially deprived group and think in terms of intergroup solidarity is through communal organizational and political action. Indeed, previous studies of minority group coalition formation in US politics emphasizes practical, communal political action as a crucible in which participants may develop a strong in-group consciousness along with a sense of common cause with other minority groups (Espiritu 1992; Garcia Bedolla 2005; Padilla 1985). Likewise, case studies and qualitative research reveal clear efforts by Muslim organizations and leaders to both build a sense of in-group collective identity as well as build coalitions with and support the social concerns of an array of other social groups—Jewish Americans on anti-Semitism and harassment, African Americans on police brutality and racism, Latinx Americans on ending DACA and supporting DREAMERs, and (at times) sexual minorities on harassment and discrimination (Calfano and Lajevardi 2019; Tekelioglu 2019; Yukich 2018). This evidence suggests the possibility of institutional and organizational factors conditioning the relationship between the perception of in-group deprivation among American Muslims and their support and empathy for other minority groups. While this is a relationship we cannot measure using existent survey data (which do not contain sufficient inquiries of respondents' political organizing or organizational memberships), the potential importance of organizers and activists in providing the social and organizational contexts within which

a sense of group deprivation and intergroup solidarity can be cultivated, among Muslims as well as other marginalized US minorities.

Another way to think about the connection between the sense of in-group deprivation among Muslims and their increased sense of intergroup solidarity is to consider the significance of the common political opposition faced by American Muslims and the other groups for which they express intergroup solidarity, namely, right-wing political forces of white Supremacy and Christian nationalism, who also support President Donald Trump (Braunstein 2019; Dahab and Omori 2019; Edgell 2016; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018; Perry and Whitehead 2015). While the previous mechanism suggests that Muslims and other minority groups might develop a sense of in-group deprivation and then intergroup solidarity through political action and community organizing, this mechanism centers on the recognition by those who feel they are members of socially deprived groups that they share the same political opposition as other minority groups in their midst. Just as American Muslims heard and saw Trump make defamatory statements about Muslims, appoint openly Islamophobic officials, and try to enact a restriction on Muslims entering the country, so did they see and hear these other racialized and marginalized groups—Latinx and African immigrants, Black Americans, Jewish Americans, and gays and lesbians—face similar social and political attacks from Trump and his key constituency (Bail 2014; Braunstein 2019; Dahab and Omori 2019; Edgell 2016; Selod 2015; Whitehead and Perry 2020). The cross-group solidaristic political attitudes expressed by American Muslims—and others—who feel group deprivation could be relational in nature, and might be shaped in part in response to a political climate in which they are one of many marginalized social groups under attack from the same right-wing political coalition. This may be why those Muslims who feel the strongest sense of group deprivation also feel the strongest support for these other marginalized groups—these "enemies of their enemy" are considered political friends.

6. Conclusions

The fact that the great majority of US Muslims feel a strong sense of group deprivation, and that this sense predicts empathy and concern for other politically marginalized groups, may mean that Muslims are taking their place as a politicized racial and ethnic group, as much as a religious one, and one whose concerns extend out to other social groups similarly marginalized in contemporary American politics—Blacks, LGBTQIA+ individuals, Hispanics, Jews, and immigrants. These results not only suggest the potential for cross-group political coalitions and allegiances, but also demonstrate that this sense of allegiance with other marginalized groups—this solidaristic attitude—is powerfully shaped for American Muslims by their own perceptions of in-group deprivation. In this way, our paper contributes to and extends the social scientific literature on the racialization and political behavior of American Muslims in contemporary American society. While many have looked at the processes of racialization and discrimination and their effect on Muslims in terms of their own self-perceptions, our project demonstrates how these processes impact the political attitudes and expressions of Muslim Americans, not simply as recipients of discrimination but as agentive political thinkers and actors in their own right.

Finally, our results offer a testable hypothesis with important implications for organizers and activists. Future research could test whether perceived marginalization leads to intergroup solidarity among other minority groups. If it does, this affirms the importance of in-group consciousness raising as a crucial component of intergroup coalition building.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Coefficients from Logistic Regressions Predicting Solidarity with Black People.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Change Needed for Equality for Black People		**Perceived Discrimination against Black People**	
Discrimination Experiences Scale [0,3]	0.34 ***		0.60 ***	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		1.37 ***		3.39 ***
Constant	0.92 ***	0.21	0.70 ***	−1.21 ***
Observations	917	922	947	955

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A2. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Gays and Lesbians.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Homosexuality Should Be Accepted		**Perceived Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians**	
Discrimination Experiences Scale [0,3]	0.15 ***		0.33 ***	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		0.82 ***		2.73 ***
Constant	−0.34 ***	−0.17	0.33 ***	−1.49 ***
Observations	2612	841	886	895

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A3. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Immigrants, Hispanics and Jews.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Approval of Immigrant		**Hispanics Face Discrimination**		**Jews Face Discrimination**	
Discrimination Experiences Scale [0,3]	−0.01		0.51 ***		0.34 ***	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		0.70 **		3.23 ***		2.72 ***
Constant	1.89 ***	1.91 ***	0.35 ***	−1.72 ***	−0.61 ***	−2.64 ***
Observations	2775	923	905	918	879	887

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A4. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Black People using Imputed Data.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Change Needed for Equality for Black People		**Perceived Discrimination against Black People**	
Discrimination Experiences Scale [0,3]	0.31 ***		0.48 ***	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		1.26 ***		3.27 ***
Age (Ref: 18–24)				
25–34	−0.18	−0.08	−0.62 *	−0.47
35–44	−0.08	0.06	−0.21	0.27
45–54	−0.03	0.09	−0.65 *	−0.40
55–64	−0.01	−0.03	−0.12	0.00
65+	0.04	0.10	−0.58	−0.40
Don't Know/Refused	0.10	0.10	−0.48	−0.73
Female	0.29	0.18	0.74 ***	0.49

Table A4. *Cont.*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Change Needed for Equality for Black People		Perceived Discrimination against Black People	
Ethnicity, Race and Generation (Ref: 1st or 2nd Gen MENA)				
1/2nd Gen S. Asian	0.46 *	0.47 *	0.01	0.01
1/2nd Gen NB-Other	0.69 *	0.69 *	0.40	0.57
1/2nd Gen Bl	0.84 **	0.73 *	0.88 **	0.93 *
3rdG + Black	1.60 ***	1.30 **	2.06 ***	1.45 **
3rdG + White	0.27	0.09	0.68	0.15
3rdG + Other	1.62 *	1.49 *	1.00	0.41
Don't Know/Refused	0.34	0.23	1.38	0.99
Generation (Ref: 1st Generation)				
Second Generation	0.08	0.06	0.38	0.30
Don't Know/Refused	−0.26	−0.11	−1.01	−0.29
Income (Ref: Less than $30K)				
$30K–Under $50K	0.41	0.35	0.39	0.29
$50K–Under $100K	0.30	0.17	0.69 **	0.49
$100K +	0.49 *	0.38	1.03 ***	0.97 **
Don't Know/Refused	0.04	−0.01	0.25	0.18
Mosque Attendance (Ref: Never)				
Seldom	0.38	0.24	0.84 *	0.64
Few/Year	0.31	0.13	0.89 **	0.49
1–2/Month	0.47	0.35	0.46	0.05
1/Week	−0.05	−0.22	0.43	−0.06
>1/Week	0.28	0.10	0.63	0.07
Prayer Frequency (Ref: Never)				
Eid Only	−0.45	−0.45	−0.29	−0.37
Occasionally	−0.70	−0.57	−0.39	−0.08
Some/Day	−0.58	−0.41	−0.17	0.40
5/Day	−0.39	−0.25	−0.29	0.07
Political Ideology (Ref: Very Conservative)				
Conservative	1.54 **	1.43 **	0.14	−0.49
Moderate	1.69 **	1.50 **	1.05 *	0.51
Liberal	1.50 **	1.23 *	1.31 *	0.60
Very Liberal	1.94 ***	1.75 **	1.18 *	0.70
Don't Know/Refused	0.95	0.71	0.60	−0.04
Constant	−1.09	−1.48 *	−1.12	−2.39 **
Observations	1001	1001	1001	1001

Multiple imputations conducted using chained regressions over 20 iterations in Stata 16. Corresponds to Table 2 in the main text. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A5. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Gays and Lesbians using Imputed Data.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Homosexuality Should Be Accepted		Perceived Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians	
Discriminations Experiences Scale [0,3]	0.12 **		0.21 *	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		0.58 **		2.50 ***
Age (Ref: 18–24)				
25–34	−0.41 **	−0.45	−0.83 ***	−0.74 **
35–44	−0.75 ***	−0.99 ***	−0.81 **	−0.62 *
45–54	−1.05 ***	−1.22 ***	−0.65 *	−0.44
55–64	−1.00 ***	−1.39 ***	−0.66 *	−0.66
65+	−1.57 ***	−2.03 ***	−0.92 **	−0.74 *
Don't Know/Refused	−0.80	−0.64	0.95	0.91
Female	0.46 ***	0.64 **	1.06 ***	0.94 ***

Table A5. *Cont.*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Homosexuality Should Be Accepted		Perceived Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians	
Ethnicity, Race, and Generation (Ref: 1st or 2nd Gen MENA)				
1st or 2nd Gen. S. Asian	−0.05	0.34	0.17	0.23
1st or 2nd Gen. Non-Black Other	0.53 **	0.69 *	0.06	0.05
1st or 2nd Gen. Black	0.35	0.45	0.79 **	0.73 *
3rd Gen. + Black	0.25	0.00	1.22 ***	0.71 *
3rd Gen. + White	1.03 ***	1.58 *	1.31 *	1.15
3rd Gen. + Other	0.60 *	0.74	0.91 *	0.49
Don't Know/Refused	−0.07	0.25	2.06 *	1.87
Generation (Ref: 1st Generation)				
Second Generation	0.44 **	0.32	0.41	0.33
Don't Know/Refused	−0.15	−0.44	−2.36 *	−2.13
Income (Ref: Less than $30K)				
$30K–Under $50K	−0.04	0.17	0.27	0.19
$50K–Under $100K	0.10	0.36	0.68 **	0.52 *
$100K +	0.65 ***	0.99 ***	0.92 ***	0.82 **
Don't Know/Refused	0.17	0.56	0.26	0.25
Mosque Attendance (Ref: Never)				
Seldom	−0.01	0.44	0.71	0.45
Few/Year	−0.22	−0.15	0.80 **	0.54
1–2/Month	−0.35	−0.13	0.51	0.29
1/Week	−0.38 *	−0.26	0.32	0.01
>1/Week	−0.80 ***	−0.58	0.48	0.11
Prayer Frequency (Ref: Never)				
Eid Only	−0.19	0.35	−0.66	−0.82
Occasionally	−0.30	−0.23	−0.64	−0.60
Some/Day	−0.76 ***	−0.46	−0.15	0.13
5/Day	−1.25 ***	−1.19 **	−0.70 *	−0.65
Political Ideology (Ref: Very Conservative)				
Conservative	0.61	0.96	0.15	−0.14
Moderate	0.67 *	1.18 *	0.77	0.37
Liberal	1.14 ***	1.57 *	1.14 *	0.65
Very Liberal	1.36 ***	1.50 *	0.97	0.60
Don't Know/Refused	0.32	1.04	0.55	0.26
Year (Ref: 2007)				
2011	0.45 ***			
2017	1.07 ***			
Constant	−0.39	−0.50	−0.84	−1.96 **
Observations	3084	1001	1001	1001

Multiple imputations conducted using chained regressions over 20 iterations in Stata 16. Corresponds to Table 3 in the main text. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A6. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Predicting Solidarity with Immigrants, Hispanics, and Jews Using Imputed Data.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Approval of Immigrants		Perceived Discrimination against Hispanics		Perceived Discrimination against Jews	
Discrimination Experiences Scale [0,3]	0.00		0.37 ***		0.27 ***	
Perceived Discrimination against Muslims (Ref: No)		0.81 **		3.04 ***		2.57 ***
Age (Ref: 18–24)						
25–34	−0.37	−0.90	−0.51 *	−0.38	−0.28	−0.18
35–44	−0.65 **	−0.61	−0.55 *	−0.29	0.08	0.28
45–54	−0.73 **	−0.77	−0.63 *	−0.47	0.13	0.28
55–64	−0.46	−0.55	−0.37	−0.42	0.13	0.16
65 +	−0.31	−0.14	−0.56	−0.38	0.15	0.37
Don't Know/Refused	−0.92	−0.96	−0.31	−0.48	0.93	0.96
Female	0.20	0.61 *	0.63 ***	0.42 *	0.25	0.10
Ethnicity, Race, and Generation (Ref: 1st or 2nd Gen MENA)						
1st or 2nd Gen. S. Asian	0.40 *	0.60	0.15	0.24	−0.08	−0.07
1st or 2nd Gen. Non-Black Other	−0.04	−0.46	0.02	−0.02	−0.12	−0.15
1st or 2nd Gen. Black	0.69 *	1.93	0.75 *	0.69	0.85 **	0.78 **
3rd Gen. + Black	−1.17 ***	−1.35 **	1.20 ***	0.57	0.62 *	0.25
3rd Gen. + White	−0.31	−0.93	0.63	0.27	0.23	0.04
3rd Gen. + Other	−0.95 **	−1.03	0.97 *	0.52	1.07 *	0.87 *
Don't Know/Refused	−0.31	13.87	0.06	−0.47	0.38	0.17
Generation (Ref: 1st Generation)						
Second Generation	−0.29	−0.22	0.29	0.21	0.67 **	0.67 **
Don't Know/Refused	−0.12	−14.97	−0.08	0.56	−0.72	−0.49
Income (Ref: Less than $30K)						
$30K–Under $50K	0.32	1.04 *	0.32	0.27	0.08	0.04
$50K–Under $100K	0.42 **	0.45	0.70 **	0.54 *	0.61 **	0.48 *
$100K +	1.00 ***	0.98 *	1.02 ***	0.99 ***	0.65 **	0.54 *
Don't Know/Refused	0.71 **	0.16	0.27	0.21	0.24	0.18
Mosque Attendance (Ref: Never)						
Seldom	0.22	0.90	0.91 *	0.77	0.83 *	0.69
Few/Year	0.10	−0.21	0.77 **	0.48	0.75 **	0.57
1–2/Month	0.21	−0.17	0.95 **	0.89 *	0.36	0.20
1/Week	0.10	0.16	0.55	0.29	0.38	0.22
>1/Week	0.18	0.36	0.68 *	0.34	0.49	0.28
Prayer Frequency (Ref: Never)						
Eid Only	−0.15	1.22	−0.48	−0.54	−0.54	−0.49
Occasionally	0.41	0.96	−0.37	−0.16	−0.52	−0.33
Some/Day	0.23	0.66	−0.14	0.28	0.11	0.42
5/Day	0.26	0.50	−0.14	0.17	−0.22	−0.00
Political Ideology (Ref: Very Conservative)						
Conservative	0.44	0.63	0.09	−0.43	0.29	0.05
Moderate	0.80 **	1.13 *	0.68	0.08	0.42	0.05
Liberal	1.16 ***	1.28 *	1.30 **	0.71	0.48	0.01
Very Liberal	0.70 *	0.77	1.14 *	0.70	0.97	0.64
Don't Know/Refused	0.64 *	1.20	0.52	−0.01	0.34	−0.01
Year (Ref: 2007)						
2011	−0.15					
2017	0.58 ***					
Constant	0.82 *	0.29	−1.27 *	−2.69 ***	−1.96 ***	−3.54 ***
Observations	3084	1001	1001	1001	1001	1001

Multiple imputations conducted using chained regressions over 20 iterations in Stata 16. Corresponds to Table 4 in the main text. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

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Race, Ethnicity, and the Functional Use of Religion When Faced with Imminent Death

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Abstract: This article uses religious coping theory to theorize about how and why race and ethnic groups on death row frame religious last statements at the moment of imminent death. Unique data (N = 269) drawn from death row inmates in Texas between December 1982 and April 2016 reveal uniformity in the dominance that black, white, and Hispanic inmates assign to relational forms of expressions that draw them closer to God and expressions that facilitate spiritual intimacy with others, over self-focused expressions that represent efforts to gain control over the imminent death experience or signal a transformed life. There is a hierarchy of preferred religious coping methods that changes for each group following the implementation of a new policy allowing the family and friends of murder victims (co-victims) to witness the execution of inmates. It is concluded that race and ethnic groups differ in the premium they place on preferred religious coping strategies when faced with imminent death, and a change in social context, such as the sudden presence of co-victims at executions, increases the religious content of last statements for all groups.

Keywords: religious coping theory; death row; last statements; race; ethnicity

1. Introduction

The last statements of those executed by the state have long fascinated scholars and onlookers alike since the origins of the practice in 14th-century Europe. What final words will people utter when they are certain of the exact time and place of their death? The answer, it turns out, runs the gamut from the sublime ("I'm at peace with all of this and I won't have to wake up in prison any more. I totally surrender to the Lord") to the humorous ("Where's my stunt double?"). The systematic study of the final words of death row inmates is a relatively recent development in social science research that began with an interest in documenting the most common themes contained in last statements (Heflick 2005; Hirschmüller and Egloff 2016; Schuck and Ward 2008; Shermer 2018; Vollum 2008; Upton et al. 2017; Vollum and Longmire 2009). More recent inquiries have analyzed the last statements of death row inmates with an eye toward understanding their psychological make-up (Foley and Kelly 2018; Kelly and Foley 2013; Rice et al. 2009), the antecedents and consequences of expressed apologies (Cooney and Philips 2013; Eaton and Theuer 2009), possible race and ethnic variation in the content of last statements (Lester and Gunn 2013; McCaffree et al. 2020), methods of religious coping (Smith 2018), and the multiple dimensions of forgiveness found in last statements (Smith 2019). As important as this research is, at least three important gaps remain. First, there has been no attempt to theorize how and why race and ethnic groups prioritize certain religious coping methods over others in their last statements.[1] Second, no attempt has been made to track change over time in the priorities that race

[1] Depsite the conceptual and empirical distinction between the words "religion" and "spiritual," I use them throughout the text interchangeably.

and ethnic groups assign to religious coping methods. And, finally, we know very little about the role social context plays in influencing the content of last statements across race and ethnic groups.

To fill these gaps this article uses religious coping theory as a lens to view the coping strategies of inmates of race and ethnic groups who utter last statements just moments before their execution. In particular, I explain how and why black, white, and Hispanic[2] inmates prioritize a variety of religious coping methods, and I explore change over time in the hierarchy of preferred religious coping strategies among race and ethnic groups, while examining whether change in the social context in which last statements are elicited engenders change in the content of last statements. I begin with a discussion of religious coping theory to lay the foundation for the analysis described above. I then discuss what we currently know about the last statements of death row inmates. Following a discussion of the data, analytical strategy, and key results, I summarize the research findings, discuss their contributions to the literature, explain the limitations of the study, and provide direction for future inquiries.

2. Religious Coping Theory

Researchers have documented the long and intimate history between religion and penal institutions throughout Europe and the United States (Johnson 1990). Not only were state-sponsored executions seen as a way for condemned people to atone for sin (Johnson 1990), but Christianity, the dominant religion throughout most Western prison systems, preached a redemptive theology that included the possible salvation of some of the most reviled offenders in society. Notwithstanding what the state could do to the physical body, with heartfelt belief in Jesus Christ, Christianity promised (e.g., John 3:16) people who have been condemned to die with "literal immortality" (Heflick and Goldenberg 2012).

Despite the strong connection between religion and the death penalty, very little is known about how and why death row inmates use religion to cope with imminent death. Koenig et al. (1998, p. 513) define religious coping as "the use of religious beliefs or behaviors to facilitate problem-solving to prevent or alleviate the negative emotional consequences of stressful life circumstances," while Pargament et al. (2011, p. 2) refer to religious coping as simply an effort "to understand and deal with life stressors in ways related to the sacred."

The religious coping literature provides voluminous evidence showing that people are drawn to religion when faced with stressful life events (Ano and Vasconcelles 2005; Pargament 2010). In particular, not only does church attendance increase among people undergoing stressful life circumstances, but religion is associated with reduced depression among middle-aged inmates (Koenig 1995) as well as improved mental and physical health and reduced rates of mortality (Harris et al. 1995; Oxman et al. 1995; Pargament et al. 1994).[3] When queried about their most frequently used coping methods in times of stress, elderly people, racial minorities, people facing life-threatening crises, and inmates all point to religion (Bulman and Wortman 1977; Conway 1985; Flannelly and Inouye 2001; Koenig 1995).

As important as these studies are, much remains to be learned about the specific functional use of religion when people are faced with life-threatening events. Prior studies are limited because they draw on traditional measures of religiosity (i.e., frequency of church attendance, prayer, viewing religious television, religious affiliation, or self-rated religiousness; Pargament et al. 2011). As Pargament et al. (2011) note, such measures fall short when it comes to accounting for why, when, or how people engage in religious coping behaviors. With this limitation in mind, a growing chorus of scholars have championed the need for more studies featuring "situation-specific" religious coping behavior (Ano and Vasconcelles 2005; Pargament et al. 2000), specifically as it relates to death row inmates (Smith 2018, 2019). This study is built on the premise that the imminent death process (the period directly preceding the execution) experienced by death row inmates is a situation-specific event that provides inmates the opportunity to verbalize,

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[2] The term "Hispanic" is used by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, which is the primary data source used in this study.
[3] For a review see Pargament (2002).

in real time, religious coping strategies to deal with the stress of knowing exactly when and how they will die. As prior research shows, religious expressions are a prominent feature of the last statements of death row inmates (Heflick 2005; Schuck and Ward 2008; Smith 2018, 2019; Vollum and Longmire 2009).

For the purposes of this study, I draw on the religious coping theory of Kenneth Pargament and his associates, leading scholars in this understudied area of social science research. Pargament and his associates assembled the most frequently used measures of religious coping in the literature (Pargament et al. 2011) and showed that when faced with major stressful events, people use religion (1) to find meaning in their circumstance (e.g., viewing the stressful event as part of God's plan), (2) to establish control (e.g., turning the situation over to God), (3) to gain comfort from and closeness to God (e.g., seeking God's forgiveness), (4) to gain intimacy with other people (e.g., looking for spiritual support from others), and (5) to achieve life transformation (e.g., looking to God for a new direction in the present life). Building on prior research (Smith 2018), this study examines the religious coping strategies of black, white, and Hispanic death row inmates made during the imminent death experience—an important yet unexplored area of social scientific inquiry. We know that during moments of imminent death, certain religious coping methods are prioritized over others. For example, (Smith 2018) found that when death row inmates are moments away from execution, their last statements tend to reflect efforts to gain comfort from and closeness to God followed by efforts to gain intimacy with others. However, other religious coping methods proved to be of lower priority, such as attempts to gain control, signal life transformation, or find meaning during the imminent death experience. As important as this research is, it does not speak to the question of whether race and ethnic groups vary in the way they prioritize religious coping strategies during the few moments preceding execution. This new line of empirical inquiry is justified given what we currently know about race and ethnic variation in religious coping during stressful life events. For example, the most common finding in the literature reveals that blacks are more likely than whites to utilize religious coping methods when faced with stressful life events. In particular, when dealing with a variety of illnesses, blacks display a stronger belief in divine control than whites and are more likely to view God as a healer, miracle worker, and savior (Krause 2005; McAuley et al. 2000; Schieman et al. 2006). Similarly, when dealing with anxiety, blacks engage in more positive religious coping than whites (Chapman and Steger 2010). Hispanics are rarely included in these comparative studies, but, when they are, the evidence suggests that the religious coping strategies of Hispanics are more similar to that of blacks than whites when coping with life threatening circumstances (Culver et al. 2002). Thus, given this literature, in the face of imminent death, I expect religious coping methods to vary by race and ethnic group.

3. The Last Statements of Death Row Inmates

Rooted in Christian history, the practice of recording the last words of people who have been condemned was an attempt to convey spiritual mercy on the part of the state while also providing the prisoner an opportunity to repent and find salvation moments before death (Elder 2010). According to Elder (2010), the last words of prisoners who are about to be executed are important because they provide an "oral history of the overlooked, the infamous and the forgotten—who nonetheless speak to a common humanity with their last act on earth." Given the uniqueness of such rare moments, it stands to reason that researchers would be interested in the content of last statements. Since the mid-2000s, a small but burgeoning cottage industry of studies has documented the most common themes found in last statements (Heflick 2005; Hirschmüller and Egloff 2016, 2018; Schuck and Ward 2008; Shermer 2018; Vollum 2008; Vollum and Longmire 2009). A frequent observation is how surprisingly positive the themes are (Goranson et al. 2017; Hirschmüller and Egloff 2018; Upton et al. 2017). Last statements have also been used to assess the psychological make-up of death row inmates (Foley and Kelly 2018, Foley and Kelly 2018; Rice et al. 2009), evaluate disparities in the content of last statements uttered by race and ethnic groups (Lester and Gunn 2013; McCaffree et al. 2020), and explore religious coping strategies of inmates (Smith 2018, 2019).

When it comes to common themes, Heflick (2005) content analysis of 237 last statements from Texas inmates on death row revealed six major themes: belief in an afterlife, activism (e.g., promoting social causes and advice to others), appreciation and love, silence, innocence, and forgiveness. Examining the same data, Schuck and Ward (2008, pp. 49–50) rank-ordered the most common themes and found that expressions of love or appreciation aimed at family and friends comprised 65 percent of all last statements, eclipsing expressions addressing family (including the victim's) and friends (55 percent), religious expressions (46 percent), and forgiveness (39 percent). More extensive examinations of the Texas data revealed ten major themes and 56 secondary themes, including expressions of well-wishes (58.6 percent), religion (48.3 percent), contrition (32.9 percent), gratitude (29.5 percent), and personal reconciliation (21.6 percent), to name a few (Vollum and Longmire 2009). Vollum and Longmire further divided their religion category into afterlife expressions (26 percent) and proclamations of faith and giving oneself over to God (24 percent). Further demonstrating that religion was a prominent feature of the final statements, the authors uncovered other important religious themes, such as preaching (15.8 percent), praying for others (13.4 percent), gratitude toward God (7.5 percent), prayer unspecified (6.8 percent), asking for God's forgiveness (6.8 percent), and prayer for self (6.5 percent). As alluded to above, studies documenting the most common themes found in the last statement data generally conclude that the themes are unexpectedly positive (Goranson et al. 2017; Hirschmüller and Egloff 2018; Shermer 2018; Upton et al. 2017) which is remarkable given the dire circumstances that death row inmates find themselves in at the moment of imminent death (Johnson et al. 2014).

Last statements are also a window into the emotional, psychological, and spiritual make-up of death row inmates (Cooney and Philips 2013; Eaton and Theuer 2009; Foley and Kelly 2018; Kelly and Foley 2013; Rice et al. 2009; Smith 2018, 2019). Prior studies show that making a reference to God is the best predictor of apology, with the invocation of God seen as a way of elevating the inmate's status (Cooney and Philips 2013). Eaton and Theuer (2009) found that forgiveness and empathy predict apology, and Rice et al. (2009) discovered that death row inmates are more likely to express repentance in the presence of victims' families and other co-victims. Smith (2019) study examined how the last statement of death row inmates could be used to understand how forgiveness is framed under stressful circumstances. He found, among other things, that death row inmates primarily prioritize efforts to seek religious forgiveness from others, followed by attempts to seek forgiveness from God for themselves. A smaller share of inmates used their final words to forgive others and seek forgiveness from others.

As discussed in detail below, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) not only publishes the last statements of death row inmates, but it also provides demographic information detailing, at a minimum, the inmate's race, ethnicity, and gender status. Such information enables scholarly exploration of possible variations along race and ethnic lines in the content of last statements. To date, two studies of racial and ethnic differences in last statements have yielded important insights that, when paired with what we know about religious coping theory, can inform expectations regarding possible race and ethnic variation in the priority that inmates assign to methods of religious coping at the moment of imminent death. Lester and Gunn (2013) analysis of last statement data from Texas found that Hispanic inmates included more religious expressions in their last statements than did whites and blacks, but blacks and whites included more positive expressions overall. In contrast, McCaffree et al.'s (2020) analysis of the Texas data revealed, among other things, that white inmates were more likely than black inmates to employ "sorry-related" words by a ratio of 2:1. The authors also found that race mediates the relationship between committing an economic crime and the probability of expressing remorse, in that those who expressed the least remorse (blacks) were also more likely to commit capital crimes that were connected to a secondary economically motivated crime such as robbery.

Additional inquiry into possible race and ethnic variation in the content of last statements is further justified given what we know about the intersection of race and the death penalty in general. Prior research shows that race and death penalty outcomes can intersect at the very outset of

capital cases when prosecutors decide to seek the death penalty in the first place (Baldus et al. 1990; Pierce and Radelet 2002; Williams and Holcomb 2001) and extending to the moment when judges and juries decide to impose the death penalty (Bowers et al. 2003; Paternoster and Brame 2008). In both phases, the literature paints a convincing picture of bias against black offenders, especially when the victims are white and female (Paternoster 1984; Williams et al. 2007) or when whites dominate the jury pool (Bowers et al. 2001, 2003).

This study extends inquiries into the intersection of race, ethnicity, and the death penalty not by asking whether there is evidence of racial bias in the last statement of death row inmates, but by, for the first time, revealing the religious coping methods of black, white, and Hispanic death row inmates as they face imminent death. Three previously unanswered questions are asked and answered: Is there race and ethnic variation in the way groups prioritize methods of religious coping? Is there any indication of change over time in the preferred religious coping mechanisms employed by race and ethnic groups? And, finally, is a change in social context associated with a change in the content of religious last statements among race and ethnic groups?

4. Data and Plan of Analysis

The data used to answer these questions come from the (Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) 2016) website. My research assistants and I accessed 537 records of inmates sentenced to death by the State of Texas from 7 December 1982 to 6 April 2016. Out of a total of 429 oral last statements made by death row inmates, we classified 270 as "religious" or "spiritual" if the statement contained a reference to a deity, a prayer, scripture recitation, religious singing, or a mention of the afterlife (e.g., heaven).

This research centers on the State of Texas because, unlike the other capital punishment states, Texas publishes the last statements of death row inmates.[4] This information is accompanied by, among other things, demographic data including the race and ethnicity of death row inmates. Texas is also ideal because of its reputation as a religious state.[5] The Pew Research Center (n.d.) reports that three out of four adults in Texas identify as Christian and nearly 90 percent of adults living in Texas express a belief in God. Thus, the widespread availability of last statement data reaching back to 1982, the demographic information it provides, and Texas's high self-reports of religiosity make the Texas data particularly well suited for an exploration of change over time in the functional role that religion plays among race and ethnic groups at the moment of imminent death.

As part of a larger project, I worked with two external coders to isolate all verbalized last statements in the Texas data (N = 429).[6] We used an open-coding process (Strauss and Corbin 1990) to inductively identify major themes in the data. We then isolated all religious last statements (n = 269) and stratified them by race and ethnic group (and later by time period). I then proceeded to conduct a detailed content analysis of the 269 religious statements to determine the extent to which the content of the last statements aligned with Pargament et al. (2011) methods of religious coping. That is, I asked to what extent the statement represented efforts on the part of the inmate to (1) gain comfort from and closeness to God; (2) gain intimacy with others; (3) gain control; or (4) achieve life transformation. For the

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[4] Missouri also publishes the last statements of death row inmates. See Upton et al. (2017) for an analysis of Missouri data.

[5] Considering the religious orientation of Texas, one anonymous reviewer asked why Texas would be in the business of collecting and retaining the last statements of death row inmates, and subsequently, making them available to researchers. This important question is beyond the scope of the paper but, noted on p. 3, historical explanations for recording last words were linked to attempts on the part of the state to convey mercy and provide the inmate with an opportunity to repent before execution (Elder 2010). That said, it is not clear why Texas would make the last statements available to the public. Certainly the rationale behind that decision is worthy of future research.

[6] During the study period, 108 inmates declined to give a last statement. Thus, we have no way of knowing whether those inmates would have expressed themselves in religious terms. A much smaller subset of inmates provided incoherent or rambling statements. The idea that death row inmates would decline or offer an unintelligible last statement is interesting in its own right. Consistent with ethnographic investigations (Johnson et al. 2014, p. 147), such instances may be a function of the consequential and debilitating effects of years of confinement on death row.

purposes of this article, Pargament et al. (2011) coping method of finding meaning from the imminent death experience was eliminated from the analysis due to excessively small cell counts once the data were stratified by race and ethnic group (See Appendix A, Table A1 for a detailed description of Pargament et al.'s coping methods, subscales, and definitions). I then sought to assess whether inmates relied more heavily on certain religious coping methods than others. This strategy involved isolating the religious last statements of each group and calculating the proportion of religious expressions that reflected each coping method. I then constructed a hierarchy of preferred religious coping expressions for each group beginning with the most preferred (i.e., largest proportion of) expressions at the top of the hierarchy and concluding with the least preferred expressions at the bottom of the hierarchy. For each group, the analytical goal was simply to determine the proportion of religious expressions representing efforts to gain comfort from and closeness to God, build intimacy with others, establish control over the imminent death moment, or signal a transformed life. Finding more than one religious coping theme in one last statement was par for the course. For example, expressions seeking comfort from and closeness to God were often found alongside attempts to gain intimacy with others.

The Social Context of the Death Chamber and Chang over Time

The social context in which last statements are orally delivered is like no other.[7] In the modern era, state-sponsored executions involving lethal injections are largely ritualistic, regimented, clinical, and even theatrical.[8] In the death room, the inmate is the center of attention, but the warden and often a chaplain or a religious representative of the inmate are also present and they serve as nontrivial players in this morbid drama. Witnesses to the execution peer through glass windows with family members of the inmate separated from family and friends of the murder victim in adjacent rooms. Representatives of the news media are also present. Once the inmate is strapped to a gurney, it is the warden who typically asks if the inmate would like to make a last statement. Whether the inmate responds "yes" or "no" or offers no response at all is immaterial to the start of a lethal administration of a cocktail of debilitating drugs. We know this because some inmates' last statements clearly indicate that they could feel the drugs coursing through their bodies (e.g., "I can feel it now," "I can taste it," "I can feel it, it's affecting me now").

This unique social context motivates the examination of race and ethnic variation over time in the functional use of religious coping methods. First, on 1 December 1996, Texas implemented a new policy allowing immediate family members of victims and those with a close relationship to the victim to witness the execution of the offender convicted of killing their loved one in person. The policy was amended in 1998 to also include friends of the victim's family (Rice et al. 2009; Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) 2017). I argue that the new policy dramatically altered the social context of the death chamber. For the first time, death row inmates were provided an opportunity to speak directly to co-victims. This new arrangement naturally leads to an important empirical question about social context: To what extent might the qualitative content of last statements made outside the presence of co-victims (pre-1996) differ from the content of last statements made in the presence of co-victims (post-1996)? Investigating a similar question, Rice et al. (2009) analysis of the Texas data revealed a noticeable uptick in expressions of guilt and repentance after the implementation of the new policy. More recent research shows that religious expressions (Smith 2018) and, in particular, expressions of forgiveness (Smith 2019), substantially increased following the implementation of the new policy. While important, that research did not address whether the influence of social context on the content of last statements of death row inmates varied in any way by race or ethnic group—a central focus of the current study.

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[7] A handful of last statements were written by inmates or an associate prior to the inmate's trip to the death chamber. Since this study is focused on the spontaneity of oral statements, all written statements are excluded from analysis—an exclusion that does not alter in any way the results of the study.

[8] See Elder (2010) for a rendering of last statements delivered during historical eras featuring executions by hanging, firing squad, electric chair, and the gas chamber. And see Johnson et al. (2014) for a more contemporary description of the process.

A second reason for pursuing an analysis of change over time in the qualitative content of last statements among race and ethnic groups has to do with the proposition that religious coping methods may vary over time and across situations among individuals. Pargament et al. (2011) encourage researchers to investigate this possibility. Ideally, this kind of exercise would be suited to a longitudinal analysis that follows the same people and their statements over time. But last statements are by definition made at one point in time by a single individual and are therefore cross-sectional in nature. Fortunately, the data do allow for an evaluation of whether the aggregate religious coping methods of inmates faced with the same imminent death situation change among race and ethnic groups over time. Such an inquiry significantly extends the study of last statements and insights into the most frequent mechanisms of religious coping employed at the moment of imminent death.

To explore the role that social context plays during the imminent death experience and to track change over time in the qualitative content of religious last statements, I divided the data into three time periods: 1982–1995, 1996–2000, and 2001–2016.[9] The first period represents the time preceding the implementation of the new policy, the second period covers the new policy, and the third period allows us to explore whether any changes that occurred between the first and second periods carried over into the third period. Following the implementation of the new policy, and informed by prior literature, it is reasonable to expect (1) an increase in religious expressions for all groups; (2) greater investments in religious expressions that represent efforts to draw *comfort from and closeness to God* and greater *intimacy with people* (relational modes) for all, but (3) Hispanics and blacks will exceed whites in making such investments.

5. Results

5.1. Race/Ethnic Variation in Religious Statements

Table 1 shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of all executions in Texas (row 1), the number of valid oral statements (row 2), the number of oral religious statements (row 3), and the number of oral religious statements as a percent of all valid oral statements (row 4) for inmates executed between 7 December 1982 and 6 April 2016. During this time period, the absolute number of whites (239) executed in Texas exceeded that of Hispanics (100) and blacks (196). Whites (190) also outnumbered Hispanics (81) and blacks (157) in the total number of oral statements and the total number of religious oral statements (whites 124; Hispanics 56; blacks 89). However, when given the opportunity to utter a final statement, a larger proportion of Hispanics (69%) compared with whites (65%) and blacks (57%) expressed themselves in religious/spiritual terms. This preliminary finding comports with Lester and Gunn (2013) discovery that during their last statements, Hispanics are more likely than other groups to express themselves in religious terms—a finding contradicting statistical evidence that black men are more religious than Hispanic men (Cox and Diamant 2018).

Table 1. Number of Executions and Religious Statements by Race and Ethnicity (7 December 1982–6 April 2016).

		Hispanic	White	Black	Total
1	Number of executions	100	239	196	535
2	Number of oral statements	81	190	157	428
3	Number of oral religious/spiritual statements	56	124	89	269
4	Religious statements as a percentage of all oral statements	69%	65%	57%	63%

[9] Before 1995, executions in Texas were comparatively sparse, so the first time period (1982–1995) encompasses executions that took place over a thirteen-year period. After 1995, executions accelerated to such an extent that aggregating the data into four- to five-year time spans generated roughly as many executions as the first time period.

5.2. Race/Ethnic Variation in Religious Statements over Time

Figure 1 displays the percent of oral religious statements for each race and ethnic group by time period. Before the implementation of the family and friends policy (1982–1995), about half of whites (52%), Hispanics (50%), and blacks (50%) expressed themselves in religious terms. However, the period during which the new family and friends policy was implemented (1996–2000) witnessed the greatest increase in religious expressions as a percent of all oral statements for each group. In particular, Hispanics experienced the greatest increase, jumping by 25 percentage points between the first (pre-policy) and second (policy) time periods, while the increase for whites and blacks over the same time period was 17% and 8%, respectively. These patterns strongly suggest that each race and ethnic group responded to the presence of co-victims at the execution by increasingly framing their final utterances in religious terms.

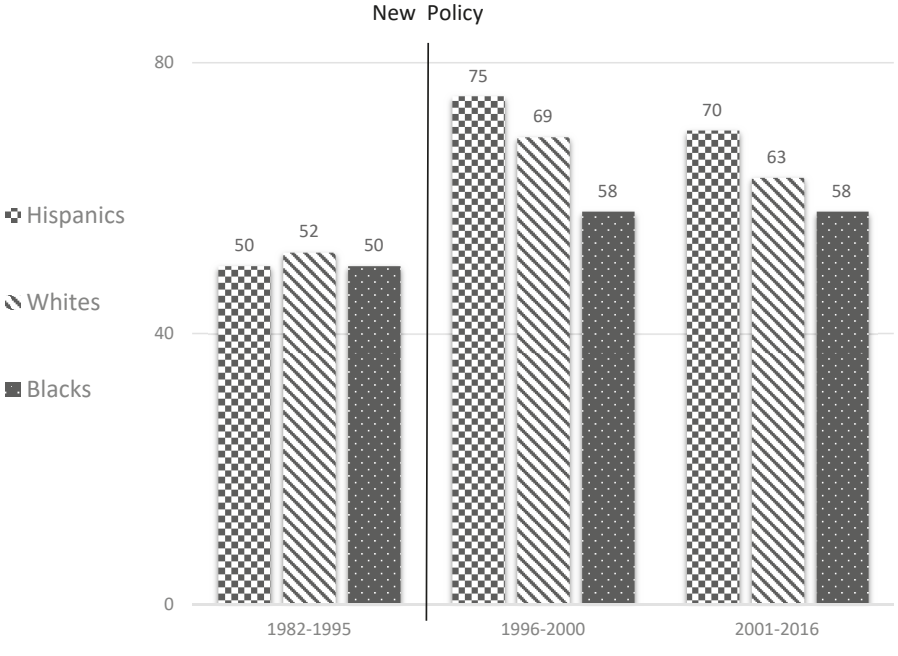

Figure 1. Percent of Valid Oral Religious Statements by Race, Ethnicity, and Time Period.

Figure 1 also shows that between the second (1996–2000) and third (2001–2016) time periods, the commitment to religious expressions decreased from 75% to 70% for Hispanics and from 69% to 63% for whites, but remained steady for blacks at 58%. Thus, the impact of context varies, not only over time, but also by race and ethnic group. Consistent with prior research, Hispanics appear to place a higher premium on expressing themselves in religious terms at the moment of imminent death (Lester and Gunn 2013). What is novel here is the finding that this pattern is most apparent after the implementation of the new policy allowing co-victims to witness the execution.

5.3. How and Why Race and Ethnic Groups Express Themselves in Religious Terms during the Imminent Death Experience

Having established race and ethnic variation in response to the changing social context of the death chamber, I now turn to the unanswered questions of how and why black, white, and Hispanic inmates express themselves in religious terms in the first place. Religious coping theory provides a useful framework for answering these queries. To address these questions, I stratified the religious last

statement data by race and ethnic group and qualitatively examined the extent to which each group employed religious coping methods. The results of this procedure, displayed in Figure 2, suggest broad consensus across race and ethnic groups in the dominance of relational modes of religious expressions over self-focused modes, but also significant variation in the importance given to specific religious coping methods. Several findings are worth highlighting.

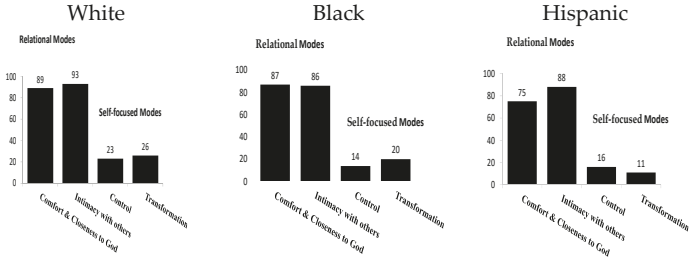

Figure 2. Hierarchy of Religious Coping Methods as a Proportion of all Religious Last Statements among Texas Death Row Inmates by Race/Ethnicity (7 December 1982–6 April 2016), (N = 269).

First, when it comes to the most preferred coping methods at the moment of imminent death, whites (93%) and Hispanics (88%) highly favor expressions reflecting efforts to *gain intimacy with others.* Such expressions, enveloped as they are by religious references, are deep and personal and often aimed at multiple audiences: "I would like to tell the surviving victims here, society, my family and friends, that I ask that they forgive me. I beg for your forgiveness" (White inmate). "I want to say I am sorry and I say a prayer for you so you can have peace and I hope you can forgive me" (Hispanic inmate).

As the second most common religious coping expression, both whites (89%) and Hispanics (75%) favor efforts to seek *comfort from and closeness to God*, usually in the form of direct references to a deity or an afterlife: "I am going to be face to face with Jesus now" (white inmate); "Thank you, Jesus Christ. Thank you for your blessing. It is you Jesus Christ, that is performing this miracle in my life" (Hispanic inmate). Third, the patterns for whites and Hispanics contrast sharply with those of blacks. As shown in Figure 2, when faced with imminent death, the top two modal religious coping methods among black inmates suggest that they are as likely to utter expressions that draw them *closer to God* (87%), such as "I want to give all praise to God and glory and thank him for all that he done for me," as they are to seek *intimacy with others* (86%), as in "Betty, you have been wonderful. You guided me to the Lord. You have been like a mother to me."

Further analysis revealed little race/ethnic variation in the content of "closer to God" expressions, but the little that does exist shows that blacks are eight times more likely than whites and Hispanics to make specific reference to Allah as a deity. In some ways, this ratio reflects the lack of Muslim chaplains in the American prison system.[10] The data show that one white inmate and one Hispanic inmate made reference to Allah, compared to nine black inmates who mentioned the deity. As one black inmate offered: "My fear is for Allah, God only, who has at this moment the only power to determine if I should live or die. As a devout Muslim, I am taught and believe that this material life

[10] In a related matter, in 1982, Charles Brooks, Jr, earned the dubious distinction of becoming the first man executed by lethal injection in the United States. Mr. Brooks was accompanied by a Muslim chaplain, Akbar Nurid-Din Shabazz who, according to his New York Times obituary, recently died of Covid-19 (New York Times, 27 June 2020, A24). Beyond the warden, prison chaplains or other spiritual advisors are the only personnel allowed into the death chamber with the inmate. While chaplains pray with the inmate and offer some measure of comfort leading up to the execution, inmates who practice a religion other than Christianity or Islam may find themselves void of this option. The Supreme Court recently weighed in on the side of an inmate who requested that a Buddhist chaplain accompany him into the death chamber after the Texas Department of Criminal Justice rejected his request. Arguing that the inmate's religious rights had been violated, the Court issued Texas an ultimatum: either supply a chaplain for inmates of all religions, or ban the practice altogether. Texas decided to ban the practice altogether (Montgomery 2020).

is only for the express purpose of preparing oneself for the real life that is to come." Another black inmate intoned at the moment of imminent death: "There's no God but Allah, and unto thy I belong and unto thy I return."

Fourth, when it comes to expressions of personal *transformation*, whites (26%) and blacks (20%) share a commonality, in that such utterances of transformation represent the third highest priority of expressions for both groups when facing imminent death. Among other things, personal transformation expressions usually allude to a religious change that has occurred since the inmate's incarceration: "I am not the same person that I used to be, that person is dead. Christ has changed me" (white inmate). "Ya'll do understand that I came here a sinner and leaving a saint. Take me home Jesus, take me home. Lord, take me home Lord" (black inmate). By contrast, among Hispanics (11%), expressions of personal transformation reside at the bottom of their hierarchy of preferred religious coping mechanisms; however, the content of such expressions are quite similar to that of whites and blacks, as in "I hope you have found God just like I have. God bless y'all" and "I got love for everybody. I am a Christian now."

Finally, when it comes to utterances that seek to establish *control*, whites (23%) place a higher premium on such expressions relative to Hispanics (16%) and blacks (14%). Expressions of *control* usually take the form of active religious surrender to a deity:

> Jesus take me home. (white inmate)
>
> Lord Jesus Christ, I commend myself to you. I am ready. (black inmate)
>
> Thank you, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. (Hispanic inmate)

To summarize, there are important similarities and differences across race and ethnic groups in the hierarchy of preferred religious coping methods employed by inmates at the moment of imminent death. Religious coping methods to *gain comfort from and closeness to God* and *intimacy with others* overwhelmingly reside at the top of the religious coping hierarchy of each group. However, the data reveal no overall, uniform hierarchy across groups. Instead, the order of priority does vary across race and ethnic groups, with whites and Hispanics prioritizing religious methods of coping to *gain intimacy with others* over efforts to *gain comfort from and closeness to God*, while blacks draw on both methods of coping fairly evenly. Further, whites and blacks place a higher premium on expressions of personal *transformation* than do Hispanics, while Hispanics and blacks share roughly similar levels of commitment to uttering religious expressions to gain *control* over the imminent death moment.

Supplemental analyses relate to overt claims of innocence, apology, and forgiveness. The data show that a higher proportion of whites (41%) than Hispanics (30%) and blacks (22%) use their religiously themed last statements to express remorse or apology (McCaffree et al. 2020), while whites (20%) are also more likely than Hispanics (14%) and blacks (17%) to seek interpersonal forgiveness.

Overall, when it comes to methods of religious coping, Figure 2 reveals a major fault line showing that "relational" modes of coping (comfort from and closeness to God; intimacy with others) are used at a much higher rate than "self-focused" modes of religious coping (seeking to gain control; achieve transformation). This pattern, which is consistent across all race and ethnic groups, raises the question of whether inmates chose to invest more in relational coping methods following the implementation of the new policy allowing the family and friends of their murder victims to witness the execution.

5.4. Race, Ethnicity, and the Hierarchy of Preferred Religious Coping Methods over Time

Having unveiled race and ethnic similarities and differences in the hierarchy of preferred religious coping methods at the moment of imminent death, I now turn to the question of whether such hierarchies change over time and, if so, whether such change is in any way associated with the implementation of a new policy allowing co-victims to witness the execution of the individual convicted of killing their loved one. Arguably, the presence of co-victims represents a change in the social context of the execution process—a change that may coincide with a re-prioritizing in the way

race and ethnic groups express themselves in religious terms. While prior research has shown that context matters when it comes to the manner in which death row inmates frame their last statements (Rice et al. 2009; Smith 2018, 2019), this is the first attempt to explore possible race and ethnic differences in such framing. Figure 3 depicts change over time in the hierarchy of religious coping methods for each race and ethnic group. Several patterns are worth reporting.

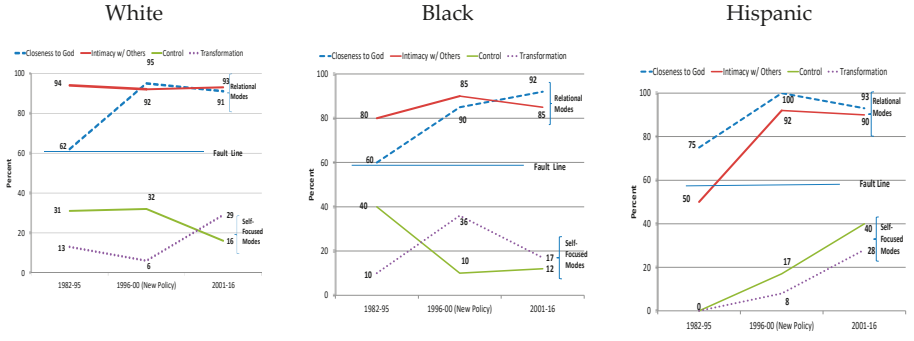

Figure 3. Hierarchy of Religious Coping Methods as a Proportion of all Religious Last Statements among Texas Death Row Inmates by Race, Ethnicity, and Time Period (7 December 1982–6 April 2016), (N = 269).

5.4.1. Intimacy with Others

First, looking across the three panels representing the patterns for each race and ethnic group, we see that whites (94%) placed a substantially higher premium in the pre-policy time period (1982–1995) on religious expressions aimed at gaining intimacy with others compared with blacks (80%) and Hispanics (50%). By the middle time period (1996–2000), during the implementation of the new policy to allow co-victims to witness executions, there was no discernible uptick for whites as they remained high even as they slightly declined to 92%. In contrast, during the same time period, the proportion of expressions framed as gaining intimacy with others for both blacks (90%) and Hispanics (100%) substantially increased. Thus, when it comes to attempts to gain intimacy with others, there is little evidence that the presence of co-victims mattered much for how whites framed their religious last statements. However, for blacks and Hispanics, the presence of co-victims coincided with an increase in religious coping expressions aimed at gaining intimacy with others.[11]

5.4.2. Gaining Comfort from and Closeness to God

With regard to efforts to draw closer to God, change in social context as represented by the new co-victims policy appears to have played a greater role for all groups. In particular, the first panel in Figure 3 shows that the proportion of whites who framed their final statements in a way that reflected efforts to gain comfort from and closeness to God increased from 62% in the pre-policy period to 95% during the period that witnessed the implementation of the new policy and settled at 91% in the recent period (2001–2016). By comparison, blacks steadily increased from 60% to 85% to 92% over the three periods. Similarly, Hispanics seemed to respond to the new policy by increasing their proportion of expressions of drawing closer to God from 75% (pre-policy) to 100% (middle period) and settling at 93% by the recent period. Again, these patterns show that following the implementation of the new policy, all groups experienced a substantial increase in the proportion of religious expressions designed

[11] Caution should be taken when interpreting the numbers for Hispanics as their cell counts are very small.

to draw them closer to God. Whites experienced the largest proportional increase (33 percentage points) followed by blacks (25 percentage points) and Hispanics (25 percentage points), respectively.

5.4.3. Gaining Control

Whereas efforts to gain intimacy with others and closeness to God reflect relational modes of expression, efforts to *gain control* can be regarded as a self-focused mode of expression. Overall, self-focused expressions display far more variation across groups than relational modes. There is no evidence that the presence of co-victims at the execution altered the manner in which whites expressed themselves in control terms. As Figure 3 displays, the proportion of control expressions among whites remained virtually unchanged between the first (31%) and second (32%) time periods, but it did show a precipitous decline by the recent period (16%). For blacks, however, the presence of co-victims as witnesses to their execution coincided with a steep decline in expressions of control, decreasing from 40% in the first time period to 10% during the period of the policy change and settling at 12% by the recent period. With regard to Hispanics, there were no expressions in the first time period that could be clearly classified as efforts to gain control, but during the policy change period, 17% of religious last statements reflected efforts to gain control, and the proportion continued to rise to 40% during the recent time period. Overall, these patterns suggest that expressions of control, a decidedly self-focused method of expression, show the most variation among the three groups.

5.4.4. Achieving Life Transformation

Declarative statements of "transformation" ("I am truly repentant"), the second self-focused mode of communication, also show stark race and ethnic variation across time. For whites, the new policy corresponded with a seven percentage point decline in expressions of transformation between the first (13%) and second (6%) time periods, but the percentage quadrupled to a high of 29% by the recent period. By contrast, for both blacks and Hispanics, the presence of co-victims coincided with a substantial increase in expressions of personal transformation. But again, there are important group differences, as the proportion of such expressions declined for blacks from 35% (middle period) to 17% (recent period), while statements of transformation among Hispanics increased from 8% to 28% across the two recent time periods. Thus, as the middle period ushered in the new policy of welcoming co-victims at executions, there was a decrease in statements of personal transformation among whites, but an increase among blacks and Hispanics. After the middle period, however, whites and Hispanics displayed a greater propensity to utter expressions of personal transformation, while among blacks, such statements fell out of favor.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

A recent increase in the scientific study of religious coping methods has paralleled heightened investigation into the last statements of death row inmates, although the body of work of the former is more voluminous than the latter. Building on these two strands of literature, this study employed religious coping theory as a framework to interpret the last statements of black, white, and Hispanic death row inmates made moments before their execution. The investigation of possible race and ethnic differences in this unique context is justified given well-documented findings regarding group variation in religious expressions alongside copious research confirming racial differences in the administration of the death penalty in the United States. Overall, the results enhance our understanding of the important role that religion plays in the lives of race and ethnic groups undergoing the most stressful life circumstance imaginable: imminent death by lethal injection. Three previously unanswered questions framed the analysis: Is there race and ethnic variation in the way groups prioritize methods of religious coping? Is there any indication of change over time in the preferred religious coping mechanisms employed by race and ethnic groups? And, does change in social context portend change in the content of religious last statements? The answers to these queries extend what we previously knew about

race and ethnic disparities in last statement content (Lester and Gunn 2013; McCaffree et al. 2020) and explorations into the religious last statements of death row inmates (Smith 2018, 2019).

An aerial view of the data reveals a deep and wide fault line between relational modes of coping (drawing comfort from and closeness to God and intimacy with others) and self-focused modes of coping (establishing control and signaling personal transformation) among all race and ethnic groups (Figure 2). This pattern remains intact across the 35 years covered by the data. In particular, from the first (1982–1995) to the recent (2001–2016) time periods, the fault line gap ranges from roughly 56% to 70% among whites, 45% to 74% among blacks, and 63% to 58% among Hispanics (Figure 3)—suggesting that the gap increases over time for whites and blacks but narrows for Hispanics.

At a deeper level, the nuanced analysis employed here reveals variation in the priorities that race and ethnic groups assign to religious coping methods during moments of imminent death, and variation in how race and ethnic groups respond to dramatic change in the social context of the death chamber. Whites and Hispanics place a slightly higher premium than blacks on efforts to establish intimacy with others (i.e., largely those witnessing the execution). In contrast, blacks prioritize efforts to draw comfort from and closeness to God almost equally with efforts to gain intimacy with others and, unlike other groups, blacks are more likely to make a reference to Allah, however, to be sure, references to Christian themes inform the content of the vast majority of last statements for all groups. Expressions of personal transformation—signaling a changed life during the time of incarceration—-are the third highest priority among whites and blacks, but Hispanics place such statements at the bottom of their hierarchy of preferred coping mechanisms. A higher proportion of whites and Hispanics than blacks offer expressions of control during the imminent death experience and these ostensibly self-focused utterances, when viewed through the lens of religious coping theory, are better understood as attempts to wrest control over their bodies from the state by relinquishing control over their souls to God.

Prior research shows that the implementation of a new policy allowing co-victims to witness the execution of offenders convicted of killing their loved ones corresponds with an increased reliance on religious coping methods (Smith 2018, 2019). The present study corroborates this finding (Figure 1), but also extends it in significant ways by revealing that the implementation of the new policy coincided with changes in the hierarchy of preferred religious coping mechanisms employed by race and ethnic groups (Figure 3). During the implementation of the new policy, religious expressions representing attempts to *gain intimacy with others* shot up precipitously among black and Hispanic inmates, while the numbers remained relatively flat among white inmates. Consistent with religious coping theory, attempts to gain intimacy with others at times came in the form of "religious helping" whereby inmates would provide spiritual support and comfort via direct prayers to co-victims, expressions of remorse, or apology. Part of this disparity has to do with two overlapping patterns: first, from the very start of the data period (1982–1995), white inmates placed an extremely high premium on expressions representing attempts to gain intimacy with others, and this commitment, which averaged in the low 90% range, was evident throughout the entire 34-year period covered by the data in this study. In contrast, in the first time period, much lower proportions of blacks and Hispanics invested in expressions aimed at gaining intimacy with others. So, once the new policy was implemented during the second time period (1996–2000), blacks and Hispanics had a greater distance to travel to reach near parity with whites.

A second explanation points to evidence showing that whites, relative to other groups, turned more of their attention to efforts to draw *comfort from and closeness to God*. Under religious coping theory, this method represents a form of "religious focus"—engaging in religious activities to shift focus from the stressful event of imminent death; and "spiritual connection"—experiencing a sense of connectedness with forces that transcend the individual (Pargament et al. 2011). Between the first time period (before policy implementation) and second time period (during policy implementation), whites experienced a 33 percentage point increase in expressions aimed at drawing them closer to God—a margin far greater than any other group. Importantly, the large increase in direct appeals to God among whites during the period of the new policy implementation and beyond was accompanied

by increases in expressions of apology, remorse, and requests for forgiveness that superseded all other groups.

Furthermore, the data show that typical efforts to *gain control* over the imminent death experience come in the form of "active religious surrender" to a deity. I explored the extent to which inmates engaged in such forms of religious coping following the implementation of the new policy allowing co-victims to witness executions. This change in the social context of the death chamber had little effect on white inmates' expressions of control, as they remained fairly steady at 31% during the first period and 32% after the implementation of the new policy. It is noteworthy that by the most recent time period, expressions of control among whites plummeted to 16%, a 50% decline relative to the previous two periods. In contrast, blacks felt less need to express themselves in control terms following the new policy—as their control expressions fell from 40% before the policy to 10% during the policy. At the same time, expressions of control among Hispanics increased from 0% to 17% between the first and second time periods and later skyrocketed to 40% in the more recent time period. These patterns suggest that expressions of control show the most variation among the three groups.

Finally, the self-focused expressions of personal *transformation*, displayed here, are largely declarations of "religious conversion" ("Christ has changed me"). As with efforts to gain control, the introduction of the new co-victims policy produced radically different responses across the three race and ethnic groups. For whites, the new policy corresponded with an initial decline in statements of transformation between the first and second time periods, although by the recent time period, the proportion of transformation expressions among whites increased by nearly fivefold. The pattern for blacks was virtually the opposite. Blacks appeared to respond to the onset of the new policy by initially increasing their expressions of personal transformation, between the pre-policy and policy implementation time periods, but by the recent time period, the commitment to expressions of personal transformation was nearly halved. Hispanics, by contrast, starting at a much lower base, steadily increased their commitment to expressions of personal transformation from 0% in the first period to 8% and 28% during the second and third periods, respectively. Thus, over time, whites and Hispanics felt more emboldened to express themselves in the self-focused mode of personal transformation, whereas the opposite was the case for blacks.

These findings must be weighed against several limitations. First, the results here may not be generalizable to other death penalty states. Outside of Missouri, Texas is the only death penalty state that publishes the last statements of death row inmates, making Texas and Missouri outliers in some respects. One study showed that death row inmates in Missouri expressed themes similar to those found in the Texas data (Upton et al. 2017). Second, Texas is also unique in its relatively high levels of religiosity, conservatism, and history of racism. These factors may influence the imminent death process in ways not captured by the data presented here. Third, the data were restricted to death row inmates who verbalized a religious last statement moments before execution. Thus, it would be useful to extend this line of inquiry to nonreligious statements in an effort to explore how and why the coping methods of nonreligious inmates may differ from those of religious inmates. Fourth, a sizeable number (N = 108) of death row inmates opted not to utter a last statement when given the opportunity to do so. Thus, we know nothing about the coping strategies they employed, if any at all, to deal with their imminent death. For example, these inmates could have decided to pray silently or recite spiritual phrases silently, or they may have been thinking nonreligious thoughts. Either way, it is important to acknowledge these missing data. Fifth, in a very small number of cases, the last statements of death row inmates were scrubbed of profane language and in other cases inmates used a language or spoke in a way that was unintelligible to those recording the last statement. However, the number of such cases was miniscule and therefore did not influence the results reported here. Finally, the data are largely limited to Christian offenders within a largely Christian context and may therefore not be generalizable to non-Abrahamic religious beliefs and other prison contexts.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study extends what we previously knew about the coping mechanisms of death row inmates. There is broad cross-group uniformity in the preference for relational

over self-focused modes of expressions but there is also variation in the way that race and ethnic groups prioritize specific religious coping strategies. Moreover, social context matters. Not only do changes in religious coping priorities correspond to changes in the social context of the death chamber, but the change in priorities varies by race and ethnic group.

This study points to a number of future research directions. First, as the findings suggest, changes in the social context of the death chamber and the composition of witnesses may influence how death row inmates chose to represent themselves in their last statements. Thus, an ethnographic approach similar to that conducted by Johnson and his associates (Johnson et al. 2012, 2014) can shed further light on the social context of confinement, the physical and mental toll it takes on death row inmates, and the influence it may have on their last statements. Second, religious coping theory offers one explanation as to why death row inmates draw on religious themes for self-presentation during the imminent death experience. Prior studies have also considered terror management theory (TMT) as a construct by which to interpret last statements (Heflick 2005; Schuck and Ward 2008). Proposed by Greenberg et al. (1986), TMT, through its *mortality salience* hypothesis, asserts that when people are asked to contemplate their own death, they will call on their beliefs to provide a "worldview defense" against the anxiety and terror that such thoughts impose. Under such conditions, the theory asserts that human beings are said to minimize or solve the problem by calling on their cultural worldviews (Becker 1973) which include, among other things, their religious understanding of life and death. Cultural worldviews, it is argued, help to explain what happens after death" (Arndt et al. 2005, p. 193). In several respects, RCT and TMT are complimentary, not competing, theoretical paradigms. While TMT asserts that people are drawn to their religion during moments of intense fear (Becker 1973; Solomon et al. 1991, 2004), RCT, as the data reported here show, further explains *why* people turn to religion under such circumstances: primarily to gain a sense of comfort and closeness to God and intimacy with others and, secondarily, to gain of sense of control and personal life transformation. Future research could further explore how these two theoretical paradigms cohere (or not) using different samples and different life-threatening events. Finally, the religious coping methods revealed here are likely to be good examples of religious coping strategies around death outside of the death penalty context. As one anonymous reviewer suggested, and as I pose here as a fruitful line of inquiry for future research, it might be interesting to compare the religious coping methods employed here with other religious discourse around imminent death, such as people in hospice care.

Beyond the confines of the death chamber, one implication of the findings reported here suggests that social context matters in another way. As the "capital of capital punishment" (Johnson et al. 2012, p. 15), and as one of the most religious states in the nation, Texas presents a peculiar irony amid waning support for the death penalty in the United States. Christianity, the dominant religion in Texas and Texas prisons, presents to the religious supporter of the death penalty a stark dissonance that seems to be playing out in real time. On the one hand, Christianity is a redemptive religion that promotes the forgiveness of sins for all who believe, no matter how vile the sin, and such forgiveness is not only applicable in this life, but in the life to come. The data shown here suggests that this redemptive promise of radical transformation in the here and now ("I am not the same person. Christ has changed me") and the reward of literal immortality in the afterlife ("I'm going to heaven and I'll see you there") informs the hope that embodies the last statements of religious death row inmates. On the other hand, many Christians still support the death penalty, seeing no contradiction at all between state-sponsored execution and the Christian message of redemption and salvation. For these believers in Christianity and the death penalty, vengeance appears to outweigh the possibility of redemption.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Pargament et al. (2011) Religious Coping Subscales and definitions of religious coping methods *.

Religious Methods of Coping to Gain Control	
Collaborative religious coping	Seeking control through a problem-solving partnership with God
Active religious surrender	An active giving up of control to God
Passive religious surrender	Passive waiting for God to control the situation
Pleading for direct intercession	Seeking control indirectly by pleading to God for a miracle or divine intercession
Self-directed religious coping	Seeking control directly through individual initiative rather than help from God
Religious methods of coping to gain comfort and closeness to God	
Seeking spiritual support	Searching for comfort and reassurance through God's love and care
Religious focus	Engaging in religious activities to shift focus from the stressor
Religious purification	Searching for spiritual cleansing through religious actions
Spiritual connection	Experiencing a sense of connectedness with forces that transcend the individual
Spiritual discontent	Expressing confusion and dissatisfaction with God's relationship to the individual in the stressful situation
Marking religious boundaries	Clearly demarcating acceptable from unacceptable religious behavior and remaining within religious boundaries
Religious methods of coping to gain intimacy with others and closeness to God	
Seeking support from clergy or congregation members	Searching for comfort and reassurance through the love and care of congregation members and clergy
Religious helping	Attempting to provide spiritual support and comfort to others
Interpersonal religious discontent	Expressing confusion and dissatisfaction with the relationship of clergy or congregation members to the individual in the stressful situation
Religious methods of coping to achieve a life transformation	
Seeking religious direction	Looking to religion for assistance in finding a new direction for living when the old one may no longer be viable
Religious conversion	Looking to religion for a radical change in life
Religious forgiving	Looking to religion for help in shifting to a state of peace from the anger, hurt, and fear associated with an offense

* Religious methods of coping to find meaning have been omitted from the analysis due to small cell counts for race and ethnic groups.

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A Complex Religion Approach to the Differing Impact of Education on Black and White Religious Group Members' Political Views

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Abstract: This paper examines the interaction of education for both Blacks and Whites in all major religious groups on four key political issues: Abortion, gay marriage, feelings toward redistribution, and political party identification. We find that for most Blacks, race is the most salient factor across all four political dimensions; whereas there is significant variation by religion and education for Whites, there is very little difference for Blacks. As previous research has noted, Blacks are generally more conservative on gay marriage and Blacks are generally positive about redistribution, much more so than most Whites regardless of education and religion. We find education is more liberating to Whites than Blacks. The only issue for which education has significant effects for Blacks is abortion, but even in this case, unlike for Whites, there are not large religious differences among Blacks. This study corroborates previous research that abortion and gay marriage are less politically central to Blacks, who at all education levels are more likely to be Democrat than the most Democrat identified Whites.

Keywords: race; religion; education; politics

We know that race,[1,2] education,[3] and religion[4] are all important predictors of Americans' political views. We also know that education is highly correlated with race[5] and religion.[6] Unfortunately, the vast majority of research neglects to look at the way that education and religion interact with race in relationship to political views. Most research that examines religion and politics has focused exclusively on Whites.[7] Those that do examine Blacks, do so almost exclusively in relation to Black Protestants, although more than a quarter of Black Americans do not identify as Protestant, and significant differences among Black Protestants that are known to exist have gone largely unexplored.

This paper examines the interaction of education for both Blacks and Whites in all major religious groups on four key political issues: Abortion, gay marriage, feelings toward redistribution, and political

[1] We use race as a variable to imply the role of racial group membership within a stratified society, not innate biological or cultural characteristics.
[2] On race and political views see: (Abramowitz and Saunders 2006; Citrin et al. 2003; Erikson 1995; Fowler et al. 2013; Gelman et al. 2008).
[3] On education and political views see: (Bolzendahl and Brooks 2005; Hyman and Wright 1979; Stroope 2011).
[4] On religion and political views see: (Brooks and Manza 1997a; Brooks et al. 2003; Green 2007; Hayes 1995; Kellstedt and Green 1993; Kohut et al. 2000; Lim et al. 2010; Layman 1997; Leege and Kellstedt 1993; Manza and Brooks 1997; Wuthnow 1988).
[5] On education and race see: (Fischer et al. 1996; Hosang 2011; Kao and Thompson 2003; Omi and Winant 2014; Swanson 2004).
[6] On education and religion see: (Cantril 1943; Darnell and Sherkat 1997; Glass et al. 2015; Wuthnow 1988; Wilde and Glassman 2016).
[7] In this paper, we capitalize White and Black to linguistically assert their socially constructed nature. We use Whites and Blacks to refer to individuals' self-identification as members of politically invented racial groups.

party identification. We find that for most Blacks, race is paramount. Whereas there is significant variation by religion and education for Whites, there is very little difference for Blacks. As previous research has noted, Blacks are generally more conservative on gay marriage and Blacks are generally positive about redistribution, much more so than most Whites regardless of education and religion. The only issue for which education has significant effects for Blacks is abortion, but even in this case, unlike for Whites, there are not large religious differences among Blacks. The only exception to these findings has to do with Blacks who go to historically (predominately) White Evangelical denominations. They have views more like White Evangelicals—becoming much more conservative economically as their education increases.

In this paper, we employ a complex religion approach (Wilde and Glassman 2016), with the understanding that inequality intersects with religious group membership. This approach does not impose anything particularly new or counterintuitive to what we already know about religion. A complex approach to religion simply means taking what researchers already take for granted and operationalizing it more precisely. In other words, most religion scholars would agree that the experiences and political outlooks of working-class White and Black Protestants would be different from one another—and also would be different from highly educated White Mainline Protestants. The point of a complex religion approach is making sure that these realities are properly operationalized, in the case here, by interacting education with religion and race to examine how its effects might vary between groups.

1. Research on Race, Education, Religion and Politics

Ample research demonstrates that increases in education are correlated with more progressive views on abortion and homosexuality (Evans 2002; Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Loftus 2001; Ohlander et al. 2005; Olson et al. 2006; Petersen 2001; Sherkat et al. 2010) but more conservative views on economic issues (Alesina and Giuliano 2009; Clydesdale 1999; Felson and Kindell 2007; Guillaud 2013; Keely and Tan 2008; Kluegel 1987; Phelan et al. 1995). Recent research also establishes that significant educational differences between religious groups remain in the US (Wilde and Glassman 2016).

Additionally, there are significant differences between racial groups in educational attainment, where Blacks are disadvantaged as a result of historical and contemporary racism (Lareau and Jo 2017; Darity et al. 2018). Despite this, very few studies interact education with religious groups for Black Americans. The few studies that do include Black groups other than Protestants when looking at a breadth of political issues (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014) do not consider religion in interaction with education. This is the case despite calls to better understand the differing political views of Blacks and Whites with the same religious orientation (Edgell 2017).

Although more than half of all Black Americans consider themselves born-again Christians, they remain decidedly Democratic in voting behavior, prioritizing liberal economic and civil rights policies over conservative views on issues like homosexuality and abortion (Dillon 2014; Fowler et al. 2013; Gay 2014; Lynxwiler and Gay 1999; Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Robinson 2006; Sherkat et al. 2010). As Greeley and Hout (2006) note:

> Whatever their feelings about abortion or evolution or homosexuality, [Black Christians] still vote in overwhelming numbers for Democratic candidates. Thus, while 52% of lower-income, White, Conservative Protestants voted Democratic in the 1990s, 90% of lower-income Afro-American Protestants did... Race, therefore, interacts with and ultimately reshapes the link between Conservative Protestantism and conservative politics.
>
> (Greeley and Hout 2006, p. 70)

In fact, Brooks and Manza (1997b) found that the difference in voting behavior is twice as large by racial group (comparing Blacks and Whites) as it is by religious group. Below we discuss how Blacks' robust alignment with the Democratic Party is a result of a long-term political process.

1.1. The History of Black Americans' Political Affiliation

When the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was passed, Blacks gained the right to vote and exercise political power, and overwhelmingly held allegiance with the Republican Party (Carmines and Stimson 1990). Fighting for Black suffrage caused some White voters to shift to the Democrats (Wang 2012). While only the most radical Republicans suggested Blacks should be considered completely equal with Whites socially and politically, the Republican Party was the party of Lincoln, publicly welcomed Black voters, and encouraged Black education (Stampp 1965).

After Reconstruction, the Republican Party alienated their Black constituents in their attempt to gain White votes (Fauntroy 2007). In response to Civil Rights issues (Carmines and Stimson 1990), the Great Depression, and the New Deal, Blacks began to support the Democratic Party (Sherman 1973). The Democratic Party progressed in their positions on racial equality, and ultimately made a political shift to champion Civil Rights (Carmines and Stimson 1990). Increasingly during the 1960s, national party leaders took divergent positions on Black Civil Rights and the Republican Party began to court the previous core of the Democratic Party, conservative White Southerners and working-class Northern Whites (Fauntroy 2007) who defected in large numbers (Black and Black 1989). This racial cleavage was solidified in the 1964 presidential election (Stanley et al. 1986). Today, Blacks continue to primarily support the Democratic Party (Abramson et al. 2015; Flanigan et al. 2014; Hershey 2017; Wayne 2011).

1.2. Race and Views on Abortion

Earlier sociological studies generally found Blacks to be more disapproving of abortion than Whites (Craig and O'Brien 1993; Hall and Ferree 1986; Secret 1987). More recent studies have suggested a narrowing of the race gap (Evans 2002) with a few studies even suggesting that Blacks are now more supportive of abortion than Whites overall (Strickler and Danigelis 2002). While one study attributes this change to Whites becoming more disapproving (Boggess and Bradner 2000), the majority of studies find that Blacks have become increasingly liberal on abortion since the 1960s (Bolzendahl and Brooks 2005; Evans 2002; Lynxwiler and Gay 1999; Strickler and Danigelis 2002).

Of course, the history of abortion in the US is certainly racialized. White abortion advocates in the early 1970s largely neglected to include Blacks and failed to address their historic support of involuntary sterilization, or what Angela Davis refers to as "a racist form of mass 'birth control'" (Davis 1983, p. 204). Moreover, the Supreme Court's rulings in cases on funding abortion effectively denied access to abortions for low-income Americans; however, the primarily White, middle-class abortion rights movement remained silent on this issue (Roberts 1999), alienating Blacks from the movement. Still Blacks had been steadily fighting for reproductive rights, and in the 1980s and 1990s, Black activists publicly advocated for abortion rights (Solinger 1998), shifting the rhetoric within the Black community around abortion. By the mid-1990s, abortion was included in the broader movement for reproductive freedom (Solinger 1998). How and whether this has been related to activism within the Black Church, has not, to our knowledge, received a great deal of attention.

Likewise, there has been little examination of how this relates to variations in religious beliefs or education either within or between groups. Those that do examine religion and race tend to only examine Black Protestants (Evans 2002; Dillon 2014) even though a quarter of Blacks do not identify as such (cf. Lynxwiler and Gay 1999). Furthermore, almost none of these studies interact education with religion (cf. Evans 2002), although we know that both religion (Cook et al. 1993) and education (Petersen 2001) are highly important predictors of views of abortion.

1.3. Race and Views on Gay Marriage

Black Americans are much more conservative on the issue of homosexuality than Whites (Loftus 2001; Lewis 2003; Perry et al. 2013; Dillon 2014). There is evidence that the gap in disapproval of gay marriage is widening as support is increasing at a faster rate for Whites than Blacks (Sherkat et al. 2010).

There is also evidence that these differences are heavily dependent upon religious views. Studies that control for denominational affiliation almost cut the difference in Whites being more supportive of same-sex marriage than Blacks in half (Egan and Sherrill 2009; Sherkat et al. 2010), primarily because some White religious groups have much more tolerant views towards homosexuality than others. Although some scholars have indicated Blacks are less supportive of homosexuality as a result of the Black Church (Schulte and Battle 2004; Ward 2005; Cohen 1999), others argue that this is connected to their more traditional beliefs in gender roles in general (Dalton 1989; Green 2007; Lemelle and Battle 2004; Ward 2005; Whitley et al. 2011). Others argue that Blacks' more conservative views about homosexuality are due to socialization in the Black community (Greene 2007; Ward 2005; Negy and Eisenman 2005), connected to public Black figures, such as Cleaver (1968), framing homosexuality as a White disease that was contradictory to Blackness (Rhodes 2017). Still, how this relates to variations in education or religious affiliation within the Black community has not received much academic attention.

1.4. Race and Views on Redistribution

The picture changes completely once we begin to examine feelings toward redistribution and political party identification. Blacks have a greater commitment to liberal economic policies, including faith-based welfare reform (Bartkowski and Regis 2003), and a much less individualistic and more structural understanding of poverty (Cobb et al. 2015) than Whites (Alesina and Giuliano 2009; Davis and Robinson 1996b; Emerson et al. 1999; Mayrl and Saperstein 2013; Pyle 1993; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014). Wealthy Blacks are more likely to identify with their race than class (Erikson and Tedin 2015), strongly believe that their economic progress is dependent on the success of Blacks as a group (Tate 1994), and are almost as supportive as poor Blacks of social welfare policies like redistribution (Dawson 1995; Erikson and Tedin 2015). Theorists attribute this to the fact that Blacks are structurally oppressed, so there is a racialized sense of the social structure that does not exist for Whites (Omi and Winant 2014).

As for potential religious effects, Davis and Robinson (1996a) found that the Orthodox (defined as those who hold beliefs in "biblical inerrancy and a God-directed world") are more favorable to economic redistribution than progressives (p. 758). This is of particular importance because "with strong Evangelical Protestant roots, [Blacks] are much more likely than [Whites] to hold orthodox theological beliefs" (McDaniel and Ellison 2008, p. 182). In general, White Protestants are less approving of economic redistribution compared to those of no religion, Catholics, and Jews, who are more supportive (Alesina and Giuliano 2009), while Black Protestants the most likely to have structural interpretations of poverty (Hunt 2002). Views toward redistribution are certainly mediated by education. Edgell and Tranby (2007) found that religious conservatives are more economically conservative on charity for Blacks as they become more educated (Edgell and Tranby 2007). However, this inverse relation may not hold true for other White religious affiliations or racial groups.

1.5. Disaggregating Diversity within and Outside the Black Church

The "Black Church" is a reference to the pluralism of Black Christian churches in the United States (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). In response to racism and discrimination, Black churches and denominations were founded independently from their White counterparts (Wilmore 1983). Within a segregated and oppressive society, the Black Church developed as the medium for Black society (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014) and acted as a unifying force for Blacks that helped advocate for Black civil rights (McDaniel 2008).

Many scholars have argued that the experiences of Blacks living as a subjugated group in an unequal society have shaped the sociopolitical nature of the Black Church (Greenberg 2000; Frazier 1974; Lincoln 1974; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; McDaniel 2008; McDaniel and Ellison 2008). Thus, while Black and White denominations may be theologically and organizationally alike, some scholars have found that they highlight disparate elements of Christian doctrine (Gilkes 1980; Paris 1985; Pattillo-McCoy 1998), suggesting there will be a difference between racial groups of the same denomination. Whereas

many Black churches (see Spence 2015 for exceptions) emphasize structures of oppression (Gilkes 1980) and biblical resistance to oppression (Harris 1999), the equality of all people (Paris 1985), and the connection between the individual and the community (Pattillo-McCoy 1998), White churches often stress individualistic ideas (Hinojosa and Park 2004; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). It is therefore likely that we will see a difference in support for economic redistribution.

In this paper, we do not dispute the institutional and ideological importance of religion for African Americans. However, we note that most analyses that examine Blacks' political views include only Black Protestants. About three-quarters of Blacks are Protestant, the vast majority of whom are theologically conservative and demonstrate traditionalism in beliefs, frequency of Bible reading, and church attendance (Greeley and Hout 2006).[8] However, 18% of Blacks report no religion today—comparable, albeit slightly lower, to the percentage of Whites who do so (Pew Religious Landscape Study 2015). While non-religious Whites have received scholarly attention, the literature on non-religious Blacks is sparse. In addition to the non-religious, 5% of Blacks are Roman Catholic (Feagin 1968; Pattillo-McCoy 1998) and 3% are "Other" religions—mostly Muslim. Thus, more than a quarter of Black voters are not Black Protestants and are therefore missing from the discussion of how the intersections of religion and race affect political opinions until now.

1.6. Complex Religion

Given the importance of the religion for Blacks socially and politically, Blacks' overall educational disadvantage, and how these two factors may be coupled with Blacks' support for liberal economic policies, this paper attempts to untangle the importance of race, religion, and education for Blacks' political views. In doing so, the analysis that follows is theoretically informed by the "complex religion" approach. The term "complex religion" builds on theories of complex inequality (Choo and Ferree 2010; McCall 2001). Researchers of complex inequality argue that social stratification is multidimensional. Different kinds of disadvantages lead to different outcomes and experiences. These researchers therefore urge others to examine how inequalities of gender, race, or socioeconomic status interact to create a unique impact on social experience. Complex religion extends these theories to include religious group membership among the social structures that matter for inequality (Wilde and Glassman 2016). This study seeks to disaggregate the impact of racial group membership on core political views in a way that is more conscious of internal variation, particularly socioeconomic status through examining education, across religious and racial groups.

In employing the complex religion approach, we acknowledge many possible causes for the socioeconomic differences that exist between American religious groups. While there is some, primarily older, evidence that some people may choose their religious affiliation because of their social class (Loveland 2003; Sherkat and Wilson 1995), we do not think that the vast majority of these differences result from such religious switching. Similarly, although there is some limited evidence that some religious subcultures discourage class mobility (Darnell and Sherkat 1997; Lehrer 2009), we also do not argue that they are primarily a result of religious groups encouraging or discouraging class mobility. While both of these are possible mechanisms behind some of the differences between American religious groups, a theory of complex religion would posit that the majority of these differences are a result of the process of social reproduction (Bourdieu 1984) set in place long ago by variations in immigration, settlement, and mobility patterns over the course of American history.

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[8] Though we focus here on Black Christian Protestants, who are the focus of most research on race and religion in the United States, it is worth noting that scholars are also examining the intersection of race, class, gender, and religion in non-Christian faiths, especially Islam (Jamal 2005; Prickett 2015).

2. Data and Methods

To explore whether and how educational differences between religious groups and racial groups influence political views, we interact education with religious group membership for both Blacks and Whites in our examination of four key political issues: Abortion, gay marriage, economic redistribution, and political identification. For our analysis, we use the Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey. The 2014 Religious Landscape Survey is a telephone survey of more than 350,000 respondents across every state in the United States, which probes issues of religious identification, social and political attitudes, and demographic measures (Pew Religious Landscape Study 2015). Although its response rate is low, Pew is preferable for our purposes because its massive sample size combined with its excellent information on religion and politics allows us to examine Blacks in comparison to Whites in a way that we cannot with smaller traditional surveys like the General Social Survey (GSS). We ran all of these analyses on the GSS and found no significant differences besides losses of statistical significance because of sample size limitations (analysis available upon request).

2.1. Dependent Variables

We look at party affiliation (Guth et al. 2006; Kohut et al. 2000; Layman 1997; Miller and Hoffman 1999; Woodberry and Smith 1998) and views on politically salient issues (Hutchings and Valentino 2004), including the issues most closely associated with the "culture wars"—namely abortion and homosexuality (Hunter 1991) and views toward redistribution.[9] Selecting these well-studied issues allows us to see the impact of taking a complex religion approach and disaggregating Black Protestants.

We assess a single ordinal indicator of support for abortion. Respondents were asked, "Do you think abortion should be legal in all cases (4), legal in most cases (3), illegal in most cases (2), or illegal in all cases (1)." The variable created for feelings toward gay marriage was also on a four-point scale. Respondents were asked, "Do you strongly favor (4), favor (3), oppose (2), or strongly oppose (1) allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?" For political identification, the Pew question asks: "In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?" Respondents who answered that they were Independent were also asked "as of today, do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?" Of those who originally identified as independents, about a third said they leaned Democrat or Republican and the rest responded that they leaned neither way. We created a five-point scale with Republicans (1), Republican-leaning Independents (2), Independents (3), Democrat-leaning Independents (4), and Democrats (5). Since these ordinal variables have more than four categories and the sample size is large, there is little difference between ordinal regression and ordinary least square (OLS) regression. For the ease of interpretation and model parsimoniousness, we choose OLS regression. To adjust for heteroscedasticity, robust standard errors are used in all models.[10]

Our question regarding attitudes toward redistribution is a bit different from the rest. Respondents were asked which statement on government aid to the poor[11] comes closest to their own views: "Government aid to the poor does more harm than good, by making people too dependent on government assistance (0)" OR "Government aid to the poor does more good than harm, because people can't get out of poverty until their basic needs are met (1)." To be consistent with the other models, we use linear probability model (LPM), which is an OLS model with a binary dependent

[9] By necessity, we save for future scholars related topics such as the study of social movements (Wood 1999; Young 2002; Yukich 2013) or political cultures (Berezin 1997) and nationalism (Zubrzycki 2006) and the way they intersect with race, class, and religion.

[10] We run all the models using ordered logistic models and logistic models (for attitudes toward the poor in the following section) to double-check our results. Results are almost the same in significance levels and relative effect size, and thus there are no fundamental differences between OLS models and logit models for our analyses. In addition, we add the results from logit models in the Appendix A so that readers could see and compare these results (Tables A3 and A4).

[11] We use the term redistribution although the question is more closely aligned with creating equal opportunity and meeting the basic needs of the poor so they can get out of the poverty.

variable. After the regression, the predicted values of respondents' views all fall within the range between 0 and 1, which is consistent with the assumption of LPM that the dependent variable should be between 0 and 1. Thus, the linear probability model works well. We used robust standard errors to adjust for heteroscedasticity.

2.2. Independent Variables

Our study examines the impact of religious affiliation and how it intersects with both race and education. We compare Mainline Protestants, Conservative Protestants, Catholics, those of other religions, and those of no religion using Pew's categorization scheme.[12] In order to examine both race and religion, we created a nine-category religion model that included racial identification. This new religion variable includes White Mainline Protestants, White Conservative Protestants, White Catholics, Whites of other religions, Whites of no religion, Black Protestants, Black Catholics, Blacks of other religions, and Blacks of no religion. In an additional set of analyses, we also explore differences among Black Protestants using a new coding scheme advanced by (Shelton and Cobb 2017). This coding scheme includes six new categories: Baptist, Methodist, Holiness/Pentecostal, Non-denominational Protestant, Historically White Evangelical Protestant, and Historically White Mainline Protestant.

We measured education in the Pew data set by recoding Pew's variable on the respondent's highest level of education ("Educ") into the corresponding years of education. We did this to make it easier to interact education with religion and race, rather than control for education as almost all previous studies have done (cf. Edgell and Tranby 2007).

2.3. Control Variables

In all of our models we control for variables known to influence political views: Age (Inglehart 1977; Nie et al. 1999; Scott 1998), religious attendance (Green et al. 1991; Inglehart 1977; Sherkat et al. 2010),[13] and gender (Green 2007; Klein 1985; Roth and Kroll 2007; Wirls 1986). We also control for rural and Southern residence because region has been found to figure into the relationship between religion and politics (Davis and Robinson 1996a; Ellison and Musick 1993; Wald et al. 1989; Woodberry and Smith 1998). We examined interactions for both of them and found that, although they are significant, their presence does not change the overall findings presented here. Descriptives for all of the variables in our model are presented on Table 1.[14]

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[12] Because of Pew's large number of cases, the Pew religion categorization scheme is able to separate out distinct groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, which sometimes get coded as Conservative Protestants, and sometimes as religious "others," depending on the religious categorization scheme used. The FUND scale developed by Tom Smith codes them as Conservative Protestants (Smith 1990), whereas Reltrad considers them "others" (Steensland et al. 2000). We initially examined both groups separately, but found that they act largely like Conservative Protestants, so we included them in that category in all analyses reported here.

[13] We interacted attendance with our religion variable to see how the effect of attendance changes across different religious groups. The r-squared for each model were similar to the results of education. Graphs of predicted values available upon request.

[14] All items and scales were recoded so that higher values reflect more progressive views.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey).

	Mean/Proportion	SD	Min	Max	Frequency
Dependent Variables					
Abortion	2.586	0.995	1	4	32,695
Gay Marriage	2.633	1.074	1	4	31,602
Economic Redistribution	0.525	0.499	0	1	32,155
Political Party Identification	3.142	1.608	1	5	31,335
Key Independent Variables					
Years of Education	13.511	2.359	8	18	34,025
Nine Category Religion					28,903
White Conservative Protestant	0.249				7198
White Mainline Protestant	0.160				4617
White Catholic	0.183				5280
White Other Religion	0.056				1604
White No Religion	0.205				5916
Black Protestant	0.104				2995
Black Catholic	0.009				269
Black Other Religion	0.009				248
Black No Religion	0.027				777
Black RelTrad					2515
Black Baptist	0.552				1388
Black Methodist	0.066				165
Black Non-denominational	0.150				377
Black Historically White Evangelical Protestant	0.005				113
Black Historically White Mainline Protestant	0.005				117
Black Holiness/Pentecostal	0.141				354
Control Variables					
Religious Attendance	3.567	1.638	1	6	34,008
Age	5.960	3.547	1	15	33,520
Female	0.516	0.500	0	1	34,224
South	0.373	0.484	0	1	34,224
Urban	0.366	0.482	0	1	34,224

Note: Weight is used. Jews are not included. Frequencies of each religious tradition are rounded to integers. Age range starts from age 24 or below with 1 increase as an increment of 5 years.

3. Findings

Table 2 presents the results of our regression analysis on all dependent variables.[15] We discuss each of these in turn below.[16]

[15] Table 2 and the following Table 3 present the effect size of education for each religious group. For the original results from interaction models, please see Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix A.

[16] Graph points are only displayed for cells with over 10 people.

Table 2. Effects of education in ordinary least squares (OLS) models with the interaction of education and nine category religion on political views.

	Abortion	Gay Marriage	Economic Redistribution	Political Party Identification
White Conservative Protestant	0.021 ***	0.033 ***	−0.011 ***	−0.063 ***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.008)
White Mainline Protestant	0.072 ***	0.113 ***	0.027 ***	0.076 ***
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.010)
White Catholic	0.040 ***	0.067 ***	0.005	−0.022 *
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.009)
White Other Religion	0.079 ***	0.089 ***	0.020 ***	0.088 ***
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.017)
White No Religion	0.066 ***	0.092 ***	0.036 ***	0.118 ***
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.008)
Black Protestant	0.089 ***	0.044 ***	0.010 *	0.011
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.004)	(0.010)
Black Catholic	0.101 ***	0.031	0.018	−0.009
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.012)	(0.034)
Black Other Religion	0.142 ***	0.069	−0.000	0.030
	(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.017)	(0.045)
Black No Religion	0.092 ***	0.084 ***	0.018 *	0.042 *
	(0.020)	(0.190)	(0.008)	(0.021)
R^2 (%)	22.97	32.07	8.79	20.24
Observations	27,100	26,282	26,677	26,251

Note: Religious attendance, age, female, south, and urban are included as control variables. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

3.1. Abortion

To examine racial and religious differences in views toward abortion, we examine Pew's question, "Do you think abortion should be, legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, illegal in all cases" for both Blacks and Whites in different religious groups by education in Figures 1 and 2.

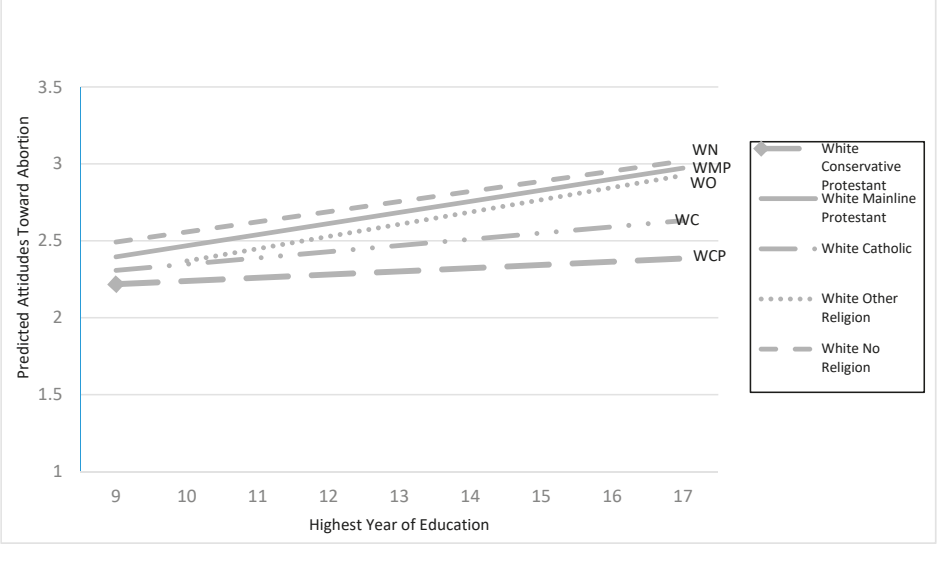

Figure 1. The interaction of religion and education on views on abortion.

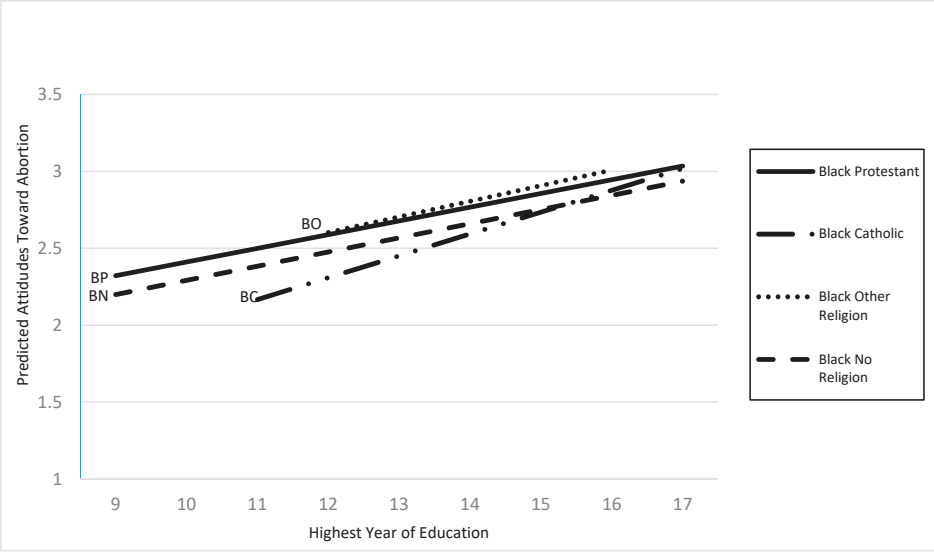

Figure 2. The interaction of religion and education on views on abortion.

Figures 1 and 2 present the findings of our regression analysis for both Blacks and Whites in different religious groups by education.[17] At lower levels of education, Blacks and Whites are not overall very different on abortion: For instance, at nine years of schooling there is little difference (0.29) between Whites of no religion (2.49) and Blacks of no religion (2.2). Previous literature has suggested that Blacks are more supportive of abortion than Whites (Strickler and Danigelis 2002), yet we find this is only true at higher levels of education. Moreover, studies have suggested this is a result of less religious (Evans 2002) Blacks; although this figure shows, Blacks of no religion have the most conservative positions, aside from Black Catholics with under 15 years of education.

Education is positively correlated to more liberal views on abortion, as is the accepted wisdom in the literature (Evans 2002; Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Kiecolt 1988; Petersen 2001), but it has much greater effects for some groups than for others—most notably little effect on White Conservative Protestants who are known to be, along with Catholics, most resistant to liberalization on this issue (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; DiMaggio et al. 1996; Emerson 1996). Overall, the education effect is similar for Blacks and Whites on abortion, such that Black Protestants look closer to White Mainline Protestants than they do to their more theologically similar White Conservative Protestants. In fact, at the highest levels of education, Black Protestants show the highest acceptance (3.04), while White Conservative Protestants have the lowest (2.39).

3.2. Gay Marriage

We present the findings for the responses of Blacks and Whites in different religious groups by education to the question: "Do you strongly favor (4), favor (3), oppose (2), or strongly oppose (1) allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?" in Figures 3 and 4.

[17] To increase readability, we have separated the figure by race. For all results consolidated in one figure, please see Appendix A.

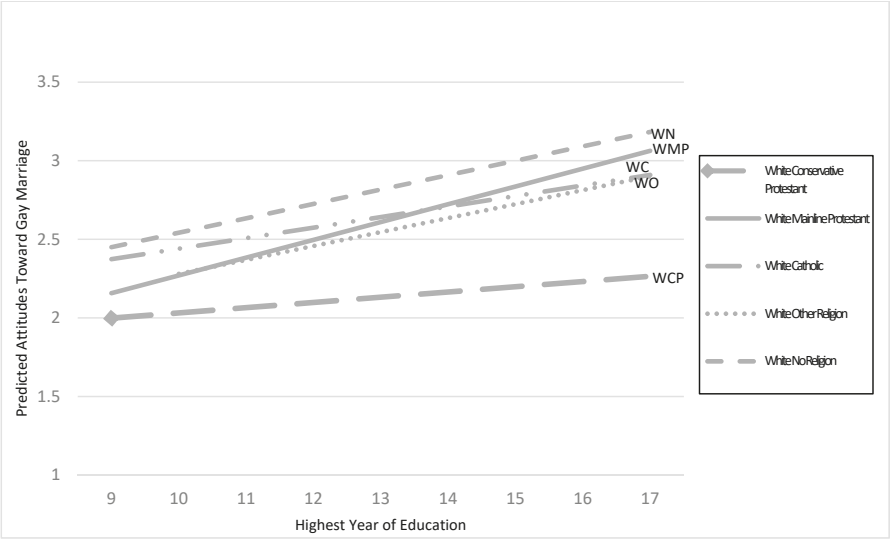

Figure 3. The interaction of religion and education on views on gay marriage.

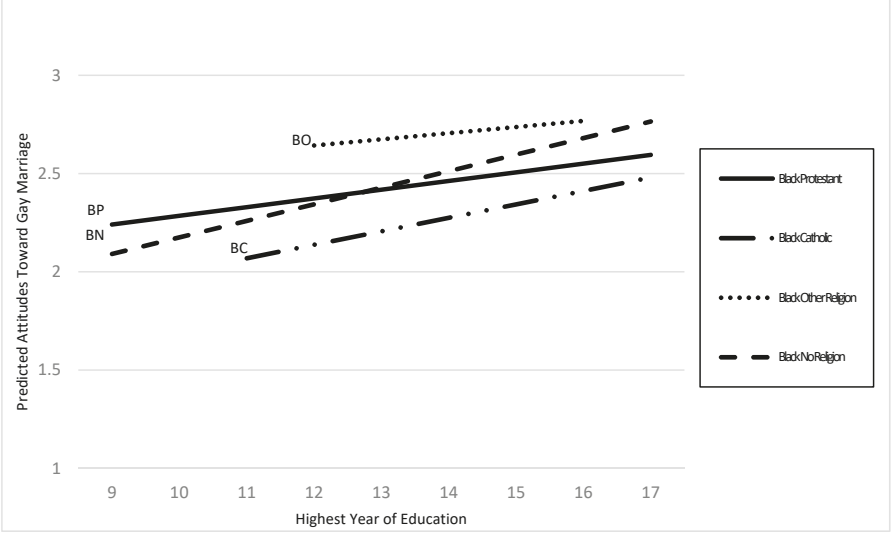

Figure 4. The interaction of religion and education on views on gay marriage.

Figures 3 and 4 show, in contrast to their views on abortion on which education is correlated modestly with more progressive views, education has a much smaller effect on Black Protestants' views on homosexuality. On this issue, like White Conservative Protestants, they remain relatively conservative regardless of their educational backgrounds. In comparison, education is liberalizing for other Black religious groups.

Unlike abortion, Blacks of no religion are more progressive than most other black religious groups, after 11 years of education. Still, even the most progressive Blacks remain more conservative than all other Whites in groups except Conservative Protestants.

Other than the strong effect of education for Blacks of no religion, there is, by and large, much less variation among Blacks regarding gay marriage.[18] This means that at their most highly educated, Blacks vary from a high of 2.8 for Blacks of no religion to a low of 2.5 for Black Catholics on gay marriage (mid-way between favoring and opposing gay marriage). This is much less variation than compared to the variation in Whites, where Whites of no religion are a 3.2—far above the score that represents "favoring" legal gay marriage—but White Conservative Protestants are a 2.3—close to unilaterally "strongly opposing" legal gay marriage.

When looked at together, these findings demonstrate that when it comes to gay marriage, most Black religious groups are more conservative than most White religious groups, with the exception of White Conservative Protestants, who again are the most conservative group. While Conservative Protestants have the most negative views of gay marriage (Barringer et al. 2013; Evans 2002; Olson et al. 2006; Rayside and Wilcox 2012; Sherkat et al. 2010) and the most educated Americans are the most positive towards gay marriage (Bolzendahl and Brooks 2005; Brooks and Manza 1997b; Ellison and Musick 1993; Evans 2002; Fowler et al. 2013; Kiecolt 1988; Loftus 2001; Ohlander et al. 2005), research that examines religious affiliation and attitudes towards gay marriage universally controls for education and/or race. Thus, the extensive difference between the most and least educated Blacks of other religions, and the limited effect of education on Whites in Conservative Protestant denominations and all other Blacks in religious groups, has to our knowledge not been demonstrated.

3.3. Redistribution

Respondents were asked which statement on government aid to the poor comes closest to their own views: "Government aid to the poor does more harm than good, by making people too dependent on government assistance (0)" OR "Government aid to the poor does more good than harm, because people can't get out of poverty until their basic needs are met (1)." Our findings in Figures 5 and 6 are consistent with previous research.

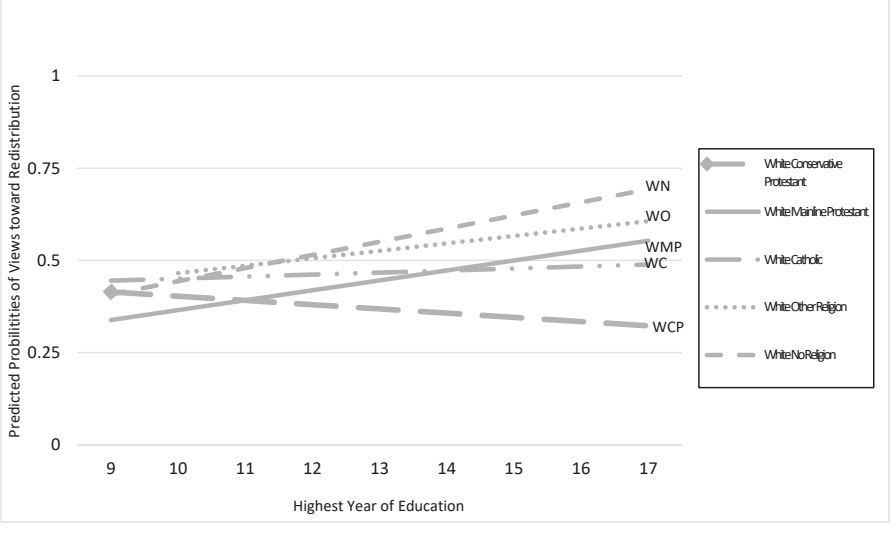

Figure 5. The interaction of religion and education on views toward redistribution.

[18] This may result from immigration, not merely an education effect.

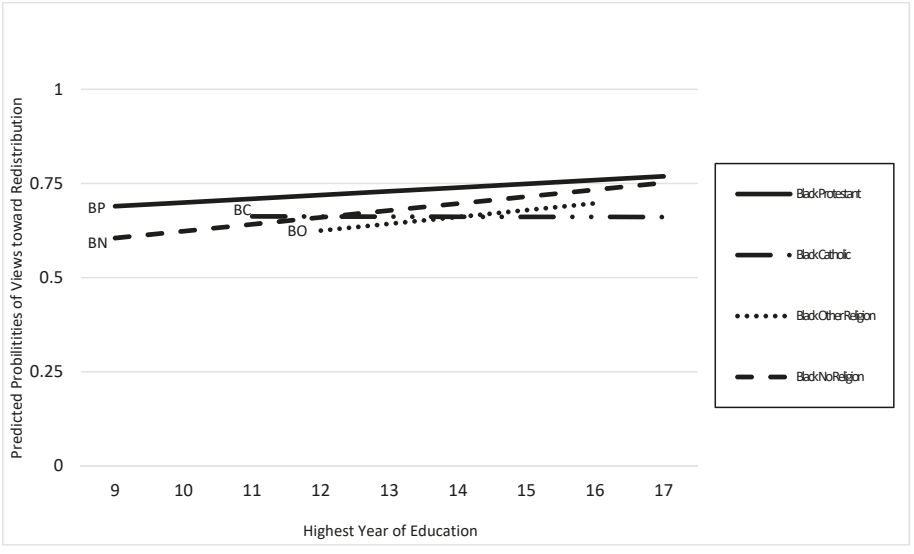

Figure 6. The interaction of religion and education on views toward redistribution.

There is significant variation among all Whites in religious groups, and strong variation by education for Whites as Figure 5 shows. Like abortion and gay marriage, the gap in support widens with increased educational attainment. We can see there is little effect of education among Blacks. For Whites, increases in education are correlated to more progressive views for all religious groups outside of White Conservative Protestants. Whites in Conservative Protestant denominations had the lowest impact of education on more progressive positions for abortion and gay marriage within White religious groups, and are the only religious group who get more conservative significantly on redistribution with education.

Figure 6 also shows there is little variation among Blacks in relation to the issue of redistribution—with all Blacks in religious groups being among the most progressive groups in America. There is a wide disparity between racial groups. Whites in any religious group at any level of education is more progressive on redistribution than members of the most progressive Black religious groups after 10 years of education (0.7). Only Whites of other religions (0.61) and those of no religion (0.69) at the highest level of education come close to or surpass the Blacks progressivism in relation to economic equality: Those or no religion with between nine years of education (0.61) and 13 years (0.68) or Black Catholics of all levels of education (0.66).

3.4. Political Party Identification

The picture regarding political identification for Blacks by religion and education is remarkably similar to that regarding redistribution. Our five-point scale with Republicans (1), Republican-leaning Independents (2), Independents (3), Democrat-leaning Independents (4), and Democrats (5) is presented in Figures 7 and 8.

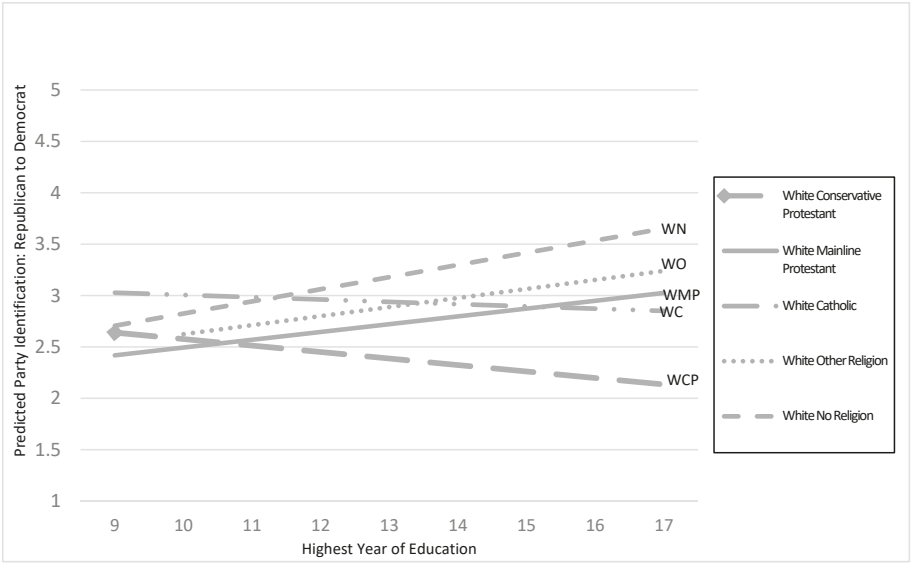

Figure 7. The interaction of religion and education on party identification.

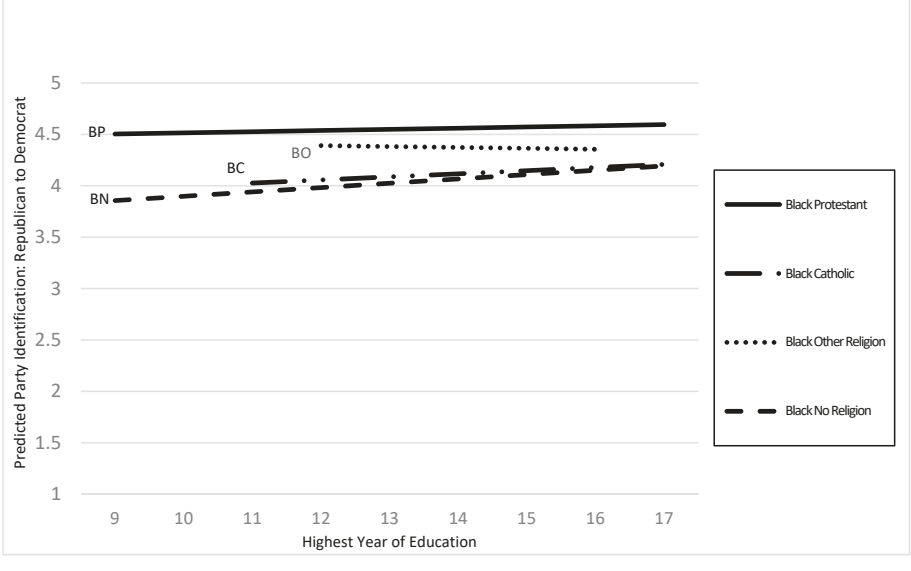

Figure 8. The interaction of religion and education on party identification.

The low variation among Blacks compared to Whites is visible within Figures 7 and 8. Blacks of all religious persuasions are more Democrat leaning (3.8–4.5) than all White groups. It also demonstrates that at all levels of education, all Black groups are more likely to identify with the Democratic party than any White group, even among Whites with other religions and Whites of no religion with the highest levels of education.

Black Americans with no religion are the only Black subgroup that are significantly impacted by education. Unlike their White counterparts of no religion who tend to be more progressive and

Democratically identified than other White groups, Blacks of no religion are the least Democratically identified Blacks. In fact, Blacks of no religion, below 13 years of education, are the only Black (non)religious group who report lower than Democrat-Leaning Independents (4). That said, they are still stronger Democrats at their lowest identification than any White religious groups at their highest education and Democratic affiliation.

Like abortion and gay marriage, education is significant for all White religious groups. However, similar to redistribution, White Conservative Protestants are unique to their White counterparts in the impact of education: Higher levels of educational attainment are correlated with more Republican identifications. This is true also for White Catholics, albeit to a lesser, but still significant, extent.

3.5. Differences among Black Protestants

The analysis presented above examines the key religious groups in the US for both Blacks and Whites. As the existing research to date almost exclusively examines Black Protestants on these issues, if it examines Blacks at all, the addition of Black Catholics, Blacks of other religions, and Blacks of no religion is a contribution, in and of itself. Our findings suggest that while many have attributed Blacks' progressive stances on redistribution and strong support for the democratic party to the role of the Black Church—it seems that race is a much bigger factor than religion on all four of the issues we examine here.

However, up until now, we have not examined any possible differences among the three-quarters of Blacks who identify as Black Protestants. When we do so, using the new coding scheme developed by (Shelton and Cobb 2017), we can see that there is substantial variation among Black Protestants. Table 3 presents the results of our regression analysis on all dependent variables. We discuss each of these in turn below.

Table 3. Effects of education in OLS models with the interaction of education and Black religious affiliation on political views.

	Abortion	**Gay Marriage**	**Economic Redistribution**	**Political Party Identification**
Black Baptist	0.111 ***	0.053 ***	0.007	0.042 **
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.013)
Black Methodist	0.030	0.068 *	0.024	−0.009
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.013)	(0.025)
Black Non-denominational	0.072 ***	0.040	0.007	−0.024
	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.011)	(0.027)
Black Historically White Evangelical Protestant	0.051	0.045	0.011	−0.028
	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.019)	(0.052)
Black Historically White Mainline Protestant	0.109 ***	0.107 **	−0.000	−0.034
	(0.033)	(0.038)	(0.013)	(0.039)
Black Holiness/Pentecostal	0.046 *	−0.014	0.019	−0.011
	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.028)
R^2 (%)	11.40	16.35	1.98	5.67
Observations	2285	2221	2279	2304

Note: Religious attendance, age, female, south, and urban are included as control variables in all models. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

Table 3 demonstrates the varied influence of education for various Black Protestant denominations on different political issues. For instance, for Baptists, higher education is correlated with more progressive views toward abortion, homosexuality, and political party identification, while Blacks in Historically White Evangelical Protestant denominations do not show an effect of education for any political issue.

Of all the political issues, education has the largest effect on views toward abortion for all Black Protestant groups, besides Methodists, as seen in Figure 9. This is in alignment with the findings from our nine-category race and religion model where education was not significant for Black

Protestants' identification with a political party and had minimal effect on views toward gay marriage and redistribution.

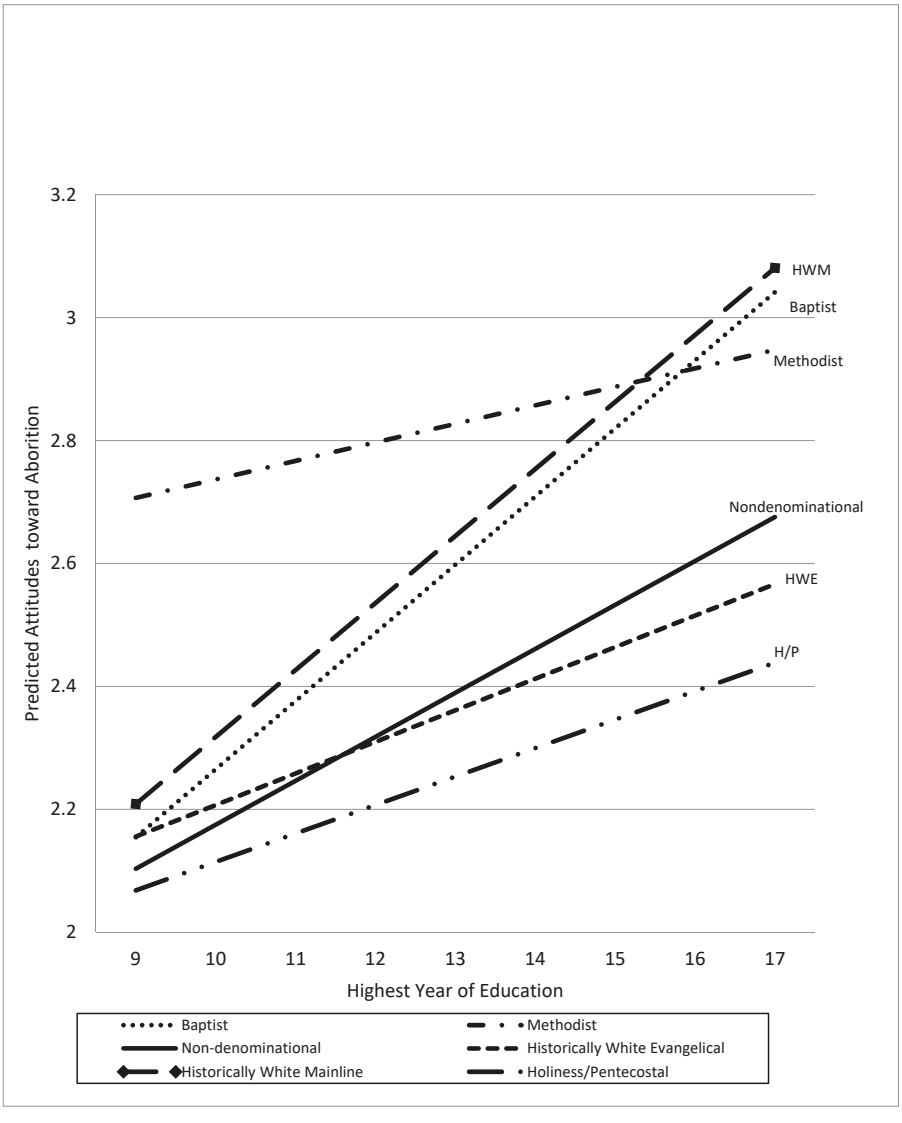

Figure 9. The interaction of education and religion for Black Protestant views on abortion.

Not including Methodists, at nine years of education, all groups are relatively unsupportive of abortion (with scores contained largely between 2.1 and 2.2). Although the influence of education was significant when looking at Black Protestants as a group, education is not significant for Methodists, who hold the most progressive views of all Black Protestant groups from nine to 15 years of education, and those in Historically White Evangelical denominations, who remain conservative like their White Conservative Protestant counterparts.

At the highest levels of education, Blacks in Historically White Mainline denominations, Baptists, and Methodists indicate abortion should be legal in most cases. This more closely resembles the acceptance we saw of Black Protestants as a group than the more conservative beliefs of those in Non-denominational, Historically White Evangelical, and Holiness/Pentecostal denominations. These findings corroborate the importance of distinguishing denominational affiliation for Black Protestants.

Compared to the range in support for abortion, Figure 10[19] shows even more variation in views toward gay marriage at the highest levels at education.

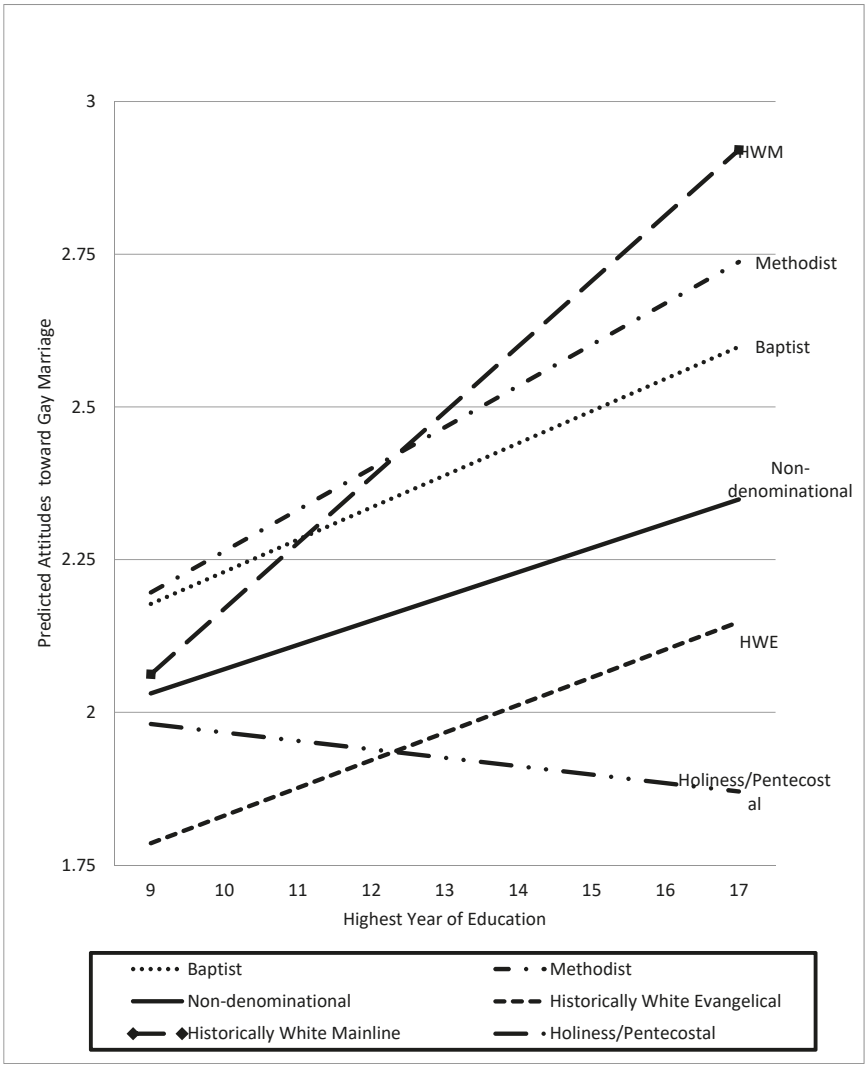

Figure 10. The interaction of education and religion for Black Protestant views on gay marriage.

[19] To increase readability, we begin at 1.75 on the X-axis. All figures in the Appendix A begin at the same point of the X-axis. Please see Figure A5.

At the highest levels of education, Holiness/Pentecostals are again the most conservative and oppose gay marriage with a score of 1.9. This is a full point lower on the Likert scale of support than the most progressive group, Historically White Mainline Denominations who come close to favoring gay marriage (2.9). Under 12 years of education, Historically White Evangelicals are the most likely to oppose gay marriage; however, at the lowest level of education, this is less than half a point lower on the scale of support than Methodists (the most progressive group). Like abortion, the gap in support widens with educational attainment.

When looking at Black Protestants as a whole, education has a significant but small effect (0.044) on views toward gay marriage. However, when we take a closer examination at different denominations, education is significantly more likely to be connected with more progressive views for Baptists, Methodists, and those in Historically White Mainline Protestant denominations. Unlike any other Blacks in religious groups, education increases demonstrate more conservative viewpoints for Holiness/Pentecostals, although this effect is not significant. These findings reiterate the need to disaggregate the Black Protestant category.

Figure 11 shows that all Black religious groups are for redistribution. Education does not significantly influence any Black Protestant denomination's views toward redistribution.

In terms of views toward redistribution, those in Historically White Mainline denominations are the most progressive at all years of education. Still, the variation amongst groups decreases throughout additional years of education at the highest years of education, and the difference between the most progressive (Historically White Mainline at 0.8) and least progressive (Historically White Evangelicals at 0.7) is marginal. This is a change from views on abortion and gay marriage, where Holiness/Pentecostals are the least progressive group at higher levels of education; however, they still hold the most conservative under 14 years of education.

As would be predicted from our nine-category race and religion model, the results of political identification for Black Protestants notably resemble the picture presented regarding redistribution. Figure 12 shows the lack of education effect we saw in Black Protestants as a group on political identification is mirrored closely by all denominations but Baptists.

Baptists are the only Black Protestant group who are significantly influenced by education in their political party identification. While increased education demonstrates more Democrat identification for Baptists, it is somewhat (but not significantly) related to more Republican affiliations for those in Non-denominational, Historically White Evangelical, and Historically White Mainline denominations. Here we see that Historically White Evangelicals are again among the less progressive religious groups.

Only three groups surpass the threshold of 4.5 (mid-way between Democrat and Democrat-leaning Independent). Methodists at all years of education, Baptists after 14 years of education, and those in Historically White Mainline denominations before 15 years of education. Still, at all levels of education, every Black Protestant group is above Democrat-leaning Independent (4).

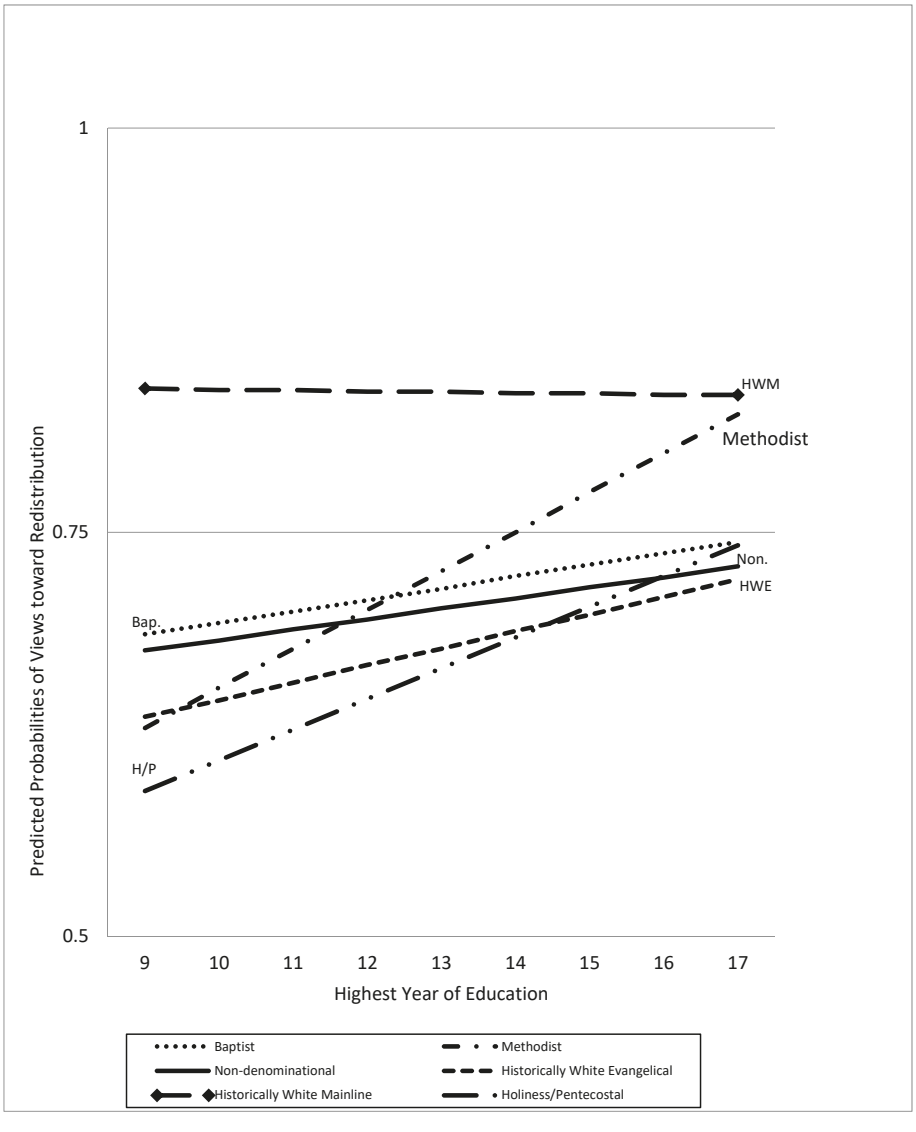

Figure 11. The interaction of education and religion for Black Protestant views on redistribution.

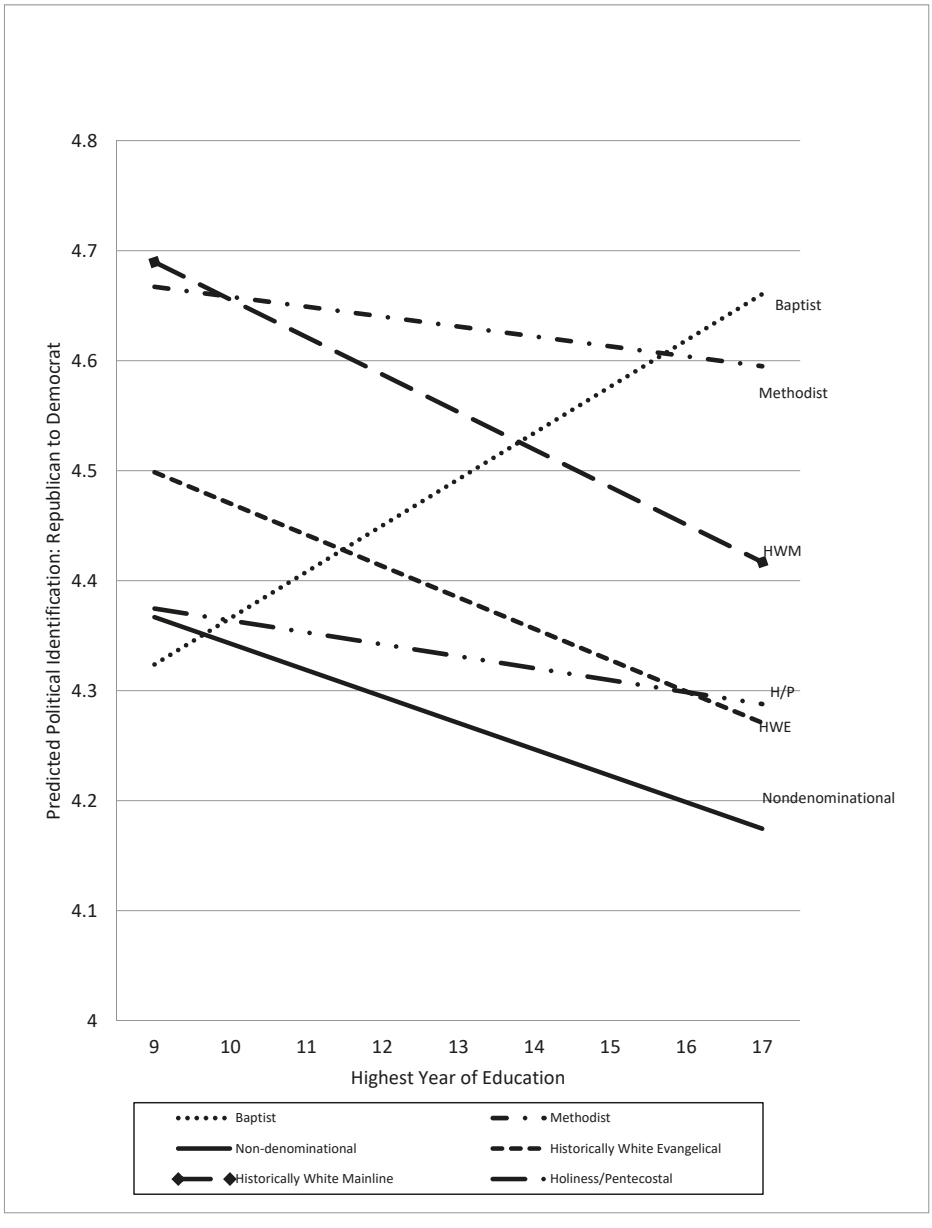

Figure 12. The interaction of education and religion for Black Protestants on political identification.

4. Conclusions

As this research shows, taking a complex religion approach does not mean that one will always find a greater religious effect. In this case, for Blacks, the intersection of religion, race, and education, suggests that beyond a "general cultural" effect that is very difficult to measure, religion and education have very little effects on Blacks' political views. Blacks of all religious affiliations (including and especially those of no religion) and of all levels of education are politically liberal. The differences

among Blacks of different religious views are generally quite small, suggesting that Blacks' political views are much more about race than about religion or education. This is the case except, as we have already noted, for Blacks who attend Historically White Evangelical Churches. They look much more like White Evangelicals than Blacks on issues of economic redistribution and political party identification.

Strikingly similar to moderate (non-Catholic or Conservative Protestant) Whites on abortion, Blacks in all religious groups become more accepting of abortion as they become more educated. The same is true of gay marriage, although Black Protestants' views are less impacted by educational attainment on this issue, and Blacks overall are more conservative than all Whites except White Conservative Protestants. Taking a very broad view of politics, we can see that Blacks' political identities seem disconnected from the social issues of abortion and gay marriage, which are quite divisive, and politically central, among Whites. Instead, we see that Blacks' political identities are more connected to views of economic redistribution, and that race continues to hold primary significance in the political opinions of Blacks in the United States.

Even so, however, we revealed meaningful denominational variation in Black Protestants, a religious category that is rarely disaggregated. At the highest level of education, Blacks in Historically White Mainline denominations were the most progressive group on views toward abortion, support of gay marriage, and feelings toward redistribution; while those in Historically White Evangelical denominations held either the most conservative or near the most conservative beliefs on these issues of all Black Protestant groups. While education was correlated with more progressive views for Blacks in Historically White Mainline denominations on views toward abortion and gay marriage, education had no effect for those in Historically White Evangelical denominations for any political issues. This demonstrates the extent that Blacks' political views and interaction with education vary by denominational affiliation and the flaws with treating Black Protestants as a monolith.

Our findings corroborate Shelton and Cobb (2017) findings that Holiness/Pentecostals are the most religiously conservative Black Protestants, with those in Non-denominational and Historically White Evangelical denominations falling closely behind. While Baptists and Methodists were consistently among the most progressive for all four political issues, the difference with more conservative Non-denominational and Holiness/Pentecostal groups was most apparent in the social issues of abortion and gay marriage. This supports the need for future research to examine Black Protestant denomination groups separately, particularly for beliefs on sexual morality.

Future research should look at why Blacks with no religion are the most conservative Blacks. Future research should also explore why education seems have much less of an effect on Blacks' political views than Whites', perhaps by examining whether education has a different impact on the material lives of Blacks and Whites and how that influences political views.

This paper points to the need for employing complex religion in empirical analysis. Consistent with existing research, we find that while Blacks, regardless of religious identification and education levels, lean to the left on aid to the poor and are more likely to be Democrats, they are more conservative than Whites on abortion and gay marriage. However, we also find that Blacks who attend Historically White evangelical churches have political views that more closely resemble Whites who attend such churches, especially among those who have more years in full-time education. We also found Blacks of no religion to be the most conservative Blacks. Thus, this study demonstrates the importance of further research on Black religiosity and politics to examine in greater detail non-protestant Blacks and non-religious Blacks.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.W.; methodology, h.p., W.S., M.W.; software, W.S.; validation, W.S.; formal analysis, h.p., M.W., W.S.; investigation, h.p.; data curation, h.p. and W.S.; writing—original draft preparation, h.p.; writing—review and editing, h.p., W.S., M.W.; visualization, h.p.; supervision, M.W.; project administration, M.W. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Original results from the OLS models of examining the interaction of education, race, and religion for Blacks and Whites (Black Protestant as reference).

	Abortion	Gay Marriage	Economic Redistribution	Political Party Identification
White Conservative Protestant	0.511 ***	−0.143	−0.082	−1.192 ***
	(0.134)	(0.137)	(0.065)	(0.184)
White Mainline Protestant	0.227	−0.704 ***	−0.503 ***	−2.665 ***
	(0.139)	(0.146)	(0.070)	(0.206)
White Catholic	0.425 **	−0.072	−0.204 **	−1.172 ***
	(0.139)	(0.141)	(0.068)	(0.197)
White Other Religion	0.056	−0.450 *	−0.336 ***	−2.655 ***
	(0.183)	(0.195)	(0.095)	(0.292)
White No Religion	0.380 **	−0.217	−0.513 ***	−2.757 ***
	(0.137)	(0.138)	(0.068)	(0.186)
Black Catholic	−0.133	0.425	−0.192	0.100
	(0.402)	(0.394)	(0.185)	(0.510)
Black Other Religion	−0.912	−0.527	0.066	−0.704
	(0.469)	(0.530)	(0.241)	(0.644)
Black No Religion	−0.148	−0.510	−0.160	−0.922 **
	(0.307)	(0.291)	(0.128)	(0.334)
Education	0.089 ***	0.044 ***	0.010 *	0.011
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.010)
White Conservative Protestant	−0.068 ***	−0.011	−0.021 ***	−0.075 ***
× Education	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.013)
White Mainline Protestant	−0.017	0.069 ***	0.017 ***	0.064 ***
× Education	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.014)
White Catholic	−0.049 ***	0.023 *	−0.004	−0.034 *
× Education	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.014)
White Other Religion	−0.010	0.045 ***	0.010	0.076 ***
× Education	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.020)
White No Religion	−0.023 *	0.047 ***	0.026 ***	0.107 ***
× Education	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.013)
Black Catholic	0.012	−0.013	0.008	−0.020
× Education	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.013)	(0.036)
Black Other Religion	0.053	0.024	−0.010	0.019
× Education	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.017)	(0.046)
Black No Religion	0.003	0.040	0.008	0.031
× Education	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.009)	(0.024)
R^2 (%)	22.97	32.07	8.79	20.24
Observations	27,100	26,282	26,677	26,251

Note: Religious attendance, age, female, south, and urban are included as control variables. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

Table A2. Original results from the OLS models of examining the interaction of education and specific religious affiliation among Black Protestants (Black Baptist as reference).

	Abortion	Gay Marriage	Economic Redistribution	Political Party Identification
Black Methodist	1.279 **	−0.116	−0.213	0.803 *
	(0.409)	(0.432)	(0.206)	(0.401)
Black Non-denominational	0.303	−0.030	−0.006	0.638
	(0.364)	(0.372)	(0.174)	(0.433)
Black Historically White	0.537	−0.326	−0.084	0.810
Evangelical Protestant	(0.565)	(0.589)	(0.274)	(0.741)

Table A2. *Cont.*

	Abortion	Gay Marriage	Economic Redistribution	Political Party Identification
Black Historically White Mainline Protestant	0.071	−0.607	0.219	1.051
	(0.539)	(0.614)	(0.214)	(0.589)
Black Holiness/Pentecostal	0.495	0.401	−0.205	0.527
	(0.367)	(0.310)	(0.167)	(0.430)
Education	0.111 ***	0.053 ***	0.007	0.042 **
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.013)
Black Methodist × Education	−0.081 **	0.015	0.017	−0.051
	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.014)	(0.028)
Black Non-denominational × Education	−0.039	−0.013	−0.001	−0.066 *
	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.012)	(0.030)
Black Historically White Evangelical Protestant × Education	−0.060	−0.007	0.004	−0.071
	(0.040)	(0.043)	(0.019)	(0.053)
Black Historically White Mainline Protestant × Education	−0.002	0.055	−0.008	−0.076
	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.014)	(0.041)
Black Holiness/Pentecostal × Education	−0.065 *	−0.066 **	0.012	−0.053
	(0.026)	(0.022)	(0.012)	(0.031)
R^2 (%)	11.40	16.35	1.98	5.67
Observations	2285	2221	2279	2304

Note: Religious attendance, age, female, south, and urban are included as control variables. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

Table A3. Effects of education in logit models with the interaction of education and nine category religion on political views.

	Abortion	Gay Marriage	Economic Redistribution	Political Party Identification
White Conservative Protestant	0.053 ***	0.064 ***	−0.054 ***	−0.075 ***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.011)
White Mainline Protestant	0.145 ***	0.225 ***	0.111 ***	0.093 ***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)
White Catholic	0.087 ***	0.131 ***	0.023 *	−0.026 *
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)
White Other Religion	0.173 ***	0.193 ***	0.084 ***	0.097 ***
	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.019)
White No Religion	0.131 ***	0.212 ***	0.161 ***	0.132 ***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.009)
Black Protestant	0.189 ***	0.083 ***	0.051 *	−0.005
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Black Catholic	0.234 ***	0.051	0.083	−0.018
	(0.062)	(0.051)	(0.058)	(0.059)
Black Other Religion	0.318 ***	0.124	−0.002	0.039
	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.074)	(0.061)
Black No Religion	0.216 ***	0.158 ***	0.094 *	0.033
	(0.051)	(0.039)	(0.043)	(0.032)
Pseudo R^2 (%)	9.74	13.77	6.59	7.34
Observations	27,100	26,282	26,677	26,251

Note: Religious attendance, age, female, south, and urban are included as control variables. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * <0.05, ** <0.01, *** <0.001.

Table A4. Effects of education in logit models with the interaction of education and Black religious affiliation on political views.

	Abortion	Gay Marriage	Economic Redistribution	Political Party Identification
Black Baptist	0.210 ***	0.097 ***	0.036	0.064
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.028)	(0.036)
Black Methodist	0.071	0.129 **	0.142	−0.013
	(0.053)	(0.049)	(0.079)	(0.079)
Black Non-denominational	0.134 ***	0.075	0.030	−0.065
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.052)	(0.042)
Black Historically White Evangelical Protestant	0.092	0.079	0.048	−0.084
	(0.072)	(0.082)	(0.092)	(0.092)
Black Historically White Mainline Protestant	0.196 **	0.211 **	−0.005	−0.055
	(0.064)	(0.079)	(0.103)	(0.091)
Black Holiness/Pentecostal	0.092 *	−0.029	0.092	−0.035
	(0.044)	(0.041)	(0.053)	(0.053)
Pseudo R^2 (%)	4.45	6.44	1.74	4.48
Observations	2285	2221	2279	2304

Note: Religious attendance, age, female, south, and urban are included as control variables in all models. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * < 0.5, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

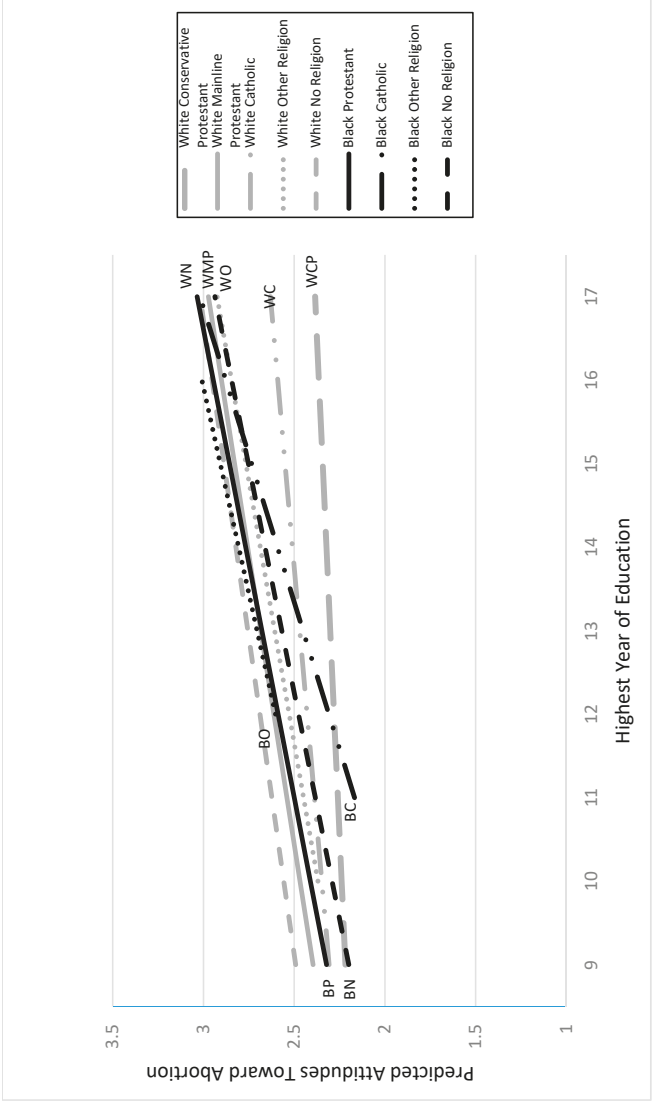

Figure A1. Views on abortion by race, religion, and education, Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey.

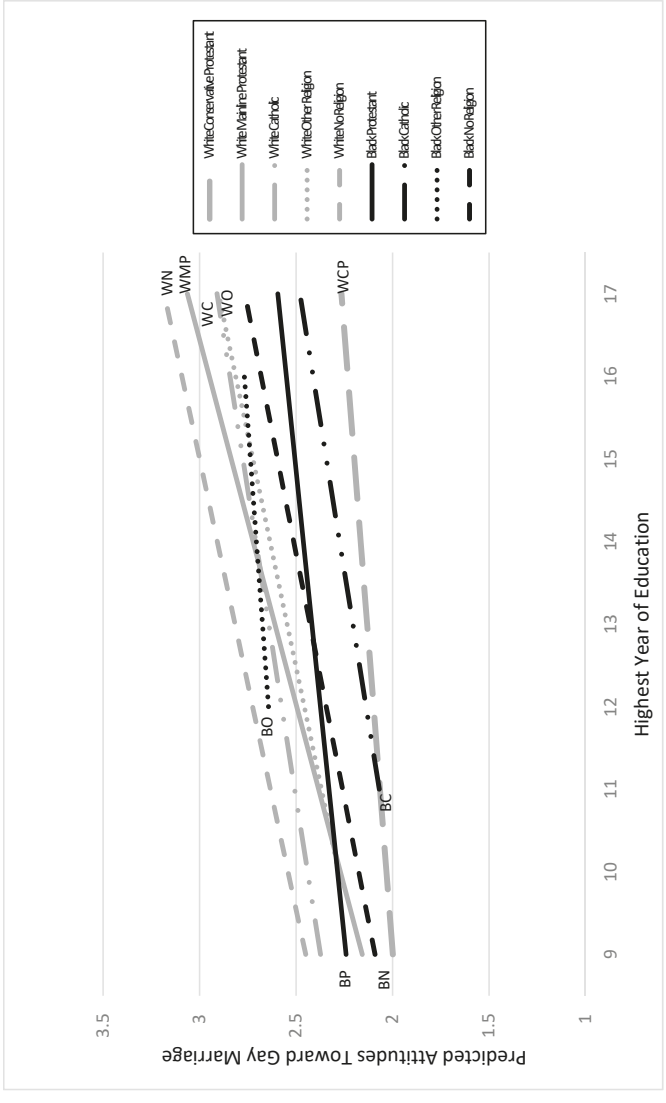

Figure A2. Views on gay marriage by race, religion, and education, Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey.

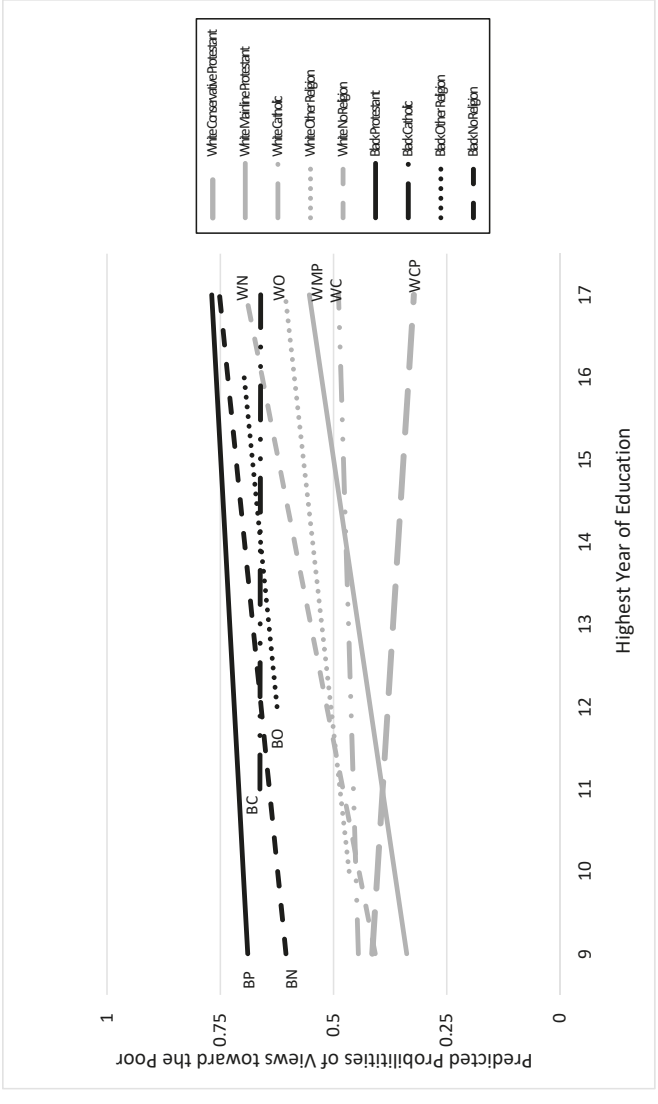

Figure A3. Views toward the poor by race, religion, and education, Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey.

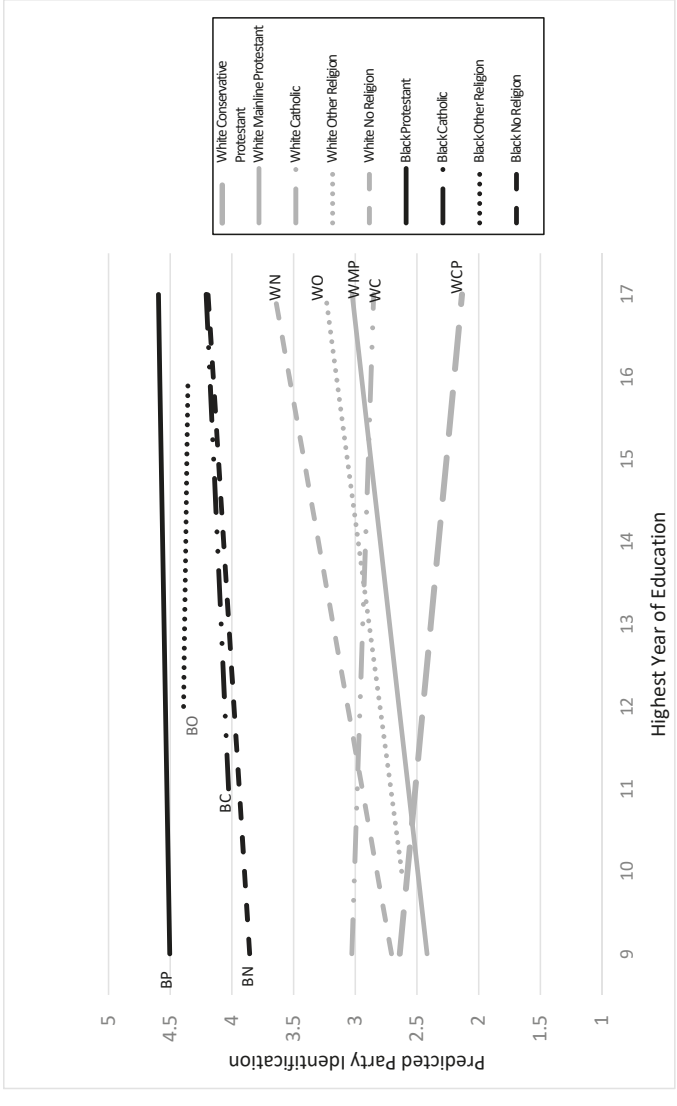

Figure A4. Party identification by race, religion, and education, Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey.

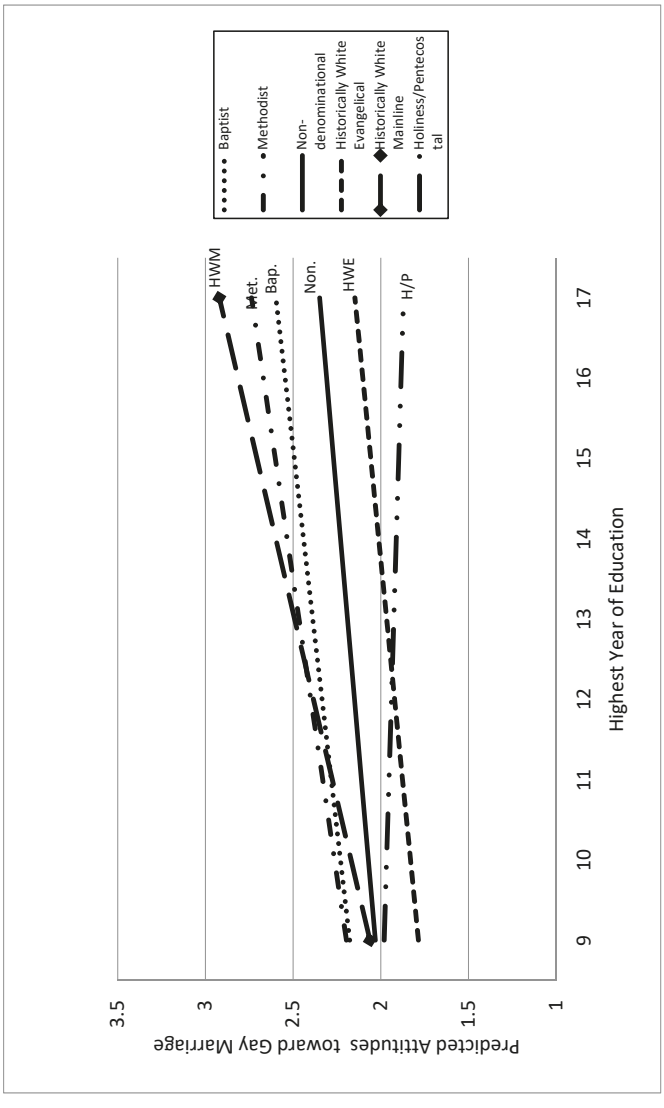

Figure A5. Black Protestant views on gay marriage by religion and education, Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey.

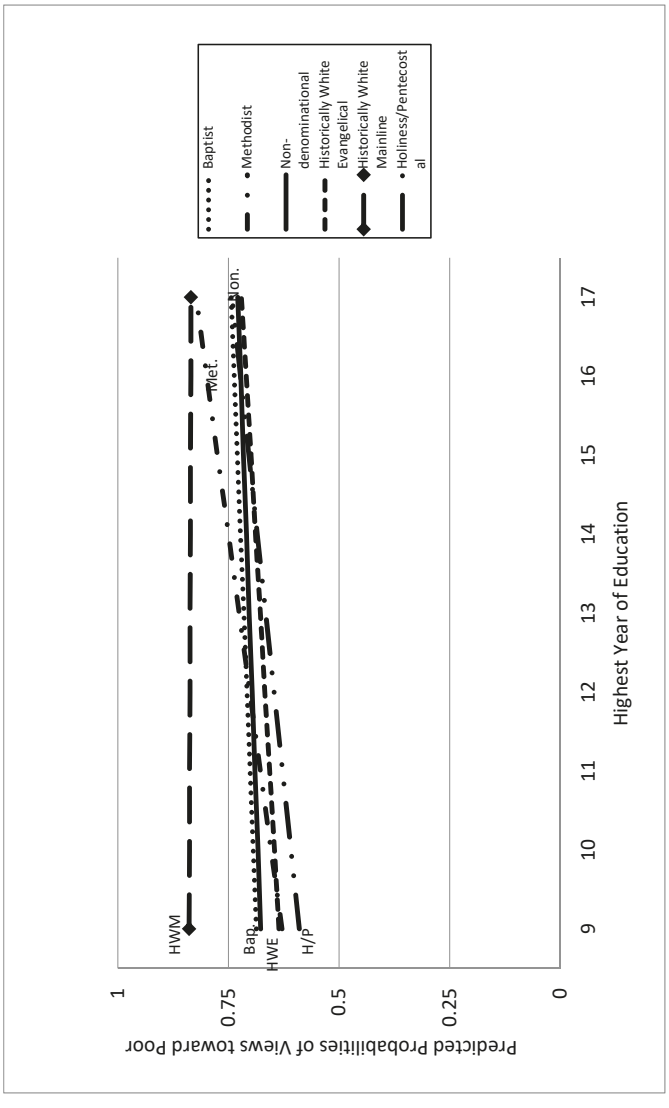

Figure A6. Black Protestant views toward the poor by religion and education, Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey.

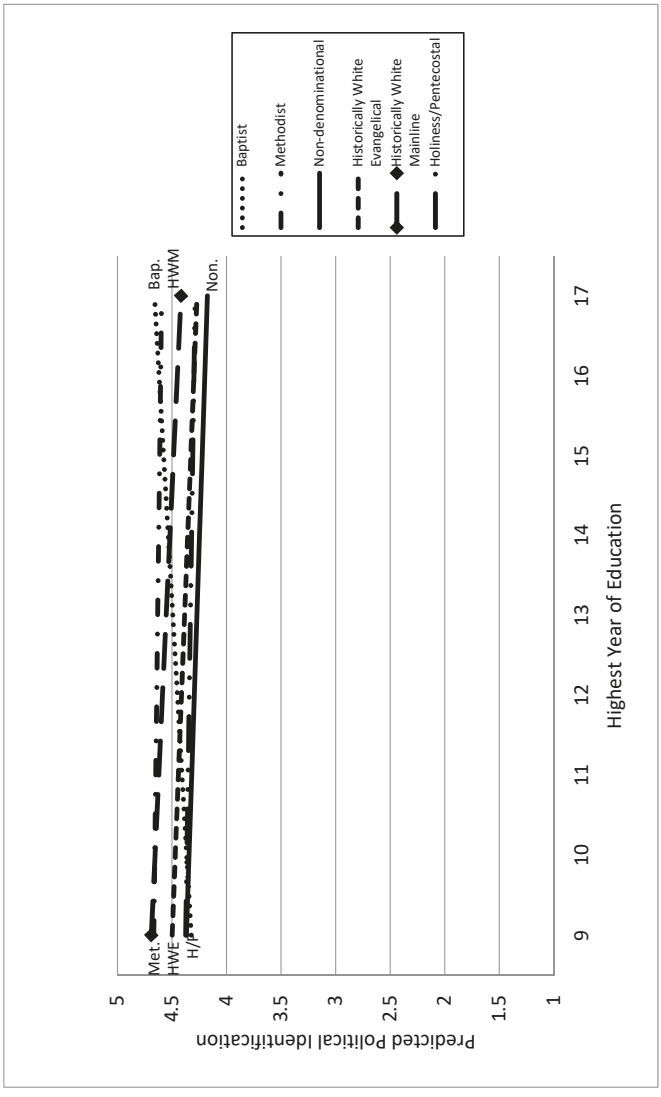

Figure A7. Black Protestant party identification by religion and education, Pew 2014 Religious Landscape Survey.

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Article

Efficacy, Distancing, and Reconciling: Religion and Race in Americans' Abortion Attitudes

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Abstract: Religion and race together inform Americans' abortion attitudes, but precisely how remains contradictory and unclear. Presumptions of shared religious or secular "worldviews" dividing abortion opinion mask variation among racially diverse adherents within the same tradition. Theoretical gaps compel a deeper, qualitative exploration of underlying processes. This article uses close analysis of a religiously and racially diverse, ideal–typical subset of in-depth interviews from the National Abortion Attitudes Study to identify three processes operating at the intersection of religion and race in abortion attitudes: *efficacy*, *distancing*, and *reconciling*. While religion's effect on abortion opinion remains paramount, accounting for social location illuminates meaningful variation. Findings offer an important corrective to overly-simplified narratives summarizing how religion matters to abortion opinion, accounting more fully for complex religion and religion as raced.

Keywords: abortion; religion; race; attitudes

1. Introduction

Religion matters to abortion attitudes, whether measured as affiliation, belief, importance, attendance, or otherwise (Gay and Lynxwiler 1999; Hess and Rueb 2005; Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Adamczyk and Valdimarsdottir 2018). Scholars frequently depict religion's impact as mediated through "worldviews" predisposing people to particular ways of making sense of their environments (Luker 1984; Emerson 1996).

Race also matters to abortion attitudes, albeit demonstratively less so than religion (Bolks et al. 2000; Wilcox 1990; Combs and Welch 1982; Carter et al. 2009). Religion is itself "raced," lending "cultural repertoires that people draw on and act upon very differently depending on their social location" (Yukich and Edgell 2020, p. 7). Religion and race are not neatly separated in how Americans form opinions on complex social issues, their interactions often contradictory. Abortion opinion attributed to religious differences can render invisible the intersecting influence of race, while attribution to race can render invisible that of religion. Religion is complex (Wilde 2020) and abortion attitudes multidimensional; religion and race work together to situate and complicate how Americans feel about myriad social issues including abortion.

This paper aims to generate new theory in the realm of religion, race, and abortion attitudes, remedying scant and contradictory conclusions drawn to date. Accordingly, it employs a close reading of in-depth qualitative interviews to assess interactions of religion and race in the ways that ordinary Americans understand abortion. The paper narrows in on a religiously and racially diverse group of nine ideal–typical interviewees chosen for theoretical reasons from among more than two hundred interviews in the National Abortion Attitudes Study (NAAS). Findings identify processes of *efficacy*, *distancing*, and *reconciling* to describe ways that white, Hispanic, and black Americans variously form abortion attitudes within their racially diverse religious (non)affiliations. Conclusions affirm

the relevance of religion to abortion attitudes while magnifying the ways that race mitigates *how* religion matters.

2. Linking Religion, Race, and Abortion Attitudes

Americans are ambivalent about abortion (Cook et al. 1992; Cowan and Hout 2019; Bruce 2020). Theories of abortion attitudes, however, frequently explain not ambivalence but predictability born of coherent and mutually opposed cultural frameworks in which religion is a central player. "The pro-life world view . . . is at the core one that centers around God," writes Luker; "the pro-choice world view is not centered around a Divine Being" (Luker 1984, pp. 186–88). Whether under the guise of "worldviews," "schemas," "symbolic politics," or otherwise, cultural frameworks purport to reveal implicit assumptions regarding the world as it is and should be (Berger 1967; Luker 1984; Sewell 1992; Welch et al. 1995). Frameworks translate personal values into public policy preferences. Cultural conceptions get internalized, protected, and reinforced within similarly oriented networks of people—religious and nonreligious groups among them (Bartkowski et al. 2012; Guenther et al. 2013). Religious engagement lends itself to more conservative viewpoints on abortion, in part by excluding alternatives (Bartkowski et al. 2012; Adamczyk and Valdimarsdottir 2018; Luker 1984). Nonreligious involvement in liberal socio-political organizations may foster more progressive viewpoints on abortion (Scheitle and Corcoran 2020; Manning 2015).

Operationalizing worldviews to assess abortion attitudes for ordinary (i.e., non-activist) Americans, however, is ill-equipped to attend to racially diverse perspectives among (non)religious adherents presumed to share a common worldview. If worldview intervenes between religion and abortion attitudes to make religion's influence more indirect (Emerson 1996), how does this vary by racial subgroup? Worldviews can generate meaningful differences along racial lines (Bartkowski et al. 2012). Qualitative interviewing reveals a complex and even contradictory patchwork of thinking on abortion that runs counter to more coherent arguments articulated by activists (Munson 2018; Bruce 2020). Ordinary Americans hold multiple identities—racial and religious among them—that are not easily consolidated nor measured by mutually exclusive worldviews.

With few exceptions, Americans affiliated with any religious denomination express higher levels of opposition to the legalization of abortion, on average, than those religiously unaffiliated (see Table 1). However, variation therein is wide: Hindu Americans, for example, are more supportive of abortion's legality than Mormons; Catholics are relatively split; Mainline Protestants are more supportive than Evangelical Protestants (Pew Research Center 2015). Abortion attitudes held by members of a faith tradition are frequently inconsistent with vocal leaders representing traditions with which they affiliate (Hoffsmann and Johnson 2005). Across all religious groups, attitudes toward sexual morality and human life correlate closely with abortion attitudes (Jelen 2014).

Table 1. Views on Abortion Legality by Religious Group (Adapted from Pew Research Center 2015).

Religious Tradition	Legal in All/Most Cases	Illegal in All/Most Cases
Jehovah's Witness	18%	75%
Mormon	27%	70%
Evangelical Protestant	33%	63%
Catholic	48%	47%
Orthodox Christian	53%	45%
Historically Black Protestant	52%	42%
Muslim	55%	37%
Mainline Protestant	60%	35%
Hindu	68%	29%
Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	73%	23%
Buddhist	82%	17%
Jewish	83%	15%

Evangelical Protestants hold some of the strongest opposition to abortion (Hoffsmann and Johnson 2005; McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz 2013; Silber Mohamed 2018). The longstanding gap between

evangelical and nonevangelical attitudes on this issue has widened in recent decades, garnering attention as a sign of polarization within the social and political worlds of Americans more broadly (Hoffsmann and Johnson 2005; Lewis 2017). A more conservative view on abortion may itself attract some Americans to evangelical churches (Hoffsmann and Johnson 2005). Evangelical differentiation in abortion attitudes holds even among younger Evangelicals, who remain conservative on abortion even while their attitudes on other issues become more liberal (Farrell 2011).

But Evangelicals do not hold homogenous attitudes on social issues (Peifer et al. 2014). Among African Americans, attitudes toward abortion look more similar to Catholics and mainline Protestants than to other Evangelicals (Evans 2002; Steensland et al. 2000). Surveys reveal black Protestants to hold "significantly more liberal attitudes on abortion and sexual morality than evangelical Protestants"—a difference made more transparent upon categorizing black Protestant religious traditions separately to account for race (Steensland et al. 2000). Younger generations of black Protestants show no major shifts in attitudes toward abortion when compared to their older counterparts (Smith and Olson 2013).

Catholics exhibit a high degree of internal variation with regard to attitudes toward abortion, an intragroup polarization that has increased over time (Evans 2002). Divergence among Catholics' attitudes toward abortion lends evidence to the tradition's historic capability to absorb high levels of diversity and dissent (Bruce 2017; Dillon 1999). Highly committed Catholics are more likely to agree with Catholic teaching regarding abortion and say that the Church's opposition to abortion is very important to them personally (D'Antonio et al. 2013). White and Hispanic Catholics hold dissimilar views on abortion (D'Antonio et al. 2013). Catholicism's unidirectional influence on abortion attitudes shows signs of decline amid Catholic pro-choice movements, demographic change, and political leadership amplifying Evangelical voices (Strickler and Danigeli 2002; Lewis 2017; Miller 2014).

Growth in the proportion of religiously unaffiliated Americans—nearing par with that of U.S. Catholics and Evangelicals—compels their inclusion among any assessment of religion on attitudes towards abortion. Compared to the religiously affiliated, unaffiliated Americans exhibit more progressive positions on socio-moral issues, in general (Smith and Olson 2013; Cook et al. 1992; Lim et al. 2010). However, even as the more acutely religiously unaffiliated character of the youngest Americans has liberalized overall attitudes, abortion bucks this trend. Younger religiously unaffiliated Americans are more conservative in their views on abortion than older religiously unaffiliated Americans (Smith and Olson 2013).

Religious (non)affiliation, in other words, insufficiently explains differences in abortion attitudes. Religion's influence is multidimensional, complex, and intertwined with other personal and structural variables (Smith and Olson 2013; Dillon 2014; Bartkowski et al. 2012; Wilde 2018). Within the same religious tradition, Americans who consider religion "important" in their lives are less likely to support abortion's legality than those who say that religion is "not important" to them (Pew Research Center 2015; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014). Attendance at religious services increases the likelihood of conservative views toward abortion (Bartkowski et al. 2012). Lay Catholics readily dissent from stances taken by bishops on sexual ethics (D'Antonio et al. 2013; Dillon 2018). Affiliates within the same tradition often distinguish between abortion type and circumstance in evaluating personal positions (Hoffsmann and Johnson 2005).

Attending to racial variation among religious adherents can help to demystify differences in abortion attitudes, while also introducing further contradictions. Scholarship on abortion attitudes and religion too often ignores racial variation entirely, or presumes as normative the experiences of white Americans (Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Yukich and Edgell 2020). This runs counter to a robust literature that makes transparent linkages between race and religion, such as the overwhelmingly—albeit slowly declining—monoracial character of U.S. congregations (Edwards et al. 2013; Chaves and Anderson 2014). Americans who share a religious identity remain unlikely to practice their religion alongside those who do not also share their racial identity. Religious congregations frequently reinforce racial exclusivity, even when unintentional (Oyakawa 2019).

Quantitative assessments hint at variation in abortion attitudes within and across racial groups linked to religiosity (Combs and Welch 1982; Wilcox 1992; Bolks et al. 2000; Davenport 2018). Black Americans once assessed as less supportive of legal abortion than whites (Combs and Welch 1982; Hall and Feree 1986; Wilcox 1992) were subsequently found more supportive when accounting for church attendance, Biblical literalism, religiosity, and doctrinal orthodoxy (Gay and Lynxwiler 1999; Wilcox 1992). Hispanic Americans exhibit a somewhat higher overall opposition to abortion when compared to white Americans, but are themselves internally varied (Bolks et al. 2000; Holman et al. 2020). Religiously devout Evangelical Protestant Hispanics hold stronger opposition to abortion than religiously devout Hispanic Catholics (Bartkowski et al. 2012). Bartkowski et al. (2012) attribute differences among Hispanics to the influence of evangelical subcultures and dilution of Catholic pro-life messaging, filtered through different levels of worship service attendance. Asian Americans, too, exhibit splits in abortion views not dissimilar from Americans overall, but with marked differences religiously and ethnically (Wu and Ida 2018). Religiosity holds a higher influence on the abortion attitudes of non-Catholic Christian Asian Americans, and is particularly salient for Vietnamese and Filipino Americans who attend church regularly (Wu and Ida 2018). Biracial Americans express more liberal views toward legal abortion than either monoracial black or white Americans, and are significantly less religious Davenport (2016, 2018).

In sum, we are left with a rather contradictory set of findings regarding abortion attitudes: religious explanations that vary upon accounting for race, and racial explanations that vary upon accounting for religion. None fit neatly into conceptions of abortion opinion divided by oppositional worldviews. These complexities and contradictions highlight the need to break down presumptions of coherent religious or secular frameworks predicting abortion attitudes and explore more fully the intersecting influence of race among religious (non)adherents. This requires a "complex religion," approach acknowledging multidimensionality (Wilde and Glassman 2016; Wilde 2018; Wilde 2020). Religion does not stand alone to inform abortion opinion, but in concert with personal and structural variables including race (Dillon 2014). Rather than seeking to pinpoint independent effects, a complex religion approach adapts methodology to recognize that religion does not operate independently (Wilde 2018). Attending to interactions among influences on abortion attitudes sheds light on diversity observed within religious groups rather than treating them as monolithic wholes (Evans 2002; Dillon 2014). Seeing complex religion, in other words, lets us see complex abortion attitudes.

3. Methods

To formulate a new theory on religion and race in Americans' abortion attitudes, I analyze qualitative data from the 2019 National Abortion Attitudes Study (NAAS), the largest known in-depth interview study of "ordinary" Americans' views on abortion. As principle investigator, I led a team of researchers who interviewed 217 American adults residing in six United States locales (California, Colorado, Indiana, Pennsylvania, North Dakota, and Tennessee). After an initial pilot (n = 20), potential interviewees were selected using a two-stage sampling process. First, a letter was sent via post to a random set of mailing addresses within 173 zip code areas. Abortion was not disclosed as the topic during initial outreach. Recipients were invited to complete an online pre-screener requesting birthyear, sex, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, number of children, religious preference, religious service attendance, education, political party, and ideology (as measured by the General Social Survey (GSS) scale of 1 "extremely liberal" to 7 "extremely conservative"). A final question in the pre-screener disclosed abortion as the research topic. Responses (n = 671) were used to construct an interviewee sample approximating diversity across the U.S. population as a whole.

The semi-structured interviews lasted 73 min on average and were conducted in-person, with limited exceptions made for telephone interviews upon request. Most took place in public, semi-private locations such as public libraries; others were conducted at the interviewee's home, workplace, or another mutually agreeable locale. The interview protocol queried an interviewee's "big picture," personality, and values before moving into a series of semi-structured questions about abortion attitudes

(first thoughts; memories; connections to religion, politics, family, and more; views on legality and morality; and issue engagement via media, politics, or movements). The NAAS protocol additionally replicated, verbatim, several questions used by the General Social Survey (GSS) and Gallup to assess abortion attitudes. All NAAS transcripts were systematically coded in Atlas Ti using thematic codes as well as grouped by race, religion, and more.

For the theory-generating purposes of the current paper, I created a 3 × 3 subsample matrix consisting of three ideal–typical Catholic interviewees (one white, one black, and one Hispanic), three ideal–typical Evangelical Protestant interviewees (one white, one black,[1] and one Hispanic), and three ideal–typical interviewees with no religious affiliation (one white, one black, and one Hispanic). Read the opposite direction, the 3 × 3 matrix consists of three white interviewees (one Catholic, one Evangelical, and one unaffiliated), three black interviewees (one Catholic, one Evangelical, and one unaffiliated), and three Hispanic interviewees (one Catholic, one Evangelical, and one unaffiliated). A profile of characteristics for all nine interviewees can be found in Table 2.

This subsample of ideal–typical interviewees was chosen for theoretical reasons to enable in-depth exploration of personal viewpoints, comparisons across religious and racial self-identities, and theoretical discoveries within an underdeveloped area (Swedberg 2018; Weber 2012). I do not control for potential variation in age, class, gender, education, ideology, relationship or parental status, abortion history, region, or other patterns beyond race and religion. No one interviewee (and no one person) represents an entire group—religiously, racially, or otherwise. This analytical technique harnesses the explanatory power of qualitative data to illuminate the "how" and "why" of interactions between race and religion observed in Americans' abortion attitudes, nestled within broader categories and patterns.

[1] Following Steensland et al. (2000), this interviewee is protestant, evangelical or born-again, and African American.

Table 2. Interviewee Subsample Characteristics.

Interviewee	Religion	Race	Religious Attendance	Gender	Legality of Abortion (Gallup)	Morality of Abortion (GSS)	Most "Pro-choice" (1) to Most "Pro-life" (10) Scale (NAAS)
Trent	Catholic	White Non-Hispanic	Weekly	Male	Legal only under certain circumstances	It depends	10
Marcus	Catholic	Black	Several times a year	Male	Legal under any circumstances	It depends	1
Alondra	Catholic	Hispanic	About once a month	Female	Legal only under certain circumstances	Not morally opposed	3
Nancy	Evangelical	White Non-Hispanic	Weekly	Female	Legal only under certain circumstances	Morally opposed	10
Neesha	Evangelical/ Black Protestant	Black	Several times a week	Female	Legal under any circumstances	Morally opposed	4
Marco	Evangelical	Hispanic	Weekly	Male	Legal only under certain circumstances	Morally opposed	10
April	Nonaffiliated	White Non-Hispanic	Never	Female	Legal under any circumstances	Not morally opposed	1
Louis	Nonaffiliated	Black	Never	Male	Legal under any circumstances	Morally opposed	4
Consuelo	Nonaffiliated	Hispanic	Less than once a year	Female	Legal under any circumstances	Not morally opposed	2

4. Findings

Like any random set of nine Americans, the interviewees in this subsample matrix showcase the interplay of personal and cohort experiences, embeddedness in social structures and inequalities, and the tenor of both predictable and unpredictable moments across a lifespan. Three of these nine interviewees disclosed personal abortion experiences themselves; all nine knew someone personally who had had an abortion.

The ways that race operates to inform abortion attitudes among this religiously diverse subsample of nine Americans can be described in terms of *efficacy*, *distancing*, and *reconciling*. All three words signal *processes* in action and interaction more than *outcomes* or fixed attitudes. White interviewees from different (non)religious affiliations engage in *efficacy* by emphasizing felt agency to manipulate structures that enable higher levels of control over abortion decisions and subsequent outcomes. Religiously diverse Hispanic interviewees engage in *distancing* by moving away from highly institutionalized religious schemas in favor of more nimble and voluntaristic religious decision-making. Black interviewees of different (non)religious affiliations engage in *reconciling* by reckoning with religious schemas held in conflict with on-the-ground realities of inequality and inefficacy. The three processes of efficacy, distancing, and reconciling cut across religious perspectives included in this subsample (Catholic, Evangelical/black Protestant, and religiously nonaffiliated).

In what follows, findings are grouped by religious tradition to reveal contrasting processes informing abortion attitudes within shared religious affiliations. A subsequent section revisits the collective characterization of racially diverse interviewees' efficacy, distancing, and reconciling.

4.1. Three Catholic Americans

Our three subsampled Catholic interviewees are Trent, Marcus, and Alondra.[2]

Trent (white, weekly-attending Catholic) is in the "Baby Boomer" generation at 58-years-old and the oldest of four children from a Catholic family raised in a predominantly Catholic neighborhood. His parents were teenagers when they got pregnant unexpectedly with him; his mom dropped out of high school to raise him. Trent says that he is not particularly "outgoing" but has a strong network of friends and considers himself a leader, having commanded multiple sports teams and high-level positions throughout his career. He has a bachelor's degree and considers himself somewhat conservative and an Independent, politically. Though Trent has never married and has no children of his own, he has cared for nieces and nephews we well his ailing parents. Asked what is most important to him, Trent says "my faith, obviously," evidenced by regular Mass attendance. Truthfulness, trustworthiness, and honesty are among Trent's core values, he tells us.

Marcus (black, sporadically-attending Catholic), a 53-year-old Gen Xer, is remarried with two adult children from his first marriage and two younger stepchildren from his second. He grew up in a low-income neighborhood in New Orleans in an actively Catholic family and attended all-boy, predominantly African American Catholic schools. He has an associate's degree, considers himself moderate, and is a Democrat. Marcus describes himself as "fair" and committed to hearing all people's opinions, whether "right, wrong, [or] sideways." He tries to stay positive, take care of his family, and "treat others as I wanna be treated . . . At the end of the day, we all just wanna be treated like human beings—as people, you know? Not numbers, not whatever title we put on each other." Marcus attends Mass several times a year but finds himself "struggling a bit with it, with the faith." He believes in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, but is concerned about "what our humans have done in the faith" and wonders aloud where the Church is going.

Alondra (Hispanic, semi-frequently-attending Catholic) is a 23-year-old Millennial without children who lives at home with her parents and three siblings. She enjoys seeing concerts and movies

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

in between a full-time job and attending college part-time on the road to her bachelor's degree. Alondra considers herself moderate and identifies with no particular political party. Alongside family, staying "respectful" and being generous are among her core values. She says she wants "to be a good person, you know, in order to live a good life." A lifelong Catholic, Alondra says "I try to go to church every Sunday" but makes it about once a month. She was involved in her parish youth group as a teenager, but does not currently participate in non-Mass activities at her parish.

The way that each of these three Catholics initially responds to the word "abortion" offers a preview of feelings and associations the topic conjures, both personal and political. Trent (white, weekly-attending Catholic) offers a succinct summation resonant with Catholic teaching on abortion when he says that his first thought upon hearing the word is "the willful and intentional termination of human life in the womb." His early memories of exposure to the concept came in the context of Catholic schooling, where "the nuns did not hesitate to discuss [Roe v. Wade] while the Supreme Court was hearing the case." He recalls hearing sermons about abortion from the pulpit and being asked to sign form letters provided by the school and archdiocese to petition local lawmakers. "I was taught we were opponents of abortion." Trent conjectures that his own birth to his 17-year-old mom back in 1960 likely "would have been an abortion" were it to have occurred in today's climate. "I would not exist, very likely, if I were conceived in, let's say, 2010 instead of 1960."

Sharing a Catholic self-identification with Trent, Marcus (black, sporadically-attending Catholic) offers an alternative first reaction to the word abortion: "Old white guys." Asked to elaborate, Marcus says that while he has "a lot of feelings around abortion," issues of race, gender, and class rank high among them:

> What I see in the news and what I see on TV is a lot of old, old white people trying to place their beliefs upon other people. I truly believe that, and I say it directly. It's not my body, I can't tell you what to do with it. I'm a dude. I'm a guy, you know? Well, I have a portion in the conception process, right? I truly believe that a couple, whoever conceives this baby, the man and the woman, they could sit down and have real life discussions. 'Can we afford it? Am I gonna die? You know, what's this gonna look like? What's—how's this gonna be in five, 10, 15, 20 years? What is this gonna look like for all three of us, you know, if we decide to have this child?' And then, if we don't decide, if we say, 'Well, I live in the projects, I don't have a job,' you know, all these different things. 'Am I going to be able to come out of it to help this child?' Okay?

Marcus explains how "some people know that they will be exactly where they will be for the rest of their lives. Good, bad, or otherwise. And so, you have to make, you know—they need to be able to make decisions based on what they have going on and what they think they can do." The prospect of not being able to provide for a child "in a way that's going to be healthy and happy and sustainable" means needing to "figure out what to do." Like Trent, Marcus recalls Roe v. Wade being a "big thing" and hearing about it while attending all-boy Catholic schools, where the sanctity of life was a prominent message. However, Marcus also describes mixed messages from teachers about being "a man growing up in this community," such as "your first responsibility is: don't have sex before marriage. Your second responsibility is: if you choose to do so, make sure that you are taking care of your business and being protected."

Alondra (Hispanic, semi-frequently-attending Catholic) struggles to articulate her initial reactions to the word "abortion," searching for words to convey her feelings. "I mean, taking—I mean—I wouldn't say taking, but, like, I'm trying to think of the word, but I can't. I mean, just—ending a pregnancy. That's what I think of abortion. I think that's the thing, I guess." Her earliest encounters with the concept came when watching a show in which a young Latina has unprotected sex, gets pregnant, and navigates conversations and decisions that eventually lead to an abortion. This sticks with Alondra not only because of the storyline but also because of what she hears about the actress afterward—that the woman's own Catholic faith and disagreement with her character's abortion decision subsequently compelled her to leave acting altogether. Alondra shares that abortion is a topic

she generally avoids, because "I just feel like if I say something, they might end up, like, taking it the wrong way or something."

As a Millennial, Alondra's own associations of Catholicism and abortion come not through lived memories of Roe v. Wade but formal messages from organizers in the pro-life movement. She recalls once receiving a pamphlet on her way out of Mass that contained a footprint pin representing that of a six-week-old baby. Her reaction to it suggests an affirmation of discretion more than a hardline Catholic stance: "When I saw it, I was like—'Oh, like this is—I mean, this is nice to see.' I mean, maybe some people would lean toward [abortion], but, I mean, like, for me, I, like, I lent towards [having the baby], because, personally, I wouldn't have [an abortion]. But I know there's other people who probably would have an abortion."

All three Catholic interviewees distinguish between their personal views and those of the Catholic Church, to varying degrees. Trent continues to agree with the Church's stance against abortion learned in his youth, seeing it as "a type of murder." He evaluates a "pro-choice" label as "blather," "vacuous," and "trivializing human life." When asked where he would put himself on a scale from 1 (most "pro-choice") to 10 (most "pro-life"), Trent quickly chooses "10," almost as a given. However, he openly dissents from Catholic teaching regarding birth control and sex outside the context of marriage, saying that he engages in sex as a single person, himself, and encourages women he is with to use birth control ("I'm thankful for them when they use it. I did not want to have a child out of wedlock").

Marcus talks openly about the conflict he feels between his Catholic faith and views on abortion, something that, for him, circles around issues of family, economics, and philosophies of life. He affirms the view that "life is precious," while at the same time acknowledging challenges in building positive family environments. He speaks fondly of his Dad working to provide for his family and how hard he and his wife have worked to provide for their children such that "they never went through a time where they didn't have a roof over their head, or didn't have food in their mouths, or didn't have clothes on their back." But, Marcus says, "it's hard to do all this stuff":

> I believe life is precious. I do. But I also believe that you have to be able to make that life precious. Life doesn't—isn't just precious all by itself, you know? Just the idea of breathing and waking up each day doesn't make life precious. What makes life precious is what we do with it every day.

Marcus offers the example of situations where children are born from nonconsensual sex or face a lack of family support or financial and mental health resources—conditions where a loving family environment is made difficult. "Not everybody grew up the same way . . . for some people, family means, you know, dad beat them up every day, mom drinking every night, you know—dad beating their mom every day." Having "good" parents is paramount. Unlike Trent, who alludes magnanimously to his own parents who raised him "without anything," Marcus instead talks of mothers who suffer from postpartum depression, poverty, or "daddy is out of the picture." "Raising a child requires not only love, it requires patience, it requires peace, but it also requires the ability to earn income and earn a sustainable income."

All this is what, to Marcus, complicates a "life is precious" Catholic framing in opposition to abortion. Further, Marcus says that the Catholic Church does not do enough to support positive family environments: "After the baby's about six months old, [the Church] start[s] basically pulling themselves away from that situation" rather than assisting with housing, food, and other forms of support. He adds: "I feel like they spend so much time in talking about the abortion piece of it, we don't even talk about what happens after a baby is born, you know?"

Alondra does not name Catholicism as a primary source of authority or morality with regard to her own feelings on abortion, privileging instead the specific person and situation at hand. She regards the Church as a potential support system for those who opt to continue their pregnancies, which is not everyone: "What if someone needs [an abortion] because in case they get pregnant, um, but they can't—how do you say it, they can't support the child they have?" Alondra lauds birth control for

reducing someone's chances of needing an abortion and describes no tension between her religious views and support of contraception.

None of these three Catholic interviewees say that they are "morally opposed" to abortion in all circumstances. Trent (white, weekly-attending Catholic) expresses the strongest moral dissension but leaves still room for exceptions by saying, "It depends." "For someone who is healthy and learns that she is pregnant, you're killing human life. To me, it's morally wrong. I don't decide whether it's legally right or wrong. Again, Roe v. Wade says that it's legal, but a lot of things that are legal are also wrong. Morally wrong, socially wrong." He does not, by contrast, morally oppose abortion if the mother's health is at risk.

Marcus (black, sporadically-attending Catholic) asserts once again how much the individual situation matters to morality, attending to differences in personal circumstance and experience:

> It's not a moral position, because to me, again, I still believe it's a deeply individual thing. For me, you know, it has more to do with how it all came about. . . . For me, it's not right or wrong, it's, you know, it is—it is what happens in real life. But, like I said, I believe in the sanctity of life, but there's also a quality of life. So, if the child is not gonna be brought up in a way that is healthy and loving, then I don't know if there's a point. So that's kind of where—that's why I say 'It depends.'

Marcus presumes that his views are not shared by everyone, because people grow up differently: "Morality is really the personal idea of right and wrong, you know? It's different for everybody, because we all grew up in different ways, you know?"

Alondra (Hispanic, semi-frequently-attending Catholic) indicates that she is not morally opposed to abortion, saying, "I think it's like—to each their own. Like, it all depends like on, how do you say, the situation." She mentions rape as one situation in which abortion would be morally acceptable. Timing in the pregnancy is what evokes moral trouble for Alondra: the later, the more morally unsettling abortion feels. "I mean, it depends, like, how far along someone would be in their pregnancy . . . I don't think they should have the abortion." She says that she does not know where exactly to draw that line during pregnancy, though.

Our three Catholics are also internally varied in their responses to abortion's legality. Trent (white, weekly-attending Catholic) is the most legally restrictive, opposed to abortion's legality except in instances of rape and health risk to the mother. He incorporates critiques of abortion-seekers as "selfish" and "reckless," needing to "accept the consequences" and "make the best of it." Abortion is, to Trent, "trying to rid yourself of a problem which you caused yourself. I don't think it should be legal. I think that's murder." Trent personalizes his legal rationale with repeated reference to his own parents: "I was that child in the womb to two teenagers who didn't have anything." Regarding cases of severe defects, Trent says he has "dozens of friends with children like that"; "They're the best parents." He wishes to use the law to restrict immorality because he dislikes the idea of having to "pay" for someone else's mistake:

> Particularly when they force society, others in society, to pay for that abortion . . . so we have to pay to rid you of a problem which you did yourself, generally? Most of the time it is consensual. You know, maybe it's careless or reckless or bad luck, but even teenagers now know the consequences of such behavior, or the potential consequences of such behavior.

Trent thinks that abortion today comes "on demand" and is troubled by doctors and nurses being "required to perform abortions."

Marcus (black, sporadically-attending Catholic) holds the most legally permissive views of the three Catholics, open to legality under "any" circumstances and for "any" reason, identifying as "pro-choice" and a "1" on the scale of most pro-choice to most pro-life. He reasserts concern for the life a child will encounter following birth: "Every child that's born should be loved and cared for every day," something not all potential parents are prepared to provide. Regarding the use of the law to

guide moral decisions, Marcus says, "it's a personal view," giving examples of sex before marriage and even his son's aversion to wearing shoes. "Doesn't mean it should be illegal, you know?"

Alondra (Hispanic, semi-frequently-attending Catholic) expresses ambivalence regarding the legality of abortion, occasionally even changing her own responses midstream. She identifies as pro-choice, but not completely, putting herself as a "3" on the scale. Alondra's preference to limit abortion's legality to "certain circumstances" stems from her desire to include the husband or boyfriend in the decision, along with her discomfort with later-term abortions. But making abortion illegal will not prevent them, she suspects:

> It's like, you shouldn't—you shouldn't just have an abortion just because you don't like the gender you're having. *[Interviewer: Sure, right. And do you think that should be legal, though? Even if you don' agree with it morally?]* I don't know [laughs]. It's like one of those hard questions. Because, like, even if they do make a law like that, I don't think they'll be able to go through, like . . . .[. . .] . . . Like, even when marijuana was illegal, people were still smoking it [laughs], sort of thing.

Trent, Marcus, and Alondra are three Catholics with three racially diverse perspectives and three divergent attitudes toward abortion.

4.2. Three Evangelical Americans

Our three subsampled Evangelical interviewees are Nancy, Neesha, and Marco.

Nancy (white, weekly-attending Evangelical), 47, is an "empty nester" married for 27 years with two adult children. She has a bachelor's degree and marked "other" as her racial identity in the online prescreener. Asked to clarify in person, Nancy explained, "I know I'm primarily 'Anglo,' if that's what you want to call me . . . I just don't like labels, because I feel like we all—especially in America—are so mixed, and I don't like racial confines; I don't even like the word 'race' . . . I think color of your skin should never enter into a conversation." Nancy also claims "other" when it comes to political party identification but considers herself conservative. She has "a heart for kids and helping"—"I've always been, like, a helper"—something she applies to teach children who face emotional and behavioral issues. Nancy's nondenominational church is a big part of her life: a predominantly white congregation with Baptist roots but no official denominational ties. She was raised in a strict conservative missionary Baptist family and saved at 13, "but there has been a lot of, like, growth areas and realizations since then"—and, though she says that she does "align with Evangelical doctrine," she bristles at the label "Evangelical."

Neesha (black, weekly-attending Evangelical/black Protestant) is a 36-year-old single mom of three young children who aspires to start a business online, because "I'm trying to be rich. I'm going to be rich." In the meantime, she works up to 56 h a week as a store manager and leads worship at her predominantly black nondenominational church. She has a high school diploma, is a Democrat, and identifies as a moderate. Neesha says that her friends would describe her as "silly, outgoing, spontaneous," but that she is also quiet, shy, and humble. She talks about God as "definitely important to me" and wishes for "world peace"—specifically, an end to bullying, which brings her to tears. Like Nancy, Neesha agrees that she belongs within the "Evangelical" category but isn't a huge fan of the word. "People call me that, but the fact that I haven't actually stepped out to do [evangelization] completely . . . ?"

Marco (Hispanic, weekly-attending Evangelical), age 63, was raised Catholic as one of eight siblings but "came to the Lord" several years ago and now identifies as an Evangelical. He marks this as the time he became a Christian, "meaning, I developed a relationship with Jesus, as opposed to just believing in God and the Holy Spirit and the Son of God, and all those kinds of things." He has a high school diploma, identifies as conservative, and is a Republican. Marco is in his second marriage and has no children, describing himself as introverted and "generous with my time." He fishes, hunts, and does not travel much, saying that he is more of a "couch potato" with a close-knit circle of friends.

Marco's church is very important to him and a big part of his weekly routine. He attends Bible studies multiple times a week and maintains a close relationship with his pastor.

First thoughts and early memories conjure politics for two of our three Evangelical interviewees, alongside sensitivity and hesitancy to engage a conversation about abortion. Before Nancy (white, weekly-attending Evangelical) begins her interview, she requests reassurance that the exchange will not become a debate, and that the questions will not be exercised as a tool to judge or convince her to think otherwise. This association carries into the way Nancy describes her initial response to the word "abortion":

> I don't know what comes to mind. I mean, it's kind of a trigger word for a lot of people, but it's not necessarily a trigger for me—but it makes me sad to think about people that are both in that situation or feel like that's their only choice. Yeah.

Nancy says that the topic is both relational and personal to her as the child of a single mother:

> I was raised in a single-mother household and so I'm not immune to the difficulties of those things. I know they are real and they feel very heavy on the people who experience those things. So, I don't have a lack of compassion for them, their situation, choices that they have made to put themselves there or maybe choices that were even made for them. So, I don't have a lack of that empathy, but it's just a sad situation. But we live in a world where there is a lot of sad situations.

She describes having seen "the effects" of what happens when children are not in "a safe and loving environment."

Neesha (black, weekly-attending Evangelical/black Protestant) both internalizes and extinguishes enflamed connotations with the word "abortion." She leads with personal experience when she says:

> I don't know. I guess I kind of have mixed emotions. I guess, especially experiencing it myself, you know? Because before, you know, I was like, oh my God, I would cringe—like, really? Like, I don't even want to *think* about anything like that! Until you're put in a situation, and you're faced with it, and you're like, oh my God, do I do this? I don't know. I really don't know how I feel about it, when I hear it—It's just like, I don't know. For me, it's just like—well, I don't know. It's just a word now.

And for Marco (Hispanic, weekly-attending Evangelical), abortion again intertwines with its political and personal ramifications. He says of his initial associations:

> It means the taking of a life. I think that's kind of my thought from a kind of understanding politically and practically what's happening. . . . It's such a political term anymore, that whenever I hear it, I think that there's a politic attached to it. There's a political string attached to it.

Marco holds memories of a poster in his childhood Catholic school showing "the pope actually pointing his finger, saying that abortion is a 'no no'." Abortion evoked "the most horrible picture in my mind," but he was even more shocked to learn about Catholic families who would send their young daughters off to "have this taken care of." About this perceived hypocrisy, Marco says: "It's like, 'Yes, we [Catholics] believe in all this—unless it happens to us, then we are going to move the goalposts; we're going to change the rules to suit ourselves.'"

All three of these Evangelical interviewees name explicitly connections between their attitudes toward abortion and their faith commitments. Nancy evokes language about loving "the least of these" and credits her congregation for being a part of the "solution" to abortion by supporting foster families, adoption, special needs children, and more. She upholds a relationship with God who "wants to walk us through this; He wants to love us."

Neesha likewise shares in a faith perspective that discourages abortion while uplifting individual worth, dignity, and contribution. "You just never know the reason why you got pregnant," she says.

Even when "something wrong happened" like rape, "something right happened" with a pregnancy . . . "you never know why God allows things to happen." At the same time, Neesha struggles to reconcile this view with her feelings regarding a woman who faces such a situation, as Neesha herself has:

> I don't feel like it's right for anybody to force [a woman] to keep her child that she never did anything to bring a baby on in the first place. She didn't choose for that to happen. It chose her. But if she, I mean . . . it depends on the person also. If she feels spiritually, like, well, maybe God did this for a reason, maybe this will help me. Like, the girls that got kidnapped and they were raped over and over and then she had the baby. Well, of course she didn't have a choice but to be there with the baby, feed the baby. She loves the baby. It's her baby, and the baby lives with them now. I mean, she raised the child. That's my child. It came from a horrible situation, but it was a great blessing, also.

Neesha's thinking-out-loud becomes a self-monologue of sorts between her two abortion experiences and her commitment to a faith tradition that views abortion as a sin:

> I feel like what I did was evil . . . I mean, it's killing. "For the ways of sin is death," you know? I mean, to murder somebody, I mean, "Thou shalt not kill," I mean, it's a commandment, you know what I mean? People feel like, well, the baby wasn't even, didn't even come out of you yet. The baby wasn't even breathing. The baby was breathing through me, though. The baby was still connected to me, just like I'm connected to the Father. You may not see that I'm connected to the Father, but I'm still living. He's living through me. You can't see that, but he is. The baby is in me, living through me.

Neesha also juxtaposes the "evil" of killing with "choice" that comes from free will:

> I don't feel like anybody should tell someone what they should do with their body. The consequences that we face, we'll have to deal with it on our own, because that was our choice. If God wants you to handle this, you know, by—I mean, you reap whatever you sow. I definitely reaped mine, and it still hurts to this day, but I have forgiven myself.

She says that her forgiveness is "the most important thing."

Regarding his own faith-informed views on abortion, Marco says that prior to his conversion, he believed that abortion was acceptable for a young unmarried woman who was "not looking to get married, but her career, her education, all those things are in play." But, coming to the Lord meant "changing" and "softening" Marco's heart. He relayed a conversation with a friend in which he summarized a biblical stance on abortion:

> [My friend] said, "So where does it say about abortion in the bible?" I said, well, it talks about killing. And we're not supposed to do that. So, in my view, if I were to say, you know, that abortion is killing, then that's biblical. We're not supposed to do that.

Marco adds that "I have to believe in things of the Bible," including "how much we're supposed to love one another." He contrasts abortion with issues like taxes, marijuana, or liquor licenses, because abortion is "more of a spiritual problem . . . it's something more to my heart, because of my faith."

An unsurprising outgrowth of religious connections informing these three Evangelicals' attitudes toward abortion, they share the highest level of agreement when asked directly about the morality of abortion. Replicating the GSS (2018) question "Leaving aside whether or not you think abortion should be legal, are you morally opposed to abortion or not or would you say it depends," all three Evangelicals say that they are morally opposed.

Nancy (white, weekly-attending Evangelical) describes abortion on the whole as an "escape from reality" and wishes that she had had more confidence at age 19 to share her moral opposition with a best friend who sought an abortion at the time. Neesha (black, weekly-attending Evangelical/black Protestant) shares her moral opposition as a critique of others making bad choices, even if they are

legal: "Morally, I'm just, 'No.'" Marco (Hispanic, weekly-attending Evangelical) explains his moral opposition as an extension of his view that humans do not have the authority to take a life, denying a child's potential contributions. He would "like to see more people turn to the Lord" and gain "that ability to see that, yeah, [abortion]'s wrong."

These three Evangelicals also share restrictive views on abortion's legality, though not completely. Nancy supports using the law to regulate abortion access, but recognizes its limits to guide moral decisions—to her, this goes more to personal beliefs. "You either have the belief system or you don't have the belief system. I mean, it's just like drugs. Drugs are illegal. They are still going to happen if people don't have it in their morals not to do it." At the same time, Nancy fears that making abortion legal will increase its use. "With the availability of that to people in the community, if it has [increased the number of abortions], we have to ask ourselves, are we helping anything? Or are we creating a new problem?"

Both Nancy and Marco (Hispanic, weekly-attending Evangelical) say that abortion should be legal "only under certain circumstances," identify as "pro-life" and a "10" on the pro-choice to pro-life scale, and say "no" to legal access to abortion in nearly all of the GSS scenarios. The one scenario that gives both Nancy and Marco pause is that of risk to the mother's health: Marco says "yes" to legal access in this circumstance; Nancy says "I don't know." Health contingencies for the mother push both of these Evangelicals away from responding "illegal in all circumstances," albeit reluctantly so. Nancy, for example, pushes out of focus these kinds of challenging scenarios when she says "healthy pregnancies, healthy children: that would be a starting point." Marco says that "As much as I want to say 'never' . . . in this case, I don't think it can be absolute [illegality] because of medical problems, medical concerns." He leans on the expertise of medical authority rather than the autonomy of the pregnant woman, however, saying, "that decision for medical reasons has to be considered and weighed by a medical person who genuinely has all the facts and is willing to share all the facts with the person, the woman in that case, of course, for medical reasons."

Beyond this health risk, both Nancy and Marco wish to disallow legal abortion. Marco critiques "convenience"-based abortion decisions and valorizes children with disabilities as holding "real value" and, when surrounded by support and love and understanding, "overcoming those things." He considers abortion in the case of rape a form of "vengeance" against an "innocent" baby. "Why do you blame that child?" Marco asks, drawing the metaphor of a living seed that is planted, germinates, and sprouts. Nancy likewise references relationships she has fostered with persons who have special needs ("I see the value of those people").

By contrast, Neesha (black, weekly-attending Evangelical/black Protestant) talks about not restricting legal access to abortion despite her moral opposition to it. She considers herself both "pro-choice" and "pro-life" and evokes a rationale similar to what we heard from Marcus (black, sporadically-attending Catholic):

> For me, [abortion]'s immoral, I wouldn't do it. But would I make it illegal? Probably not, because that's what I feel in the world, do you know what I mean? Other people might be like, 'No, it's my body. I choose to do it. I want to do it. I don't think anything's wrong with it.' [*Interviewer: Why not?*] Oh, man, because everybody is raised differently. Everybody comes from different backgrounds, everybody comes from different religions, and just—people just don't think the same. Everybody's mindset, also, is different. Some people's mindset is up here, where they don't allow any negativity to get to them. Anything that anybody has to say that's going to go against what they believe, because they have a strong mind. I'm like, 'no.' The other people's mindset, 'you should have an abortion,' 'you shouldn't have this baby,' 'you have so much to live for,' 'you have a full scholarship' and 'dah, dah, dah.' And it's like, okay, you're right, blah, blah, blah. And then they go through with it. As opposed to—I have friends who have had kids while they were in high school, and they have college degrees. They have got homes, they have nice cars, they're married. It just depends on the person.

Different backgrounds generate different moral stances, to Neesha, and the law necessarily accommodates this. For this reason, she prefers to see abortion "legal under any circumstances" and says "yes" to a question replicated from the GSS about whether or not it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if the woman wants it "for any reason." She explains her reasoning as valuing "free will" and abortion being "her damn choice."

At the same time, Neesha responds "no" on the legality of abortion if a woman is married and does not want any more children, has a low income, or is single and does not want to marry the man, all of which she finds troubling. These reasons are "silly" or "selfish," because "the Bible says multiply and be fruitful. Get over it." About legality in instances of a severe defect in the baby, Neesha says "I don't know" and adds, while tearing up, "It's discrimination. It is a prejudice against a kid because of a deformity. They're still people."

Nancy, Neesha, and Marco are three Evangelicals with three racially diverse perspectives and three similar but divergent attitudes toward abortion.

4.3. Three Religiously Nonaffiliated Americans

Lastly, our three subsampled interviewees with no particular religious affiliation are April, Louis, and Consuelo.

Wearing a "Love the Abandoned, Respect the Mistreated" baseball cap on the day of her interview, 32-year-old April (white, never-attending nonaffiliated) is a married mom of two, the oldest of whom came from an unexpected pregnancy a few months after April met her now-husband ("Yeah; it was pretty crazy … and wasn't a great situation. His parents were not thrilled about it"). She describes herself as sarcastic, funny, and loyal. April is an "extremely liberal" Democrat with an associate's degree. Religion is not a big part of her life, nor was it in childhood, when her family went to church only on Christmas. "We didn't practice it. We didn't pray. We didn't do anything with that." Today, April considers herself "closer to being an atheist than anything" and exposes her own children to information so that they "can make a decision for themselves" about religion.

Louis (black, never-attending nonaffiliated), 67 and "in pretty good shape for an old man," is retired, single, and Dad to two adult children. He has a high school diploma and considers himself a moderate and Independent. Having served in Vietnam, Louis describes his personality as "up and down … if you rub me the wrong way, you catch a bad break." He says he is less reactive than he was as a young person and now tries to "stay away from a lot of drama and stuff like that." Louis finds it most important to "uplift other people when you can." He was not raised in a particularly religious household and dislikes organized religion, having "been through" Christianity and Islam at different points in his life. "It wasn't for me." Louis does say that he is spiritual, though, incorporating meditation and belief in nature.

Lastly, Consuelo (Hispanic, rarely-attending nonaffiliated) is a 58-year-old first-generation immigrant from Columbia whose family migrated to the U.S. when she was young. Consuelo admits being unsure what to mark as her racial identity when she completes surveys because she feels neither black nor white. She recently concluded that "I must be black, because I'm different as far as your average light-skinned person in Columbia"; nonetheless, "putting down African American still doesn't feel right" and she would prefer a "brown" category. Consuelo has a Master's degree, is a Democrat, and identifies as moderate. She is a divorced mom and shares, with a laugh, that she has more pet peeves than core values—but perhaps "peace, love, and kindness" would sum them up. Although Consuelo's family of origin was Catholic, they did not practice the faith nor teach it to her or her siblings. "I read lots of children's bible stories—that was how I first learned about religion as an adult." She belonged to a Protestant church for a while as an adult, but left after experiencing offensive treatment following a family trauma. Consuelo believes in "a higher being, but I don't know if it's God."

These three religiously nonaffiliated interviewees offer a loose array of initial associations with the word "abortion." For April (white, never-attending nonaffiliated), the word "abortion" is immediately

personal: "I had one. So, that's what comes to mind." She shares her story of being on birth control while married but getting pregnant anyway. "We just financially knew that we couldn't handle it . . . we were going through a bit of a rough patch in our marriage, as well . . . .We just were not prepared, and I just felt like we wouldn't be able to give that child, or our existing children, a good life if we did that." She cannot recall exactly when or how she first learned about abortion in her youth.

Louis (black, never-attending nonaffiliated) says right away that he "doesn't like the word [abortion]; I don't like what it represents," clarifying that the fate of a pregnancy resulting from rape is "up to her"; otherwise, "I don't really like part of it." Louis summarizes his views upfront when he says that, "[Women] are doing what they think is best for them. How can I tell somebody what to do with their body? It's their body. [. . .] That's on them. Whatever decision they make, they have to pay for. That is the way I look at it." Asked about early memories hearing about abortion, Louis recalls how "they used to call [abortion] the 'coat hanger thing'"; "The girl around the corner . . . if she was pregnant, she went down South to have a baby down there."

Consuelo (Hispanic, rarely-attending nonaffiliated) evokes talk of choice and bodily autonomy when first hearing the word "abortion." She relays that it conjures "The freedom of choice, and the ability of a woman to make decisions about her life and her body . . . . I see that as the definition rather than the ending of a fetus, or the termination of a life. I see the definition as more to do with the woman than the fetus." Consuelo discloses a personal experience with abortion, as well, and says that early encounters with the idea came through casual conversation rather than any formal instruction.

Religion operates more as a foil than as motivation for the abortion viewpoints of interviewees with no formal religious affiliation. "I'm just so anti-religion," April says, refuting any links between religion and her feelings about abortion. Louis does not connect his views to religion, either, but observes that "the whole issue is a spiritual thing . . . You are dealing with a baby coming into the world. You had the power. You have, like, a God-given power, you know, you can bring that person in or you can just eliminate them. That's the spiritual aspect of it." Reflecting upon how her own core values of "peace, love, and kindness" connect to her abortion views, Consuelo pauses and giggles while responding, "I would say that I still hold that as a core value, but [it] makes you kinda think."

These three religiously nonaffiliated interviewees also offer a mix of responses as to abortion's morality. Louis (black, never-attending nonaffiliated) is morally opposed, though he clarifies in the same breath that "that's not on me what a woman does with her body. She gets a choice to do whatever she wants to do with her body. That's not my baby. I have no connection there. And it's on her." He names slavery as an example of something that was immoral but still legal:

> It's just like slavery back in the day. That was straight legal. But it wasn't right. That whole issue was morally wrong but with the laws, they made it legal. A lot of laws now, they make it legal, but it's not morally right.

April (white, never-attending nonaffiliated) and Consuelo (Hispanic, rarely-attending nonaffiliated) are not morally opposed to abortion. Consuelo emphasizes bodily autonomy: "Because it's her body, and I think she should have the freedom to make choices for her own body. And not just the immediate nine months, but what happens after." She contrasts the birth of her son with a pregnancy she aborted years prior, saying that she felt very "maternal" with the latter but not with the former, given how early in the pregnancy she sought the abortion. Consuelo does not narrate her own abortion decision as immoral or regretful.

Our three subsampled religious "nones" offer the greatest consistency with regard to views on the legality of abortion, at least on paper. Responding to a standardized question regarding legality, all three interviewees say "legal under any circumstances." Consuelo references her personal gratitude for abortion's legality, thankful "that I had a safe place to go, and a choice that I was able to make without it being illegal. Without there being any consequences of me potentially being imprisoned over my actions . . . .I think women who have to make that choice now are—or should be grateful that they live in a country where there's good medical facilities, and still in a country where it is not illegal,

and where they have the right and the choice." Louis says similarly, "She shouldn't have to go to, like, the coat hanger."

April (white, never-attending nonaffiliated) likewise expresses gratitude for legal access to abortion, and downplays the rights a husband might have in an abortion decision. "I don't really think marriage should have anything to do with it, to be honest. I mean, I don't really know why that would play such a role in it, it's still, whether or not you're married . . . you're married, you're not married; who cares [laughs]?" For her, this was personal: "I mean, I was married. We weren't ready."

Louis complicates his otherwise legally permissive stance toward abortion when he says that abortion should not be legal when there is a "strong chance of serious defect in the baby" or when a woman "is married and does not want any more children" (GSS). His opposition echoes eugenics and references a troubling movie about "designer" babies: "I mean, you shouldn't have an abortion because of defects. Most of us are a defect." In cases where a woman does not want more children, it is Louis' consideration for the father that sways his response, particularly if the conceiving partners are married:

> Like I said, that is her choice. But it would be the husband's choice, too . . . . They would have to agree on that. If the husband and wife agree on that, she couldn't do nothing sneaking and have an abortion. And he doesn't know nothing about it and finds out like years later—"say what?" So, then they would have to move forward or not go forward. They would have to talk.

When the woman is unmarried, by contrast, Louis says that abortion should be legal: "He is not planning on marrying her to help take care of the baby. That is going to drag her down." Louis criticizes both women and men for not "think[ing] things out"—including the superior option of adoption. "The baby could be alive. I would give them that option. I would tell them that." He also critiques male politicians who make abortion laws while acting as if "they know what is best for the woman, when they don't."

About his complex and at times contradictory views on abortion, Louis says, "Even though I would make it legal, I would still have my moral issues about it." Consuelo (Hispanic, rarely-attending nonaffiliated) also separates her legal opinions from her moral ones when she says, "No, not all reasons are justified, but it's not the government's business. It's not my business. It's not anyone's business, but her business." The government's role, Consuelo says, is "to enact laws that help make society functional" but "stay out of my freedoms."

April (white, never-attending nonaffiliated) is fairly apathetic to questions linking morality and legality, because she cannot help but equate "morality" with "religion." "That's what I'm trying to, like, work through in my head right now, because I'm not a religious person. I don't think the two necessarily go hand-in-hand. I think you can raise your kids with good morals, and religion doesn't have to play a part at all. So, but yeah, since I'm not, for some reason, I'm, in my head, I'm still putting the two together, like, religion and morality, and I don't know why. But, yeah, since I'm not religious at all, I just, I can't. I don't have a lot on that." At the same time, April references situations she finds troubling—for example, "I can't say I would agree with, like, if a woman was just out there 'slutting it up' [laughs] and was just getting pregnant, you know, and she's not on birth control and just doesn't do anything about it. And she just keeps having abortion after abortion, that's a little ridiculous [laughs]." But "Ultimately, I think it's the woman's choice."

All three of our subsampled religiously nonaffiliated interviewees adopt the label "pro-choice." Their responses to the 1 ("most pro-choice") to 10 ("most pro-life") scale vary, however: Louis (black, never-attending nonaffiliated) is a "4," Consuelo (Hispanic, rarely-attending nonaffiliated) a "2," and April (white, never-attending nonaffiliated) a "1."

5. Efficacy, Distancing, and Reconciling

Resonant with prior studies, religion's effect on abortion attitudes is clear: religiously affiliated interviewees in our subsample exhibit more conservative overall views toward abortion's morality and legality than religiously unaffiliated interviewees. Evangelical/black Protestant interviewees express more conservative views than Catholic interviewees, whose views are more conservative than nonaffiliated interviewees. Religion coheres through common lexicons and reference points for articulating moral views, particularly when compared with nonreligious interviewees who draw upon different cultural repositories and use religion as a foil.

The entanglement of religion and politics emerges as a backdrop for interviewees' abortion understandings, particularly for Evangelicals. Evangelical interviewees' explicit allusions to politics (e.g., abortion as a "trigger" and "political string") and relative deftness in communicating nuanced views signal effective mobilization around abortion as central to an Evangelical political agenda (Lewis 2017). Catholic interviewees' comparatively diffused messaging on abortion signals a post-secular turn in Catholicism, marked by nonassenting lay adherents (Dillon 2018).

But findings also reveal religion's impact as complex, complicating abortion opinion through race. Social location and positionality—in which race is central, particularly in the United States—contours how different Americans draw upon religious or secular repositories and translate them into private and public life (Yukich and Edgell 2020). For our white, Hispanic, and black American interviewees, I name this active work of translation *efficacy*, *distancing*, and *reconciling*, respectively.

Efficacy, observed within the responses of religiously diverse white interviewees, refers to the presumption of agency and greater control over outcomes within religious and other institutional fields. Efficacy marks a sense of empowerment that accompanies access to opportunities, resources, and personal discretion. *Distancing*, observed among our religiously diverse Hispanic interviewees, refers to intentional movements away from normed, expected, or long-held cultural views and practices in ways that make room for higher levels of autonomy. Distancing emerges vis-a-vis institutional fields and traditions where agency is otherwise experienced as limited—specifically Catholicism, given its dominance among Hispanic Americans. Movement from Catholicism can be experienced as "costly" for Hispanics, creating "religious distance" from family, friends, and neighbors (Bartkowski et al. 2012, p. 348). Lastly, *reconciling*, observed within responses from religiously diverse black interviewees, names inequality and actively navigates felt clashes between dominant belief structures and lived and learned experiences on-the-ground as black Americans within the unequal social milieu of the United States. Reconciling allows for discretion and interpretation linked to individual circumstances.

We can see *efficacy* in the way that Trent (white, weekly-attending Catholic), for example, articulated his sense of agency and control over positive post-pregnancy outcomes such as that his mother who birthed him at age 17. Trent upholds her example as a way to say of others' "reckless [sexual] behavior" that "you must accept the consequences," superimposing his experience of efficacy on to others. At the same time, Trent subverts religious tenets that would reduce agency over his own sexuality, such as Catholic stances regarding birth control and sex outside the context of marriage. Trent sets the terms of Catholicism's applicability to him. Similarly, Nancy (white, weekly-attending Evangelical) describes her privileged networks to advance alternatives to abortion via paid and volunteer work as well as through her congregation. She evokes religion as a viable means to exert agency over pregnancy outcomes, even amid "sad" circumstances. Nancy's experience as the child of a single mother solidifies her efficacious sensibility ("Where would I be if I didn't get brought into the world?" she asks). Her vision of efficacy imputes circumstances as controllable and disparities as resolvable (or invisible, by not "seeing" race) through the distribution of resources presumed to be equally available to all Americans. April (white, never-attending nonaffiliated) exercises efficacy by challenging the very need for religion in conversations about abortion, emphasizing her agency over the basic moral terms of deliberation. Religion works as an available resource but not an inhibiting one: April controls when and whether to engage moral or "religious" thinking to understand abortion. The story of her personal

experience of abortion within the context of marriage illustrates, for her, felt agency to set the trajectory of abortion decisions and positive long-term outcomes.

We can observe *distancing* in responses from our Hispanic interviewees (one Catholic, one Evangelical, and one nonreligious), intertwined with childhood Catholic affiliations. Alondra (Hispanic, semi-frequently-attending Catholic) describes her relatively weak socialization into formal Catholic teaching on abortion. She retains her Catholic identity, but has moved away from weekly Mass attendance and parish involvement as well as the wholesale agreement with Catholic stances on abortion. Alondra's positionality as a young Latina generates heightened distance from the institutionalized anti-abortion Catholic messages internalized and communicated by older Catholics, including Trent and Marcus. Her distancing embodies the broader dilution of a contemporary Catholic antiabortion stance among young Hispanic Catholics (Bartkowski et al. 2012).

Marco (Hispanic, weekly-attending Evangelical) also exhibits distancing via strong opposition to abortion acquired during his movement to evangelicalism from the Catholicism of his youth. He distances himself from what he now identifies as hypocrisy in Catholicism, leaning into his newer evangelical faith commitments as a means of justifying a strict stance against the legality and morality of abortion. While still Catholic, Marco likewise distanced himself from formal positions of the Church on abortion; now, as an Evangelical, his views look more similar to formal Catholic ones but his justifications are more distanced from Catholic sources. Marco describes his anti-abortion position as born not of socialization into Catholicism, but re-socialization into his current evangelical religious affiliation. Consuelo (Hispanic, rarely-attending nonaffiliated), too, distances herself from the already distanced Catholicism of her youth, who never received a formal introduction to Catholic teachings. Her distancing was exacerbated upon experiencing discomfort and rejection within faith communities joined as an adult. Religion (and morality) are no longer readily transparent connections to Consuelo's personal views on abortion. She describes neither religious tenets nor government laws as meriting any role in personal abortion decisions.

Finally, we see in responses from our black interviewees a process of *reconciling*. Marcus (black, sporadically-attending Catholic) holds simultaneously—uncomfortably, even—the teachings of his faith and the perspectives he has gleaned through personal experiences as a black American. Unlike the anticipation of control (efficacy) introduced through felt agency, access to available resources, and evidence of long-term positive outcomes, Marcus instead identifies contradictions in the lived application of Catholic teachings that don't—or cannot, in practice—actualize their promises. He shares sentiments of internal conflict on abortion stances alongside cultural work to reconcile Catholic positions with lived contra-experiences. Neesha (black, weekly-attending Evangelical/black Protestant) likewise points out contradictions between her available religious repertoire and personal, lived experiences. She talks through a seeming lack of correspondence between beliefs and behavior in ways not dissimilar to how poor women interviewed in *Promises I Can Keep* describe abortion as a tragedy more than an empowered personal choice (Edin and Kefalas 2011). Neesha changes her mind and, on paper, confounds standardized measures of abortion attitudes—reconciling, in real-time, the importance she places on both religion and "free will."

Louis (black, never-attending nonaffiliated) does not convey the same moral permissibility and high levels of support for legal abortion that our other two religiously nonaffiliated interviewees do. He instead works to reconcile his personal disapproval of abortion with his awareness of what harm is experienced when access is denied or when the law is leveraged to restrict personal freedoms. Louis' reconciling does not happen within a formal religious repertoire, but a nonreligious one: he frames moral arguments on abortion as stemming from proper conceptions of gender, relationships, and government in regulating personal boundaries.

The efficacy observed among whites in different religious traditions denotes felt agency born of privilege. Efficacy filters religion through comparative racial advantage, elevating perceptions of agency to exert control over abortion outcomes. Consequently, racial privilege, for white Americans, amplifies the impact of religion on abortion attitudes. Differently allocated resources and practical

inconsistencies lead to unrealized efficacy among both black and Hispanic Americans, by contrast, distinguishing the ways that religion impacts their abortion attitudes.

Distancing among Hispanics showcases a sense of in-betweenness in both religious and racial identities. Hispanic interviewees arduously make room for increased agency vis a vis formal religion through processes of distancing from seemingly intransigent yet weakening institutional norms, Catholicism in particular.

The reconciling observed among black Americans necessarily contends with the occurrence of racism, harm, and *in*efficacy that renders abortion absolutes less tenable. Moral positioning emerges amid a complex negotiation with realities on-the-ground. Religion's impact on abortion opinion is, for black Americans, dampened by the realities of racial disadvantage. This finding helps to explain seemingly contradictory trendlines observed in black Americans' abortion attitudes over time and portends future volatility contextualized by Americans' ongoing reckoning with racial injustice.

Efficacy, distancing, and reconciling do not predict single views on abortion. They describe instead modes of intersectional thinking. Interviewees mix, synthesize, and reject personal and political stances at the nexus of (non)religious and racial vantage points. Racial privilege can intensify the impact of religion on abortion attitudes; racial disadvantage can dampen it. Seeing up close the divergent ways that this happens within shared affiliations showcases (non)religion as not merely a coherent schema or "worldview," but as a complex, negotiated repertoire for ordinary people who occupy different social locations.

The abortion attitudes of Trent, Marcus, Alondra, Nancy, Neesha, Marco, April, Louis, and Consuelo cannot stand in for those of all American Catholics, Evangelicals, or religiously unaffiliated, nor for all whites, blacks, and Hispanics. They reveal, nonetheless, processes that complicate extant summaries of religious and racial influence on abortion attitudes. Their perspectives invite fuller consideration of the efficacy, distancing, and reconciling that occurs among all subsets of Americans who share a religious affiliation.

6. Conclusions

This article introduced three processes by which white, Hispanic, and black Americans from Catholic, Evangelical, and nonreligious affiliations come to think and feel differently about abortion. Hearing intimately from a cross-section of religiously and racially diverse Americans solidifies the relevance of religion for abortion views and—more importantly—the imperative to explore how religion matters differently to different Americans. Prior research hints at variation in abortion attitudes along both racial and religious lines but says little about how the two work in interaction, or with depth beyond isolated measures of abortion opinion.

Here, religion's impact on abortion attitudes is revealed as complex: its effect on attitudes strong, but mediated through race. Efficacy, distancing, and reconciling signal active and interactive processes, not fixed or finished outcomes. Religious and racial vantage points mesh, clash, and contradict when shaping Americans' attitudes toward abortion. Seeing complex religion reveals active interpretation more than predictable schema. Qualitative evidence uncovers multilayered thinking on abortion that helps to explain contradictions and inconsistencies observed in surveys. Pairing qualitative and quantitative evidence begins to flesh out complex religion's influence on abortion opinion and how variables including race intervene.

This article is limited by its intentionally narrowly focus on nine Americans. No one interviewee represents a religious or racial group any more than one statistic captures all views on abortion. Observing these three processes within this group of interviewees, moreover, does not preclude the possibility that other groups of Americans also enact efficacy, distancing, and reconciling. Further exploration could authenticate the relevance of these modes of thinking to how religiosity shapes attitudes on many social issues. Future research could also consider the confounding influence of age, gender, ideology, abortion experience, and more.

Efficacy, distancing, and reconciling illuminate ways that white, Hispanic, and black Americans from Catholic, Evangelical, and nonreligious affiliations variously sort through their attitudes toward abortion personally, morally, and legally. These conclusions challenge homogenous depictions of views shared by "Evangelicals," "Catholics," or the "religiously nonaffiliated" without regard to complex religion and the realities of race. Complex religion offers an inroad to understand dissimilar attitudes toward abortion and other contested social issues.

Finally, attending to complexity in abortion attitudes via in-depth, qualitative exploration may help to humanize a realm of American culture often assessed as fraught, polarized, stigmatized, and depersonalized. Understanding how real people discern personal and political viewpoints through shared meaning systems and different social locations lends insight into Americans' enduring ambivalence toward abortion.

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Equal Opportunity Beliefs beyond Black and White American Christianity

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Abstract: Scholars in critical race and the sociology of religion have independently drawn attention to the ways in which cultural ideologies drive beliefs about inequalities between groups. Critical race work on "abstract liberalism" highlights non-racially inflected language that tacitly reinforces White socioeconomic outcomes resulting from an allegedly fair social system. Sociologists of religion have noted that White Evangelical Christian theology promotes an individualist mindset that places blame for racial inequalities on the perceived failings of Blacks. Using data from the National Asian American Survey 2016, we return to this question and ask whether beliefs about the importance of equal opportunity reveal similarities or differences between religious Asian American and Latino Christians and Black and White Christians. The results confirm that White Christians are generally the least supportive of American society providing equal opportunity for all. At the other end, Black Christians were the most supportive. However, with the inclusion of Asian American Christian groups, we note that second generation Asian American and Latino Evangelicals hew closer to the White Christian mean, while most other Asian and Latino Christian groups adhere more closely to the Black Christian mean. This study provides further support for the recent claims of religion's complex relationship with other stratifying identities. It suggests that cultural assimilation among second generation non-Black Evangelical Christians heads more toward the colorblind racist attitudes of many White Christians, whereas potential for new coalitions of Latino and Black Christians could emerge, given their shared perceptions of the persistent inequality in their communities.

Keywords: complex religion; racial hierarchy; second-generation; social attitudes

1. Introduction

Inasmuch as the racial disparities in employment, wealth and housing continue and are worsened by some measures, attitudes about equal opportunity undergird much of the resistance toward policies aimed at ameliorating these inequalities. Pertinent to the collection of studies in this volume is the evident role that cultural scripts play through religious affiliations, as they relate to racial disparities and the very ideals intended to project an exceptionalist or colorblind view of American society. As Wilde and her colleagues have shown and argued, research findings on religious differences always intersect with social characteristics in which our society is typically stratified, namely race, class, and gender (Wilde 2018; Wilde and Glassman 2016). In many cases, it is the responses of White Americans that drive the narratives of "religious effects". Wilde termed this intersectional framing of religion "complex religion", and our study provides another example of how our current understanding of religious cultural scripts renders the views of non-White religious individuals and groups inconsequential or invisible. In the following, we consider the associations of religious affiliations and racial identities with attitudes about equal opportunity. We apply the racial hierarchy framework to the research on religious affiliation's relationship to inequality attitudes using a unique sample of Americans that allow

us to examine White, Black, Asian, and Latino Christian responses on the same measures. Our findings generally support the "racial trichotomy" as it applies to equal opportunity beliefs, but we show that such hierarchies are complicated by generational and religious traditions differences among American Christians. We conclude that complex religion offers a lens that incorporates both colorblind racism and assimilationist framings that themselves primarily focus only on race, religion, or immigrant status. Future research considerations in light of this integrated framing follow.

1.1. Revising the Racial Order

According to a recent survey, more than half of White Americans admit that racism remains an important problem in society (Horowitz et al. 2019). For many Americans, racism is the result of individual acts and practices, but critical race scholars clarify that it is, in fact, more than prejudiced behavior. Racism operates in and through racial structures, or "a network of social relations at social, political, economic and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of various races" (Bonilla-Silva 2015). These structures produce and reproduce a racial hierarchy that benefits the dominant racial group while also placing other minority racial groups at a disadvantage. In America, this reproduction of racial inequality results in a racial hierarchy defined and maintained by White Americans (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Given such power, White Americans create and promote their own culture and interests as the norm to which non-Whites and other subordinate groups must conform or assimilate (Doane 1997). Historically, we see evidence of how some ethnic groups designated as not White were absorbed into the White racial category (Brodkin 1998; Ignatiev 1995). This suggests that whiteness is malleable—capable of extending membership to certain individuals who do not threaten the cultures and structures held in place by White Americans (e.g., European Protestants) (Doane 1997; Delgado and Stefancic 2012).

However, considering the current influx of immigrants primarily from Latin and Asian countries, the Black and White binary is a problematic paradigm insofar as it either fails to account for racialized groups that fit neither category or demands their assimilation to one or the other of the two categories (Alcoff 2003; Perea 1997; Delgado and Stefancic 2012). The Black and White binary essentially forces non-Black minorities to compare their treatment with those of African Americans (Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Perea 1997). "Race," in the Black–White paradigm, always refers to the Black community. Consequently, the history, struggles, and complexities of Latino and Asian Americans are marginalized, if not invisible in that racial discourse (Alcoff 2003; Perea 1997). To accommodate these challenges, new scholarship conceptualizes a new racial classification system for American society: a tri-racial system with "Whites" at the top and "collective Blacks" at the bottom (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Examples of those included in the "Whites" category are those who already classify as White, most (White-looking) multiracials, assimilated/urban Native Americans and assimilated White Latinos (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Collective Blacks include Blacks, most Southeast Asians, dark-skinned Latinos and reservation-bound Native Americans (Bonilla-Silva 2004). The remaining racial group—"honorary Whites"—forms the intermediate category and is comprised of different Asian ethnic groups (e.g., Chinese Americans, most multiracials, Middle Eastern Americans) and light-skinned Latinos (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Lee and Bean 2012). Adding Latino and Asian Americans into the racial hierarchy draws much-needed attention to the treatment of these racial minorities in America. It accounts for the various ways in which Asian, Latinx, and Native American groups and individuals are affected in similar and dissimilar ways via discrimination at the individual and structural levels (e.g., Rosenbloom and Way 2004; Wright et al. 2015). As an important clarification, Bonilla-Silva carefully delineated stratification within these racial categories that complicates the way we interpret race and racial ordering; as noted earlier, not all Latinos fit into one of the three main categories of the non-White parts of the hierarchy, and not all Asian American groups fit into one either. For groups in the honorary White and collective Black positions, some experience what Liu (2017) described as "proxy privilege" or limited advantages that aid individual White women and persons of color rather than the group as a whole. This revised racial order incorporates insights from segmented assimilation theory, which posits that many contemporary immigrants and their children experience a bifurcated experience in the

US. Among the newcomers, some are almost immediately cast into the middle class and its attendant upward mobility opportunities, while others arrive in the working class with limited opportunities for mobility (Zhou 1997). This aligns with the collective Black and honorary White categories in Bonilla-Silva's framing. Evidently, Latino and Asian Americans navigate a unique racialized reality as racial groups who experience both privileges (relative to Blacks) and discrimination (Kim 1999; Lee and Tran 2019; Lee and Bean 2012). More pointedly, as different Asian and Latino groups assimilate structurally into different sectors of the American economy, the cultural component of assimilation also takes root (Gordon 1964). This can and often does include assimilation into the dominant racial ideology, colorblind racism.

1.2. Colorblind Racism and the Narrative of Equal Opportunity

Ideology is an important factor within the revised racial order. Sociologists contend that cultural ideologies play an important role in the allocation of resources (Sewell 1992). In the post-Civil Rights Era, direct racial prejudice has largely (although not entirely) fallen by the wayside in favor of what many scholars, such as sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, are calling colorblind racism, which he defined as a new racial ideology which "explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics" (Bonilla-Silva 2010, p. 2). The main framework for colorblind racism is abstract liberalism, which employs laissez faire views towards racial issues, while also describing them in an abstract manner (Bonilla-Silva 2015). In other words, while many White Americans avoid overt racist language, they defend their racism by appealing to abstract ideals such as individualism that tacitly asserts that racial differences in social and economic outcomes are a result of personal abilities or failings rather than systemic efforts to disenfranchise entire groups of individuals. This frame of colorblind racism is so embedded in racial ideologies and current structures that minorities also fail to recognize its hidden power (Hunt 1996; Manning et al. 2015; Bobo 2011).

One particular principle within abstract liberalism is the belief in equal opportunity. The narrative of equal opportunity is familiar to most Americans; it imagines an ideal society in which its members are given opportunities for upward mobility, regardless of group affiliations or characteristics (e.g., gender, race, religion etc.). These opportunities therefore are equally available to all individuals without discriminating against class, gender, race and religion. When opportunities are equally available, outcomes can be unequal, since every individual applies her effort in unequal ways. The impact of ethnic, racial or religious systemic bias is minimal based on this view of equal opportunity. As long as society makes opportunity available equitably, alleged "structural differences" must be the result of some other factor in the personal life and decisions of the individual.

Because White Americans believe in abstract liberalism, they project the same expectations on racial minorities. Consequently, many White Americans oppose programs implemented to help racial minorities because they fundamentally believe that equal opportunity is available for all Americans. They further maintain that they have no hidden advantages and that current policies in fact penalize them, as seen in the accusations of 'reverse discrimination' (Bonilla-Silva 2015; Delgado and Stefancic 2012). This belief does not account for structural inequities "baked in" which may result in significant inequalities in the labor market, wealth accrual, and educational attainment. White Americans adhere to this belief that equal opportunity is a reality far more than non-Whites, and their conviction exemplifies their privileged status.

Black Americans, by contrast, are strong advocates for structural change intended to rectify current and past inequities by improving opportunities for all African Americans (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Hunt 1996; Hunt 2007). The visible disparities in equal opportunity between Whites and Blacks leads to greater health inequalities for African Americans (Noonan et al. 2016), large wage gaps and high unemployment rates among Blacks relative to Whites, even when accounting for mass incarceration rates (Western and Pettit 2005). Thus, supporting structural remodeling is inherently necessary for the welfare of the Black community (Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Western and Pettit 2005; Golland 2011; Hunt 2007).

Latino and Asian Americans have a unique position in the racial hierarchy, significantly distinguishable from both Black and White Americans (Yancey 2004; Hunt 1996; Hunt 2007). They support both abstract liberalism's individualism as well as sociologically informed structural explanations for racial inequality (Yancey 2004; Hunt 2007). In these studies, scholars did not differentiate skin tone for Latinos and ethnicity for Asian Americans, as Bonilla-Silva has explicated. However, what this research suggests is that without disaggregation of these racial categories, it appears that, over time, Asian and Latino Americans' attitudes hew closer to White Americans' preference for individualist explanations of racial inequality (Yancey 2004; Hunt 2007). With regard to Asians Americans, such ideological adherence to abstract liberalism coincides with their pre-migration educational advantages, socioeconomic mobility, residential integration and racial intermarriage (largely with Whites) (Yancey 2004; Lee and Bean 2012).

From this review, we posit that an examination of abstract liberalist ideology, particularly equal opportunity attitudes, will mirror racial inequality attitude patterns. Namely, we expect that White Americans would be least supportive of the need for greater equal opportunity for all, while Black Americans will be most supportive, and Asian and Latino Americans falling in between.

1.3. Colorblind Racism and American Evangelical Cultural Scripts

Commitment to the abstract liberal ideal of equal opportunity is strongly endorsed by most White Americans, but White Evangelical Christians have received special attention because of their overtly stated convictions. For White Christians, particularly evangelicals, religion, and specifically the cultural tools (Swidler 1986) derived from their combined religious beliefs and social position, plays a significant role in shaping their racial attitudes (Emerson et al. 1999; Edgell and Tranby 2007). As framed by the theory of colorblind racism, White evangelicals also employ abstract liberalism by blaming the problems of racial inequality on African Americans both as individuals and their culture. Emerson and Smith (2000) argued that White evangelicals see the root of the inequality not as structural failure to enforce equal opportunity but as individual inability to maximize one's efforts when opportunities present themselves. Because the problem is not located in society's structures, the solutions must also be individual and non-structural. This focus on non-structural solutions such as cross-racial friendship building, sometimes dubbed "racial reconciliation", helps us understand how White evangelicals can decry racial inequality while also proffering a solution that does nothing to change the root problem. Subsequent research has extended this argument to include all White Christians, regardless of Christian tradition (Taylor and Merino 2011; Hinojosa and Park 2004).

Less well considered are the views of African American Christians, who constitute the majority of African Americans today. How do they understand these inequities and to what extent does religion affect their views? Studies reveal that Black Christians are influenced by their religion and exhibit different perspectives on some social issues from Black non-Christians (Shelton and Emerson 2012; Taylor and Merino 2011). However, unlike their White counterparts who display some variation in perspectives toward racial inequality, Black Christians remain consistent across all denominations (Hinojosa and Park 2004). African American Christians, particularly those from historically Black churches and denominations, show that the script of individualism and the ideology of abstract liberalism do not necessarily emerge from all Christian theology and practice. In African American Christian theology, cultural scripts emphasize liberation and equality (Taylor and Merino 2011; Paris 1985). The Black Church has often been at the forefront of calls for institutional change to further guarantee equal opportunity for all (Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Edgell and Tranby 2007). While Black Christians may accede that racial inequalities may be due in part to differences in individual effort, they emphasize that the primary driver of racial inequalities is structural in nature. Thus, equal opportunity in American society must be pursued and protected.

While scholars of religion have studied extensively the racial attitudes of White and Black Christians, there is sparse literature on the views of Latino Christians, despite the fact that 83 percent of the group claim this religious affiliation, with a majority (62 percent) identifying as Catholic (Taylor

et al. 2012). Studies have suggested a possible Catholic–Protestant divide among Latino Christians; Brown (2009) found that Latino American Christians, regardless of tradition, share similar views toward racial inequality, indicating a regnant racial schema. Edgell and Tranby (2007), however, found that Latino Catholicism provides a distinct set of cultural tools favoring structural explanations and advocacy for institutional resolutions. Asian American Christians, to date, have not been considered on these matters (with the exception of Brown 2009). However, similar to other studies about general racial patterns on racial ideology, Asian American Christians also show a more middling position on racial inequality attitudes, similar to that of Latino Christians. In sum, the current research would lead us to hypothesize the following:

Hypothesize 1a (H1a). *White Christians will express the lowest support for equal opportunity for all.*

Hypothesize 1b (H1b). *Black Christians will express the highest support for equal opportunity for all.*

Hypothesize 2 (H2). *Asian American Christians will express lower support for equal opportunity for all compared to Black Christians.*

Hypothesize 3 (H3). *Latino Christians will express lower support for equal opportunity for all compared to Black Christians.*

1.4. Religio-Racial Consolidation or Generational Cleavage?

According to the racial trichotomy framework, we would expect that the ideological views of American Christians would follow the same hierarchy as the structural position of all Americans in general. However, we have reason to believe that nativity or generational status differences may play an important and complicating role in the ways that religious affiliation can affect commitment to abstract liberalism. For immigrants, much of their understanding of the racial structure in American society is filtered through their exposure to that ideology prior to arrival in the US (Kim 2008; Rodríguez 2018). However, for their children, the second-generation, whether born or raised in the US, their view is informed through a combination of factors while undergoing their primary socialization in the US. Asian and Latino immigrants may not be as attuned to their position as racial minorities compared to the second generation. For these immigrants, including Christian immigrants, we might expect a certain level of optimism and adherence to abstract liberalism. For the second generation, we might expect some conflict in their ideological formation. They may observe their immigrant forebears and peers' belief in abstract liberalism as something they too should embrace or internalize, but they may also interpret such adherence as cultural naiveté, one that does not comport with their daily observations of their social surroundings. Thus, we provisionally suggest that Asian and Latino Christians will diverge in their views about equal opportunity; immigrant Asian and Latino Christians will be nearer to the attitudes of White Christians, while second generation Christians will be nearer to the attitudes of Black Christians.

2. Data and Methods

The data used for our analysis were drawn from the 2016 National Asian American Survey (NAAS) Ramakrishnan et al. (2018). NAAS is a telephone survey (landline and cellphone combined) conducted over the course of four months after the 2016 national elections. About two thirds of the respondents were surveyed over landlines, while the remaining respondents were contacted via cell phone. The survey was also available in ten different Asian languages, in addition to English and Spanish. This was crucial for this survey because 74 percent of Asian adults speak another language at home. Thus, having translation into their native tongue as an option creates a better sample of Asian Americans and removes past biases towards English speaking, higher educated, and younger Asian American adults (Lee and Pérez 2014). Moreover, unlike past surveys, NAAS purposefully targeted previously under-sampled Asian ethnic groups by oversampling ten Asian groups. This includes about 500 Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese

Americans, and between approximately 320 and 400 Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Pakistani Americans. The survey had a response rate of 28%. The NAAS included over 6400 respondents from all different racial and religious backgrounds. About 4400 of all respondents were Asian, reporting Asian ancestry or at least one Asian parent. In addition, around 400 non-Latino Whites, 400 non-Latino African Americans and 1125 Latinos (whether White, Black or other) were also included in this survey to allow for interracial comparisons. We limited our analyses only to those 2969 respondents who identified as Christian broadly construed. While the United States remains largely Christian, Asian Americans are the least Christian of all racialized groups. As such, a survey with large oversamples of Asian Americans will produce a sample that is much less Christian than US surveys that sample using conventional sampling techniques and strategies (Funk et al. 2012; Smith et al. 2015).

2.1. Dependent Variable: Need for Equal Opportunity

The main dependent variable is a summed scale derived from three questions out of six regarding perceptions of equal opportunity. These read:

> *"Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed."*
>
> *"If people were treated more fairly in this country, we would have fewer problems."*
>
> *"One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance."*

All items included 5-point Likert scale responses where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. These items were reverse-coded such that the summed scale highest value reflects the highest agreement on a need for greater equal opportunity. Table 1 shows that the mean for this summed scale is 11.9, with a range of 3 to 15. Factor analysis with varimax rotation using the original 6 equal opportunity questions identified two significant groupings. The variables that were identified and used in our summed dependent variable for analysis had an average communality of 0.724 and an eigenvalue above 1, thus satisfying Kaiser's criterion and justifying their grouping.

2.2. Primary Independent Variable: Racial/Ethnic, Generational, Religious Identities

Our primary independent variable measure disaggregated racial and generational groupings within religious affiliations by integrating all three characteristics. Race was measured as self-identity with a variety of ethnic and racial labels from which one could identify as many labels as one prefers. The NAAS oversample of Asian Americans introduced a large number of Asian ethnic groups, few of whom selected more than one label. Since the US racial order joins together Asian ethnic groups into the racial category "Asian", we employed this designation to simplify our analyses. However, we created a generation variable where we differentiated those Asian and Latino respondents who had immigrated after age 12 (immigrant generation or first generation) and those who were born in the US or arrived in the US prior to age 13 (the second generation). Inclusion of certain immigrants based on age of arrival signals that primary socialization of the respondent occurred in the US. As such, these immigrants, sometimes called the "1.5 generation", understand American social realities as a lived experience as a racial minority. Other immigrants socialized elsewhere in their formative early years likely experienced society as a member of the majority (Portes and Zhou 1993). In the following analyses, we include the following racialized groups: White, Black, Asian American 1st generation, Asian American 2nd generation, Latino 1st generation, and Latino 2nd generation.

Religious groupings were based on the "RelTrad" classification scheme that combines Protestant Christian religious groups into larger categories that retain cultural and historical significance (Steensland et al. 2000). Utilizing the limited denominational categories, we subdivided these into Evangelical, Mainline, Historic Black Protestant, Other Christian, and Catholic. Where denominations were ambiguous, we utilized the "born-again or Evangelical Christian" to divide these respondents.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	Frequency	Mean or Percent	Range			Frequency	Percent	Range
Dependent Variable				*Age*	<35 years	487	16.4	0–1
… we don't give everyone an equal chance	2969	3.389	1–5		>34 years	2482	83.7	0–1
… fewer problems if people treated equally	2969	4.096	1–5					
… make sure everyone has equal opportunity	2969	4.442	1–5	*Gender*	Women	1661	55.9	0–1
Sum scale ("Need Equal Opportunity")	2969	11.927	3–15		Men	1308	44.1	0–1
Religio-Racial Identities				*Educational*	No schooling	121	4.1	0–1
Evangelical White	90	3.0	0–1	*Attainment*	No GED	351	11.8	0–1
Evangelical Asian American 1st gen	326	11.0	0–1		High school degree	622	20.9	0–1
Evangelical Asian American 2nd gen	153	5.2	0–1		Some college	524	17.6	0–1
NHPI Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath)	79	2.7	0–1		College degree	945	31.8	0–1
Evangelical Latino 1st gen	58	2.0	0–1		Graduate degree	406	13.7	0–1
Evangelical Latino 2nd gen	83	2.8	0–1					
Mainline/OC White	104	3.5	0–1	*Region*	South	658	22.2	0–1
Mainline/OC Asian American 1st gen	188	6.3	0–1		Northeast	287	9.7	0–1
Mainline/OC Asian American 2nd gen	198	6.7	0–1		Midwest	323	10.9	0–1
Mainline/OC Latino	75	2.5	0–1		West (excl. CA)	563	19.0	0–1
Black Church Protestant	272	9.2	0–1		CA	1138	38.3	0–1
Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath) Black	43	1.4	0–1					
Catholic White	91	3.1	0–1	*Employment*	Employed	1422	47.9	0–1
Catholic Asian American 1st gen	376	12.7	0–1	*Status*	Not Employed	1547	52.1	0–1
Catholic Asian American 2nd gen	191	6.4	0–1					
Catholic Latino 1st gen	358	12.1	0–1	*Political*	Republican	807	27.2	0–1
Catholic Latino 2nd gen	284	9.6	0–1	*Affiliation*	Independent	485	16.3	0–1
Total	2969				Democrat	1677	56.5	0–1

Finally, we merged the racial and generational categories with the religious affiliations to create our final list of 17 Christian racialized affiliations. Despite the large overall sample size, some racial-religious groupings were still inadequate for reliable analyses and were merged together. Our main categories included: White Evangelical Protestants, White Mainline and Other Christians, White Catholics, Asian American 1st generation Evangelicals, Asian American 2nd generation Evangelicals, Asian American 1st generation Mainline and Other Christians, Evangelical, Mainline, Other, Catholic combined, Asian American 2nd generation Mainline and Other Christians, Asian American 1st generation Catholics, Asian American 2nd generation Catholics, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Christians (Evangelical, Mainline, Other Christian, Catholic combined), Latino American 1st generation Evangelicals, Latino American 2nd generation Evangelicals, Latino American Mainline and Other Christians (1st and 2nd generations combined), Latino American 1st generation Catholics, Latino American 2nd generation Catholics, Black Church Protestants, and Black Other Christians (Evangelical, Mainline, Other Christian, Catholic combined).

2.3. Controls

We accounted for other possible explanatory factors that may contribute to explaining the responses to our dependent variable in our analyses. Age was a dichotomous measure distinguishing those 35 and older (1) from those younger than 35 (0). Gender was coded dichotomously, where women = 1 and men = 0. Employment status was also coded dichotomously to reflect current employment status (1) from not currently employed (0). Educational attainment was measured along 6 categories reflecting no educational completion (1), no high school completion (2), high school completion or GED equivalent (3), some college course attainment (4), B.A. degree attainment (5), and post-B.A. advanced degree attainment (6). Political affiliation was coded into three dummy variables reflecting Republican, Independent, and Democratic party identities. Region was coded into a system of dummy variables indicating four conventional Census regions, and an indicator for California, which was oversampled. The variable for the western state region excludes this state. Given the oversampling, we felt this was a more rigorous accounting for possible regional effects on the dependent variable.

2.4. Method of Analysis

Table 1 presents an overview of the NAAS variables we used. We examined the dependent variable means across all of our major religio-racial groupings and these are illustrated in Figure 1. Table 2 includes the multivariate coefficients from OLS regressions of the main independent variable and the controls. In Model 1, we included only control measures, and Model 2 includes religio-racial identities, with White Evangelical Protestants as the comparison group. Model 3 re-introduces this group but excludes Black Church Protestants. Models 2 and 3 help to illustrate the primary finding of the relationship between non-Black minority Christians and White as well as Black Christians.

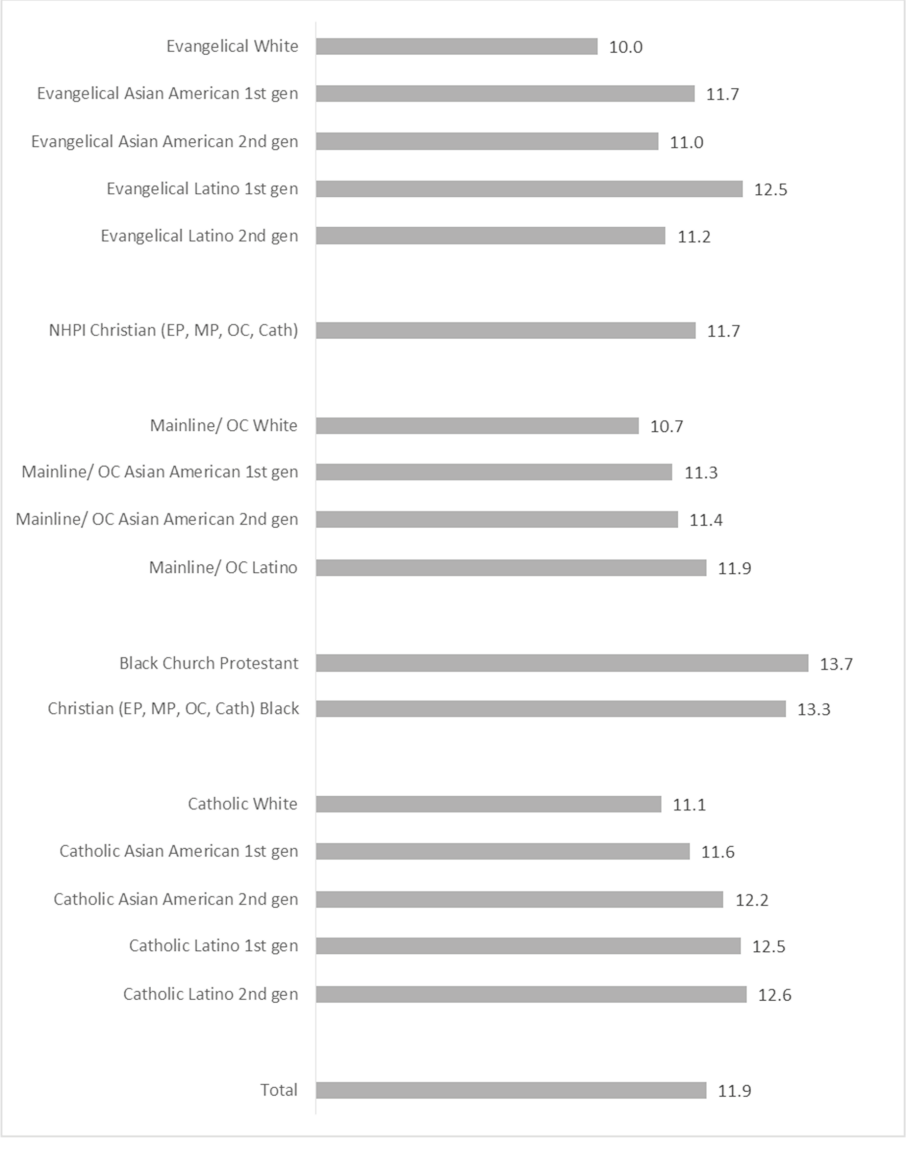

Figure 1. Religio-Racial Affiliation Means For "Need Equal Opportunity" Scale.

Table 2. Predictors of "Need for Equal Opportunity".

		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
		Unstd. Beta	**S.E.**	**Sig.**	**Unstd. Beta**	**S.E.**	**Sig.**	**Unstd. Beta**	**S.E.**	**Sig.**
Religio-Racial Identities										
Evangelical White (M2 contrast)								−3.288	0.314	***
Evangelical Asian American 1st gen					1.614	0.305	***	−1.674	0.213	***
Evangelical Asian American 2nd gen					0.730	0.345	*	−2.558	0.267	***
NHPI Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath)					1.349	0.404	***	−1.939	0.341	***
Evangelical Latino 1st gen					2.343	0.433	***	−0.945	0.371	*
Evangelical Latino 2nd gen					0.918	0.393	*	−2.371	0.323	***
Mainline/OC White					0.574	0.368		−2.715	0.297	***
Mainline/OC Asian American 1st gen					1.049	0.329	***	−2.240	0.245	***
Mainline/OC Asian American 2nd gen					1.146	0.331	***	−2.142	0.250	***
Mainline/OC Latino					1.625	0.402	***	−1.663	0.335	***
Black Church Protestant (M3 Contrast)					3.288	0.314	***			
Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath) Black					2.880	0.473	***	−0.409	0.417	
Catholic White					0.913	0.379	*	−2.375	0.311	***
Catholic Asian American 1st gen					1.552	0.303	***	−1.736	0.209	***
Catholic Asian American 2nd gen					1.723	0.338	***	−1.565	0.252	***
Catholic Latino 1st gen					2.155	0.313	***	−1.133	0.215	***
Catholic Latino 2nd gen					2.184	0.315	***	−1.105	0.219	***
Age	Over 34 y.o.	−0.688	0.137	***	−0.765	0.143	***	-0.765	0.143	***
Gender	Female	0.449	0.098	***	0.385	0.096	***	0.385	0.096	***
Region	Northeast	0.220	0.186		0.428	0.182	*	0.428	0.182	*
	Midwest	−0.007	0.180		0.446	0.177	*	0.446	0.177	*
	West (except CA)	−0.200	0.151		0.268	0.156		0.268	0.156	
	California	0.007	0.130		0.144	0.129		0.144	0.129	
Educational Attainment		−0.187	0.036	***	−0.103	0.038	**	-0.103	0.038	**
Currently Employed		−0.105	0.102		−0.157	0.099		-0.157	0.099	
Political Affiliation	Democrat	1.402	0.113	***	1.097	0.112	***	1.097	0.112	***
	Independent	0.700	0.152	***	0.596	0.149	***	0.596	0.149	***
(Constant)		12.850	0.353	***	11.018	0.443	***	14.307	0.379	***
Adjusted R2		0.075			0.139			0.139		
N		2968			2968			2968		

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the frequencies, means and ranges for our primary variables. Survey respondents expressed the highest levels of agreement with the statement about ensuring equal opportunity. The lowest level of agreement was with the statement "One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance". With regard to the primary independent variable, we note that not one of the religio-racial groupings constitutes more than 13 percent of the entire sample (1st generation Asian American Catholics), and no grouping has an N less than 43 (Black Christians who are not in historically Black Protestant denominations). More than 80 percent of the sample is over the age of 34; women constitute a majority (about 56 percent), as does non-employment status (about 52 percent), and Democrat affiliation (about 57 percent). In terms of educational attainment, the largest category, BA degree attainment, garnered almost one-third (32 percent) of all respondents, followed by about 21 percent with a high school degree or GED equivalent. In terms of region, excluding California, which included 38 percent of the sample, the largest fraction of respondents were from Southern states (about 22 percent). Another 19 percent were from the non-California west and the remaining 21 percent were about evenly divided between Northeast and Midwestern states.

Figure 1 shows us the general pattern of responses to the equal opportunity scale by religio-racial groupings. We grouped findings based on Christian religious traditions with racial disaggregations per religious grouping (with the exception of Native Hawaiian Christians which had no other comparison group within it). Mentioned earlier, Christian responses had an overall mean of 11.9, with a range of 3 to 15. Among Evangelical Whites, Asians, and Latinos, only first generation Latinos had a higher rating than the average (12.5). White Evangelicals showed the lowest support for equal opportunity (10.0). Mainline Protestants show the same pattern: White Mainline respondents showed the lowest support for equal opportunity (10.7), and every other group was nearer to the sample mean (11.3–11.9). Protestants in historically Black denominations were the most supportive of equal opportunity (13.7), followed closely behind by other Black Christians not in this tradition (13.3). No other religio-racial grouping approaches this level of support. Among Catholics, again White Catholics showed the lowest support for equal opportunity (11.1), and they are joined with first generation Asian Americans, who were similarly below the sample mean. The second generation Catholic Asian Americans and Latinos, as well as Latino first generation, had a high level of support compared to the sample mean. This suggests a pattern seen in previous research: White Christian support, regardless of tradition, was lowest for equal opportunity, while Black Christian support was highest. Most every other racial minority Christian group fit somewhere between these two mean positions. Asian American Christian groups, with the exception of second generation Catholics, were between White Christians and the sample mean. Second-generation Asian American evangelicals joined White Christians in expressing some of the lowest support for equal opportunity. Latino Christians, with the exception of second generation Evangelicals were at or above the sample mean. This suggests that opinions about equal opportunity among religio-racial groupings largely fall into a racial hierarchy where White Christians are least supportive, followed by second generation Asian and Latino Protestants. African American Christians were the most supportive and are joined by Latino Christians and second generation Asian American Catholics. All other groups fall somewhere between these two clusters. Notably, our hypothesis regarding generational shifts toward White Christian attitudes applies to second generation Protestants; second generation Catholics, both Asian and Latino, are closer to Black Christian views on average.

The observations in Figure 1 were then placed into OLS regression where we controlled for other possible explanatory factors, including age, gender, educational attainment, employment status, region and political affiliation as shown in Table 2.

Model 1 accounts for these alternative factors and accounts for about 8 percent of the variance in predicting equal opportunity beliefs. In this all-Christian study, women (compared to men), along with Democrats and Independents (compared to Republicans), were more supportive of equal opportunity. Those over 34 years of age and those with greater educational attainment were less favorable. These

effects were consistent across all models. The exception to this pattern was regional effects. Even when accounting for the California oversample as a distinct possible outlier, respondents in the western region were not significantly different from those in southern states. In Model 1, none of the regions were significantly different from the South. In the subsequent models, however, respondents in the Northeast and Midwestern states were more supportive of equal opportunity compared to those in the South. The primary measure of religio-racial affiliations was significant, even with the aforementioned controls included. In Model 2, White Evangelical Christians were the comparison group and every other religio-racial group, except for White Mainline/Other Christians, were statistically significantly more in favor of equal opportunity. While statistically significant, we note also that the smallest coefficients were for White Catholics and second generation Evangelical Asian Americans and Latinos. Standardized Betas (not shown) suggest that, although these groups are different from White evangelicals by a statistically significant margin, they have the smallest effect in comparison to all other groups. In Model 3, we changed the comparison group to affiliates in historically Black Protestant denominations and found that all other religio-racial groupings among Christians, save for Black Christians of other traditions, were significantly less supportive of equal opportunity. Suggestive of Figure 1, second generation Evangelical Latinos stand apart from other Latino Christians in having the largest negative coefficient (−2.371) by one full point in comparison to all other Latino Christian groups in Model 3. Overall, we find that Black Christians are the most supportive of equal opportunity, White Christians tend to be the least, and Asian and Latino Christians tend to fall somewhere in the middle. These results generally suggest a racialized hierarchy within American Christianity with regard to attitudes toward equal opportunity, and some religio-racial generational distinctiveness that has not been shown before.

4. Discussion and Future Directions

4.1. New Religio-Racial Solidarities and Cleavages

Our study suggests that the general racial hierarchy or revised racial order applies to attitudes toward equal opportunity among American Christians. This suggests that structural racial domination has counterparts within cultural ideologies; White supremacy generally goes unquestioned through the internalization of abstract liberalism, particularly for White Christians, regardless of specific tradition. Resistance to this ideology is evident among some Christians, particularly those informed by the liberation theologies in the historic Black Church tradition. At the extreme ends of support for abstract liberalism, we find confirmatory evidence of a racial hierarchy among Black and White Christians.

However, Latino and Asian American Christians show some important complications to this current understanding of abstract liberalist ideological adherence. We conjectured that immigrants, including immigrant Christians, from Asia and Latin America would show adherence to abstract liberalism roughly approximating that of White Christians. We further conjectured that the second generation would align more closely with Black Christians. On both points, evidence did not readily support these claims. The general alignment of Latino Christians, with the important exception of second generation Latino evangelicals, comports with Brown's earlier finding that Latino Christians were largely similar on inequality attitudes. The clustering of Latino Catholics in both generations also supports Edgell and Tranby's argument that Catholicism offers a unique cultural toolkit that challenges racial inequality attitudes for these professing Latinos. Our disaggregation of Latino Christians by religious tradition and generation revealed that cultural assimilation to White evangelical ideology may be at work primarily for second generation Latino evangelicals. The same could be said for second generation Asian American evangelicals. Unlike Latino Christians, other Asian American Christians are more dispersed in their views about equal opportunity. Here, we may have evidence of an "honorary White Christian" attitudinal position that mirrors the structural one identified by Bonilla-Silva. In sum, religious affiliative effects on abstract liberalist attitudes such as equal opportunity are complicated by a combination of generational status and racial designation; our findings support the complex religion argument that religion intersects with race and nativity. Larger oversamples may better

clarify how distinctive these religious traditions are within different generations of Asian and Latino Christians. New oversamples of immigrant and second generation African and Caribbean Christians, most of whom identify as Black, will also add important clarification on how racial positioning may work in the ideological commitments of recently arrived Black Christians. Other explanatory factors we could not account for due to data limitations include racial and socioeconomic compositions of the respondent's neighborhood, stronger individual-level socioeconomic indicators, and perceptions of having faced discrimination. As one reviewer noted, each of these can help explain respondent attitudinal disposition regarding equal opportunity.

4.2. Future Directions

Complex religion invites scholars to move beyond current framings, especially those involving racial difference. The Black–White framing in racial inequality attitudes research and in race-related sociology research more generally remains robust insofar as understanding racial broad dynamics are concerned. What we show here is that non-Black minority Christians, particularly Asian and Latino American Christians, constitute potential new allies that may complicate the terminology for the framings we currently use.

We need more qualitative inquiry into the sources at work that help explain why these new potential cleavages are occurring as they are among American Christians. What cultural resources and scripts inform how immigrant and second generation Asian American and Latino Christians think about equal opportunity and inequality for that matter? While this question is often directed at further academic inquiry, we feel this has import for social justice efforts. This introductory study raises questions about how colorblind ideology is transmitted more so among some non-White Christians than other non-White Christians. Conversely, how are anti-racist ideologies embraced by some non-Black Christians more so than others? Christian communities of color could begin conversations that invite immigrant and second-generation members to discuss the sources of their ideological commitments and excavate the roots from which those commitments first appeared. To the extent that racial equity is important to the mission of a given Christian community of color, such intra- and intergenerational communal introspection could transform the ways and means of addressing racialized injustice in their local community perhaps through a combination of ethnic-specific collective effort and partnerships with like-minded Black Christians. At present, much of our scholarship on these subpopulations has not taken this next step given our reliance on assimilation theory. Our findings suggest that there is more to the cultural assimilation framework than generational identity boundary work. What informs the boundary work apart from rejection of practices and beliefs surrounding internalized ethnic cultural beliefs? How is identity linked to perceptions of the inequalities occurring around these immigrant and second generation individuals and communities? How do the cultural scripts from Christian communities inform and socialize non-Black minority Christians in view of these social inequalities?

Apart from these investigations, we recommend revisiting these analyses in two other ways. First, we recommend consideration of non-Christians. To what extent are the cultural scripts among American Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists similar to or different from American Christians, particularly Black and White Christians? Further how might the views or scripts of atheist, agnostic, and otherwise non-religious Americans resemble or differ from those of different racialized Christian groups? Studies of the so-called "Protestant work ethic" proposed by Weber suggest that this concept is not exclusively Protestant (Park et al. 2016). If similar ethe exist, future research should examine how those too could alter the effect of religious affiliation on equal opportunity beliefs. Second, we recommend ethnic-specific interactions with Christianity. Asian Americans are the least Christian of all major racialized groups in the US. However, among Asian American Christians, different ethnic groups dominate these subpopulations. The largest fraction of Asian American evangelicals is Korean (about 43 percent of NAAS), and another 53 percent of Asian American Catholics are Filipino in NAAS. Similarly, Mexican Americans dominate the Latino category and we should expect that this is true among Catholic and Protestant Latinos. How might ethnic group dominance within these

racialized categories alter our understanding of the alleged "racial differences" found in religion research? These are a few avenues for future directions that complex religion helps to illuminate.

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Religion across Axes of Inequality in the United States: Belonging, Behaving, and Believing at the Intersections of Gender, Race, Class, and Sexuality

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Abstract: Much research considers group differences in religious belonging, behaving, and/or believing by gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexuality. This study, however, considers all these factors at once, providing the first comprehensive snapshot of religious belonging, behaving, and believing across and within these axes of inequality in the United States. Leveraging unique data with an exceptionally large sample, I explore religion across 40 unique configurations of intersecting identities (e.g., one is non-Latina Black heterosexual college-educated women). Across all measures considered, Black women are at the top—however, depending on the measure, there are different subsets of Black women at the top. And whereas most sexual minorities are among the least religious Americans, Black sexual minorities—and especially those with a college degree—exhibit high levels of religious belonging, behaving, and believing. In fact, Black sexual minority women with a college degree meditate more frequently than any other group considered. Overall, whereas we see clear divides in how religious people are by factors like gender, education, and sexual orientation among most racial groups, race appears to overpower other factors for Black Americans who are consistently religious regardless of their other characteristics. By presenting levels of religious belonging, behaving, and believing across configurations of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality in the contemporary United States, this study provides a more complex and complete picture of American religion and spirituality.

Keywords: inequality; religion; gender; race; ethnicity; class; education; sexuality; sexual orientation

Group differences in religious belonging, behaving, and/or believing by gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexuality are among the most researched topics in the social scientific study of religion. The intersection of economic inequality and religion was a topic of particular interest for Marx and other early theorists, and the interrelationships between social inequalities (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality) and religion have become just as if not more frequently examined across the social sciences (Davis 1971; Edgell 2017; Schnabel 2020).

Large bodies of research explore these group differences individually. Gender differences in religiosity, for example, have been debated for decades (Edgell et al. 2017; Miller and Hoffmann 1995; Roth and Kroll 2007; Schnabel 2015, 2017, 2018a; Schnabel et al. 2016; de Vaus and McAllister 1987). Substantial bodies of research also explore group differences in religion by race (Chatters et al. 1996; Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Hunt and Hunt 2001; Roof and McKinney 1987), class (especially as measured by education) (Flere and Klanjšek 2009; McFarland et al. 2011; Schwadel 2011; Stark and Bainbridge 1985), and sexuality (Schnabel 2020; Sherkat 2002, 2016). Some recent theory and research, however, has begun applying intersectionality theory to religion, suggesting that we need to look not just across but also within social statuses (Avishai et al. 2015; Schnabel et al. 2018; Stewart et al. 2017; Wilde 2018; Wilde and Glassman 2016).

Qualitative research has more frequently applied an intersectional lens on the complexity of religion and inequality (Burke and McDowell 2020; Ellis 2018; Khurshid 2015; Legerski and Harker 2018;

Prickett 2015; Read and Eagle 2014; Wilde 2019; Wilde and Danielsen 2015; Zainal 2018), but quantitative research has also started applying an intersectional lens on religion. Although some quantitative research has begun considering, for example, religion at the intersection of gender and race (Glass and Jacobs 2005; Read and Eagle 2011), race and class (Wilde et al. 2018), or gender and sexuality (Sherkat 2002, 2016), much less quantitative research considers the intersection of more than two characteristics at the same time (but see Schnabel 2016b; Sherkat 2017).

Research on group differences in religion demonstrates that structurally disadvantaged groups are often more religious than their more privileged counterparts—except for sexual minorities who have been frequently condemned, marginalized, and excluded by organized religion (Perry and Schnabel 2017; Powell et al. 2017; Schnabel 2016a; Sherkat 2002; Wedow et al. 2017). Various theories have been set forth for this phenomenon of religion disproportionately appealing to the disenfranchised, mostly centered on material and/or social deprivation and hardship and the spiritual, social, and psychological compensation religion provides (Du Bois 1903; Davis 1971; Glock 1964; Hoffmann and Bartkowski 2008; Schnabel 2020; Stark and Bainbridge 1987). Although we generally know that women, Black Americans, and those with less education are typically more religious—and sexual minorities are *less* religious—than their more privileged counterparts, we know less about whether and how these factors intersect with one another in shaping religious belonging, behaving, and believing.

It is possible that those who are disadvantaged on more statuses will be more religious, but—in light of intersectionality theory and the complexity of inequality—we cannot just expect simple additive patterns that would allow us to just add up the number of a person's disadvantaged statuses to predict their level of religiosity or expected beliefs. In other words, we cannot just assume that Black–white gaps in religion will be exactly the same for women and men, or that the relationship between education and religion will be the same for sexual minorities and heterosexuals. Therefore, to get a better picture of the complexity of American religion on standard measures of religious belonging, behaving, and believing, we need to explore variation within status characteristics and examine how these characteristics intersect with one another.

Leveraging unique data with an exceptionally large sample, this study provides the first comprehensive snapshot of religious belonging, behaving, and believing across configurations of what are arguably the "core" axes of inequality: gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality (Schnabel 2018b). Exploring religion across 40 unique configurations of intersecting identities (e.g., one is non-Latina Black heterosexual college-educated women), I show (1) how structural disadvantage often but not always predicts greater religious belonging, behaving, and believing; (2) when and why certain statuses predict different levels and types of religion and spirituality; (3) how status characteristics intersect with one another to yield patterns that vary not only across but also within groups; and (4) how the patterns vary across different types of religion measures. Illustrating this variation, whereas Black women tend to be at the highest levels across measures, different subsets of Black women are at the top of different aspects of religion. For example, Black heterosexual women with less than a college degree report the most religious salience and affiliation, as well as the highest levels of belief in God and the inspiration of scripture. Black heterosexual women with a college degree, however, are the most involved in organized religion, and Black sexual minority women with a college degree meditate more frequently than any other group considered.

By presenting levels of religious belonging, behaving, and believing across social status configurations in the contemporary United States, this study provides a more complex and complete picture of American religion and spirituality at the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. In response to the helpful comments of a reviewer who said they "fundamentally disagree" with using empirical quantitative survey methods to measure religious belonging, behaving, and believing, I would like to acknowledge that: (1) this is a quantitative research note that uses survey data, (2) empirical research cannot perfectly measure the world, and (3) surveys cannot capture all the aspects, particularities, and complexities of people's lives. I would also like to highlight that Christianity is the predominant religion in the United States and that standard survey measures of

religion are often better at measuring monotheistic and congregation-focused religiosity than other forms of religion.

Despite limitations, this study will be the first to use nationally representative data to describe religious belonging, behaving, and believing across configurations of the "core" axes of inequality. I find that religiosity varies not only between groups but also within groups in ways that point to the complexity of inequality and religion in the United States.

1. Data, Measures, and Methods

1.1. Data

This study uses data from the 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study (RLS). The RLS data—with a very large sample size (over thirty-five-thousand respondents) and the needed social status characteristics and religion measures—provide a unique opportunity to examine standard measures of religion across various configurations of social status characteristics. These data come from phone interviews commissioned by the Pew Research Center and provide a large population-based sample of the American public. The survey was conducted from 4 June to 20 September 2014 in English and Spanish (3.8% of all interviewers were conducted in Spanish). Data collection was divided among three research firms: Abt SRBI, Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI), and Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS). Abt SRBI was the lead research firm, coordinating sampling and data collection. The national survey employed a dual-frame (cellphone and landline) random-digit dialing (RDD) approach to yield a nationally representative sample, with approximately 60% of the interviews conducted on cellphones and 40% on landlines. Overall, the response rate (AAPOR3) was 10.2% for the cellphone sample and 11.1% for the landline sample.

The full sample included 35,071 respondents, and this study focuses on the 33,479 cases with complete information on all the social status characteristics (gender, race and ethnicity, education, and sexual orientation). The sample sizes for analyses of individual measures of religious belonging, behaving, and believing vary by the availability of the relevant outcome measure.

1.2. Measures

1.2.1. Social Status Characteristics

This study explores religion across the following social status characteristics: gender (women and men), race and ethnicity (non-Latinx white, non-Latinx Black, non-Latinx Asian, non-Latinx other race and multiracial, and Latinx), class (less than a BA and BA or more education), and sexual orientation (heterosexual and LGB). I recognize that there are other ways to conceptualize and measure these social status characteristics, and I use the measures available in the dataset. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the social status characteristics individually and in combination with one another. Please note the relatively small size of some combinations of status characteristics.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of status characteristics.

Status Characteristics and Configurations	Frequency	Percentage
Men	16,720	49.9
Women	16,759	50.1
Non-Latinx White	24,417	72.9
Non-Latinx Black	3281	9.8
Non-Latinx Asian	891	2.7
Non-Latinx Other Race/Multiracial	1452	4.3
Latinx	3438	10.3
Less than a BA	19,266	57.6
BA or More Education	14,213	42.5

Table 1. *Cont.*

Status Characteristics and Configurations	Frequency	Percentage
Heterosexual	31,896	95.3
LGB	1583	4.7
White Heterosexual Men with a BA	5714	17.1
Black Heterosexual Men with a BA	393	1.2
Asian Heterosexual Men with a BA	356	1.1
Other Race/Multiracial Heterosexual Men with a BA	261	0.8
Latino Heterosexual Men with a BA	415	1.2
White LGB Men with a BA	279	0.8
Black LGB Men with a BA	25	0.1
Asian LGB Men with a BA	21	0.1
Other Race/Multiracial LGB Men with a BA	13	0.04
Latino LGB Men with a BA	30	0.1
White Heterosexual Men without a BA	5963	17.8
Black Heterosexual Men without a BA	1047	3.1
Asian Heterosexual Men without a BA	150	0.5
Other Race/Multiracial Heterosexual Men without a BA	428	1.3
Latino Heterosexual Men without a BA	1248	3.7
White LGB Men without a BA	244	0.7
Black LGB Men without a BA	35	0.1
Asian LGB Men without a BA	10	0.03
Other Race/Multiracial LGB Men without a BA	22	0.1
Latino LGB Men without a BA	66	0.2
White Heterosexual Women with a BA	5035	15.0
Black Heterosexual Women with a BA	536	1.6
Asian Heterosexual Women with a BA	206	0.6
Other Race/Multiracial Heterosexual Women with a BA	218	0.7
Latino Heterosexual Women with a BA	393	1.2
White LGB Women with a BA	235	0.7
Black LGB Women with a BA	25	0.1
Asian LGB Women with a BA	11	0.03
Other Race/Multiracial LGB Women with a BA	22	0.1
Latino LGB Women with a BA	25	0.1
White Heterosexual Women without a BA	6642	19.8
Black Heterosexual Women without a BA	1142	3.4
Asian Heterosexual Women without a BA	125	0.4
Other Race/Multiracial Heterosexual Women without a BA	449	1.3
Latino Heterosexual Women without a BA	1175	3.5
White LGB Women without a BA	305	0.9
Black LGB Women without a BA	78	0.2
Asian LGB Women without a BA	12	0.04
Other Race/Multiracial LGB Women without a BA	39	0.1
Latino LGB Women without a BA	86	0.3

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study (N = 33,479). Note: Limited to cases with complete information on gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

Class can be measured in various ways. The data include both an income measure and an education measure. I opted to use the education measure for theoretical and empirical reasons. Theoretically, a college degree provides a relatively clear social class divide, distinguishing the working from the middle and upper classes. Empirically, income had exponentially more missing data than education, and income was fielded in categories that make it more difficult to clearly separate the working class from middle and upper classes. Due to the relatively small size of the sexual minority groups, I combine lesbian/gay and bisexual respondents into a single LGB sexual minority category.

1.2.2. Religious Belonging, Behaving, and Believing

This study examines eight key measures of religious belonging, behaving, and believing (see Table 2). First is a measure of religious salience, which asked respondents whether they consider religion not at all important = 0, not too important = 1, somewhat important = 2, or very important = 3 in their lives. Next are measures of religious affiliation (any affiliation = 1) and membership in a local congregation (membership = 1).

Table 2. Metrics and descriptive statistics for religion measures.

Measures	Metric	N [a]	Mean/Proportion	SD	Range
Religious Salience	Religion Not at All Important = 0 to Very Important = 3	33,259	2.19	1.03	0–3
Religious Affiliation	Religiously Affiliated = 1	33,288	0.78		
Congregational Membership	Member of a Local Congregation = 1	33,397	0.53		
Attendance Frequency	Never = 0 to More than Once a Week = 5	33,334	2.60	1.64	0–5
Prayer Frequency	Never = 0 to Several Times a Day = 6	33,183	3.98	2.21	0–6
Meditation Frequency	Never = 0 to At Least Once a Week = 4	32,978	2.18	1.77	0–4
Belief in God	Believe in God or Universal Spirit = 1	32,681	0.90		
Word of God	Believe Relevant Scripture [b] is Word of God [c] = 1	31,089	0.62		

[a] Cases without information or with responses that did not fit the given categories were excluded. [b] The scripture respondents were asked about (e.g., Bible, Torah, Koran) was determined by their religious affiliation. [c] "Word of God" does not necessarily mean literal/inerrant.

Following the binary measures of religious belonging are ordered measures of religious and spiritual practice, measuring how frequently respondents attend religious services aside from weddings and funerals (never = 0, seldom = 1, a few times a year = 2, once or twice a month = 3, once a week = 4, and more than once a week = 5), pray outside of religious services (never = 0, seldom = 1, a few times a month = 2, once a week = 3, a few times a week = 4, once a day = 5, and several times a day = 6), and meditate (never = 0, seldom = 1, several times a year = 2, once or twice a month = 3, and at least once a week = 4).

The last two items are belief questions about God ("Do you believe in God or a universal spirit?" Yes = 1) and scriptures ((Bible/Torah/Koran/Holy Scripture inserted based on respondents' religious affiliation) is the word of God = 1 vs. is a book written by men and is not the word of God = 0).

1.2.3. Analytic Strategy

This study will first report results from regression models including all the social status characteristics predicting each of the eight religion measures. I use logistic regression for dichotomous outcomes and OLS for ordered outcomes (additional analyses with ordinal logistic regression yielded substantively equivalent results). I will then present proportions (for dichotomous outcomes) and means (for ordered outcomes) for each of the religion items across all configurations of the social status characteristics.

2. Results

Much research on group differences in religion focuses on one group difference at a time. This study focuses on gender, race, ethnicity, class (as measured by education), and sexual orientation differences alongside and in interaction with one another. Before examining religion across the range of possible configurations of status characteristics, let's first look at main effects for group differences. Table 3 presents group differences in religious belonging, behaving, and believing in models that include each of the characteristics (but do not interact them with one another). We will consider each measure individually, but before we do I will highlight a couple of key patterns. Across all measures, women score higher than men, and non-Latinx Black Americans higher than non-Latinx white Americans. Sexual minorities report lower levels of religious belonging, behaving, and believing than heterosexuals across measures except for the one that is not necessarily tied to organized religion (and is perhaps more spiritual than religious): meditation.

Table 3. Status characteristics and religious belonging, behaving, and believing.

	Salience [a]	Affiliation [b]	Congregation Membership [b]	Attendance Frequency [a]	Prayer Frequency [a]	Meditation Frequency [a]	Belief in God [b]	Scripture Is Word of God [b]
Woman	0.28 ***	0.47 ***	0.44 ***	0.33 ***	0.88 ***	0.26 ***	0.77 ***	0.46 ***
	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Race and Ethnicity (Reference: Non-Latinx White)								
Black	0.47 ***	0.38 ***	0.54 ***	0.63 ***	0.99 ***	0.60 ***	1.62 ***	1.01 ***
	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.12)	(0.05)
Asian	−0.13 ***	−0.24 **	−0.78 ***	−0.13 *	−0.41 ***	−0.08	−0.34 ***	−0.35 ***
	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.07)
Other/Multiracial	0.09 ***	−0.12	−0.19 ***	0.02	0.36 ***	0.35 ***	0.21 *	0.05
	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.10)	(0.06)
Latinx	0.15 ***	0.04	−0.31 ***	0.18 ***	0.20 ***	0.42 ***	0.37 ***	0.15 ***
	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.04)
Less than BA	0.20 ***	0.13 ***	−0.19 ***	−0.06 ***	0.35 ***	−0.16 ***	0.69 ***	0.76***
	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.03)
LGB	−0.45 ***	−0.91 ***	−0.90 ***	−0.73 ***	−0.81 ***	0.02	−0.91 ***	−1.15 ***
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Constant	1.90	1.02	0.05	2.43	3.25	2.02	1.45	−0.17
N	33,259	33,288	33,397	33,334	33,183	32,978	32,681	31,089

[a] OLS used for ordered outcomes. [b] Logistic regression used for binary outcomes. Standard errors in parentheses. Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Having noted some of the broad overarching patterns across outcomes, let's consider them one at a time. First looking at religious salience, a general measure of religiousness, we see that most disadvantaged groups are more religious than their more privileged counterparts. However, sexual minorities report less religious salience than heterosexuals, and Asian Americans less religious salience than non-Latinx whites. These patterns are as might be expected: sexual minorities report that something that frequently marginalizes them is not particularly important in their lives, and Asian Americans, who are less frequently tied to the dominant religious institution (i.e., Christianity) than other racial groups, also report religion being less important in their lives.

Shifting to two binary measures of religious belonging—affiliation and congregational membership—we see patterns that in some ways parallel those for salience but with some differences. Whereas people in the other/multiracial and Latinx categories reported more religious salience, they do not differ significantly from whites on the likelihood of identifying with a religion and are significantly *less* likely to be members of a local congregation. And while people with less than a bachelor's degree are more likely to identify with a religion, it is those with a bachelor's degree who are more likely to actually be members of a local congregation. This pattern of different styles of religion by education will show up again: those with more education—who are more civically engaged generally—are more actively engaged in congregational life at the same time that those with less education score higher on most other religion measures.

Turning now to our measures of religious practice, we see patterns consistent with what we have seen so far. Women and Black Americans continue to consistently score higher than their counterparts on these measures. Women and Black Americans are joined by Latinx Americans in this pattern of consistently more frequent religious and spiritual practice. The patterns for other racial groups are more varied, however. Asian Americans continue to score lower on religion measures, except that they do not meditate any less frequently than whites. People in the other/multiracial category do not attend services any more frequently than whites but do pray and meditate more frequently. Those with more education attend services and meditate more frequently than those with less education. Those with less education, however, pray more frequently. Whereas sexual minorities are less religious than heterosexuals on most measures, they do not meditate any less frequently than heterosexuals.

Finally, we come to two belief measures: belief in God and in scriptural inspiration. Here we see some of the strongest patterns by education and sexual orientation: those with less education and heterosexuals hold substantially more traditional views on these beliefs than those with a college degree and sexual minorities. Women, Black Americans, and Latinx Americans are also more traditional in their beliefs than their more structurally-advantaged counterparts. Asian Americans are less likely to believe in God or scriptural inspiration than whites. Those in the other/multiracial category are more likely to believe in God, but their views on scriptural inspiration do not significantly differ from those of whites.

Overall, disadvantaged groups besides sexual minorities and Asian Americans do tend to score higher on these religion measures, but there's variation for specific aspects of religion. For example, whereas those with less education report more religious salience, are more likely to affiliate with a religion, pray more frequently, and hold more traditional beliefs, those with a college degree are more actively engaged in religious congregations and also meditate more frequently. And whereas Latinx Americans are more religious than non-Latinx whites on most measures, they are no more likely to be affiliated with a religion and are *less* likely to be members of a local congregation.

Having seen the main effects for the social status characteristics across measures of religious belonging, behaving, and believing, we now turn to how these characteristics intersect with one another to create different status configurations with potentially varying implications for religion. Figure 1 presents religious salience across the 40 possible configurations of the status characteristics. Here, we see a pattern that will repeat again and again: Black women are at the top in terms of religious belonging, behaving, and believing. Black heterosexual women without a BA report the highest level of religious salience, followed by Black heterosexual women with a BA.

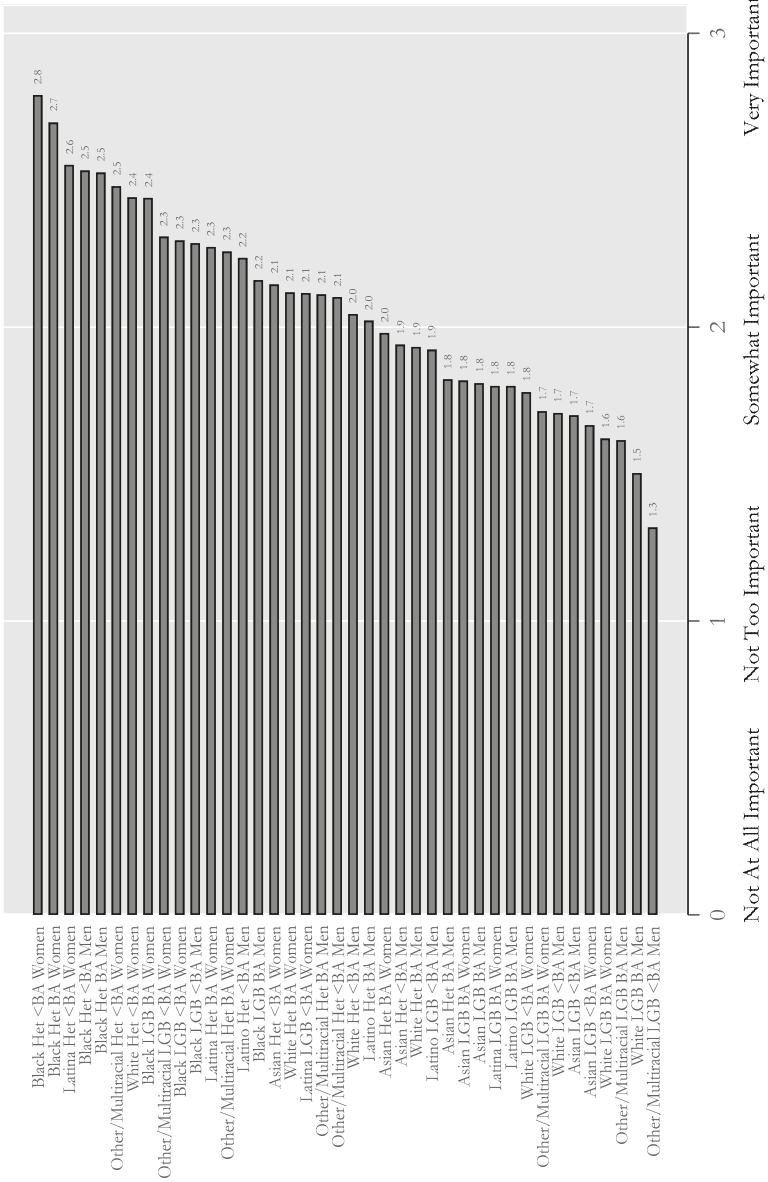

Figure 1. Religious salience across configurations of status characteristics, Religious Landscape Study (RLS) (N = 33,259).

Looking from the top to the bottom of Figure 1, we see a general pattern where most of the groups at the top of the chart are heterosexuals whereas most of the groups at the bottom are sexual minorities. We get to the eighth group from the top before we see the first sexual minority group (Black sexual minority women with a bachelor's degree) and the 14th group from the bottom before we see the first heterosexual group (Asian heterosexual men with a bachelor's degree). In fact, it is almost entirely Black sexual minorities who are the sexual minority groups in the upper half of the figure. Therefore, while for most groups being a sexual minority is linked to particularly low levels of religious salience, that is not so much the case for Black Americans (among whom sexual minorities continue to report relatively high levels of religious salience). Likewise, it is almost all women toward the very top of the figure, but there are also groups of Black men toward the top as well. It appears, therefore, that being Black can to some extent overcome what would typically be characteristics (being a sexual minority and being a man) that would be linked to being on the lower half of the figure. Likewise, being a woman is typically linked to being in the upper half of the figure, but being a sexual minority—who is not Black—will overcome the tendency for women to be on the upper end of religious salience. Among whites, it appears other factors become particularly important dividing lines for how religious people say they are: white heterosexual women without a college degree are quite religious but white sexual minority men with a college degree are quite secular.

Turning now to religious affiliation in Figure 2, we primarily see groups of women at the top. However, Black heterosexual men with a bachelor's degree and, to a lesser extent, Black heterosexual men without a bachelor's degree are also among the groups most likely to have a religious affiliation. Overall, groups of gay and bisexual men and, to a lesser extent, lesbian and bisexual women are those least likely to report a religious affiliation. Similar to the patterns for religious salience, it is not until we get to the 14th group from the bottom of the figure before we see our first heterosexual group (again, it is Asian heterosexual men). Overall, we see that being Black seems to overshadow other identities in terms of religiousness, while we see more variation on other characteristics among other racial and ethnic groups, including Asians, Latinxs, whites, and those in the multi/other race category.

Shifting from affiliation to congregational membership, we see similar overall patterns, but while those without a college degree trended toward the top on the affiliation figure, it is those with a college degree that trend upward here. Illustratively, it is Black heterosexual women with a college degree who are most likely to be members of a local congregation as shown in Figure 3. Perhaps surprisingly, Black sexual minority women with a BA are more likely than every group except for heterosexual Black women to be members of a local congregation. Black sexual minority men with a BA are also toward the top of congregational membership—whereas being a sexual minority predicts a very low likelihood of membership for most Americans, sexual minority Black Americans with a college degree still exhibit very high levels of membership. In fact, Black sexual minority men with a BA are just as likely to be members as are Black heterosexual men without a BA. For no other racial or ethnic group are sexual minorities nearly so likely to be members of a congregation.

Figure 4 presents the patterns for our first measure of religious behavior: religious service attendance. We see that, once again, Black women are at the top: Black heterosexual women with and without a bachelor's degree attend more frequently than any other group. Of the eight groups who attend most frequently, all are Black and Latina. Two of these groups are sexual minorities: both women and men Black sexual minorities with college degrees. Whereas Black sexual minorities with college degrees were among some of the most frequently attending groups, all 16 of the groups who attend least frequently are sexual minorities. There is a clearly intersectional phenomenon occurring at the intersection of sexual orientation, race, and education so that while most sexual minorities rarely attend services, sexual minority Black Americans with college degrees, both women and men, still frequently attend religious services. This pattern does not extend to Black sexual minorities with less education, however: Black sexual minority men with a BA are among those who attend most frequently, but Black sexual minority men without a BA are among those who attend least frequently.

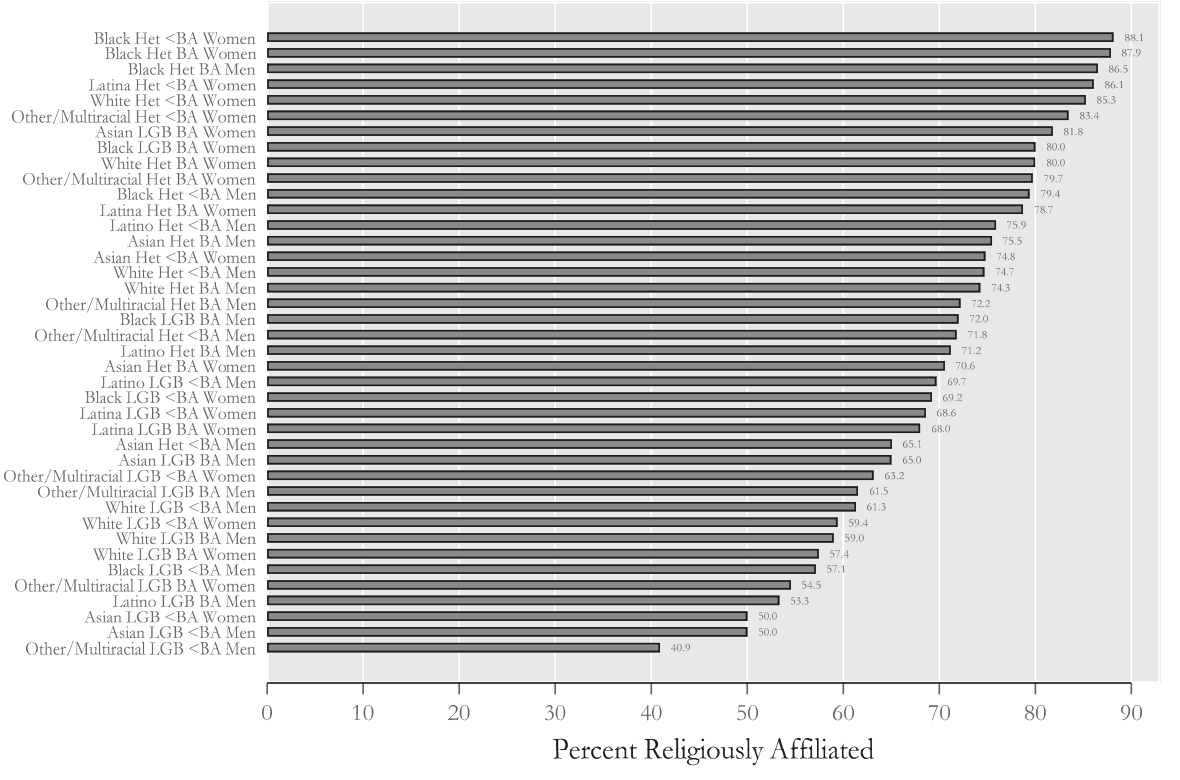

Figure 2. Religious affiliation across configurations of status characteristics, RLS (N = 33,288).

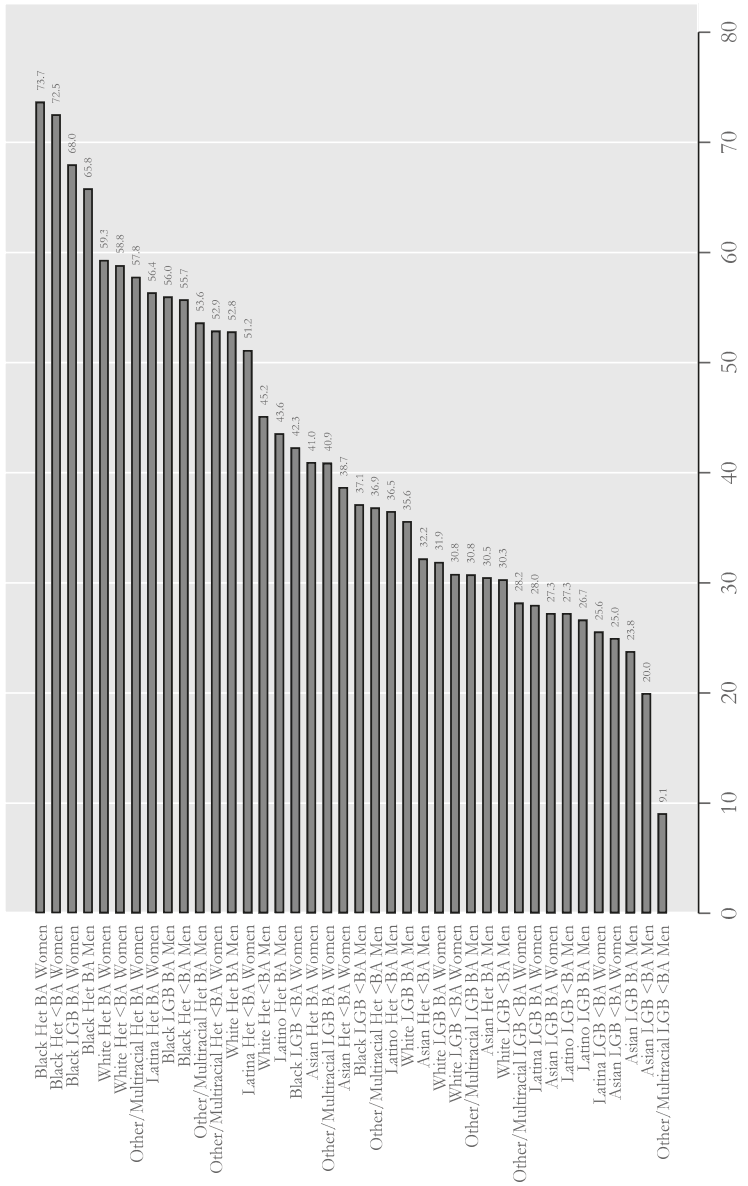

Figure 3. Membership in local congregations across configurations of status characteristics, RLS (N = 33,397).

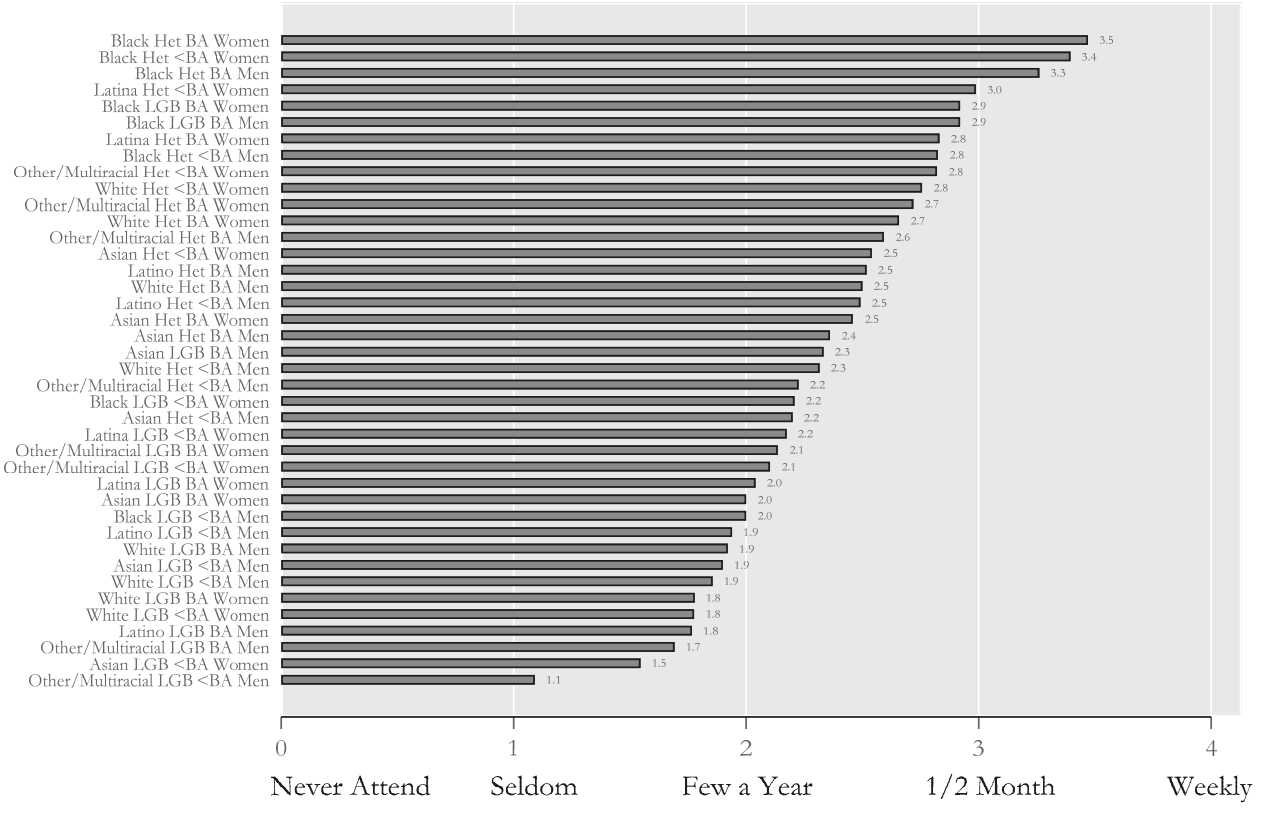

Figure 4. Religious service attendance frequency across configurations of status characteristics, RLS (N = 33,334).

Figure 5 presents patterns for prayer frequency, and Black women are again at the top. However, prayer frequency differs from attendance frequency in a few ways. First, the patterns for sexual orientation differ, with groups of sexual minorities and heterosexuals more interspersed in terms of prayer frequency. In fact, Black sexual minority women with a college degree pray more frequently than everyone but Black heterosexual women and other/multiracial women with less than a college degree. Therefore, it appears that while sexual minorities—except for Black sexual minorities with a college degree—are less likely to be involved in organized religion, they still pray fairly frequently and are not consistently non-religious and non-spiritual. Gender is a key divide for prayer frequency, with women making up 10 of the 12 groups who pray most frequently but only two of the 12 groups who pray least frequently. Whereas groups with a BA were more toward the top on attendance frequency, that is not the case for prayer frequency.

For meditation, a measure more of lived religion and spirituality distinct from organized religion in the U.S., there are several sexual minority groups at the top: notably, it is again Black women, here, sexual minority Black women with a BA, at the top. In fact, Figure 6 shows that five of the six groups who meditate most frequently are sexual minorities. This pattern for meditation indicates that sexual minorities, like other structurally-disadvantaged groups, are also looking for meaning and psychological wellbeing in their daily lives. However, organized religion, by further marginalizing rather than welcoming sexual minorities, has failed to provide community and meaning-making opportunities to a group who might otherwise find them particularly meaningful. Similar to the patterns for prayer, meditation frequency is clearly gendered, with many (but not all) groups on the higher end of meditation frequency being women (and especially women with college degrees).

Next, we turn to two belief measures: belief in God and scriptural inspiration. Figure 7 shows that Black women without and with a BA are the two groups most likely to believe in God, with almost universal belief in God. And Black sexual minority women without a college degree are more likely to believe in God than everyone but heterosexual Black women and heterosexual Latina women without a college degree. Whereas many groups demonstrate almost universal belief in God (or a universal spirit), this particularly high level of belief is largely restricted to racial and ethnic minorities. Among whites, women without a college degree are the only group with over 90% belief in God. Notably, most of the groups least likely to believe in God are sexual minorities. Of the ten groups least likely to believe in God, the only two heterosexual groups are Asian men with and without a college degree. As Table 1 illustrated, there is an overall trend of those with a bachelor's degree being less likely to believe in God, and we do see that seven of the ten groups most likely to believe in God have less than a college degree; nevertheless, Black Americans exhibit very high levels of belief in God even if they have a college degree—and even if they are sexual minorities.

Finally, we see in Figure 8 that Black women are again at the top of belief in scriptural inspiration, with nine in ten Black heterosexual women without a college degree, and four in five of those with a college degree, believing scripture is the word of God. Black Americans make up seven of the 10 groups who are most likely to believe scripture is the word of God. Notably, all 12 of the groups least likely to believe scripture is the word of God are sexual minorities, who have frequently been condemned via particular literalist interpretations of scripture. Moreover, all six of the groups least likely to believe in literalism are sexual minorities with college degrees. Likewise, most of the groups who are most likely to believe scripture is the word of God have less than a college education, except for Black Americans, including Black sexual minorities, who are likely to believe scripture is the word of God even if they have a college degree.

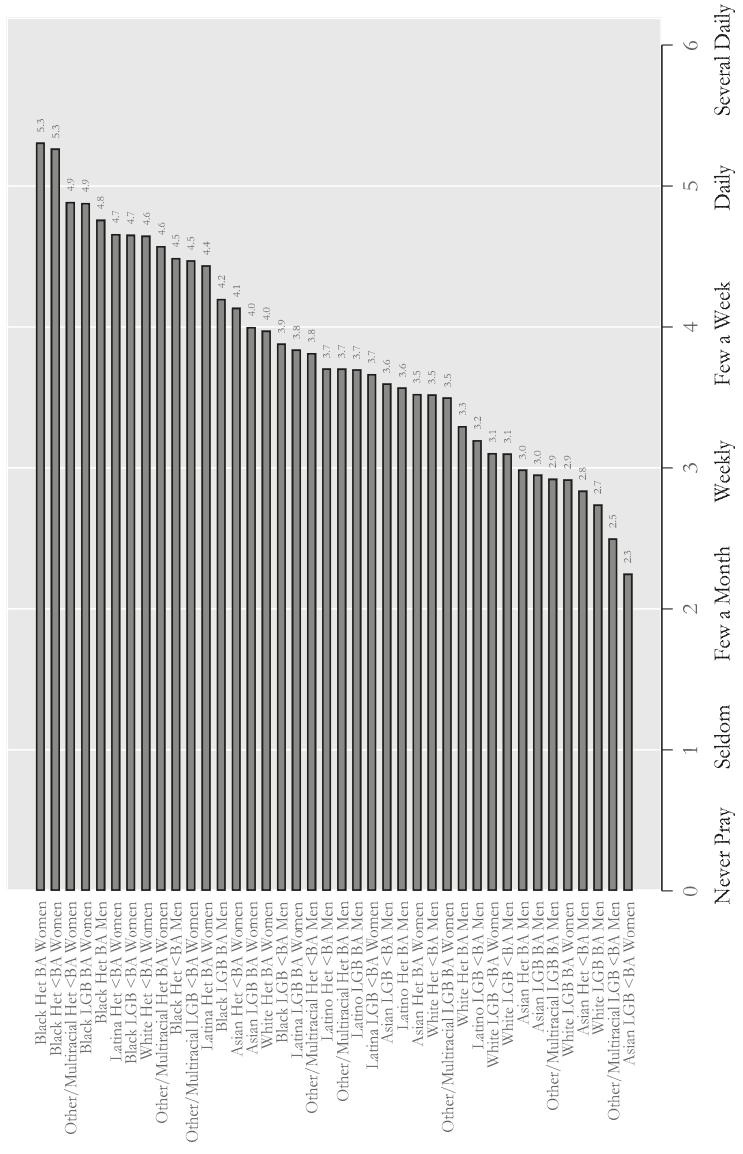

Figure 5. Prayer frequency across configurations of status characteristics, RLS (N = 33,183).

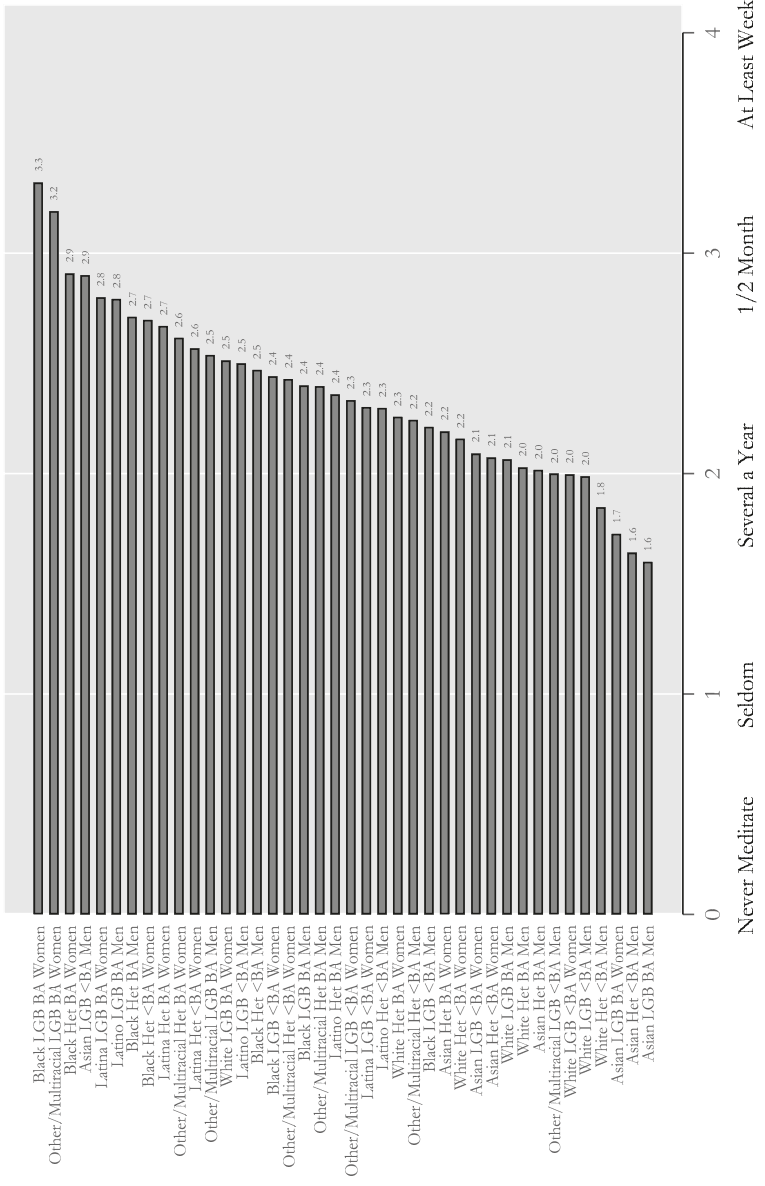

Figure 6. Meditation frequency across configurations of status characteristics, RLS (N = 32,978).

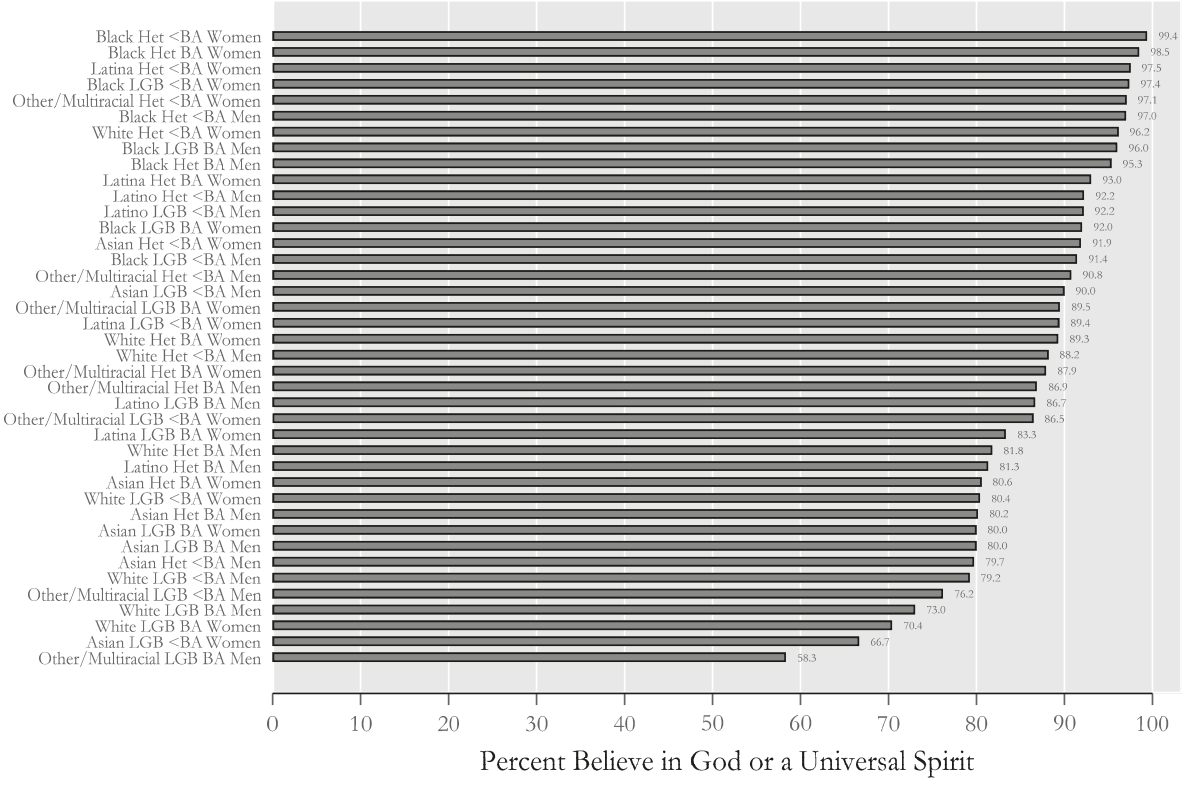

Figure 7. Belief in God or universal spirit across configurations of status characteristics, RLS (N = 32,681).

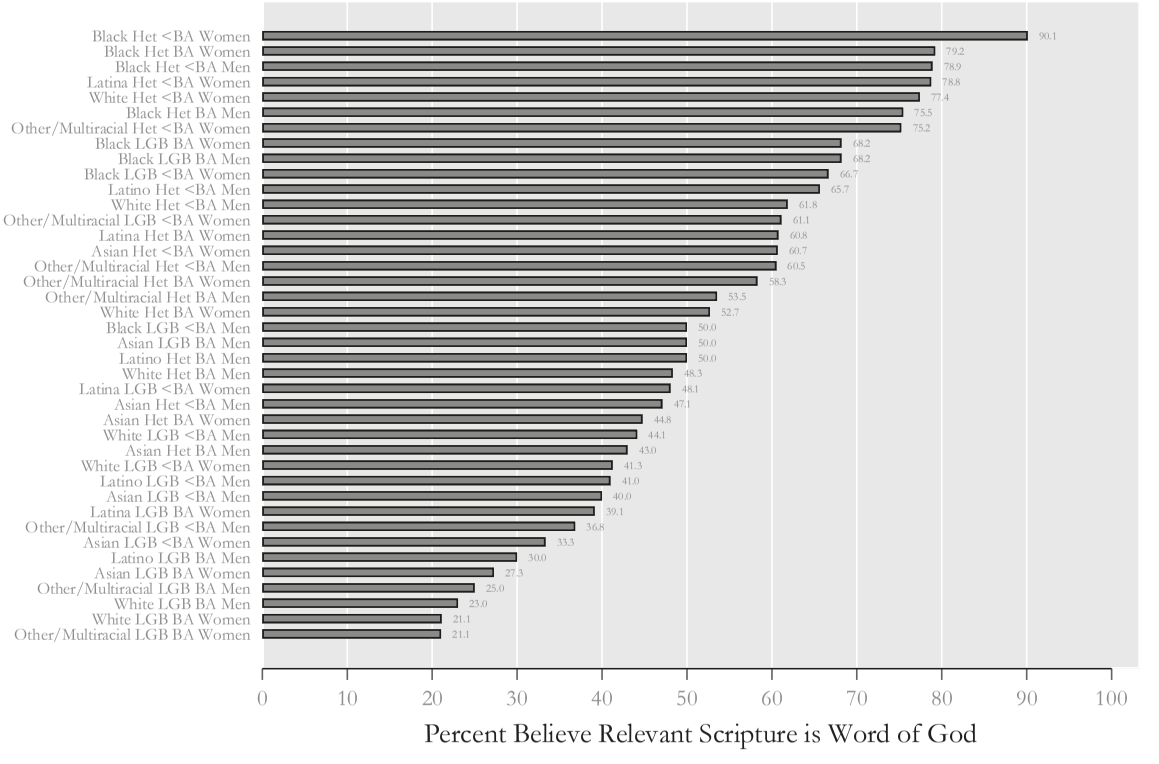

Figure 8. Belief in scripture as word of God across configurations of status characteristics, RLS (N = 31,089).

Analyses of five additional religion measures (see Figures A1–A5 in Appendix A) confirm the patterns for the eight primary measures: Black women are at the top of participating in religious small groups, scripture reading frequency, believing religious teachings are more important than everything else in determining right and wrong, believing in heaven, and believing in hell. Consistent with the patterns presented earlier, while most sexual minorities tend to be on the lower end of these additional religion measures, Black sexual minorities tend to be toward the top.

3. Discussion

Much research considers group differences in religious belonging, behaving, and/or believing by gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexuality. This study considered all these factors in tandem, providing a novel overview of inequality and religion in the United States across 40 unique configurations of social status characteristics. Across all measures of religious belonging, behaving, and believing considered, Black women are at the top—but, depending on the measure, it is different subsets of Black women at the top. Although structurally-disadvantaged groups often score higher on religious belonging, behaving, and believing, sexual minorities typically score lower, especially on measures related to organized religion and traditional beliefs. They do not meditate less frequently than heterosexuals, however, and there seems to be something unique to the intersection of race, class, and sexuality that makes it so that sexual minority Black Americans, and especially those with a college degree, are among the most religious Americans. In fact, it is sexual minority Black women who meditate most frequently in the United States. In short, race appears to overpower other factors among Black Americans, who tend to be highly religious regardless of their other characteristics. Other racial and ethnic groups, however, tend to vary more within themselves depending on other characteristics like gender, class, and sexuality.

The goal of this study was to describe levels of religiosity across standard measures of belonging, behaving, and believing across social status characteristics, considering whether these characteristics intersect to produce multiplicative rather than just additive patterns in religiosity. For example, do gender differences in religiosity vary across racial and ethnic groups? The results demonstrated intersecting rather than just additive group differences in religiosity, with perhaps the clearest example being sexual orientation differences in religiosity. Whereas white sexual minorities are much less religious than white heterosexuals, Black sexual minorities are still comparatively religious. This pattern may be surprising given that Black Americans tend to be especially likely to oppose same-sex relationships.[1]

[1] Religion helps explain why Black Americans have comparatively negative attitudes toward same-sex relationships: it is because they tend to be particularly religious (Schnabel 2018b; Sherkat et al. 2010) and live in particularly religious areas (Adamczyk et al. 2016).

This study's purpose was to describe broad patterns across many groups and measures, but I will provide some theoretically informed speculation for the pattern of comparatively high religiosity among Black sexual minorities. One possibility is the semi-involuntary nature of the church in the Black community and the potential that sexual minorities would risk further marginalization from their communities for being both sexual minorities and not involved in the church (Ellison and Sherkat 1995). A complementary possibility, one that is more about seeking positives than avoiding negatives, is that there are certain aspects of the Black Church that could be particularly appealing to sexual minorities. For example, sexual minorities tend to be especially common and prominent in gospel music and Black church choirs (Heilbut 2012; Jones 2016). In fact, Black churches have been criticized for "hypocrisy in opposing same-sex marriage while relying on gay people for much of the sacred music of the Black church" (Freedman 2012, p. 14). Additionally, Black churches tend to have especially strong, connected, and pro-social communities, and when sexual minorities are religious, they tend to emphasize interconnectedness and pro-social community (Halkitis et al. 2009). Moreover, sexual minorities appear to be drawn to and benefit from psychological compensation from religion and spirituality, and Black churches may be particularly effective at promoting social and psychological benefits for those facing structural disadvantages and hardships in their daily lives (Jeffries et al. 2008; Pitt 2010; Schnabel 2020). Finally, whereas Black churches often remain theologically conservative on issues like same-sex relationships, they still tend to promote the progressive politics and Democratic voting favored by sexual minorities (Schnabel 2018b).

By presenting levels of religious belonging, behaving, and believing across configurations of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality in the contemporary United States, this study provided a more complex and complete picture of American religion.[2] Yes, disadvantaged groups besides sexual minorities tend to be more religious and more likely to hold traditional religious beliefs, but the complexity of inequality and religion in the United States produces variation across configurations of social status characteristics and measures of religious belonging, behaving, and believing. Specifically, how religious people are depends on complex interactions of all their status characteristics so that, for example, sexual orientation differences in religiosity are comparatively smaller among Black Americans than among other groups. The results also demonstrated variation across different aspects of religion, with groups who are typically less religious (e.g., sexual minorities and those with more education) demonstrating comparatively higher levels of some aspects of religion and spirituality (e.g., meditation).

This study highlights the importance of intersectional approaches in the study of religion, demonstrating the need to look within, rather than just across, social status characteristics to understand American religion and spirituality.

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Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

[2] At least insofar as American religion can be measured with surveys without substantial oversamples of religious minorities. Because most religious Americans are Christian, on average patterns presented for American religion are largely Christian patterns.

Appendix A

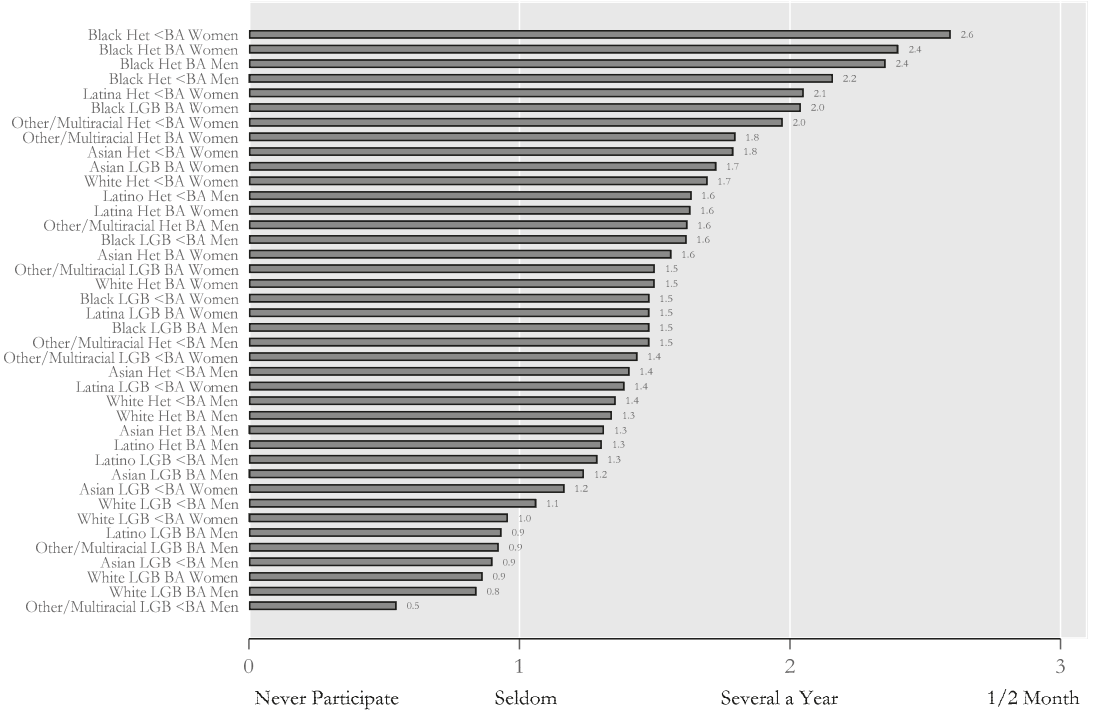

Figure A1. Religious small group participation (prayer groups, scripture study groups, etc.), RLS (N = 33,298).

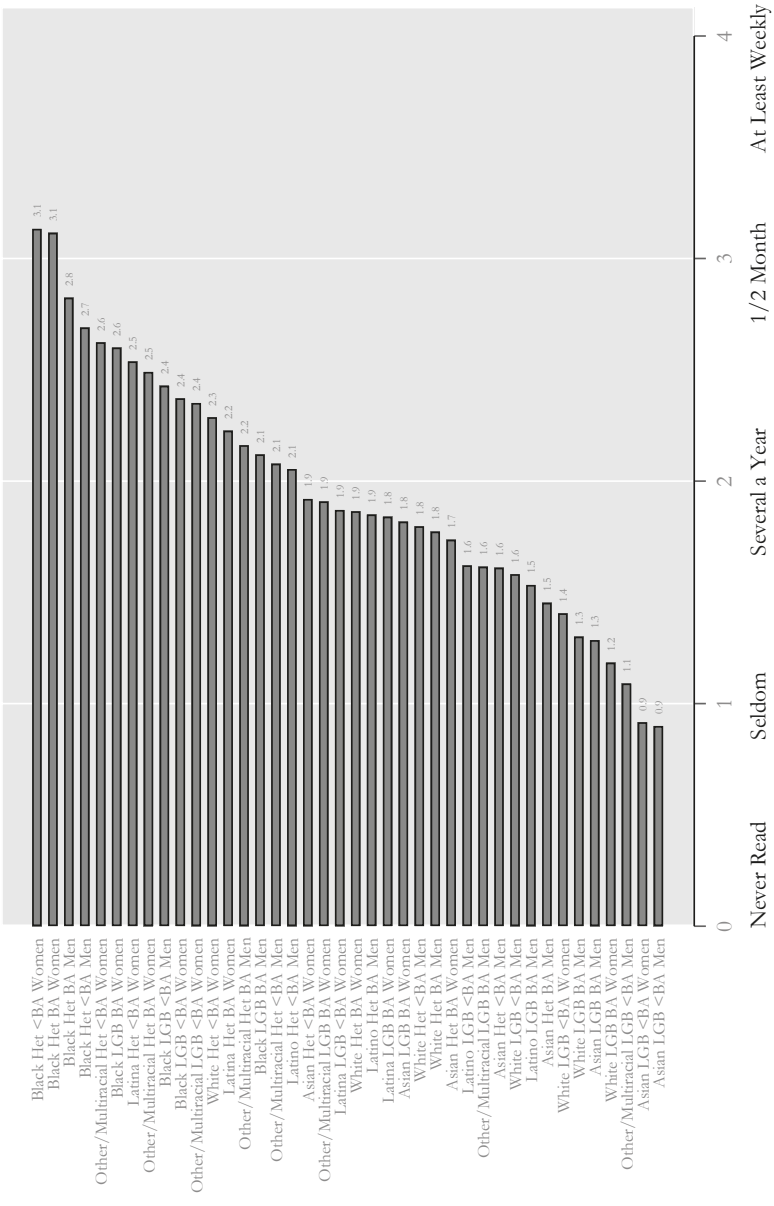

Figure A2. Scripture reading frequency, RLS (N = 33,258).

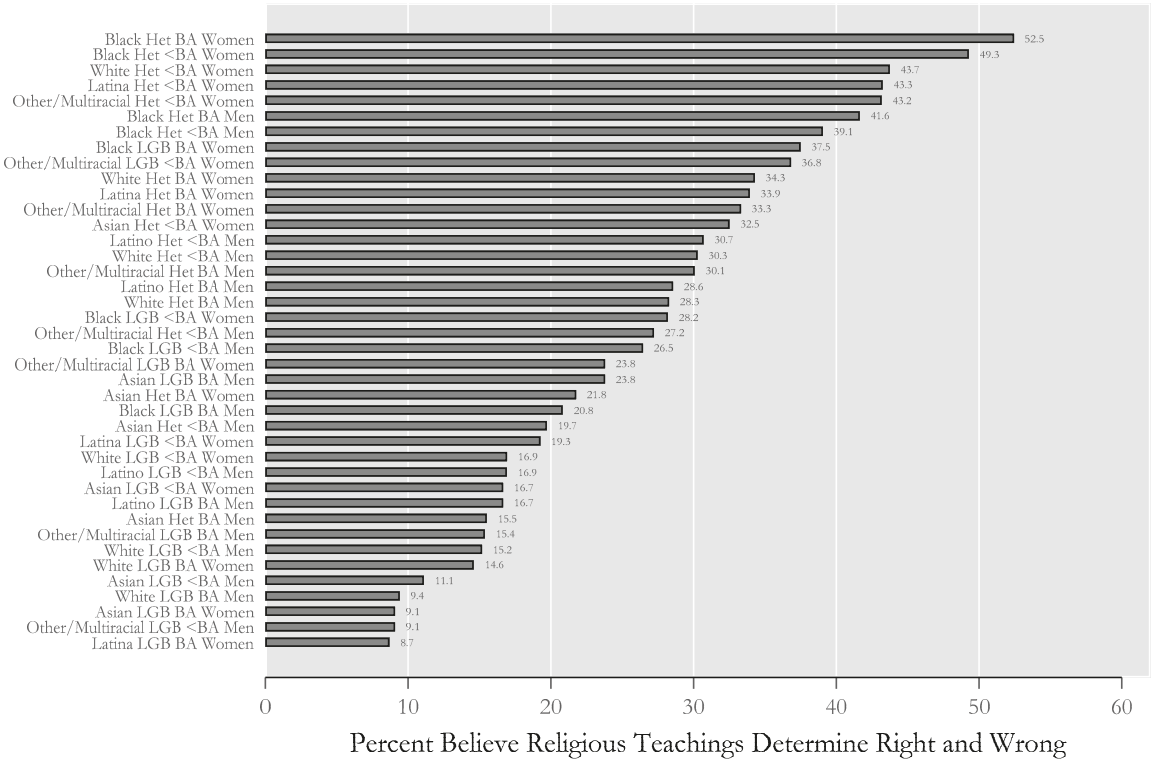

Figure A3. Religious teachings and beliefs more important than philosophy and reason, practical experience and common sense, and scientific information in determining right and wrong, RLS (N = 32,578).

Figure A4. Belief in Heaven, *RLS* (N = 30,930).

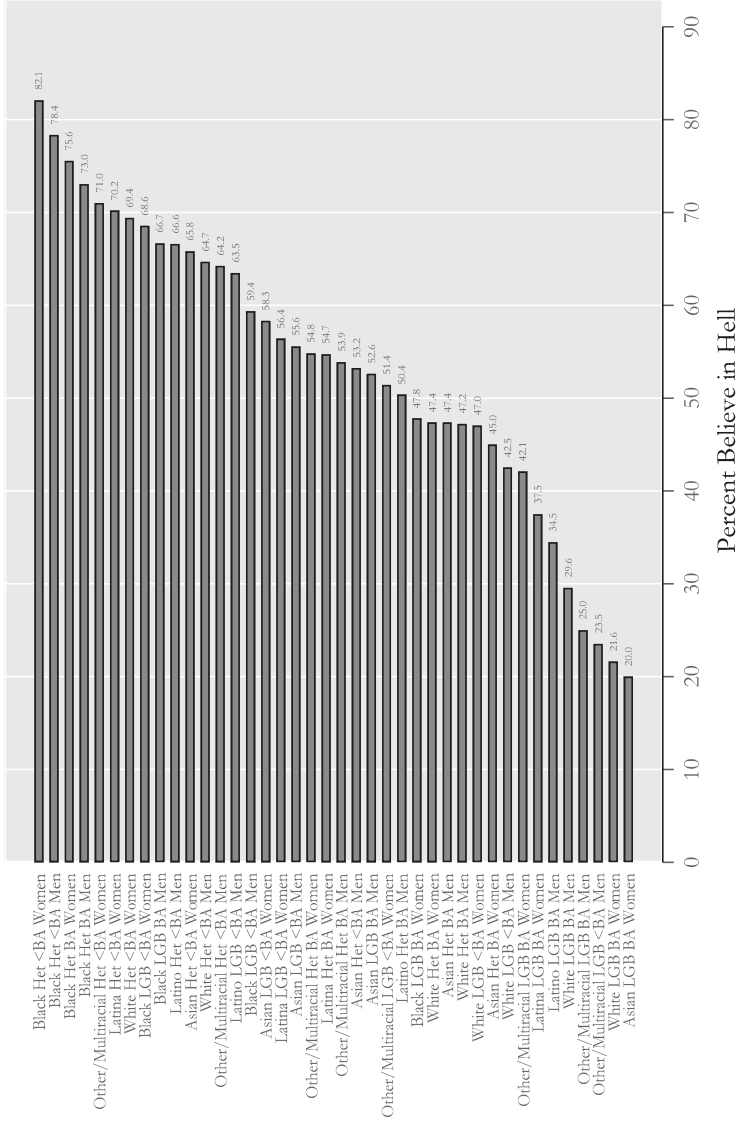

Figure A5. Belief in Hell, RLS (N = 30,672).

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