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Religious Resources or Differential Returns? Early Religious Socialization and Declining Attendance in Emerging Adulthood

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The transition from adolescence into emerging adulthood is usually accompanied by a decline in religious participation. This article examines why such decline occurs at different rates across major Christian traditions and whether this variation can be explained by early socialization factors. Using data from waves 1 and 3 of the National Study of Youth and Religion (N = 1,879), I examine the effects of parental religiosity, church support, religious education, and youth group involvement on the decline in attendance five years later. Results show that these socialization processes adequately explain why attendance declines at different rates across religious traditions. However, these socialization factors do not have the same effect across traditions and often yield differential returns for attendance outcomes. These findings also suggest that comparisons across religious traditions can resolve the "channeling hypothesis" debate about whether parental influence on an offspring's future religiosity is primarily direct or indirect.

Keywords: *socialization, channeling hypothesis, adolescence, emerging adulthood.*

INTRODUCTION

Declining religious service attendance during the transition from adolescence into young adulthood is a consistent finding across religious traditions (Petts 2009; Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler 2007; Willits and Crider 1989). Some traditions, however, undergo decline at steeper rates than others (Smith and Snell 2009; Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler 2007). What explains the variation in these rates of decline?

As Bartkowski (2007:519) has observed, scholars have paid little attention to denominational differences in attendance trends among adolescents. In addition, studies that examine religious participation in young adulthood often focus on factors from later in the life-course, such as the effects of college attendance, marriage, having children, and so on (Chaves 1991; Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994). However, research on religious socialization suggests that factors from *earlier* in the life-course—particularly the influence of parents, church, religious education, and peer-groups—have important enduring effects on religiosity in young adulthood (e.g., Cornwall 1988; Himmelfarb 1979; Martin, White, and Perlman 2003). Such findings suggest that we need to consider proximate factors as well as long-term ones. Therefore, while previous socialization studies examined single religious traditions and long-term factors, the present study will assess both the extent to which early factors can explain differences and also compare these across religious traditions.

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Two important studies examine how attendance trends of young adults are shaped by prior causal factors. Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) assess how early normative deviance contributes to changes in attendance, and Petts (2009) looks at how early life-course factors account for variations in religious participation trajectories. Neither of these studies, however, explains differences between religious traditions in these attendance trends.

In this study, I examine two possible explanations for such differences. The first I term a "religious resources" account, meaning the main agents of religious socialization (religiously active parents, supportive churches, religious education, and religious peer groups) can be considered resources that contribute to attendance outcomes. In this view, differences across religious traditions in the rates of declining attendance are a result of some groups simply having more or less of some of these resources. The majority of studies on religious socialization tend to assume some version of this account (e.g., Martin, White, and Perlman 2003; Petts 2009). I also look at an alternative explanation—what I call a "differential returns" account—which posits that some agents of socialization may be crucial for creating a sustained habit of religious participation in some traditions although not in others. Finally, making such comparisons also allows me to address the "channeling hypothesis" debate (Martin, White, and Perlman 2003; Myers 1996) about whether the influence of parents on the religiosity of offspring is either direct or is primarily indirect and channeled through other agents of socialization.

Using recent, nationally representative longitudinal data on American young adults (the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR)), I find strong support for the differential returns account, with significant variation across traditions in the effects of most agents of religious socialization. I also find direct and persistent effects of parental religiosity on offspring's future religious participation. The results of this study emphasize the need for scholars of religion to better understand the bases of such differences across religious traditions in early socialization, which matters when considering how churches retain commitment across generations.

Religious Socialization

Studies on religious socialization usually take into account four agents: parents, church, religious education, and peers (Cornwall 1988:227–28). The family constitutes the first and primary locus of socialization, and numerous studies have attested to the importance of the family for religious outcomes (see Hyde 1990:224–37). Parents share with children their religious worldview, which is then reinforced by other adults in the religious group (Uecker 2009). Religious norms and values can be transmitted through various forms of encouragement or punishment at home as well as in schools (Bartkowski 2007; Ellison and Sherkat 1993). When determining religious outcomes, studies also attest to the importance of the quality of parent-child relationships (e.g., Ozorak 1989) as well as nourishing relationships with other adults in the religious community (e.g., Hoge 1988). As children grow older, peers become increasingly important in the socialization process. Children may learn different things from peers than from other agents of socialization. Peers can reinforce or model religious views and practices (Cornwall 1988; Potvin and Lee 1982) or can undermine them, such as when peer group norms are dissonant with those of the family or religious tradition (Hyde 1990:237). Learning from these agents of socialization also includes internalizing others' beliefs and practices as one's own (Handel [1988] 2006; Peterson, Rollins, and Thomas 1985).

The Channeling Hypothesis Debate

How are these various agents of socialization interrelated? One prominent account of socialization that attempts to explain this is the channeling hypothesis (Himmelfarb 1979; Cornwall 1988). This theory posits that parents have a primarily *indirect* effect on the socialization of their

offspring by channeling them into various institutions and experiences that serve to reinforce parental values. As a result of such mediation, the direct effect of parents on their offspring's religiosity decreases as children grow older (Francis and Brown 1991).

This channeling hypothesis, however, is debatable. While some studies find that parents' influence on their offspring's religious development is primarily indirect, mediated through church and peer groups (Himmelfarb 1979; Cornwall 1988), others find that parents have a strong and lasting direct effect on the religiosity of their offspring later in life, even when controlling for later life outcomes and social networks (Myers 1996). Still others find that the effect of parents and families on the religiosity of offspring exceeds that of religious schooling (Greeley and Rossi 1966). More recent studies show that while there is some mediation of parental effects through church and peer groups, a direct parental effect remains (Martin, White, and Perlman 2003).

A plausible explanation for the seeming impasse about whether or not such channeling occurs is that most of these studies neglect possible variation across religious traditions. While earlier studies on religious effects of families noted some denominational differences in the effects of agents of religious socialization (Hoge, Petrillo, and Smith 1982; Potvin and Lee 1982), most studies on the channeling hypothesis are unable to address such differences because they typically rely on data from single religious traditions: Himmelfarb (1979) examines Jews, Cornwall (1988) examines Latter-Day Saints, and Martin, White, and Perlman (2003) examine mainline Protestants. The relative effects of parents, church groups, and peer groups on outcomes such as religious service participation could differ across these groups. Further comparisons across religious traditions are therefore needed to assess the channeling hypothesis.

Religious Resources or Differential Returns?

In addition to assessing the channeling hypothesis, comparing across religious traditions can also help us examine whether these agents of socialization explain differences in the rates of attendance decline in emerging adulthood. I assess two distinct explanations for how these agents of socialization might function across religious traditions.

First, rates of attendance decline may vary because some traditions are "stronger" than others in possessing or utilizing these agents of socialization. An implicit assumption in most previous studies (e.g., Himmelfarb 1979; Cornwall 1988; Martin, White, and Perlman 2003; Petts 2009) seems to be that the agents of religious socialization identified in the literature—parents, church support, religious education institutions, and peer groups—matter across all religious traditions for predicting future religiosity of offspring. If rates of attendance decline are greater in some groups than others, then it would imply that these groups are "weaker" in some of these resources (i.e., they might have lower parental religiosity, fewer supportive adults, less religious education, or less youth group involvement). I label this a "religious resources" explanation: each of these agents of socialization could be considered resources that contribute to the sustained practice of attendance, regardless of tradition. Net of other important demographic and background factors that affect religiosity outcomes (Ozorak 1989; Petts 2009), I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: *Variation across religious traditions in rates of attendance decline will be explained by differences in strength or availability of key "religious resources" during early socialization—namely, parental religiosity, church support, religious education, and youth groups.*

In addition, using the religious resources approach to extend the channeling hypothesis argument across denominations, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: *Across denominations, the effect of parental religiosity on future attendance outcomes of offspring will be completely mediated by other agents of socialization—particularly church, religious education, and peers.*

Second, certain agents of socialization may matter more for particular religiosity outcomes in some religious traditions than in others. I call this a "differential returns" account, which posits that even if some of these purported resources were abundant for adolescents in a certain tradition, they would not matter for attendance outcomes—at least, not as much as they would in other traditions. Such variation might be expected in light of important historical and cultural differences between American religious traditions (see Steensland et al. 2000:293–94). Evangelical and black Protestant churches approximate ideal-typical "sects" that are more exclusive, with voluntary and highly committed membership, stricter norms, and a higher cost of membership; contrarily, mainline Protestantism and American Catholicism resemble ideal-typical "churches" that are less "strict" on membership and less likely to emphasize distinctiveness from mainstream society (Iannaccone 1994:1192, 1190).

Such differences in strictness may correspond to differences in the socialization processes in these groups. Among evangelical Protestants, religious socialization often aims at reinforcing a strong subcultural identity that provides "both clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant outgroups" (Smith 1998:118–19). Black Protestant churches, which played a central role in supporting African Americans throughout their historic struggle and that continue to shape their social attitudes and civic commitment, might similarly foster a distinctive religious, but also ethnic, subcultural identity in the socialization process (Chaves 2004:117; Haight 1998; Steensland et al. 2000:294). Thus, boundary-maintenance and identity-reinforcement may be mechanisms that foster the importance of regular attendance among evangelical and black Protestants. Among mainline Protestants, on the other hand, socialization might more likely foster an attitude of tolerance and accommodation to mainstream society (Ammerman 2005; Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994). American Catholicism, which a century ago was a highly distinctive and embattled subculture, rapidly assimilated into the American mainstream in the post-World War II years (McNamara 1992:18–25; Varacalli 2006). This partly helps explain the lack of distinctively religious socialization in Catholic schools and youth programming (see Smith and Denton 2005:212–15; Uecker 2009). Additionally, research on "Generation X" Catholics found that, despite the official stance of the Catholic Church on obligatory weekly attendance, the majority of them held the belief that "one can be a good Catholic without going to Mass" (Hoge et al. 2001:54). Mainline Protestants of the same generation similarly did not view regular attendance as important (Ammerman 1997, 2005). Thus, some agents of socialization might not emphasize attendance in these traditions.

Other studies, while not focused on attendance outcomes, report differences across religious traditions in the effects of agents of socialization. Inskeep's (1986) study found parental influence to be the main factor affecting religious development among mainline Protestants in his study, whereas church groups seemed to matter more among evangelicals. Myers (1996) found that parents' religiosity had a greater effect for conservative Protestants than for mainline Protestants (but his study did not control for other agents of socialization such as church groups). Yet no studies thus far have undertaken a detailed assessment of such variation across religious traditions. Prompted by these studies, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: *Variation across religious traditions in rates of attendance decline among young adults will be explained by differences across traditions in the effects of agents of socialization.*

In addition, using the differential returns approach to extend the channeling hypothesis argument across denominations, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: *The effect of parental religiosity on future attendance outcomes of offspring will be completely mediated by other agents of socialization in some denominations but not in others.*

Data and Methods

The present study relies on data from the most recent national survey on the religious beliefs and practices of American adolescents, the NSYR, which is a nationally representative longitudinal study of the religious beliefs and practices of American teenagers. (For this study, only the data from the first and third waves were considered.) The first wave of the panel study was conducted in 2002 and 2003, using a random-digit dial method to conduct a telephone survey of a total of 3,370 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17. The third wave was conducted in 2007 and 2008 when these same respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24. The retention rate for the third wave was 77 percent of the original participants (see Smith and Denton 2005:292–301 for further details). The present analysis focuses on the subsample of evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, black Protestant, and Catholic respondents who were retained in the panel in wave 3 ($N = 1{,}965$). The categorization of these denominations is based on the RELTRAD classification scheme of religious traditions developed by Steensland et al. (2000), which has become the standard in survey research on religion and is especially attentive to the distinctiveness between religious traditions. Focusing specifically on major Christian groups allows us to understand whether there are, within the same broad religious tradition, important differences in the pathways and agents of socialization—particularly whether some agents are more "effective" for attendance outcomes in some traditions. My analysis focuses on changes between wave 1 and wave 3 to assess what initial factors can predict change after a five-year period. Observations for individuals who provided a "don't know" or "refused" response on the dependent variable were eliminated through listwise deletion. A small percentage of individuals (3.3 percent) were not asked questions about their mother if no mother figure was living at home; these observations were deleted through listwise deletion.[1] Missing data dispersed across other independent variables were imputed using multiple imputation, generating a sample with a weighted $N = 1{,}879$. Table S1 reports means, standard deviations, and ranges of the variables used in the analyses (see Appendix S1 online at wileyonlinelibrary.com). No systematic bias appears in the sample across the categories of denomination, race, gender, or household income level.

Dependent Variable

As a measure of religious participation, the key dependent variable in this study is the reported church attendance of teenagers in wave 3, measured as a seven-category ordinal variable (ranging from 0 = Never to 6 = More than once a week). In all models, I control for the initial religious service attendance that respondents reported in wave 1 of the study. As a result, the dependent variable does not indicate the absolute value of attendance at wave 3, but is a lagged dependent variable that now reflects *changes* between the waves. Using such a lagged dependent variable is particularly useful in modeling change across the waves of a panel study.[2]

[1] In NSYR surveys, 21 percent of cases (42 percent of whom were African American) had no father figure living at home and were not asked questions about their father. Due to this systematic bias, and since the father variables were not significant in initial analyses, I omitted them from subsequent models.

[2] As Regnerus and Burdette (2006) note, models using lagged dependent variables control for unmeasured heterogeneity and are especially useful for measuring habitual or reinforced behavior (cf. Allison 1990; Finkel 1995). These are also

Independent Variables

To assess which initial agents of religious transmission affect religious outcomes over time, the main independent variables were wave 1 measures.

Religious Tradition. Based on Steensland et al.'s (2000) RELTRAD classification of denominations, binary variables were created to indicate religious tradition: evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, black Protestant, and Catholic.

Parental Religiosity. I created two indices of parental religiosity to assess two theoretically distinct aspects of this concept. The first index measures *parental religious participation*, which includes parents' frequency of religious service attendance and how active parents are in church in addition to attending services (e.g., choirs, Bible studies) (alpha = .80). The second index, *parental religious environment*, includes how important parents claim their faith is in daily life, how frequently parents pray for the child, and how frequently the family talks about religious things at home (alpha = .65). Responses to each of these questions were scored on a five-point Likert scale in increasing order of frequency or importance. The distinction between these two concepts helps distinguish between the effects of religious activities in which the child may be obliged to participate simply because they reside with parents, versus forms of parental religious expression at home and outside the church setting.

Church Support. This index included dummy variables for whether or not respondents considered adults at church "very easy" to talk to, whether or not there were any adults at church whom respondents "enjoy talking with" or who gave them encouragement, whether or not respondents considered their church a "very good" place to talk about serious issues, whether the church "usually" (as opposed to "sometimes," "rarely," or "never") made them think about important things, and similarly whether or not the church "usually" felt "like a warm and welcoming place" (alpha = .78). Respondents who reported that they never attended church, and who were hence not asked these questions, were coded 0.

Religious Education. Two separate variables were included in the models. The first accounted for whether the youth attended *Sunday school* or CCD, or other religious education classes at least once a week (not including religion classes at school), during the past year. The second indicated whether the youth currently attended a *private religious school*. Both were coded as dummy variables (1 = attends).

Youth Group Involvement. This variable was measured by an indicator of the number of years the respondent has been attending a youth group (0–10 years). Youth group attendance frequency variables were not included because respondents may be conflating this with Sunday school attendance or religious service attendance.

Control Variables

I controlled for age, sex, and race, which have all been shown to be related to religiosity (Clark and Worthington 1987). Region was represented by a variable indicating residence in the South (1 = South). Several parental and family characteristics are also considered to affect the religiosity of offspring (Myers 1996; Ozorak 1989) and were included as controls: whether the teen resided with biological parents who were married (coded 1); religious homophily, or whether parents went to the same church (coded 1); parental income (categories 1–11); mother's education (0–14 categories); number of hours respondent's mother works (0–120 hours); and mother's influence.[3] An additional variable measuring "normative deviation" (Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler 2007) was created, which was an additive index (alpha = .80) comprising frequency

conservative estimates, since "only coefficients that significantly shape change over the course of the year[s] between waves will display significance" (2006:185).

Table 1: Mean values of agents of socialization across denominations

Wave 1 Variables	*N*	Mean	Sig.	*SD*	Min	Max
Parental Religious Participation						
Evangelical	761	.16	a,b,c	.94	−1.99	1.46
Mainline	278	−.07	b,c,d	.94	−1.60	1.46
Black Protestant	254	.34	a,c,d	.87	−1.60	1.46
Catholic	586	−.30	a,b,d	.77	−1.60	1.46
Parental Religious Environment						
Evangelical	761	.19	a,b,c	.72	−2.31	.98
Mainline	278	−.32	b,d	.79	−2.38	.98
Black Protestant	254	.36	a,c,d	.51	−1.40	.98
Catholic	586	−.25	b,d	.76	−2.70	.98
Church Support						
Evangelical	761	.20	a,b,c	.68	−.99	1.09
Mainline	278	−.02	c,d	.71	−.99	1.09
Black Protestant	254	.05	c,d	.67	−.99	1.09
Catholic	586	−.26	a,b,d	.68	−.99	1.09
Private Religious School						
Evangelical	761	.09	b,c	.28	.00	1.00
Mainline	278	.05	b,c	.22	.00	1.00
Black Protestant	254	.04	a,c,d	.19	.00	1.00
Catholic	586	.12	a,b,d	.32	.00	1.00
Regular Sunday School / CCD Attendance						
Evangelical	761	.39	a,b,c	.49	.00	1.00
Mainline	278	.27	c,d	.45	.00	1.00
Black Protestant	254	.28	c,d	.45	.00	1.00
Catholic	586	.20	a,b,d	.40	.00	1.00
Youth Group Involvement						
Evangelical	761	2.43	a,b,c	.04	.00	10.00
Mainline	278	1.99	c,d	.06	.00	10.00
Black Protestant	254	1.70	c,d	.08	.00	10.00
Catholic	586	.94	a,b,d	.04	.00	10.00

a: Significantly different from mainline ($p < .05$).
b: Significantly different from black Protestant ($p < .05$).
c: Significantly different from Catholic ($p < .05$).
d: Significantly different from evangelical ($p < .05$).

of oral sex, sexual intercourse, smoking marijuana, and getting drunk (all arrayed as four-point Likert items).

I also created two variables to reflect early *internalization* of personal religious practice and belief. Personal Religiosity is an index to account for religious salience internalized at an early age, including frequency of praying alone and importance of faith in daily life, both scored on five-point Likert scales in increasing order of frequency or importance. Items were standardized to create an index (alpha = .66). I also generated a variable to indicate whether the respondent said "yes" to all the following traditional Christian belief statements: believes in a personal

[3] Mother's influence was measured by a seven-item index (alpha = 0.81) consisting of how close the respondent feels to the mother, whether the respondent feels they get along well, how often the respondent talks to the mother, how often the mother encourages the respondent, how often the mother says she loves the respondent, and how much time the respondent spends with the mother (all items were scored on five-point Likert scales).

God, definitely believes in an afterlife, believes in a judgment day, and believes in miracles. Respondents who adhered to all of these beliefs were coded 1.

In addition, I included several wave 3 controls in a final model to assess the importance of early religious socialization, holding constant the effect of later life-course factors. These include dummy measures of whether or not the respondent never attended college (1 = yes), attended a religious college (1 = yes), switched religious traditions between wave 1 and wave 3 (1 = yes), is currently married (1 = yes), has children (1 = yes), has ever cohabited (1 = yes), or currently lives with parents (1 = yes). I also include the respondent's work hours and the number of religious friends the respondent reports as having in wave 3. Including such wave 3 factors helps assess whether a direct effect of early parental influence persists despite controlling for the later life-course factors such as marriage and children, as well as religious peers in young adulthood.

Analytical Strategy

I use ordered logistic regression techniques to explain the differences between religious traditions. Successive models assess Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2—that is, whether the religious resources account explains denominational differences in attendance outcomes, and whether the effect of parental religiosity is completely mediated by other factors (Table 3). Next, in Tables 4 and 5, I examine interaction effects of each of the main agents of socialization with each of the traditions to assess Hypothesis 3 (i.e., whether some agents of socialization matter for attendance outcomes in some traditions but not in others).To facilitate interpretation, I present some predicted probabilities (Table 6). To assess Hypothesis 4 (i.e., the extent to which the channeling hypothesis holds true for different denominations), I compare, within each religious tradition, models that regress attendance change on parental religiosity only with models that include all other independent variables and controls (Table 7).

Results

Means and standard deviations of the various socialization factors from wave 1 across RELTRAD types, and the significance levels of differences between them, are presented in Table 1. Table 2 reports means and standard deviations of attendance at waves 1 and 3 across the groups and shows that the story of change in religious participation of American adolescents over these three waves of the panel study is one of decline. On the one hand, we see in Table 1 that for most socialization factors, Catholics have the lowest mean values; on the other hand, as we see in Table 2, mainline Protestants show the highest rates of decline in wave 3 and are most likely to report decline.

Table 2: Religious service attendance across denominations, waves 1 and 3

	Attendance (w1) 2002–2003		Attendance (w3) 2007–2008				
	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	Sig.	*N*	% Reporting Decline
Evangelical	4.17	1.88	2.65	2.17	***	761	66
Mainline	3.44	1.99	1.63	1.82	***	278	71
Black Protestant	3.78	1.93	2.70	2.02	***	254	59
Catholic	3.24	1.92	1.77	1.87	***	586	66
						1,879	

Source: NSYR 2002–2008.

Assessing the Religious Resources Explanation

Table 3 presents odds ratios from ordinal logistic regression models with the lagged dependent variable indicating change in attendance from wave 1 to wave 3. Model 1 estimates the effects of religious tradition without any controls and assesses how other traditions compare in attendance decline to Catholic. I use Catholics as the omitted reference group because they have the lowest overall "resources" in wave 1, and thus, according to Hypothesis 1, we should expect other traditions to have coefficients greater than zero. However, we find that mainline Protestants have a lower coefficient; their odds of undergoing greater decline in attendance in wave 3 are 34 percent higher (1/0.747) than those of Catholics, which challenges Hypothesis 1.

Table 3: Odds ratios from logistic regression models predicting religious service attendance at wave 3 (weighted)

	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)	Model (4)	Model (5)	Model (6)
Religious tradition[a]						
Evangelical	1.617***	1.682***	1.349**	1.240+	1.137	1.224+
Protestant	(.162)	(.181)	(.149)	(.140)	(.129)	(.143)
Mainline	.747*	.817	.741*	.678**	.653**	.679**
Protestant	(.099)	(.115)	(.106)	(.099)	(.096)	(.101)
Black Protestant	1.911***	2.266***	1.469*	1.493*	1.458*	1.514*
	(.258)	(.347)	(.233)	(.238)	(.234)	(.252)
Parental religious participation			1.502***	1.437***	1.467***	1.403***
			(.099)	(.095)	(.097)	(.095)
Parental religious environment			1.516***	1.452***	1.248**	1.254**
			(.117)	(.113)	(.101)	(.103)
Church support				1.263**	1.121	1.139
				(.102)	(.092)	(.096)
Regular Sunday school				1.228*	1.176	1.269*
				(.126)	(.121)	(.133)
Private religious school				1.393*	1.287+	1.155
				(.207)	(.193)	(.177)
Youth group involvement				1.073***	1.056**	1.047*
(years)				(.0191)	(.019)	(.019)
Controls						
Wave 1 attendance	1.486***	1.445***	1.294***	1.192***	1.176***	1.195***
	(.036)	(.036)	(.035)	(.038)	(.037)	(.039)
Demographic controls						
Female		.847+	.885	.913	.855+	.826*
		(.072)	(.076)	(.079)	(.075)	(.075)
Age		1.004	.986	.976	.955	.988
		(.033)	(.033)	(.033)	(.033)	(.036)
Race = Hispanic		1.452**	1.336*	1.381*	1.361*	1.416*
		(.209)	(.195)	(.201)	(.199)	(.214)
Race = other[b]		.609*	.577**	.569**	.567**	.558**
		(.126)	(.119)	(.117)	(.118)	(.120)
Wave 1 contextual controls						
Lived in the South		1.116	1.062	1.037	.969	.962
		(.100)	(.096)	(.094)	(.089)	(.089)

(Continued)

Table 3 *(Continued)*

	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)	Model (4)	Model (5)	Model (6)
Married, biological parents		1.357**	1.319**	1.317**	1.336**	1.224+
		(.143)	(.140)	(.140)	(.142)	(.133)
Parental religious homophily		1.247*	.993	.970	.938	.885
		(.129)	(.106)	(.104)	(.100)	(.096)
Household income		.992	1.016	1.016	1.015	1.005
		(.018)	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)
Mother's influence		1.207**	1.178*	1.131+	1.065	1.051
		(.082)	(.080)	(.078)	(.074)	(.074)
Mother's education		1.008	.986	.985	.986	.974
		(.019)	(.018)	(.018)	(.018)	(.019)
Mother's work hours		.994**	.997	.996	.997	.995*
		(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Normative deviation		.737***	.765***	.798***	.837**	.890+
		(.046)	(.048)	(.051)	(.053)	(.059)
Internalization						
Personal religiosity					1.453***	1.281***
					(.102)	(.093)
Traditional beliefs					1.374**	1.349**
					(.137)	(.136)
Wave 3 contextual controls						
Never attended college						.631***
						(.072)
Attended religious college						.898
						(.100)
Ever cohabited						.576***
						(.071)
Married						1.436+
						(.277)
Has children						1.208
						(.214)
Lives with parents						1.348**
						(.130)
Work hours						1.000
						(.003)
Number of religious friends						1.422***
						(.039)
Religious switching						1.465***
						(.157)
N	1, 879	1,879	1,879	1,879	1,879	1,879
Log likelihood	−3216.5	−3165.8	−3104.1	−3084.7	−3060.9	−2930.4
χ^2	393.5	494.8	618.3	657.0	704.7	965.7
Pseudo R^2	.0576	.0725	.0906	.0962	.103	.142

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
$+ p < .10$, $^{*} p < .05$, $^{**} p < .01$, $^{***} p < .001$.
[a]Reference group = Catholic.
[b]Other = Neither white, nor black, nor Hispanic.

Model 2 adds the demographic and contextual controls from wave 1. Here we see that these controls (particularly, the control for Hispanic)[4] sufficiently account for the statistically significant difference between Catholics and mainline Protestants, although this significant difference reappears and grows stronger as agents of socialization are added into subsequent models. Model 3 adds the two parental religiosity variables. (The effect is similar if these variables are entered sequentially.) Both parental religious participation and religious environment are highly significant and with similar coefficient sizes, each increasing odds of higher attendance by 50 percent. Adding these variables considerably reduces the effect size and significance for evangelical and black Protestant, but restores the statistically significant difference of mainline Protestant.

Model 4 adds the other "religious resources"—church support, regular Sunday school, religious private schooling, and youth group involvement. Entering these variables decreases the effect size and considerably reduces the significance level of evangelical Protestant; slightly reduces the effect size of mainline Protestant, but increases the significance level; and slightly increases the effect size of black Protestant. These variables were entered into the model simultaneously because it is difficult to justify any particular sequential ordering of these factors (unlike parental religiosity, which typically has chronological priority).[5] Overall, these "resources" seem to explain some of the Catholic-evangelical difference, but not the difference between Catholics and mainline Protestants or black Protestants.

Model 5 introduces the internalization factors from wave 1—personal religiosity and traditional beliefs. Entering these factors removes the marginal statistical significance of the evangelical coefficient; reduces the coefficients of all three denominations; reduces the coefficient and statistical significance of parental religious environment; and reduces the coefficients and significance levels of church support, regular Sunday school, private religious school, and youth group involvement.[6] Finally, Model 6 adds additional controls from wave 3. Adding these variables increases the significance levels of evangelical Protestant and does not have a strong effect on other religious tradition variables.[7]

Overall, these findings do not seem to support the religious resources hypothesis posited in Hypothesis 1, from which we would have expected statistically significant differences between religious traditions to disappear once the main agents of socialization were accounted for. However, these factors do seem to explain the Catholic-evangelical Protestant difference, suggesting that these agents of socialization might matter for attendance outcomes in similar ways in at least

[4] Entering the Race = Hispanic variable into the model is sufficient to eliminate the significance level of the mainline coefficient. Hispanics constitute 25 percent of Catholics but only 1.1 percent of mainline Protestants, and separate t-tests show Hispanic Catholics' decline in attendance across waves is significantly less than other Catholics. They might thus serve to prevent Catholic decline compared to mainline Protestant.

[5] In ancillary analyses, I examined different sequential combinations of entering these agents of socialization. (1) Youth Group makes the strongest difference, reducing coefficients for all three RELTRAD groups, the parental religiosity variables, and the significance level of evangelical. (2) Church support drops the significance level of the evangelical coefficient and slightly reduces coefficients of each RELTRAD group, but makes no noticeable change to the parental religiosity coefficients. Private religious schooling slightly reduces the parental religiosity coefficients, and regular Sunday school has little effect on either RELTRAD groups or parental religiosity.

[6] In ancillary analyses, I entered each internalization variable separately and found that much of this above effect is driven by the personal religiosity variable. In particular, it drops the parental religious environment coefficient by 40 percent. Some of this effect might thus be due to families praying together. The traditional belief variable, while decreasing significance levels of church support and Sunday school, only slightly decreases other coefficients, and increases the coefficient and significance level of black Protestant. This suggests that there may be some variation across traditions in the effect of early internalization of beliefs on future religiosity outcomes.

[7] In ancillary analyses, I entered each of these controls separately to assess their effects. Religious switching has the most effect, reducing the religious tradition coefficients slightly and dropping the significance level of black Protestant. It has no effect on the parental religiosity variables. Controlling for living with parents in wave 3 slightly reduces the coefficient of parental religious environment. Controlling for the number of religious friends in wave 3 reduces the significance level of youth group involvement in wave 1. All the other factors have little to no moderating effect on the religious tradition or socialization variables.

Table 4: Ordered logistic regression model (weighted) predicting religious service attendance at wave 3: Interaction effects[a]

	Catholic[b] (Main Effect)	Evangelical Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Black Protestant
Religious tradition (main effect)	*.830*	*1.068*	*.627**	*1.104*
	(*.508*)	(*.168*)	(*.138*)	(*.235*)
Parental religious participation	*1.772****	.794	1.074	.427***
	(*.230*)	(.127)	(.237)	(.089)
Parental religious environment	*1.030*	1.334	1.011	2.591**
	(*.132*)	(.238)	(.234)	(.815)
Church support	*1.059*	1.061	.866	1.347
	(*.140*)	(.179)	(.199)	(.307)
Regular Sunday school attendance	*1.259*	1.064	.377**	2.010*
	(*.241*)	(.259)	(.128)	(.707)
Private religious school	*.882*	1.940+	.951	.472
	(*.207*)	(.664)	(.480)	(.347)
Youth group involvement	*1.003*	1.033	1.162*	1.042
	(*.035*)	(.0445)	(.072)	(.061)
N	1879			
Log likelihood	−2094.1			
χ^2	1018.2			
Pseudo R^2	.149			

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. $+ p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
[a]Table represents single model, and includes all controls from Table 3.
[b]Catholic is the reference group for interaction effects. Main effects are presented in italics. The main effect for Catholic is the constant term, which is the first cut-point (see Inlow and Cong 2009). The Catholic effect for each of the socialization variables is the same as their main effect. The table inset presents interaction terms for row X column variables.

these two traditions. Yet, these models do not account sufficiently for the statistically significant differences in attendance decline of Catholics from mainline Protestants and black Protestants.[8] These models do not support the channeling hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) either. Accounting for the various "channels" of socialization does not substantially diminish the parental religiosity coefficients and has no effect on their significance levels.

Assessing the Differential Returns Explanation

Table 4 examines whether significant differences arise between religious traditions in the effects of agents of socialization on attendance trends. This table is essentially a single model that adds interaction effects to Model 6 in Table 3. Catholic continues to serve as the reference group, and each of the six agents of socialization are interacted with the three remaining religious traditions. While scholars continue to debate how to interpret interaction effects in nonlinear models, Buis (2010) argues that using multiplicative effects, such as odds ratios, overcomes most difficulties, and I follow him in this regard.

[8] Ancillary analyses found that entering model 3—the parental religiosity variables—prior to entering the demographic and contextual controls was sufficient to completely eliminate the statistical significance of the black Protestant coefficient and to reduce it by 60 percent. Entering either parental religious participation or environment into the model reduced the black Protestant coefficient by 40 percent and the significance level to $p < 0.05$.

The first row displays the main effects for the four religious traditions. The coefficient for Catholic is the constant term, which is the first cut-point (Inlow and Cong 2009). Comparing this row to Model 6 in Table 3, we see that introducing interaction effects reduces coefficients and significance levels of evangelical, mainline, and black Protestant, although the mainline coefficient still remains significant. The main effects for the socialization factors are the same as the Catholic effects for each of them, and the interaction coefficients are to be interpreted as odds ratios with respect to the Catholic effect. So, for example, looking at parental religious participation, each unit increase in this variable, net of other factors, increases the odds of Catholics attending more frequently in wave 3 by 77 percent. The odds of black Protestants "benefiting" similarly from this factor, however, are considerably less than those of Catholics, and this difference is strongly significant. In contrast, examining the net effect of parental religious environment, each unit increase in this factor increases the odds of black Protestants attending more frequently in wave 3 by 159 percent compared to Catholics. No significant differences appeared between Catholics and other traditions in the net effects of church support.

In the fifth row, the odds ratio for mainline Protestants indicates that for those who attended Sunday school weekly during adolescence, net of other factors, their odds of attendance *decline* and are 2.65 (1/0.377) times greater than those of Catholics who attended Sunday school. On the other hand, the odds of black Protestants attending *more* frequently in wave 3 are twice as great as those of Catholics, for those who attended Sunday school regularly during wave 1. Attending a private religious school in wave 1 has a positive though marginally significant effect for evangelical Protestants in comparison to Catholics. Youth group involvement has a statistically significant positive effect for mainline Protestants in comparison to Catholics.

Table 5: Interaction effects using other reference groups (odds ratios)

	Main Effect	Interaction Term	
Evangelical Protestant			
Parental religious participation	*1.407******	BP: .538**	
Parental religious environment	*1.373**	BP: 1.943*	
Church support	*1.123*		
Regular Sunday school attendance	*1.340+*	BP: 1.889+	ML: .354**
Private religious school	*1.710**	BP: .243+	
Youth group involvement	*1.036*	ML: 1.125*	
Mainline Protestant			
Parental religious participation	*1.904****	BP: .397***	
Parental religious environment	*1.041*	BP: 2.562**	
Church support	*.917*		
Regular Sunday school attendance	*.475***	BP: 5.331***	EP: 2.822**
Private religious school	*.838*		
Youth group involvement	*1.166***	EP: .889*	
Black Protestant			
Parental religious participation	*.757+*	EP: 1.860***	MP: 2.517***
Parental religious environment	*2.668****	EP: .515*	MP: .390*
Church support	*1.427+*		
Regular Sunday school attendance	*2.531***	EP: .529+	MP: .188***
Private religious school	*.416*	EP: 4.111+	
Youth group involvement	*1.045*		

Note: Table replicates model in Table 4 above using evangelical (EP), mainline (MP), and black Protestant (BP) as reference groups instead of Catholic. Catholic interaction terms and effects are identical to Table 4 and not shown. Main effects are in italics. Only statistically significant interactions are displayed. *N* and model fit statistics are identical to Table 4.

Since the above results only compare differences of other traditions with Catholics, Table 5 examines other significant interactions between evangelical, mainline, and black Protestants. Several effects are noteworthy. The net effect of parental religious participation is significantly lower for black Protestants compared to evangelical and mainline Protestants. The main effect for black Protestants suggests that, net of other factors, higher parental religious participation increases the odds of their attendance *declining* during emerging adulthood. However, a stronger parental religious *environment*, net of other factors, significantly increases the odds of increased attendance for black Protestant young adults, both within the tradition and compared to other traditions. Church support has a marginally significant positive effect among black Protestants, but it does not have significant interaction effects. The net effects of Sunday school attendance vary significantly across groups: the strongest effect is among black Protestants, followed by evangelicals, followed by mainline Protestants. The negative mainline effect indicates that mainline Protestant young adults who attended Sunday school weekly during wave 1 are twice as likely to *decline* in attendance in wave 3 compared to those who did not attend Sunday school in wave 1, net of other factors. Private religious schooling has a sizeable and significant net effect for evangelicals, which is considerably higher than the effect for black Protestants. Finally, youth group involvement matters significantly more among mainline Protestants than evangelicals. These differences provide strong support for Hypothesis 3.

To interpret some of these findings more clearly, I present some predicted probabilities in Table 6 to compare differences between low and high values (the minimum and maximum) of some agents of socialization across traditions. To make these predictions somewhat meaningful, I examine probabilities for unmarried females, setting all other controls at their mean and other religious traditions at zero.

Examining parental religious participation, we see that for an unmarried Catholic female aged 20 (the wave 3 sample average), the probability of never attending church at wave 3 is 52 percent when parents do not attend services or participate in church activities, but only 13 percent when parents' religious participation in wave 1 is weekly or more. Among black Protestants, however, net of other factors, high parental religious participation actually predicts a higher probability of the daughter *never* attending rather than attending weekly. For Catholics, parental religious environment has almost no net effect on wave 3 church attendance, whereas among black Protestants, there is a substantial difference between the net effects of a weak versus strong parental religious environment on future attendance outcomes. For mainline Protestants, weekly Sunday school attendance, net of other factors, results in a substantially higher likelihood of *never* attending church in wave 3 rather than attending weekly or even monthly. Among Catholics, in comparison, we see that Sunday school attendance has essentially no net effect on church attendance. Among black Protestants, however, never having attended Sunday school predicts a 25 percent probability of never attending in wave 3; weekly Sunday school attendance predicts a 31 percent probability of weekly wave 3 church attendance; but early Sunday school attendance makes no difference for predicting wave 3 monthly attendance.

Attending a private Christian school during wave 1, net of other factors, significantly increases the probability of an evangelical attending church weekly in wave 3, while not having attended such a school predicts a higher probability of never attending in wave 3. However, private religious schooling makes no such difference in attendance outcomes for an otherwise similar Catholic respondent. Youth group attendance matters significantly for mainline Protestants: for a 20-year-old female who had not attended youth group during or before wave 1, the probability of never attending church in wave 3 is more than three times that of an otherwise similar respondent who had been attending youth group for 10 or more years in wave 1. Among Catholics, however, we see that youth group attendance, net of other factors, makes no such difference on attendance outcomes. These differences across religious traditions in the predicted probabilities of effects of socialization factors provide strong support for the differential returns hypothesis (Hypothesis 3).

Table 6: Predicted probabilities for effects of agents of socialization on wave 3 attendance[a]

Agent of Socialization	Religious Tradition	Value	Probability of Attendance Outcome: Never	Once a Month	Once a Week
Parental religious participation	Catholic	Never	.52	.06	.03
		Weekly+	.13	.14	.17
		Difference	−.39*	.09*	.14*
	Black Protestant	Never	.20	.13	.11
		Weekly+	.33	.10	.06
		Difference	.13*	−.03*	−.05*
Parental religious environment	Catholic	Low	.28	.11	.08
		High	.26	.12	.09
		Difference	−.02	.01	.01
	Black Protestant	Low	.57	.05	.02
		High	.10	.14	.21
		Difference	−.48*	.09*	.19*
Regular Sunday school	Catholic	No	.28	.11	.08
		Weekly	.23	.12	.10
		Difference	−.05*	.01	.02*
	Mainline Protestant	No	.38	.08	.05
		Weekly	.56	.05	.03
		Difference	.18*	.04*	.03*
	Black Protestant	No	.25	.12	.09
		Weekly	.05	.12	.31
		Difference	−.20*	.00	.23*
Private religious school	Catholic	No	.26	.11	.08
		Yes	.28	.11	.08
		Difference	.02	.00	.00
	Evangelical	No	.25	.11	.09
		Yes	.16	.14	.14
		Difference	−.09*	.02*	.05*
Youth group involvement	Catholic	0 yrs	.26	.11	.08
		10+ yrs	.26	.11	.09
		Difference	.00	.00	.01
	Mainline Protestant	0 yrs	.36	.09	.05
		10+ yrs	.10	.14	.19
		Difference	−.26*	.06*	.14*

[a]Predicted probabilities are for unmarried females, holding all other controls at their mean and other categories at 0;
*Differences between predicted probabilities of minimum and maximum values are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Finally, to assess Hypothesis 4 (i.e., whether the channeling hypothesis holds in some religious traditions but not others), I ran separate models within each tradition to examine whether the effects of parental religiosity can be explained by other factors (Table 7). Column 1 presents coefficients of ordered logistic regressions of wave 3 attendance on parental religious participation and environment, controlling for wave 1 attendance only. The second column presents coefficients from a model including all other independent variables and controls.

The results of these models show that both parental religiosity factors have persistent direct effects among evangelicals. Among mainline Protestants and Catholics, the effect of parental religious participation persists, but parental religious environment is completely mediated by other factors. Among black Protestants, however, parental religious participation does not have a

Table 7: Odds ratios from ordered logistic regression model (weighted) predicting religious service attendance at wave 3: Reduced models[a]

	(1)	(2)
Evangelical Protestant (*N*=761)		
Parental religious participation	1.618***	1.446***
	(.151)	(.146)
Parental religious environment	1.639***	1.204+
	(.200)	(.161)
Mainline Protestant (*N*=278)		
Parental religious participation	1.937***	2.245***
	(.375)	(.505)
Parental religious environment	1.543*	.943
	(.288)	(.219)
Black Protestant (*N*=254)		
Parental religious participation	.869	.834
	(.134)	(.145)
Parental religious environment	2.919***	2.253**
	(.771)	(.701)
Catholic (*N*=586)		
Parental religious participation	1.820***	1.766***
	(.235)	(.254)
Parental religious environment	1.260+	1.111
	(.156)	(.158)

[a]Standard errors in parentheses.
+ $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
Model 1 controls for wave 1 attendance only. Model 2 includes all controls and independent variables.

statistically significant effect on the change in attendance even when controls are not included. In addition, the independent effect of parental religious environment remains nearly unchanged even when controlling for all other factors, including wave 3 factors such as attending religious college, living with parents, number of religious friends, and so on, which previous studies have suggested should explain much of the initial parental effect. Across traditions, at least some aspect of initial parental religiosity continues to have a direct and significant effect on future attendance outcomes. Thus, Hypothesis 4 is not supported.[9]

Discussion

This study examines whether socialization agents and processes differ in significant ways across denominations and whether such differences during adolescence can explain denominational differences in attendance trends during emerging adulthood. Previous research suggested that religious socialization occurs primarily through the influence of parents, supportive adults at church, institutions of religious education, and peers, but it did not consider whether agents

[9] I also created a single scale comprising components of the parental religious participation and environment indices, which loaded onto a single factor (eigenvalue = 2.84, alpha = 0.81). This "parental religiosity" scale did not yield any significant interaction effects across denominations, suggesting that it functioned across denominations as a religious resource. In addition, using this variable in separate denominational models, I found that for black Protestants, its effect was completely mediated by other factors, suggesting support for the channeling hypothesis. However, as one reviewer pointed out, the use of this scale is theoretically questionable, as it does not allow us to recognize how parental participation and environment may affect offspring's religiosity separately.

and processes of socialization might operate differently across religious traditions. I have argued that it is important to assess whether differences in attendance trends among young adults can be attributed either to the fact that some early socialization factors might be more or less available in some traditions than in others (what I have called a religious resources explanation), or rather because some agents of socialization matter more for attendance outcomes in some traditions than in others (a differential returns explanation). The findings of this study lend considerable support to the differential returns explanation. For each of the agents of socialization considered here (with the exception of church support), significant variation is shown across religious traditions in their net effects on change in attendance.

Despite the tremendous variation that surely exists *within* religious traditions, significant discernible differences still arise *between* these groups in the outcome effects of purportedly universal socialization processes. When it comes to the effects of parental religiosity, for example, different aspects of this construct matter differently for attendance outcomes across traditions. Parental religious *participation* matters considerably for Catholics and mainline Protestants but has a negative net effect for black Protestants. However, parental religious *environment* has a strong positive net effect for black Protestants but not other traditions. What explains such differences in the effects of socialization factors?

Among Catholics and mainline Protestants, evidence suggests that the importance of the practice of regular church attendance declined considerably over the latter half of the 20th century (Ammerman 2005; Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994; Hoge et al. 2001:54). Table 1 seems to reflect this, where Catholics and mainline Protestants have significantly lower mean values of parental religious participation compared to other traditions. At the same time, people in these traditions continue to affiliate themselves with their denominations, and even claim their faith to be of personal importance to them (Ammerman 1997; Dillon 1999). Thus, those parents who still practice frequent church attendance and involvement (which is now a less common practice in these traditions) will primarily be the ones who influence their offspring's sustained commitment to attendance, rather than those who prefer a less institutional mode of religiosity.

Explaining the parental effects among black Protestants requires more speculation. Numerous studies have examined black Protestant congregations, but we know very little about the transmission of religiosity in their families. This topic merits further research, and the findings of the present study suggest some future directions. Black Protestants show the highest levels of both parental religious participation and environment (Table 1), so if these factors are to be viewed as "resources," they are not lacking. However, the negative net effect of parental participation, combined with the strong positive effect of environment, indicates that high parental participation yields high "returns" for offspring's future attendance *only* among families who also emphasize religiosity privately and at home. Those who do not include a religious home environment can expect a high likelihood that their offspring's attendance will decline. Perhaps such parents' frequent participation may not be primarily motivated by religious reasons (e.g., it could be a result of social pressure), which might therefore yield children more likely to stop attending once they leave home. Regardless of parents' participation levels, the "returns" on maintaining a strong religious environment for offspring's attendance are substantially higher for black Protestants than others. These parents who consider their faith very important, pray frequently, and talk about religion at home frequently are for some reason better able to contribute to socializing church attendance in their offspring than are parents in other denominations.

Among evangelical Protestants, both parental religious participation and environment seem to matter, net of other factors, for attendance outcomes. Consistent with subcultural identity theory (Smith 1998), both these socialization processes might strongly emphasize the importance of attendance. The *meaning* of attendance in relation to personal religiosity may thus vary across religious traditions, which would consequently affect how it is socialized by parents.

Church support, net of other factors, does not vary significantly across traditions. Apart from the marginally significant black Protestant effect, it does not have a direct net effect on

future attendance outcomes. Regular Sunday school attendance has a negative net effect for mainline Protestants, even if wave 1 attendance is the only control. Possibly these teenagers are obliged by parents to attend regular church services along with Sunday school classes, and once their Sunday school requirement is ended, they drop out of attending altogether, since they have no personal commitment to it. Ammerman (2005:9) finds in her research that "mainline Protestants often opt for Sunday school in lieu of worship for their children." Thus, after fulfilling a Sunday school course, dropping out of attending all church services may have become a culturally acceptable pattern among mainline Protestants. By contrast, among black Protestants, having attended Sunday school predicts increased attendance, while not having attended Sunday school is a strong predictor of attendance decline. This is not an institution that has received much scholarly attention, but ethnographic research on black Protestant Sunday schooling reveals its importance for socializing personal commitment to scripture, a sense of resilience, strong bonds between adults and children, and a shared sense of cultural history (Haight 1998). Thus, important differences are noted between mainline and black Protestants in the socialization at Sunday school, which generate a personal commitment to attendance only for black Protestants. Again, such settings deserve further comparative ethnographic study.

Private religious schooling has a net positive effect on attendance for evangelicals in comparison to Catholics, for whom it does not affect attendance outcomes. This supports Uecker's (2009) findings, which are also consonant with Smith's (1998) subcultural identity thesis. Evangelical religious schooling may serve to perpetuate distinct identities with clear boundaries, in ways similar to the way Catholic religious practices, less than a century ago, served to uphold a worldview and practices quite distinct from "mainstream" American society (Varacalli 2006). While Catholic schools persist and still remain important for Catholics, they usually do not perpetuate such religious distinctiveness today (Smith and Denton 2005:212–15; Uecker 2009). Thus, even though a higher percentage of Catholics attend religious schools, this factor yields less returns for attendance outcomes than it does for evangelicals.

Youth group involvement has a positive net effect on attendance outcomes for mainline Protestants, but not for other groups. Among mainline Protestants, youth groups seem to draw on the most religiously committed youth,[10] and their content may emphasize the importance of attendance. But this might not be the case in other groups. One study of Catholics that inquired into youth group activity suggests that they may serve primarily as a means of socializing with other teenagers (D'Antonio et al. 2007:82) rather than cultivating typical religious practices. Of course, variations would exist from group to group within denominations in this regard, but this study also suggests possible variations *between* traditions in the functioning of the average youth group.

Conclusions

The comparisons across religious traditions undertaken in this study explain most of the significant differences between them in the rates of declining attendance in emerging adulthood.

[10] I ran separate t-tests, within each RELTRAD group, to assess differences in various indicators of religious commitment (wave 1 attendance, traditional beliefs, faith-importance, and frequency of prayer) between those who do and do not attend youth group. I found that for all four religiosity variables, mainline Protestants had the largest and significantly higher differences between those who did and did not attend youth group. Evangelicals are next, followed by Catholics, and then black Protestants. (The ordering of these groups, interestingly, is the same for all four variables, although the differences are least pronounced for frequency of prayer.) The NSYR data do not allow us to assess whether youth group attendance is a cause or consequence of wave 1 religiosity, but we can at least say that the most religiously committed mainline Protestant youth tend to attend youth groups.

Despite Catholics having lower scores than other traditions on most socialization "resources" in wave 1, mainline Protestants by wave 3 show higher rates of decline and disaffiliation. This mismatch is at least partly explained by differential "returns" from the effects of key agents of socialization—for example, the higher rate of Sunday school attendance for mainline Protestants combined with its negative effect on attendance outcomes. Aside from these factors, distinct cultural effects could be at work. Part of the explanation for the Catholic-mainline difference may be that disaffiliation has become an acceptable route for mainline Protestants (Ammerman 2005; Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994). Being Catholic, on the other hand, is for some the equivalent of an ethnic or cultural category, making it unlikely that they would disaffiliate altogether (Dillon 1999; Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler 2007:1677). Consider some Hispanic immigrants, for example, and also descendants of immigrants from countries such as Poland or Italy, whose forebears endured persecution and ridicule as they tried to maintain their ethnic and cultural traditions during their years of assimilation. In such cases, agents of socialization might facilitate commitment to cultural and ethnic perceptions of one's tradition, which in turn sustain religious affiliation and at least occasional attendance.

Other factors help explain the relatively lower decline in attendance among evangelical Protestants. To some degree, the importance of socialization "resources" might matter here, since evangelicals have relatively high scores on most of these factors as well as positive returns for attendance outcomes. But evangelicals also seem to derive a much greater return from private religious schooling (which supports Uecker 2009), even though Catholics are more likely to attend religious schools. While Catholics derive a larger return from parental religious participation, they have very little of it to begin with. In addition, Catholic and mainline Protestant parents not only have lower levels of religious involvement than other traditions, but they may also be less demanding of their children when it comes to religious practice, especially in comparison to evangelicals. Evangelicals place a stronger emphasis on their children's obedience to authority, whereas mainline Protestants (and perhaps Catholic parents as well) tend to encourage autonomy and self-direction instead (Bartkowski 2007:514). Such strictness may serve to preserve and sustain practices such as attendance, which perpetuate subcultural cohesion and boundaries (Iannaccone 1994; Smith 1998).

Black Protestant emerging adults show the least decline in attendance, and their comparative advantage in this regard seems to be a function of parental religious environment and regular Sunday school attendance. While black Protestants derive a negative net effect from parental religious participation, they gain high returns from parental religious environment, of which they have very high initial levels. Black Protestants' higher rate of Sunday school attendance, along with their higher returns for attendance from this factor, also serve to explain the difference in rates of decline. Additional cultural factors may matter here as well, such as the importance of the Black church in sustaining religious and ethnic, as well as civic, identities and commitments (Chaves 2004:117; Steensland et al. 2000:294). The speculative nature of some of these explanations only underscores the fact that we simply do not have enough in-depth qualitative data on processes of religious socialization across different religious traditions—in families or in institutions such as Sunday school and youth groups—to understand how and why these differ. Given the predominance of the religious resources assumption in most previous studies, perhaps many scholars do not think there are any such differences to be studied at all.

Regarding the channeling hypothesis, the present study finds a persistent direct parental effect on offspring's future religiosity, rather than a primarily indirect effect mediated by other agents of socialization. Some specifics, however, vary across traditions. I have conceptualized parental religiosity here as including religious participation and religious environment. Both factors have persistent direct effects among evangelicals. Parental participation alone has a significant net effect among mainline Protestants and Catholics but parental religious environment is mostly mediated in these groups by other factors. Among black Protestants, only parental religious environment has a significant effect, unmediated by other factors. Given the large number of

parameters in the models in this article, the Jewish and Mormon samples in this survey were too small to yield reliable results and should be examined in future studies.

Curiously, the general effect of wave 1 parental religious participation remains significant despite controlling for wave 3 factors such as religious peers and living situations. Additional models (not shown) also controlled for wave 3 religious beliefs, faith-importance, and frequency of prayer, and even these did not eliminate the significant effect of this variable. These early parental influences might thus produce mechanisms that sustain attendance regardless of how "religious" one is. Early socialization of strong habits during adolescence might have an effect on practices that cannot easily be shaken off—these might be instances of conformity without internalization (Peterson, Rollins, and Thomas 1985). Alternatively, people may continue to attend church because of a reluctance to displease parents or significant others (Smith and Snell 2009:232), or because they feel they have already invested so much into a particular cultural practice. In other words, current religious behavior, while based in habits cultivated by religious behavior in the past, may now be motivated by reasons that are not specifically religious. It is also possible that the strength of the parental effect, in spite of all the controls included, reflects a generation or cohort effect. Because key rites of passage into adulthood (leaving home, getting married, and so on) are now delayed (Arnett 2000), parents may have a greater influence on offspring today than several decades ago. Another explanation might be that this parental effect persists simply because the duration considered is only five years; perhaps future waves of this study will yield different results.

The focus of this study is limited to attendance outcomes, but the approach offered here could also be tested on other religious outcomes (e.g., salience of faith, adherence to doctrinal beliefs, financial giving) and other life outcomes. Different agents of socialization may matter differently in different groups to sustain these outcomes. Additionally, religious decline during adolescence is not a one-way stream. Various pathways of return to religious practice, such as marriage, having children, and so on (Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995), can be better assessed as this sample grows older.

An important limitation of this study is that the methodology of multiple regression is suited primarily for discerning net effects—independent effects of a variable while holding all others constant—whereas in real life, any of these factors under consideration may work differently in conjunction with other factors (Ragin 2000). I do not intend to dismiss net effects as irrelevant; we can still merit from an understanding of why certain factors have strong independent effects in some groups but not others. Nevertheless, future studies should examine conjunctional effects using methods such as qualitative comparative analysis—for example, to assess under what conditions, or in combination with what other factors, might certain agents of socialization, such as Sunday school or private religious schooling, matter strongly for attendance outcomes, even in religious traditions in which their net effects may be negligible or negative.

To conclude, this study finds that agents of socialization differ in their effects across religious traditions. Future research should look into whether functional equivalents across traditions may exist for some of these agents of socialization (e.g., whether other kinds of peer groups might be more important than youth groups in sustaining religious outcomes). Further study along these lines—particularly, comparative ethnographies of families and congregations across religious traditions—can help us better understand how churches continue (or fail) to sustain commitment across generations.

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Supporting Information

The following supporting information is available for this article:

Appendix S1. Descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables, weighted.

Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at wileyonlinelibrary.com.

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