

2017

More Than Just Attendance: Individualistic Versus Collective Religious Socialization on Religious Change

Caitlin Halligan

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**MORE THAN JUST ATTENDANCE: INDIVIDUALISTIC VERSUS
COLLECTIVE RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION ON RELIGIOUS
CHANGE**

Caitlin Halligan

**Thesis submitted to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

**Master of Arts
in
Sociology**

**Christopher Scheitle, PhD, Chair
Katie Corcoran, PhD
Lisa Dilks, PhD**

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

**Morgantown, West Virginia
2017**

**Keywords: Religion, group membership, youth group, religious stability, religious
socialization
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Abstract

More Than Just Attendance: Individualistic Versus Collective Religious Socialization on Religious Change

Caitlin Halligan

With the recent rise in individuals not identifying with a religion, now is a prime time to research disaffiliation. Using data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, the present study examines whether or not collective religious participation in early adolescence, above and beyond individualistic religious participation, reduces the likelihood of disaffiliation in young adulthood. The results show that those who attended a religious youth group in early adolescence were less likely to disaffiliate in early adulthood than those who did not attend. Youth group seems to have a unique role in retaining youth involvement in the church.

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More Than Just Attendance: Individualistic Versus Collective Religious Socialization on Religious Change

Researchers have long been interested in the dynamics of religious switching. With the recent rise in individuals not identifying with a religion, the interest in religious switching has only grown. A lot of this rise can be attributed to Millennials (also known as Generation Y). Research has shown that one in four Millennials are not affiliated with any faith (Pond, Smith, & Clement 2010). In addition, unaffiliated Millennials tend to be male, formerly Catholic, and of Asian, Irish, or Jewish origins (Kosmin et al. 2009). Though there is a lot of research on predictors of religious disaffiliation, little research has examined how group experiences as a youth could have a unique role in retaining youth involvement.

The present study examines whether or not collective religious participation in early adolescence, above and beyond individualistic religious participation, reduces the likelihood of disaffiliation in young adulthood. Collective religious participation is conceptualized as practices that are specifically group-oriented and have a specific religious motive that would otherwise stop the group from existing. Individualistic religious participation is conceptualized as religious participation an individual does solely or willingly by his- or herself. Previous research has shown that prayer, reading scripture, and attendance leads to greater stability in one's religious affiliation, but does participation in collective religious practices make an additional significant difference? For example, imagine teen 1 and teen 2 both went to the same church regularly, prayed the same amount of times, and read scripture the same amount of times. However, teen 1 participated in youth group, went on mission trips, and attended religious summer camps, while teen 2 did not. Is teen 1 less likely to disaffiliate later in life due to the additional participation in collective religious activities?

BACKGROUND*Determinants of Youth Religiosity*

Before understanding why some individuals disaffiliate from their childhood religious tradition, we must first ask how those religious identities were formed in the first place. Parents remain the primary influence on the development of an adolescent's religious identity (Francis and Gibson 1993; Hoge and Petrillo 1978; Hunsberger and Brown 1984; Myers 1996; Ozorak 1989; Regnerus et al. 2004; Vaidyanathan 2011). Hoge and Petrillo (1978) found that parents have a very strong influence on their youths' church attendance patterns, mostly through their own behavior. One study found that parents' religious participation accounted for more than 60% of the variance in the religious beliefs and practices of their high school-aged children (Parker and Gaier 1980). If parents are not attending religious services, it is likely that the child is not either. This explains why parental divorce is associated with lower religious service attendance (Zhai et al. 2007). Parental conflict may arise if both parents previously attended the same church, so one parent might choose to stop attending, which may impact whether or not the child continues to go to religious services. Similarly, adolescents whose parents are married may be exposed to religion more than adolescents whose parents are single, as single parents tend to be less religious than parents of two-parent families (Regnerus and Uecker 2006; Zhai, Ellison, Glenn, and Marquardt 2007).

Adolescents' religiosity is also affected by their relationship with their parents. Research has shown that adolescents are more likely to conform to their parents' religion if they feel emotionally close to their parents (Hoge and Keeter 1976; Hunsberger 1983; Ozorak 1989; Sherkat and Wilson 1995). The relationship between a parent and child can be influential in the child's religiosity when approaching adulthood. Adolescents whose biological families remain

intact, whose parents both attend church regularly, who participate in family worship activities, and whose parents place a stronger emphasis on their religion in their childhood home are more likely to remain within their childhood religious “umbrella” when they emerge into adulthood (Dudley 1999; Hunsberger and Brown 1984).

In addition to parents, friends have an important role in adolescent religiosity. The religious beliefs and behaviors of parents and friends socialize youth into the norms and expectations of a religious group and therefore, adolescents are more apt to be religious if their parents and friends are (King, Furrow, Roth 2002). However, some researchers have found that family variables are weak predictors of adolescent religiosity (Desmond, Morgan, and Kikuchi 2010; Smith and Snell 2009). Gunnoe and Moore (2002) found that peer religiosity emerged as a better predictor of youth aged 17-22 than parental religiosity. “Adolescents who are attached to their peers have higher initial levels of religious service attendance” (Desmond, Morgan, and Kikuchi 2010: 265). In addition to service attendance, peers have a very strong influence on youth group participation and attitudes toward the group (Hoge and Petrillo 1978). Hoge and Petrillo (1978) found that those whose closest friends either participate in church youth programs or who go to the same church are more likely to participate in youth programs than those who do not. When adolescents are attached to their peers, they may be more influenced by their peers. Desmond, Morgan, and Kikuchi (2010) suggest that while they may gain more from religious interactions with their friends, they may also decrease their religiosity to accommodate or conform as their friends’ religiosity decreases. However, peers do not seem to influence beliefs as much as they influence participation. Researchers have found that while peer behaviors may have a strong effect on “public” forms of religious expression, such as religious service attendance, they do not have much of an effect on private belief, such as whether or not

religiosity is important (Cheadle and Schwadel 2012; Desmond, Morgan, and Kikuchi 2010; De Vaus 1983).

As adolescents emerge into adulthood, they may be exposed to more delinquent peers who engage in deviant behaviors. Smith and Denton (2005) found that associating with delinquent peers has been shown to negatively impact adolescent religiosity. Additionally, social networks may change as adolescents emerge into early adulthood. Americans' social networks are predominantly composed of those with similar religious beliefs, affiliations, and levels of religious participation (Cavendish, Welch, Lee 1998; Louch 2000; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, Cook 2001). Cheadle and Schwadel (2012) examined religiosity and friendships of adolescents from 7th to 12th grade from seven small schools and found that youth prefer friendships with those who are similar; though religious participation, devotion, and identification changed for many, such changes were systematically related to changes in their friendship network. Romantic relationships are also influential on adolescent religiosity. The religious beliefs of one's fiancé, spouse or serious boyfriend or girlfriend has been shown to influence one's religiosity (Wallace 1975). Overall, it is clear that there are many factors that retain youth from disaffiliating from their childhood religious beliefs and practices, but why does this change so drastically for some but not for others?

Disaffiliation

The Pew Research Center has issued their most recent report of religiosity in the United States. The findings showed "recent decrease in religious beliefs and behaviors largely attributable to the "nones" – the growing minority of Americans, particularly in the Millennial generation" (Smith and Cooperman 2015). In addition, research has found that those who say they believed in God dropped from 92% in 2007 to 89% in 2014 and that the religiously

unaffiliated has increased from 16% in 2007 to 23% in 2014 (Wormald 2015). With the decrease in religious beliefs among Millennials, and the increase of those who identify as unaffiliated, now is a prime time to further research on changes in religiosity.

Many have studied Millennials' religiosity and have found that of those who disaffiliate, thirty to forty percent disaffiliate as they emerge into adulthood (Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1993; Hunsberger and Brown 1984; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990). Kosmin et al. (2009) reported that of the "Nones" in America that presently make up 15% of the United States population, 22% of them are 18-29 years old. Some researchers have argued that going off to college diminishes religiosity. Capolitz and Sherrow (1977:109) describe college campuses as "a breeding ground for apostasy." The freedom individuals experience on a college campus allows emerging adults to "cease activities (such as church services) that they find uninteresting or devalued among peers, and to engage in actions that are at odds with their religious tradition's teachings" (Uecker, Regnerus, Vaaler 2007). At some point during their time at college, many students experiment with drugs and/or alcohol. Decline in religiosity has been shown to be inversely related to alcohol use and partying among young adults (Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno 2003; Engs and Mullen 1999; Uecker, Regnerus, Vaaler 2007; Wechsler and McFadden 1999). Uecker, Regnerus, Vaaler (2007) found that those who have smoked marijuana are twice as likely to disaffiliate than those who have not. In addition, students often develop romantic relationships during college and make the decision to cohabit. Cohabitation is often seen as sinful to many denominations who believe that a couple shouldn't reside together unless they are married. Research has linked cohabitation to a decline in religiosity, and about 40% of American women aged 20-29 cohabit (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995; Thorton,

Axinn, and Hill 1992; Uecker, Regnerus, Vaaler 2007). It may not necessarily be college that influences religiosity, but rather the activities one engages in while attending.

Research has been ambiguous on the impact of college. Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) examined the social sources of religious decline and found that those who did not attend college and two-year college students are 61 and 54 percent more likely to disaffiliate than four-year college students. They suggest that college is not a determinant of disaffiliation. Today, students go off to college because many jobs that previously only required a high school education now require a college degree. Students are more concerned with economic production and financial success and less about morals and beliefs. They are less likely to enroll in classes that challenge their faith (Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler 2007). Other than education, there are many other factors that contribute to disaffiliation.

The American “Nones” are typically younger and male (Bainbridge 2005; Garza, Garcia-Mundoz, and Neuman 2013; Hayes 2000; Kosmin and Keysar 2006), raised Catholic (Garza, Garcia-Mundoz, and Neuman 2013; Kosmin et al. 2009), and from the West Coast (Hale 1977; Killen and Silk 2004; Kosmin and Keysar 2006). Class has not been shown to be a distinguishing characteristic of declining religiosity, but race, however, is. Kosmin et al. (2009) reported that Latinos have tripled their proportion among “Nones” from 1990-2008 and that those of Asian, Irish, and Jewish descent are the most secularized ethnic groups. Another important demographic among the “Nones” is their political affiliation. Forty two percent of Nones consider themselves to be Independent, 34% Democrats, and 13% Republicans (Kosmin et al. 2009). This may be due to the fact that disaffiliating is still relatively taboo and more liberal political affiliations may be more accepting of this than more conservative political affiliations.

There are also denominational differences among those who disaffiliate. Garza, Garcia-Mundo, and Neuman (2013) examined individuals who once identified with a religion and later disaffiliated. Using data that consisted of 15,000 subjects from 32 Western countries, they found that 9% of women and 14% of men converted out of the religion in which they were raised. Of those who disaffiliated, 53.7% identified Catholicism as their original denomination, 39.9% identified previously with Protestantism, 2.9% with Orthodox, 2.9% with Judaism, and 3% with other religions. A report on the religious “nones” showed that 24% of the current “nones” were previously Catholic (Kosmin et al. 2009). Previously being Catholic seems to be associated with disaffiliation, perhaps due to lower levels of social integration and lack of church activities for youth to participate in compared to other denominations. The Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study (Smith and Cooperman 2015) explains the relatively high level of disaffiliation of Catholics. Researchers found that Catholics had the lowest level of involvement in their congregation with 84% saying they have a low/medium level of involvement in their congregation.

Declining levels of participation contributes significantly to disaffiliation. Although two-thirds of people with a religious preference attended church services several times a year or more, only 12 percent of persons with no religious preference attended more than once a year” (Hout and Fischer 2002:174-175). Few people with no religious preference participate in religious activities, though 93% reported praying sometimes (Hout and Fischer 2002). Over time, those with no religious preference may decide to disaffiliate altogether. Declining levels of participation may also be due to problems one has with their church. Using Gallup national survey data, Perry, Davis, Doyle, and Dyble (1980) discovered that individuals who had disaffiliated cited specific conflicts with the church, its theology, its members, life-style

incompatibility, or feeling that it was unhelpful to their personal life. Albrecht et al. (1988) and Hoge (1981) had similar outcomes, finding that frequent reasons for leaving the church were due to life changes such as geographical or schedule changes, lack of belonging, marriage to someone who does not attend, and specific problem with the church (issues with leaders, doctrines, members, etc).

Other than understanding certain characteristics that are associated with (or can contribute to) disaffiliation, it is important to understand the process of disaffiliation. Barbour (1994) identified four characteristics associated with the process of disaffiliation: Intellectual doubt, moral criticism, emotional suffering, and disaffiliation. The first two address causal factors that precipitate disaffiliation, while the last two address how the individuals talk about the process of their disaffiliation. Fazzino (2014) had similar findings in her qualitative study on Evangelical exit narratives. The first stage of disaffiliation, pre-conversion, addressed the spiritual doubt and emotional distress individuals had that caused them to reevaluate their beliefs. Fazzino (2014) reported that the individuals felt a disconnect between what they were learning in the classroom versus what was being taught at church. Several individuals discussed issues with pastors who would make claims such as “the earth is less than 10,000 years old” and other anti-science assertions. The second stage, cognitive deconversion, is the movement from belief to non-belief, where individuals explore other things, such as atheist literature, that made them confront their beliefs. The final stage, post-deconversion, is the cognitive and social activities that an individual undertakes in order to change his/her worldview. Here the individual exerts a change in social activities that align with their new identity and social needs. Other research, such as Smith (2011) and his research on atheists, have found similar processes in which he classifies as “four stages in the construction of an atheist identity in America: the starting point:

the ubiquity of theism, questioning theism, rejecting theism, and 'coming out' atheist" (Smith 2010:219). Questioning religiosity seems to play a major role in the process of disaffiliation.

What exactly leads some to question their faith and others to not? I argue that social cohesion and group membership in the church play an important role in whether or not one questions, and eventually leaves, their faith.

Group Membership and Social Cohesion

Understanding group membership and collective experiences among individuals is not new to the field of sociology. Strangor (2004:57) explains that "people join groups for the benefits that the groups provide them, and they leave groups (if they can) if those benefits are not greater than the costs that accrue from being a group member." Being a member of a group can help accomplish goals, can provide psychological well-being, can provide the feeling of acceptance and belonging, and can even provide a sense of safety and security (Stangor 2004). Groups are considered cohesive when "group-level conditions are producing positive membership attitudes and behaviors and when group members' interpersonal interactions are operating to maintain these group-level conditions" (Friedkin 2004). People often belong to several different social groups. Hanks and Eckland (1978) found that membership in adult voluntary associations was significantly related to extracurricular activity involvement during adolescence. More specifically, Perks and Haan (2011) found that religious involvement as a youth has significant predictive import in explaining adult levels of community participation. If adolescents are participating in religious group activities when they are younger, will they be more likely to continue religious group activities as they emerge into adulthood?

In Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915/1965), he argued that religion is legitimated through moments of collective effervescence, where individuals come together as a group and experience intense, electrifying, religious experiences that allow them to engage in emotional solidarity and group unity. Such an experience cannot be achieved without a collective group sharing the same ideas and participating in the same action. Rituals created by members of a religious community provide a sense of emotional solidarity that Durkheim argued was so important for social order. Today, modern religions maintain moral communities that provide collective effervescence and emotional solidarity every week during their church services. However, while attending church can be a collective experience, the standard motions are highly individualized today as church size has grown. Nearly a third of all U.S. worshippers attend congregations with 1,000 or more in weekly attendance (Chaves 2004). This may explain why so many studies have found a rise in those with no religious preference and decreased church attendance but not a decline in belief. Perhaps this decline has to do with those participating in religious services that do not create the emotional solidarity they desire. Other forms of religious participation that are more collective, such as youth groups, Bible studies, prayer groups, participation in a church choir, and so forth may be more important for retaining church members.

Specifically among adolescents, collective religious practices, such as those previously mentioned, may be more influential in retaining religious faith than individualistic religious practices, such as praying or reading the Bible. Those who participate collective types of religious practices are more likely to attend church (Dougherty and Whitehead 2010; Smith et al. 2002; Snell 2009; Trinitapoli and Vaisey 2009). In a study on small groups within a church, Dougherty and Whitehead (2010) found that being involved in a small, intimate gathering with

fellow worshippers was related to positive religious outcomes for individuals. The individuals in their study expressed that they initially did not intend to return to the [large] church, but found a place to belong through a small group. This type of small group belonging can be attributed to what Randall Collins (2004) would describe as emotional entrainment, where the individuals interacting together in a youth group, Bible study, et cetera become entrained in each other. This involves a shared mood, sense of effervescence, and excitement in the interaction. This allows the individuals in the group to feel entrained and feed off of each other's responses with high emotional energy and creating solidarity among the group. Such experiences are more likely to contribute to a stable religious identity because of the unique religious experience one gets in a group that cannot be experienced through individualistic religious participation. The individuals who were involved in small groups devoted to prayer, discussion, or Bible study reported a greater sense of belonging, more frequent attendance, and higher rates of giving. Snell (2009) examined religious youth group participation outcomes and found that those who participated in youth group when they were 13-17 years old did not find church boring, wished to attend more frequently, and also planned to continue attending when 25 years old. Hoge and Petrillo (1978) also found one indicator for disaffiliation among young adults—dropping out of Sunday school participation. Participating in religious groups as a youth is clearly beneficial for keeping children active church members.

In addition to youth group and Sunday school, mission trips are another way to collectively participate in a religious group. Using the National Study of Youth and Religion, Trinitapoli and Vaisey (2009) examined various dimensions of youth religiosity at Wave 1 (2003), the occurrence of a mission trip between waves, and changes in religiosity at Wave 2 (2005). They found that the effect of going on a short-term mission trip was statistically

significant for a variety of outcomes related to religious belief and practices. In particular, individuals who went on a mission trip were less likely to have doubt about their belief in God, were more likely to have increased feelings of closeness to God, were more likely to agree that it is okay to convert others, had an increase in church attendance, private Bible reading and prayer, and an increased likelihood of actually proselytizing individuals of a different faith (Trinitapoli and Vaisey 2009: 138). This research indicates that collective religious practice is indeed a transformative and valuable experience for religious individuals.

Youth participation represents the development of relationships, bonding, and in group loyalties (Goreham 2004). Youth ministry programs, according to Garland (1997), offer opportunities for youth to build social capital through participation with their peers to address their social and spiritual needs, such as spiritual growth, identity formation, and cognitive interest. Lofland and Stark (1965) discovered that in order for a religious conversion to occur, a person must experience, within a religious problem solving perspective, enduring, acutely-felt tensions that lead him to define himself as a religious seeker; he must encounter the cult at a turning point in his life; within the cult an affective bond must be formed and any extra-cult attachments, neutralized; and there he must be exposed to intensive interactions if he is to become a deployable agent. Though this research focused on cults, it can be applied to any type of religious conversion or lack thereof. In this research, I argue that those involved in collective religious practices in early adolescence are less likely to question or change their religious identity because they share an affective bond, attachment, and intensive interaction with other members participating in the collective religious practices, whereas those who do not are not exposed to this experience of bonding and group cohesion. For example, Jenny and Jessica both went to the same church regularly, prayed the same amount of times, and read scripture the same

amount of times. However, Jenny participated in youth group, went on mission trips, and attended religious summer camps, while Jessica did not. Is Jenny less likely disaffiliate later in life due to the additional participation in collective religious activities?

PRESENT STUDY

The present study examines whether or not collective religious participation in early adolescence, above and beyond individualistic religious participation, influences disaffiliation in young adulthood. Previous research has shown that prayer, reading scripture, and attendance leads to greater stability in one's religious affiliation, but does participation in collective religious practices make an additional significant difference?

Data, Measures, and Methods

Using the National Study of Youth and Religion, I hypothesize that those participating in early collective religious practices are less likely to disaffiliate from their religion by young adulthood. The Wave 1 data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (Smith and Denton 2003) includes a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 English and Spanish-speaking teenagers between 13 and 17 and their parents. Parent interviews were conducted with either the mother or father, based on whoever was available. If the biological mother or father was not available, other parent-like figures were eligible to complete the parent person of the survey (e.g., step-parents, resident grandparents, resident partners of parents).

Wave 1 was collected from July, 2002, to April, 2003 by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill using a random-digit-dial method. Random-digit-dialing allows equal representation of all listed, not-yet-listed, and unlisted telephone numbers. The teenagers interviewed lived in the household for at least six months out of the year. If there were multiple teenagers in the house, the one with the most recent birthday was interviewed in order to

randomize responses. The Wave 3 data attempted to re-interview all English speaking Wave 1 youth survey respondents and was collected between September 2007 and April 2008 using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing system. The respondents were between ages 18 and 24 at the Wave 3 interview. Because I am interested in early childhood religious practices and the effects it has on early adulthood, Wave 1 and 3 data was most appropriate. Of the eligible 3,282 Wave 1 respondents, 2,532 participated in the Wave 3 survey making the completion rate 77.1%. The sample used in this analysis consisted of 1,704 participants. Those who did not participate in both Wave 1 and Wave 3, and those who were coded as missing on any of the variables were left out of the analysis.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was created to measure whether or not the teen had disaffiliated from their religion at the time of Wave 1 by Wave 3. The original variables used to create the disaffiliation variable were RELTRAD and TRADREL, which measured the teens' religious tradition at Wave 1 and Wave 3. Adolescents who remained affiliated between Wave 1 and Wave 3 were coded as 0, while those who disaffiliated between the waves were coded as 1. Those who remained affiliated were not necessarily the same denomination at both Waves. Such individuals were coded as 1 unless they specifically went from an affiliation to "not religious" because I was not interested in denominational switches, just if the participant left religion altogether. I was also not interested if participants went from being not religious to being affiliated, so the analysis was limited to respondents who had a Wave 1 religious affiliation.

Independent Variables

The teen respondent's Wave 1 religious tradition was measured with a series of dichotomous indicators representing Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, Black

Protestants, Catholics, Jewish, Mormons, and “Other”. The variable was created by the researchers of the National Study of Youth and Religion and was based off the RELTRAD method in Steensland et al. (2001). The variable was based on the type of religious congregation the teen said they attended, and if the church type provided was not sufficient to place them into a category, other variables from both the parent and the teen were used to make a determination. The religious tradition categories are included as a series of dichotomous indicators in the analysis with Evangelical Protestants serving as the reference category. Evangelical Protestant was chosen as the reference category due to extensive research that indicates Evangelicals to have increasingly high retention rates (Iannaccone 1994; Sherkat 2001; Smith and Cooperman 2015).

Teen attendance at Wave 1 was not included in either the “collective religious participation” variables or the “individualistic religious participation” variables. The justification for excluding attendance from these categories was that attendance may not necessarily be collective religious participation. One may attend a service and have no interaction with those around them, making it a personal, more individualistic experience. The collective religious participation variables chosen more accurately portray group-oriented religious participation.

Collective religious participation variables. In this study, collective religious participation is conceptualized as practices that are specifically group-oriented and have a specific religious motive that would otherwise stop the group from existing. In both Wave 1 and Wave 3, respondents were asked the following questions that were used to measure collective religious practices: The first question asked, “How many times, if any, have you ever gone on a religious missions team or religious service project?” with possible answers ranging from 0-20. The “don’t know” or “refused” responses were treated as missing data. A second question asked,

“Are you CURRENTLY involved in ANY religious youth group?” with possible answers of 1) No, 2) Yes, 3) “Don’t know.” The “don’t know” responses were treated as missing data. A third question asked “How many TOTAL times, if any, have you been a camper at a summer camp run by a religious organization with religious teachings or songs in its program?” with possible answers ranging from 0-20. The “don’t know” or “refused” responses were treated as missing data. The collective religious participation variables were also checked for multicollinearity. The correlations among the collective variables showed a positive, weak, correlation (Evans 1996) which ranged from 0.31 to 0.37. This shows that the variables were different enough to be good predictors on the dependent variable than if they were highly correlated with one another.

Individualistic religious participation variables. In this study, individualistic religious participation is conceptualized as religious participation an individual does solely or willingly by his or her self. In both Wave 1 and Wave 3 respondents were asked the following questions that were used to measure individualistic religious practices. The first question asked, “How often, if ever, do you pray by yourself alone?” Possible responses were 1) Never, 2) Less than once a month, 3) One to two times a month, 4) About once a week, 5) A few times a week, 6) About once a day, or 7) Many times a day. A second question asked, “How often, if ever, do you read from the Bible to yourself alone?” Possible responses were 1) Never, 2) Less than once a month, 3) One to two times a month, 4) About once a week, 5) A few times a week, 6) About once a day, or 7) Many times a day. The “don’t know” responses were treated as missing data.

Control Variables

In Wave 1, adolescents were between the ages of 13 and 17 and most were still living with their parent(s). With that being said, I controlled for parent’s religious attendance. A question asked to the responding parent during the telephone interview at Wave 1 “In the last 12

MONTHS, how often have you been attending religious services, not including weddings, baptisms, and funerals?” After reverse coding the response choices were 1) Never, 2) Few times a year, 3) Many times a year, 4) Once a month, 5) 2-3 times a month, 6) Once a week, and 7) More than once a week. Additionally, I controlled for whether or not the teen attended a different congregation than the responding parent in Wave 1, which was coded as “0” if the teen attended the same congregation and “1” if the teen attended a different congregation.

Several demographic and socioeconomic variables known to affect religiosity were included in this analysis. The analysis controls for sex (male=0, female=1), age at Wave 1 (range=13-17), and whether or not the teen moved between Wave 1 and Wave 3 (1=moved). I created the moved variable by using the Census division variables in Wave 1 and Wave 3. If the respondent remained in the same division between Wave 1 and Wave 3 it was coded as 0, and if the respondent moved divisions between waves it was coded as 1. The question used to measure teen’s race was recoded to combine several of the response categories into one. Asian and Islander were collapsed into one response, along with Mixed and Other. The recoded responses ranged from 1-6, being 1) White, 2) Black, 3) Hispanic, 4) Asian/Islander, 5) Native American, and 6) Mixed/Other. These categories are included as a series of dichotomous indicators in the analysis with White serving as the reference category. The respondent’s marital status at Wave 3 was also recoded into a dichotomous variable with 1 being single and 2 being married. Original response choices “married but separated”, “divorced”, and “widowed” were all recoded into the “single” category for the purpose of this analysis. Less than 1% of the respondents reported that they were married but separated, divorced, or widowed. The teen’s level of education at Wave 3 was recoded into the following categories 0) Not in school, 1) High school, 2) Vocational school, technical school, community college, and other, and 3) College or university. The original teen

education level had separate categories for vocational or technical school, community/junior college, and other, but these categories were collapsed into one due to their similarities. Parent education was also controlled for and measured on a three-point scale with the categories being 1) Less than 12th grade, 2) Completed high school, and 3) Beyond high school. Because parent income may impact whether or not a teen could attend a mission trip or religious summer camp, parent income was controlled for and was measured on an eleven-point scale compromised of \$10,000 increments up to \$100,000 or more.

Analytic Approach

The analysis for this research begins with a brief overview of the disaffiliation rates among the different denominations and an overview of the collective religious participation and individualistic participation among the different denominations (See Tables 2 and 3). I continue the analysis by utilizing logistic regression models (N=1704) to predict disaffiliation between Wave 1 and 3 based on the different types of religious participation (collective and individualistic). The analysis used a longitudinal weight that was specifically calculated for analyzing data from Wave 3 with Wave 1 data. The new weight was developed with a simple correction factor that was applied within each region-income stratum (defined by the four census regions and five income levels at Wave 1) to adjust the weight for each individual. It also accounted for the change in the distribution of the respondents by census regions and income groups resulting from Wave 3 sample attrition.

RESULTS

The sample (N=1704) in this study was predominately White (68.60%), Single (94.25%), and Evangelical (37.97%) or Catholic (27.46%). There was a relatively equal representation of males (47.65%) and females (52.35%), and the mean age of the teen at the time of Wave 1 was

14.98 (See Table 1). A majority of the teens at Wave 1 had been on at least one religious mission trip and/or religious summer camp, and about half were involved in a youth group.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables (N= 1704)

	Mean/%	Standard Deviation	Range
Disaffiliated Between Wave 1 and 3	16.51%		
Wave 1 Religious Tradition			
Evangelical Protestant	37.97%	--	--
Mainline Protestant	13.67%	--	--
Black Protestant	13.09%	--	--
Catholic	27.46%	--	--
Jewish	1.58%	--	--
Mormon/LDS	3.29%	--	--
Other	2.93%	--	--
Wave 1 Teen Attendance	3.85	1.92	0-6
Wave 1 Collective Participation			
Mission Trips	1.06	2.50	0-20
Religious Summer Camp	1.55	2.80	0-20
Youth Group	.47	.50	0-1
Wave 1 Individualistic Participation			
Pray Alone	4.73	1.85	1-7
Read Scripture	2.82	1.74	1-7
Controls			
Parent Income	6.26	2.85	1-11
Parent Education	2.67	.58	1-3
Parent Attendance	5.09	1.77	1-7
Teen Sex			
Male	47.65%	--	--
Female	52.35%	--	--
Teen Age	14.98	1.39	13-17
Teen Race			
White	68.60%	--	--
Black	17.08%	--	--
Hispanic	9.86%	--	--
Asian/Islander	1.53%	--	--
Native American	1.00%	--	--
Mixed/Other	1.94%	--	--

Teen Education Wave 3	1.65	1.34	0-3
Teen Marital Status Wave 3			
Single	94.25%	--	--
Married	5.75%	--	--
Teen Moved Between Waves	.00	.06	0-1
Different Congregation Than Parent in Wave 1	13%		

Of the teens who had a religious affiliation in Wave 1, a total of 287 of them disaffiliated by Wave 3. As seen in Table 2, 16.51% of the 1,704 respondents disaffiliated between Waves 1 and 3. The highest rate of disaffiliation is seen among Jewish respondents, with 35.44% disaffiliating between Wave 1 and Wave 3. The second largest group to disaffiliate was the other religion group with 27.96%, followed by Mainline Protestants and Catholics. Black Protestants had the lowest number of adolescents who disaffiliated, with only 10.68% disaffiliating between Waves. Evangelical Protestants and Mormons also had fewer adolescents disaffiliate, 12.87% and 13.27% respectively. Overall, denominations experienced at least 10% or more adolescents who disaffiliated as they emerged into adulthood. This shows that the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood is indeed a vulnerable time for disaffiliation.

Table 2: Percent of Respondents Who Were Disaffiliated in Wave 3 by Wave 1 Religious Affiliation

Wave 1 Affiliation	% Disaffiliated in Wave 3
Evangelical Protestant	12.87%
Mainline Protestant	21.33%
Black Protestant	10.68%
Catholic	19.70%
Jewish	35.44%
Mormon/LDS	13.27%
Other	27.96%
Total	16.51%

N=1704

Using the first and third waves of the National Study of Youth and Religion, I hypothesize that participation in collective religious practices at the first wave will reduce the

likelihood of disaffiliation by the third wave. Group membership allows people to experience a shared sense of belonging and group transcendence, creating emotional solidarity and social cohesion. Those who participate in collective religious activities have an additional added experience in relation to those who only participate in individualistic religious practices. Therefore, the individuals not participating in collective religious activities are not experiencing social cohesion/emotional solidarity and are more likely to disaffiliate from a religion than those who are.

Figures 1 and 2 examine the prevalence of individualistic and collective religious practices across the traditions. The individualistic practices show that on average, Evangelical Protestants and Black Protestants pray alone more than any of the other denominations, with a mean of 5.17 and 5.15. Jewish teens pray the least on average, with a mean of 2.59. Evangelicals also tend to read scripture alone more than other denominations, with the exception of Mormons who have a mean of 3.54. In addition to praying alone the least, Jewish teens also read scripture alone the least with a mean of 1.67. On average, most denominations tend to pray alone more than they read scripture alone. This may be due to busy schedules and little time to sit down and read scripture. It is easier to pray alone because one can pray while driving, walking from one distance to another, and so forth, whereas reading scripture requires time set aside to devote to reading. Overall, in descending order, Mormons, Evangelical Protestants, and Black Protestants engage in individualistic practices the most, while Jews tend to engage the least.

Figure 1. N=1704

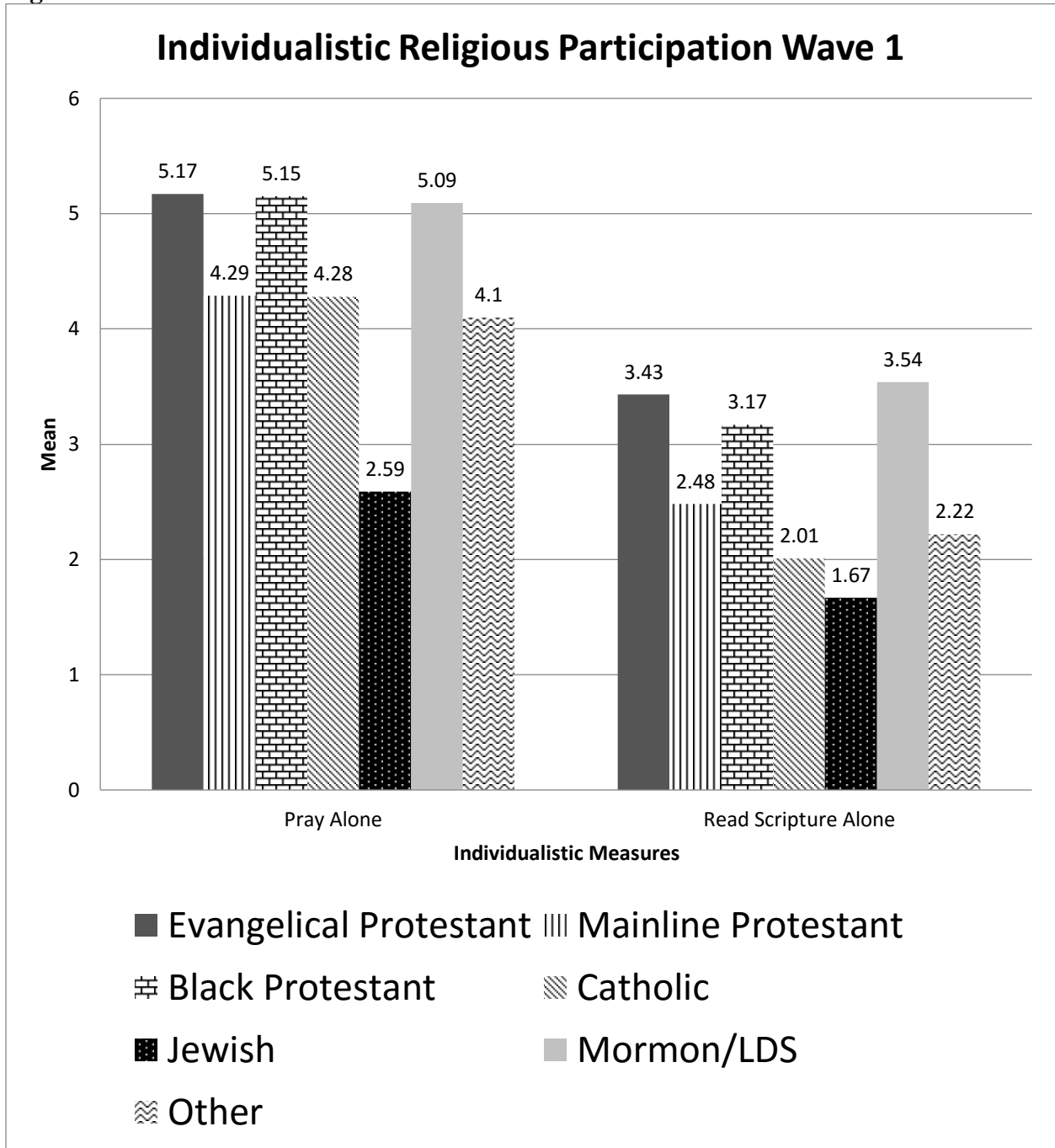
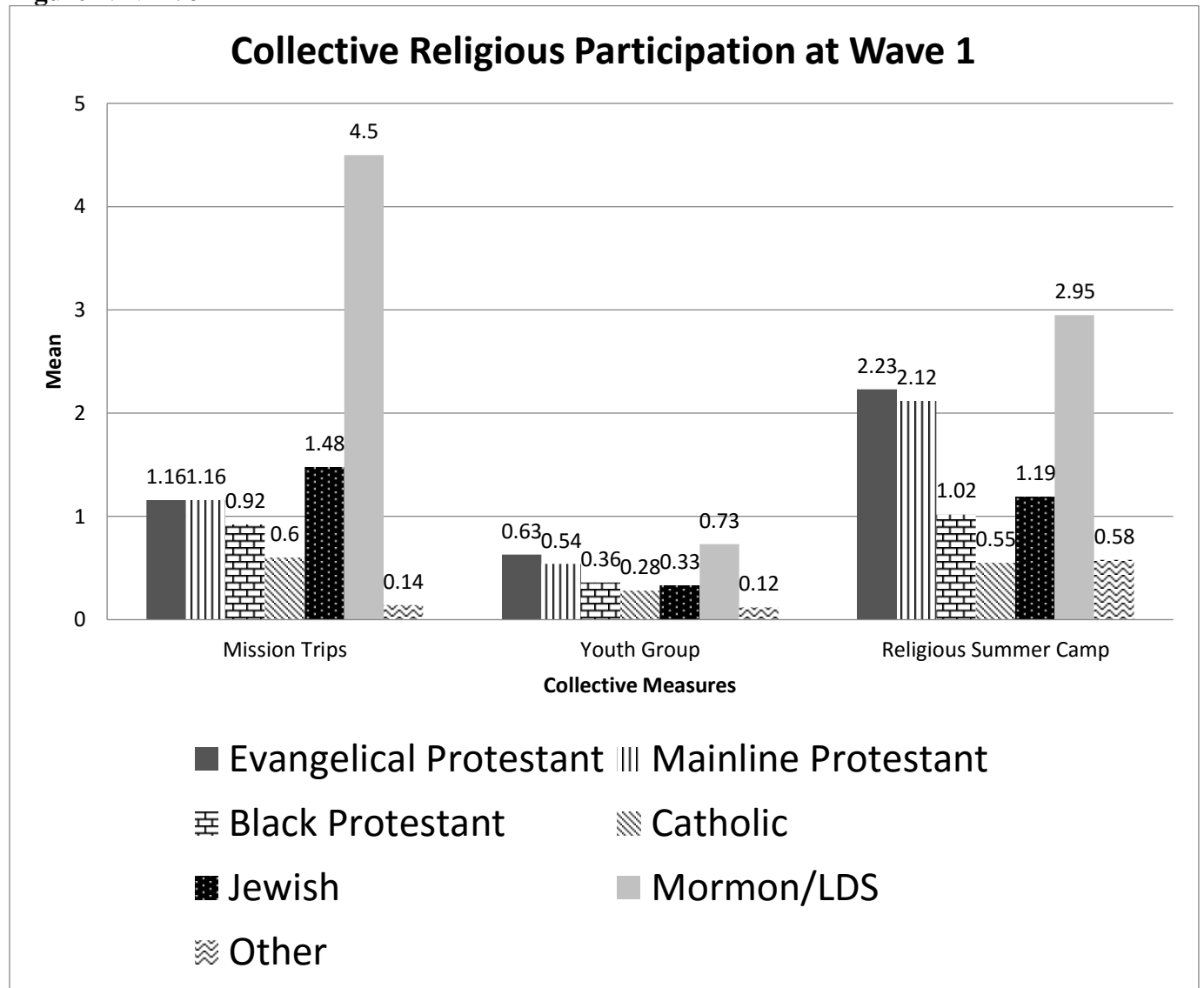


Figure 2. N=1704



The collective practices shown in Figure 2 show that, unsurprisingly, Mormons are the most likely to go on religious mission trips with an average of 4.50 times in their lifetime, while Catholics and “Other” are the least likely. The higher rate of Mormons participating in religious mission trips can be explained by the rite of passage that many Mormons between the ages of 19-

23 participate in. Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, and Mormon teens on average were involved in some type of religious youth group in Wave 1 whereas few Black Protestant, Catholics, Jewish, and “Other” were. In addition, Mormon youth were also the most likely to attend a summer camp run by a religious organization. Mormon teens have been a camper at a religious summer camp a total of 2.95 times in their life. Catholics and “Other” were the least likely to have attended a religious summer camp, only reporting to have attended .55 and .58 times respectively. Of all the collective religious practices combined, Mormons had a substantially higher rate of participation with a mean of 8.18, followed by Evangelical Protestants (4.02), Mainline Protestants (3.82), Jews (3.00), Black Protestants (2.30), Catholics (1.43), and “Other” (.84).

Looking at both individualistic and collective practices, it appears that Mormons have the highest level of religious participation overall among the traditions, followed by Evangelical Protestants, Black Protestants, Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jewish, and Other. Though Jewish teens had the lowest level of individualistic participation, it appears they engage in collective practices more than Black Protestants, Catholics, and “Other”. Mormons participate in collective religious activities far more than the other denominations. The descriptive statistics show that collective religious participation is a unique aspect of religious involvement that is specific to some denominations and not others. How does this type of participation retain adolescents involved in the church over time?

Using logistic regression, I predict being unaffiliated at the time of Wave 3 for all of the adolescents that responded in both Wave 1 and Wave 3. Model 1 focuses solely on denominational differences, controlling for other factors. The odds of disaffiliating between Waves 1 and 3 for Mainline Protestants is 1.93 times higher than Evangelical Protestants

($p < .001$). Catholics are 1.66 times more likely than Evangelical Protestants to disaffiliate between waves ($p < .01$). It is not surprising that Mainline Protestants and Catholics were significantly more likely to disaffiliate than Evangelical Protestants, since the descriptive statistics for Mainline Protestants and Catholics showed a higher percentage than other denominations for being disaffiliated by Wave 3. Jews, Mormons, and “Other” were not statistically different from Evangelical Protestants.

Looking further down Model 1, I find that those young adults whose parents attended religious services more frequently in Wave 1 have significantly reduced odds of disaffiliation compared to those whose parents did not attend frequently (O.R.=0.74; $p < .001$). If parents are attending services, it makes sense that their children were as well, which will increase their chances of staying affiliated than if they did not attend services as a child. Additionally, the odds of females disaffiliating were 0.67 times lower than males ($p < .01$). Similarly, respondents who were still in high school in Wave 3 (O.R.=.21, $p < .001$) or who were in college in Wave 3 (O.R.=.44, $p < .001$) have significantly lower odds of being disaffiliated compared to those who are not in school. As previously mentioned, some research has suggested that college is associated with a decline in religiosity and higher rates of disaffiliation. However, the research presented here shows that those who attend a college or university are .44 times *less likely* to disaffiliate compared to those who are not in school, while those who were in high school were .22 times less likely to disaffiliate compared to those not in school. It seems that college may actually have more of an impact on staying affiliated than high school does. Also, those in college who lived in group quarters, such as a dorm, sorority, etc. were, though not significantly different, less likely to disaffiliate than those who still lived with their parents. Living in group quarters may be more influential on religious retention than previously thought. Compared to

Whites, Asian/Islanders were 3.10 times more likely to disaffiliate ($p < .05$). Though the other races were not significantly different from Whites, Asian/Islanders had a much greater odd of disaffiliating compared to the other groups. This may be explained by the fact that Asians are disproportionately male, well educated, and residents of the West, which have all been shown to influence religiosity. It may also be due to the fact that there are low levels of religiosity in many Asian countries, such as Japan and China (Kosmin et al. 2009). The only other group that was more likely to disaffiliate than Whites was Mixed/Other, though they were not significantly different.

Model 2 expands upon Model 1, but specifically examines the effects of collective religious participation in predicting disaffiliation by Wave 3. Mainline Protestants are still significantly more likely than Evangelical Protestants to disaffiliate by Wave 3, 1.85 times more likely to be exact ($p < .05$), even when controlling for collective participation. Though Mainline Protestants are still more likely to disaffiliate than Evangelical Protestants, this model shows that collective religious participation reduces the odds slightly. Though insignificant, it reduces the odds for all other denominations as well compared to Model 1. The collective participation measures show that those who are involved in a religious youth group at the time of Wave 1 are .36 times less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 than those who were not involved in a youth group at Wave 1 ($p < .001$). Though not significant, going on religious mission trips and/or attending a summer camp run by a religious organization has no effect on whether or not one is more likely to disaffiliate. This is likely due to the fact that mission trips and summer camps are normally a short amount of time once a year, whereas youth group is normally, at the very least, weekly. Meeting with a group weekly allows for closer bonds and attachments to be made, and will likely keep the members coming back each week. Similar to Model 1, those whose parents attend

religious services, those in high school, and those in college are all significantly less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 compared to those who did not attend and were not in school ($p < .001$). Those who identified as Asian/Islander were still more likely (2.93 times more likely) to disaffiliate by Wave 3 ($p < .05$). Though not significantly different from males, Model 2 shows that females are .73 less likely than males to disaffiliate. This increased the odds compared to females in Model 1, which shows that in addition to being more religious in general, females may be more influenced from group membership than males. Overall, when comparing Model 1 and 2, Model 2 shows that the collective participation measures reduce the likelihood of disaffiliation by Wave 3.

Model 3 expands upon Model 1 as well, but specifically examines the effects of individualistic religious participation in predicting disaffiliation by Wave 3. Controlling for individualistic measures no longer significantly predicts whether or not Mainline Protestants are more or less likely than Evangelical Protestants to disaffiliate by Wave 3. The individualistic measures show that there is statistically significant evidence that those who pray by themselves alone are .77 times less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 than those who do not pray alone. This is not surprising after examining the descriptive statistics that showed most denominations were likely to pray more than read scripture. Even though there is not a statistically significant difference, those who read scripture alone seem to be less likely to disaffiliate than those who do not. Similar to Models 1 and 2, those whose parents attend religious services, those in high school, and those in college are all significantly less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 ($p < .001$). Interestingly, Similar to Models 1 and 2, Model 3 showed that the odds of disaffiliating for high schoolers and college students was significantly lower compared to those who were not in school. Asian/Islanders are still significantly more likely (2.80 times more likely) to disaffiliate

by Wave 3 compared to Whites, but controlling for individualistic participation slightly reduces the likelihood of Asian/Islanders disaffiliating ($p < .05$) compared to Model 1. Those who identified as Mixed/Other were 2.78 times more likely to disaffiliate compared to Whites ($p < .05$).

Model 4 examines whether attending religious services in Wave 1, not controlling for the individualistic and collective participation measures, makes a difference in predicting disaffiliation by Wave 3. Mainline Protestants once again become significantly more likely (1.77 times more likely) than Evangelical Protestants to disaffiliate by Wave 3 ($p < .05$). This shows that attendance is significantly less important for keeping adolescents from disaffiliating for Mainline Protestants compared to Evangelical Protestants. Those who attended religious services in Wave 1 were .76 times less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 than those who were not attending ($p < .001$). Similar to the previous models, those whose parents attend religious services, those in high school, and those in college are all significantly less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 ($p < .001$). Asian/Islanders were still significantly more likely (2.90 times more likely) to disaffiliate by Wave 3 compared to Whites ($p < .05$).

Model 5 examines all the measures together. Mainline Protestants are no longer significantly more likely to disaffiliate than Evangelical Protestants. Even though there is not a significant difference, Mormons are less likely to disaffiliate than Evangelical Protestants whereas they were more likely in all the other models. Other and Catholics are no more or no less likely to disaffiliate than Evangelical Protestants controlling for other factors. Though attending services as shown in Model 4 is significant for Mainline Protestants, controlling for collective and individualistic measures seems to diminish that importance. The results show that those who were attending religious services during Wave 1 were .84 times less likely to

disaffiliate by the time of Wave 3 compared to those who were not attending services ($p < .001$).

Of the individualistic measures, those who reported praying by themselves alone in Wave 1 were .80 times less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 than those who did not pray by themselves alone ($p < .001$). There was still no significant difference for those who read scripture alone compared to Model 3. Youth group remained to have a significant effect on predicting disaffiliation, controlling for other factors. Those who attended youth group at the time of Wave 1 were .56 times less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 than those who did not attend youth group ($p < .05$).

This shows that youth group, above and beyond attendance and individualistic religious factors, helps to retain youth in the church as they emerge into adulthood. Mission trips and summer camps remained to have no significant effect on whether or not teens disaffiliate between Waves.

Teens whose parents attended religious services at Wave 1 were .87 times less likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 than those whose parents did not attend religious services ($p < .001$). Those who were still in high school at the time of Wave 3 were .21 times less likely to disaffiliate ($p < .001$) and those who were attending a college or university were .49 times less likely to disaffiliate than those who were not in school at all ($p < .01$). In all models, religious retention seemed to make more of a difference for college students than did for high school students. This is likely due to college students leaving their home and their church and having a busy schedule that makes them less likely to be participating, but still able to participate in individualistic practices such as reading the Bible and praying. This supports previous research that has shown that college students are not getting less religious, but they are just participating less. Lastly, those who identified as Asian/Islander's and Mixed/Other were significantly more likely to disaffiliate by Wave 3 than Whites. Asian/Islander's were 2.69 times more likely and Mixed/Other were 2.89 times more likely than Whites to disaffiliate ($p < .05$). Overall,

participating in a religious youth group during early adolescence seems to be a good indicator for predicting whether or not teens disaffiliate by early adulthood.

Table 4: Logistic Regression Predicting Being Unaffiliated in Wave 3 (Odds Ratios Shown)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Wave 1 Religious Tradition					
Evangelical Protestant (ref.)	--	--	--	--	--
Mainline Protestant	1.93** (.49)	1.85* (.50)	1.48 (.39)	1.77* (.45)	1.49 (.40)
Black Protestant	.97 (.47)	.76 (.36)	.76 (.40)	.92 (.45)	.71 (.36)
Catholic	1.66** (.35)	1.23 (.28)	1.16 (.26)	1.39 (.30)	1.00 (.23)
Jewish	2.89 (1.79)	2.31 (1.40)	1.50 (.93)	1.77 (.54)	1.14 (.71)
Mormon	1.20 (.56)	1.12 (.53)	1.02 (.46)	1.18 (.54)	.91 (.42)
Other	1.90 (.80)	1.30 (.55)	1.27 (.61)	1.43 (.64)	1.01 (.47)
Wave 1 Attendance	--	--	--	.76*** (.03)	.84*** (.04)
Wave 1 Individualistic Religious Participation					
Pray Alone	--	--	.77*** (.04)	--	.80*** (.04)
Read Scripture Alone	--	--	.86 (.07)	--	.92 (.08)
Wave 1 Collective Religious Participation					
Youth Group	--	.36*** (.08)	--	--	.56* (.13)
Mission Trips	--	1.02 (.04)	--	--	1.03 (.04)
Religious Summer Camp	--	.99 (.03)	--	--	1.00 (.05)
Controls					
Wave 1 Parent-Child Different Congregation (ref=same congregation)	1.25 (.30)	1.26 (.29)	1.17 (.27)	1.19 (.28)	1.12 (.26)
Wave 1 Parent(s) Education (ref=less than					

Individual Versus Collective Religious Participation

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12 th grade)					
Completed High School	1.23 (.45)	1.42 (.51)	1.19 (.43)	1.23 (.47)	1.25 (.47)
Beyond High School	1.22 (.43)	1.40 (.49)	1.12 (.38)	1.27 (.47)	1.23 (.43)
Wave 1 Parent(s) Attendance	.74*** (.03)	.79*** (.04)	.79*** (.04)	.84*** (.04)	.87*** (.05)
Wave 1 Parent(s) Income	.99 (.03)	.99 (.03)	.98 (.03)	.99 (.03)	.98 (.03)
Wave 1 Female (ref=male)	.67** (.11)	.73 (.12)	.85 (.14)	.74 (.12)	.90 (.15)
Wave 1 Age	.92 (.06)	.90 (.06)	.90 (.06)	.90 (.06)	.88 (.06)
Wave 1 Ethnicity (ref=White)					
Black	.72 (.29)	.71 (.29)	.97 (.43)	.64 (.27)	.83 (.37)
Hispanic	.77 (.23)	.76 (.22)	.88 (.26)	.68 (.21)	.76 (.23)
Asian/Islander	3.10* (1.61)	2.93* (1.43)	2.80* (1.37)	2.90* (1.52)	2.69* (1.29)
Native American	.60 (.43)	.70 (.49)	1.01 (.66)	.67 (.44)	1.05 (.65)
Mixed/Other	2.15 (1.00)	2.30 (1.12)	2.78* (1.40)	2.29 (1.04)	2.89* (1.44)
Wave 3 Married (ref=single†)	.57 (.20)	.54 (.20)	.61 (.23)	.60 (.22)	.61 (.23)
Wave 3 Level of Education (ref=not in school)					
High school	.21*** (.09)	.23*** (.09)	.21*** (.09)	.22*** (.09)	.21*** (.09)
Vocational/Technical/Community College	.82 (.20)	.77 (.19)	.82 (.21)	.89 (.22)	.83 (.21)
College or University	.44*** (.10)	.44*** (.10)	.47*** (.11)	.47*** (.10)	.49** (.11)
Wave 3 Residence (ref=parent's home)					
Another person's home	.83 (.24)	.85 (.25)	.88 (.25)	.85 (.25)	.87 (.26)
Own place	1.07 (.24)	1.14 (.26)	1.08 (.25)	1.09 (.25)	1.12 (.27)
Group quarters (Dorm, Sorority, etc)	.62 (.17)	.65 (.18)	.61 (.18)	.60 (.17)	.61 (.18)
Moved Between Waves	1.48 (1.17)	1.46 (1.14)	2.22 (1.81)	1.49 (1.14)	2.04 (1.57)
Constant	3.64 (4.04)	5.37 (6.17)	20.58** (24.28)	7.26 (8.36)	27.33** (33.45)

N	1704	1704	1704	1704	1704
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* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$
 Odds Ratios
 Standard Error in parentheses
 † Single was recoded and includes widowed, separated, and divorced

Additional Analyses

Additional models were run in order to validate the findings. While Mormons consider themselves Christians, many argue that they should not be classified as such. Specifically for research purposes, Steensland et. al (2000: 297) categorize Mormonism as “Other”, among their highly used, six religious affiliation categories. With that being said, the logistic regression models were run without the inclusion of Mormons, without the inclusion of “Other”, and without the inclusion of both Mormons and “Other”. Statistical significance was still found among the variables that were previously significant.

As previously mentioned, the collective religious participation variables responses ranged from 0-20 and from 0-1. Because two variables were continuous and one variable was nominal, the two continuous variables were recoded to match the nominal variable. For both the religious summer camp variable and the mission trip variable, the responses were coded as “0” if the respondent had never attended a religious summer camp or gone on a religious mission trip and coded as “1” if they had attended. The logistic regression was rerun with the newly coded variables and still produced statistical significance on all of the previously significant variables.

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Loveland (2003) concluded in his research that childhood socialization is not an influential determinant of religious choice. However, the research presented here shows quite the opposite. It is not shocking that those who attended religious services when they were younger, prayed, and whose parents attended religious services were less likely to disaffiliate from their

Wave 1 religion by the time of Wave 3 than those who did not engage in such activities.

However, what is surprising and interesting is how attending youth group as an adolescent significantly affects the likelihood of disaffiliation in early adulthood, above and beyond attendance, prayer, and other practices. What makes youth group so significant and not religious mission trips or religious summer camps?

Youth group may offer more of an affective bond and provide more social cohesion than mission trips or religious summer camps. While mission trips and religious summer camps may only last a week or so, participation in youth group lasts for years and adolescents may choose to continue attending a youth group as they enter into early adulthood and go off to a college or university. It is clear that youth group has a unique effect on one's religious identity. The tight knit bonds that Durkheim, Collins, Lofland and Stark have theorized on that are established in youth groups are likely the reason why youth group is more influential on religious stability than going on religious mission trips or attending religious summer camps. The group cohesion among youth group members comes from their similar beliefs and engaging and interacting in the same activities together every week at youth group. The affective bonds that are established give individuals a feeling of belonging and acceptance, furthering their dedication to their youth group, and in turn, their religious faith. If members of youth group are engaging in interactions that create and sustain mutually focused attention and meaning, they become emotionally entrained, creating an emotionally charged intersubjectivity that solidifies the group. If adolescents are experiencing this in their youth group, they are less likely to question their religiosity and maintain their religious identity as they enter adulthood because they are benefiting from the group and have a sense of belonging. If adolescents do not experience this type of interaction and solidarity in their church, they are more likely to step back and evaluate

their commitment to their religious faith, which may lead to questioning their beliefs and leaving religion altogether.

Are teens participating in youth group because their friends already are, or are they participating in youth group because of the new friendships they acquire? Future research should explore this question in order to better understand the influence of youth group on retaining youth. It is possible that teens initially attend youth group because their friends from school, neighborhood, or sports team are participating. While this may initially get the teen involved in a youth group, the new friendships that are formed may be what is keeping them involved over time. These in-church friendships may aid to other forms of religious participation, whether it be church picnics, plays, choir, etc. Youth group may also produce more enjoyment out of religion. Youth groups are normally filled with activities that engage teens, which may keep them interested and excited about learning and attending. Teens may prefer to attend a youth group while their parents attend religious services because of the activities and how engaged it is, while church services typically consist of lengthy sermons.

Though youth group seems to have a unique effect on religious stability, we cannot ignore the significance of the individualistic religious measure of prayer in this research. Those who pray by themselves alone have lower odds of disaffiliating compared to than those who do not. However, it can be argued that prayer is not entirely individualistic, but rather more of a collective form of religious participation. Collins (2010) describes prayer as a type of internal dialogue that is carried along by the same kinds of emotional intensities as external interaction rituals. The individual is speaking to God, or some other divine entity, and is asking for help, praising, or thanking—acts not usually found in mundane internal dialogue. Therefore, prayer

may be more collective, furthering my argument that collective religious participation is unique in retaining youth in the church.

Adolescence is a crucial time for religious development. The experiences adolescents have with their church will heavily influence whether or not individuals maintain their religious identity over their life course. If congregations wish to retain youth for years to come, they should spend more time and effort into the planning, promotion, and execution of youth activities. Past research has shown that how approachable and understanding the pastor and youth leaders are is a very important factor in determining whether or not youth participate in church youth programs (Hoge and Petrillo 1978; Jarvis 1967; Strommen 1963; Vaidyanathan 2007). Congregations should also focus on ways to reach out to young adults. When adolescents go off to college, they may still desire to participate in youth group but do not want to put in effort or have the time to go “church shopping.” Since adolescents are likely to disaffiliate as they enter adulthood, churches may desire to partner with colleges or universities in order to gain members. Madsen and Vernon (1983) found campus religious group participation to be an important variable related to stability and change. Students who joined campus religious organizations were religiously more homogeneous and more orthodox upon entering college than those who did not join campus religious organizations.

There are several limitations to this study. Though there are many studies that examine religiosity at two time points, this research is limited as to what it can tell us about adolescent religiosity. Though the two waves of data used captured the gap between adolescence and early adulthood when religiosity is likely to decline, causality still cannot be assumed. In addition, the variables used to measure individualistic and collective religious practices may not be the best indicators to gauge the effects of individualistic and group-oriented religious participation. There

are many other religious practices individuals engage in other than praying alone and reading scripture alone. For example, many may find more value in meditating by themselves than reading scripture alone. There are also copious amounts of collective religious participation that could measure group involvement more adequately. Some congregations may not offer mission trips for youth under a certain age, which could influence their decision to go on mission trips in the future. Many religious summer camps are often independent of the church, so though it may keep adolescents consumed in religious teachings, it may not keep them active in the church. Lastly, future research should find more creative ways to measure religiosity other than attendance. This research has shown that religious activities that involve interacting with others makes a difference in religious stability. Though there are people physically in a social space when attending a church service, it does not mean the people involved are necessarily interacting and developing affective bonds and attachments to one another. Future research may consider asking participants' opinions on whether or not they feel attending church is more of a collective experience or a more of an individualistic experience.

The research presented in this paper has shown that those who participate in religious youth groups are less likely to disaffiliate than those who do not. While attendance and prayer have been shown to increase religious stability, participation in a religious group is essential. It is more than just attendance, it is about the social interactions one experiences that make a difference as to whether someone is active in the church for a year versus a lifetime.

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