

# Anonymity and the Rise of Universal Occasions for Religious Ritual: An Extension of the Durkheimian Theory\*

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*In this research, Durkheim's theory of the universalization of religious beliefs is extended to analyze the occurrence of religious rituals. Drawing upon Schutz's phenomenology of social relations, we amplify theoretically the Durkheimian perspective and suggest that the universalization process is stimulated by an increase in anonymity (as opposed to intimacy) in society. Structural factors consistent with anonymity — i.e., increasing population density, political and economic differentiation, and monetary exchange — are hypothesized to influence the universalization of ritual occasions. A recursive path model is devised for the hypothesized relationships in the universalization process. We find support for the model using data from a cross-cultural sample of nonindustrial societies. The implications of these results for understanding religious rituals in contemporary complex societies are then discussed.*

## INTRODUCTION

Durkheim held that religious impulses appear in all societies, but that their nature changes with societal structure.<sup>1</sup> For example, he noted that in low-density societies, religious beliefs are characterized by specificity and concreteness. A restricted field of interpersonal relations makes up this kind of society, and the religious is expressed through circumstances familiar to all participants: unique features of the local group, its activities and environment.

This contrasts with dense societies where social differentiation is advanced. Here religious beliefs take on a universal character. Social relations are more diffuse and

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1. In fact, Durkheim ([1912] 1965) was not as rigidly deterministic in this regard as our words imply (Lukes 1985). Nevertheless, the insight of hypothesizing an isomorphism between social structure and religion has laid a broad foundation for numerous theoretical and empirical studies (e.g., Bellah 1970; Bergesen 1984; Collins 1975:91-103, 153-5; 1988:188-228; Douglas 1966, 1982; Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 1963; Houtart 1980; Mauss and Beuchat [1906] 1979; Reeves and Bylund 1989; Swanson 1960, 1973; Warner 1961; Westley 1983; Wuthnow 1987).

tentative; the shared experiences of society's members are less constant and consistent. As a consequence, the religious cannot perform the function of promoting solidarity if it is grounded in specific and concrete spheres of localized social experience. The *conscience collective* must be transformed: It must rise above all local diversities and become sufficiently abstract and general to seem appropriate to all members of society without distinction.<sup>2</sup>

We shall call the process that brings about this transformation "universalization." Durkheim observed that the universalization process first appeared with the aggregation of simple tribal communities into larger confederations:

If sacred beings are formed which are connected with no geographically determined society, that is not because they have an extra-social origin. It is because there are other groups above these geographically determined ones, whose contours are less clearly marked; they have no fixed frontiers, but include all sorts of more or less neighboring and related tribes. The particular social life thus created tends to spread itself over an area with no definite limits. Naturally the mythological personages who correspond to it have the same character; their sphere of influence is not limited; they go beyond the particular tribes and their territory. They are the great international gods. (Durkheim [1912] 1965:474)

Durkheim had already noted in *The Division of Labor* that this principle had broader application than to tribal societies alone:

When civilization is developed over a vaster field of action, when it is applied to more people and things, general [i.e., universal] ideas necessarily appear and become predominant there. The idea of man, for example, replaces in law, in morality, in religion, that of Roman, which being more concrete, is more refractory to science. Thus, it is the increase in volume in societies and their greater condensation which explain this great transformation. (Durkheim [1893] 1964:290)<sup>3</sup>

Durkheim's focus when writing in this vein was on belief,<sup>4</sup> but it is clear from *The Elementary Forms* that he considered ritual to be inseparable from religious ideation. Ritual enacts beliefs, while generating and sustaining solidary commitments in the name of religious ideals (Pickering 1984).

The purpose of the present study was to determine if a transformation occurs in religious action, or ritual, that is comparable to the universalization of religious beliefs. We propose to extend Durkheim's theory, as it was applied to belief, to the prediction of ritual occasions. More specifically, we hypothesized that the occasions for holding religious rituals are also transformed as societal density and differentiation increase. Low density and limited differentiation should result in rituals which are held on irregular, ad hoc occasions where typically there is a specific (localized) sense of crisis. Conversely, the greater the density and differentiation in society, the greater the likelihood that rituals will be held in regular occasions following some standardized temporal scheme which transcends the particular circumstances of a local group.

2. A parallel to Durkheim's ideas can be found in the writings of Georg Simmel, particularly his work on the stranger and on the numerical effects of social density on consciousness (Wolff 1950:402-424).

3. The last sentence is enigmatic out of context. By "increase in volume in societies and their greater condensation," Durkheim is referring to the higher density of social relations that comes about as population and division of labor increase.

4. Much research in the Durkheimian tradition has likewise focused on the social foundations of religious beliefs (Bellah 1970; Swanson 1960).

### RITUAL OCCASIONS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS

Durkheim held that the cognitive, emotional, and moral experiences of the individual derive from social relations in groups (Collins 1975, 1988). However, the linkage between the macro-level of group structure that envelops the individual, and the micro-level of interpersonal relations through which these experiences are constructed, was never fully spelled out, although Durkheim's viewpoint does imply the existence of such micro-level conditions (Alexander and Giesen 1987:7-8). The co-participation of the performers of a ritual shapes the consciousness of each. The performers interact using symbolic representations and emotional displays to signify a common commitment to an idealized image of social structure. The individual's engrossment in ritual performances rests, according to Durkheim, on the capacity of its religious imagery to express fundamental conditions of his or her experience of society.

To create a link between the individual's involvement in social relations, on the one hand, and in ritual, on the other, we used Alfred Schutz's phenomenological analysis of social relations as a point of departure.<sup>5</sup> According to Schutz, the awareness of others may be analytically divided into several discretely cognized "worlds" (Schutz 1967: 139-214): Sandwiched between the world of predecessors, whom one can observe indirectly but not interact with, and the world of successors, whom one knows only by inferences based upon the acquaintance with predecessors and fellow men, there is the world of persons with whom one shares a "community of time." These persons may themselves be differentiated into fairly distinct sectors according to varying degrees of intersubjectivity and intimacy. Thus, persons between whom deep levels of common understandings exist through frequent and prolonged interactions we may call *intimates*.<sup>6</sup> Typically, intimates include lovers, spouses, parents, children, siblings or other close kin, and friends. Importantly, social relations with intimates are very concrete and specific because of the prolonged physical proximity between persons in these relationships. Intimates are individuals whose biographies are intertwined.

At a distance of less intimacy and less intersubjectivity we may identify *consociates*,<sup>7</sup> persons with whom one interacts directly and therefore with whom one recognizes some unique elements of common experience. Owing to the opportunity for physical proximity, consociates are recognized as unique persons although the actual extent of inter-

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5. It might strike some readers as incongruous to amplify Durkheim's theory of the sacred with a Schutzian framework. After all, Schutz took the subjective experience of the individual as the starting point for his analytic approach (Wagner 1970), whereas Durkheim stressed the *a priori* influence which involvement in social groups exerts on the individual's subjectivity. However, phenomenologists of late have shown a greater receptivity to Durkheim's ideas (Coenen 1981), and *pari passu* phenomenological threads have been noted in Durkheim's own work (especially in *The Elementary Forms*).

6. Schutz was concerned with intimacy throughout his analysis but did not single out "intimates" as a distinct category. His reason for not doing so might have been that he felt such a category would be too nebulous for use in analyzing social relations in advanced urban society. On the contrary, we intend to argue that the category has empirical validity for the nonindustrial societies considered in the present study. We are indebted to Turner's (1988:154) discussion of "intimates" as a specific social category.

7. We use this term more restrictively than Schutz did (1967:163-176) since we have created "intimates" as a separate category.

subjectivity and biographical knowledge might be rather limited. Lofland (1985:16) has captured this level of knowing others:

To know another personally is always to apprehend him as a unique historical event. It is always to recognize him either by face or by name or by some other means and to be able to connect with this face, or name, or whatever, bits and pieces of accumulated material.

At one extreme, consociates verge on being intimates, and at the other, they are practically strangers. A multitude of these more distant consociates inhabit modern cities. They are found every time there is a fleeting encounter between a service provider and a client (Davis 1959).

Finally, *contemporaries* occupy the farthest remove from intimacy. While one shares a common community of time with these others, no direct experience of them as unique persons is possible. In the absence of physical proximity and face-to-face encounters, contemporaries can be known only in the abstract as anonymous "social types." Thus, the attributes of contemporaries are purely categorical, never concrete, intimate, or personal.

Societies differ in the possibilities offered for individuals to gain direct experience with other persons. Nonindustrial societies are an especially appropriate universe of study for this phenomenon. To understand why this is so, consider the United States as a contrary case. In the United States the intimacy of the family, the friendship network, and the work group rapidly shades off into the spheres of distant consociates and contemporaries. Thus, most members of this society have no direct experience of one another, although mass communications and transportation cloud the issue somewhat: Television news, talk shows, and tabloid newspapers afford their viewers and readers a *sense* of intimacy with political leaders, media stars, and sports heroes. By contrast, in nonindustrial societies the absence of advanced communication and transportation technologies restricts an individual's awareness of contemporaries and makes it virtually impossible to maintain social intimacy without physical proximity.

Urban, industrial societies have another characteristic that confuses the issue we wish to explore. The sacred in the United States and in similar societies is differentiated into secular as well as religious dimensions. Thus, we have mostly secular rituals, such as presidential nomination conventions and law court proceedings, as well as fully religious rituals. Following a practice used often by contributors to the *Année sociologique*, we circumvented these complications here by confining our empirical analysis to non-industrial societies where rituals are almost always of a religious nature.

Low-density, kinship-organized societies which lack formal political institutions, market exchange, and a marked division of labor are most likely to be composed chiefly, if not exclusively, of intimates and close consociates. The traditional Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert in South Africa are such a society. The nomadic community or band is made up of a small number of related families (usually fewer than 100 persons). Band members spend virtually all their time in close proximity and frequent interaction with each other throughout their day-to-day activities. Beyond the local band, there are relations with more distant family members living in other bands, but these occur

with less frequency.<sup>8</sup>

Contrast this with the densely populated Ashanti of Ghana. Here we find a hierarchy of chiefs and subchiefs, with their own respective retinues of political functionaries and priests. Economic specializations and the use of gold dust as a medium of exchange are also prominent. As a consequence, social relations among the Ashanti branch out from the intimacy of the co-resident family to embrace concentric sectors of more distant consociates, including Ashanti neighbors, not related by kinship or marriage, plus traders, artisans, and district chiefs. Moreover, owing to the density of Ashanti society, there are many more persons whom an individual cannot know through direct experience at all but only through a vague awareness of their existence. These contemporaries are typified by clan and locality nomenclature.

The occurrence of ritual occasions in these two societies is strikingly at odds. Among the Bushmen, rituals are performed on ad hoc occasions of specific need. Particularly important are magical rites designed to heal illness or injury, and rites associated with improving hunting or relieving drought. Absent in the ceremonial repertoire of the Bushmen are rites that celebrate an anniversary or some other regular event. Ashanti rituals, on the other hand, are practiced on regular occasions as calculated by the passage of days and seasons. These rites are not performed in response to crises that affect the individual or local group, nor do they represent unique circumstances that arouse concern, as the Bushmen rituals do. Instead, Ashanti rituals reaffirm the legitimacy of royal lineages, as well as relations between the Ashanti people as a whole and one or more of their gods. These calendrical rites provide occasions on which Ashanti who are strangers to one another may nevertheless assemble for coordinated acts of worship.

Further examples may be cited from Central and South America, where low-density societies, such as the Yanomamo, Jivaro, and the Mundurucu, have exclusively ad hoc rites, while high-density societies, such as the Aztecs and Quiche, practice calendrical rites. In comparison with these examples, medium-density societies, like the Inca and Huichol, practice both ad hoc and calendrical rites. It will not be necessary to iterate these patterns further since they will be tested comprehensively in the statistical analysis below.

Elaborating Durkheim's ideas in this way led us to hypothesize that in societies, like those of the Bushmen, the Yanomamo, etc., where the overwhelming preponderance of social relations is with intimates, the performance of public rituals will be guided by concrete occasions of need and concern. These occasions will especially encompass threat or grave uncertainty to the local group or to one of its members. In these intimate societies, a threat to only one person immediately engages the concern of all others because of the high density of interpersonal experiences. On the other hand, in societies like the Ashanti, the Aztecs, and the Quiche, where there is a high proportion of non-intimates with whom a person might have fleeting direct encounters or might have only indirect knowledge, the tendency is to practice generalized, abstract rituals held on

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8. To avoid too extensive a bibliography, we will not cite references when discussing the characteristics of individual societies that make up the sample. A comprehensive list of such references has been provided by White (1989).

regular occasions.<sup>9</sup> In a social world where numerous others are anonymous representatives of stereotypical categories, rituals become divorced from the concrete experiences of primary groups and intimate relations. Calendrical rites are the public religious occasion par excellence in such cases (Sorokin and Merton 1937). Zerubavel (1981) has observed that schedules and calendars in general establish occasions where persons from disparate niches in the social structure are able to engage in synchronized action. Synchronization does not result from actors' having intimate knowledge of one another. Quite the contrary, it supersedes intimacy and makes it unnecessary.

The synchronization which regular scheduling creates results in a type of formal interaction. Atkinson (1982), in discussing the differences between formal and informal interaction, has stated that the former is most characteristic of multi-party procedures where the interests and experiences of the participants are varied. Thus formalization is necessary in order to bring about shared attention to the matter at hand. Informal interactions differ from formal ones in that the experiences of the parties involved are shared and are richly contextualized. It would appear that ritual occasions are sensitive to these same social dynamics: Ad hoc crisis rites are a kind of informal interaction which is most characteristic of an intimate social environment, while calendrical rites correspond to formal interaction that is associated with a multi-party, anonymous social setting.

We wish then to propose here that the change from ad hoc crisis rites to calendrical rites is analogous to the change, noted by Durkheim, from concrete conceptions of sacred beings to the "international gods." To see society as a mixture of intimates, consociates, and contemporaries existing in varying proportions contributes a new dimension of understanding to Durkheim's theory of religious universalization.

Durkheim ([1893] 1964), Tönnies ([1887] 1957), Sjöberg (1960), Collins (1975), and many others have noted the structural characteristics of societies which are associated with decreasing intimacy and greater anonymity in social relations. In virtually any list of these structural factors, high population density, increasing economic and political differentiation, and the presence of monetary exchange have a prominent place.<sup>10</sup> From this we infer that the universalization of ritual occasions is spurred by increasing population density, political hierarchy, and economic differentiation, and finally by money and market exchange, because these are all factors which are associated with the growth of anonymity in society.

### *Hypotheses*

The effect of these structural factors on the manner in which ritual occasions are held can be fitted into a recursive path model (Figure 1). The prevalence of anonymous social relations and typified categories of others (as opposed to the exclusive prevalence of relations with intimates) is a consequence of complex cause-and-effect relations between

9. Although magic rituals and other forms of crisis rites might still be found in these societies, they tend to be concealed from public view. These "privatized" crisis rites are frequently considered heterodox and inimical to public morality.

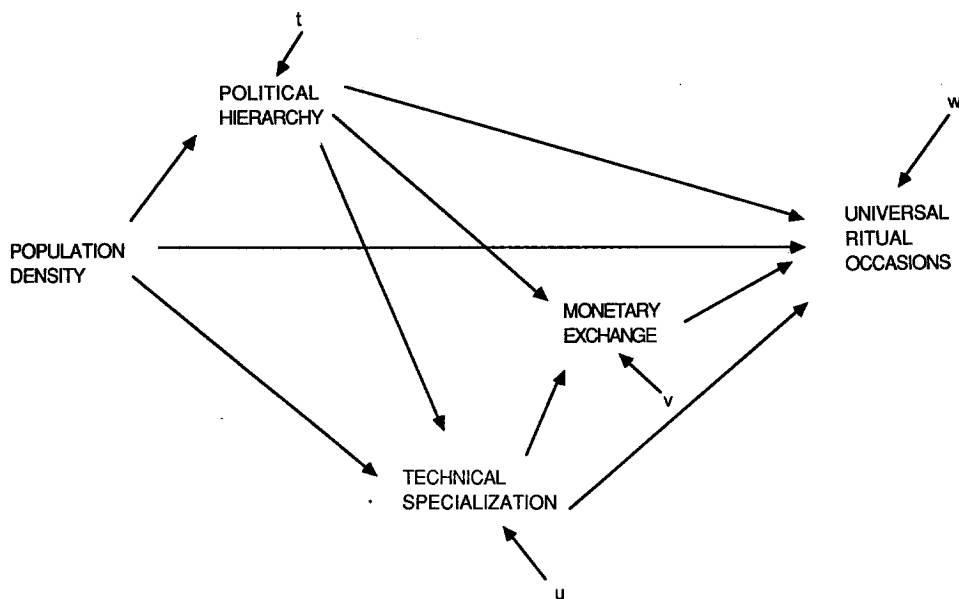
10. As Durkheim ([1893] 1964), Park et al. (1925), Sramel (Wolff 1950:409-424), Sjöberg (1960), and others have noted, all of these factors together are practically synonymous with urbanization.

population density, differentiation in both the economic and political dimensions, and the presence of a general medium of exchange (money). Thus we derived the first set of hypothesized relationships in our model:

1) If the universalization of ritual occasions is associated with a movement away from exclusive intimacy toward greater anonymity in society, then it also increases as a result of an increase in: a) population density, b) political hierarchy, c) technical (economic) specialization, and d) monetary exchange.

FIGURE 1

## PATH MODEL OF THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF RITUAL OCCASIONS



Population density is an exogenous variable in the model. Its effects on the dependent variable are seen to be complex due to its relationships with the other independent variables. It is widely recognized that population change and population density are among the primary movers of human history (Harris 1979; Lenski and Lenski 1987; Johnson and Earle 1987). In the present study, it has been noted that population density directly impacts two major institutional arenas in nonindustrial societies: the arena of economic or technical specialization, and the arena of political hierarchy. The first line of influence was identified by both Spencer (1898) and Durkheim ([1893] 1964). They stated, based on historical comparisons among societies, that increasing population density leads to a greater differentiation of economic tasks and roles, as well as to political stratification. Circumscription theory in anthropology argues that state structures arise under conditions where human populations are congested, and warfare is endemic because of a combination of population growth, resource concentration, and social circumscrip-

tion (Carniero 1970; Roscoe and Graber 1988). Thus, archaic states arose because population densities created competition for scarce resources which necessitated the development of politico-military organization. Secondly, dense populations facilitated the rise of administrative hierarchies to manage the collection of tribute (Johnson and Earle 1987; Lenski 1984).

A causal relation has also been posited between political hierarchy and technical specialization (Rueschemeyer 1986; Lenski 1984). One of the consequences of the rise of a political elite in preindustrial societies is that a privileged class patronizes the growth of luxury crafts. Moreover, in some preindustrial cities, craft specialization was encouraged to facilitate tax administration (Lenski 1984:202). These considerations led us to the following hypotheses:

2) Political hierarchy increases with population density.

3) Technical (economic) specialization increases with population density and with political hierarchy.

Finally, the growth of an all-purpose money which serves as a universal standard of value and medium of exchange is tied to the growth of political hierarchy and to the economic division of labor, and indirectly tied to increasing population density (Dalton 1968; Hodges 1988:96-124; Lenski 1984). Thus, the last set of relationships hypothesized in our model is:

4) Monetary exchange increases directly with political hierarchy and technical (economic) specialization, and indirectly with population density.

## METHODOLOGY

A path model has been prepared to show the direct and indirect effects of the independent variables on our dependent variable. The present study tested the above hypotheses with data from a sample of 148 nonindustrial societies.

### *Sample*

The sample for this study was derived from the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (SCCS; Murdock and White 1969). The SCCS is intended to represent the world's known nonindustrial societies and has been compiled in such a way as to overcome the effects of geographic propinquity and historical diffusion that make the use of a still larger data base, Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas* (1967), problematic. Although it is a stratified purposive sample, rather than a simple random sample, and overrepresents societies which have been extensively studied, the SCCS is widely regarded as the most representative and complete sample of nonindustrial societies available for cross-cultural statistical analysis (Coltrane 1988:1071).

The societies which comprise the SCCS range from small, nonliterate hunting-gathering bands to archaic states and peasant communities within complex agrarian societies. Intermediate levels of societal complexity are also represented, including communities subsisting on shifting agriculture, and tribes of nomadic herders. The descriptive sources used to code the characteristics of these societies date mostly from the mid-



nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century and are made up of historical and travel accounts as well as ethnographic reports.

The present study made use of 80% of the SCCS (148 out of a total 186 societies). This sample provided a reasonably even distribution across the values of each of the variables in the model. We excluded 35 of the SCCS cases since they could not be coded on the dependent variable. Most of these societies were coded as having rites of passage rather than calendrical rites or crisis rites.

Rites of passage are an ambiguous category as far as the present study is concerned. In some cases, such rituals are practiced at significant moments in the lifecycle of each individual. These could be construed as ad hoc, irregular ceremonies similar to crisis rites. However, rites of passage can also be formally scheduled rites marking the status passage of an age-set or gender cohort (Schlegel and Barry 1979, 1980). We reviewed the literature describing a subsample of the SCCS societies in Africa and South America and found an additional source of variation. In some cases, both types of passage rites — ad hoc and calendrical (or seasonal) — were present in the same society, one type reserved for each sex. Murdock's and Wilson's simple presence/absence coding of passage rites doesn't permit us to capture these relevant contrasts.

The three remaining societies which were excluded did not have codes for either population density or monetary exchange. Overall, the 38 excluded cases were less densely populated and economically differentiated than were the cases retained for analysis, and had less political hierarchy. Little difference in the frequency distributions was found between excluded and retained cases for the variable of monetary exchange.

### *The Dependent Variable*

In the present study, the universalization of ritual occasions was an index constructed from two dichotomous codings. Murdock and Wilson recorded data for the presence or absence of the following contrasting types of public rituals, or "prominent community ceremonies," as they called them:

- 1) *Calendrical rites*: The most prominent ceremonies are calendrical, being determined by the annual cycle of economic activities (e.g., first fruit rites, harvest ceremonies), by astronomical observations (e.g., new-moon or solstice celebrations), or by a ritual calendar (e.g., saints' days).
- 2) *Crisis rites*: The most prominent ceremonies are magical or religious rites performed on irregular occasions of individual or community concern, e.g., shamanistic curing performances, purification rituals, ceremonies before and after wars, or rites celebrating the installation of a chief, in which participation is normally by the community at large. (Murdock and Wilson 1972:263)

The universalization of ritual occasions was interpreted as the extent to which calendrical rites were more frequent, while irregular crisis rites were less frequent. Although in reality this variable is continuous, it can be approximated using the dichotomous codes just described to create the following ordinal scale: 1 — crisis rites present, calendrical rites absent; 2 — both crisis rites and calendrical rites present; 3 — crisis rites absent, calendrical rites present (see Appendix for frequency distribution).

### *The Independent Variables*

Population density, the degree of technical specialization, the extent of political hierarchy, and the reliance upon money exchange were our independent variables. Each was taken unaltered from Murdock's and Provost's (1973) original codes (see Appendix for complete definitions of these variables).

### *The Path Model*

The objective of our analysis was to determine not only if all the independent variables positively influenced the dependent variable, but also which variables and causal paths between variables were the most important. A path analysis which lays bare the direct and indirect effects is well-suited for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> The assumption was made that the prevalence of anonymous social relations and typified categories of others (as opposed to the exclusive prevalence of relations with personally known others) is a consequence of complex cause-and-effect relations between population density, economic and political differentiation, and the presence of a general medium of exchange (money).

## RESULTS

Moderately strong and statistically significant correlations were found for all pairs of variables in the model (Table 1). However, correlations that included the dependent variable were weaker across the board than were the correlations among the indepen-

TABLE 1  
CORRELATION MATRIX OF VARIABLES IN A  
PATH MODEL OF THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF RITUAL OCCASIONS  
(*N* = 148)

	Variables				
	Population Density	Political Hierarchy	Technical Speciali- zation	Monetary Exchange	Universal Ritual Occasions
Population density	—				
Political hierarchy	.59	—			
Technical specialization	.49	.54	—		
Monetary exchange	.53	.48	.43	—	
Universal ritual occasions	.38	.32	.34	.34	—

For all correlations,  $p < .0005$ .

11. All of the variables in this study are ordered categories rather than interval measures. Although alternative analytic strategies are available when variables are discretely measured, we were unable to analyze these data with a procedure such as multinomial logit analysis because of low cell frequencies. Thus we have taken some liberties in using regression techniques here. Nevertheless, we note that violations of assumptions of regression with the use of ordinal measures have been found to produce little bias in most cases (Asher 1983:90, n.9). The likelihood of bias in this instance is low since we have previously analyzed some of the relations in our path model with logistic regression and obtained comparable results.

dent variables. It has become commonplace in sociology and anthropology to regard symbolic action as underdetermined by social structure (Wuthnow et al. 1984), and our results appear to support this view.

An analysis of the decomposition of effects in the path model showed that many of the causal relations we hypothesized were supported (Table 2). On the other hand, relations between universal ritual occasions and any of the independent variables except population density were not statistically significant, although their signs were positive as the hypotheses required. In some cases the non-significance of these relations was an artifact, we suspect, of the small sample size and the fairly strong correlations among the independent variables (Table 1).<sup>12</sup>

TABLE 2  
DECOMPOSITION OF EFFECTS IN A PATH MODEL  
OF THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF RITUAL OCCASIONS  
(*N* = 148)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Total Effects	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects Via			R <sup>2</sup>
				X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	
Political hierarchy (X <sub>1</sub> )	Population density	.59	.59***	—	—	—	.35
Technical specialization (X <sub>2</sub> )	Population density	.49	.27**	.22	—	—	.34
	Political hierarchy	.38	.38***	—	—	—	
Monetary exchange (X <sub>3</sub> )	Population density	.33	—	.26	.07	—	.27
	Political hierarchy	.43	.34***	—	.09	—	
	Tech. specialization	.25	.25**	—	—	—	
Universal ritual occasions (X <sub>4</sub> )	Population density	.36	.20*	.11	.05	—	.19
	Political hierarchy	.18	.06	—	.07	.05	
	Tech. specialization	.19	.15	—	—	.04	
	Monetary exchange	.14	.14	—	—	—	

Significance of direct effects: \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001.

Population density was found to have the largest total effect and the only significant direct effect (beta = 0.20) on the occurrence of universalized ritual occasions. Fifty-six percent of the total effect of population density was accounted for by this direct effect, while most of the indirect effect was attributable to its influence via political hierarchy. The mediated effect via political hierarchy was more than twice as large as the indirect effect via technical specialization. This is a point to be revisited when we assess the overall usefulness of political hierarchy in the path model.

Although nonsignificant in the regression analysis, the positive influences which technical specialization and monetary exchange had on universalized ritual occasions are also worth noting. The direct effects of these two variables were nearly equivalent (beta = 0.15 and 0.14 respectively). An additional 21% of the total effect of technical

12. The effects of technical specialization or monetary exchange were significant when *universal ritual occasions* was regressed on population density and on either one of these variables.

specialization resulted from its indirect effect via monetary exchange. With a larger sample for the analysis, we think that the direct effects of both technical specialization and monetary exchange would have become significant.

In contrast, the direct effect of political hierarchy on universalized ritual was not only non-significant but also very low in magnitude ( $\beta = 0.06$ ). However, the theoretically supported indirect effects of this variable, and its function of mediating the effect of population density, would seem to justify keeping it in the model. Thus, while only a third of political hierarchy's total effect was accounted for by an unmediated relation with the dependent variable, the remaining two-thirds of the total effect were due to its influences via technical specialization and monetary exchange. These mediated effects were roughly equal (0.07 and 0.05 respectively). Finally, if there remains any doubt about the explanatory usefulness of political hierarchy in the model, this is dispelled by observing the indirect effects of population density (totaling to 0.11) that were mediated by this variable. The total effect of political hierarchy was about half as large as the total effect of population density, roughly equal to that of technical specialization, and larger than that of monetary exchange.

An objection could be raised that a more parsimonious model would result if population density alone were used to explain universal ritual occasions. This would then suggest that political hierarchy, technical specialization, and monetary exchange, which are presumed to contribute to the anonymity of social relations, actually have no empirical consequences for the universalization of ritual occasions.

It would strengthen our argument, therefore, if political hierarchy, technical specialization, and monetary exchange could be shown collectively, if not individually, to make a significant contribution toward explaining the universalization of ritual occasions. This in fact can be demonstrated by the incremental F-ratio, which may be used to test whether a subset of variables adds significantly to variance already explained by a prior variable (Tabachnick and Fidell 1983:112-113). With only population density in the regression equation, we obtained an R-square of 0.146. When the other independent variables were added, the R-square increased to 0.194. A calculation of the incremental F-ratio revealed that the difference in R-squares was significant below the 5% level ( $F_{inc} = 2.842$  with  $df = 3, 143$ ). This finding clearly argues for keeping these variables in the model.

## DISCUSSION

We have proposed that the public occasions for celebrating religious rituals varies with the experience of anonymous others in social relations, and that the latter varies with societal density and differentiation. Thus, low density and low differentiation contribute to ritual that is ad hoc and particularistic. By contrast, high density and high differentiation mold religious action into universally standardized occasions where persons from varied walks of life can meaningfully participate.

The results presented here suggest a modification of Durkheim's early view in *The Division of Labor*, in which at times he seemed to suggest that "organic solidarity" is achieved in dense, differentiated societies at the expense of the *conscience collective*. The present research indicates that universal ritual occasions synchronize interactions

between persons who are socially differentiated and anonymous. This type of ritual creates a basis for recognizing anonymous others as co-members of large, diffuse social groups. It does not occur on occasions of individual or local group crisis, and hence does not necessarily signify a homogeneous emotional and cognitive experience. Greater latitude is given to individuals as far as their motivations for participation are concerned.

The relationships hypothesized in the path model have received qualified empirical support. That population density is the most important of the independent variables should probably come as no surprise. Durkheim is only one of numerous authors who have noted the connection between it and anonymous social relations (e.g., Lofland 1985; Spencer 1898; Tönnies [1887] 1957). The weak direct effect of political hierarchy also seems reasonable, given the characteristics of our sample. With the rudimentary communications that prevail in nonindustrial societies, ordinary people have little direct experience or even knowledge of distant political elites. The political hierarchy, except for local functionaries, will have a shadowy significance at the grassroots. This is reinforced by the existence of social barriers and sumptuary laws (Lenski 1984), as well as by the presence of brokers and patrons who shield local populations from elites (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984). Thus, instead of a direct effect, the greatest influence of political hierarchy on the universalization of ritual occasions is an indirect effect through the impetus it provides for intensifying anonymity by increasing the economic division of labor and monetary exchange.

The path model explains 19.5% of the variance. Characteristics of the societies not specified in the model would be expected to explain additional variance. First, a non-industrial society's subsistence activities and economic patterns might be important in stimulating the appearance of calendrical rites, if not in the diminution of ad hoc crisis rites. This seems true of the reindeer-herding Chukchee of eastern Siberia, for example. These people, who have an extremely low population density, nevertheless practice an annual round of sacrificial rites that corresponds with seasonal changes in their economic activities. Similarly, the Australian aborigines, who were so influential in the development of Durkheim's sociology of religion, held seasonal corroborees at times when an ample supply of wild food resources permitted several local groups to gather together for a period of some weeks. Moreover, in preindustrial societies, agriculture has an enormous impact on routinizing economic patterns and hence might influence the scheduling of ritual occasions. Due to the coding definition used in the SCCS by Murdock and Wilson (1972), calendrical rites cannot be considered to be independent of the existence of agriculture in the societies sampled here. However, crisis rites are inversely related to society's dependence on agriculture ( $r = -0.28$ ).<sup>13</sup> The work routines of agriculture, in contrast with the opportunistic activities of hunting and gathering, probably do encourage the "routinization" of ritual occasions.

A second factor which might contribute to the universalization of ritual occasions is the presence of a bureaucracy which sponsors and manages the rites. As Weber (1963:30) noted, one of the consequences of an organized priesthood is the systematic routinization of religious practices. A measure of the presence of a formal priesthood

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13. A measure of dependence on agriculture has been provided for the sample used in this study by Murdock and Provost (1973, column 3).

or religious hierarchy was not available for our sample. However, Davis (1971:154) used a similar cross-cultural sample, composed of 60 nonindustrial societies, and found a significant association between the "degree of religious organization" and calendrical rites.

A third factor which is related to the second, and which might be even more significant because of the nature of our sample, is the influence of world religions upon the ritual practices of tribal peoples. This could account for many anomalies that weaken the relationships expressed in our model. Thus, the Lapps practice the calendrical rites of the Lutheran Church despite their relatively low population density, and the equally low-density Cayapa of Ecuador were visited annually by a Catholic priest who performed the sacraments. If a means were available to control for such influences, we believe that the hypothesized relationships would be more strongly supported.

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Recently sociologists have taken renewed interest in ritual (Collins 1988; Gusfield and Michalowicz 1984; Turner 1988, 1991), a topic that occupied a prominent place in Durkheim's *oeuvre* and that of his many colleagues. We have attempted to make a contribution to this perspective. While much of the current literature is devoted to interpreting ritual meanings (Alexander 1988), we have focused instead on Durkheim's concern with how the religious is congruent with structured social relations, by arguing that the universalization of ritual occasions derives from the experience of anonymous others in society. This idea was tested using structural variables that are associated with anonymity. Thus, population density, political hierarchy, technical specialization, and monetary exchange were shown to influence the universalization process. Although we used a deterministic model for the analysis, we found no evidence of strongly linear relationships. The results discussed above should be seen as indicative only of some general patterns and tendencies.

The empirical evidence used for the present research was based upon nonindustrial societies. Nevertheless, implications for understanding religious rituals in contemporary complex societies may be sketched. One could surmise, for example, that telecommunications will increase an individual's awareness of "contemporaries" and thereby foster greater participation in universal rituals instead of localized rites. This was in fact a conclusion from a nationwide survey of television viewers in Brazil. According to Kottak (1990), Brazilians who watch television more frequently are less inclined to observe the traditional rites of their local communities and prefer instead to celebrate international religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

In modern urban-industrial societies, we have noted a preponderance of universal ritual occasions and a relative absence of ad hoc religious rites.<sup>14</sup> The United States celebrates numerous holidays which are component rites of the American "civil religion"

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14. It is characteristic that even individualized rites such as the Jewish bar mitzvah and Christian baptism take place during regular worship services. We do not wish to imply, however, that ad hoc crisis rites have disappeared altogether. As one *JSSR* reviewer has pointed out, the recent Gulf War affords examples of such ritual occasions.

(Bellah 1970; Schwartz 1991), along with family-oriented national religious holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. In the erstwhile Soviet Union, a Marxist-Leninist "civil religion" flourished that was also celebrated in elaborate national rituals (Lane 1981). Universal ritual occasions also appear to be the normal practice in various localized groups where one would expect to find ad hoc rituals if they existed in any frequency: for example, the family reunions which occur annually in the southeastern United States, during which religious worship plays a significant part (Neville 1987); Zen meditation groups in southern California (Preston 1988); "cult of man" groups in Montreal (Westley 1983); and Londoners practicing nature worship and the occult (Luhmann 1989). Thus, our impression is that the trend identified in the sample of nonindustrial societies is not controverted by the religious rituals of contemporary complex societies.

Wirth (Reiss 1964), Park (Park et al. 1925) and other urban sociologists have generally thought that the function of religion in cities is to provide a basis for community, that is, for the playing out of face-to-face relationships, and to contribute to heightened experiences of intimacy, in order to offset the feeling of alienation which urban life is said to promote. To this argument we are tempted to suggest a counter. The intimacy which modern religious ritual is supposed to achieve might be more apparent than real, a *semblance* of intimacy which is fostered by the synchronization and formal interaction that universal ritual occasions provide.

Westley (1983) has argued that the religious rituals most characteristic of modern complex society are those practiced by "cult of man" groups. These rituals aim at self-mastery and invoke a protective reverence for the individual (see also Bellah 1970). Intimacy is shunned or is permitted only so that it can be transcended:

The only way to prevent interpersonal contamination, it would seem, is to eliminate attempts at interacting on the profane level, to withdraw to the inner reaches where there is safety and mystic reunion, to continue the external contact only as an impersonal machine. (Westley 1983:132)

The rise of universal occasions for religious rituals in nonindustrial societies doesn't run to this extreme, but isn't it perhaps the same developmental path?

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## APPENDIX

*Universal ritual occasions:* (1) crisis rites present, calendrical rites absent (27.7%); (2) crisis rites present, calendrical rites present (20.3%); (3) crisis rites absent, calendrical rites present (52.0%) ( $N = 148$ ; index based on Murdock and Wilson 1972, column 13).

*Population density:* (1) less than one person per five square miles (19.6%); (2) from one person per square mile to one per five square miles (10.8%); (3) from 1.1 to 5 persons per square mile (13.5%); (4) from 5.1 to 25 persons per square mile (14.2%); (5) from 26 to 100 persons per square mile (18.2%); (6) from 101 to 500 persons per square mile (11.5%); (7) over 500 persons per square mile (12.2%) ( $N = 148$ ; from Murdock and Wilson 1972, column 4).

*Political hierarchy:* (0) the society is stateless, and political authority is not centralized even on the local level but is dispersed among households or other small component units (4.7%); (1) the society is stateless but is composed of politically autonomous local communities (37.8%); (2) one administrative level is recognized above that of the local community, as in the case of a petty state with a paramount chief ruling over a number of local communities (societies which are politically completely dependent, lacking any political organization of their own and wholly absorbed into the political system of a dominant state of alien culture are likewise placed in this category) (25.7%); (3) two administrative levels are recognized above that of the local community, as in the case of a small state divided into administrative districts (14.9%); (4) three or more administrative levels are recognized above that of the local community, as in the case of a large state organized into provinces which are subdivided into districts (16.9%) ( $N = 148$ ; from Murdock and Provost 1973, column 9).

*Technical specialization:* (0) metalworking, loom weaving, and pottery are all absent or unreported (20.9%); (1) pottery is made but metalworking and loom weaving are absent or unreported (10.8%); (2) loom weaving is practiced but metalworking is absent or unreported (18.2%); (3) the society is reported to have specialized metalworkers or smiths but to lack loom weaving and/or pottery (29.7%); (4) the society is reported to have a variety of craft specialists, including at least smiths, weavers, and potters (20.3%) ( $N = 148$ ; from Murdock and Provost 1973, column 5).

*Monetary exchange:* (0) no money or other medium of exchange was in use at the designated time period, mercantile transactions being conducted exclusively through the direct or indirect exchange of goods (42.6%); (1) domestically usable articles, e.g., salt, grain, livestock, tobacco, furs, tools, or ornaments, circulated freely as a medium of exchange in intercommunity trade, true money being absent (5.4%); (2) articles of token or conventional value, not domestically usable at least in quantity, such as cowrie shells, wampum, imitation tools or weapons, feathers, or bars of metal, circulated freely in intercommunity exchange as an elementary form of money (12.8%); (3) the currency of an alien people circulated freely as money (25.0%); (4) an indigenous currency in the form of metal coins of standard weight and fineness, and/or their equivalents in paper currency, circulated freely as money in intercommunity exchange (14.2%) ( $N = 148$ ; from Murdock and Morrow 1970, column 7).