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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

MORAL LANDSCAPES:
RELIGION, SECULARISM, AND SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

THOMAS JOSE JOSEPHSOHN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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To Marnie

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CHAPTER ONE

CHARTING THE LANDSCAPE

Sociologists have long discussed the division between secular and religious people in this country. Some have taken sides with one camp or another or problematized the lines as they are drawn (Hunter 1992; Williams 1997; Thomson 2010), yet for the discussion of conflict, sociologists have not investigated in much depth what secular or religious people think of the religious and nonreligious groups that make up their social reality. If there is conflict at a level beyond the elites, one would expect to find that average members of religious or nonreligious congregations would have strong negative opinions about particular outsiders. This dissertation asks, what specifically are the opinions of religious and secular people of the believers and nonbelievers around them? While secular and religious people differ in terms of some key behaviors, little attention has been paid to the specific ideals, values, and ways of looking at others that contribute to their understanding of their social world.

This question is relevant because it speaks to debates about the relationship between belief and action, the nature and moral significance of participants' differences as a general way of categorizing others, the culture wars debate, the critiques of liberal moral blindness and relativism, and the connection between atheism and morality. In the most practical sense, sociology needs to investigate the relationship

between secularist and religious views of others because these views impact people's everyday lives. Whom we choose to associate with; whom we fear, dislike, think are wrong; and who is moral, immoral, and amoral—these are all shaped to some extent by our principles and beliefs. This dissertation explores the ideas and moral orientations that are important to a particular slice of religious and nonreligious America and how they influence their opinions of the groups in their social (albeit mediated) worlds.

I investigate the means by which people in these groups define themselves against others in a religious context using what Lamont (1994:1) calls *symbolic boundaries*, or the “types of lines that individuals draw when they categorize people.” I focus on the variety of ways that people represent themselves and their beliefs as being different from others and on the specific ways that these differences are organized both with words and spatially (explained below). This framework allows me to discuss the impact of a view on others without having to resort to explanations focusing on values or tool kits that are proposed by other authors (Swidler 2003; Vaisey and Lizardo 2010).

This dissertation sheds some light on what religious and secular people think of themselves and others through a partly exploratory study of the differences and similarities among members of four congregations located in or around Chicago, Illinois—the Ethical Humanists (a secular group), an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregation, a Reform Jewish congregation, and a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregation—in terms of their thinking style, key ideals, and moral

considerations for assessing themselves and other religious and political groups. The analysis is based on fifty-five semistructured interviews using a unique graphically based instrument with members of the four congregations. Slightly more than half of the participants from each site were women, all participants were white, they were generally highly educated, and nearly all would be categorized as upper-middle class to upper class.

I have chosen to interview a largely demographically homogenous sample to limit the influence of factors beyond religion and politics that might influence participants' views of others and because these people—white, wealthy, and educated—have the ability and, in some cases, the time to shape the world around them than other groups. Their understanding of a group as peaceful, bellicose, or unimportant can matter because of where they place their time, money, and attention.

To varying degrees in popular culture and academic writing, we attribute behavioral differences distally or proximally to differences in belief (Smith 1998; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Beit-Hallahmi 2010).¹ More directly, specific beliefs are thought to have implications for attitudes toward specific behaviors. If I hold Christianity to be true and all other religions false, then it should follow to some extent that members of other religions are *at least* not following the best path and perhaps should be the target of some social sanctions (Wuthnow 2005). Although differences in belief are seen to be important for accounting for behavioral differences and opin-

1. While Putnam and Campbell claim that the major factor for increased civic participation is *participation* in church groups rather than belief, belief is a motivation to attend these groups unto itself.

ions of others, there has been little to no direct empirical comparative work on either subject.²

The dearth of comparisons between secular and religious groups is met by an overstatement of the similarities among religious people. While some scholars highlight the gradual homogenization of congregations (Putnam and Campbell 2010), others such as Smith (1998, 2002) and Wuthnow (1989, 2005) have highlighted important differences within denominations and congregations in terms of their specific beliefs. But (as I will show in later sections of this dissertation) because of Smith's and Wuthnow's methods, comparison groups, and theoretical presuppositions, both scholars tend to overstate the similarities of respondents in various religious subcategories. There is a need to simultaneously break down religious categories and compare the various elements to secular participants so as to enable sociologists to see what distinctions are important to the varieties of religious and secular people.

While sociologists have thoroughly investigated the statistical relationship between specific political, cultural, and religious views and certain behaviors and views of others, the ways in which we have done so (typically quantitative) have limited the analysis of the *means* by which people distinguish themselves from others and *who* the relevant groups and categories are that populate their worldview. This focus overemphasizes the salience of specific means of categorization for determining negative views of others. As Lamont (1994) highlights, sociologists typi-

2. There has been some comparative work focusing on differences between secular and religious service providers though (Bender 2003; Ebaugh et al. 2003).

cally give participants a list of various groups (as the sociologists define them) excluding both how participants might think about other groups or define them. Then we correlate particular responses with evaluations of these predetermined groups, attempting to explain how the belief is associated with the action after statistically taking into account mediating variables. While this research is extremely valuable for answering fine-grained questions, such as which values are associated with particular views and behaviors, it typically ignores how participants define their worlds and populate them. They provide participants with predefined ways of understanding others but do not ask if these means of categorization *matter* to the individuals in terms of how she or he thinks of others. This study contributes to our understanding of the complex processes of evaluations of others through various social, ethical, and intellectual standards through proposing a theory (specified below) which links saliency, motivation, and categorization through a variety of sociological works.

As will be discussed in greater detail in the methodology section, I asked participants to literally map out their religious world, instructing them to place groups near or far from a center of *X* on a radial grid on a piece of paper in terms of how closely those groups aligned with what they believed. This alternative method allows me to discuss the terms that people use to organize their views of others, the groups that make up their religious world, and the salient ideals, practices, morals, and interaction styles they used to judge the groups on their maps. My dissertation

focuses on how the conglomeration of all these factors locates religious and secular people in relation to each other.

Relational Principles

My research finds drastic differences among participants in each congregation in terms of whom they see themselves as different from and why they are different. For Ethical Humanists, the threat of violent, intolerant, patriarchal, or spiritualist religions looms large, while many of the conservative Protestant participants placed “all other religions” away from them, with the occasional devil worshiper and atheists placed somewhere else in the outskirts. Regardless of specific religious or non-religious orientation, the means by which I compare these groups highlights how the boundary work that they do fits into overall patterns I call *relational principles* that transcend any particular group. “Relational principle” is a term I use to highlight patterns in how participants understand others and their means of differentiating themselves from them. It is both relational in that it focuses on actual groups embedded in their everyday and imagined lives (rather than abstract Parsonian and Mertonian values) and principles, reflecting a perspective on an arena-specific aspect of the world rather than an abstract whole world (Bourdieu 1987).³

I find four different relational principles that reach across lines of religion, secularity, or political affiliation, the first of which I call the *Truth relation principle*.⁴ For this group, distance is articulated as the extent to which other groups conform

3. Though I reference Bourdieu here, I do not intend the hierarchical and necessarily competitive denotation of his term “field.” I merely wish to emphasize that the process of self-differentiation in this research is placed in a specific context rather than the whole world of other groups.

4. See figure 1 at the end of the chapter for a summary.

to their beliefs about religion and morality, as well as their specific method for evaluating information. As Malinda in my study said, “You’re either with Christ or against him.”

Second is the *Tact relation principle*. Participants in this category evaluate difference by determining which groups do not interfere with other groups, allowing all others to believe and act as they choose. Tact users actively avoid interfering with the workings of other religious groups (save to pushing them to avoid interaction), while also holding exclusive views of other religions. Their religious and secular exclusivity, however, is not a salient factor for their categorization of others in the religious landscape. Peter, a young member of the conservative Protestant congregation in this study, represented this position well when he located “any forceful group” on the periphery of his map. By “forceful,” he means any group that tries to or forcefully convinces others to believe as they do or make others live by the rules of a particular belief system. While theologically exclusive himself, Peter and all other Tact relation principle respondents indicate that it is more important to be civil with each other and leave one another alone about matters of faith than to endanger friendships or even society by arguing.

Next is the *Tolerance relation principle*. For these participants, distance is conceived as the extent to which other groups are perceived as (1) accepting others with different beliefs, (2) believing that one religion does not hold absolute truth, and (3) having the willingness to learn/interact with others. Alex, a Secular Humanist participant in this research, summed up the position by saying, “You can be inclu-

sive of others and try to understand them, or you be tribalistic and hide away from the world.”

The final group is the *Test relation principle*. These participants define distance on their maps by evaluating where other groups stand on a particular issue. David, a member of the Reform synagogue in this study, summed up this principle when he said, “You don’t turn your back on Israel.” These participants focused on a single issue—such as abortion, women’s rights, or Israel—to judge all those around them. For David, groups that might otherwise be extremely distant for theological reasons (like fundamentalist Christians) were seen as more closely aligned with how they define themselves because they are supportive of Israel.

Though some participants neatly fit into a single category, many of them belonged to two or more, though, as will be discussed in the conclusion, some of these principles are, in practice, mutually exclusive. These are not Weberian “ideal types” because there are real-world people whose views are fully described by their relation principle. Weber understood ideal types to be never fully realized in the world, but as a set of descriptions which more or less describe some facet of social life, such as bureaucracy. However, for general discussion, it is adequate to use the term “ideal types” when describing these principles because of their occasional fuzzy boundaries.

However, participants’ maps reveal that placing a group on the periphery of one’s map does not necessitate negative evaluations of that group. This reflects what I call the *level of moralization* of participants’ maps. The level of moralization is the

extent to which boundaries are conceived of as reflecting ideals of right or wrong. This is different from many other sociological conceptions of difference, which necessitate that difference equals disdain. In this study, I find that unless difference is conceived of in moral terms, groups cannot be like participants without being disliked or deemed immoral. Looking at the salient categories that people use to differentiate themselves from others as well as the extent to which these differences are thought of in terms of good and bad, or of better and worse, provides insight into the general social and sociopsychological mechanisms for establishing and maintaining inequality. It is not enough to highlight a correlation between belief and practice: sociologists must also investigate participants' representations of other groups, the salience of these differences, and the moralization of this categorization schema to form evaluations of others.

I also focus on the groups themselves as part of the analysis, though, ultimately, I find that they are of less analytic use for understanding how people think of others, finding instead that relational principles are more fruitful ways of thinking about how people understand groups around them. Lacking statistical data, it is difficult to decide if other ideologies, personalities, or specific theologies could more effectively categorize or explain the participants' views and may commit the qualitative equivalent of a specification error. That said, relational principles were the most effective way to understand how people understood their world around them and (as I highlight in chapter 3) the best way to organize this dissertation.

To varying degrees, each of these groups actively attempts to influence the world around them, have vocal and well-publicized internal debates on issues of particular group boundaries, and be a part of the national discourse on the role of religion in America. These groups have never been subject to a comparison with each other in general, let alone their specific ideals and views of other groups. More specifically, while Jewish and Christian groups have been compared on these issues, they have never been compared along with a secularist organization which highlights what similarities or differences between Jewish and Christian groups are *religious* in character as opposed to some other factor.

This comparison relies on the assumption that when people participate in this study and use the research instrument to differentiate themselves from others, they are all performing a similar action—namely, constructing senses of difference and of similarity between themselves and others. This assumption is born from the nature of the questions that participants were asked; they placed groups as close or as far as those groups were from *themselves and what they believe*, leaving open what that center was, but asking them to categorize groups in those terms. Through this general process, I believe I can compare seemingly disparate groups under a common rubric, revealing patterns as yet unnoticed (or at least underdescribed).

I argue that these insights have important implications for sociology of religion and cultural sociology in general, where many researchers find correlations between specific views of others and specific beliefs without delving into the causal mechanisms that link belief to moral judgment or dislike. Scholars working from

more ethnographically oriented traditions—such as Moon (2004), Edgell (1999), and Lichterman (2005)—have developed theories on conflict that emphasize group-oriented factors for understanding these mechanisms; their explanations are more often than not at a group level rather than an individual level and do not account for individual peculiarities. Sociologists in other traditions like Chaves (2010) have problematized the belief-action linkage, though they argue from a Swidlerian (Swidler 1986, 2003) cultural tool kit perspective that disregards religious ideals and, to some extent, culture as efficacious for motivating action (Vaisey 2009, 2010; Vaisey and Lizardo 2010). I find this perspective problematic as it limits values, ideals, and moral principles to influence only in “uncertain times.” Rather than resurrecting Parsonian notions of values as motivation for action, I draw upon the various literatures on boundaries to attempt to demonstrate how culture is perhaps most fruitfully understood as efficacious for motivating action through a combination of Bourdieu’s *habitus* (Bourdieu 1987, 1990), symbolic resources (Sewell 1992; Williams 2002), and cognitive and social boundaries (Lamont et al. 1996; Lamont 2000a; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007). This shift in principle provides a means for investigating how religion, morality, and culture in general function.

In a more narrow focus, my research also speaks to the literature on the functioning of symbolic boundaries by analyzing how participants literally draw distinctions between representations of themselves and others. I also contribute to sociopsychological literature on boundaries by defining, assessing, and comparing

what I call *mapping styles*, or the ways people organize their sense of difference between themselves and others. A person may map their world of religion in a binary, a spectrum, clusters, or a ring. Each of these styles reflect views of the world that are unlike traditional dichotomously or trichotomously oriented symbolic frameworks for evaluating others, such as the ones presented in various works in cultural sociology and sociology of religion (Lamont 1994; Smith 1998; Lamont 2000b; Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006).

Finally, my research contributes to debates about the difference between secular and religious people in America. I find, perhaps surprisingly, that in terms of views of other groups, a participant's relation principle and, in some cases, the level of moralization matters more for how they understand their social world than the specifics of what they believe. While one person may see truth as embedded in the Bible and another person might find truth through rigorous scientific scrutiny, their shared Truth principle matters more for how they think of other religious groups around them. Furthermore, both groups have variously moralized understandings of the groups around them. I show that arguments from scholars like Bellah et al. (1984) that atheists and secularists and liberal religious people are somehow anomalous are unsubstantiated once we ask people directly about the groups they care about and how they classify them.

I emphasize that though the people in this study are at varying levels of power and authority over others, they are also neighbors, friends, and family. They are citizens, voters, contributors to campaigns, public speakers, and active participants

in dialogue with senators and other elected officials. They are a part of the national discourse, and what they think about others, especially religious others, matters for how they interact with the world around them. Evaluating others through the lenses of Truth, Tolerance, Tact, and/or Test, they make choices for who they want to be and do not want to be, perhaps whom they want or do not want to have as friends, or whom they will or will not hire or vote for (Edgell et al. 2006).

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the divide between secular and religious people in addition to the wider literature on boundaries and the functioning of culture. Chapter 3 addresses the methods I used to approach the questions broached in this introduction and chapter 2, as well as justifying and describing in greater detail the innovative graphical instrument used for this dissertation. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 focus in turn on the Truth, Tact, Tolerance, and Test relation principle, addressing how various participating individuals within these and religious traditions articulate a specific relation principle. I specifically highlight the groups that hold the center and periphery for each congregation within the principle, as well as the common thread of the relation principle found throughout the four participating groups, and how each relational principle provides unique insights into the social and religious worlds of the participants, as well as some theoretical tools for sociological research.

Chapter 8 highlights the unique features and contributions of the spatial qualitative data collected in this dissertation to the study of boundaries. Using qualitative evaluations of both interview data and the maps' structures of themselves, I develop a framework for analysis, wherein I describe how the shape of the maps the

participants drew is reflective of their understanding of the nature of Truth, Tolerance, Tact, and their various Tests. I also highlight the complexities associated with each map type, such as when a conservative Protestant participant negotiates the consequences of her binary orientation toward others, leading to her to half-jokingly place Girl Scouts of America in relatively close proximity to devil worshippers and atheists.

I conclude by summarizing the contributions this dissertation makes to the sociology of religion and cultural sociology, questioning some of the existing representations of secular and religious communities, critiquing characterizations of liberalism through the Tolerance relational principle, and discussing the relationship between belief and moralization of others. While various camps in sociology debate the importance of different principles and values between secular and religious people, my research indicates that, to some extent, many principles cut across these boundaries, revealing a moral landscape of religions and specifically nonreligious groups shaped by one's principle toward Truth, Tact, Tolerance, or Test.

Table 1. Relational principles

Relation Principle	Definition
Truth	Distance is conceived of as the extent to which other groups conform to their beliefs about religion and morality, as well as a method for gaining truth (with specific conclusions entailed in those methods)
Tolerance	Distance is conceived of as the extent to which other groups are seen as (1) accepting others with different beliefs, (2) believing that one does not hold absolute truth, and (3) having the willingness to learn/interact with others
Tact	Distance is conceived of as the extent to which other groups allow others to believe as they choose
Test	Distance is conceived of as where groups stand on a particular issue

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In contemporary America, religious and nonreligious belief systems serve as bases of civic, economic, intellectual, and interpersonal inclusion and exclusion (Wellman and Tokuno 2004; Davidson 2008). We know that people use religion to judge others positively and negatively, exclude and include people in their social networks, define what it is to be a member of the nation, and sometimes justify and motivate violence or altruism toward people. The cumulative effect of all these processes is that people use religion in deciding a great deal about how they live their lives, vote, and, most importantly for this dissertation, view others.

In particular, this dissertation is focused on how religious and secularist beliefs shape people's view of others. Broadly speaking, sociologists offer three general models of religion's role in people's views of the groups around them. The first focuses on the correlation between prejudice and religion. Various studies are concerned with specific tendencies such as particularism, exclusivity, images of God, literalism, attendance, and the importance of God (Pargament et al. 2007; Raiya et al. 2008; Froese, Bader, and B. Smith 2008; Merino 2010). These scholars tend to highlight the complicated and interdependent nature of belief, geography, and contact among groups on various indicators of prejudice.

The second research focuses on the ways that religion produces specific in-group/out-group dynamics in generating social cohesion, shared group identity, and/or collective effervescence (Finke and Iannaccone 1993; Iannaccone 1994; C. S. Smith 1998; Durkheim [1912] 2001; Graham 2007; Cimino and C. Smith 2007). These scholars emphasize the importance of maintaining and creating group boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in order to sustain the group.

The third set of literature on the subject is composed of ethnographic works investigating the functioning and splitting of various congregations. This body of research shows the importance of attaining a ground-level view of congregational conflict by showing how personal interactions, group dynamics, and ideological battles come together to cause strife or bring a congregation together (Ammerman 1990; Edgell 1999; Zuckerman 1999; Lichterman 2005). Ammerman and Zuckerman in particular rely on a culture wars model, while Lichterman and Edgell use a variety of models and theoretical orientations to understand the social dynamics in the congregation.

The fourth means of explaining religion's role in creating social divisions through views of others focuses on where particular religions place moral authority, either in the individual or in some form of an objectivated social object (Griswold 2008). This fourth and final grouping is perhaps the most controversial because it is associated with grand statements about *culture wars* and America being divided between progressives and orthodox believers (Hunter 1992; Davis and Robinson 1996; Zuckerman 1999; Kniss 2003; Hunter 2009).

Each of these arguments on religion's role in creating and sustaining social fissures provide useful information and theories, yet as I will argue in this review of the literature, these scholars' methodological and theoretical commitments limit their ability to see three vital components that shape how religion influences views of others. The first limitation is the authors' inattention to the salience of some beliefs over others. More clearly, while a participant may strongly agree that he/she is a biblical literalist, it may not be a strongly salient aspect of his/her identity when it comes to forming opinions of others even if it does strongly influence other important facets of that participant's life. Second, many qualitative and quantitative attempts to understand religion's role in social exclusion/inclusion only focus on the varieties of religious social exclusion and lack a comparison with how *purposefully* secular people who espouse intentionally nonreligious or antireligious belief systems also exclude/include others. Without comparing the purposefully secular with religious people, it is difficult to discuss the specific influence of religion itself on evaluations of others. Finally, many of these models of difference have difficulty examining the persistence of interreligious conflict beyond individuals thinking they are absolutely right.¹ While statistical and qualitative data show that absolutist thinking is important to exclusive viewpoints regarding other religions, research using particularism or exclusivity focuses on a single aspect of religious belief (truth

1. The variable is called "particularism" or "exclusivity," depending on the author. The difference is that particularism is the belief that one's religion is correct to the exclusion of all others, while exclusivity is the belief that only one religion provides salvation (not necessarily damnation for others) (Trinitapoli 2007). In practice, the terms are used interchangeably.

versus falsity or saved versus not saved) over other potential ways of viewing others, such as similarity versus difference, moral versus immoral, etc.

After reviewing these themes in the literature more thoroughly, I investigate the relevant ways cultural sociologists have of studying social divisions. I briefly compare Swidler's (1986, 2003) "culture as a tool kit" model, values, and symbolic boundaries as potential ways of analyzing religiously oriented social fissures. I find that Lamont's (1994, 2000, 2002) conceptualization of symbolic boundaries is the most appropriate for this study because of its ability to balance the need to take individual intention and belief seriously without positing a causal "track" between belief and opinions of others (Weber 1958). While Lamont's model is useful, its utility could be expanded by looking beyond hierarchical relationships and vertical social distance to also see horizontal social distance (Cavan 1971).

Religion and Prejudice

Perhaps the most well-known work investigating the connection between religion and prejudice is Glock and Stark's *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism* (1969). They posit a rather complex model that links religious beliefs to modern secular anti-Semitism. Specifically, they connect what they call "religious dogmatism" as measured by an index of orthodoxy, a belief in historic desecration of Jews against Christians, and other variables to anti-Semitic religious beliefs. While their argument has been critiqued by various scholars (Middleton 1973; Konig, Eisinga, and Scheepers 2000) on statistical and theoretical grounds, some of Glock and Stark's key variables—such as belief in historic desecration, particularism, and religious ortho-

doxy—remain important to modern studies linking prejudice and religion. The emerging consensus is that religiously oriented prejudice in general and toward particular groups is statistically related to beliefs in desecration by the target group (Pargament et al. 2007; Raiya et al. 2008), particularism/exclusivity (Scheepers, Gijbbergs, and Hello 2002; Wuthnow 2005), biblical literalism (Froese et al. 2008), wrathful images of God (Froese et al. 2008; Jung 2011), identification as Evangelical, and belief that America is a Christian nation (Merino 2010).²

Without going through the causal logic of each variable, I will focus on two studies that are representative of the problematic aspects in these works. The first is Wuthnow's *America and the Challenge of Religious Diversity* (2005). Though Wuthnow's focus is on opinions of diversity, he devotes a considerable amount of the piece to understanding the relationship between people's views of God and their willingness to grant civil liberties to various minority religious groups. His survey asks participants about the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements that "other religions hold some truth about God" and if "Christianity is the best way to understand God." From these questions, he creates a tripartite classification: (1) those who agree with the statement that Christianity is the best way to understand God and disagree with the other statement (exclusivists), (2) those who agree with both statements (inclusivists), and (3) those who only agree with the

2. There are additional variables that are significant in these studies but are not directly associated with religious beliefs, including political beliefs, contact with various target groups, being Southern, education, being female, and right-wing authoritarianism.

statement that other religions hold some truth about God (pluralists) (see also Merino 2010).

Two key problematic aspects of Wuthnow's system are its inability to capture both secular forms of exclusion, as well as the relative saliency of exclusivism participants. First, questions about access to access to truths about God necessarily limit the ability for secular people to articulate the ways that they may exclude others.³ I believe that part of the reason for this omission is that the groups that sociologists typically study as the targets of discrimination are not particularly powerful minority groups, such as homosexuals, communists, racists, immigrants, Muslims, and atheists. Typically, secular people—defined as those who do not regularly attend a religious group and do not have a committed belief in God—are not investigated for their own exclusive tendencies (Zuckerman 2009; Putnam and Campbell 2010). But from billboards showing images of the Three Wise Men and the star of Bethlehem proclaiming, "You know it's a myth—this season, celebrate reason" (Slotnik 2010) to the secularly oriented ACLU, secularism or secular philosophies have significant out-groups which can be the subject of legal and/or civic critique and acrimony. As such, sociologists cannot ignore how the views of secular people shape whom they exclude and include. The second issue is that it is possible that one can be religiously exclusive, but this belief is not the primary way for that person to understand religious others. While someone may think that their religion provides exclusive access to God, as my research will demonstrate, it does not entail that oth-

3. A question about secular exclusivity would have to ask—similar to religious exclusivity—about the consequences for false belief.

ers are morally bankrupt or worthy of disdain or even considered all that different from the participant.

Another pertinent example is Jung's (2011) work on the correlates of respect for Islam. He argues, in line with Froese et al. (2008), that belief in a wrathful, punishing God, along with being a member of particular varieties of Christianity, is correlated with a decreased likelihood of respecting Islam. Interestingly, Jung shows that unlike other religious affiliations, for Evangelical Christians, increased contact is associated with *decreased* respect for Islam. While this work contributes significantly to our understanding of the relationship among contact, belief, and religious affiliation, it is important to also investigate what it is about contact between Evangelical Christians and Muslims that creates less respect? Also, it is important to ask what participants mean by Islam when they answer the question. As I will demonstrate later in this dissertation, while some people condemn "Islam," they can have more positive views of "Muslims" as people of faith. While also subject to the critiques I made above about the causal linkages between a belief and views of others, Jung's work also highlights that quantitative analysis does not necessarily capture the particularities of people's views in its quite-legitimate pursuit of generalization and standardization and that this omission can misshape our theories that sociologists use to understand people's views of others.

In most survey research, scholars predefine the groups that the participants are going to evaluate because it is necessary for generalizing the results. However, if we are interested in prejudice or even in just the relationship between secularist

and religious beliefs and views of others, providing groups for evaluation ahead of time in research limits the participants to the groups that we think are important. While many of these indicators (especially the GSS measures on communists and racists) are particularly valuable for understanding general attitudes toward civil liberties, to understand whom people separate themselves from, social scientists need to also offer participants additional ways of responding. Participants may perceive social divisions we do not recognize using items for distinction we do not know about. Just as we do not know exactly whom secularist people pose themselves against or how they are exclusive, the constrained nature of our measures do not allow researchers to investigate whom religious people see themselves as opposing or getting along with. We only know what surveys tell us, and surveys only tell us about the groups that we have thought of beforehand.

Generally, quantitative work of this nature does not allow participants to highlight the groups or ideas that are salient to them. This tendency is manifest in built-in minimization of the potential for secular forms of exclusion, occasionally vague causal logic, and an inattention to the salient groups and the terms in participants' worlds. While the work is extremely valuable for understanding general forms of prejudice, it does not necessarily address the boundaries that are particularly important and salient to people. The next body of literature handles this issue by focusing on boundaries themselves as they relate to social cohesion, though it does so at the expense of those groups that exist between the in- and out-groups.

Us and Them

Another tradition in the sociology of religion that studies the links between religion and social separation was founded by Durkheim. In general, the focus is on how the necessities of group formation and preservation entail ostracism or even violence against outsiders. In his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim argues that religion and indeed God are a representation of the larger emergent community (Durkheim 2001:156–7). For Durkheim, “Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them” (2001:62). This united community stands against those outsiders. The social energy harnessed by religion builds a sense of “us” and thus a potentially dangerous sense of “them” (Wellman and Tokuno 2004; Graham 2007; Collins 2008).

Other scholars working from a more social psychological perspective have investigated the role of in- and out-groups in establishing and maintaining group cohesion. Smith uses his *subcultural identity theory* to highlight the importance for Evangelical Christians to both actively define others as *negative reference groups* while also engaging with those negative reference groups so as to be cognizant of their own separate identities (see also Bartkowski 2004; Cimino and C. Smith 2007, 2011). A group grows or diminishes on the basis of its ability to maintain a balance between firmly establishing who they are in both positive and negative terms without becoming isolated and complacent or diluting its identity.

Using a completely different theoretical foundation, but to similar ends, scholars working in the rational choice tradition of sociology (Finke and Stark 1989; Finke and Iannaccone 1993; Iannaccone 1994) emphasize how exclusive beliefs enable better and more productive resource and emotional management for a congregation. Rather than in-group/out-group dynamics, strictness and exclusiveness simply discourage those who would not contribute (and thereby diminish the enthusiasm and resources of the group) from staying involved. Groups in this model are only as healthy as they are able to exorcise people who otherwise would diminish the strength of the collective “we” feeling.

Regardless of the differences in their perspectives, these scholars all claim that the establishment of firm boundaries is essential to the strength and self-definition of the group. However, this theoretical focus makes it difficult for them to discuss the role of liminality in the formation of group identity. Every strong and coherent group does not need to cast all those who are not exactly like them as complete outsiders. To put the point differently, not all boundaries are completely “bright” rather than “blurry” (Alba 2005). For many groups, people stand between “us” and “them” and play an important role in developing that group’s identity. Even theologically speaking, many religions have hierarchies of salvation and exclusion, such as Islam and Mormonism, where “people of the book” or those who are not apostates are subject to different rules and eternal fates than some more definite others.

These scholars' data ultimately support the importance of liminal groups, though their theories do not directly account for them. As I noted above, both Christian Smith's model and strictness theorists pose a sort of curvilinear relationship between strictness and group strength (Iannaccone 1996). Too much exclusivity becomes detrimental to group health. In practical terms, this means that functioning groups have outsiders who have something in common with the group but do not fit completely, or those who bear the requirements for membership, but not necessarily all or all the time.⁴ The worldview of the religions and secularists is not comprised solely of pure believers and disbelievers nor of free riders and devotees. If sociologists are to understand the role of "otherness" in group solidarity and maintenance, we need to have some way of including liminal groups in our analysis.

Culture Wars and Moral Cosmologies

The final group that is relevant to religiously inspired group divisions involves moral cosmologies that define the ultimate character of the world. These scholars' frameworks divide the world either by peoples' or groups' tendency toward individualistic or communalistic views on the authority or the economy which often manifests as liberal fighting conservatives (Hunter 1992; Zuckerman 1999; Kniss 2003; Davis and Robinson 2001; Ryle and Robinson 2006). In this literature, a chief issue is the models' difficulty of accounting for interreligious conflict because of their focus on communalistic versus individualistic disagreements. More clearly, while some data indicate a division between individualism and communalism, not

4. An exception may be Olsen and Perl's (2005) work on "cheap riding," but this only adds a third category rather than creating a spectrum.

all (or perhaps most) conflict, especially intrareligious, centers on that theme—a fact that is obfuscated by the models.

Starting with the work on divisions based on secularism and religion, Hunter's work *Culture Wars* (1992) divides the world into the orthodox and the progressives. He argues that the distinguishing feature of the orthodox group is their belief in the existence of transcendent absolute and undebatable guidelines (often established by some deity). Conversely, progressives, following the enlightenment tradition, focus on interpreting, critiquing, and establishing new rules, thereby questioning their absolute and universal character. From the division between the two groups, two camps emerge with differing views on abortion, homosexuality, separation of church and state, and other important social issues. The nation and its populous are broken into warring factions in an irreconcilable series of debates. While I cannot summarize the vast amount of critiques of Hunter's work, it is sufficient to say that while there is evidence that Americans are divided on specific issues like gay marriage, school prayer, and abortion, there is little evidence to indicate that ideological conformity and antagonism toward those that disagree with one's beliefs have spread to the public at large (Williams 1997; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2004; Baker 2004; Thomson 2010). Despite the critiques against the *Culture Wars* (Hunter 1992) model, it provides a basic framework which other scholars use in their own models.

Zuckerman's *Strife in the Sanctuary* (1999) offers an account of schism in a religious organization. He shows how the confluence of ideology, personality, opin-

ions of specific individuals, and in-group/out-group dynamics rent asunder a moderately sized relatively peaceful Jewish synagogue. Zuckerman actively connects his research to the culture wars model, arguing that “the schism of Willamette’s Jewish community fits neatly within this ‘culture war paradigm’” (1999:144).

However, Zuckerman’s argument relies on some particular social dynamics that could have gone otherwise and thereby exemplifies one problematic aspect of the culture wars model that will come to be of importance in this dissertation. A major issue in the synagogue was the rabbi’s pro-Palestine stance. This issue, along with homosexuality and disagreements on gender issues, coalesced into a fault line which divided the congregation. In other congregations, the issue of Israel does not vary with these other issues. Some orthodox congregations are vehemently against Israel’s existence (Neturei Karta 2002), while some reform congregations—including the one in this dissertation—announce that they “stand with Israel” on signs outside of their synagogue. More clearly, while conservatism and pro-Israel stances correlate, it does not have to be a major fissure that separates liberal from conservative people in a synagogue. In this dissertation, I will show that theological liberalism and being pro-Israel are not necessarily at odds. The culture wars argument renders the world as two camps, but while there is polarization on specific issues, they do not necessarily form coherent sets of antagonistic worldviews.

Another ethnographic account used to support the culture wars model highlights a separate issue with that argument, though it predates it. Ammerman’s work *Baptist Battles* (1990) vividly describes the splintering of the a large Baptist denom-

ination on the issue of whether heterodox views of the Bible would be excluded. The battle was waged using methods familiar to political campaigns: shipping people in from various remote churches to vote in the denominational meetings, points-of-order called on technical issues involving the bylaws to gain some advantage, and strongly worded attacks by each side against the other. Ultimately, the exclusivists beat the inclusivists, leading to the inclusivists forming their own denomination that is separate from the original. Ammerman's work offers limited support for the Niebuhrian models because she found that increased income and education strongly correlated with the moderate position, while the inverse was true for the conservative stance, though they largely focus on the ideological issues involved.

Though *Baptist Battles* describes liberal and conservative parties debating, it does not support the culture wars model. The schism Ammerman investigated focused on allowing heterodox believers to remain—not the nature of truth itself. Many of the “moderates” in her narrative were biblical literalists and socially conservative, but they did not believe that they should expel nonliteralists from the group—the discussion was mostly concerned with enforcement rather than specific beliefs.⁵ While the debate does have theological elements, it was largely a civil concern: “Is the group exclusive or inclusive of heterodoxy?” not “Is the Bible literal or historical?” Ammerman's work shows the importance of taking into account dimensions of conflict outside of theology and the sources of authority to see how matters

5. See also Woodberry and Smith (1998) for an account of how this debate was a repeat of one that occurred in the 1920s—only then, the moderates won.

of civility and inclusiveness toward different views can be important for informing group conflict and views of others.

Adding a substantial amount of complexity to Hunter's vision of a divided and pugnacious America is Kniss's (2003) "Mapping the Moral Order." Kniss draws a heuristic map for organizing and comparing various ideological systems. The map depicts two variables: moral authority and moral project, both of which are spectrums ranging from individual to communal. Moral authority defines what is good, beautiful, or true for that group (Kniss and Numrich 2007). An individual locus of moral authority means that a group believes that one finds epistemic, ethical, and aesthetic truths through individual rationality, emotions, or reflection. Conversely, a collective locus of moral authority relies on tradition, a sacred text, or a hierarchy for deriving standards. When people at this end of the spectrum attempt to understand a situation, they turn to scripture, the pope, or a central religious committee for guidance. Moral authority is the primary dimension that Hunter (1992) focuses on. However, there are more than issues of authority here; for instance, there are important differences among Americans regarding their views on the economy and what constitutes a community; this is the material of Kniss's other dimension.

The second axis of Kniss's moral order map is the "moral project" of a group. Whereas moral authority answers the question of what is good, beautiful, or true, the moral project describes how a group carries this ideal out in the world. Moral project also varies along a spectrum from individual to communal. At the individualist end, a group will seek to carry out its message on a person-to-person basis. Is-

sues such as drug abuse and poverty are seen as individual problems rather than as results of systemic inequality or failures on the part of the community. These groups seem to lack the language to talk about structure or a community as a whole and consequently have a difficult time understanding some economic or power dynamics (C. S. Smith 1998; Emerson and C. S. Smith 2001). In contrast, a collective moral project focuses on the well-being of a collective, like the Muslim *ummah* or Catholic Christendom.⁶ Problems are dealt with in terms of the community rather than seen as a collection of individual problems.

Whereas Hunter's model reduces American understandings themselves to one dimension, Kniss's adds a second dimension to account for essentially what amounts to differences in economic policy within and beyond a congregation. This perspective offers an alternative to the dichotomous worldview offered by Hunter (1992) in that we can see unexpected alliances, such as theologically conservative Black Protestants voting for Democrats because of their collective moral project, as well as interesting tensions, such as the fight between so-called paleocons and neocons over the issue of how communal the moral authority should be for the Republican platform.⁷

But even with an additional dimension, and not forcing a dichotomy upon the data, the moral cosmology perspective suffers from an inability to model interreli-

6. The collective which is referenced can be expanded to the whole of humanity in some instances, such as in humanism as a philosophy. But typically, it is restricted to specific groups. Also, it is important to note that the terms *ummah* and "Christendom" both refer to the community of believers, though they do have political aspects.

7. For more nuanced work on moral cosmologies, see Starks and Robinson (2007, 2009) and Starks (2009).

gious conflict that does not deal with economic or certain social justice issues. When devout Muslims and Catholics form theological boundaries against one another, it is not a matter of individualism versus community moral authority nor secularism versus progressivism—it is a difference of what constitutes truth rather than its source. While some scholars argue that the major boundary in the country is between the purposefully secular and everyone else (Wuthnow 1989; Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006), research indicates that some varieties of *religious* belief are still strongly associated with negative opinions of *religious* others (Pargament et al. 2007; Merino 2010; Jung 2011). In sum, while the moral cosmology perspective can take into account the diversity of perspectives between religion and secularism (hence secular exclusion), individualism and collectivistic perspectives, and liminal groups, it is less able to deal with ideological diversity within religions and the varieties of conflicts that can stem from that diversity. However, as the next section will show, there exist ethnographic works that transcend these models through focusing on the complex sets of interpersonal dynamics which ultimately lead to the disintegration or ineffectuality of organizations.

Ethnographic Accounts of Group Division

There are a number of works in the sociology of religion that use ethnographic methods to understand congregational conflict and divisions. These works capture many of the subtleties that other methods omit in their attempts to generalize their findings to the wider U.S. population. They also account for some of the problematic aspects of qualitative research in that they do not impose an evaluation of hierar-

chical understanding. Edgell's work *Congregations in Conflict* (1999)⁸ and Lichterman (2005, 2006, 2012) move beyond the culture wars model and support my contention that nontheological matters play an important role in determining symbolic boundaries, yet they focus on the factors that group level factors uniting or splitting a congregation or their efficacy in engaging in social justice. By contrast, my work focuses on the boundaries that individuals use to understand the world around them which may not match the group boundaries.

Other ethnographic methods have gone beyond the culture wars or Niebuhrian models that take into account the subtle social dynamics and particular ways congregations maintain solidarity that can result in congregational strife. Edgell's work focuses on congregation models which are "distinct cultures that are comprised of core tasks and legitimate ways of doing things" (1999:7). Edgell categorizes these distinct cultures into a variety of subtypes, each with its own sense of what the congregational community is and how that community is supposed to function. Strife comes from either conflicts in the proper way to be in the congregational model or groups having different congregational models. It is the latter type, the "who are we" style question, which results in schism because part of the difference between congregations' styles is how to resolve conflict. Even attempts at resolution can exacerbate a conflict because the groups are using very different assumptions about what the rules for interaction are. Edgell shows a whole new side to congregational life, where the theological issues that are prominent in the culture

8. Note: At the time of publication, Dr. Edgell's last name was Edgell-Becker.

wars model are aspects of debates between very different senses of what a congregation is and what it should be.

Although I focus on individual preferences, Edgell's work supports my belief that theological matters might not be of paramount importance to some congregants or congregations. Standing next to people oriented toward worship and truth, others might see social action as important, while some see maintaining the peace for the community as the most pressing issue (1999:15). I find more diversity within a congregation than Edgell did because I am not specifically focusing on conflict. I suspect that many people with conceptions of what is important to them that are different from others in a congregation may just keep quiet or rely on social networks that are more like-minded, though without the need for schism. Another possibility, though I do not attempt to address it here, is that there is a sufficient overlap between congregational models that people can coexist provided no major issues arise that make the difference meaningful.

Lichterman's work on civic engagement is the most developed argument on group solidarity and conflict (Lichterman 2005, 2006). He argues persuasively that we should understand group action and conflict as part of its *group style*, or "the a recurrent pattern of interaction that arises from a group's taken-for-granted understandings about how to be a good member in a group setting. Group style is how people coordinate themselves as a group; there are different ways to be together as a group, and thus different group styles" (Lichterman 2006:539). In other words, group style answers the question of how a group does things. Group style includes

how a group sustains boundaries, their bonds as expressed through mutual obligation and their specific speech norms (2005:54). Independent of ideology, group style can facilitate or hinder effective civic action depending upon the context. In the case of several of the groups studied by Lichterman in his book *Elusive Togetherness*, the groups were prevented from accomplishing their goals because their group style prevented them from being successfully reflexive about their place in the community, the context of those they attempted to help, and the larger state context. The group style which sustained them and provided solidarity for them as a group rendered them ineffective at their stated goals.

Lichterman's work is relevant here because he shows that nontheological but not purely organizational elements of a group can facilitate or impair a group's ability to carry out its mission to the world. The group style—as articulated through boundaries, speech norms, and group bounds—is imbued with theology but is not reducible to it. My overall argument thus far has been that the liberal/conservative dichotomy is insufficient for understanding opinions of others because there are strong opinions that fall outside of it and because it is not necessarily important to some people. However, those arguments are part of a larger one focused on the connection between theology and action. Whereas the culture war model implies that at the center of the debate are irreconcilable notions of "truth," Lichterman shows that a group's behavior in general is not wholly patterned by these ideals, but rather by the particular cluster of group norms and boundaries that relate to but are not completely based upon a group's "truth."

The relationship between group style and relational principles is somewhat unclear to me because my analysis did not focus on the group as a whole, nor did I investigate infragroup interactions to gain a sense of “how things are done.” At best, I can assume that whatever differences there are among participants are harmonized or filtered out when it comes to group action. Yet group style helps harmonize or filter out dissonant voices to produce coherent group boundaries. Group boundaries are essential for understanding group conduct, but I believe that there is *also* merit to investigating personal sets of boundaries within the group. While people act in groups, they also have social networks beyond the congregation. Their jobs, families, and connections before coming to the congregation all span beyond the walls of the sanctuary, and so their personal boundaries can factor into interactions with these outsiders.

The ethnographically based literature on group conflict provides a number of crucial insights into how people evaluate others. They highlight how personal opinion, the particularities of group dynamics, congregational models, group styles, and theology can come together to impact the opinions of members of the group regarding each other and the world around them. Edgell’s and Lichterman’s works support my arguments in terms of moving beyond theology as a primary means of understanding others. However, I believe that their focus on a different level of analysis limits their applicability to my present study.

Assembling the Pieces and Setting a Direction

The literature presented thus far paints a general, if loose, picture of the sociological literature on the influence of religion on fostering or undermining social divisions. I have given priority to particular forms of inquiry—such as qualitative research—over others because I believe that these forms of inquiry will successfully navigate the problems associated with the existing literature. I have highlighted how the existing mostly quantitatively oriented data tends to ignore secular exclusivity, inter-religious conflict, the saliency of belief, and liminal groups. Most of my critiques are grounded in methodological concerns over the kinds of data that are omitted from quantitative research. It is not my intention to critique these scholars for not doing the research project that I am interested in. Their analysis reveals sociologically and practically interesting aspects of the relationship between religion and social divisions. The major issue is that these omissions are themselves important and sociologically interesting. Consequently, I introduce several qualitatively oriented theories available in cultural sociology for studying social divisions that I believe may be able to obtain information on these gaps in our research. If we are going to understand how the salient ways that secular and religious people view themselves and others, it is imperative that we have theoretical tools that are suitable to the task.

My focus on people's opinions of the groups that they find relevant to themselves requires that I take the specific content of what they say about others and themselves seriously and as relevant for their interactions with others. Cultural sociology provides a smorgasbord of options for understanding how people under-

stand each other (Small and Lamont 2008), yet three tools in particular emerge from the options available: cultural tool kits, *habitus*, and symbolic boundaries. The first provides ample ways to understand how people construct their strategies of action and opinions of others, but I believe the tool kit model suffers from a subtle instrumentalist understanding of human motivation. The second, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, offers an insight into how people's preferences, manners of interaction, and general dispositions influence their understanding of other people, though it is somewhat limited in its ability to discuss moralistic rather than status-oriented distinctions among people (Lamont 1994:181). Symbolic boundaries, on the other hand, take people's opinions of others seriously without necessarily relying on Weberian notions of values to understand how they influence people's interactions and opinions of others.

The first resource for understanding opinions of others is Swidler's (1986, 2003) work on cultural tools. Swidler argues that "action is not determined by one's values. Rather action and values are organized to take advantage of cultural competences" (1986:275). More clearly, one's aspirations have more to do with the strategies of action in our tool kit than values. People pursue the options made available to them by their structural situation and the cultural tools available to them. Values are seen from this perspective not as motivations, but as post hoc justifications for our actions. Our tools shape the values that we follow; presumably, success of a specific kind in a field is inherently desirable. Rather than values or preferences, we should look at "culturally shaped skills, habits, and styles" (ibid).

Swidler's model serves as an excellent corrective to Parsonian and Weberian models of culture, where our values directly determine our actions and strategies for action. These simplistic understandings of the functioning of culture ignore how culture does not just provide ends which lead us down a set trajectory; culture can also provide us with the a variety of means, important symbols, and boundaries which delimit our understanding of ourselves and others (Zerubavel 1996; Griswold 2008). However, I find that Swidler's model overemphasizes one aspect of culture (means) and thereby ignores how values and, more importantly, other aspects of culture influence our behavior and understanding of the world.

Williams (2004) notes that the culture as a tool kit model relies solely on structural and sociopsychological mechanisms for generating action, constricting culture's role to delimiting choices rather than providing motivation for a specific option. Removing "motives" from the domain of culture places emphasis on how social and cognitive tendencies "push" us in specific directions. But, as Williams says, "thinking of cultural elements as 'tools' underplays the affective, moral, and even unacknowledged ways in which culture holds and shapes those within it" (Williams 2004:96).⁹ People use tools for specific ends; these may be instrumental and/or sociopsychological, but sociologists cannot rule out culture as also providing motivation in some ways, even if people are inconsistent. To quote Alexander, "Valuation is cultural. People have different ideas about how to distribute love, beauty, money,

9. Furthermore, there is a question of where frames, tools, etc., come from in the first place. Someone may hold a particular religious view because it provides a sense of empowerment, but it does not necessarily explain why one chooses a particular religious view when presented with a number of choices (Mizruchi 1994:336).

power, and access to the good life” (2007:24). What is considered worthwhile is not just social psychology or self-interest, nor is it constantly shifting: what we pursue through various tools is in part determined by culture. Empirically speaking, evidence *does* suggest that values can play a role in social outcomes. As Vaisey (2010) and Lizardo (2006) demonstrate, values for education can have statistically significant and consistent effects over time on social networks and economic behaviors.

Yet I do not think that values are an adequate means of analyzing views of others because values are a basis of moralization of others. More specifically, all the distinctions that we make between ourselves and others with regard to religion and politics are not necessarily moral in nature; it is possible for some groups to be simply different, incorrect, or simply annoying. While it would be an interesting project to investigate how people define others on the basis of their values, this perspective builds a unidimensional and almost-necessarily hierarchical representation of people’s views of others. My goal is to seek the broadest understanding of these differences so as to highlight a larger fraction of the variety of ways that people create and sustain distinctions between themselves and others with regard to religio-political differences. There are two related approaches in cultural sociology for investigating the distinctions that people make with regard to each other that go beyond the narrow perspective provided above, specifically the works of Bourdieu on the creation and maintenance of class hierarchies and of Lamont on symbolic and social boundaries.

Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1987) provides a useful way of understanding how people think about and evaluate others in, as well as how culture functions to produce and reproduce, a social hierarchy. The key means by which dominating social classes maintain their position is through the maintenance and production of their habitus, which Bourdieu defines as:

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures pre-disposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively "regulated" and "regular" without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (1990:53).

Loosely, I see habitus as a collection of frames, schema, and practices that organize a person's life. Our habitus structures our lives while we change them through enacting and living them in order to adapt to the shifting fields in which we work. They are rooted in schema which are "learned, internalized patterns of thought-feeling that mediate both interpretation of on-going experience and reconstruction of memories" (Strauss 1992:2). These interpretations offer "scripts" of action embedded in them which tell us what to do in given situations. For instance, when I meet people, I evaluate them using the schemas and dispositions that inform my understanding of the world. Their manner of speaking, style of jokes, and choice of food help me locate others with respect to the standards and dispositions I inherited and continue to cultivate to the exclusion and inclusion of the people in my life.

Taken together, schema and habitus gives us a sense of how people organize the social world around them into various categories. The habitus we are socialized into informs our interpretations of the world and provides plans of action at a dispositional level, while schemas are the forms to which those interpretations conform. If I go to a sit-down restaurant, my white middle-class secularish habitus informs my preferences for the restaurant itself, the food, and how I go about ordering, eating, and paying for my food. My habitus does not just provide me with frames or tools, but dispositions which guide my choices. One can come to love beer to the exclusion of wine, praise honesty over materialism, and enjoy direct speaking rather than subtle nuance—each feeling as “right” as knowing which direction is up (Ignatow 2009; Vaisey 2009; Lamont 1994) and each used to evaluate and categorize the people around us. Even the most calculated action is informed by our habitus because what is seen as possible and the information we use in our calculations are shaped by our habitus (Bourdieu 1990:53).

Habitus is not composed of values but rather interpretations of the world and plans of action (Lizardo 2004:392). It both classifies the world and gives us general guidelines for acting on the world. This is not a static process; for Bourdieu, we actively construct our understanding of the world using structurally defined categories, but in the process, we may change the situation or create new categories.

We can overcome the barriers that a value-oriented or tool kit model by using habitus because it shows how culture gives us ways of doing things and a sense that the way we are doing them is the “natural” way to do them. While people often

do not follow their stated values, they often make moral judgments without conscious deliberation (Lizardo 2004; Ignatow 2009; Vaisey 2009). Our socialization provides us with the feeling of “rightness” of our tastes, even if they are not consciously held. It lacks both the instrumentalist and rational choice theory implications of Swidler’s theory (Lizardo 2004:367), as well as the deductive and/or internalized value reasoning orientations implied by Parsonian and Weberian understandings of morality. One of the most powerful elements to Bourdieu’s habitus is its unconscious and nondeliberative nature: our preferences just feel correct (Ignatow 2009; Vaisey 2009). This is not to say that these preferences are inherent rather than social; rather, they are the result of socialization throughout the life course.¹⁰

Habitus provides us with an understanding of the motivational “push” of culture. Our preferences and interactional expectations are shaped by our dispositions and schema. Our evaluations of others are in turn based on our preferences and interactional expectations that influence whom we hire, fire, and/or are our friends with. Yet Lamont notes that Bourdieu “almost exclusively stresses the importance of signals of socioeconomic and cultural status . . . [which] vastly underestimates the importance of moral signals and makes them the privileged concern of a small group of people” (Lamont 1994:181). Lamont’s emphasis on morals as important means of social division is especially relevant when looking to how people in various religions evaluate each other, as morality is considered by many in popular culture to be a

10. However, Werfhorst and Hofstede (2007) argue that for educational attainment, habitus mostly matters for earlier childhood while one’s tendency toward risk aversion matters later in life. Similarly, Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997) find that early childhood cultural capital matters less over time.

domain of religion (sometimes exclusively). While Bourdieu's account offers much in understanding the causal efficacy of cultural and cultural objects (Griswold 2008), it is somewhat limited in understanding how explicitly moral arguments can be important to people.

The study of social boundaries in America was led by Michèle Lamont (1994; 1996; Lamont 2000). Substantively, Lamont and Molnár (2002) find that work on boundaries spans a large number of areas in sociology including "cognition, social and collective identity, commensuration, census categories, cultural capital, cultural membership, racial and ethnic group positioning, hegemonic masculinity, professional jurisdictions, scientific controversies, group rights, immigration, and contentious politics" (167). The authors describe two kinds of boundaries that are found in the literature: symbolic boundaries and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are "conceptual distinctions" that we use to organize our reality; through various social processes, we divide time, space, people, and ideas—creating a sense of the world (2002:168). In contrast, social boundaries are those objectivated symbolic boundaries that manifest in unequal access to material resources and generally constrain social agent's behavior. As Wimmer (2008) notes, boundaries must have categorical and behavioral aspects to become social boundaries: "One divides the social world into social groups—into 'us' and 'them'—and the other offers scripts of action—how to relate to individuals classified as 'us' and 'them' under given circumstances. Only . . . when ways of seeing the world correspond to ways of acting in the world, shall I speak of a social boundary" (2008:975). Not all symbolic boundaries become social

boundaries. In order for a boundary to move from symbolic to social, it needs to be widely held in an institutional field, sufficiently unambiguous, and enforced (Lamont 1994). These two forms of boundaries represent enacted senses of difference. With the acts of seeing one thing as unlike another, specifying the content of each, and classifying the nature of the dissimilarity, then acting upon those differences create social boundaries.

At a simple level, Lamont's work shows how opinions on others can have great impact on the treatment of various out-groups, irrespective of laws being passed (Lamont 1994; Lamont et al. 1996; Lamont 2000). Lamont demonstrates that boundaries regarding financial status, morality, and culture can have a grave impact on hiring practices, social networking, and allocating one's time and effort. People's sense of a "worthy person" informs them how they live their lives as well as how they act toward the people they encounter. For those with strong convictions (religious or secular), there are necessarily those who are excluded, and this has consequences for interpersonal and group interaction and social inequality.

In my research, using social and symbolic boundaries does not necessarily presuppose any a priori out-group, nor does it necessarily limit who or how people can be excluded or included. People can show researchers where they erect boundaries between themselves and others, rather than the researcher's choice. Additionally, Lamont's system precludes the possibility of liminal groups who play a role in helping to shape group identity while not being completely included or excluded. Lamont's framework is perfectly suited to studying symbolic boundaries as they are

used by religious and nonreligious people to distinguish themselves from others. I believe that by utilizing Lamont's framework, it is possible to see a facet of the complex ways people use beliefs to distinguish themselves from others.

Theoretical tools are unfortunately insufficient for understanding the social world; one needs instruments that are able to handle the complexity implied by theory. In the next chapter, I discuss the methods, sampling, and the innovative instrument called *ideomapping* that I used to try to capture the social distinctions that are important to participants.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS, CONTEXT, AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

At the center of this dissertation are questions concerning views of religious and secular people on other religiously oriented groups around them and how the participants' religious and political beliefs relate to those views. Given the gaps in the literature highlighted in chapter 2 and the general dearth of research on views by secular people, especially their views of religious groups, my research is partly exploratory and strives to avoid presupposing an overly constricting framework that limits the scope and substance of the participants' views of others.

Answering these questions, I required instruments, questions, and a sampling frame which allow participants to (1) discuss *any* group relevant to the question, (2) use *their* terms, and (3) isolate how participants belonging to *particular* religious and political ideologies view others. The instrument, which I call *ideomapping*,¹ when coupled with a semistructured interview allows participants to represent their sense of similarity or dissimilarity in a two-dimensional space and discuss what those differences mean to them in the broadest terms possible, while still allowing for comparison among participants.

While my instrument allows for a wide diversity of views, my theoretical sampling frame focuses on homogeneity. To isolate religious and political beliefs

1. It is so named because it allows participants to create maps of their ideological landscapes.

from other variables, I chose organizations with significantly different religious and political views, but similar demographic, socioeconomic, educational, and regional characteristics. Using statistical language, I attempted to maximize variance on beliefs, while minimizing variance due to demographic and educational sources to highlight the relationship between politics, religion, and views of others.

In this chapter, I discuss this dissertation's sampling methods, a rough outline of the demographic, and ideological characteristics of the participants, and I argue for my use of an unusual graphical instrument. This chapter describes the specifics and outcomes of my sampling framework as well as a brief literature review justifying my use of the ideomapping instrument. My sampling technique was mostly successful in securing a largely homogenous sample in all the required terms save age. I conclude with a brief discussion on some of the problems associated with the method and a discussion of possible solutions.

Sampling and Level of Analysis

I conducted fifty-five semistructured interviews from four research sites determined by theoretical and convenience sampling. To lessen influence of the variance from nonpolitical or religious beliefs on views of others, I chose congregations that were as similar as possible in terms of race, income, education, urbanism, gender, even while they differed in terms of theological liberalism versus conservatism, faith tradition, or being a member of a faith or purposefully secular. In order to increase homogeneity on race, education, income, urbanism, and location, I chose congregations in relatively affluent and well-educated areas according to the census and re-

viewed congregation websites to ascertain the racial profile of the church. I also attempted to interview both men and women in equal numbers at every congregation to avoid biasing the data toward a particular gendered perspective (beyond my own influence).

In order to find variation in religious tradition as well as theological liberalism and conservatism, I contacted theologically liberal and conservative congregations from Jewish and Lutheran congregations all located within or around Chicago. I specifically chose to include Lutheranism because they typically have similar polity structures across theological visions and pull from a shared tradition, thereby minimizing variation among those social dimensions.² Unfortunately, there are no safely accessible conservative secular organizations that regularly meet in this region, so I was unable to include that perspective in this study.

I e-mailed any church or synagogue that fit the criteria that I had established and was accessible by public transportation or bicycle. Of the over fifty congregations that I e-mailed, I was able to gain access to five and had to drop the Orthodox Jewish congregation that I had established contact with because of a lack of participants. The first participating congregation is a purposefully secular organization located in a suburb surrounding Chicago. It has over one hundred members of various ages, though according to the information they provided me on the group, as a whole, they are an aging congregation. The second is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) located in a suburb of Chicago. It is a moderate-

2. This may change as some congregations expand (Ellingson 2007).

ly sized congregation of over one hundred members. This particular church emphasizes being openly welcoming to gays and lesbians. Though all the participants with whom I spoke were white, a small number of the congregants had East Asian and African heritage. The third participating congregation is a member of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and is located in a wealthy neighborhood in northern Chicago. This particular synod of the Lutheran Church is theological and politically conservative and participates in a parochial school system. The congregation is large, with over two hundred members. The final participating congregation is a Reform Jewish congregation located in North Chicago. With over one hundred members, it is an LGBT-friendly congregation that is active in interfaith work.

The research design was successful in terms of producing a largely racially, economically, and educationally homogenous sample (see table 3). Most of the participants in this research are highly educated, middle class to upper-middle class, older, and all the participants are white. One exception is that the average age of the LCMS participants was much lower than the average age of that of the other congregations. I am uncertain as to how this influences my outcomes, though younger people tend to be more liberal on many issues, though I speculate that it would increase the similarities among the congregations. People tend to become more conservative with age, even controlling for their religious affiliation (Henningham 1996; Truett 1993). As such, older people in a liberal congregation might be closer to younger people in a conservative congregation with regard to their political beliefs. In future

research, I will have to attain either significantly more variation in age in each group or find some way to minimize its impact.

The design was also successful in capturing a variety of political and theological beliefs both within congregations and among them as shown in table 2 below on the subject of “belief in God.” Because I lack a random sample, it is impossible to statistically test how participants’ views of others were correlated to their belief tradition or their specific thoughts on God.

My analysis is primarily a comparison of individuals with different beliefs, rather than congregations because I lack sufficient numbers of participants from each congregation to make statements about those congregations. Furthermore, my focus in this dissertation is on individuals’ views of others, rather than on emergent congregational views because current research on the subject does not highlight the unique qualities of individual views. I use a nonrandom set of congregations because I am interested in keeping constant the congregational context for a group of people and because the secular population who belongs to a congregation (and is therefore actively secular) is unlikely to produce significant numbers of people for comparison with religious people through a random sample. As I will discuss in future chapters, highlighting individual views drew attention to the particular reasoning strategies that participants used when distinguishing themselves from others. This focus helped shed light on how existing sociological theories on religion and views of others are limited by their macro or quantitative approaches.

Process

After receiving permission from a group's leadership, I attended a service of the organization, after which the speaker would announce my presence, project aims, and desire to talk to people about participating in an interview. After the service, I stood in a public area, and people came to me if they were interested in participating. I exchanged contact information and arranged meetings in a public area like a coffee-house, though I occasionally was invited into their homes. Interviews typically lasted one to one and a half hours, though some were as short as thirty minutes, while one over three hours. After signing and explaining the informed consent document, I began the interview with a short survey that discussed the participants' beliefs and religious identification while the participants narrated the reasoning behind their answers. Following this, I provided the participant with the mapping instrument.

I call the instrument the *ideomap*.³ Participants were given a piece of paper with an *X* surrounded by concentric circles and radii on a white field, resembling a dartboard (see figure 1). They were then instructed to view the central *X* as their own religious or religiously oriented beliefs or nonreligious beliefs. Using a pen, participants drew and labeled new *Xs* at varying distances from the center *X* (them) representing various religious, ideological, or mystical groups or traditions in terms of how close or far away these other belief systems or organizations are from their

3. See Josephsohn and Brown-Saracino (unpublished).

own.⁴ As participants drew, I asked them to narrate aloud their judgments and reasoning. I asking open-ended questions to help clarify any ambiguities in their assessments of others.

Why Mapping?

The instrument I used here allows participants to discuss both whatever groups are salient to them and the terms in which they think about these groups. Existing methods are insufficient for these tasks in a number of ways. First, quantitative approaches to the study of symbolic or social boundaries a priori limit the qualities of the boundaries and the groups or people that they constitute. They ask participants about specific groups using researchers' terms, thereby limiting the categories they use and the grounds for evaluation. Second, existing qualitative and mixed-method approaches limit the complexity of participants' views, preventing thorough documentation and analysis of the relations with numerous interrelated groups and any ambiguity or ambivalence in those relations.

The first approach to studying symbolic boundaries is the one used by Edgell et al. (2006) to investigate American's opinions on atheists. Using surveys, Edgell et al. were able to generalize their findings to the United States; however, they could only speculate as to why Americans were so distrustful of atheists. Scholars know a great deal about what groups are stigmatized in American culture, but the reasoning for of the stigmatization is not easily answerable by surveys. Furthermore, it is pos-

4. Only two participants placed specific individuals on their maps. In one case, it was the participant's sister, and the other, it was George Bush. However, most participants used specific groups, faith traditions, or broad terms for collections of groups.

sible that the term “atheist” means different things to people—this is completely plausible given that a significant number of people who profess atheism on surveys also claim to believe in God (Bullivant 2008). By having participants locate other groups on the map, I should be able to gain information regarding both their self-definition and definitions of other groups.

Relying on in-depth interviews, many researchers use symbolic boundaries as a lens to study how identity is constructed and maintained a variety of entities and groups like nations (Theiss-Morse 2009), groups like middle-class men (Lamont 1994), Arab-American adolescents (Ajrouch 2004), hotel workers (Sherman 2005), and minority racial groups (Vasquez and Wetzel 2009).⁵ These studies effectively capture dynamics that shape symbolic boundaries and demonstrate their influence on group behavior and adaptation to changing contexts. However, these in-depth interviews, which tend to explicitly or implicitly focus on hierarchically or conflict-oriented frames, possess some limitations.

First, most in-depth interviews ask participants to discuss multiple potentially interrelated groups in terms of hierarchical or adversarial relations and with no liminal or middle ground between in- and out-groups. As a result of the structuring of the questions, interviews regarding symbolic boundaries risk producing elevated social desirability effects and build in hierarchical assumptions about people differentiating themselves from others. Especially in an American context, asking a participant if they feel superior to some group may violate populist notions of abstract

5. This list is not exhaustive, but it exemplifies the key issues I discuss in the chapter. For a more comprehensive list, see Lamont and Molnar (2002) and Pachucki et al. (2007).

liberalism's notion of equality. This may lead participants to omit or have difficulty articulating senses of superiority (Bonilla-Silva 2009; Wuthnow 2005). While, in theory, qualitative research does not require a hierarchical focus or produce social desirability effects, most qualitative inquiries into symbolic boundaries employ hierarchically oriented questions, limiting the participants' ability to frame relations or boundaries in alternate terms and perhaps invoking more socially desirable answers. Second, many in-depth interviews ask informants to consider and discuss a large number of interrelated groups. This raises the possibility that some informants will lose track of the complex relations among groups. Worse still, participants may have no previous views on some groups and in being asked have to generate options.

Michèle Lamont is at the forefront of recent qualitative approaches to the study of symbolic boundaries in contemporary sociology. While not the only scholar to utilize symbolic boundaries from this methodological position, Lamont's theoretical approach and methods greatly influence and illustrate methodological limitations I raise above (Sallaz and Zavisca 2007; Silva and Warde 2010). In her interviews, Lamont relies on a notably direct approach. For instance, in *The Dignity of Working Men*, she reports asking participants, "Whether we admit it or not, we all feel inferior or superior to some people at times. In relation to what types of people do you feel inferior? Superior? Can you give me concrete examples? What do these people have in common?" (2000:254). Likewise, she asked, "What kind of people would you rather avoid? What kinds of people leave you indifferent?" (2000:254).

Lamont is not alone in this approach. Several recent studies of symbolic boundaries also rely on a hierarchical frame (e.g., Vasquez and Wetzel [2009] and Wilkins [2008]).⁶ In such studies, the primary methodological and analytical frame is hierarchical—for example, “better than” or “happier than.”⁷

Such inquiries into how participants understand themselves hierarchically—the dominant qualitative approach to studying symbolic boundaries—reveals how symbolic boundaries serve to reinforce hierarchies and power inequality. For instance, Lamont demonstrates how the ideals that people use to separate themselves from others influence their hiring decisions, social networks, etc. (Lamont 1994:33). In short, this qualitative approach’s direct inquiries about hierarchy uncover the structure and origins of actors’ feelings of superiority and inferiority and enhance knowledge of the influence of those perceptions on social life.

However, I suspect that it less effectively identifies areas of ambiguity or ambivalence that may be inherent in some social imaginations. Moreover, it risks coloring over the possibility that some actors may not conceive of social boundaries in neat hierarchical—“better than” or “less than”—terms. Lamont even critiques Bourdieu’s argument that “differentiation leads directly to hierarchalization,” but her critique was based upon varying strength of symbolic boundaries, rather than

6. Lamont writes that her work contrasts with Bourdieu’s because she does “not predefine the content of criteria of evaluation, but leave open the question of their relative salience and presence among a wider range of alternative criteria” (Lamont 2010:137); however, her work still relies on Bourdieu’s hierarchical orientation.

7. There is a considerable research focusing on symbolic boundary processes (e.g., expansion, contraction, etc.), but it too focuses on hierarchical rather than ambiguous evaluations. For example, see Cherry(2010) and Fuller (2003).

on their hierarchical character (Lamont 1994:182). Questions about superiority and inferiority may discourage mention of actors whom participants regard neither as “like me” or “not like me,” but instead whom they regard as falling somewhere between those poles. In short, I suspect a hierarchically framed method is best used for identifying those whom informants regard as “insiders” and “outsiders” and for exploring the origins of those categories, but that it is less well positioned to reveal the complex and sometimes contradictory middle ground that may influence social interactions.

Another approach involves the use of social thermometers. In these instances, participants are given a scale of 1 to 100 to measure how they feel toward something like a group or person (Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989). While this method is useful for understanding how someone feels toward one predefined group, it is less useful for understanding how groups relate to each other or when one is investigating what groups are used by a participant to form their evaluations. Because the social thermometer instrument relies on predefined groups, scholars do not learn how participants understand their ideological landscape, and we risk imposing categories that might not be relevant, salient, or part of the participant’s view of the world.

The thermometer method bears some similarity to the Q-Sort test used in psychology in terms of its limitations. Q-Sort involves giving participants stacks of cards with a name, phrase, concept, or place written on it. They are then asked to place these cards in their own order to show the extent to which particular cards fit

closer or farther from some statement. The Q-Sort method is a refined and tested method, though it poses some problems. First, the participants are given cards with terms on them, thus simultaneously limiting what participants can include and providing them with terms or groups that they might not have used. By allowing participants to both label and place their *Xs*, I hope to gain valuable information regarding how they organize their understanding of the world. In preliminary work using this instrument, I have had a participant create only one *X*, which they labeled “Religion,” and put it as far away from his *X* as possible. This type of result would be nearly impossible for a Q-Sort test and has some interesting theoretical implications. Second, it does not allow individuals to “cluster” their cards together or similarly place cards in a very different space—this limits the number of dimensions by which someone can distinguish themselves as well as the number of distinctions they can make among groups.⁸

The final alternative method is used by Charles (2009). Participants are given a picture of nine to twelve identical line drawing houses and told that their house is in or near the middle. They are then asked to decide the race of the people living near them and in the neighborhood. One can easily imagine this instrument being used for other variables like religion, sexual preference, or class. This instrument is useful, but it offers more information on how comfortable people feel about varying

8. There are clear benefits to the Q-Sort method in terms of ease of quantitative analysis. After reaching saturation of groups for my research, it may be useful to use a Q-sort instrument using these groups for the cards.

amounts of other people, rather than the specific sense of how they feel about that group.

The *ideomapping* instrument provides information regarding moral boundaries and categories, while also providing more information and being more flexible than other methods. Though it may not offer as much statistical information as the Q-Sort instrument, it compensates for that disadvantage by providing in-depth information that directly pertains to the research questions at hand.

Coding Relational Principles

Interviews were transcribed by myself or a paid assistant who signed a confidentiality contract and had no knowledge of the research or known connections to any members of the congregations involved or their members. I chose grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) as a basis for my coding and initial analysis because of both my critique of the existing literature as overly confining and because grounded theory is well suited to exploratory research because it allows themes to emerge from the data with a minimal number of assumptions. Practically speaking, I attempted to bracket my assumptions as to how particular groups would view others, the terms they would use, their own sense of religious identity, etc.

Using Qualrus and later Dedoose qualitative analysis software, my coding worked in three stages: initial coding, broad coding, and theme coding. In the initial coding stage, I attempted to highlight points that focused on the participants' views of themselves and others in as broad a way as possible. Paying special attention to groups, I attempted to answer these questions while I coded: (1) what placed the

group closer, (2) what placed the group farther, (3) what kind (as in religious or secular) of group it was, (4) the positive or negative terms associated with the group (e.g., intolerant), and (5) the group's relationship with the groups around it (e.g., all the groups physically close bear particular similarities).

Initial codes consisted of codes such as "religion causes narrow-mindedness," "atheism is intolerant," and "be a good person." I then organized these codes and the quotes attached to them into clusters such as those who say that atheism is intolerant or those who use the term "intolerant" at all. Using these groupings, I created the broad codes which would later serve as the basis for my relational principles. I started focusing on distinctions within codes. For instance, a variety of participants used the phrase "be a good person," yet when I read the quotes attached to the use of the phrase, they often had different meanings. Participants who often used the terms "intolerant" and "tolerance" tended to use "good person" to mean someone who goes out into the world and is proactive in doing outreach to others. Other participants understood the phrase to mean someone who is polite, friendly, and does not talk about religion. Broad codes consisted of "good person positive," "good person negative," and regarding other relational principles, "true/false moralized," "true/false nonmoralized." From the broad codes, I created thematic codes which would become the relational principles.

The thematic codes highlighted the distinctions that organized the majority of the broad codes. More clearly, I looked for terms that would describe the differences among the participants (and their associate collections of quotes) without

overlapping. The relational principle Tact, for instance, emerged from the aforementioned distinction between “good person positive” and “good person negative.” I noted that the participants with a negative understanding of a “good person” were focused on separating religion from public life and were especially upset by those who violated this ideal (the broad code for this was “religion not public”). The relational principle Tact emerged because these participants are *just* being tactful—many still have orthodox particularistic beliefs, but they tactfully do not talk about these beliefs in public and expect others to do the same.

At the broad and thematic levels of coding, I attempted to find statements that did not fit within the definitions I established through my coding. For instance, I was especially wary of my definition of the Tolerance principle, which involves several interrelated concepts: (1) accepting others with different beliefs, (2) believing that one does not hold absolute truth, and (3) being willing to learn/interact with others. However, by looking at individual statements about specific groups in the context of all the statements made by a participant, the definition held over different participants despite the constraints. As I will note in the conclusion, there were some participants who focused on morality and culture that did not fit into my schema, though they did not play a significant role for more than this small subset of participants.

Sampling and Organizational Issues

My initial intention was to have the dissertation organized according to the groups who participated in my research. I had planned for a chapter for Judaism, Liberal

Lutheranism, Conservative Lutheranism, and, finally, one for the Ethical Humanists. I suspected when I began that I might have to organize it into sections describing liberal versus conservative groups or participants, or secular versus liberal. But in the course of my research, I found that a different organizational scheme more effectively organized how people understood themselves in relation to others. Table 4 shows the distribution of relational principles by political orientation and group membership. In terms of each code's share of the ideological space, the Tact principle was the most prevalent, where Tact statements were used by a majority of the participants (though it was less frequently the major principle). The next most frequently used was Truth, then Tolerance, and, finally, Test orientations.

The table shows that I found that the ways that people understood others were *generally* not organized by religion, politics, or secularity. The relational principles are distributed across the groups with no group holding a monopoly on a particular way of understanding others. However, the Tolerance relational principle is completely absent from those who consider themselves to be socially conservative. This indicates that Tolerance is, to some extent, a liberal ideal. The relationship between liberalism and the Tolerance principle stands in contrast to the other relational principles that are not linked to a particular political ideology or specific religion. The lack of socially conservative Tolerance users did not represent the axis of difference which separated groups from each other, nor could centering on that elucidate our understanding of existing social divisions.

Given that my focus was how people understood others and that the means people used to do so did not map completely on to ideological lines, I decided to use the codes themselves—Truth, Tolerance, Tact, and Test (highlighted above)—to organize my arguments in this dissertation. My decision to organize the chapters in this way does leave out some commonalities within organizations. As such, I try to describe such commonalities within the chapters, highlighting how the liberal Lutheran participants shared a common sense of truth and common outsiders, while painting a larger picture of what the truth relational principle means for how participants understood others.

Problems, Solutions and Implications

There were several unanticipated issues that I encountered using the *ideomapping* method that limited the possibilities for quantitative analysis and complicated some aspects of qualitative analysis. A key component of ideomapping was the possibility for quantitative comparisons among maps. The first issue I did not anticipate was the sheer number and variety of ways that participants described groups on the maps. For instance, Islam could be broken down into innumerable subvarieties or understood in terms completely foreign to this researcher. Across participants, people ostensibly discussing the same group often are referring to specific aspects, subvarieties, activities, orientations of the religion. Islam, for instance, was broken into nineteen subcategories, and terms like “Violent Islam,” “Mohammadian,” “Muslims,” “Political Islam,” “Islamists,” and “Islam” all could represent significant divisions within a larger body or were the defining characteristic of the religion. Some of the-

se divisions were idiosyncratic (as I highlight in chapter 7), but even the most common terms (e.g., “Islam,” “Roman Catholicism,” and “Judaism”) occurred in less than half of the maps.

It is possible to aggregate terms such that any X that I judge to have something to do with Islam is counted toward the total, but I am uncertain if “Political Islam” is comparable to “Mohammedanism.” While I could have asked participants if they would put these groups together, it was difficult to do so for two reasons. First, I was not immediately aware of the issue, and I did not fully consider the implications for quantitative research. Second, asking each participant if the term they used was the same or dissimilar as all the similar terms that other participants used for a group would have lengthened the interview considerably and distracted from it.

The problem of the terms that participants used is especially acute when a single participant uses multiple terms for what I judge to be the same group. If “Muslims” and “Violent Islam” are on the same map, then I could count it twice for the total number of references, but when mapping the proximity of groups for quantitative comparisons among maps, the path is unclear. I had intended to take the most prevalent groups and see what their average distances were from the center; however, I am uncertain if people mean the same thing when they say that Islam is far, while other participants say that Muslims are close, nor do I have sufficient numbers of either group for more than a casual comparison. Describing the variety of labels for a group as being the same thing which can be counted as an increase in

the number of a specific category in my tallies seems arbitrary and unsuited to the goals of this dissertation to preserve important individual variation.⁹

A potential solution to this problem in future research is to preset the number of and terms for groups that participants may choose. After additional pilot interviews (and perhaps focus groups), I could develop a body of terms for groups or ideas that are salient to the participants and limit their responses focusing on those groups while asking them to use all the terms even if it is marked “don’t care.” This option is attractive because it would enable easier comparison between groups. If a random sample is obtained, those results generalize to a population. Unfortunately, this solution limits the groups that participants can use and asks about groups that the participant may not find particularly salient to their understanding of the world.

Conclusions

The exploratory aims and sampling procedures of this dissertation make it difficult, if not impossible, to generalize to the wider population. However, the sampling and open-ended character of the methods that I used greatly facilitated the exploration of what very particular kinds of participants thought of other religious and intentionally nonreligious groups around them. The participants in this study were alike in many ways. They are all white, generally middle class, educated, and mostly urban, yet they systematically differ in terms of their beliefs about God and politics. I cannot infer a causal direction between relational principles, religious beliefs, and

9. Without delving into postmodernist critiques of essentialist definitions of religion, it is interesting to note that looking at participant’s responses, there appears to be a sphere of interrelated terms and ideas associated with a religion as I understand it as a sociologist. Interestingly, we seem to relate to fragments of religions rather than their wholes.

political ideology. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, such speculation is unnecessary. As I have shown, there does not appear to be a particular relationship between the principles one uses to judge others and one’s political affiliation, save perhaps in terms of what principles one does not choose.

The method also successfully highlights the particular distinctions that people make in evaluating the world around them. The graphical method I employ allows people to describe which groups are salient to them in salient terms. Unlike previous attempts to investigate people’s views of others, this method allows participants to highlight the nonhierarchical and subtle distinctions that play an important role in shaping their understanding of their moral landscape.

Table 2: Participating Groups by Political/Theological Orientation

	Jewish	Christian	Secular
Liberal	X	X	X
Conservative		X	

Table 3: Demographics and Belief¹⁰

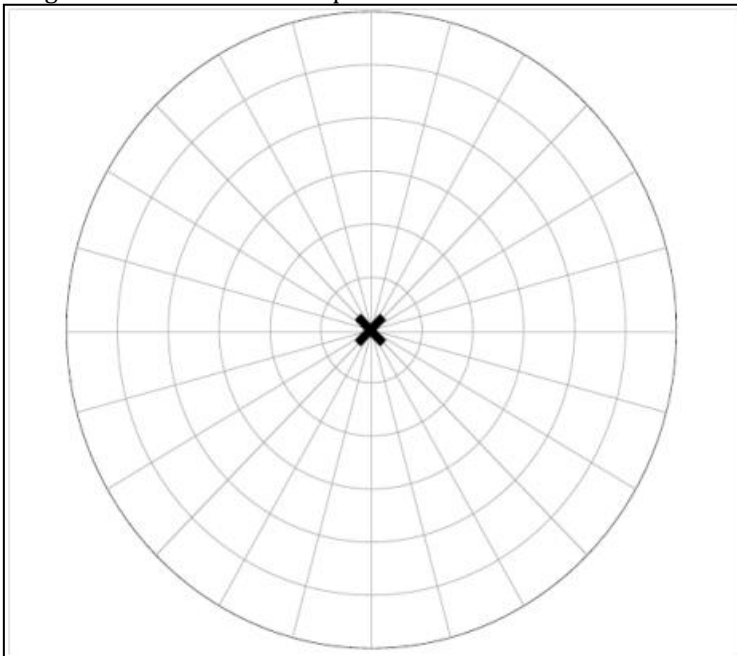
	% White	% Men	Ave. Inc	Ave. Edu	Ave. Age	E. Lib	E.C on	S. Lib	S. Con	% GodW atch
Secular	100	62	50–59	Col.	58	10	6	15	1	0
Lib. Christian	100	52	40–49	Col.	58	9	5	15	0	73
Con. Christian	100	45	60–74	Col.	37	0	8	1	8	100
Ref. Judaism	100	44	50–59	Mast.	59	3	1	6	0	22

10. The GodWatch question asks if the participant believes in a God that watches over them. Participants that marked that they strongly agreed or disagreed were included; those who marked that they didn’t know or disagreed were excluded. Totals in the political section are lower than the total number of participants for each group because people who identified as “middle of the road” were not included in the list.

Table 4: Relational Principles and Religious Affiliation

	E. Lib	S. Lib	S. Con	E. Con	L. Christian	C. Christian	Jewish	Secular
Tact	10	7	4	9	5	5	2	5
Tolerance	6	10	0	2	6	1	3	7
Truth	4	9	3	4	5	5	4	5
Test	2	6	2	5	7	3	3	3
Total	22	32	9	20	23	14	12	20

Figure 1: Shrunk Ideomap



CHAPTER FOUR

TRUE AND FALSE: THE TRUTH RELATIONAL PRINCIPLE

John is a professional in his early sixties, a tall thin man with graying hair and an easy smile. We spoke in a small corner diner on Chicago's north side. A member of the local Ethical Humanist Society, John characterizes his life with religion as one of antipathy and aversion. Amid sips of coffee, John spoke in detail of subtle distinctions among ten different secular groups, placing them closer or farther from the center *X* on his grid, depending upon how closely they aligned with his views of the proper beliefs for secular organizations. However, he had a very different way of talking about religious groups:

Interviewer: You mentioned religions earlier, where would it be?

John: I can't fathom that they would be anywhere near me, they're off the page, they're just *nonsense*.

Interviewer: All of them?

John: All of them.

Later in the interview when probed about why religion is off the page:

John: [B]ecause religion is fanciful thinking, it is isn't rational, like I said, it's nonsense.

John sees himself as holding a sensible position and views groups that are far from him as "nonsense." John is not alone in his sense of difference based on truth. Malin-

da is a thirty-six-year-old housewife and mother. Talking in a coffee shop near her Missouri Synod Lutheran church, she said of other religious groups, “You’re either with Christ or against him . . . Jesus says it in the Bible, and that’s how things are . . . [other religions are] there because they don’t believe that Jesus was the Son of God.” She presents a view that is *substantively* different from John—that is, she included none of the same groups at the periphery of her map. Yet the organizing principle she uses is nearly identical to John’s, as both of their primary criteria for deciding which groups they identify closely with is how closely the other groups’ beliefs align with their understanding of truth. In this context, “truth” means belief in a dogma, adherence to a thinking style, or use of a method for understanding the world. This does not necessarily mean their map patterns are identical, as I will discuss in another chapter, but the decision-making process for placing groups close or far from the *X* that represents themselves involves the same relational principle.

In this dissertation, a relational principle is the specific standard that individuals and groups use to distinguish themselves from others within a particular domain of social life (in this instance, religion). I examine in this chapter participants who rely upon what I call the Truth relational principle to organize their religious worldview. The maps drawn by those using the Truth relational principle locate other groups close or far from the center based on the extent to which they conform to respondents’ beliefs about religion and morality, as well as methods for gaining truth. Subsequent chapters address three alternative relational principles: Tact, Tolerance, and Test.

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss how people from seemingly opposing groups (like politically liberal secularist John and theologically and politically conservative religious Malinda) are similar in their means for evaluating other religious groups. Though liberal Christians, Reform Jews, conservative Christians, and Ethical Humanists clearly have dissimilar understandings of what constitutes truth and how one assesses that truth, a segment of each of these groups uses the same evaluative Truth-oriented rubric to understand others. I also highlight throughout this chapter how distance from the center can be moralized like the above to participants but does not necessarily indicate that a participant thinks a group is “good” or “bad,” especially for the Truth relational principle. The boundary between near and far is not consistently moralized. In some cases, participants see distant groups as incorrect or wrong in both an intellectual and moral sense rather than just “incorrect.” This has some important implications for how sociologists understand how beliefs do or do not lead to hierarchical evaluations of others.

In the next section, I describe the particularities of this relational principle from secular, religious, liberal, and conservative perspectives in different subsections, emphasizing the variable levels of moralization and specific tensions within those groups. I conclude the section by addressing alternative ways of conceptualizing the data that focus more on the identities of participants, ultimately finding that comparing groups in terms of their relational principle is the most fruitful for understanding how the participants organized their views of others and how they understand the religious/ideological world around them. While individuals working within the Truth relational principal certainly view their ideological world in

“us”/“them” terms, what and who constitutes “us” and “them” and how the two are divided is not necessarily simple nor without emotional complexity.¹

Secular Truths and Bad Methods

While describing the groups at the periphery of her map, Tammy taps her finger on an X labeled “Biblical Literalists.” She frowns and says, “It’s just wrong . . . you can believe in magic and monsters, or you can use science and rationality that will let you understand how the world is.” Tammy is like a number of other secular participants in the study who emphasize a materialist worldview coupled with an exclusive use of scientific methods for understanding how the world works. They understand science and rationality to be fundamental truths about the universe:

Tammy: Who’s next are the Quakers and the Jewish pro-religious humanists . . . Quakers have beliefs about things that there may be something supernatural that we just don’t understand it. And that could be. I just find it hard to believe that there are things that don’t obey the laws of physics. The physics are like the Ten Commandments to me. If we talk about the laws that Moses brought down, I will give you a law. You can’t see something moving at the speed of light. That is a law. Right? That is a real law. Right? You know, so far as I know, nobody has broken it. That is a law.

Tammy does not just think that scientific methods of understanding the universe are better; they represent foundational laws which have no exceptions and which they used to define themselves against other groups like Quakers. For many of the secular participants like Tammy who rely on a Truth principle, using rationality, scientific methods, and materialism is not just a matter of being correct—it is itself a moral imperative.

¹. Trinitapoli (2007) indicates that that even among the most exclusivist American Christians, there is a tendency to make exceptions to the rule that all non-Christians are going to hell.

[Speaking of people who believe the Earth is flat “Flat Earthers”] Evidence is high in my system of what is important . . . But, I really believe in the value of evidence and the scientific method for learning things and learning what is. Guessing what is, it’s all a guess, a moral confidence guess. So these are people who ignore evidence and these are people who ignore humanity.

Similarly, Reggie, a professional and self-identified Secular Humanist, said:

Atheists and the secular humanists are in the same range. Why did I put them there? Well, because, unlike traditionally religious people, I don’t necessarily believe in a god. I don’t really believe in a god that (inaudible) individuals. A lot of people would like to believe that is true. But intellectually, I’m not convinced. And, once you get away from the idea of a god who is going to reward or punish you in the afterlife, it makes you realize more what is going on in this life. You realize if there is no afterlife there is only this life. There is nobody giving out what I call demerits in the sky to punish people because they were bad. It’s up to us to make sure this life is how it is supposed to be. It puts a lot more on us humans to take responsibility for what is happening. That person that says Hitler will be punished in hell, I don’t think that is true. It’s up to people here and now, which I believe is what secular means. People who are here, in the here and now, need to take responsibility for what things are like, what life is like for people now. There is no pie in the sky. That is kind of why I am with the secular humanists and the atheists.

This often-moralized boundary between their understanding of responsibility and God and rationality versus “pseudoscience,” spiritualism, and alternative investigatory strategies place secularists as the few who are “willing to deal with what is,” “able to take responsibility for the world and not wait for some outside force to save us,” and allows them to, as participant Jacob said, “actually make a difference in the world because we actually see the world for how it is.” Individuals and groups that do not fit within their understanding of the truth are characterized at best as well-meaning, but intellectually dishonest people who could do a whole lot more if they thought rationally or, at worst, as superstitious barbarians. In a particularly direct comment, participant John, who was quoted above, said:

I'm not going to say that to believe in a religion means you're a bad person, because there are definitely exceptions, there are actually lots of good religious people, and lots of people who do good and bad things for all sorts of reasons. But when you believe something that's patently false, and you're lying to yourself and you're hurting the people around you.

Similarly, Jacob said:

This is what is in the heads of the mothers that kill their children. Religion has to take responsibility for that. They have these fantastic, ridiculous notions backed up by stories of Abraham and everything else in the bible. I have to push these people way out to the outer ring. It's terrible on an individual level, a societal level. It is all based on believing, taking on faith, receiving knowledge, no matter how illogical it might be. I have been to a few catholic services in the past ten years or so, with friends, confirmations, and things like that. It has all been the same church. They have been pretty terrible. For one thing, nobody is there, big empty isles. Just people wandering in and out. They are just following motions. And I bring this up now, the last time I went the homily by the priest, he managed to say exactly, 180 degrees opposite everything I believed. You'd think there would be common ground but it was opposite. The whole idea was doubt is bad, faith is good. I believe doubt is good; faith is bad for all the reasons I just said. Faith is a terrible concept. People can redefine anything they want, hope, but faith is a firm, and unshakable belief with things you have no reason to believe. If you have reason to believe it you would have to take it out of faith. The whole concept of faith is so damaging in our society.

As will be discussed in later sections of this chapter, secular participants using the Truth relational principle were alone in almost always moralizing the division between proper methods/thinking and improper thinking/methods. In other words, deviation from this standard meant that someone was doing something morally wrong and potentially harmful rather than just intellectually incorrect.²

². Sam Harris (2010) and earlier utilitarians argue that there is no difference between being morally wrong and being harmful, though without getting into debates about the reducibility of moral reasoning, some of the participants in this dissertation indicate that they value evidence and rationality for their own sake rather than their ability to help people. As a participant said, "I would rather have a harmful truth than a pleasant lie."

Though the Truth subsection of secularists shares much in common with other secular individuals in their emphasis on humanistic virtues of responsibility and helping other people (Kurtz 2000), the main organizing principle of their maps and a necessary condition for realizing these virtues hinges upon a person's ability to use proper methods and think in terms of materialist rationality. Yet discourse focusing on reason and proper thinking is not the sole domain of secularists. The next group specifically addresses these issues, though they argue that the truth which defines who they are and are not is somewhere between religion and science.

Liberal, Religious, and Unafraid

At a coffee shop in a northern suburb of Chicago, to the tune of Burning Spears's *Rivers of Babylon*, Serena summarized the map she had just drawn as "a center where everyone has access to God, and the outside where God is limited or non-existent." The center held the "sister faiths" to Christianity, Islam, and Judaism and, slightly farther out, Hinduism and Buddhism. The outer limits of her map held atheists and fundamentalists because both groups deny what Serena and others who share her religious and political orientation see as a fundamental truth of the world: that God exists and is accessible to all.

Serena is one of the participants in this dissertation who belonged to a theologically liberal congregation, self-identified as politically liberal, who strongly agreed with the statement that there is a "God who watches over [them]" and who also organized their maps in terms of the extent to which groups accept the respondents' understanding of God.

It is important to note that their basis for excluding both atheists and fundamentalists is not simply the assumption that those two groups believe that they are right and everyone is wrong, because participants using the Truth relational principle use similar evaluative standards.³ Using the Truth principle, these participants stand out from other liberal Protestants who participated in the study because, unlike participants using different relational principles (such as Tolerance), they believe they hold a particular truth about the world that also allows room for other religions to hold important truths about the universe and maybe even God but are nevertheless firm believers. As Serena explained when I asked her why she put atheists on the periphery of her map, “It’s just the exact opposite of what I believe.”

Often working in fields that require advanced degrees, liberal Christian participants in the Truth set consistently took great pains to discuss the compatibility or separation of science and their religious belief. They feel attacked by secular colleagues who conflate them with fundamentalists and annoyed with biblical literalists for unrigorously understanding Christianity, thereby giving it a bad name.⁴ The atheists they confront seemingly do not understand science in that they assume ontological atheism instead of agnosticism, let alone understand their religion, and biblical literalists are completely misguided with regard to the proper way to interpret the Bible—that is, as a book to be interpreted.

Harvey, a participant in his sixties often dealt with these issues:

³. Antiabsolutism is a value for participants in the Tolerance set and will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁴. The focus on reputation management was a persistent theme in many participants’ reasoning for their relational principle, although it is the most prevalent in the Tact chapter for reasons to be discussed in that chapter.

In [the field the participant works in] there are a lot of people who think religion is the same as being delusional, or that you believe the world was created in 7 days, or that you hate science . . . this often comes up in jokes or off-handed comments in the middle of what would be normal conversations. But that isn't scientific, science doesn't and can't say anything about God, and thinking logically the two aren't incompatible.

Later in the interview, he added:

Literalists don't get it, these books are thousands of years old and are translated and interpreted, God spoke to people, but that doesn't mean that we understand what He said to them, or that they understood what He said . . . if you try to explain some parts of science to people it sounds like magic now, let alone when you lack the sort of background information that we have today.

While some of these participants kept quiet about their beliefs in public, many discussed at length how they were not going to shy away from "anti-Christian comments" from coworkers, nor would they let fundamentalist discourse dominate discussions of religion. For these participants, their religion is complex, subtle, and based on a mix of faith, evidence, and reason (if perhaps not in its final justification). Some were less direct in their actions, but they felt they needed to say something to prevent their beliefs from being insulted. Serena, a younger ELCA participant, echoed this point when she was asked about a particularly negative experience she had with other people concerning her beliefs:

I was young and had to go to a camp and all of the people in my cabin were judging me for my faith and judging me saying that I wasn't a real Christian because of what I believed and that I need to learn what my faith was about, but I know what I believe, and I was really put off by those people. Now I generally avoid it, but if someone presses me I'm not going to let them tell me I'm not Christian, that's just not okay.

Placing a social group on the outskirts of their maps does not necessarily imply that these Truth participants think a group is immoral, though it definitely could be

grounds for such a claim. These liberal religious Truth principle participants often spoke of having positive relationships with atheists and were mostly annoyed with biblical literalists, save in instances when religion was a matter of contention. When participants did moralize the boundary between truth and falsehood, the consequences were usually put in terms of people who were misguided and tried to use a false version of religion to harm others. Or as Serena put it, “They don’t really understand God or they wouldn’t hurt people.” Or as Rod, another Truth participant, said, “They’re so selfish that they don’t actually follow God, they follow themselves.”

Truth for this set of participants is broad and inclusive, though they see both themselves and this truth as assailed by secularists and other Christians. Their understanding of God, religion, and what others should know about the two is in many ways strikingly different from that of the theologically conservative Christian participants in the Truth set, who see Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life; and for most of them, no others come to the Father save through him. As this chapter continues to demonstrate, both the previously discussed liberal Protestants and the conservative Protestants in the next section assess other groups primarily in terms of how they conform to their own understanding of truth.

By Grace Alone

Malinda seems to have clear views of others. As she looked at her map and described who was close by, she said, “These are the people who follow Jesus . . .” Then pointing with her pen to the periphery, she added, “These are the people who don’t.” For participants like Malinda who are members of a theologically conservative Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and use the Truth relational principle, the

primary means for describing their ideological landscape is the extent to which various groups align with what they believe. As Frank, a man in his thirties who is regularly involved with the church, said of the “other religions” category at the extremes of his map, “God’s message is clear, and Jesus is the way.” Participants using this principle varied in their assignment of who was on their periphery, though they often used large abstractions like “other religions” and “non-Christians.” Atheists and agnostics made occasional appearances in the outer reaches of their maps, as those groups are an ideological polar opposite of what the participants believe.

Not all maps follow a strict binary layout; some participants included a scatter shot of middle-ground groups for varieties of Protestantism and even Judaism in between the conservative Christian center and the periphery, even on maps that mark the edge as “all other religions.” The key point is that the center is variously defined to mean belief in the Judeo-Christian God, Lutheranism and its doctrine of *sola gratia*, or a particular form of Christianity as an aggregate of beliefs. For example, Frank said of religions that are between the periphery of his map:

The center would be Lutheran . . . going out from there, probably more, the Christian . . . that in a in a broad sense a lot of people can say that they’re Christian, but Lutheran, is, more a definitive answer than Christian, so I think of Christian as being more broad, but I think there are Christians out there that would have differences with some of my view points, I think that in a sense Lutherans would probably have a better understanding of my beliefs of my core beliefs, than necessarily some whose Christians.

Later in the interview on Catholics:

Well simply, the Catholics and the Jewish they focus more on works. Catholics, still believe in Christ, and ah, once you get out to the Jewish, they don’t believe in Christ, and that’s even further out. I think in the center with the Lutheran and the Christian, is the core belief that we don’t save ourselves it’s not through our works, we are saved, but it’s through God’s works. We start

getting out to the Catholics and the Jewish and you're getting further and further away from that.

Frank has a definitive sense of what Christianity and, more specifically, truth are. He sees Lutheranism as a more "definitive" subgroup of his religion that has specific doctrines. Groups that he sees as disagreeing with those doctrines like Jews and Catholics are farther away from the center of his map. Doctrine on how salvation functions in this instance serves Frank as a means for distinguishing and locating other groups relative to each other and himself.

The level of moralization of this boundary varied greatly between participants, with some saying that groups on the periphery of their map were "just different," while others considered groups morally suspect by virtue of their distance from God's truth. Some participants said that peripheral groups were not necessarily bad, but they were likely to be immoral because they lacked God's guidance through the Bible, which is somewhere between a completely moralized boundary and a completely nonmoralized boundary. Don exemplified this sentiment best when he said, "Well, you can be good and not a Christian but that's only because God speaks to all of us, but if you have the Bible, you have guidance and limitations, you have direction. With the Bible you have some good guidelines to keep you from drifting off." Being on the "incorrect" side of Don's boundary does not mean that people are immoral for their incorrect beliefs, but they are likely to stray from a good path without the Truth found in Don's religion.

Judaism and Its Sisters

Dwayne was raised in a “mildly Orthodox” household that kept kosher, but his parents didn’t regularly attend synagogue. As he became older, he joined a series of different synagogues with a variety of theological positions, finally settling on a Reform congregation in north Chicago. His map looked much like that of several other participants who started with Judaism in the center and then worked out next to Islam and then to Christianity, with “secular groups” making up the periphery of his map. Other participants in this category also placed Orthodox Judaism at the edge of their map. For them, the major guiding Truth principle was where one stood with regard to monotheism. Those that place Orthodox Judaism far from their center, and thus from them, thought that the Orthodox interpretations of the Torah were incorrect. With one exception—Orthodox Judaism—this boundary was not particularly moralized. As a middle-aged participant Macy said, “It’s really just a matter of belief, half my friends are atheists and they’re great people, great and nice people, you should just be a good person and they’re good people.” The proximity of Islam to the center of their maps meant that these participants ignored political issues where members of the two religions were in contention with each other (unlike the Test group discussed in a later chapter). These participants spoke of openness to interfaith events, or as one participant Brittany said of Islam and Christianity, “We all believe in the same God and there’s no reason we can’t pray together.” Their understanding of the truth was like what the liberal Protestants discussed above in that it had a particularly inclusive definition of who was able to be like them. They also shared with liberal Protestants their scrutiny of Orthodox Judaism and occasional moralization of

the boundary between their liberal theological orientation and Orthodoxy. Reform Jewish people using the Truth relational principle, however, did not moralize their boundary differences with secular people, perhaps on account of their consistent and positive exposure to avowed atheists and various stripes of secular people. Or it could be as Brittany said later in her interview, “It doesn’t matter if you believe: you’re Jewish, and community works just as well.” While the Reform Jews and ELCA participants in many ways seem different from the Ethical Humanists and Conservative Lutherans that I have presented here, they are using the same idea of separation—truth. Regardless of the moralized qualities of the truth, people who are different are in some ways incorrect, whereas those who are close are closer to the truth.

Truth in the Literature

Thus far, this chapter lumps together ideologically and demographically diverse groups, from socialists to conservatives, middle-aged men and young women, devotedly religious and avowedly secular. But why organize them under the Truth relational orientation rather than one of the plethora of ways of organizing religious beliefs, such as Wuthnow’s (2005) framework involving inclusivists, exclusivists, pluralist? Comparing the participants in this study in terms of *how* they orient themselves to others and the types of boundaries they draw, rather than the specifics of their beliefs or whom they like and dislike gives us a greater understanding of the criteria people use to judge others.

Current sociological literature would characterize many who use a Truth relational principle as “exclusivists” (Merino 2011; Scheitle and Adamczyk 2009;

Wuthnow 2005; Trinitapoli 2007; Juergensmeyer 2003; Stark 2003; Glock and Stark 1969). Exclusivity is a somewhat nebulous term associated with exclusive beliefs about who goes to heaven or with the belief that one's religion is true to the exclusion of all others. However defined, the consensus is that exclusivists and absolutists tend to have negative evaluations of nonbelievers. I find that not to *always* be the case. For many of the maps drawn by participants who would otherwise be categorized as "exclusivists," I find greater complexity in their views than the term "exclusivity" would indicate.⁵ I believe that this is the case because of the ways that the term is currently operationalized and conceptualized. Specifically, exclusivity is somewhat problematic for studying secular or non-Christian participants because it often refers to relationships with deities and does not account for the varying salience of Truth in affecting how people relate to others, nor does it recognize the varying levels of moralization for these distinctions.

The first limitation regarding secularity is evident in how a variety of authors understand exclusivity. Stark (2003) describes exclusivity, or what he calls "particularism," as requiring an exclusive exchange relationship with a deity. Similarly, Scheitle and Adamczyk (2009) in their study of the effects of theological exclusivity on bonding social capital rely on questions which emphasize both a Christian and specifically nonsecular position, thereby omitting a wide variety of religious or nonreligiously oriented reasonings for excluding people. Bader and Palmer (2011)

⁵. Trinitapoli's (2007) study of religious exclusivists supplements quantitative methods with interviews to great effect. However, she does not expand beyond the Christocentric focus of the research instrument. Juergensmeyer does not specifically use the term "exclusivity," preferring instead to discuss absolutism and a cosmic setting. His perspective, while not Christian focused, is defined by religion because of the cosmic dimension of belief. This is not a failing of his work, but rather reflects his interest in some of the unique qualities of religious terrorism.

and Froese and Bader (2007) also rely on theocentric notions of exclusivity by operationalizing the term by looking at the effects of conceiving of God as angry or judgmental. Focusing on Christians and monotheism limits the utility of the concept of exclusivism to Christians and couches exclusivity solely in terms of truths or relations with God. This phrasing might make secular participants in a study seem non-exclusive or even render them invisible.

Like nearly all the aforementioned authors, Wuthnow's operationalization of exclusivity a priori precludes secular statements of exclusivity, but operationalizing it in terms of truth about God or exclusive exchange relationships (à la Stark) with God also limits the many ways *religious* people might locate themselves relative to others. Wuthnow (2005) asks participants about the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements that other religions hold some truth about God and if Christianity is the best way to understand God. From these questions, he creates a tripartite classification: (1) those who agree with the statement that Christianity is the best way to understand God and disagree with the other statement (exclusivists), (2) those who agree with both statements (inclusivists), and (3) those who only agree with the statement that other religions hold some truth about God (pluralists).⁶

As my findings demonstrate, the truth that people use to include and exclude others is not limited to beliefs about God. Secular participants use particular styles

⁶ It is difficult to interpret the answers of subjects in Wuthnow's "American Diversity" survey who answered "strongly disagree" to both statements, for they could be members of a non-Christian religion, atheists, or simply have a very different understanding of Christianity.

of thinking and evidence gathering to include and exclude others, and Christians can use conceptions of God that are not bound to a particular religion.⁷ Surveys which emphasize the exclusivist qualities of religion while ignoring secular responses ignore a potent way that secular participants can define themselves (Cimino and Christopher Smith 2007). Furthermore, religious exclusivity has been connected to hostility and judgmental attitudes toward particular religious others, and it would be interesting to investigate if secularism as it is practiced in the United States has a similar impact (Wuthnow 2005).

Beyond omitting secular people from their research, many scholars who use exclusivity in their models ignore the importance of salience and level of moralization for understanding people's views of others. By not including these factors into their studies, scholars miss out on important variables that can perhaps explain some of their data that has yet to be understood. In their research, Wuthnow (2005), Trinitipoli (2007), and Merino (2010, 2011) found strong correlations between their operationalization of exclusivity and the likelihood of restricting other groups' rights and negative views of those groups. However, looking at the data set the above authors used for their research, in absolute terms, a large number of exclusivist respondents did not hold these negative views. For instance, 58 exclusivist respondents favor making it illegal for Muslims to meet in the United States, while 123 do not, 53 versus 129 for Hindus, and 56 versus 124 for Buddhists. Similarly, on the issue of interfaith marriage, 81 respondents do not have any objection or only minor

⁷ Few scholars have studied secular exclusivity, though Baker and Draper (2010) demonstrate that coherent exclusive secular frameworks exist quantitatively. My research provides some qualitative nuance to their findings by highlighting the reasoning and complexity of secular exclusivity.

objections to their child marrying a Muslim versus the 23 respondents who would not have stronger objection at all, etc.

The issue here is *not* that there is a statistically significant link between these attitudes of exclusivity and negative behaviors toward other religious groups; Wuthnow and others have demonstrated that admirably. Rather, my emphasis is on the 23 respondents with mild to no objections of their child marrying a Muslim or the 123 respondents who do not want to make it illegal for Muslims to assemble. How do we explain their views? How do we explain the outliers and sometimes the majority? I believe it is through understanding the rubric by which they organize their religious world and the emphasis they place on particular views versus others. For some people, those around them are either right or wrong—what I call the Truth relation orientation—whereas for others, their understanding of the world is solely focused on how tolerant people are or how civil they are or where they stand on a particular issue. Someone may answer on a survey as an “exclusivist,” but if the exclusive truth of Christianity is not salient to them in making decisions about others, they might not have the same strong negative evaluations as those people who moralized and focus on ideological differences.

The underlying causal mechanism behind Wuthnow’s and others’ models is that if someone does not think that a religion has truths about God, then they are doomed to hell, are a threat, or are morally suspect. But I believe this framework is problematic for several reasons. As I have argued in this chapter, two necessary components of the causal chain that leads from exclusivity to negative evaluations of others are that an exclusivist’s views of others are primarily organized around truth

and that they have moralized this boundary between the proper believer and those who do not share those beliefs. By organizing the participants in this study into a Truth category, rather focusing on the particularities of their beliefs, I have highlighted why taking both of these factors into account for both secular and religious participants is important. Looking especially to the liberal religious participants, some of whom are exclusivist, they did not necessarily consider different and incorrect beliefs to be a sign of moral failing.

Whenever Truth is salient and moralized, those who do not share it are left not only peripheral in their maps, but also, as a matter of principle, morally suspect. But, in lieu of moralization, other people can simply be different. They need not have their rights removed, be morally suspect, or otherwise discriminated against. Without the theological boundary being moralized, differences can be noted but do not necessarily carry stigma.

While I lack generalizable survey responses, I have a great deal of data on the process some people use to exclude others. It indicates that the belief that one's religion is absolutely right and others' are wrong and that those who are wrong are morally suspect represents a narrow band of believers, but surveys exaggerate their numbers by omitting the salience of this belief and the moral qualities of the boundaries it creates. If people described as exclusivists on surveys focus on other principles for evaluating others like simple politeness, their maps would look rather different even though they may share the same exclusive theology as their coreligionists who use a Truth orientation. The next chapter specifically deals with these kinds of participants, whom I call the Tact relation orientation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DO NOT DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD NOT HAVE DONE UNTO YOU:

THE TACT RELATIONAL PRINCIPLE

Chad is a middle-aged upper-middle-class member of a mean Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregation and a firm believer that “Jesus Christ is [his] Lord and Savior.” Yet atheists and members of other religions do not make up the periphery of his map. Rather, he placed on the margins groups like “Forceful Christians,” “Strident Atheists,” and any religious or secularist group that he thought of as “pushy,” as Chad said later in the interview:

I know this nice guy who’s an Atheist, he’s a decent guy, he works hard, takes care of his family, you know. There is this other guy I know, he’s a Christian, but, I just can’t stand how he is so pushy, he walks up to people, and is just pushy, telling people that they’re wrong and need to see the light, and that’s just none of my business, nor is it his. If someone wants to talk about it, sure, but otherwise don’t get in people’s faces . . . leave them alone.

Chad—like other people using what I call the “Tact” relation principle—has strong beliefs about religion, even strong exclusivist beliefs, but places groups close or far on the basis of how much they seek to convince or coerce others to believe as he does.¹ Eve, a middle-aged self-identified Ethical Humanist, echoed this perspective after placing “Atheists” far away from her center *X* despite indicating in the interview that she did not believe in God or the supernatural. She said, “When I say

1. With one exception: these secular participants reported that other religions or religion in general is wrong.

atheist I mean people who will go up to you and say you need to change your beliefs, their rude, and pushy, and make [Ethical Humanists] look bad.”²

The maps of participants who used this relation principle locate other groups close to themselves and what they believe on the basis of whether those groups do *not* enforce their beliefs on nonbelievers, or to evangelize. While their motivations are often different, ranging from keeping religion private, group image, or maintaining peace, all the users of this relation principle maintain that one should not try to “push” one’s beliefs on others. Participants using the Tact principle often have very strong beliefs about religion (or religious beliefs), but their primary rubric for evaluating other groups is based on how those groups interact or, more accurately, do not interact with others. To use a term from theories of rational choice, people using the Tact principle are mostly concerned with *metanorms*, or norms of norm enforcement (Axelrod 1986; Horne 2007). I use the word “Tact” to describe this principle because while the people using it disagree with those around them, they focus on politeness and civility for evaluating others above and beyond the specifics of others’ beliefs.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the Tact relation principle and discuss how this principle relates to both the sociological literature on civil religion and existing categorization schema. I outline some of the common characteristics of the Tact principle, including its secular and religious varieties, separation of “good-

2. It is important to note from a methodological standpoint that, technically, the participant is an atheist. But in terms of self-description, atheism means something more than simply not believing in God. This highlights how participant definitions are important for research (see also Bullivant 2008).

ness” from belief, and foci on reputation management and/or private religion. I argue that the Tact principle is, to some extent, the quintessential way many Americans, especially middle-class Americans, “do” religion. It is not a civil religion, as Bellah et al. (1984) and others would argue; rather, it is more akin to Stark’s (2003) articulation of the concept, which is less civil religion and more *religion civilly*. These participants believe in their religion or philosophy, but for various reasons, they resist the temptation to dissolve their beliefs into relativism or fight for others to believe as they do. They are religious as many would traditionally understand it, yet choose to practice their religion in a way that many would understand as promoting civility, if not respect. They hold a form of relatively private religion (or secularism), accepting the tenants of their belief system, but doing so in a *tactful* fashion, where no one is confronted with differences in belief or, often, with religion at all.

This is a similar language to the one that Lamont (1994) use in her work *Money, Morals, and Manners*. In this work, Lamont highlights the importance of cultural boundaries for influencing her participants’ hiring decisions and evaluations of other individuals. Tastes in the “right” kind of cultural material and, in some cases, openness to a broad range of things created boundaries which separate the “cultured” from the uncouth. Similarly, Ollivier (2008) and Peterson (1996) find that various kinds of orientations toward cultural consumption and diversity create symbolic boundaries (though they do not necessarily use that term) and means for distinction. While Tact is similar to these scholars’ understanding of cultural boundaries, it is different because it is not consumption oriented, nor is it even defined in

positive terms. Bourdieu's (1987) work is relevant here as he shows how habits, tastes, or manners of speaking, eating, learning, or even moving can be markers of status and reinforce cultural and economic hierarchies. Though my sample is relatively homogenous, it is possible that part of what Tact is how middle to upper-class people think about religion. It is a marker of being cultured or civil to simply avoid the topic; to quote an old adage, the topics one should avoid in at a party include religion, politics, and money—although some participants were happy to talk about politics with others.

Tact users do not like particular others, not because of their choice of music or because of a lack of openness; rather, they distance groups on their maps because of the perception that those others are discussing their beliefs in a time, place, or way that they feel is inappropriate. Additionally, the Tact orientation is moralized in a way that the other organizational schema are not. As we shall see in the rest of the this chapter, being tactful is intertwined with what it means to be a "good person."

Being Tactfully Secular

"It just makes us look . . . terrible," said Eve over coffee. "I don't believe like they do but it doesn't mean that I have to be pushy about it, or insult people, they're just different." Born into a moderately religious family but allowed to find "her own path," Eve sees no reason for other people to be forced or persuaded to believe as she does. Asked what she thinks of religious belief, Eve replied, "Well, I don't believe in it, I think it's nonsense really, but it doesn't matter because you can be a good person and believe nonsense." Eve ostensibly uses a Truth principle, but her material-

ism and atheism are less important for evaluating others than being “a good person,” a nebulous term for not harming people, being generally agreeable, and not forcing one’s beliefs on others. She went on to summarize her position, saying, “I think you finally reach the point where you’re kind of, you get to a live and let live, I had my, don’t challenge my beliefs and I’m not going to challenge yours.” Eve is among the many self-identified secular participants in this dissertation who value their secular beliefs but see no reason to use it as the sole (or even an important) criterion for thinking about her views of others. As Victor below highlights, even people that they agree with on theological matters, like the exclusively secularist and Humanist Brights, are placed farther away because of their behavior.

Victor: Brights. I have a lot of the same belief structure about the structure of the universe that Brights, the skeptical and ethical humanists have. I differ from them in [inaudible] what I give to other people’s opinions. I differ from them on, um, I just have much more, I . . . I’m trying to be diplomatic.

Interviewer: No need to be diplomatic.

Victor: Ok, I think some of them are jerks. They can just be . . . they can be nasty people. I have a belief system, we agree on our belief system. I have no doubts in how the world was created, and all that stuff. And, but the way that I act is much more with humility and gratitude and out of your face. I actually don’t think it is that important for anybody else to believe what I believe.

Victor, like other Test-principle-using participants, downplays the importance of his secular beliefs instead focusing on not being a “jerk.” The groups most typically found on the periphery of their maps are varieties of fundamentalism and specific (often ideographically termed) types of atheism, sometimes all lumped together under a term like “violent religion,” as Zane (quoted above) identified a peripheral group. Eve later came to term the clusters “forceful groups.”

It is important to note that labels like “violent religion” and “forceful groups” appear in other the interviews. Various people in the Tolerance relation principle used “violent religion” to describe the groups on their periphery. However, this apparent overlap demonstrates the usefulness of the qualitative portion interviews. Though they use the same term “violent religion” to describe groups on the edge, participants using the Tolerance relation principle mean something very different from Tact-using participants. For the Tact group, the offense is not violence in and of itself; it is the imposition of one’s will upon another at its most extreme form. As Zane, a self-identified atheist and Secular Humanist, said, “Violence is never an acceptable way to get others to believe as you do, you can’t and shouldn’t try to force your beliefs on others.” On the other hand, Bridgett, a middle-aged self-identified Ethical Humanist who uses the Tolerance relation principle, said, “Violence is just wrong, their harming others . . . they’re not letting [other people] be who they are.” While I will delve into this difference in more detail in the chapter on Tolerance, the relevant difference between these quotes is that Zane was particularly interested in others forcing their beliefs, whereas Bridgett focused on the act of violence itself as well as not accepting other’s beliefs as they are. It is worth noting that Zane is not interested in acceptance, only not coercing others, and he appears to also be less interested in the harm inflicted to others in general, though this could simply be a matter of priming his answers to previous questions.

A small fragment of the secular participants are people who should be categorized as nontheistic or irreligious (Zuckerman 2008) because religion is such a

foreign concept to them that belief in a religion is not even a salient criterion for evaluation. These participants would not use Truth to assess other groups because religion is not relevant enough to be a point of reference to identify against. They use the Tact principle almost by default because they do not think enough about other belief systems to take a definite position on the truth or falsehood of religion or even their own belief system; in a sense, they are profoundly nonreligious, not simply religious ones.

The Tactful Faithful

Lester is a younger self-identified Jewish man who “wish[es] everyone would just leave each other alone.” While we spoke at the donut shop where we met for the interview, he consistently repeated this desire: “It’s none of my business what you believe, and it’s none of your business what I believe.” Like other religious participants who work within the Tact principle, Lester’s focus is on privacy and not intruding upon another person’s beliefs. Grant, a middle-aged ELCA participant, supported privacy during the interview when he noted the following about other religions:

There isn’t a way around it, people are just going to disagree with each other and make a lot of noise and fight over something that’s not going to change. Look at the Middle East . . . they keep trying to tell each other what to do and what to believe, how to live, did you know you can’t build a church in Saudi Arabia? People just need to let each other believe what they’re going to believe and let other’s go about business.

Grant expresses skepticism about the possibility that one can make others believe in the tenants of a different religion, as well as a similar sentiment to Lester mentioned above. He believes that religion is a private affair and that one should not attempt to convince others of the truth of one’s religion. For both participants as well as other

religious Tact participants, their main focus was on allowing others to believe as they will, without outside forces pushing them to change.

The groups most typically on the periphery of the participants' maps using the Tact principle were atheists and various "pushy" Christians or Jews, who were described as "forceful Christians," "Evangelical Christians," "Fundamentalists," or sometimes specific groups such as the "Lubavitch," an ultraorthodox Hasidic group. Wesley, a self-identified Orthodox Jew who attended a reform synagogue, said of "Lubavitch" when he placed them on the outskirts of his map, "They just don't know respect for people's beliefs." Some participants did not place atheists on the periphery of their maps, but a majority of religious participants using this principle identified atheists as being particularly aggressive in their claims against them. The participants often used words like "demanding," "unfriendly," and "aggressive" to describe atheists—all of which are terms that connote a disregard for politeness and civility on the part of atheists.

A broad difference between religious and secular users of the Tact principle is that secular participants tended to place violent, coercive groups in the periphery of their maps, whereas religious Tact participants tended to locate only vocal or "pushy" groups on the outskirts of their maps. It appears that religious and secular Tact participants tend to use different scales; religious participants' scales range from tactful to strongly tactless, while secular participants' scales range from tactful

to violently tactless.³ While I cannot do more than speculate as to why violence is more of a salient marker for secular Tact principle participants, I believe that for many secularists, the narrative about religion holds that violence is the natural progression of extremes of religious belief. Or quoting Victor, “When you believe in the supernatural and the afterlife, it all of the sudden makes sense to push people into trying to believe something . . . and what’s it matter if you have to shoot a few people to get them to believe like you do . . . you’re doing everyone a favor.” This same narrative is found in the Truth and Tolerance principles, although what participants from each principle consider problematic about violence varies. As the discussion above notes, participants using the Tact principle are less inclined to focus on violence in and of itself as problematic; rather, they concentrate on coercion, or in other words, the forceful imposition of one’s beliefs on others.

Fuzzy Boundaries

There are participants who primarily use the Tact principle but also include other relational principles in their evaluations of others. The most common mixture is between Truth and Tact. Participants who mix these principles do not place groups that are theologically or ideologically dissimilar to them *close* to them, but they do not necessarily put them as far as those groups that are both dissimilar in belief as well as Tact. For instance, Russell, an older man and ELCA member, placed Hindus at roughly the middle of his map, saying, “Well . . . they are polytheists, not bad people, but we just don’t have much in common with each other when it comes to God.” But

3. While most secular participants located only violent religions at the periphery of their maps, two secular participants also located violent communists in that region.

regarding the fundamentalist Muslims at the periphery of his map, he says, “They’re wrong, Jesus is the way, we know that . . . they force their beliefs on the world.” Russell reserves the most distant sections of his map for those who are both nonbelievers and tactless. Similarly, Poly, another middle-aged ELCA member, said of Judaism, “I put them there partly because we worship the same God and because a lot of my friends are Jewish and good people . . . they don’t hurt anyone . . . they’re there though because well they don’t believe in Jesus.” The choice to have this section in the Tact chapter rather than the chapter on Truth is because Tact is clearly the more dominant principle; tact shifts those who are theologically dissimilar to being completely on the outskirts of his map and the subject of Tact-oriented condemnation.

Interestingly, participants using the Tact and Truth principles tend to be more lenient on their coreligionists who proselytize than those participants who only use the Tact principle. Fellow Christians or secularists who seek to convert others might “have the right idea” even if they go about it in overly aggressive ways. Many of these participants are not outright against reaching out to others; they simply think that it should be conducted in a way that does not offend or distress the targets of that outreach. As Wendy, a middle-aged self-identified LCMS, said, “I mean, our job is to reach out to people, but we lose people if we say, ‘Hey, you’re wrong.’ We don’t need to do that, we can have friendly conversations, polite disagreements without yelling.” Wendy is clearly hesitant about being impolite with people who are not secular both for issues of manners and for practical reasons. She uses a Truth principle in that she clearly believes that her religion is right and that other,

farther (from her center *X*), groups are wrong. But as her Tact principle dictates, being aggressive in one's attempts to convince others is impractical and impolite. Politeness is a particularly useful term to describe anyone using the Tact principle because it reflects a concern for maintaining an established order for interaction among people, an order which I believe is an invisible, but important element of what I call religion done civilly.

Religion Civilly and the Good Person

The Tact principle is not Golden Rule Christianity (Ammerman 1990), morally therapeutic deism (Smith and Denton 2005), "civil religion" (Bellah 1967; Bellah et al. 1984) or "pluralism" (Wuthnow 2005)—all these involve some kind of compromise with orthodoxy. People using the Tact principle have strong beliefs about the truth of their beliefs but argue for various reasons that it is inappropriate to "push" their beliefs on others. Instead, they prefer to exist as if religious boundaries were not there, politely ignoring or dismissing religion as a way of categorizing people and instead focusing on how people keep their religious beliefs private and on being a "good person" for these decisions and distinctions.⁴

Tact participants consistently separate being a "good person" from what one believes. However, the symbolic boundaries found in the Tact principle were often themselves moralized. To be a good person was to not evangelize, not to force one's beliefs on others, and not to "make a big deal about what people believe," as Eve

4. The Tact principle is similar to Bonillia-Silva's (2009) concept of color-blind racism, as the principle ignores structural inequality and social boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002) based on religious discrimination. Using neutral language about being "a good person" hides the ways in which various religious perspectives and ways of being religious are privileged in the USA.

said. Though these participants also had positive definitions of what being a good person was that involved being kind and cooperative with others, goodness was primarily defined negatively through an absence of a particular set of objectionable actions. A “good person” in the Tact principle involves *not* evangelizing, *not* making a fuss about beliefs, and this forms being a good person. As Zane said in his interview:

I put [fundamentalist religions] here because they make people do things against their will, they are making them, or rather, trying to make them believe, when that’s just wrong, and it doesn’t work, you can’t get people to believe through force, you can’t make them care, you can just make them afraid. . . . they aren’t good, you can’t just walk around trying to force others to do as you say.

Zane’s quote, like Eve’s above, focuses on both the moral and practical aspects of violating the Tact principle. While separating belief from moral worth is unsurprising within the Ethical Humanists whose motto is “Deed before Creed,” it was more interesting to find this view in both liberal and conservative Protestant denominations, where the sermons I observed often drew a connection between particular beliefs and behaviors. Jeffery, a member of LCMS, echoed Chad’s previously quoted sentiments: “You can be a good person and still believe the wrong thing.” Similarly, LCMS member Stacey said that “people from other religions do good to other people.” Despite the claims of their religions to some important (relatively) exclusive truth about God, being “good” is seemingly more important for their views of others than being “right.”⁵

5. The distinction between being “good” and being “right” as bases for the evaluation of others demonstrates in sharp relief the difference between the Tact and Truth relational principles.

Though participants often used the term “good” to describe people who did not violate the Tact principle, the principle is largely not focused on morality. Rather, the Tact principle is concerned with respect, politeness, and not disturbing the peace. As Gordy, as middle-aged self-identified ELCA participant, said when asked if leaving others alone was a moral issue, “I wouldn’t call it moral, I don’t like that word for this, moral is about thou shalt and thou shalt nots, it’s about not interfering in someone’s life and how they’re doing things.” Similarly, Victor said in the quote about the secularist group known as the Brights, “Some of them are jerks.” As the quote above illustrates, being a “jerk” is not a moral failing here; it is being impolite by not downplaying the significance of beliefs for evaluating and interacting with others. It is a way to appear nonideological, nonconfrontational, not intolerant, and it takes no issue with any issue save taking issue with issues. Roger, a retired ELCA participant, exemplified this position when he said:

I don’t judge anyone for what they believe, I don’t care what you believe or what, what makes a man is his actions and what he does to his fellow man. I don’t bother people with stuff that really isn’t as important as what is in his heart.

Later in the interview, he continued the thought:

Sure they would be better off if they were Christian, *I guess I’m not supposed to say that*, but they might be, but it isn’t my business to tell them, and it’s not their business to say I’m wrong for not believing whatever it is they believe. But, [pointing to atheists at the periphery of his map] these guys are just always in your face on TV, in courts, trying to tell people they can’t pray when they want trying to shove their [stuff] at you.⁶

6. The italicized comment matches Tinitipoli’s (2007) findings about the tension that religious exclusivists feel between their religious beliefs and the aforementioned norms. Though Roger does not seem to feel tension here, he only recognizes the potential conflict. His comment is also similar to those made about race or ethnic differences (Bonilla-Silva 2009).

Roger may be an extreme case in that he would admit to believing in the practical and not just spiritual superiority of his religion (many others hesitated on that issue), but his words above illustrate the larger point: the enforced but not moralized character of the Tact principle provides participants with a sense that they have some kind of neutral, natural, or nonideological position that promotes peace and cooperation without challenging others' beliefs, although it represents a fundamental challenge to universal and expansionist religions/ideologies. Because I am discussing relational principles—that is, the ideas and frames that structure people's views of others—rather than theology or philosophy, participants from a variety of viewpoints can come to similar conclusions about how to relate and, more specifically, how not to relate to others.

To some extent, the Tact principle is the guiding ethic of private religion as understood by Luckmann (1967) and Casanova (1994). These authors argue that religion in the modern world has become private by being constrained to just answering questions about the universe and the afterlife. Areas where religion had institutional dominion like the economy and politics come to be regulated by their own logic. In this line of thinking, the Tact orientation undoes the exclusive connection between one particular type of religion and being considered moral. The definition of “good” is no longer bound to a particular religion; rather, it has moved to the civil sphere where one can be good by simply not being a “jerk” or being “moral” in a generic sense. The Tact principle does not entail that one conform to particular theological positions or beliefs save those concerning interactions with others. In

other words, private religion has public implications. People beyond the Tact principle are expected to not fully practice their beliefs, which may require that they be “fishers of men.” Instead, they are asked to keep to themselves so as to keep the peace or for practical reasons or because the cause is hopeless when others have firm beliefs.

Returning to a concept in the chapter on the Truth relational orientation, the privatized and negatively defined type of belief in the Tact relational principle makes it difficult to determine its level of moralization. Because the definition of a “good person” was defined in part by the relational principle, perhaps it is best to say that the Tact orientation always had a degree of moralization, but because of its negatively defined character, it left somewhat open what “good” could be, if not what it could not be.

The Tactless

The Tact relation principle—like that of the Truth, Tolerance, and Test—spans political and religious boundaries. However, the particulars of how one is tactful and whom one sees as being tactless are organized along religious lines. Consider the differences between the following religious participants, Grant and Peter and Victor, in answering questions regarding bad experiences when talking about their beliefs.

The first, Grant, a middle-aged ELCA participant, said:

Grant: I don't talk about my beliefs with others . . . well . . . if it comes up, I will, I even sometimes invite people to [my church], but I never evangelize, I never tell people they need to come. I don't want to come across as “that guy” [makes air quotes with his hands]. But if someone is interested I'll say something

Interviewer: Tell me about “that guy.”

Grant: You know, the guy who is always nagging you to come to his church, and always making people uncomfortable. I’m not going to bring it up, but if someone asks what I’m doing on Sunday, or if they ask questions, I’ll talk about it.

Grant is comfortable having conversations about religion, even promoting his church, provided it is done in a polite manner and in the right context. The phrase “that guy” serves as code for those who break the Tact principle by trying to convince others to join their religion or talk about their beliefs in the wrong context, namely, when discussions of religion are uninvited or even avoided. Grant’s response was similar to other religious participants who use the Tact principle in that it was acceptable to talk about religion, provided it was in a context where someone had initiated the discussion, like with Peter, a younger LCMS participant:

Peter: I don’t talk about religion at work or with people don’t know real well, it causes problems.

Interviewer: What if someone asks you?

Peter: Asks me what? About my religion?

Interviewer: Yes, about your religion.

Peter: Most people avoid talking about religion, actually, outside of church this is the longest conversation I’ve had about religion since college.

Interviewer: have you had any conversations about your religion?

Peter: well, like I said, most people avoid it, but yeah, there have been times when people asked me what church I go to, and I’ll tell them, and one time a guy seemed interested so I said he could come if he wanted.⁷

7. The conversation above is much like many of the interviews where the participant said that she or he rarely had these conversations because of their busy schedules. This finding is particularly unsurprising with Tact-using participants because they seem to avoid conversations about religion with the exception of very particular contexts.

Like Grant mentioned above, Peter is hesitant to talk about his religious beliefs save in very specific contexts. The situations in which religious conversations can happen are limited to when there is an invitation to discuss the matter.⁸ The participants are not unwilling to discuss religion, provided they relegate religious discussions to highly specific times and places of their lives. “That guy” serves as a marker for this boundary, the one who introduces religion into places, times, and ways that are inappropriate by Tact standards. Altogether, religious participants who used the Tact relational principle had a bounded and, to some extent, private understanding of religion—Tact here limits but does not erase religion from public life.

Members of the secular organization who used the Tact principle differed in their sense of the appropriate place of religion. Secular participants relying on this principle typically found any mention of religion a violation of the Tact principle. The Ethical Humanist participant Victor mentioned above, who was so adamant about how unimportant particular beliefs were, later went on to say, “If I’m talking with you don’t tell me about your beliefs, frankly, I don’t want to know about your youth group, or even if you go to church on Sunday . . .” Responding to experiences with people of other faiths, another secular participant, Barry, said, “I don’t talk about it . . . I keep my beliefs to myself.” In instances where secular participants said this, I would often probe further, asking, “What if someone asks you about it?” Like

8. Again, the issue of manners is important for understanding the Tact relational principle. There needs to be an invitation and mutual acceptance that religion is an acceptable conversation topic.

religious participants, secular participants were willing to talk about *their* beliefs.

But conversations about religion, in any context, were more often than not frowned upon, as Zane, quoted above, said, "I'm happy for people who have that, but I don't want to hear about it."

Secular participants appear to understand Tact as precluding discussions of religion in general outside of the context of their own philosophies. It appears that secular Tact-using participants are more exclusive than their religious counterparts, though it is difficult to assess this because I did not ask Christian participants if they would like to hear about how a Friday Shabbat service or the recent Diwali went or if the sunset prayers were nice at the local mosque. I would not expect the participants to be offended and/or annoyed, but I also did not anticipate the secular participants drawing that boundary. Even the trappings of religion can spark annoyance on the part of the participants. Mentions of an effort to introduce candles at various events brought critiques from both Tact- and Truth-using participants because of the apparent religious undertones. For secular Truth-using participants, the candles represent an affront to secular philosophies and practices. Secular people who rely on the Tact principle, on the other hand, saw the candles as a violation of secular practice, but more importantly an effort to introduce religion into a specifically public setting, when it should be left in the home. Of the matter, Barry, a middle-aged self-identified Secular Humanist and professional, said:

We get together regularly to learn about something to talk to each other, but I am not in a church or synagogue. I know a lot of the people who come here come from a Jewish background, but you can't separate the religion from candles. It's their tradition, and it's a religious tradition, and if they want to

celebrate that at home, good, but I don't want it here at [the secular organization].

Given the discussion above on secular participants to avoid religion altogether, an interesting and unexpected point where religious and secular participants converge is their regular placement of atheists far from the center of their maps. People who place atheists far from their center did so often with some modifier like "strident" or "fundamentalist." The nearly universal distancing of atheists within this principle (and also within the Truth principle) is unsurprising, given the findings of Edgell et al. (2006) that atheists are the least trusted group in America, surpassing Muslims and homosexuals. They argue that the widespread negative attitudes toward atheists are caused by their placement beyond the bounds of civil religion. Atheists are the social object that every religion can point to as part of the American religious world and society in general by saying "not us." While this explanation describes the ideological and identity functions of excluding atheists, it does not explain the *justifications* for excluding atheists from American society. Sociologists have often argued that atheists are excluded because they are seen as immoral and have occasionally argued this point themselves (Berger 1970). Yet I typically find that atheists are more often disliked for violating how religions is "done civilly" in America.

Where atheists appear, even on maps that are largely defined by a different relation principle, the common reason for their placement away from the center of participants' maps is that they aggressively tell others that they are wrong, thereby violating both the Tact relation principle's mandate against trying to "push" one's beliefs on others and the Tolerance relation principle's assertion that no one should claim

to be completely right and that others are wrong—put directly, atheists in this study are not disliked for lacking morals so much as being seen as impolite.⁹

It is not unusual then that secular participants who do not want to see religion are also against vocal atheists who actively discuss religion. As I highlighted above, I believe that the Tact principle is the socially accepted way that people do public religion in America—it is private and leaves others free to believe as they will, provided they are quiet about their beliefs.

This finding expands the work of Edgell et al. (2006) by highlighting how atheists serve as a multifaceted symbolic boundary, or more directly, people have different reasons for distrusting and disliking atheists. It is not unexpected that people within the Tact principle would place atheists at the peripheries of their maps given that atheists serve in the collective imagination as the group that most clearly breaks the norm of religious civility in this country, refusing to adopt the more neutral deistic language promoted by many politicians and public commentators and insisting on making seemingly neutral language and, indeed, religion an issue to discuss. Additionally, recent atheist movements have aggressively criticized religion through best-selling books and advertisement campaigns with messages on subways like “A million New Yorkers are good without God, are you?” The overtly

9. It is interesting to note that politeness and hospitality are cited as key virtues far more or as often than not killing in ancient moral systems for the Greeks, Romans, Norse, and Confucian Chinese (Bolchazy 1993). While modern discussions of ethics focus on broad issues of purity, choice, and the individual (Graham and Haidt 2010), the metanorms and civility appear to still be important issues in lay discussions of group interactions (MacIntyre 1984).

critical and intentionally incendiary qualities of these campaigns make them exceptionally visible targets for the ire of people using the Tact principle.

Perhaps though, the biggest “crime” vocal atheists commit is talking about religion in a way that does not let the public *quietly* assume that its beliefs are correct (even secular Tact-using people who want to avoid religion). Atheists’ outspoken critique of religion more than anything makes theological differences seem to matter in public.¹⁰ Both secular and religious Tact-using participants are invested in the idea that they are right and that religion *should not* matter for public interaction; to make religion a point of contention draws light to the existence of differences among people and, potentially, the importance of those differences for how we evaluate others. The Tact principle can render differences of belief, religious hierarchies, and, most importantly, conflicts among invisible groups—atheists and the fundamentalists, the “that guys” of the world shedding light and, to some extent, creating these divisions.

In the next chapter, I will show in the section on the Tolerance relation principle that not everyone dislikes atheists on the basis of their supposed incivility; some people simply do not like them for their certainty. When they make declarations condemning belief in religion, they are rejecting a whole set of beliefs in a way that some participants in this study said was born from uncertain foundations. In essence, this group argues that atheists and any other group that declares that all

10. This should also apply to open and aggressive displays of religion. Perhaps because vocal atheists can easily violate the Tact, Truth, and Tolerance principles, hence angering most of America (rather than just a small segment), they get a larger share of the attention and thereby violate the Tact principle even more severely.

others are right and they are wrong and those who also refuse to work with other religious groups are essentially intolerant and need to change their ways.

CHAPTER SIX

“I’M INTOLERANT OF INTOLERANCE”:

THE TOLERANCE RELATIONAL PRINCIPLE

After eating breakfast at a diner in downtown Chicago, Eddie, a middle-aged self-identified Ethical Humanist, offered the following comments about why an *X* labeled “fundamentalists” was at the periphery of his map:

I don’t like that they force their beliefs on others, they don’t let people believe what they want to believe . . . We all have a responsibility to *respect* what others believe, who am I to say someone’s wrong . . . although, I guess you could say that I’m intolerant of intolerance.

Unlike participants using the Tact relational principle, Eddie and people like him go beyond simply avoiding the issue of religious differences and directly assert that people should *respect* other groups’ beliefs and, to some extent, embrace religious pluralism. This principle, which I call the Tolerance relational principle, is also dissimilar to the Truth principle because the primary criterion of evaluation is not cast in terms of “correct/incorrect” so much as a very moralized sense of “accepting of others/intolerant toward others.”¹ Participants who use Tolerance principle conceive of the distance between their center *X* and other *X*s as the extent to which other groups are seen as (1) accepting others with different beliefs, (2) believing that

1. I chose the term “tolerance” because participants often used that word to describe their beliefs. Tolerance is often associated with a Tact principle like orientation toward others, as in “merely tolerating” someone. However, the participants in this study did not understand tolerance to mean only to avoid difference; to tolerate another group or person was to accept and try to understand them, which is a far cry from the Tact relational principle.

one does not hold absolute truth, and (3) willing to learn/interact with others. These seemingly contradictory principles are aptly illustrated by Tabby, a middle-aged ELCA participant, speaking about why she located atheists on the edge of her map:

It's just that they, they are so self-assured, they think they have all the answers, and they're going to go out and tell everyone they're wrong. [Atheists] don't know any more than you or I, it's a matter of being tolerant, and understanding others. I've learned a lot from atheists, and they have a lot to learn from my beliefs. That's what it's about, learning from each other

Using the Tolerance principle, Tabby assumes that humans have incomplete knowledge about the universe and that various groups are capable of different degrees of gaining truths about the universe. As such, no one group holds the monopoly on those truths. That any particular position is unable to have complete dominion over the truth means that various other views have something to offer to the discussion of how the universe works. Agnes, an older ELCA participant, expressed this mentality best when she said:

No one is capable of being completely certain about how the universe works and everything in it. There is so much we don't know and who am I to say that a particular perspective is wrong when I don't have all the information . . . groups like even Fundamentalists can tell us something about how the world is and maybe even about God. . . . I put groups there that I strongly disagree with because they think they've learned everything, that they have the answers, *and then* they are intolerant toward others who don't think [the far groups] know everything.²

Agnes rejects the idea that any particular religion or belief system has any kind of exclusive access to how the universe works, and to think that one does is to fundamentally misunderstand the world. The Tolerance principle combines epistemic,

2. The phrase "and then" is important here because it demonstrates a particular understanding of the relationship between belief and action, which I will discuss in greater detail in this chapter.

moral, and interactional norms to form a unique way of viewing and engaging with the world. As I will discuss in this chapter, this unexpected combination of characteristics found in the Tolerance principle serves to highlight some important issues in the sociology of religion with regard to scholars' understanding of cognition, contradiction, and identity. It is important to note that the alliteration for the names of the relational principles is only fortuitous; as this chapter will demonstrate, it was the participants who repeatedly used the term "tolerance" to describe their understanding of others.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the Tolerance principle as it functions for liberal secular and religious participants. I investigate the common assumption made by scholars such as MacIntyre (1984), Sandel (1984, 1998), and Taylor (1985) that Tolerance-principle users are intellectually inconsistent, atomistic, or relativistic. I argue that instead of thinking of these individuals as confused or inconsistent, Tolerance users show scholars how people enact their beliefs without contradiction or even internal conflict. Further, I highlight how Tolerance users articulate and form both the limitations to their sense of tolerance as well as their own group identities in the face of other Tolerance-using groups and intolerant "others."

I also consider the Tolerance relational principle as it stands in relation to other relational principles. While Truth and Test both focus on the content of one's beliefs or actions with regard to a particular ideal, the Tolerance and Test principles demonstrate preferences for types of interaction. However, Tolerance is defined by what people should do and Test defined by what people should not do. Ultimately I

investigate how Tolerance is perhaps the most powerfully norm of all the relational principles because Tolerance users are able to think of themselves as not enforcing their beliefs—they see themselves as simply intolerant of intolerance.

The Shape and Limits of Tolerance

Of the relation orientations discussed thus far, none of them have been, in Lamont's (1994) words, inherently "moral boundaries." The Truth relation orientation has a wide range of levels of moralization, as did the Test and, to a lesser extent, Tact orientations. The Truth relational principle allows for its users to make amoral distinctions, where groups can differ in beliefs but that differences does not entail a negative or positive moral evaluation of those groups. Conversely, the Tolerance relation principle stands out in that it is *inherently* a moral distinction. For a distinction to have a moral quality it means that to be far away from the center of a participant's map is not just "different"; it is, by definition, morally wrong. Groups that are far away from a Tolerance map are intolerant, and this represents a moral infraction or deficiency on the part of those peripheral groups. Almost universally, the exterior boarder of a participant's map in the Tolerance orientation is constituted by "fundamentalists," and often "violent groups," "Nazis," and, semiregularly, the "KKK." *Any* group that is seen as believing that they absolutely right, all others wrong, and those others should be forced to believe and practice as they do, is peripheral. For instance, Eddie, quoted above, said;

This power thing, to me, is—did you ever see the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* Disney movie? It was the first Disney movie with a real villain. The Disney villains before [him], every Disney villain was kind of this person who knew

they were evil and were laughing about it. I think evil in the world happens from people who believe they are genuinely right and have a lot of power.

Like other Tolerance users, Eddie is critical of thinking that one is absolutely correct. Judge Claude Frolo from the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* is a true villain because of his certainty. More directly, complete certainty is moralized such that one is not a true villain without it.

However, being peaceful is not enough, for one must also work with other religious organizations to promote peace and mutual understanding. Extreme isolationists, such as sectarian Orthodox Judaism and Fundamentalists living on compounds or ghettos who are on the periphery of these participants' maps, are often only slightly closer to the center than groups who blow up buildings. To be close to the center on a map using the Tolerance relational principle, a group must avoid absolutism *and* embrace others. As Alex, a middle-aged self-identified Secular Humanist, said:

I put [Orthodox Jews] there [on the periphery of the map] because they're so tribalistic, they think that they are the chosen people, pulling themselves away from everyone into their tiny communities . . . all they talk about are themselves and they reject everyone else . . . I put them a bit closer because it's not that they go out and shoot people, but they're so intolerant . . .

Whereas Tact users reject talking about religion outside of very specific contexts, it is acceptable when using Tolerance to reference religion, provided it is not exclusively focused on one's own community. Further, it is not enough to be open to being wrong. It is almost equally important to reach out to those who would disagree with you, to be a part of a community or engaged in a relationship with those others. The Tolerance principle shares with the Tact principle a tendency to focus on the

same groups for the periphery irrespective of one's particular beliefs. Atheists, Fundamentalists (sometimes lumped under the same title as "Fundamentalists-all"), highly politicized "right-wing religion," and Orthodox Judaism regularly appear on the Tolerance list of peripheral groups. The groups that people identified against were often specifically theologically related to their own groups. For example, Tolerance-using Secular Humanists were more likely to specifically mention other secularists in the lumping of groups, but it was in a context of those groups' failure to conform to a specific standard. For instance, Omar, an Ethical Humanist and self-identified atheist, said of intolerant atheists:

Especially when the word religion comes up, which for some of these progressive or left, leftist or atheistic groups is sometimes a dirty word . . . [I] run across people who are atheists that are I'll call them dogmatic in their Atheism and I'll also call the intolerant of other worldviews to the point where they have their world view and you should have their worldview too, so that how I came, that's why that scale occurred, there's two scales . . . [intolerance means] I don't agree with your world view, or you don't agree with my world view, is it important to me.

Similarly, Ophelia described what she did not care for with regard to fundamentalists:

The absolutism, the fact that fundamentalist tend to think that they have all the answers and that they're answers are the right ones and I just don't think any group has a monopoly on that. So, you know, it's sometimes not even what they believe it is the way in which they hold the belief.

The interesting feature here is that groups that the participant identifies with are placed at the margins of his map. Like participants using the Tact principle, the salient means of identification is the principle rather than group affiliation or specific points of secular belief. What is different from the Tact principle is that Tolerance

participants have a positive definition of what one *should* do. It is not enough to ignore others; one must *do* something to be tolerant. As Ema, using the Tolerance principle, said when asked what Humanism meant to her, “That we accept, anyone, and anyone’s belief as long as your main belief is to believe in your fellow man.” The principle of inclusion here downplays the specifics of some beliefs, while highlighting the importance of accepting others. One *should* accept others, and one should not put too much importance on beliefs outside of accepting others when relating to the social world.

It is also important to note how the participants used the term “intolerant.” To be intolerant was not simply to voice one’s opinion about religion; it was to actively not reach out to others or to isolate oneself from other communities. When I asked Alex what intolerant means, he paused and spoke slowly, saying, “Well, yeah, it means that you don’t respect others and you think you’re absolutely right, you see, like them [points to the Orthodox Jews on his map].”

However, from the perspective of Tolerance users, their requirement that people not be absolutist does not explicitly require particular beliefs per se. Rather, they use disconnect belief and being a “good person,” though in ways different from the Tact relational principle users.

Minimizing Certain Beliefs and Being a Good Person

Like the participants who use the Tact relational principle, Tolerance users minimized the importance of belief for interactions with others. That said, they did not completely discount the importance of beliefs. This was particularly relevant when I

probed Tolerance-oriented participants on the definition of the phrase “a good person.” For these participants, a “good person” is defined in positive terms, as in participants describe good people by listing what they do (rather than do not do, like the Tact users). Omar, quoted above, said, “I don’t care what you believe, it’s what you do, you reach out to those around you from different backgrounds and traditions and try to learn from each other.” This common sentiment was shared by Eddie, an Ethical Humanist quoted above, who said, “It comes down to action, and if you believe in hurting other people, then you’re going to hurt people, but the particulars don’t matter so much as doing the right thing.” However, often in the next sentence after discussing how beliefs do not matter, participants would describe how some groups can be extremely intolerant and think that they have the absolute truth. These statements seem to be in contradiction, though they make sense in light of what Dwayne, a Reform Jewish participant (also a Truth principle user), answered to a question regarding what constitutes a good person. He said:

A good person is, is . . . a person who doesn’t judge someone for having different beliefs, and tries to reach out to people to understand them. They don’t refuse to sit with someone just because they believe something different from them or throw rocks at them . . . a good person lets you, wants to understand you and what you believe and is open to hearing you. Does that make sense?

For Dwayne and other Tolerance users, tolerance is understood as an activity rather than a belief. Beliefs matter, but only to the extent that they inform action. To perform tolerance means to go out and embrace others or at least work for the betterment of the world around us without regarding beliefs: it is a physical and mental mandate and absolutism gets in the way. Tolerance users believe that to embrace

others one must not be an absolutist; nonabsolutism is a necessary part of a behavior, not a belief requirement for the sake of belief.

I originally saw a contradiction between the mandate to not be absolutist and to devalue believes because I was using an overly cognitive framework to understand the Tolerance principle. One is tolerant when one accepts others and reaches out to people of differing beliefs—the simultaneous critique of absolutist knowledge claims and basing judgments of others on belief makes sense if the expectation is for people to avoid thinking that would get in the way of reaching out to others or thinking of one’s community. Omar said of intolerant people:

Well you’re a believer and I’m not a believer, and I just can’t abide by that, I can’t even sit in a room with you and talk with you because you’re a believer. Not only do I disrespect the idea of your beliefs, *I begin to disrespect you*. So, that’s what I would call, that would be on the intolerant.³

Ophelia also highlights this point:

When you’re making law you have to balance the good of the whole with the rights of the individual. I think it is a tightrope that we constantly walk . . . Keeps us kind of moving in the right direction. Isolationist, I . . . put . . . kind of akin to a fundamentalist in that it’s very self-centric as opposed to any relativity with the people that are around you.

Later in the interview:

Interviewer: Isolations are closer than fundamentalists?

Ophelia: Isolationist, they’re still, they still have the same problem of, self-centric, self-centric approaches to life, but to me, the fundamentalist goes a bit further because they say not only is the way I see things the right way, but you have to live by them too. Whereas isolations tend to say just let me by myself and do what I want to do. At least they aren’t trying to live by their creed. Whereas for the fundamentalists, that’s ultimately they’re goal. They want everybody to live by their belief system.

3. Emphasis added.

Tolerance-oriented participants see beliefs as informing action; if intolerant beliefs and intolerant action go together, doing Tolerance means that a person has to avoid absolutist thinking or enforcing one's beliefs on others, save of course beliefs about positive relations with the people. This understanding of the relationship between action and belief is also found in the difference between how Tolerance and Tact users understand the term a "good person." Unlike the Tact-oriented participants who shy away from talking about beliefs at all, Tolerance users only minimize certain beliefs without recognizing the imposition of their own beliefs on others. While they are not committing a contradiction, Tolerance users' emphasis on the practices of Tolerance allow them to ignore how they are imposing a particular belief system.⁴ Tolerance users are intolerant of intolerant practices, which entail intolerance of beliefs. This understanding of tolerance bears much resemblance to what Fish (1997) called boutique multiculturalism, which is the acceptance of other cultures provided they do not do anything to offend the sensibilities of the multiculturalist.

In Fish's conception of boutique multiculturalists, culture is a window dressing that covers the important shared reason and humanity of people. It is acceptable to have a festival or dress differently; it is not acceptable to order assassinations of people, treat people or animals inhumanly, or evangelize. Fish argues that this "light" multiculturalism is not really multiculturalism, nor is it intellectually coherent because one is imposing one's values on others. We should instead reject liberal-

4. The question as to if they recognize how they are imposing a system of practices will be addressed later in this chapter.

ism or at least discussions of tolerance and recognize that people have fundamentally different values that conflict. Discussion does not answer the problem; marginalization or expulsion are the only answers to value conflicts.

Beyond Fish's representation of tolerance, it is important to recognize the power of tolerance in framing debates (Brown 2006). By placing some beliefs at the periphery as intolerant while claiming to be completely tolerant, irreconcilable discussions about theological truth are minimized to the periphery of society. Similar to Bonilla-Silva's (2009) concept of abstract liberalism, the tolerance frame does not see itself as a perspective that enforces its beliefs on others. It functions by making people change exclusive aspects of their belief systems to participate in the discussion, lest they are labeled intolerant and ineligible for rational and civil discussion. Similar to how governments will include former terrorist organizations in the functioning of government to moderate them, the language of liberalism makes it such that to participate in the discussion one *must* moderate or else they are being intolerant.

This form of tolerance can have a dark side, bludgeoning frank discussions of differences, power inequality, and imperialism (Brown 2006). Observing these potentialities would require more investigation into how participants interacted with these other groups though I did not see it in my limited investigation. I hesitate to apply *these* particular critiques because the groups at the periphery of the Tolerance users maps, the so-called intolerant, are not powerless subjects nor are they without their own counternarratives. If Tolerance downplays religious differences, it is a di-

rect counter to those groups that hold religious differences to be paramount and essential to identity. If it does hide power, it hides it in the face of groups who are less inconspicuous in their practices of power. As a position without internal contradiction, it is no worse or neutral than those it critiques. From this position, Tolerance users' actions and its relationship to practice and belief allow them to hide their own power and enforcement strategies—strategies that are readily apparent in their group boundary-maintenance strategies.

Tolerance and Group Identity

Self-identified secular participants who used the Tolerance principle were often in the difficult position of fighting against members of their own group who they saw as intolerant while maintaining the boundaries of their own group against groups like the Universalist Unitarians. These disagreements would come up in debates over the use of seemingly religious paraphernalia in group meetings. As discussed in the chapter on Tact, the use of candles was a singularly contentious issue, as the Tact and, occasionally, Truth users understood the presence of candles in a group meeting to be a violation of their expectations for their services. The participants who used the Tolerance principle were often the subject of critiques from Tact and Truth users for allowing or promoting the use of candles:

Ema [Ethical Humanist]: A lot of Ethical Culturalists are atheists, or they're Ethical Culturalists because they are not, they want nothing to do with spiritualism, or any kind of theistic, *no candles*, no singing, that to me, you know, that's to me, if you don't like it, you suck it up. Other people will enjoy it, that's, which, a lot of people, they preach ethical culture, they'll preach, they don't practice it as much as they should. We're supposed to have a very high tolerance, for the individuality of everyone.

Bea [Ethical Culturalist]: We've had minor little issues within our society like when we start up in the mornings we light **candles**, some people object even to that, that that's too churchy . . .

Alex [Secular Humanist]: [speaking of a leader from a national atheist group] Well their president said you're killing yourself, you're never going to grow because you're not openly atheistic, so, and we had people from atheist groups come to some of our meetings and leave by saying I can't support this, this is, you're a religion, you have a **candle** burning on your table . . .

These participants do not emphasize belief nor do they see religious accoutrements as objectionable given that it is a useful practice for some people.⁵ Tolerance principle users' sense of what is important led to them being somewhat alienated from members of their own and other secular organizations that explicitly adhere to a Truth or secularized Tact principle. However, both secular and religious Tolerance-using participants' troubles also include defining themselves against groups that are very similar to them and their group in terms of the use of the Tolerance principle.

A common problem for all Tolerance-using participants is not contradiction; it is boundary work. The Tolerance principle makes it difficult to distinguish oneself from other Tolerance-oriented groups because the principle tends to minimize differences in ideology and theology provided one is considered "tolerant."⁶ More clearly, it becomes harder to tell the difference between a rabbi and a minister when both reject theological exclusivity and actively study one another—differences seem to become simply window dressings. When Tolerance trivializes other differences,

5. It is also interesting to note that the atheist organization critiquing this participant's group relies on models of church growth promulgated by both sociologists and church-growth specialists. As Ellingson (2007) notes, the models that sociologists and other experts use can become self-fulfilling prophecies by being adopted by those whom we study.

6. This is a tendency that Smith (1998) notes using the language of subcultural identity theory in his description of liberal religion.

participants used other principles that reinforce the boundary between groups.

From the secular perspective this means introducing an element of the Truth principle into assessments of other groups. Jimmy, an older professional and self-identified Ethical Humanist, said:

The UU's a nice people, very tolerant, but they also have some religious aspects to them that I'm not really comfortable with. Most of their members are secular, but they still pray and talk about God. Recently they've added a lot more religious stuff into their meetings, using Jesus as a reference and everything. I, don't, I don't think that they are terrible people or anything, I just think the religious stuff is kind of off.

Similarly, Eddie said:

I put Catholics close because most of the Catholics I know are pretty tolerant people, they do a lot of interfaith stuff and will even let people into their churches that are secular. I don't have a lot of experience with them . . . but they're not close to the X because they still are very much a religion, with God, and Jesus, and the cross, and everything.

Jimmy and Eddie made these kinds of statements after placing over ninety percent of the groups on their maps using the Tolerance relational principle and deemphasizing belief.⁷ In interviews that were otherwise characterized by Tolerance, the Truth principle creates a boundary between the secular Ethical Humanists and the religiously oriented Universalist Unitarians and Catholics.⁸ It is important to note, however, that the participants were not intentionally creating this boundary for the purpose of boundary creation. Rather, Jimmy and secular Tolerance users like him cannot as easily rely on Tolerance for distinguishing themselves from other Toler-

7. Nine of ten, and ten of twelve, respectively.

8. It is equally interesting to note, for secular participants, which groups were not seen to not have any tolerant subgroups or were considered intolerant as a whole, including Muslims and Hindus, though I lack data as to why some groups were classified as wholes rather than broken into various subgroups.

ance-using groups. In the center of a map, the distinction between true and false become salient markers of difference in addition to tolerance and intolerance.

Religious participants, on the other hand, used a wider variety of strategies in defining themselves against other groups that they saw as tolerant. Jewish participants, in addition to sometimes using the Truth principle, used the Test principle to distinguish themselves from groups that were otherwise tolerant, like liberal Muslims, but might have “regressive tendencies toward women,” or Catholics who are “still . . . hierarchical,” as Ophelia, a middle-aged participant, said. ELCA participant Agnes said of Catholics, “The Catholics I know are great, they’re really tolerant, but women should be able to be clergy if they want.” Again, it is important to note that these participants predominately used the Tolerance principle for describing the location of groups on their maps. Test and Truth emerged as additional ways Tolerance users distinguished themselves from other groups they saw as tolerant.

I believe that the difference between the secular and religious Tolerance principle users is a matter of the differing saliency of political beliefs for self-definition. Liberal religious participants often mark the differences between themselves and other religious groups on both theological and political grounds. Because the Test principle covers political distinctions, political dimensions of liberal religious participants’ identities serve as an additional means of defining them from other tolerant groups. Secular participants who use the Tolerance principle are more concerned with differences in belief because as a group they are to some extent externally defined by their nonbelief in religion.

For both secular and religious Tolerance-using participants it was much easier to define themselves against the intolerant out-groups at the peripheries of their maps. As I discussed above, Nazis, fundamentalists (of all kinds), violent religious groups, and sectarian religious sects all served as a easy points of contrast between the identity of the Tolerance-principle user and the rest of the world.

The boogeymen at the periphery of the participants' maps form a sort of pure "other," which is the out-group that helps the participants form their identity. Whereas the Truth relational principle had an extremely broad other; the Tact, a diffused other; and the Test principle, a particular group coupled with a few others, the Tolerance orientation has a sense of an ideological opposite, a force running contrary to their desires, an evil juxtaposed to their good. Nearly all the participants who used the Tolerance principle made reference to these groups, though only a few had ever had direct experience with violent ones (more had some experience with isolationists).

Omar: I put Nazis there [outer ring of his map] because they're violent, hateful, intolerant, and killed millions . . . they take from people.⁹

Jimmy: Violent religions are there [outer ring of his map] . . . well, because they're violent and will kill people because they think their absolutely right, women children, anyone . . . they don't tolerate anything but this cruel idea which they try to force everyone to follow.

Dwayne: [Fundamentalists] are just bigots who won't accept people for who they are and what they believe.

9. Omar also discussed these groups in a different moralistic sense, which is discussed in the conclusion.

The groups at the periphery of these participants' maps represented the anathema to those who use Tolerance in their evaluations of others. The violent and absolutist characteristics of these groups work against all that users of this relational principle consider to be important. Although the Tolerance principle has a positive definition for how people should act, it is negatively defined with regard to the world because Tolerance users actively created their identity *against* these outside groups. Though I am uncertain of its meaning, I believe it is telling that most of the Tolerance users started at the periphery of their maps and worked inward—in other words, they started with what they were not and then moved to what they were.

The Limits of Tolerance

The Tolerance principle is not necessarily multiculturalism as in some ways it is an extremely potent form of assimilationism, similar to the Dutch government's recent law forcing immigrants to watch videos of gay and straight couples kissing (Crouch 2006). Tolerance-oriented participants want others to change their actions and, therefore, their beliefs. It is not ideologically neutral nor is its principle not to interfere with others' beliefs. Whereas Tact is mostly negatively defined, Tolerance is positively defined: others *should be* tolerant of difference, learn and embrace others, accept the incompleteness of human knowledge, and condemn those who do not do these things, especially those who are violent in their antagonism to these values.

Understanding the Tolerance principle in this way is important because some scholars in sociology, philosophy, and other disciplines characterize tolerance and liberalism in general as prone to atomism, relativism, and general intellectual

inconsistence. In particular MacIntyre (1984) argues that liberalism fails to provide any or philosophically sound sense of what constitutes a good worthy of perusing outside individuals' own desires. Similarly, the observations made in Bellah's *Habits of the Heart* (1984) serve as a case in point. He notes that for many of his interviewees, there is a sense that "there is something arbitrary about the goals of a good life . . . [and that] it is easier to think about how to get what we want than to know what exactly we should want" (1986:21). The general argument that he and other scholars inspired by communitarian critiques of liberalism make is that modern American life leaves many individuals lacking a strong sense of direction or what the *good* is. Rather, they only know that to try to coerce or, even in some cases, tell people what is good for them (or even themselves) is somehow abhorrent. While perhaps their representations of liberalism resonate more strongly with the Tact orientation, even in this case Tact participants have a definite understanding of what "good" is and what is desirable; they only do not wish to impede other people's desires. If Tact users have a sense of what is good beyond limiting others, then Tolerance-using participants, a fortiori, have a definite, nonrelativistic sense of what is good, which they use to classify others.

These analyses misrepresent what the participants in this study meant when they organized their maps according to degrees of tolerance and how they used the term "tolerance." Tolerance, as it is understood by these participants, is a normative force that demands the alteration of others' actions to conform to this principle. It is not enough for people to simply ignore differences; people must be made aware of

differences and then shown that in fact all religions are merely different ways of understanding the world.

I have presented these participants as particularly forceful, yet in conversation their manner of talking about their ideals can be extremely circuitous. When asked directly or through survey questions if and how they would enforce their beliefs on others, these participants generally took an extremely passive stance, often only enforcing their views when others' lives were on the line. But sociologists have long known that social control does not only occur through direct and explicit enforcement; often seemingly neutral or fair policies end up reinforcing social boundaries and aiding and adding to the stigmatization of marginal populations (Carr 1997; Bonilla-Silva 2009). Without ethnographic data, it is difficult to observe how the Tolerance principle is enacted and enforced save through debates about candles, but it is telling that the Tolerance-principle users spoke quite directly about how candles should be allowed at an event when some members would be offended, asking the offended to accept the candles or perhaps just learn to like them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHERE YOU STAND: THE TEST RELATIONAL PRINCIPLE

“It’s about Israel,” David said, pointing to “liberal Jews” at the periphery of his map. Talking in a quiet coffee shop in North Chicago, David was explaining why he, a self-identified social liberal and economic moderate, would place “liberal Jews” far from the center of his map. He went on to say, “You can’t be blind to this, [Palestinians] blow up people, put military bases in hospitals . . . You can’t ignore them and what [Palestinians] are doing . . . It’s like treason to side with them.” David, like other people who use what I call the Test relational principle, relies on a single issue—a litmus test—such as Israel to structure sections of his map. Other participants who use this principle discussed issues such as stances on homosexuality, women’s rights, the ordination of women, and abortion. All of them relied on a single issue to structure some of their maps, which often overrode other socially obvious boundaries such as religious differences and political affiliations. Though only one of these participants used the Test principle to the exclusion of all others (David, quoted above), the potency of the Test issues for defining the terrain of the maps of participants that used the Test principle is considerable.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the role of the Test relation principle for defining people’s views of others. I specifically use the Test principle to demonstrate two points about the importance of saliency for understanding how people

define others. First, by allowing participants to discuss what issues are important to them rather than a priori defining it for them, I can show how some issues dominate theological and political distinctions so that when an outsider might presume antagonism, there might be an alliance. Second, I highlight the relative priority of an issue when it mediates the opinions of others; that is to say, it is the *importance of* Israel to an individual that matters for defining others, rather than *opinions on* Israel. Using examples from participants who focus on the women's movement and Israel, I show the necessity of salience for understanding the views of others and how misunderstanding these concepts misrepresents the belief systems that sociologists study.

Testing Others

There are clusters of issues that are important to particular congregations: Jewish participants unsurprisingly often used Israel as an issue, Christians and Secular participants often used women's rights more broadly (with some exceptions), and conservative congregants focused on women in ministry. These patterns of focus for issues are unsurprising in and of themselves, but the particularities of how these issues functioned on participants' maps are noteworthy for the information they provide us about how issues influence participants' views of others.

Participants like David, mentioned above, highlight the importance of Israel for shaping some Jewish participants' views of others. In particular, the question of how to understand the relationship between the Palestinians and the Israeli state was a point of bitter contention for participants such as Wallace, a middle-aged self-

identified Conservative Jewish participant. He said, “I’m a pretty forgiving guy . . . but you can’t just ignore what’s going on there, the bombings and missiles and murders, you have to lie to yourself to not see it.” Beth, a middle-aged housewife, said, using a matter-of-fact tone, “It’s a simple matter really: it’s us or them, and people who don’t see it like that or are confused on [this issue] are backwards.”

David, Wallace, and Beth illustrate how other people’s stance on Israel served as one of the primary ways Jewish Test users differentiated themselves from others. At their outside borders stand liberal Jews who support Palestinians or are critical of the Israeli government’s aggressive handling of the conflict. Often these participants use the word “liberal” in a different sense from how most Americans understand the term. For them, liberal means someone who is “easy on Palestinians,” as Wallace reported, those who “have their heads in the sand” on Palestine. This alternative way of using the term “liberal” demonstrates the power of the Test principle for powerfully influencing how we understand the world around us. Words that are commonly understood as meaning something very specific come to have a different connotation in the context of the issue around which the Test principle is organized.

Secular participants who used the Test principle primarily focused on women’s rights or the separation of church and state. An interesting difference between these two issues within secular groups is the nature of the poles that they used to structure their maps. Participants who focused on abortion issues structured their maps along poles of antiabortionists to groups that did not have a negative view of women’s rights to choose—though they did not specifically include them there for

that reason. In other words, they had a well-defined “other,” but they did not positively define themselves or the groups near to them by being pro-choice (they used other principles). By contrast, those that focused on the separation of church and state placed groups that “promote theocracy” (a phrase used by several different secular Test users) on the periphery of their maps and included groups that specifically promoted the separation of church and state on the inside of their maps (e.g., the Freedom from Religion Foundation). There are many groups that are actively pro-choice such as NOW and NARAL that could have been included in the center of the participants that founded their Test of others on women’s rights, but these participants did not positively identify with those groups.

The difference between the pro-choice and the separation of church and state Test users is interesting because of what it can tell sociologists about the functioning of identity. I believe that the difference might have emerged as an artifact of the research context. I asked these highly secular participants to discuss groups that had something to do with religion. Secular pro-choice groups are typically not associated with anything that could typically called “religious.” However, the Freedom from Religion Foundation is logically relevant to religion, even if oppositional so. More clearly, whereas NARAL is an organization that exists independently (even conceptually) from religion, the Freedom from Religion Foundation is in part defined by religion. When I asked participants to locate groups far from them in the context of discussing groups that have something to do with religion, there are readily available positive and negative groups for the state church issue, while there are

fewer well-known groups oriented explicitly for or against religion on pro-choice side of the abortion debate. As such, Test-oriented participants who focused on the abortion debate had less salient ideological resources to draw upon when defining the inner rings of their maps, but plenty of groups to identify against.

Liberal Christians typically focused on a different set of issues from secular participants. Test-using liberal Christians also looked into women's issues but specifically focused on gay marriage and women in the ministry. Given that ELCA in this study was actively a "Reconciling in Christ"¹ church, it is unsurprising that many members specifically identified against churches that were antihomosexual and liked this congregation because of its generally welcoming atmosphere to the GLBT community.

For several of the Test-using participants, there were groups that were actively associated with being "gay churches" that these same participants placed in the middle of their maps. As one participant, Steve, said, "It didn't feel like a church. When you're sitting there and there is a drag queen eating a sandwich next to you during mass, it doesn't seem like a church." Or as another ELCA member, Benny, said, "I'm just a Christian who happens to be gay. Those places are all about being gay Christians. That's not really how I understand being a Christian." In both of these cases, the participants have a sense of what it is to be a Christian whether defined by a way of comporting oneself at church or the primacy of a Christian identity that did not match what they found at these churches. This kind of language bears a re-

1. This is an ELCA program designed to welcome gays and lesbians into the church.

markable similarity to Brekhus's (2003) research on gay identity in the suburbs. He found that many gay men did not want to have their primary identities defined by their homosexuality; rather, being gay was an aspect of who they were, but only one part among many. The Test principle was narrowly defined here—groups had to be supportive of homosexuality—but not to the exclusion of other identities, and especially the participants' understanding of Christianity. It appears as though these men were using a form of the Truth principle in addition to the Test principle. This truth principle is formed through both cultural expectations about the proper way of being in church (though it was couched in language that indicated that this cultural factor was a matter of "correct and incorrect"). Together, these participants delineated the close regions of their map as being both an accepting space and one that was authentically Christian (as they understood it).

The other Test issue for liberal Christians was women in the ministry. The participants who discussed this issue had clearly defined groups who stood against women in the ministry and those who were against it. However, the out-groups were often defined not just by their opposition to women in the ministry but for a variety of other violations using other principles. As Margareta, a middle-aged professional, said,

[Fundamentalists] are out there like I was saying partly because they won't let women preach, but also because they are just not very Christian about things, we're supposed to love each other and embrace our fellow man, but they're so full of, well, frankly selfishness that they can't see the Jesus anymore or rather they can't feel him anymore, we're called to love our fellow man, not condemn him.

This point is echoed by Mike, a younger LCMS member:

Mike: On the [other conservative Lutheran synod] they are anti-female preaching, they are anti-any liberal thoughts since the 18th century. They're very just not flexible. They are stuck in a time frame. The other one that's really far from us would be Catholics.

Interviewer: So why are they where they are?

Mike: . . . They won't allow women to preach, and because the conservative issues they have in faith.

Margareta clearly does not place the group she labeled "fundamentalists" close to her center in part because of her understanding of their views of women in the ministry (using the Test principle). However, she also uses a theologically liberal Christian understanding of the Truth principle to articulate her feelings of distance from fundamentalists. Following this trend, Mike also used the Truth principle in addition to the Test principle by distancing the Wisconsin Synod not just because of the women in the ministry issue but because of their generally theologically conservative perspective. Mike is particularly interesting because he is a member of an LCMS congregation, something he expressed ambivalence about, but thought it was a good community.

I can only speculate as to why this mixing occurred, though I believe that it is partially a result of the broader liberal orientation of the participants. Unlike Tact, Truth, and Tolerance, Test users were less likely to use a single principle, and as such, it is safe to speculate that Test users did not place as great a priority on the issue that served as the basis for the Test principle as did participants who used other relational principles. That is to say, though the Test was important enough to struc-

ture participants' views of others, it might not have been important enough to serve as the dominant basis of defining others in all cases. Consequently, groups are more likely to be defined by multiple principles, and the outer groups on the women and the ministry issue often violated other principles that the participants used such as Tolerance and Truth.

The typical issues for conservative Christians mostly involved the ordination of women. This is a particularly difficult issue conceptually because it could have easily been placed in the section on the Truth relational principle. These participants distance themselves from "liberal Christians" because, like Malinda said, "women can't preach to men . . . it's just what the Bible says." Similarly Frank said, "It's just a matter of following the Bible, and groups that do that aren't following the Bible even if they are Christian." Like the secular participants above who used abortion as the basis for distancing themselves from some groups, the few conservative Christians that mentioned these issues never specifically mentioned groups as being close by because they were against women preaching. Rather, in both cases, it was implicit that groups close to the center of their *X* shared their beliefs. Unlike the secular pro-choice participants though, the reason why this Test of a group was in place was because it served as an indicator for a group's compliance with the participants' understanding of the Truth principle. Women's ministering indicates to the participants that there is something wrong with the group in terms of its theology. I still categorize these participants as Test users (in addition to Truth principle users) be-

cause even though their reasoning was backed by theology, women ministering served as an indicator of belief and was not about belief per se.

These clusters around congregations are not notable here because they reflect deep-seated divisions in the American religio-political landscape, and this fact has been noted for over twenty years (Wuthnow 1989; Hunter 1992; Smith 1998, 2002). What is notable about Test principle users is what their various tests mean for how they understand the world around them and how it separates these participants from members of their own congregations that use different relational principles.

A complicated aspect of the Test principle is that it is unlike the other principles; where other principles often defined the whole map, Truth-oriented participants were much more likely to use it in complicated and segmented ways. More clearly, particular groups might be defined by Test while others Tolerance or Truth, and more complicated still, Test might define only far *or* close groups but not necessarily both. Disliking a group because of their views on women is one thing, but to like a group because of their views on women is another.

To purposefully identify against something is a separate issue from having being *for* something as a salient part of defining one's identity. As Wilk (1997:184) wrote, "The key point is that taste and distaste do not form simple complementary pairs; taste cannot be seen simply as the inversion, opposite, or mirror of distaste in forming social boundaries" (as cited in Warde 2011). Similarly, being against those who are against something and being for those who are for something are different

choices, both because of the possibility of neutrality and because one side might be more important than the other. One can be against those who are against women's rights to choose without having pro-choice being a salient part of how one defines oneself—the right to choose might be taken for granted.

This insight complicates our current understanding of identity which tends to focus on the logical connections between the in- and out-groups along single issues. If one is “for” something, it is logical to assume that they are against those who disagree with that. This kind of thinking is especially evident in work on exclusivity. Believing that one is absolutely right typically entails that those holding dissimilar beliefs are absolutely wrong. This logic is found in both research done on exclusivity as well as work on the culture wars.

In the first instance, scholars repeatedly argue that believing one is absolutely right will lead to negative evaluations of others who disagree with that belief (Glock and Stark 1969; Stark 2003; Wuthnow 2005). They have some substantial evidence to support this view; however, as I highlighted in the chapter on Truth, exclusivity does not necessarily entail negative views of others. The evidence from the Test chapter suggests an additional way that exclusivity can lead to consequences other than antipathy for those who disagree with one's viewpoint. If one considers the possibility that what defines who a person *is* is separate from who a person actively identifies against, then it becomes quite possible to feel close to those who disagree with one's position or simply not think about them at all when it comes to defining oneself.

The culture war hypothesis is a particularly complex topic, so I will focus on the major points. The original argument states that American politics has become bipolar with progressive, secular, relativists on one side and conservative, religious, absolutists on the other. Further, these poles serve as semicoherent nodes of opinion around which groups cluster. The argument for the culture wars relies not only on some surveys but also on analysis of the rhetoric of public elites (Hunter 2009). While there is evidence that Americans are divided on specific issues such as gay marriage, school prayer, and abortion, there is little evidence to indicate that ideological conformity and antagonism toward those that disagree with one's beliefs have spread to the public at large (Williams 1997; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2004).

A number of authors have critiqued the culture wars argument by amending or altering the number of sides. approached from a number of directions. For instance, Kniss (2003) attempts to break up our dichotomous notion of the debate, as do Starks and Robinson (2007, 2009). However, all have in common the understanding that ideological difference leads to antipathy (also a larger coherence among the voting public on these issues). But the evidence presented thus far in this dissertation and specifically in this chapter tends to indicate that while difference can lead to negative evaluations of others, there are complicating factors, and specifically there is a more complicated relationship between beliefs and views of others.

Unlike the scholars above, my research does not focus on beliefs per se. Rather, I investigate opinions of groups that the participants provide and categorize. More clearly, while some scholars ask for participants to agree or disagree on a spe-

cific statement regarding the Bible, I ask participants about other groups and then chart the patterns of opinions. It is logical to assume that being absolutely in favor of one side of a mutually exclusive issue implies being completely against another; focusing on opinions on groups rather than beliefs shows no such coherence. Rather, I find that what defines an “in-group” is sometimes separate from what defines an “out-group” for the same person. When participants defined themselves, they did not rely on ideological coherence as the sole standard for creating their map of others. Somewhere between holding a belief and describing an opinion on another group, other principles, ideas, and factors entered into the final outcome on the map. Of these, I believe that relational principles are a key ingredient. Of all the relational principles, the Test principle makes this process the most transparent because it does not dominate the terrain of participants’ maps to the same degree, and because it more easily makes explicit the idiosyncratic and powerful force that attention to specific issues can have on views of others.

The Test Boundaries and the Absent Middle

The Test relational principle was almost never used in isolation on a map. Nearly every participant who used the Test principle used additional principles on their maps. However, it is important to note where and when the Test principle was and was not used. The Test principle was rarely used to define the midpoints on participants’ maps unless it was used in conjunction with another principle to define one group. It seems that users of the Test principle rely on a cognitive mechanism Brekhus (1996, 1998) calls the “one-drop rule,” where a single violation places one

on the periphery of a map.² There are several ways of thinking about why Test was absent from the middle of many participants' maps. Beyond Brekhus's cognitive sociological interpretation, one could argue that Test defines only a part of people's maps—the outside or the inside—and another principle fills in the middle.

I believe the Test's missing middle ground is related to the pairing of Test with other relational principles on maps and the generally dichotomous and antagonistic understanding of the world implied in the Test principle. In the cases where participants used multiple principles to describe the same group, I occasionally observed a Test-defined group in the middle of a map. However, the placement was not a result of the participants' views on the issue that defined their use of the Test principle having a middle; rather, placing that group in the middle was a compromise of the other non-Test principle. More clearly, while Test was dichotomous, the other principles more often had some kind of gradation. If someone used Test and Truth for instance, and a group was ideologically similar to them but different in terms of their view on a particularly important issue such as women's rights, then that group might be in the middle.

Steve (ELCA, middle-aged): I put [Catholics] there because while I really disagree with them gay rights, I look at them and think that we have a lot in common when it comes to how we understand God.

Samara (ELCA): Why [Judaism's] there? Because while I'm pretty sure they support church being separate from the state because of their experiences with that kind of thing, they're not closer because of the Jesus thing.

2. There are two ways in which participants mixed principles on their maps, in-map and in-X mixing. In-map mixing means that the participant used multiple relational principles on their map, but not necessarily to understand a particular group. In-X mixing means that a single group had multiple principles used to describe its location on a participant's map.

Beth (Reform Judaism): I love Buddhists because they're so tolerant, they are just really accepting of others, but I ran into this one guy who started giving me a hard time about Israel, and I was totally taken back.

For all three participants, the Test principle was never compromised as a way of judging others, but inclusion of other relational principles in the participants' maps meant that a group might be closer to the center than it otherwise might have been. Steve and Samara mixed Truth and Test, while Beth used both Tolerance and Test to explain distancing herself from Buddhists though she was extremely adamant in her dichotomous perspective on Palestine. However, in the absence of other principles for understanding individual groups, the Test principle can produce a sense of closeness between participants and groups that would be at odds if the participant used a different relational principle.

Strange Bedfellows

One of the most interesting aspects of the Test principle is that participants who used it often placed groups that the *participant* recognizes as dissimilar together because the groups in question are similar on one important issue. Take for instance Wallace, a middle-aged self-identified practitioner of Conservative Judaism quoted above who is deeply concerned about the fate of Israel. Wallace says, "If you look at the population growth of Palestine, there's no hope unless we do something." For a man who indicated in the survey he took, as well as in the interview, that he strongly believes in God, he draws a very different map from participants in his religious tradition who use the Truth principle. Jewish participants who use the Truth principle often rely on theological concepts such as monotheism and following Jewish teach-

ings to place Christianity somewhere in the middle distance between them and the edge of the map, with Islam typically closer to the center of their maps. However, Wallace put Evangelical Christianity right next to his center *X*. When asked why, he replied after a short, seemingly confused pause, “Well, they support Israel.” Groups like Reform Jews, whom Wallace considers “soft on Palestine,” were located near the periphery, though not all the way at the edge because Truth was a minor principle in his maps.

Wallace’s map is similar to another participant, Gretchen’s map, in being defined by one issue which places groups that common sense and other relational principles would have in very different locations. Gretchen, a middle-aged self-identified atheist, placed “Conservatives” on the periphery of her map, saying,

They want to own women’s bodies. They see us as homemakers and child producers and not people who want to do something outside of that. Look at abortion rights, women’s bodies are under attack by men who don’t have to deal with children or their futures being . . . well, like I’m saying, they want to own women’s bodies.

Later in the interview:

Interviewer: Let’s talk about your placement of the [atheist organization] right here [points at a space on the participant’s map near but not at the edge].

Gretchen: I know them, yes, we’re both atheists, but they don’t talk about women’s rights that much, all they care about is being against religion, and they ignore the important issues like abortion. I’ve even met some that are against it . . . I won’t put them near me . . . they aren’t the same as Conservatives for obvious reasons, but [they] need to take a stand on this.

Gretchen is an avowed atheist and Secular Humanist, but due to the importance of women’s rights for defining her map, an atheist organization and “Conservatives”

are placed in proximity. Though these two groups share little in common politically and on most social issues, the failure of the atheist organization, from Gretchen's perspective, to support women's rights locates them near each other. Again, groups that are drastically dissimilar on many dimensions are lumped together due to their stances (or even the lack thereof) on a single issue. Whereas Wallace demonstrates that social boundaries can be ignored for groups close to the center, Gretchen shows that they can also be ignored for groups at the periphery. A superficial review of Gretchen, Wallace, and other Test-oriented participants seems to indicate some kind of lack of orthodoxy on their parts. They do not align themselves with those who are theologically or philosophically similar to their own beliefs as perhaps people using Truth or Tolerance might show in their maps, yet it would be a mistake to see their sometimes unique boundary frameworks as a lack of orthodoxy or a betrayal of group interests.

To explain inconsistency, Chaves (2010) views attempts at consistency between religious belief and everyday practice as a battle where we must have outside forces or a great deal of cognitive energy to follow a religion strictly. A failure to be consistent between belief and practice is nearly inevitable without the routinizing effects of persistent social support. A similar logic has been applied to understanding groups that do not align themselves along class boundaries. For instance, at a recent sociological conference, I was present for a discussion about the working-class men in the Tea Party where the general consensus was something close to false consciousness on the part of the Tea Partiers. It was argued—and to some ex-

tent agreed upon—that these working-class men’s best interest was to fight against the Tea Party, and therefore, they must be irrational (for the incongruence between their “interests” and their political alignment) and/or poorly educated. Though these ideas are based largely on a complete misunderstanding of Tea Party ideology, these discussions continue in academic communities (Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 2011). I believe both Chaves and the scholars at the conference ignore and thus misinterpret people’s affiliations and actions because they fail to take into consideration the importance of particular issues (or the other principles mentioned in this dissertation) for defining people’s group identities, their sense of alignment with others, and their actions. Wallace was not being inconsistent by seeing Evangelical Christianity as being close to his own beliefs because the group’s stance on Israel mattered more to him when it comes to opinions of others, even though they differ in terms of understandings of God, the nature of holy texts, salvation, religious practices, and probably a number of other important religious differences.

Through the lens of a single issue, participants saw themselves as similar to groups that they otherwise might strongly disagree with, and lumped together radically different groups at the edge of their maps. The single-issue perspective creates linkages and a sense of similarity in cases among groups that might otherwise be seen as dissimilar. We take for granted that groups and people who differ on matters of theology or politics will have antagonistic thoughts toward each other, or if they are poor, they will join the workers’ movement, or if they are devout Christians, they will tithe (Smith, Emerson, and Snell 2008). However, researchers in the soci-

ology of religion have demonstrated that to believe that there is a necessary link between social position or belief and particular behavioral outcomes or affiliations is a problematic assumption (Smith 2002; Greeley and Hout 2006).

The Test principle demonstrates that, at least for views of others, people are not necessarily being inconsistent or irrational by distancing themselves from those who have similar beliefs so much as they are more interested in a different aspect of their religion or beliefs. Religious identities are many things beyond a set of beliefs and practices. They also include conversations about various groups, issues, philosophies, and values that are all included within the religion in a cultural milieu which are used as resources to help describe and articulate identities. While some branches of Christianity like to exclusively define themselves on the basis of belief to the explicit exclusion of all things they deem “cultural,” belonging to a community and articulating one’s views of others as they relate to one’s belief involves additional elements of thought. For example, the Lutheran participants in this study often mentioned the Wisconsin Synod (a particularly theologically conservative sect of Lutherans) on their map. This group was never mentioned by non-Lutherans, but because it is part of the Lutheran ideological landscape, it is included in their maps. Similarly, there is nothing in being Jewish that necessitates supporting Israel (though some Orthodox groups argue the opposite), yet the discussion about Israel is relevant to the participants’ Judaism and their sense of closeness to other groups. To prioritize Israel over theology is not a contradiction, it is merely a shift in priorities. Gretchen, Wallace, and others’ religious and secularist belief systems are well

within orthodoxy, yet due to the primacy of particular issues for them, they do not follow the logic that social scientists or (in some cases) fellow members of their respective belief systems would have them use. Similarly, the working-class Tea Party members and the inconsistent religious people might simply have other things on their mind.

Views of Others

Two individuals may share the same views on women's rights, Israel, or politics, but the data presented above indicates that unless one of these issues is important to both of them, they can have wildly different expressions of their views of others. It is a rather simple point that leads to misattributions and misunderstandings of cause when social scientists do not take it into account. Humans only have so much mental attention space, and if an issue is not made salient by conversation, social enforcement, or active effort (perhaps from interest or from principle), that issue will not necessarily shape our views of others. The categories to which we belong, and the opinions we hold, do not necessarily shape our views of others; rather, the relative saliency of a particular issue mediates or even dictates these views.

Consider the following two participants: Wilber, an elderly ELCA participant, and Kevin, also an elderly ELCA participant. Both identify as economically and politically liberal (and presented similar explanations of what those terms meant), both answered that they "agree" that they believe in a God who watches over them, and both placed their shared church at the center of their map. Yet Wilber places "Islamism" at the periphery of the map because "they don't treat women right," and while

Kevin also reports that “Muslims aren’t great about women,” he instead places them near his central *X* because they are “essentially a peaceful religion.” For Kevin, being “peaceful” is the issue he cares about, and for Wilber, the treatment of women—even if they both hold the same opinion on an issue for a group, the varying importance of that issue locates them in a different social space. In other words, it is the importance of the treatment of women rather than the opinions on the treatment of women that matters for the difference between these participants’ view of Islam. While traditional statistical techniques may be able to parcel out how much variance “views of women” is able to explain “views of Islam,” without in-depth interviewing, the causal linkage is unknown.

That we have the potential to miss the causal link is seemingly a minor point, though its importance is revealed in why social scientists would not see this causal pathway. We miss the causal connection because we ignore the importance of attention and how individuals understand the world around them. While two people may have the same beliefs, the priority and mental space allotted to a particular issue may vary. Social scientists who use more traditional survey methods would look at Wilber and Kevin and miss both the causal pathway as well as misrepresent the relationship between belief and opinions of others. The relative attention and salience for people directly mediates how we understand others and perhaps how we treat and affiliate with other people, as becomes clear in the following section.

One of a Kind?

Though she does not exclusively use the Test principle, Vivian, a middle-aged ELCA participant, highlights an important aspect of the principle: its potential for idiosyncratic maps. Vivian locates many religions on her map on the basis of their views on polygamy. If a group allows polygamy or has a well-known history of it, they are automatically far from the center of her map. Dubbing them “polygamous Mormons,” Vivian resorts to a Truth principle plus issues of legality.

Interviewer: Ok, so, tell me more what’s the issue with polygamous Mormons, what’s “wrong.”

Vivian: The belief of having more than one wife.

Interviewer: This might be a weird question, but what is wrong about that?

Vivian: Um, well, it’s, it’s against the religion that I believe in. And it’s illegal.

Upon extensive probing, Vivian did not have a personal or professional background with the fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints or know any Muslims who practiced polygamy or recently read or watched anything on the issue. Similarly, take for example Bea, a middle-aged agnostic and member of the Ethical Humanists who also identifies a spiritual discussion of Scientology. She placed them on the edge of her map because of their belief in aliens. While it is debatable if this placement is a result of the Truth or Test principle, I believe her reason that “it’s just silly, I’ll believe in God before I believe in Xenu” is not a critique out of the scientific principles she espoused for much of her map, but rather an indicator of those principles, therefore a Test. The story behind Vivian’s disdain for polygamy or Sally’s ridicule of belief in aliens is immaterial, though it points to the wider issue that I am making throughout

this chapter: Test participants demonstrate (more so than others)³ that any issue, no matter how obscure, or *not* politically, philosophically, or ethically relevant to socially acknowledged theology or ideology, can be the guiding rubric for understanding the religious landscape surrounding them.

The other relational principles serve as readily acknowledged social boundaries in the modern world. Public debates about “truth” are loud and often televised, many commentators discuss the relative merits and problems with tolerance, and the Tact principle is nearly ubiquitous when calling for a “neutral” discussion. The Test principle can be based on anything important to people no matter how great or small, public or private. These issues can transcend the typical limitations imposed by more socially acknowledged boundaries.

These aberrant frameworks for understanding the world can have important consequences for how participants answer survey questions. When I asked David how he identified religiously, he marked Orthodox, though he explained it was not because of his orthodox practice, but because of his strong religiously oriented Zionist beliefs. When an issue is so important to a person that the terms that she or he uses to describe herself or himself are changed from their generally agreed-upon meaning to reflect a specialized additional meaning, it indicates both the importance of the issue for that person and the importance of understanding the salient features of someone’s evaluations of others for understanding their answers to survey ques-

3. Both of the points above could be made with the other relational principles, but the Test principle most aptly demonstrates how a single issue can transcend social and symbolic boundaries, and the general importance of saliency for understanding the views of others.

tions. The idiosyncratic elements of their views that shape the terms they use to describe themselves and the world around them are important for understanding participants' views of others but are not captured on normal survey instruments.

Too often social scientists create a priori categories through survey research and then ask participants to locate themselves and others within these categories, thereby reifying these categories. We then create causal models based on correlations between identifying with a category we provided the respondent with and opinions on another category that we created. These correlations are useful for understanding our social reality, but they can ignore the occasionally idiosyncratic pathways between one's own position and views of others, as well as the salience of particular issues for determining what the important element is for views of others.

Conclusions

This chapter focused on methodological and theoretical issues involving the models that social scientists assume when we describe causal linkages between belief and action as well as issues with survey instruments' insufficiency in capturing the unique boundaries and perspectives. Of all the relational principles, Test demonstrates the importance of exploring participants' views of others. The evidence I have presented in this chapter indicates that social scientists need to look at how belief is articulated through groups. We cannot assume that beliefs provide us with the groups that are relevant to the consequences of our beliefs. When beliefs are placed in a context of groups (rather than just sitting in abstraction), it reveals that many social scientists' assumptions about logical consistency and positive and nega-

tive evaluations of others need to be reconsidered. If we are to understand people's relative consistency, rationality, and sense of alignment with others, social scientists have to investigate our subjects' particular interests—their tests—that they use to understand the world around them. Failure to do so introduces a systematic bias into our research. It becomes easy to see irrationality and heterodoxy where there is instead a shift in priority, which leads us to neglect the importance of attention for how our participants view others.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHERE YOU STAND: THE TEST RELATIONAL PRINCIPLE

The data for this dissertation are spatial in nature and contextualized by the respondents through narration. Participants interacted with me and, equally important, a pen and a circular grid on a piece of paper. How they understood the groups on their maps was as much of a product of the relational principles they used as how they organized the space on their maps. This chapter is an investigation into those forms of spatial organization I call *map types*. I argue that though no one map type would be suitable for its own chapter because of the amount of information to be gleaned from a particular map time, how maps were drawn provides a great deal of useful information how participants understood the nature of the relational principles.

Using qualitative coding, I found four nonexclusive ways that the maps were drawn (see figure 2). The first map type, *binary*, occurred when participants located groups only close and far from them, leaving little to no gradation in between. These maps are associated with participants using bright boundaries, which clearly demarcate who is “in” and who is “out” (Alba 2005). The second type is what I call a *spectral map*. In these maps, participants tended to take one relational principle and set groups that deviated from this principle at regular intervals away from the center of their map. The next type is what I call the *cluster map*. Cluster maps have

bunches of groups scattered around the center. The respondents drawing these maps tended to use the largest number of principles, have the most groups, and make the most subtle distinctions among groups. The fourth and final type is the rarest, which I call the *ring map*. In these maps, participants draw a ring of groups equidistant from the interior and exterior of their maps using a variety of relational principles from which they pick and choose.

Each type of map is indicative of how participants thought about the nature of the ideals that determined how they thought about others. Whereas relational principles show the standards that participants use to evaluate where groups stand with relation to themselves, map types reveal participants' opinion on a foundational aspect of views of others: *Is belief/behavior unitary, or can it be broken into elements or degrees?* More clearly, does being close on the map to the center mean one must believe exactly the right thing, or is there room for partial error because one can have parts of a divisible truth? While one's assumptions on this may seem trivial, it was important for how the participants understood others. If truth can be broken into elements, such as belief in Jesus, belief in God, belief in the absolute authority of the Bible, then some people can be more or less correct. If Tact is seen as unitary, then there are those people who completely avoid "pushing" their beliefs on others and people who violate this principle without any shades of gray. Seeing oneself as completely different from another group or that group as complete outsiders can have powerful social consequences (Theiss-Morse 2009; Merino 2010); similarly, believing that one's belief system is absolutely correct and others'

is utterly false leaves no room for compromise or error (Stark 2003; Juergensmeyer 2003; Avalos 2005).

We learn a great deal about how people see the world around them through understanding how they distribute the elements that place groups closer or farther on their maps. The dispersal of *Xs* on participants' maps shows how the participants understand Truth, Tolerance, Tact, and Test in organizing their understanding of others. Furthermore, different maps pose specific conceptual difficulties for the participants. For instance, the binary map type forces participants to lump groups together that they might otherwise mark as distinct, like Girl Scouts and devil worshipers, and the cluster map type promotes discussion about the varieties of categorization and ranking of relational principles, which are sometimes not easy to organize. As I will describe in detail below, the maps provide us with some understanding of why some of these conceptual difficulties exist and hint at some powerful social consequences.

Binary

A binary map is characterized by two clusters, or just two groups, where one is located at the periphery and another in the center. The space between is empty; one is either correct, tactful, or passing the test, or one is not. Binary maps comprised 20 percent (11) of all the maps and were associated with the Tact, Truth, and Test principles, though never the Tolerance principle because its nature implies looking for areas of similarity or compromise with other groups. A binary map type implies that the participant thinks of the relational principle they use as involving the possession of a single thing or set of things acting as a unit. The relational principles

are unitary, or in other words, someone is either in possession of the Truth, be it a single or cluster of beliefs that form an identity like “Christian” or not.

Consider Malinda, the thirty-six-year-old housewife and mother quoted in chapter 4. She said of other religious groups, “You’re either with Christ or against him . . . Jesus says it in the Bible, and that’s how things are . . . [other religions are] there [on the periphery of her map] because they don’t believe that Jesus was the Son of God.” Similarly Reggie, a Secular Humanist, also from chapter 4, drew a map that contained two groups equally close to his center *X*, “Secular Humanism” and “Ethical Humanism,” with “Pseudo-Science” and “Literalists” at the periphery, which he placed there because the first is “wishful thinking of the worst kind” and the second is “absurd,” though both groups do not contain the rational thinking that is so important to Reggie.

In both cases, the participants distinguished themselves from others on the basis of their conceptualization of Truth as being something that one has or does not have. We can believe in the divinity of Jesus or not, or we can hold to the scientific method for understanding the world or not; in either case, there is one element, one aspect of the relational principle that defines which side someone is on. As will become clear with later descriptions of different map types, understanding the relational principle to be whole or something that can be broken down into components has powerful implications for how people understand themselves and others, above and beyond any particular relational principle.

The binary map offers some unique problems for the people who use it. Because of its users’ dedication to one principle that is indivisible and the cognitive

bundling they do with peripheral groups, there is some lumping that the participant might be ideologically committed to but not comfortable with. Malinda quoted above had some difficulties with groups on the periphery of her map. When placing groups on the edge of her map, she had already put down devil worshipers; she expressed some hesitation on what to do with atheists: “I don’t, atheists are here, but they, but shouldn’t be next to devil worshipers, but you’re either with Jesus or not [long pause, then laughs] but you know Girl Scouts, they’re like out here [points to the edge of the page].” Though I tried to ask follow-up questions, Malinda was evidently hesitant and uncomfortable to elaborate, using the joke about Girl Scouts as a way to relieve the tension. But where did the tension come from? Malinda clearly wanted to disaggregate devil worshipers and atheists, but her understanding of Truth as indivisible implies that there is no better or worse, “falsar” or “truer”; there is only right and wrong. I am somewhat uncertain as to why she wanted to break the two groups apart. She could have thought that devil worshipers were more incorrect, or it could be that she wanted to introduce another relational principle, like morality (discussed in the conclusion), but her ideological commitment to Truth limited her ability to communicate such additional layers of meaning or to break down Truth into components that atheists might possess. Alternatively, it could be that her binary understanding of Truth precluded using other relational principles such that being correct and good were the same thing, so additional distinctions should not matter to her.

Another instance of the binary map causing internal tensions is with Gretchen, a self-identified atheist. Gretchen had difficulty with Buddhists, saying, “I

don't want to say that fundamentalists and spiritualist Buddhists are the same, but when it comes down to it, they have a root problem of believing in things that aren't real." For Gretchen, believing entities beyond the physical world is unacceptable; it is a line that separates her beliefs from others. But like Malinda above, she does not want to lump two groups together that she perceives as different in some way.

Unlike Malinda, I was able ask for more information about why she did not want to tie those two groups together. She said, "Well, what the Buddhists believe isn't the same as Fundamentalists, they don't have any literalist texts, and they don't claim the Earth is 6000 years old." She apparently has some kind of hierarchy of incredulity, but her conceptual organization of the world means that Truth is not divisible; one either had it or did not.

For both Malinda and Gretchen, no matter their reasons, the framework that they use to understand the world puts constraints on how they are able to negotiate a reality, which they perceive as more complex than that framework. For various reasons, however, they are committed to their method of understanding the world such that they must set aside alternative perspectives. Each particular map type provides its users with tools to simplify the world, though the next map type, relative to the binary map, appears to be able to let participants organize their understanding in a relatively undramatic fashion.

Spectral

Spectral maps comprised roughly 29 percent (16) of the maps drawn by participants. Their form is a series of Xs extending incrementally outward toward the periphery of the map. Under a single relational principle, groups gradually

became less truthful, less tactful, or less tolerant with each step outward.¹ Spectral tendencies in a map could take two forms. In the first, people could be more or less correct or tactful about a single idea. For instance, Lester, quoted in chapter 5 on Tact, is a younger self-identified Jewish man who “wish[es] everyone would just leave each other alone . . . It’s none of my business what you believe, and its none of your business what I believe.” Groups like “Evangelicals” on Lester’s map that did not leave others alone were farther, but less invasive groups like “Mainline Christians” were closer, though still considered too “pushy” to be close to the center of Lester’s map.

Lester understands Tact to be something that people practice to greater or lesser degrees. Yet a different way of imagining a spectral map is that Tact can be comprised of many differently weighted elements, where having more of these elements means that one is more Tactful, and fewer elements, less Tactful, or vice versa, depending on the participant. For instance, Serena, a member of a Liberal Protestant congregation, drew her map on the basis of how groups understood God. God for Serena is ultimately a single God but embraces everyone, even polytheists, whose understanding of God is less correct. However because of Hindus’ theologically open qualities, they are closer to the center of her map than biblical literalists, who are correct about monotheism but miss out on the most important truth of their religion, that “everyone has access to God.” Similarly, Agnes, a younger ELCA member and user of the Tolerance relational principle, said,

1. The Test was missing from purely spectral maps because of the principle’s binary character.

You have to be open to people, I put Buddhists closer to the center because they are just about always tolerant, but you know, they still believe what they believe about who gets reincarnated and who doesn't but that's less important than if you just think you're right or if you are harmful to others . . . to be in the center you have to do a lot of things I guess, like not hurt people and more than that, be open to hearing people and even reach out.

Agnes and Serena's understanding of their principles break the ideas into several components that people can possess in differing quantities. Participants who draw their maps using a spectral organization break the relational principle into subelements, which are added together to form being tactful, truthful, or tolerant. In breaking down the relational principle into elements, it logically entails that groups outside of one's belief system can have access to elements of tactfulness, truth, or tolerance. Participants who use a spectral means of understanding themselves and weigh the relative merits of different aspects of belief systems because those other perspectives might have elements of truth, tact, etc.:

Eve [Ethical Humanist Tact user]: Well, I don't believe in [religion], I think it's nonsense really, but it doesn't matter because you can be a good person and believe nonsense . . . I get along with all sorts of people who believe kind of fantastical things, but people can be good sometimes even because of their religion.

Steve [ELCA, mixed Test and Truth user]: I put [Catholics] there because while I really disagree with them not letting women be priests, I look at them and think that we have a lot in common when it comes to how we understand God and the church.

Harvey [ELCA, Truth user]: I really like how Buddhists understand spirituality, it's peaceful, and it strikes me as having something true to it.

Participants who used this system see some of the things that are central to how they draw their maps in other belief systems. Consequently, there is a spectrum of groups rather than a gulf between "us" and "them." I found that filling the space

between insiders and outsiders with groups is associated with a lower level of moralization toward those on the outer ring. For example, Reggie and Larry both use the truth principle, both are secularly oriented, and they both place “Biblical literalism” on the periphery of their maps, yet they have very different maps and ways of talking about outsiders. Reggie’s map is a strict binary; of the Literalists on the periphery of his map, he said, “I don’t want to call them stupid, perhaps misguided, backwards maybe,” whereas Larry said in response to a question about why he placed Literalists where he did, “Well [pause], they’re wrong.” This pattern held for most spectral maps, the distinction was there, and even in the case of Tolerance users, it was less moralized than a binary map type. I initially did not see this correlation because some spectral maps did have a high level of moralization, yet, as I show in the next section, this is because not all spectral maps are exclusively spectral; some have elements of a binary map within them.

Spectral Binary Maps

Spectral and binary maps can be combined. Some participants have a divisible relational principle, but one element of their relational principle functions similar to a binary in that if groups possess it, they are on the map, and if they do not, they are on the periphery or even off the map. For instance, one participant, John, presented a high number of groups between his *X* and the periphery, but all of them were secular organizations. When I asked him about religious groups, he seemed surprised and said the following:

Interviewer: You mentioned religions earlier, where would it be?

John: I can't fathom that they would be anywhere near me, they're off the page, they're just *nonsense*.

Interviewer: All of them?

John: All of them.

Similarly Marta, a relatively conservative ELCA Truth and Test user, described a wide variety of religions between her beliefs and others when it came to atheists: "I don't have anything in common with them, they've abandoned God." Another instance is Frank, an LCMS member:

Interviewer: What kind of differences do you think that Christians would have with your beliefs. The General Christians I should say.

Frank: You know, the Bible and the word of God is it, does it represent his true words, and is that literal or just, just interpretation, that we are to interpret and can use how we want, and I think that's how a lot of Christian differences come in. They start to get away from the literal interpretation of the Word, so that's where some differences come in . . . when you get down to the finer points, we could disagree about, but if a Christian came to me and asked, "Am I saved," I'd say, "Yes." Because, it's our understanding as Lutherans and as Christians that, if you believe in Jesus Christ that's what it takes to be saved.

While these participants had spectrums where there was some variation along truth, beyond a particular point, qualitatively speaking, it was dichotomous. The three maps could have been drawn with a minor variation in the center, moving outward, a large gap, and then religious/secular groups; but perhaps because of size constraints, the scale of the map, and perhaps the number of groups they used, their maps happened to be spectral. Frank's map makes the point clearly. He highlighted the importance, Truth, and boundaries of his religious tradition by placing less literal views of the Bible farther away. However, one can still be a Christian and be

wrong, so the peripheral Christians are incorrect on many matters, but correct on the most important issue.

Their understanding of truth was still spectral in some ways, but the chasm between religion and secularity is vast. At the risk of mixing metaphors, if we were to number groups on the participants' map according to how distant they are from the center, it would start at one and then incrementally move to eight, then move to alpha. Though the participants think spectrally, once a group lacks all the elements of truth, they are completely and categorically different.

For John, secularity is the primary and essential element of his map that determines if the other elements are even counted as being relevant to the spectrum. Secularity is a necessary condition to be on this map, whereas the other elements like rigor or a particular scientific scrutiny of life are only sufficient. Similarly, Conservative Christians are near the edge of Marta's map because of their conservative interpretation of the Bible, but they are still within the boundaries of the group because of their God. Beyond the boundaries of secularity and belief in God lies something categorically different.

Interestingly the hybrid spectral-binary map appeared frequently among those using the Tolerance relational principle. Groups would gradually become less tolerant but still all have some tolerant qualities, then at or past the outer ring of their maps, there would be a group like "Fundamentalists-All" or "Evangelicals/Islamists," which were qualitatively, and on the map spatially, set aside:

Omar: I put Nazis there [outer ring of his map] because they're violent, hateful, intolerant, and killed millions . . . they take from people.

Jimmy: Violent religions are there [outer ring of his map] . . . well, because they're violent and will kill people because they think they're absolutely right, women, children, anyone . . . they don't tolerate anything but this cruel idea which they try to force everyone to follow.

Dwayne: [Fundamentalists] are just bigots who won't accept people for who they are and what they believe.

Each participant saw varying degrees of tolerance in many groups; however, they all had a line where one shifted from being somewhat tolerant to fully "intolerant." It was a categorical distinction where the previous distinctions had been interval in nature prior to that point. By comparison, a spectral map is at least ordinal in character; groups gradually move toward falsehood, tactlessness, or intolerance. The difference is not insignificant, as the outer boundary was rather moralized; one can be a conservative *Christian* and be, as Marta said, "misguided," or as a few self-identified Ethical Humanists said of Secular Humanists or atheists, "a little over the top" or "a bit much." But there is a wide gulf between being misguided or over the top and being "anti-Christian" or "crazy."

I am uncertain as to the broader social significance of a hybrid spectral-binary map. In many Muslim countries, being a liberal Muslim is perhaps frowned on, but not criminal, whereas apostasy is punishable by death (Anon 2001). In many religions, there is a degree of tolerance for difference of opinion, but there are those lines that groups draw that are not subject to debate. It seems that this hybrid map is the personal manifestation of these types of rules, or in other words, it is the pattern for individual symbolic boundaries, which can be encoded into social

boundaries. When maps are drawn on a legislative level, peripheral can mean illegality or worse.

Clusters

Cluster maps made up roughly 43 percent (24) of the maps, which is a larger percentage than any other map type perhaps, because they are easily useable with every relational principle. Cluster maps have aspects from the spectral map in having a segmented and hierarchically arranged understanding of groups' proximity to truth, tolerance, tact, or the "right" test answer. Yet cluster maps differ from spectral maps in two significant ways. First, rather than one group being at each increment moving outward, there can be multiple interrelated groups. Second, rather than there being a single string of groups as one looks toward the periphery, there are multiple clusters. In other words, whereas a spectral map resembles a straight road, a cluster map resembles bunches of small islands grouped together but separated from other clusters of islands over a vast area.

I do not think it is accidental that every cluster map contained multiple relational principles. Groups were clustered around a common relationship with a relational principle. For instance, Velma, an ELCA member, located Presbyterians and Episcopalians in a particular area not only because of their proximity to truth but because they were "just tolerant of people and . . . they all have some ethnicity associated with them." The groups stood not just in reference to the center along the lines of a relational principle but to each other on historical or cultural grounds. However, these historical grounds did not place them closer or farther from the center as these cultural grounds of relation were secondary to the relational

principles. Because Velma used multiple relational principles, she wanted to highlight the separate reasons for locating the groups in separate regions of their maps. In another example, Dee, a self-identified Ethical Humanist, placed atheists, Secular Humanists, and Humanists in a close area because “they can be a bit pushy, but I agree with what they believe,” while locating liberal Muslims, Christians, and Jews in another part of her map because “I don’t agree with some of what they believe, but their stances on women and government I agree with.” Likewise, Fernando, an older professional ELCA member, put Islamists and Orthodox Jews in one area because they “have a really different understanding of God” but located Hindus and Buddhists closer because “I like how peaceful and tolerant they are of other cultures, they’re always at interfaith meetings.” Dee used Tact and Truth in different sections, while Fernando used Tolerance in one section and a variety of Truth in another part.

These participants’ use of multiple relational principles necessitates that the participants highlight how groups on their maps are not placed using the same principle. By bunching groups together all over the map, participants can demonstrate that the separate clusters are not related, though the groups that make up the clusters are conceptually and visually bundled. Cluster-oriented maps demonstrate how people can have multiple and complex frameworks for viewing the world around them. Rather than letting a single issue or relational principle dictate how they relate to others, they use a range of principles to assemble their maps.

Cluster maps presented their users with less tension than some other maps, but they did invoke a lot more outward decision making, questioning, and consideration. Though it is difficult to represent, cluster map users typically narrated their thought processes and judgments to a much greater extent than other participants. For example:

Dee: Well, I could put [atheists] closer to some Muslims because they really both can be pushy sometimes, but I don't think they have that much in common with them, they just don't really think the same way, or really how I think, so I'm going to put atheists [next to the humanists]. It's hard to locate atheists because there are a lot of different kinds of atheists, it is really a catchall.

John: I don't believe in God so atheists are closer.

Velma: I supposed I could include Congregationalists with them, but I don't know if they really fit, they came from the Puritans but you really couldn't tell now, its. . . . I don't think I should even include them really, they aren't important here for this and they kind of confuse things.

Agnes: Mainline churches go there because they tend to be tolerant, they don't hurt people and they are pretty open.

The first example highlights the differences between both participants as they are describing their thoughts about the location of atheists. The cluster user notes the difficulty in categorizing this nebulous group though decides to place them with other groups that she finds to be somewhat intolerant but that she agrees with on issues of Truth. John is easily able to place atheists close to his *X* because he relies on a single principle and treats groups as wholes, which together simplify the question of how to relate to the groups. In the second case, both participants discuss the position of Mainline Protestants in general, and the cluster users even mentioned "Mainline" but debated about including or excluding a particular group. The

spectrum user had far less discussion; she knew the order of groups and how she related to them.

Using a cluster map entails a lot of questions that other participants did not have to address. Spectral users typically have one relational principle, and most groups only stand in relation to the center *X*. Conversely, groups on a cluster map stand in relation to each other as well as to the center—sometimes even using different sets of principles and different elements of those principles. Binary users have a simpler time because they have a single issue, which decides the placement of a group relative to the center *X*. They do not have to make as many distinctions among groups, and more often than not, they view groups as unitary and so do not have to make distinctions within groups. The cluster map users have a lot more work set out for them. They must consider the relational principle between groups and to themselves, they must factor in the various kinds of elements of belief/practice that might factor into a subset of a group being placed with another cluster, and finally, they have to address varying importance of different relational principles for locating groups on their maps. In addition to simply having a lot of groups and potential groups in their maps, cluster users have a lot of work to do just thinking through their maps. Yet in having maps that are complex, cluster users do not have to bundle groups together that they might otherwise separate. They do not have internal conflicts because they allow for their relational principles to be divisible and for the groups on their maps to relate to each other in complex and rich ways. By comparison, the next map, which is drawn in a ring shape, is seemingly much simpler.

Rings

Ring maps were the rarest, comprising only roughly 7 percent (4) of the maps overall. Participants who drew a ring type map used Test, Truth, and Tolerance on the same map, showing their idiosyncrasy and how no one group fits with what they believe completely, yet they are not completely antagonistic to any particular group. The larger belief system did not matter; only the segment that the participants used was important. As such, a group would neither be on the far periphery nor extremely close. Ema, an Ethical Humanist from chapter 6, provides a useful summary of her map:

I put the Humanists on there because I like their commitment to tolerate others, while I also put Muslims on the map because they have a really great and I think understandable belief in God . . . Atheists are there because they have a rigorous approach to things . . . I have the interfaith network on there as well because they're this great organization who is committed to making a more peaceful and mutually beneficial society for people . . .

It is the ultimate pluralist map showing a “take what you need and leave the rest” philosophy. Ema takes elements from atheism, humanism, Islam, and several other groups and finds them all to satisfy a particular relational principle. While this indicates a sort of relativism, it is actually a powerfully pragmatic attitude toward religion; it does not indicate that every religion is right, but similar to Wuthnow’s (2005) survey on pluralism, every religion has some important truth to them (or in this case, truth, tactfulness, or tolerance). Even fundamentalist belief systems may be included because of some tenet of belief that strikes the participant as tactful, truthful, or tolerant. All are equally distant, and all are equally close; all equally have something to contribute. Neil, an Ethical Humanist, said, “I even have

fundamentalists on there, they teach us something really important about being committed to what you think is right.” Participants who drew ring maps did not see religions as bodies of beliefs; rather, they broke them down into their components. No one element defined either their belief systems nor other systems, so they could mix and match ideas as they pleased.

Ring map users also had the widest assortment of groups. Religiously oriented environmental groups, specifically secular variations on political parties, relatively obscure religions, all made their way on to the maps. Like the other map types, ring maps presented peculiarities that the participants had to take into consideration as they made their maps. Participants’ mix-and-match attitude toward religion sometimes lead them to both desire to condemn a religion or belief system while choosing elements that they liked about the group (which in turn served as the grounds for inclusion in the map). Neil, quoted above, said, “I have them [fundamentalists] there but they can be kind of crazy . . . violent, and I’m not sure I want that, but every religion or I guess group has something to offer.” Neil also said of Secular Humanists that they can be “just really damn pushy.” Tamara, who identified herself as “spiritual” but came from the ELCA congregation, said of an X labeled Christianity on her map, “Jesus taught all sorts of great things about reaching out to people and sharing, but he also said some things I’m not okay with . . . so I have something to learn from Christians but there are some things I can go without, but I get something from them so they should be there.”

Both participants had doubts about placing some groups in their circle because they understood the group to often be on the far side of a relational

principle, yet their choice to disaggregate beliefs and practices from the unit of the group forced them to try to ignore undesirable elements of the groups (however noteworthy). The participants find something admirable in many groups, but some groups have a larger share than others of negative qualities—a distinction their ideological and spatial maps of others ignore.

Ring maps reflect an absolutism similar to binary maps. Breaking apart belief systems requires that one does not accept aspects of religions that treat the religion as a coherent whole. One cannot take seriously claims of religions that hold that they are sets of beliefs, not parts to be used. In arguing that one can disassemble religions, one implicitly argues that all religions are wrong or somehow faulty. Furthermore, like binary maps, participants have to ignore differences because of their commitment to seeing groups as pieces rather than wholes. Neil above recognized Secular Humanism's tactlessness, but no element defined Secular Humanism entirely, and he found the belief system to be true, so he omitted tactlessness as a consideration in his placement of the group on his map.

Conclusions

This chapter described the various map types and their consequences for participants' understandings of others. The level of the divisibility of various relational principles posed the strongest influence on the particular type of map. Participants who understood their relational principles as unitary typically created binary maps or hybrid maps, while those who divided their relational principles and/or had multiple principles used spectral, cluster, or ring-oriented maps. For all, though, the perspective provided unique challenges. Binary maps often forced

participants to cluster groups together that they otherwise thought should be separate, and cluster maps provided a great deal of thinking to organize.

Interestingly, the map type associated with the highest degree of disaggregation in their relational principles and the most relational principles bore many of the absolutist qualities of the binary map. The presence of these qualities is perhaps a product of having to ignore the “whole” of the groups in favor of useful pieces, whereas the binary and hybrid maps pushed users to ignore the whole in favor of a particular necessary and sufficient piece.

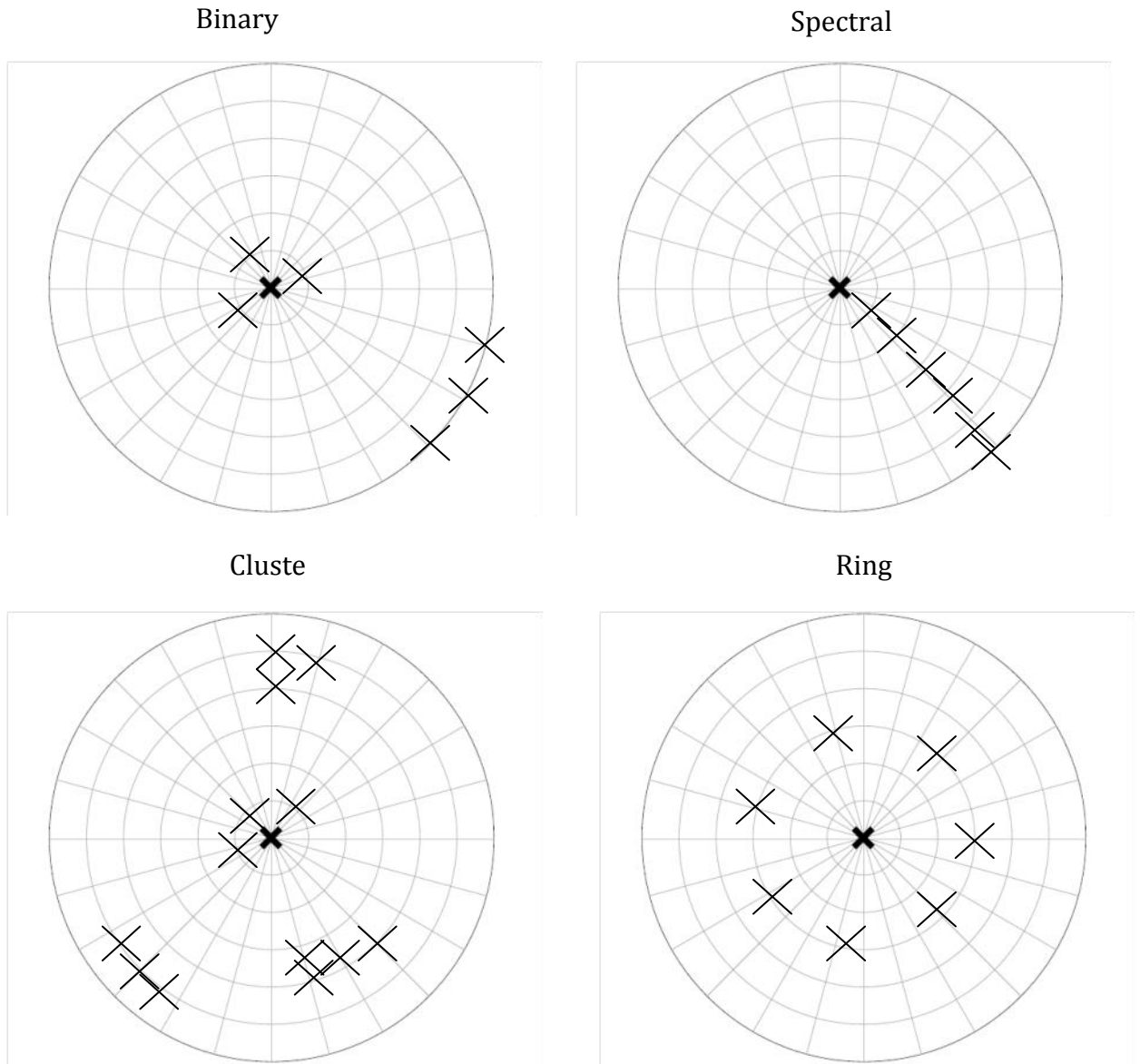
Overall, map types show us how it is important to consider participants’ mental organization of ideas about relational principles. They also seem to be related to socially relevant issues like level of moralization and willingness to tolerate others. Without additional research, I am uncertain as to the strength of these claims. It is possible that with new interviews from people from different backgrounds and experiences, these connections will be cast into a new light, which will change my interpretation, or they might dissolve altogether. Though regardless of which particular types of maps are associated with specific social consequences, the instrument itself has proven useful for studying how people understand themselves in relation to others at a level unattainable by traditional methods.

It is difficult to capture all the qualitative gaps and clusters between and among groups alongside all the quantitative maps. However, the hybrid maps show the importance of having a qualitative component when performing analysis. Just viewing the maps, removed of context or commentary, allows for a particular kinds of analysis that is interesting, but important differences and similarities between

ostensibly similar maps are omitted. Only through combining the maps with the commentary on them can we understand the meanings of the patterns that participants presented.

Rather than serving as a barrier, the physicality of the map provided participants with a literal, albeit simplified, picture of their ideological space. The immediacy of this picture, directly in front of them, pushed them into having to negotiate on the spot some of the cognitive difficulties within their views. They saw how seeing Truth as unitary put Xs representing atheists, devil worshipers, and Girl Scouts literally and cognitively side by side. The map highlighted particular features of their beliefs that might otherwise go unnoticed, or ignored, and placed them in stark relief. All representations of things simplify, the key is for the representation to highlight those elements that are important to the question at hand, without omitting important details. *Ideomapping* successfully, although imperfectly, captures a small piece of people's understanding of others and brings the tensions and difficulties involved therein to the foreground.

Figure 2: The patterns of participants' maps without reference to their relational orientation.



CHAPTER NINE

FOUR PARTS OF A MESSAGE

The sociological models of our views of others need to take into account factors beyond beliefs and contexts; I argue that we specifically need to consider relational principles. These relational principles can be more important than particular beliefs and group affiliations for determining the views of others. Existing methods do not uncover relational principles because they rely on some built-in assumptions about hierarchy in our views of others: the causal models of interaction, the salient groups people use in their evaluations of others, and the salient issues people use in their evaluations in general. Additionally, relational principles and the ideograph method provide information about *who* and *what* matters to participants, thereby elucidating a few of the factors and the relationship between these factors that govern what people think of others. Substantively, this dissertation also contributes to our understanding of how being secular or religious influences one's views of others. I find that it does not matter if someone is religious or secular for what relational principle they use, though it does matter what political viewpoint they hold as political orientations are affiliated with particular relational principles.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to discuss in some detail the contributions of this dissertation to the sociology of religion, sociology in general, and the methods sociologists use in our research. I also discuss some of the findings of

this dissertation that did not fit into the schema I developed, as well as some new questions that my research leaves unanswered.

On Relational Principles and Beliefs

We create complicated moral landscapes. They are populated by hundreds of different objects, from the “all religion” umbrella category to small organizational differences among Lutherans. But these landscapes are defined by more than beliefs and interests. Our beliefs and most cherished ideals influence our evaluations of others but do not determine these evaluations. Where some traditional models of sociology directly connect people’s beliefs and views of others, this dissertation shows that beliefs are not sufficient for understanding what we think of others. The Tact, Truth, Tolerance, and Test relational principles provide their users with groups for their attention to be focused on and ways of understanding them in relation to themselves.

When one takes on a view, one has to be told who the important objects of attention in that view are. It is one thing to say that one believes that life begins at conception, but what does that mean for how one goes about making that belief matter for interaction? Just as we must learn how to be marijuana smokers (Becker 1967), we must learn how to be pro-life, feminists, Christians, tolerant, and secular. We must learn how to enact beliefs and who the relevant actors are in articulating what it means to believe something. In other words, moral landscapes need to be populated and the distances defined.

A belief in abstract does not have any direction for which one should or should not care for, or even if caring and not caring are the ways to “hold” that belief. Consider the belief that $1+1=2$. This belief does not imply hatred or really any affective or cognitive impulse toward another person or belief system. One could say that it implies that the $1+1=1$ camp is incorrect, but first, one needs to know of this camp, that $1+1=1$ is logically inconsistent with the “2ers,” and that the way of differentiating the two positions is through mathematical logic, and that for something to be logically inconsistent with one’s position implies that it is wrong, and that your position is correct in all circumstances, and there cannot be any circumstances where the “1ers” are correct. More clearly, there is nothing about believing $1+1=2$ that entails any of one’s reactions or understandings of others. Often people are embedded in communities or paradigms which provide the boundaries and assumptions which sustain beliefs.

People generally do not hold beliefs like this in the abstract, they are part of communities of the like-minded which give definition and substance to beliefs. But my example highlights the potential polysemy in nearly any belief—no specific belief entails a particular reaction, only communities and the individual using their relational principles weave their beliefs into a system of meaning and reactions to others. We should be weary of treating any belief in abstract as a causal agent in itself. Its inherent polysemous nature, the variety of communities, and the relational principles can us lead down many tracks (Sewell 1992).

I believe that my research demonstrates that the various relational principles provide some direction for the practical impact of beliefs. If one is concerned with Truth, then those groups which oppose or contradict one's truth, *whatever it may be*, are more easily set at a distance from one's self-definition. If one is focused on Tolerance, then those whom one sees as intolerant are on the outskirts of the map, though what the other is intolerant of is *relative* to the group or individual. Without relational principles, beliefs stand in abstract, isolated from meaningful activity. In this dissertation, I have shown that relational principles play an important role in providing the groups that one evaluates, the means of distinguishing among groups (e.g., true/false, tolerant/intolerant), the moral qualities to those distinctions, and the boundaries for judgments of others (i.e., which relational principles apply and how). Beliefs are translated through relational principles which help form individual moral landscapes.

This argument is relevant to cultural sociology because it helps explain why one cultural resources is used over another. Existing social theory attempts to explain that when people evaluate others, they have their habitus to sensitize them to particular issues, but they also have the a vast collection of narratives, phrases, ideals that their life experiences, and the resources offered by the communities they belong when evaluating others. Every community and personal history offers a variety of resources to understand and organize the world; the relational principles and the specific context of the interaction help sort and organize which among the vast resources is pertinent to evaluations of other people. If an atheist is constructing ar-

guments against theists, she could use any number of critiques born of history, ideology, and personal experience. There are critiques arguing that religion is immoral, intolerant, tactless, homophobic, and misogynistic; she can use stories, philosophical arguments, or even images found on the Internet. Relational principles help dictate which resources a person finds salient, relevant, or just interesting. If said atheist is a Truth user, words like “absurdity” and “irrationality”—words and ideas often used in secularist discussions of religion—along with stories of a particular religious group arguing for something the atheist finds absurd come to shape their understanding of those groups and other religious groups. But the power of relational principles extends even into the groups that people see as relevant to them.

On Methods, Culture, and Boundaries

One of the major contributions of this dissertation is a new methodology and a development of our understanding of the functions of symbolic boundaries. The participants in this study were given a map to mark out how close or far groups are from what they believe using whatever groups they wanted and using any terms they chose to use to describe those groups. Because of the open-ended quality of the mapping process, participants used both a wide variety of terms to describe the relevant groups around them and their own ways of deciding what made a group close or far from their center *X*. Their ability to make the distinctions they wanted to make using their own terms produced some unique insights into issues that were important to participants such as the use of candles in service, or allegiance to Israel, as well as the nature of hierarchy and distinction.

In sociology there is an old question on whether difference necessitates disdain and hierarchy. Is it possible for someone to be simply *different* (Bourdieu 1987)? This point is difficult to contest given that Bourdieu argued that people rarely articulate their dislikes as dislikes for groups of particular people, especially in interviews. However, some participants in this research actively disliked particular groups qua groups, and although they sometimes obfuscated their opinions of groups, they often actively disliked people for what they believed—but not always. The numerous instances of Tolerance users demonizing those who were intolerant, or Truth-oriented participants looking down on people who did not hold their beliefs, give evidence to the proposition that the participants in this research did not hold back their judgments of others under some kind of mask of civility. Instead, they offered firm opinions of who were similar and dissimilar to them and what that difference *meant to them*.

To some extent this research demonstrates that difference does not necessitate disdain or hierarchy. The concept of levels of moralization and the Tact users' use of the phrase "good person" speaks to how recognized social and symbolic boundaries do not have to negatively affect people's judgments of others. When participants such as Don, a member of LCMS, and a Truth-principle user said, "Well, you can be good and not a Christian, but that's only because God speaks to all of us . . .," he clearly understands the difference between his own beliefs and others, but he extends God's influence, and therefore in his mind, morality, to everyone. Similarly, Brittany, a Reform Jew, said of Islam and Christianity, "We all believe in the same

God, and there's no reason we can't pray together." Both see differences of various sorts but do not necessarily create firm hierarchies. One neutralizes other differences by focusing on a similar theology, while the other highlights a common moral base, but in either case they are more or less open to the possibility that others can be good. This point is also illustrated by participants who used the Tact principle when they distinguished being a "good person" from what one believes. For instance, Jeffery, a member of LCMS, said, "You can be a good person and still believe the wrong thing." Similarly, LCMS member Stacey said that "people from other religions do good to other people." Despite the claims of their religions to some important (relatively) exclusive truth about God, being "good" is seemingly more important for their views of others than being "right." For these Tact-using participants, the recognized theological differences do not translate into important differences in terms of establishing boundaries. In other words, difference does not necessitate hierarchy. Of equal importance is the latent character of the distinctions that *did* matter for creating moralized hierarchies. The use of terms such as a "good person," defined negatively for Tact users and positively for Tolerance users, means that there are also people who are not "good." However, who is good or bad is not explicitly based upon the logic of acknowledged social boundaries.

This perspective is supported by Warde (2011) and (Wilk 1997) who demonstrate that cultural differences in consumption do not necessarily translate into strong dislikes. They find that "people may dislike items on purely aesthetic and perhaps autobiographical grounds without any necessary consequence for the

marking of social boundaries” (2011:345). Similarly, people might see difference—without even dislike—between themselves and others without necessarily holding that they are superior or necessarily establishing social boundaries. Perceived differences in beliefs *can* be important, but not necessarily so.¹ This is not to say that these cannot be moralized or that participants may have moralized other distinctions if those were brought up; only that for these participants, the difference that they spoke about was not moralized.

Lamont (1994; 1996; 2000, 2002), Vasquez and Wetzel (2009), Wilkins (2008), and other scholars overlook meaningful but nonhierarchical distinctions in part because their methods operationalize the assumption that distinction is primarily a tool for maintaining and sustaining social hierarchies. I have found reason to question this assumption by using a method which allows participants to make the kinds of distinctions they want to make in the language they choose to use. Rather than superior and inferior, participants can discuss tolerance and intolerance, correctness and incorrectness, tact and tactlessness, being on the “right” side of an issue, and possibly many other ways of relating to others—and any one of these may or may not be a sources of hierarchy.

1. Furthermore, as Wilk (1997) demonstrates, we must consider the possibility that for some groups, dislikes matter more than likes. This is to say that groups as wholes can form their identities mostly negatively or mostly positively. While I did not find any particular patterns for particular groups having on average more far versus close groups (or vice versa), there were some participants who mostly had far or close groups to define themselves. These patterns of identification demonstrate the importance for not assuming that acknowledged difference or similarities to others defines an individual or group.

On Tolerance, Liberalism and Omnivores

The Tact relational principle is most similar to what political theory names liberalism. It is, in the Rawlsian tradition, not a position concerning how people should behave with various metaphysical implications, but simply a proposition for creating a just society where different people can coexist (Rawls 1974). The chief virtue of justice is the ability for people of different perspectives to effectively treat each other equally. Tolerance is simply the ability of a diverse group of people to not kill, argue, or otherwise harm people who are different from themselves.

While some of my participants used the term “tolerance” in this way, this was not how people who used the Tolerance relational principle understood the term. When they used the word “tolerance” or “intolerance,” they mean a positive sense of reaching out to others and accepting the fallibility of one’s ideology. The Tolerance principle is not relativism because it does not treat all positions as equal: Tolerance users rejected those who disagreed with them and their relatively exclusive interactional norms and epistemic beliefs. They are, to use the phrase from the interviews once more, “intolerant of intolerance.” This understanding of tolerance goes beyond Rawls (1973) and Popper’s (1971) injunction for a tolerance society to protect itself. These Tolerance users have a positive definition of what they and others should be; they do not limit themselves to protecting freedom. They believe that people have the obligation to understand and reach out to others.²

2. The extent to which these participants actually reached out to others is uncertain, though the rhetoric in this instance is more important than the practice.

This finding is perhaps unsurprising given that Tolerance, a relational principle very similar to Peterson and others' concept of the *omnivore*, shares the omnivorous tendency to use acceptance as a means of exclusion (Peterson and Kern 1996; Warde, Martin, and Olsen 1999; Ollivier 2008; Wright 2011). Cultural omnivores use their acceptance of forms of highbrow and lowbrow media, art, and entertainment as a way to distinguish themselves from less-accepting others, both "snobs" and lowbrow consumers. Similarly, Tolerance users make their acceptance and desire to work with people of different beliefs a mark of distinction which sets them apart—and perhaps above—those who have seemingly more exclusive beliefs. Like omnivores, Tolerance users are generally open to difference, but like heavy metal, rap, and country, there are types of belief that have elements which are exclusive and are therefore disliked such as fundamentalism, orthodoxy, and "intolerant" groups (Bryson 1996). Omnivores reinforce differences among classes because "omnivores would not exist if there were no boundaries to be crossed between high and low, commercial and authentic, global and local cultures" (Ollivier 2008:144). Thus, by their very act of being and enacting their beliefs, they sustain symbolic and social boundaries. Tolerance users potentially help recreate religious boundaries by identifying those who are intolerant as well as even articulating the differences among religious groups. Even if boundaries between religions are broken, they isolate those without the time or money to go beyond their own churches (Wuthnow 2005).

Some scholars have argued that the failure and danger of liberalism is relativism or creation of atomized individuals with no sense of the common good (Sandel 1998; MacIntyre 1984). Yet it appears that to the extent that liberalism is represented by the Tolerance relational principle, this is not correct. The danger appears not to be a lack of standards beyond the individualism; rather, the issue appears to be that the Tolerance principle obfuscates the boundaries that it *does* create behind good intentions.

The extent to which omnivorousness is correlated with people who use the Tolerance principle is uncertain, though there is some evidence that omnivores tend to be more accepting of other beliefs in general, possibly classifying them as very particular liberal Truth users or Tolerance users (Warde, Wright, and Gayo-Cal 2008). It is a separate research project to discern the extent to which the exclusive character of omnivorousness mirrors the Tolerance relational principle, though it is possible that the structure and function of relational principles implicitly excludes some groups along social boundaries. For instance, a Tolerance user might have a collection of token or boutique friends from other belief systems but might otherwise limit connection or communication with religious others. Or it is possible that even though someone who uses the Truth relational principle has a low level of moralization for the Hindus at the periphery of his map, he would avoid them, deny them rights, and never allow his daughter to marry one. Despite the lack of complete information, the connections between the Tolerance relational principle and

omnivorousness may elucidate differences, correlations, and behavioral outcomes among consumptive standards, relational principles, and ideological beliefs.

On the Miscellanea

There could have been two additional relational principles for this dissertation, but because of their infrequency and qualitatively minor impact on maps, I did not include them as major points of discussion. In this dissertation, I looked at the level of moralization for each relational principle, the key issue being that difference does not equate being morally suspect. However, some participants discussed groups both at the farthest outskirts of their map and small aspects of groups in the middle that they considered to be “evil” like Satanists or Nazis or good like Buddhists. These groups were defined differently from any other group because they were not placed in terms of truth/false, tactful/tactless, tolerant/intolerant, or pass/fail. Rather, they were understood in terms of moral/immoral. The various reasons for what made a group immoral were radically different from one participant to the next. A group could be considered immoral because they “worshiped evil,” as Malinda, a Missouri Synod Truth user, said, or as other participants argued immoral groups could “put ideals above human life,” were child molesters, are “slaves to themselves,” or as Omar, quoted in the chapter on the Tolerance principle, said,

I think, evil to me, people use their power to take . . . good and evil is a continuum, how much you give, how much you take from others. And that’s kind of this balance. What I see from the Nazis and the Italian fascists, they took. They had a sense for building factories . . . but they really took. They stole. They had governments that stole people’s possessions and their lives. That’s as far away from me as, I hope that is as far away from me as anybody else.

Omar uses a term “evil” which was unusual in the interviews because it does not refer to any outside principles. For Omar, what defines evil is taking rather than giving to others. Taking lives, taking resources, and taking opportunities are ingredients for evil. This comments reflect an orientation that is not focused on tolerance or intolerance, but of moral or immoral behavior in and of itself. A majority of Omar’s remarks were firmly oriented toward the Tolerance relational principle, though the one above stands out as demonstrating the presence of additional relational principles that, for one reason or another, were not the basis of the whole or even the majority of most maps.

Moral relational principles were not limited to the outer limits of the participants’ maps. On occasion, participants used them to define the positive characteristics of groups such as Buddhists or Mainline Protestants, saying, “They’re all following a path of, I don’t know, to do good. To do good, enlightened, I guess in this sense. So basically, to assist your fellow man. Your community as a whole. And to do well. To better it. In any way possible.” To benefit one’s community is taken as a foundational good, something worthy of attainment without reference to other relational principles.

In both the positive and the negative cases, participants used the moral principle to define groups as a small segment of their maps but did not define their maps as a whole. The participants were not amoral, but most moral statements are bound together with other relational principles. The varying levels of moralization is a testimony to possibility for the Truth, Tolerance, Test, and Tact relational principles to

define what good and bad are for participants. However, for a few participants, there were groups so heinous that they went beyond the other relational principles' ability to encapsulate.

A possible explanation for the inability of the principles I found to explain heinous or immoral groups is that these participants are articulating one of the five foundations of morality that Haidt and Graham (2007) highlight in their work on the social psychology of morality. Haidt and Graham argue that people base their moral evaluations of others on one or more of five principles: not harming, fairness, in-group preference, respect for authority, and sacredness/purity. It is possible that the relational principles I discovered map on to these moral foundations, but one foundation is poorly represented for some reason. Another possibility is that relational principles are independent ways that people articulate their thoughts on the world, but they do not fully cover people's thoughts about others, leaving moralistic language to fill in the gap on the outer limits of their map.

Regarding the first option, I am uncertain to what extent the other relational principles correspond to Haidt and Graham's model of morality. Truth could fit with sacredness or in-group allegiance, Test with any of them, Tolerance with fairness or not harming others, but my analyses in trying to find correlations between the use of a principle and surveys on which bases of morality the participants prefer were not fruitful. Additionally, the Tact principle seems in some ways to defy their categorization scheme because of its focus on politeness.

The second option implies that relational principles are either explanations for deeper feelings or are limited rationalizations which can only explain so much of the participants' views of others. This perspective would be in line with Swidler's (1986, 2003) model of culture as a facilitator and tool rather than cause of action. The places where "evil" groups are located on maps are not indicators of an additional relational principle, but were the post hoc rationalizations used to explain the feelings of revulsion felt toward some groups. It is possible that in using the frame I have applied throughout this dissertation to understand the moralized group, I am reproducing an error in understanding the fundamental causes of human behavior—adding additional layers of abstraction to basic human drives. However, I believe that there is ample evidence to support that our beliefs at times and places have causal efficacy for how we live our lives and our opinions of others (Lizardo 2006; Brown-Saracino 2010; Lizardo and Strand 2010). Additionally, I believe it is important to take people's reasoning seriously rather than treating it as some epiphenomena or post hoc rationalization because otherwise we are left with a crude form of rational choice or psychodynamic model of human behavior. These models ignore how subtle distinctions can be of grave importance to our evaluations of other people and how these differences can translate into behavior toward others (Vaisey 2009, 2010). Finally, I believe that one of the contributions of this dissertation is that it shows how these principles matter for how participants categorize the world around them. If we take seriously people's categories, then we must take seriously the moral and cultural impetus behind them. Sociologists would not dismiss

the boundary between black and white in contemporary America for understanding everyday interaction, nor should we ignore the boundary and consequences of boundaries based on Truth, Tolerance, Tact, and Test. Boundaries matter, and the principles that create them matter for our understanding of the world.

The second relational principle that did not make it into the final categories but still had some presence on participants' maps was familiarity and cultural similarity. Especially for participants from a secular background, their experiences as children and young adults left some of them with a sense of kinship with their former religions. This relational principle's influence was limited to only moving a group on a map somewhat closer than it would have been under the dominant relational principle. For instance, the two most frequently familiar groups, Catholics and Jews, were often placed closer than groups of similar tolerance, ideology, or stance on an issue due to the participants' previous affiliation with them:

Tammy: I guess the closest of the inner-most arcs would be Roman Catholic, I have been back to Roman Catholic churches on occasion over the year, mainly for weddings or funerals, and there's a certain comfort to the liturgy I guess because its drummed into you from the time you're very small, there's a certain comfort to it and its always been a very spiritual experience for me, and I guess I maybe I would still be a Catholic if I could have just like sat in church and experienced the mass and kind of been left alone but you have to hear the homily . . .

Eddie: Well, I grew up in a Reform household, so when I put Judaism where I do, I guess, it has something to do with growing up with it. I mean, Judaism can be so exclusive and tribalistic, but I grew up with it and that's something.

Brittany: I put [atheists there], well many of my friends who were or are Jewish don't believe but it doesn't matter if you believe: you're Jewish, and community works just as well.

In each instance, it is apparent that the participants would otherwise locate the various groups farther away from the center if they did not feel this sense of familiarity with the group. However, familiarity and cultural similarity never were the dominant relational principle, nor did they ever serve as anything other than a slight “bump” toward the center of the map. It is possible that I have underestimated this relational principle’s impact on participants’ maps because it is impossible to be certain of exactly where a group would be; these groups very well might have been placed on the extreme periphery of the map save for the feeling of familiarity. Further, familiarity might lead participants to systematically ignore features that would distance the group even farther (see chapter 7 on Tact for more on the subject), thereby leaving groups that would otherwise be distant much closer than under normal circumstances. In either case, the relational principle does not meet my criteria for inclusion in that it only affects small regions of a few maps, never serves as the dominant relational principle, and only moves groups in one direction (closer).

Ultimately, there *could* be significantly more relational principles, each with a special set of groups, distancing mechanisms, patterns of locating groups, and affinities with political, religious, cultural, and economic ideas. The four relational principles I found through the course of my research appear to be the dominant principles for the groups I studied, but this by no means indicates that there cannot be additional, equally significant, relational principles. The extraordinary economic, educational, racial, and regional homogeneity that I cited in the methods chapter is ex-

tremely useful for comparing religions and religions to secular groups, but it also may explain why I found so few relational principles.

On Culture Wars

This dissertation shows that the “culture wars” perspective (Hunter 1992, 2009) is lacking because while some Test issues divide people, they do not make up the majority of how people view others. In general, when participants thought of others, they were not focused on issues; rather, they focused on particular ideals or (in)actions which categorize the groups around them. Furthermore, there are not two congealed and mutually exclusive sides. Within the Truth category are secular and religious people, liberal and conservative, and each are significantly different in terms of how they understand truth to be gained/revealed and what constitutes truth, but they form many different ways of viewing the world and are a minority of the participants in this study. Most people were focused on other issues such as not interfering in other people’s lives or being tolerant, or on a single issue which may or may not align along the culture wars lines.

Most importantly though, the populations on the peripheral parts of maps were not supplied from the stock anticipated by the culture wars hypothesis. Conservative religious people’s sense of difference was focused on people they considered tactless (including coreligionists) or marginal religious groups, and while some secular people strongly identified against fundamentalists, they often included atheists at the far periphery. More importantly though was the *spectrum* that participants drew in between the two extremes. Few participants had purely bipolar maps,

and many did not let a single relational principle decide their entire map. At least for the people in this research, there was substantially more ideological diversity and complexity than the culture wars hypothesis would indicate, even if they were fairly economically, racially, and educationally homogenous. The number of different groups that participants listed (over 250, more than half of which were uniquely defined), plus the variety of ways of organizing those groups, provides ample evidence that if there is a culture war, it might more aptly be described as roughly a dozen culture skirmishes.

It is possible that secular truth participants would agree with the religious tolerance participants on certain issues and that there are potential coalitions (Tact and Truth on some political matters) which our political structure tends to emphasize (Williams 1997). However, what relational principles show is the multiple avenues of rhetoric that might possibly break these collations as well as help us understand some of the complexities of the political landscape we live in.

On Morality, Atheism, and Society

Before closing, I believe it is important to note an issue of mostly political but of some sociological importance. As Zuckerman (2008, 2009) and others have noted, there is a heated debate about the ethical and moral implications of atheism. A wide variety of powerful, rich, and respected commentators have condemned atheists and secularists as amoral, misguided, and ultimately the cause of some of the worst disasters in human history (e.g., the Holocaust, Stalin's genocides, Pol Pot's brutal regime, and the French Reign of Terror) (Jacobs 2011; Benedict XVI 2011; Boteach

2011). Atheism has also been blamed by public figures both left and right for destroying everything from the economy of America to the fall of the British empire, leaving many Western nations devoid of spirit or the will to live.

Scholars of secularism and secularity have demonstrated that these claims are empirically baseless, theoretically unfruitful, and even morally suspect. So it is unnecessary to address each of the critiques (Hunsberger and Altemeyer 2006; Zuckerman 2008, 2009; Beit-Hallahmi 2010). However, this dissertation does contribute to this discussion in that it shows how both religious and secular people, Jewish and Christian, apply moral frameworks to understand the world around them. Claims that atheists are immoral, anomic, and relativistic are clearly inaccurate as even the most ardent users of the Tolerance relational principle had firmly grounded evaluations of others. Some groups were “closer” and others “farther,” even if some Tolerance users hesitated to use words like “good” and “bad” to describe groups (though they are more open to using the term to describe individuals).

Refusing to use moralistic language does not mean one does not have standards of evaluation. It reflects a conservative and possibly religio-centric (not theocentric) bias in reasoning to assume that one must think in terms of good and bad to have nonegoistic evaluations of others. This research shows, unequivocally, that secular participants made evaluations of others based on standards that they considered to be correct and that were not based around hedonic maximization. Even the secular participants who considered themselves objectivists still thought of others in terms beyond “enlightened self-interest.” In other words, secular people make

evaluations of others just like other groups—on the basis of their belief, the things they find meaningful, and the relational principles they use to organize their beliefs about others. Furthermore, these beliefs seem to effectively provide their lives with meaning and guidance.

The arguments against atheists rely on two false assumptions: first, that crass consumerism is the same thing as secularism, and second, that meaning can only come from transcendent sources—or, for the more cynical, meaning can only come from reified sources lest the awareness of the arbitrariness of meaning construction destroy our belief. The first assumption does not fit the data, as the participants were often broadly critical of consumption, materialism, and finding meaning in material goods. In fact, the secular participants were particularly focused on doing good deeds for others and improving the quality of life for themselves and even the nation. The second assumption relies on arguments stemming from Weber, Aquinas, Augustine, and other philosophers that argue for the need for a theodicy or a sense of transcendence for meaning to explain suffering and, more broadly, to provide for any meaning system (Weber 1958). However, the problem of suffering can be resolved by many meaning systems (which often play a role in creating the problem) without transcendence: people only have to invest meaning into it (Smith 1998). The end of life can be made meaningful by ascendancy to heaven and by believing that it makes life worth living or even is the “price for love” (Factor 2011).

This dissertation shows that morality is no different; any sufficiently coherent and robust meaning system that provides ways to evaluate others and oneself

will do. These meaning systems are in part comprised of relational principles. Tolerance, Truth, Tact, and Test are sites of meaning making or, to use Griswald's (2008) term, "cultural objects" that form the basis of evaluating others and hence morality. All these relational principles can be based on theological or secular foundations. Atheists can be moral by investing meaning in things, ideas, and people, just like anyone else. Nothing in atheism precludes morality. This is perhaps most evident not in grand statements about life and death, but in secular participants' evaluations of others. Truth, Tolerance, Tact, and Tests are important enough to them to discuss in great detail who is close and far in their own terms. These relational principles are statements about what the participants hold to be meaningful for defining themselves and the world around them; as such, they show that atheists and the religious alike have complex and rich moral landscapes.

Further Questions

This dissertation leaves many questions to be explored. What other relational principles are there? What is the quantitative relationship between relational principles and standard GSS measures of views of others? How do people within a congregation negotiate disagreements about relational principles? Each of these questions would require different methods and forms of analysis, though I believe that they are answerable without significant funding or grants.

Additionally, there are other more psychologically oriented questions that are worth pursuing. What correlations are there if a person uses group names like "Christianity" rather than referring to groups of individuals like "Christians"? I sus-

pect that one is more likely to see negative evaluations of group names as well as less familiarity on the beliefs of the group and actual interaction with others. More clearly, *ceteris paribus*, I expect “Christianity” to be further on average than “Christians” because the former reflects a lumping process that is likely to dehumanize. On the other hand, it is possible that discussing “Christianity” allows one to separate the ideals of the religion from the less-than-ideal members of that religion. In either case, it is an empirical question with interesting methodological consequences for survey research. If survey questions asking for opinions on Christians as opposed to Christianity yield different results, it might be useful for a survey analysis to be taken into consideration.

I am also interested in doing a more in-depth quantitative analysis of participants’ maps, but I have yet to find analysis software capable of performing statistical analysis of maps as maps where a single datum point exists in two dimensions. Existing methods reduce the datum point to one dimension (relationship to center), which means that data is lost with regard to the datum point’s absolute location on the map. I believe there are interesting patterns that exist which might be somehow related to relational principles, but without software and statistical methods for handling these kinds of data, I am without the tools to proceed with this analysis.

Additionally, an investigation of a smaller more interconnected area could potentially provide a wealth of valuable information on cognition and social order. In some small communities, the “out-groups” might easily be the church/synagogue/mosque down the street rather than a general “other.” By inter-

viewing a sufficient number of people and gathering sociometric data on the community ties, I can create a map of the town, both in terms of social networks and of ideomap networks, seeing where the nodes of attention, antipathy, and camaraderie are. When coupled with behavioral measures of civic engagement, charity, and church attendance, this would enable social scientists to get a more accurate understanding of the relationships between participants' social networks, cognitive mapping, and participation in town life.

Another stream of possible research involves the hyperrationality of all the relational principles. No one couched their discussions of the locations of groups in terms of emotions. They all had lists of rational, organized reasons for locating groups where they did, even if they had not given the issue much thought before being asked the question. It could be that when I interview new participants from a wider variety of economic and educational backgrounds, I will find that there is a greater variety of less cognitively oriented relational principles. Further, with additional study on tensions and conflicts within organizations, it might be possible to see if participants' style of evaluation (emotional, rational, systematic, idiosyncratic, etc.) comes into play with intracongregational disputes or acts as barriers to collaboration between various organizations. It is also possible that rationalized organizational principles serve as a kind of religious habitus which creates and reinforces racial, class, and religious boundaries along with other means of separation.³

3. I owe this insight to my friend and colleague Courtney A. Irby and religion working group at the McNamara Center for the Social Study of Religion.

Conclusions

American culture is an amalgam of different beliefs, practices, ideals, symbols, histories, objects, and narratives. This provides ample resources for people to articulate their views of others and define themselves. This dissertation touches upon one way that a small number of Americans both understand the ideological world around them and create a sense of who they are and what it means to be a good person. The participants located themselves and their beliefs in terms of the meaningful distinctions in their lives. The Tolerance principle provided some of them with a sense of the world where understanding, mutual cooperation, and awareness of epistemic limits form the basis of categorizing others. The Truth relational principle highlighted the centrality of beliefs for many people, as well as how those beliefs may or may not carry moral weight in evaluating themselves and other people. Tact users brought attention to the importance of a sense of politeness for the judgment of other people and how even ardent believers can downplay the *acknowledged* importance of religion for interaction. Users of the Test relational principle demonstrated the wide variety of perspectives, ideas, and issues that can form the sometimes-idiosyncratic bases of locating other groups on their maps.

Together, relational principles inform how participants understand the world around them. When a participant draws a group far away from the center of her map, she is articulating a sense of difference between herself and others. These differences could influence whom she talks to, whom she relates to, and her general experience of the religio-political landscape that surrounds her. If a participant uses

a moralized understanding of relational principle, different is no longer just a category of identification, it is a means by which the participant positively or negatively evaluates others. Those who are wrong, intolerant, tactless, or fail a test are morally suspect or even a priori defined as belonging to a category that should not be. Evaluating others through the perspectives of Truth, Tolerance, Tact, and/or Test, people make choices for who they want to be and do not want to be, perhaps whom they will have and will not have as friends, or whom they will or will not hire or vote for (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006). Unfortunately, this research did not explore the full range of behavioral and interactional consequences for each relational principles, though it is a start. However, this dissertation indicates that for some, but not all people, “different” means *bad* in some way—and it is not difficult to extend that logic to social boundaries which separate people and foster antagonism.

Each relational principle contributes to our understanding of the function of religion and secularism in America, yet together, they also highlight the importance of focusing our research on the views and opinions of others in as broad a way as possible. Through allowing participants to define their own ideological space, this dissertation shows participants’ complex and occasionally nonhierarchical basis of understanding others. The moral landscapes that emerge are diverse and give us new insights into the terrain that sociologists have long studied, but seldom with a map.

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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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