

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

**INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISM**

A Thesis in

Sociology and Demography

by

Jesse Smith

© 2019 Jesse Smith

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

December 2019

The thesis of Jesse Smith was reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Valarie E. King

Professor of Sociology, Demography, and Human Development and Family Studies  
Director, Family Demography Training Program, Population Research Institute  
Thesis Adviser

Roger Finke

Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Religious Studies, and International Affairs

Gary J. Adler, Jr.

Assistant Professor of Sociology

Jennifer Van Hook

Roy C. Buck Professor of Sociology and Demography  
Director, Graduate Program in Sociology

\*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

## ABSTRACT

Substantial literature confirms a positive relationship between parents' and children's religiosity which extends into adulthood, indicating a process of religious transmission. This relationship is especially strong when parents belong to conservative religious denominations or hold more traditional beliefs. However, the millennial age cohort is both more ideologically liberal and less religious than previous generations. In part, these trends are related: millennials are more averse to religion because they associate it with ideological conservatism. This seems to suggest a paradox: studies of family transmission indicate that religiously conservative parents should see *high* rates of continuity between their own religious beliefs and practices and those of their millennial children, while studies of millennial cohort trends lead us to expect *low* continuity. In this study, using longitudinal data from the NSYR, I find evidence of high continuity. Specifically, there is a robust positive relationship between parental religious conservatism during adolescence and respondent religiosity, favorability toward religion, moral absolutism, and belief in transcendent authority in young adulthood. This suggests that for millennials, religiously conservative family background creates a buffer effect against larger cohort trends.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| List of Tables.....                           | v  |
| Acknowledgements.....                         | vi |
| Introduction.....                             | 1  |
| Background.....                               | 2  |
| Religious Transmission among Millennials..... | 5  |
| Data and Methods.....                         | 9  |
| Dependent Variables.....                      | 10 |
| Independent Variables.....                    | 13 |
| Results.....                                  | 18 |
| Discussion.....                               | 25 |
| Conclusion.....                               | 33 |
| References.....                               | 35 |

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.....16

Table 2. OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Religiosity, Wave 4.....19

Table 3. OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Favorability Toward Religion, Wave 4.....21

Table 4. OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Moral Absolutism, Wave 4.....22

Table 5. OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Transcendent Authority, Wave 4.....24

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by funding from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to the Population Research Institute at The Pennsylvania State University for Population Research Infrastructure (P2C HD041025) and Family Demography Training (T-32HD007514). The findings and conclusions do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding agency.

The National Study of Youth and Religion, <http://youthandreligion.nd.edu/>, whose data were made publicly available at the Association of Religion Data Archives, was generously funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., under the direction of Christian Smith, of the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame.

## INTRODUCTION

A substantial body of research confirms a high degree of continuity between the religious beliefs and attitudes of parents and those of their adult children, indicative of intergenerational transmission (Bengtson 2017; Myers 1996). The success of this transmission, however, varies according to a number of factors, including the beliefs or attitudes in question and features of the particular age cohorts involved (Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009; Acock and Bengtson 1978). For the millennial generation, transmission is complicated by such trends as declining religious attendance and sociocultural polarization (Voas and Chaves 2016; DellaPosta, Shi, and Macy 2017). Compared to their elders, millennials are both more liberal and less religious, and indeed, these trends reinforce one another as liberalism becomes increasingly associated with secularism (and conversely, conservatism with religion) (Hout and Fischer 2002, 2014; Campbell, Layman, Green, and Suyaktomo 2018; Putnam and Campbell 2010).

Are millennial cohort trends interfering with the process of transmission of religious beliefs and attitudes between generations? If so, which groups are most affected? On the one hand, it is possible that millennials from religious conservative backgrounds may experience a corrosive tension between the beliefs of their parents and those of their peers which undermines transmission, while those from religiously liberal families encounter no such barriers. On the other hand, it may be that religious conservative background contributes to robust belief structures, religiously-based family identities, or in-group tendencies which serve as protective factors against antithetical cohort trends of religious decline, thus strengthening transmission, while those from religiously liberal families are afforded no such protections. In the former case,

continuity of religious conservatism should be especially weak, while in the latter case, it should be strong.

In this study, I use data from two waves of the NSYR to examine the strength of transmission of several aspects of religious conservatism from parents to their millennial children. Specifically, I examine parent influence during adolescence on young adult outcomes for: (1) religiosity (2) favorability toward religion, (3) belief in moral absolutism, and (4) acceptance of God as an ultimate moral authority. I further explore the question of whether this process of transmission is mediated by various aspects of family and religious life during adolescence such as parent-child closeness, family prayer, or discussion of religious topics at home.

Results indicate a robust positive relationship between parental religious conservatism and all four outcomes, indicating transmission of religious conservative beliefs and behaviors. Effects are mediated partially by such family efforts as joint prayer, enrollment of youth in religious school, and discussion of religious topics in the home. However, parental religious conservatism maintains an independent and significant positive effect even with inclusion of all controls and mediators. These findings lend support to the theory that features of religious conservatism within families serve as buffers against cohort trends of religious decline.

## **BACKGROUND**

Past studies find significant continuity of religious belief and practice between parents and their adult children (Min, Silverstein, and Gruenewald 2017; Smith and Snell 2009). The



strength of this continuity depends in part on both supportive family dynamics and features of particular religious traditions.

Children who are closer to their parents are more likely to adopt similar religious beliefs (Bengtson 2017; Armet 2009). Family closeness has consistently been identified as a strong predictor of religious transmission, and is further supported when parents hold similar religious beliefs to one another (Hoge, Petrillo, and Smith 1982; Myers 1996). Parents who "practice what they preach" in the sense of maintaining consistency between their professed religious beliefs and observed behaviors also exert a stronger influence on the religious lives of their children (Bader, Desmond, Udry, Bearman, and Harris 2006). Religious transmission is strengthened by use of authoritative parenting styles and active family religious practice (Dudley and Wisbey 2000; Hayes and Pittelkow 1993). When parents clearly communicate their attitudes, and maintain them consistently across time, they exert a stronger influence on the future beliefs of their children (Acock and Bengtson 1980; Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009). Families who have not experienced divorce or excessive marital conflict see higher religious continuity (Bengtson 2017). Together, these findings indicate the importance of relational cohesiveness and religious consistency within the family in promoting transmission, in a basic process of socialization. Children who identify more strongly with their parents, and who share religious practice and belief with them, are more likely to keep the same traditions in adulthood.

Some religious traditions are more successful at maintaining intergenerational continuity than others. Conservative Protestants, Black Protestants, and Mormons report especially high rates of religious similarity to their parents, while Mainline Protestants and Catholics see greater

decline across generations (Bengtson 2017; Smith and Snell 2009). Youth from "high-tension" religious backgrounds (those with more strict religious beliefs and higher demands on members) are more likely to maintain the religious identity with which they were raised than those from "lower-tension" traditions (Armet 2009). Similarly, Baby Boomers raised in conservative traditions maintained higher religiosity than other groups during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when overall religious involvement began to decline (Sherkat 1998). Various studies of religious or attitude transmission find high parent-child similarity of conservative religious beliefs as compared to other items (Dudley and Dudley 1986; Bengtson, Copen, Putney, and Silverstein 2009; Min et al. 2017). Families with more traditional gender roles (i.e. male as the breadwinner and head of household) have also shown higher degrees of religious transmission (Myers 1996). In short, conservative forms of religion see relatively high rates of continuity across generations.

This successful transmission can be accounted for in various ways. It may, in part, simply be a function of higher religiosity among these conservative religious groups (Pew Research Center 2018). Bengtson (2017) suggests that religious traditions with a "quasi-ethnic" component which hold meanings for individuals across multiple life domains (transcendent belief, family history, peer group, community life, daily practice) foster greater, and longer-lasting, devotion in their adherents. Traditions that provide intentional family support also promote stronger religious transmission. The Latter-Day Saint practice of "family home evening," the provision by many Evangelical clergy of marital counseling, or congregational efforts to host family-friendly social events are examples of this (Edgell 2006). Some theorists suggest that "strict churches are strong" because they demand more from, and thus are able to offer more to, their adherents, in the form of social, spiritual, or material goods (Iannoccone

1994; Stark and Finke 2000). Subcultural identity theory explains the continuity of conservative religious belief in terms of the sense of identity engendered by demarcating clear in-group boundaries (Smith and Emerson 1998). These accounts are largely complementary, and offer plausible interpretation of the strength of conservative religion.

The phenomenon of family transmission should not be overstated, however. Past literature reveals an enduring tension between continuity and change across generations, and many scholars find the latter to comprise the larger part of the story. Although studies find a relationship between parent and child religious beliefs or other attitudes, the effect size is often modest and does not hold across items. For example, Glass, Bengtson, and Dunham (1986) find that in contrast to religious or political orientation, gender attitudes did *not* transmit strongly from parents to children, and indeed, children may have influenced their parents more than the other way around. Hoge et al. (1982) report that children are similar to parents in political views but depart from them in areas such as sexual attitudes, religious devotionism, or opinions on integration of schools. At the level of underlying attitudes, children are found to be both more tolerant of different identities and lifestyles and more individualistic than their parents (Smith and Snell 2009; Bengtson 1975). Parental influence on children is powerful but also challenged on many fronts.

### **RELIGIOUS TRANSMISSION AMONG MILLENNIALS**

Where intergenerational continuity is lacking, this may largely be explained by cohort effects. Children are shaped not only by their parents, but by the surrounding culture, opportunity structure, and historical context in which they form their belief systems (Vaisey and

Lizardo 2016). These influences may explain, for example, a departure from parental attitudes on issues of race or sexuality among children born after the Sexual Revolution and Civil Rights eras, greater acceptance of alternative sexual identities among those raised in a cultural milieu which values LGBT rights, or openness to socialist ideas for those with no memory of the Cold War (Putnam 2000; Hoge et al. 1982; YouGov 2017). The process of religious or attitude transmission is inevitably altered, and potentially undermined, by these cohort trends.

Millennials, in particular, have experienced a variety of cultural and social changes which may influence levels of religious similarity to their parents. Religiosity, by most measures, has declined over the past several decades, with fewer maintaining strong religious practice while more people openly identify as nonreligious ("none") (Hout and Fischer 2002, 2014). Social pressure to maintain religiosity may have thus declined or, in some settings, even reversed, reducing barriers to disaffiliation (Scheitle and Ecklund 2018). Increased levels of higher education result in wider exposure to alternative belief systems, greater personal autonomy, and wider geographic distance from parents among millennials, all of which may serve to reduce religious continuity over time (Schwadel 2017; Sherkat 1991). Ready access to modern technology and social media may have similar effects. The 21st century has seen an increasing association between religiosity and Republican politics (and conversely, between secularity and Democratic politics) which may serve to drive millennials, who are disproportionately liberal, away from the religion of past generations (Putnam and Campbell 2010; Hout and Fischer 2002, 2014; Campbell et al. 2018). More than their elders, millennials exhibit a devotion to a *laissez-faire* tolerance that, for many, precludes both religious exclusivism and proselytization, which have historically represented important components of many religious traditions (Smith and

Snell 2009). In short, intergenerational religious transmission may have fewer supports and more barriers for millennials today than in generations past.

Is continuity of religious conservatism especially vulnerable to these developments, or resistant against them? While more liberal or moderate brands of religious belief present less contrast to the views prevalent among millennials, conservative religion is characterized by moral absolutism, religious exclusivism, and adherence to traditional as opposed to modern social norms, all of which are antithetical to the larger cohort trends. It might be expected that religious conservatism would encounter greater resistance in this age group, and thus see greater decline. Alternatively, certain features of conservative religion might serve as protective factors *against* decline. A sense of moral absolutism and reliance on tradition may translate to resistance to modern social pressures. The association between religion and politics, which may drive liberal millennials to become more secular, may conversely prompt conservative millennials, fewer in number though they are, to become more religious (Hout and Fischer 2002, 2014). At the family level, religiously conservative parents may place a higher value on religious traditions within the family, and thus *social* pressure from the wider culture of the millennial cohort may be counteracted by *family* pressure which promotes religious continuity. Past literature, which finds on the one hand that millennials are more liberal and less religious than their elders, and on the other that conservative churches maintain the greatest vitality by most objective measures, could be interpreted as to lend support to either view (Putnam and Campbell 2010; Armet 2009; Iannaccone 1994).

## *Defining Religious Conservatism*

In the present study, I focus on the transmission of religiosity as well as clusters of attitudes which reflect religious conservatism. Past literature has varied widely in its conceptualization of this construct. Many studies, applying something like the church-sect distinction, employ a concept of religious conservatism (tension, orthodoxy, etc.) based on membership in Evangelical denominations, or use theological beliefs which are particular to those denominations such as biblical literalism (Stark and Finke 2000; Armet 2009; Greeley and Hout 2008; Jensen 1998; Davis and Robinson 1996). Other scholars, however, have found denomination or views of the Bible to be inadequate measures of religious ideology (Smith 2012; Perry 2015). In their seminal article on religious classification, Steensland et al. (2000) call for a greater use of subjective religious liberal-conservative scales in order to better capture heterogeneity within and between denominations.<sup>1</sup> Froese and Bader (2007) identify multiple dimensions of religious conservatism, such as religious exclusivity and intensity, or support for religious influence in the political sphere, which are not particular to specific religious traditions. Wuthnow (1988) and Hunter (1991) suggest that denominational differences have decreased in cultural importance as religious coalitions have increasingly become structured around transdenominational moral worldviews. I adopt this latter view here. Specifically, I conceptualize religious conservatism as a belief in moral absolutism, founded on a source of transcendent authority (God), expressed through religious tradition.

---

<sup>1</sup> This approach is supported empirically as well. In the analytic sample from the NSYR used for this study, nearly 20% of those parents labeled "Sectarian Protestants" according to Lehman and Sherkat's (2018) religious typology self-identify as religiously liberal, while over 25% of those classified "Liberal Protestant," identify as religiously conservative. Meanwhile, Catholic parents divide very nearly into thirds between self-identified liberals, moderates, and conservatives. The RELTRAD categories (Steensland et al. 2000) show similar results. This suggests denomination is an inadequate measure of religious conservatism, at least as understood subjectively by respondents.

Although other studies have examined the trends in religious belief, affiliation, and practice between different groups with cross-sectional data, little research to date has focused on the variation in religious transmission between religiously liberal and conservative families. In addition, recent studies have focused more on continuity of religious identification and less on that of beliefs and attitudes. In this study I address these gaps by using panel data to test the effects of parental religious conservatism on young adult religiosity and moral and religious attitudes. I proceed to estimate the mediating effects of family religious practice during adolescence on young adult religious and attitudinal outcomes.

## DATA AND METHODS

The data used for this study come from Waves 1 and 4 the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). This is a nationally-representative panel study following respondents from adolescence to adulthood, collecting information on religious and spiritual formation, moral attitudes, and peer networks and family relationships. At Wave 1 (2003), 3,370 youth (ages 13-17) and one resident parent figure, mother if available and father or other household adult if not, were surveyed using random-digit-dial telephone interviews.<sup>2</sup> The original youth respondents were re-interviewed at Wave 2 (2005) and Wave 3 (2007-2008). Wave 4 of data was collected in 2013, when most respondents were between 23 and 28 years old, using internet survey for some respondents and telephone interview for others. Due to attrition, the sample size for the final wave was 2,144. After excluding 749 cases where parents did not provide an interpretable

---

<sup>2</sup> In the majority of cases, the parent reporter was the respondent's biological mother ( $n=2,485$ ). Other reporters were listed biological father ( $n=519$ ), adoptive mother ( $n=15$ ), adoptive father ( $n=7$ ), stepmother ( $n=79$ ), stepfather ( $n=64$ ), grandmother ( $n=63$ ), grandfather ( $n=6$ ), foster mother ( $n=5$ ), foster father ( $n=1$ ), female "legal guardian" ( $n=67$ ), male "legal guardian" ( $n=24$ ), father's partner ( $n=1$ ), female "other" ( $n=6$ ), male "other" ( $n=1$ ), female "don't know" ( $n=7$ ), male "don't know" ( $n=8$ ), female "refused" ( $n=11$ ), and male "refused" ( $n=1$ ).

response for the item on religious conservatism, 61 cases from the Jewish oversample, and 32 cases with missing data on other variables, the final analytic sample size is 1,302.<sup>3</sup> (Rationale for excluded cases will be discussed in greater detail below.) See Smith and Denton (2003) for more information on the NSYR.

### ***Dependent Variables***

To measure young adult religiosity at Wave 4, I create a standardized scale developed from four different items regarding belief in God, frequency of worship service attendance, self-reported importance of religious faith in daily life, and frequency of personal prayer ( $\alpha=.87$ ). In the first item, respondents were asked simply, "Do you believe in God?" and offered three responses, coded as follows: (1) no, (2) unsure, and (3) yes. Frequency of worship service attendance is measured in seven categories, from "Never" to "More than once a week." To measure importance of faith, respondents were asked, "How important or unimportant is faith in shaping your daily life?" with five available responses ranging from "Not at all" to "Extremely important." Frequency of prayer is measured in seven categories, from "Never" to "Many times a day." These measures, identical to those used by Schwadel (2017), were selected as they are

---

<sup>3</sup> For the final analytic sample, parent reporters included biological mother ( $n=997$ ), biological father ( $n=206$ ), adoptive mother ( $n=3$ ), adoptive father ( $n=2$ ), stepmother ( $n=20$ ), stepfather ( $n=22$ ), grandmother ( $n=17$ ), grandfather ( $n=2$ ), female "legal guardian" ( $n=18$ ), male "legal guardian" ( $n=3$ ), female "other" ( $n=1$ ), female "don't know" ( $n=3$ ), male "don't know" ( $n=6$ ), and female "refused" ( $n=2$ ). To address the possibility that these differences in relationships between parent reporters and children might affect the statistical relationships observed between predictors and outcomes, I conducted additional analyses with a restricted sample including only families with biological mother or father reporters ( $n=1,203$ ). This resulted in minor changes in significance patterns (though none that would affect substantive conclusions drawn from results and elaborated upon in the discussion below). Specifically among key relationships, in models 3a and 3b below, the effect of parental importance of faith was reduced in significance from  $p<.05$  to  $p<.1$ . In model 4a, the effect of parental worship attendance loses significance. In model 4c, the effect of parental religious conservatism increases in significance from  $p<.01$  to  $p<.001$ . Among other covariates, in several models parental education and race are reduced in significance, while parent-child closeness and some family-religious life variables see higher significance for some outcomes. Results from these analyses are available upon request.



specific enough to capture distinct and important aspects of religiosity, and general enough to apply to a variety of different religious traditions.

Favorability toward religion is measured using a standardized scale developed from the inverse of three items indicating negative evaluation of religion ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Participants were asked to respond to the following statements: "Organized religion is usually a big turn-off for me," "Too many religious people in this country these days are negative, angry, and judgmental," and "Most mainstream religion is irrelevant to the needs and concerns of most people my age." Available responses for each item consisted of 5-category Likert scales, coded (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) don't know, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree. Because higher scores indicate *disagreement* with the statements, reflecting rejection of these views, this scale is used to measure favorable attitudes toward religion.

Moral absolutism is measured using a standardized scale developed from five items which assess attitudes about moral relativity ( $\alpha = .80$ ). Respondents were asked to indicate level of agreement with the following statements: 1) "Morals are relative, that there are no definite rights and wrongs for everybody," 2) "The world is always changing and we should adjust our views of what is morally right and wrong to reflect those changes," 3) "Moral standards should be seen as individualistic: what one person considers to be moral may be judged as immoral by another person," 4) "Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved because what is moral or immoral is up to the individual to decide," and 5) "Moral standards are simply personal rules that indicate how a person should behave, and should not be used when making

judgments of others."<sup>4</sup> For the first two items, responses consisted of 5-category Likert scales as described above, while the last three used 7-category Likert scales. As with attitude toward religion, items were coded so that higher scores indicate disagreement with the statements, and thus reflect a rejection of moral relativism, i.e. moral absolutism.

Finally, belief in transcendent authority is measured using a standardized scale drawn from three measures. The first two are 7-category Likert-scale items: 1) "Right and wrong should be based on God's law," and 2) "American children should be raised to believe in God". The third item is a dichotomous indicator of belief in God as a personal, involved being ( $\alpha = .76$ ).<sup>5</sup> Froese and Bader (2007) identify this latter item as a central component of religious conservatism. While the majority of respondents report *belief* in God, this scale reflects a belief in the *active moral authority* of God. Agreement with these statements indicates belief that a) God is personally invested in our actions, b) God's law can be known, presumably through religious teaching, and b) all Americans from childhood should be oriented to this law. Such

---

<sup>4</sup> Though I believe that all statements in this scale logically entail and advocate moral relativism, it can be argued that different items may reflect distinct moral beliefs. For example, 3-5 may more closely reflect individualism, or descriptive relativism, as opposed to the metaethical relativism that pertains most closely to my research question here (see Abend 2008). Precedent from past quantitative literature offers relatively little guidance on how to address this concern, as researchers seeking to measure moral relativism or absolutism are bound by limitations of available survey items, which are usually less comprehensive than those found in Wave 4 of the NSYR, and rely entirely on fewer measures, similar to items 1, 2 or 4 above (see Vaisey and Lizardo 2010; Baker 2005; Rigney and Kearn 1994). It is my perspective that the use of all 5 items increases the reliability of the scale, as indicated by the alpha coefficient. As a further check, however, I estimated additional models using the following alternative configurations of the moral absolutism measure: item 1 only; items 1 and 2; items 1-3; items 1, 2, and 4; items 1, 2, and 5; items 1-4; items 1-3 and 5; and items 1, 2, 4, and 5. These alternatives yielded substantively similar results for key relationships. The most important difference is that in the full model using moral absolutism as an outcome (3d below), the coefficient for parental religious conservatism was significant at the  $p < .05$  level when using only item 1 as an outcome, whereas for every other scale configuration, this coefficient was significant at  $p < .001$ .

<sup>5</sup> Item 2 in this scale is included as an indicator of perception of transcendent authority as normative, rather than subjective and personal, belief. Some may argue, however, that this item has more to do with beliefs about childrearing than perception of God. I therefore conducted additional analyses, using a transcendent authority scale without item 2. Results are substantively similar; however, the alpha coefficient is substantially lower ( $\alpha = .44$ ) when this item is removed.

belief is framed in these statements as normative rather than subjective, and indicates support for transcendent authority as a social foundation, a view reflecting religious conservatism.

### ***Independent Variables***

#### *Key predictors*

The first primary independent variable in this analysis is parental religious conservatism. At Wave 1, parents were asked, "When it comes to your religious beliefs, compared to other religious Americans, do you usually think of yourself as..." Available responses were (1) very liberal, (2) liberal, (3) moderate, (4) conservative, (5) very conservative, and (6) "Haven't thought much about this." The modal category for this item was (6), consisting of about 30% of parents of respondents from the Wave 4 sample ( $n=749$ ). Several reporting parents also responded "Don't know" ( $n=37$ ) or "Refused" ( $n=9$ ). Because religious conservatism is treated as a continuous predictor, and parents who responded (6) are not interpretable on a scale, these respondents were excluded from the analysis. This question was also not asked of parents who reported never attending religious services *and* who did not identify with any religious tradition ( $n=204$ ). This means the analytic sample in this study reflects only the section of the population whose parents report at least minimal religious practice or identification, and who see themselves as part of a religious liberal-to-conservative spectrum.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Additional analyses not shown here reveal those parents who provided response (6) to be less religious in terms of both worship attendance and strength of belief, less educated, to have lower incomes, to be less likely to be white, and to be more apolitical than those who responded between (1) and (5). This is consistent with research finding that while a large segment of Americans do not view themselves as part of an ideological spectrum, those who do are likely to belong to higher-SES groups (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008).

As additional key variables, I employ two measures of parent religiosity in this analysis. The first is frequency of parental worship service attendance, a 5-category item ranging from "Never" to "Once a week or more." The second is an item asking parents, "How important is your religious faith in guiding your own day-to-day living?" There are six available responses ranging from "Not at all important" to "Extremely important." Past research consistently finds higher parent religiosity predicts higher child religiosity. By including both of these items in the analysis with religious conservatism, I am able to identify the independent effect of each, and compare how different aspects of parent religiosity affect different aspects of young adult religious and moral attitudes.

#### *Family and religious variables*

I explore a variety of possible mediators between parental religious conservatism, religiosity, and respondent Wave 4 outcomes, which focus on family and religious life at Wave 1 as reported by youth. As parent closeness has consistently been found to promote religious transmission, I include a variable indicating the respondent's level of closeness to the reporting parent. This item has six categories ranging from "Not close at all" to "Extremely close." To measure family religious agreement, I include a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the respondent's resident parents practice the same religion. This measure was drawn from an item at Wave 1 in which parents were asked, "Does your spouse/partner share the same religious faith as yours, are they of a different religious faith, or are they not religious?" Available responses were "Same faith," "Something different" or "Not religious." Those who responded "Same faith" were coded "1," while all others were coded "0." As family structure has been found to influence religious transmission, I include a dichotomous variable indicating whether

the respondent's biological parents were married at Wave 1. In considering the various pathways in family life by which religious belief might be transmitted, I include additional dichotomous variables indicating whether or not the respondent attended a religious school in the current or most recent school year, whether the family says grace before meals, and whether they pray together *outside* of grace before meals or at religious services. I further include the following item: "How often, if ever, does your family talk about God, the Scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual things together?" Responses consist of six categories ranging from "Never" to "Every day."

A categorical variable of parental religious tradition, using a modified 6-category version of Lehman and Sherkat's (2018) religious typology, is included in the analysis to control for the effects of denomination on Wave 4 outcomes. The following categories are included in the analysis: Liberal Protestant, Moderate and Other Protestant, Sectarian Protestant and Baptist, Catholic, Mormon, and Other.

Although many of these items are conceptually closely related, and some correlations are moderately high (between .5 and .6), post-estimation tests reveal that the variance inflation factor for each mediating variable is below 2.5, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern (Allison 1998).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

| Measure                                  | Mean/Proportion | Std. Dev. | Range        |
|--|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Wave 4 outcomes                          |                 |           |              |
| Religiosity                              | .00             | 1         | -1.81 – 1.53 |
| Favorability toward religion             | .00             | 1         | -1.94 – 2.11 |
| Moral absolutism                         | .00             | 1         | -2.01 – 2.26 |
| Belief in transcendent authority         | .00             | 1         | -1.75 – 1.39 |
| Wave 1 predictors                        |                 |           |              |
| Parental worship attendance              | 3.56            | 1.83      | 0 – 5        |
| Parental importance of faith             | 5.18            | 1.14      | 1 – 6        |
| Parental religious conservatism          | 3.14            | 1.12      | 1 – 5        |
| Parent-child closeness                   | 5.01            | .93       | 1 – 6        |
| Parents married                          | .64             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Parents' same religion                   | .62             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Teen religious schooling                 | .10             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Family prays together                    | .46             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Family says grace before meals           | .57             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Frequency of family religious discussion | 3.46            | 1.72      | 1 – 6        |
| Wave 1 Parent religious tradition        |                 |           |              |
| Liberal Protestant                       | .06             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Moderate/Other Protestant                | .28             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Sectarian/Baptist                        | .31             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Catholic                                 | .24             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Latter-Day Saint (Mormon)                | .04             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Other/no religion                        | .07             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Parent education                         |                 |           |              |
| Less than high school                    | .02             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| High school                              | .12             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Some college                             | .32             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Bachelor's degree                        | .29             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Advanced degree                          | .25             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Wave 4 – respondent                      |                 |           |              |
| Female                                   | .55             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Age (W1)                                 | 15.50           | 1.48      | 13 – 18      |
| White                                    | .76             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Black                                    | .10             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Hispanic                                 | .08             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Other                                    | .06             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Bachelor's degree                        | .47             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Married                                  | .25             | -         | 0 – 1        |
| Number of children                       | .43             | .83       | 0 – 5        |

N=1,302

### *Demographic controls*

Several demographic controls are included as well. Background SES is measured as highest level of parental education at Wave 1 (in five categories from "less than high school" to "graduate degree"). Respondent controls include race (non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and Other), Wave 1 age, and Wave 4 attainment of a bachelor's degree. I also examine the effects of respondent marital status and number of children. As there is research to indicate these latter factors may have an independent effect on religiosity, I view them as rival explanations for Wave 4 outcomes (Mayrl and Uecker 2011; Wilson and Sherkat 1994; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995). See Table 1 for descriptive statistics for all variables.

As all outcomes are measured as continuous standardized scales generated from multiple items, analyses are conducted using multivariate ordinary least squares regression. For all outcomes, I present four separate models: a reduced model including only the three key parent religiosity predictors, a controlled model adding demographic controls, a mediated model with key predictors as well as items pertaining to W1 family religious life, and finally, a full model with all predictors included.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Wave 1 parent religious tradition is included in the mediated model due to the thematic similarity to other family and religious life variables. It has been suggested to me, however, that based on the principles of the elaboration model, parent religious tradition is better understood as a control variable as it temporally precedes the process of religious transmission modeled here, and may have an independent effect on both the key predictors and dependent variables. Additional analyses (available upon request) were therefore conducted with parental religious tradition moved from the c. (mediated) models to the b. (controlled) models. This results in minor changes in significance patterns in the b. and c. models but does not affect substantive results or conclusions drawn.

## RESULTS

### *Religious Transmission*

Results for the association between parental religious items and respondent W4 religiosity are shown in Table 2. Model 1a shows that W1 parental worship attendance ( $b=.06$ ,  $p<.001$ ), importance of faith ( $b=.20$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and self-reported religious conservatism ( $b=.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ) each have an independent and highly significant effect, though this is smaller for worship attendance than the other predictors. Model 1b shows that these key relationships are robust with the addition of controls. In addition, higher parental education is associated with lower levels of religiosity, while women ( $b=.23$ ,  $p<.001$ ), blacks compared to whites ( $b=.41$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and those who are married or have children ( $b=.38$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $b=.10$ ,  $p<.01$ ) are significantly more religious.

In the mediated Model 1c, the effect of parental worship attendance is reduced to non-significance ( $b=.01$ , n.s.) with the inclusion of measures of family religious life, while the effects of parental importance of faith ( $b=.11$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and religious conservatism ( $b=.09$ ,  $p<.001$ ) appear to be partially mediated, but remain highly significant. Model 1d shows that when both demographic controls and family religious variables are included, the strength of the key relationships look similar to Model 1c. Other significant predictors of W4 religiosity in the full model are W1 parent-child closeness ( $b=.06$ ,  $p<.05$ ), teen religious schooling ( $b=.20$ ,  $p<.01$ ), joint family prayer ( $b=.20$ ,  $p<.001$ ) as well as saying grace before meals ( $b=.12$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and discussion of religious matters in the home ( $b=.10$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Only children of Sectarian Protestants and Baptists stand out as highly religious compared to Moderate Protestants ( $b=.23$ ,



$p < .001$ ). The R-squared for the full model is .36, indicating strong predictive power for the included variables.

**Table 2: OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Religiosity, Wave 4**

| Predictor  | Model 1a     | Model 1b     | Model 1c     | Model 1d     |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <i>W1 Parental Religiosity</i>                   |              |              |              |              |
| Worship attendance                               | .06*** (.02) | .07*** (.02) | .01 (.02)    | .02 (.02)    |
| Importance of faith                              | .20*** (.03) | .16*** (.03) | .11*** (.02) | .10*** (.02) |
| Religious conservatism                           | .17*** (.03) | .17*** (.02) | .09*** (.02) | .10*** (.02) |
| <i>W1 Family/Religious Life</i>                  |              |              |              |              |
| Parent-child closeness                           |              |              | .07* (.03)   | .06* (.03)   |
| Parents married                                  |              |              | -.05 (.05)   | .02 (.06)    |
| Parents – same religion                          |              |              | .07 (.05)    | .06 (.04)    |
| Teen religious schooling                         |              |              | .20* (.08)   | .20** (.08)  |
| Family prays together                            |              |              | .19*** (.05) | .20*** (.04) |
| Grace before meals                               |              |              | .11+ (.06)   | .12* (.06)   |
| Family religious discussion                      |              |              | .11*** (.02) | .10*** (.02) |
| <i>W1 Parent Religious Tradition<sup>a</sup></i> |              |              |              |              |
| Liberal Protestant                               |              |              | -.09 (.10)   | -.08 (.10)   |
| Sectarians and Baptists                          |              |              | .33*** (.06) | .23*** (.06) |
| Catholic   |              |              | -.02 (.06)   | -.03 (.06)   |
| Latter-Day Saint (Mormon)                        |              |              | .20+ (.11)   | .13 (.11)    |
| Other/None                                       |              |              | -.05 (.09)   | .00 (.02)    |
| <i>W1 Parent Education<sup>b</sup></i>           |              |              |              |              |
| Less than high school                            |              | .20 (.17)    |              | .26 (.16)    |
| Some college                                     |              | -.17** (.06) |              | -.12+ (.06)  |
| Bachelor's degree                                |              | -.22** (.07) |              | -.15* (.07)  |
| Advanced degree                                  |              | -.24** (.08) |              | -.20* (.08)  |
| <i>W4 Respondent Characteristics</i>             |              |              |              |              |
| Female   |              | .23*** (.05) |              | .22*** (.05) |
| Age  |              | -.02 (.02)   |              | .01 (.02)    |
| Bachelor's degree                                |              | .11+ (.06)   |              | .15* (.06)   |
| Black  |              | .41*** (.06) |              | .25*** (.07) |
| Hispanic   |              | .06 (.08)    |              | .08 (.08)    |
| Other race                                       |              | -.07 (.12)   |              | -.06 (.12)   |
| Married  |              | .38*** (.05) |              | .29*** (.05) |
| Number of children                               |              | .10** (.03)  |              | .08** (.03)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                   | .18          | .28          | .30          | .36          |

+ $p < .10$  \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

$N = 1,302$

Standard error in parentheses

<sup>a</sup>Reference: Moderate/Other Protestant

<sup>b</sup>Reference: High school

### *Religious and Moral Attitudes*

Results for the relationship between predictors and respondent W4 favorability toward religion are displayed in Table 3. Among key predictors, parental religious conservatism has the strongest and most significant effect ( $b=.11, p<.001$ ), while those for worship attendance ( $b=.04, p<.05$ ) and importance of faith ( $b=.08, p<.01$ ) are more modest. In the mediated Model 2c, with the inclusion of other family and religious items, parental worship attendance is no longer significant ( $b=.02, n.s.$ ) and importance of faith is only marginally so ( $b=.05, p<.1$ ), while the effect of parental religious conservatism is reduced in both strength and statistical significance ( $b=.06, p<.05$ ). In the full model, only parental religious conservatism maintains a significant independent effect ( $b=.07, p<.05$ ). Of the potential mediators, only parent-child closeness is significant, ( $b=.07, p<.05$ ), although respondents from Sectarian/Baptist ( $b=.20, p<.01$ ) or Mormon ( $b=.54, p<.001$ ) backgrounds stand out as especially favorable toward religion. This difference is especially striking for those with Mormon parents, given that this is a relatively small group. As with religiosity, women ( $b=.14, p<.01$ ), respondents with Bachelor's degrees ( $b=.18, p<.01$ ), and those who are married ( $b=.21, p<.001$ ) have significantly more positive attitudes about religion, as do African-Americans compared to whites ( $b=.27, p<.01$ ). Higher parental education is associated with less favorable attitudes toward religion. The R-squared value of the full model is .14, indicating fairly modest predictive power for this outcome.

Model 3a in Table 4 shows a strong, highly significant positive relationship between both parental worship attendance ( $b=.07, p<.001$ ) and religious conservatism ( $b=.17, p<.001$ ) on W4 respondent moral absolutism, and a more modest effect of importance of faith ( $b=.06, p<.05$ ). Inclusion of demographic controls in Model 3b does not substantially change these patterns.

**Table 3: OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Favorability Toward Religion, Wave 4**

| Predictor  | Model 2a     | Model 2b     | Model 2c     | Model 2d     |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <i>W1 Parental Religiosity</i>                   |              |              |              |              |
| Worship attendance                               | .04* (.02)   | .05** (.02)  | .02 (.02)    | .03 (.02)    |
| Importance of faith                              | .08** (.03)  | .05* (.03)   | .05+ (.03)   | .04 (.03)    |
| Religious conservatism                           | .11*** (.03) | .11*** (.03) | .06* (.03)   | .07* (.03)   |
| <i>W1 Family/Religious Life</i>                  |              |              |              |              |
| Parent-child closeness                           |              |              | .08* (.03)   | .07* (.03)   |
| Parents married                                  |              |              | -.02 (.08)   | .03 (.08)    |
| Parents – same religion                          |              |              | .09 (.07)    | .09 (.06)    |
| Teen religious schooling                         |              |              | .12 (.11)    | .11 (.10)    |
| Family prays together                            |              |              | .08 (.05)    | .09 (.05)    |
| Grace before meals                               |              |              | .04 (.08)    | .05 (.07)    |
| Family religious discussion                      |              |              | .02 (.02)    | .01 (.03)    |
| <i>W1 Parent Religious Tradition<sup>a</sup></i> |              |              |              |              |
| Liberal Protestant                               |              |              | -.01 (.12)   | -.01 (.12)   |
| Sectarians and Baptists                          |              |              | .27*** (.07) | .20** (.07)  |
| Catholic   |              |              | .02 (.07)    | .00 (.08)    |
| Latter-Day Saint (Mormon)                        |              |              | .60*** (.11) | .54*** (.12) |
| Other/None                                       |              |              | -.02* (.10)  | .03 (.11)    |
| <i>W1 Parent Education<sup>b</sup></i>           |              |              |              |              |
| Less than high school                            |              | .15 (.16)    |              | .14 (.16)    |
| Some college                                     |              | -.12+ (.07)  |              | -.12* (.07)  |
| Bachelor's degree                                |              | -.20** (.07) |              | -.18** (.07) |
| Advanced degree                                  |              | -.22* (.09)  |              | -.21* (.08)  |
| <i>W4 Respondent Characteristics</i>             |              |              |              |              |
| Female   |              | .14** (.05)  |              | .14** (.05)  |
| Age  |              | .02 (.03)    |              | .03 (.03)    |
| Bachelor's degree                                |              | .17* (.07)   |              | .18** (.07)  |
| Black  |              | .31*** (.07) |              | .27** (.08)  |
| Hispanic   |              | .12 (.08)    |              | .15+ (.08)   |
| Other race                                       |              | -.11 (.11)   |              | -.11 (.11)   |
| Married  |              | .27*** (.05) |              | .21*** (.05) |
| Number of children                               |              | .05 (.04)    |              | .04 (.04)    |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b>                             | <b>.06</b>   | <b>.11</b>   | <b>.10</b>   | <b>.14</b>   |

+*p*<.10 \**p*<.05 \*\**p*<.01 \*\*\**p*<.001

*N*=1,302

Standard error in parentheses

<sup>a</sup>Reference: Moderate/Other Protestant

<sup>b</sup>Reference: High school

However, when including mediators in Model 3c, the effects of both worship attendance ( $b=.05$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and religious conservatism ( $b=.12$ ,  $p<.001$ ) decrease in strength, while the effect of importance of faith is mediated entirely ( $b=.02$ , n.s.). Model 3d shows that of the key predictors, only parental religious conservatism remains significant when holding all other variables constant ( $b=.10$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Among mediating variables, W1 adolescent religious schooling

**Table 4: OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Moral Absolutism, Wave 4**

| Predictor  | Model 3a     | Model 3b     | Model 3c     | Model 3d     |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <i>W1 Parental Religiosity</i>                   |              |              |              |              |
| Worship attendance                               | .07*** (.02) | .06** (.02)  | .05* (.02)   | .03 (.02)    |
| Importance of faith                              | .06* (.03)   | .07* (.03)   | .02 (.03)    | .03 (.03)    |
| Religious conservatism                           | .17*** (.02) | .15*** (.02) | .12*** (.02) | .10*** (.02) |
| <i>W1 Family/Religious Life</i>                  |              |              |              |              |
| Parent-child closeness                           |              |              | .03 (.02)    | .02 (.02)    |
| Parents married                                  |              |              | .21** (.06)  | .09 (.06)    |
| Parents – same religion                          |              |              | -.11* (.05)  | -.13* (.05)  |
| Teen religious schooling                         |              |              | .37*** (.09) | .30*** (.09) |
| Family prays together                            |              |              | .09 (.06)    | .12* (.06)   |
| Grace before meals                               |              |              | .12* (.05)   | .14* (.06)   |
| Family religious discussion                      |              |              | .03+ (.02)   | .04 (.02)    |
| <i>W1 Parent Religious Tradition<sup>a</sup></i> |              |              |              |              |
| Liberal Protestant                               |              |              | .02 (.09)    | -.02 (.09)   |
| Sectarians and Baptists                          |              |              | .15** (.05)  | .17** (.05)  |
| Catholic   |              |              | -.20** (.07) | -.37* (.07)  |
| Latter-Day Saint (Mormon)                        |              |              | .39* (.16)   | .31* (.14)   |
| Other/None                                       |              |              | -.02 (.09)   | -.04 (.10)   |
| <i>W1 Parent Education<sup>b</sup></i>           |              |              |              |              |
| Less than high school                            |              | .57** (.16)  |              | .63*** (.15) |
| Some college                                     |              | .02 (.09)    |              | .03 (.08)    |
| Bachelor's degree                                |              | .02 (.09)    |              | .04 (.09)    |
| Advanced degree                                  |              | .10 (.10)    |              | .10 (.11)    |
| <i>W4 Respondent Characteristics</i>             |              |              |              |              |
| Female   |              | .02 (.05)    |              | .02 (.05)    |
| Age  |              | -.01 (.02)   |              | .01 (.02)    |
| Bachelor's degree                                |              | .21*** (.06) |              | .24*** (.05) |
| Black  |              | -.17* (.08)  |              | -.30** (.08) |
| Hispanic   |              | -.29** (.08) |              | -.23* (.09)  |
| Other race                                       |              | -.20* (.09)  |              | -.20* (.09)  |
| Married  |              | .54*** (.06) |              | .46*** (.06) |
| Number of children                               |              | -.05 (.03)   |              | -.06+ (.03)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                   | .11          | .19          | .16          | .24          |

+ $p < .10$  \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

$N = 1,302$

Standard error in parentheses

<sup>a</sup> Reference: Moderate/Other Protestant

<sup>b</sup> Reference: High school

( $b = .30, p < .01$ ), joint family prayer ( $b = .12, p < .05$ ), and grace before meals ( $b = .14, p < .05$ ) are each significant predictors of respondent moral absolutism. Unexpectedly, those whose parents share the same faith show significantly *lower* moral absolutism ( $b = -.13, p < .05$ ). Educational effects are inconsistent, as parents with *lower* levels of education (less than high school compared to high school,  $b = .63, p < .001$ ) have children with higher levels of moral absolutism,

while for respondents, *higher* education in the form of a Bachelor's degree predicts a higher score for this same outcome ( $b=.24, p<.001$ ). Notably, the effect of married status on moral absolutism is even higher than that for overall religiosity ( $b=.46, p<.001$ ). This model has relatively strong predictive power as indicated by the R-squared value of .24.

Finally, results in Table 5 show the relationship between predictors and respondent W4 belief in transcendent authority. In Model 4a, parental importance of faith ( $b=.20, p<.001$ ) and religious conservatism ( $b=.16, p<.001$ ) are highly significantly associated with this outcome. The effect of parental worship attendance is more modest but still significant ( $b=.05, p<.01$ ). When demographic controls are included in Model 4b, the coefficient for parental worship attendance becomes highly significant ( $b=.07, p<.001$ ). Analyses not shown here indicate a suppression effect of race which was removed when this variable was included in the model. Specifically, those in the "other" race category have a higher rate of worship attendance than that for whites, but a significantly lower level of belief in transcendent authority. When including W1 family and religious variables in Models 4c and 4d, the effect of parental worship attendance is no longer significant. In the full model, the effects of religious conservatism ( $b=.09, p<.001$ ) and importance of faith ( $b=.10, p<.001$ ) are reduced by half compared to Model 4a. The strongest additional independent predictors of W4 belief in transcendent authority are history of religious schooling ( $b=.21, p<.01$ ), frequency of family religious discussion in the home at W1 ( $b=.08, p<.01$ ), being married at W4 ( $b=.32, p<.001$ ), and number of children ( $b=.09, p<.001$ ). Respondents with more educated parents have significantly lower levels for this outcome. Compared to Moderate Protestants, only children of Sectarians/Baptists stand out as having significantly higher levels of belief in transcendent authority ( $b=.20, p<.01$ ). The full model has

**Table 5: OLS Regression Coefficients for Standardized Transcendent Authority, Wave 4**

| Predictor  | Model 4a   |       | Model 4b   |       | Model 4c   |       | Model 4d   |       |
|--|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| <i>W1 Parental Religiosity</i>                   |            |       |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Worship attendance                               | .05**      | (.02) | .07***     | (.02) | .01        | (.02) | .02        | (.02) |
| Importance of faith                              | .20***     | (.03) | .16***     | (.03) | .12***     | (.02) | .10***     | (.02) |
| Religious conservatism                           | .16***     | (.03) | .15***     | (.02) | .08**      | (.03) | .09***     | (.02) |
| <i>W1 Family/Religious Life</i>                  |            |       |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Parent-child closeness                           |            |       |            |       | .06+       | (.03) | .05        | (.03) |
| Parents married                                  |            |       |            |       | -.04       | (.06) | .05        | (.06) |
| Parents – same religion                          |            |       |            |       | .09        | (.06) | .09        | (.06) |
| Teen religious schooling                         |            |       |            |       | .19*       | (.08) | .21**      | (.07) |
| Family prays together                            |            |       |            |       | .11*       | (.05) | .12*       | (.05) |
| Grace before meals                               |            |       |            |       | .12+       | (.07) | .13*       | (.06) |
| Family religious discussion                      |            |       |            |       | .09**      | (.03) | .08**      | (.03) |
| <i>W1 Parent Religious Tradition<sup>a</sup></i> |            |       |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Liberal Protestant                               |            |       |            |       | -.23*      | (.11) | -.18+      | (.11) |
| Sectarians and Baptists                          |            |       |            |       | .31***     | (.06) | .20**      | (.06) |
| Catholic   |            |       |            |       | -.10       | (.06) | -.08       | (.06) |
| Latter-Day Saint (Mormon)                        |            |       |            |       | .15        | (.10) | .07        | (.10) |
| Other/None                                       |            |       |            |       | -.29**     | (.10) | -.15       | (.11) |
| <i>W1 Parent Education<sup>b</sup></i>           |            |       |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Less than high school                            |            |       | .25        | (.19) |            |       | .31+       | (.18) |
| Some college                                     |            |       | -.16+      | (.08) |            |       | -.12       | (.08) |
| Bachelor's degree                                |            |       | -.25**     | (.08) |            |       | -.20*      | (.08) |
| Advanced degree                                  |            |       | -.39***    | (.09) |            |       | -.34***    | (.09) |
| <i>W4 Respondent Characteristics</i>             |            |       |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Female   |            |       | .16**      | (.05) |            |       | .15**      | (.05) |
| Age  |            |       | -.03       | (.02) |            |       | -.01       | (.02) |
| Bachelor's degree                                |            |       | .01        | (.06) |            |       | .04        | (.06) |
| Black  |            |       | .28**      | (.08) |            |       | .15+       | (.09) |
| Hispanic   |            |       | -.15       | (.08) |            |       | -.02       | (.08) |
| Other race                                       |            |       | -.37**     | (.11) |            |       | -.34**     | (.11) |
| Married  |            |       | .41***     | (.05) |            |       | .32***     | (.05) |
| Number of children                               |            |       | .09**      | (.03) |            |       | .08**      | (.03) |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b>                             | <b>.16</b> |       | <b>.27</b> |       | <b>.27</b> |       | <b>.33</b> |       |

+ $p < .10$  \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

$N = 1,302$

Standard error in parentheses

<sup>a</sup> Reference: Moderate/Other Protestant

<sup>b</sup> Reference: High school

an R-squared of .33, suggesting nearly as strong predictive power as that seen for W4 religiosity.

Overall, models for each of these outcomes show a positive and significant relationship between parents' religious conservatism and related moral attitudes in their children. In most cases, parental levels of worship attendance and importance of faith also have positive effects,

though they vary in strength and the effect of parental worship attendance is reduced to non-significance in all full models. Across outcomes, Sectarian/Baptist background and being married at W4 are significant and powerful positive predictors.

## DISCUSSION

In this study I find positive support for the proposition that religiously conservative parents are especially effective at transmitting their beliefs to their children. Through use of demographic and religious controls, I show that this transmission is not simply a function of higher religiosity among these parents. Neither can it be reduced to the effects of different denominational cultures. Rather, there is something about religious conservatism itself that promotes greater strength of transmission between parents and their millennial children, only partially accounted for by greater incorporation of religious activity into family life.

These children represent a contrast to the larger trends within their age cohort. Millennials overall are less religious than their elders in terms of either frequency of worship attendance or rate of affiliation, and more likely to espouse liberal views or attitudes antithetical to religious conservatism (Voas and Chaves 2016). Indeed, many turn away from religion specifically because they associate it with conservative politics (Hout and Fisher 2002, 2014; Campbell et al. 2018). Given this context, it is plausible that the children of religious conservative parents would be the first to turn away. They likely experience the connection between religion and politics most intensely in either family or church contexts, and have the most exposure to conservative attitudes inconsonant with those of the bulk of their cohort peers. It is arguable that compared to children of religiously moderate or liberal parents, these

respondents should encounter the greatest intergenerational religious tension, which should then lead to the greatest religious decline.

However, such an account is not supported in the results of this study. Religious conservative family background actually appears to serve as a protective factor against millennial religious decline. Mediated models suggest this is due in part to more active religious socialization on the part of religiously conservative parents, such as enrollment of children in religious school, family prayer, and family discussion of religious issues in the home during adolescence. These efforts may foster more robust religious habits in youth which they carry with them into adulthood. Additionally, transmission may be supported by features of religious conservatism itself. Those who are raised to believe in moral absolutes and a personally involved God may be less likely to deviate from the beliefs they held in childhood, due to fear of both the interpersonal consequences of disrupted family relationships and perceived supernatural consequences of violating moral absolutes. Religious life in these families may also constitute a more central component of both personal and family identity, and thus, may be more enduring over time. In contrast, even religiously liberal parents with high levels of attendance and importance of faith may emphasize different aspects of religion with their children, such as goodwill toward others, commitment to social justice, or subjective experience of personal truth, which may still be influential, but are less likely to result in high levels of religiosity later in life (Smith and Emerson 1998).



### *Differences in Transmission between Outcomes*

Although there is evidence of transmission of religious conservatism for all four outcomes, this process appears to be stronger for some beliefs and practices than others. This is shown in the differences of the coefficients for religious conservatism, as well as the R-squared values in the models. Specifically, transmission is especially strong for religiosity and belief in transcendent authority, moderate for moral absolutism, and weaker for favorability toward religion. I propose two possible explanations for these differences. The first is that these outcomes may differ in the extent to which they actually reflect religious conservatism. While some items may be more exclusive or central to the larger construct of religious conservatism, others may be more auxiliary or may also be related to other constructs, thus leading to weaker relationships. Secondly, parental influence on children is not consistent across attitudes and behaviors, but varies by the trait in question, the extent of parental efforts to transmit that trait, and the countervailing pressures of cultural or historical circumstances that might disrupt transmission (Acock and Bengtson 1980; Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009).

The predictive power of the variables included in this analysis for favorability toward religion is relatively modest. This may be in part because I measure this outcome using the *inverse of critical* attitudes toward religion, as opposed to expressed approval. It is possible that some of those who are *more* religiously conservative may be more critical of religious bodies because they are more intimately familiar with them, and have greater personal investment in them. For example, when a respondent agrees with the statement, "Too many religious people in this country these days are negative, angry, and judgmental," while this could signify a non-believer's view on the hypocrisy inherent in religion, it could also reflect a believer's view that,

say, Christians should seek more fervently to transform themselves to become more like Christ. Or, a respondent who agrees that "Most mainstream religion is irrelevant to the needs and concerns of most people my age," could be a devout follower who simply believes religious organizations should put more resources in youth programs. Thus, low scores for this outcome could potentially reflect dissatisfaction with the present *state* of religion, rather than religion as such. Alternatively, those who are not religious but who are devoted to tolerance may actually have high scores on this outcome, holding benign and generally positive views of religion despite lack of any personal investment. Additionally, it is noteworthy that favorability toward religion is especially high among blacks and Mormons. For each of these groups, institutional religion is likely to play a central role in organizing social as well as personal life (Chatters et al. 2009; Stark and Finke 2000). Thus, while religious conservatism *is* a robust and significant predictor for this outcome, religious ideology may be less important than proximate experiences with organized religious bodies.

Moral absolutism is predicted more strongly here than favorability toward religion, but still less than religiosity or belief in transcendent authority. While moral absolutism represents an important component of religious conservatism, the concepts of moral absolutism versus relativism are highly complex, and thus may be interpreted in different ways by respondents. Very few people would wholeheartedly endorse either total absolutism or total relativism, and thus, where respondents place themselves on this scale might depend on their frames of reference. For example, none but the most ardent relativist would deny the moral wrongness of the Holocaust, while even a rigid absolutist may hesitate to declare the consumption of dessert before dinner as a moral transgression. Thus, responses may be influenced by the kinds of

situations respondents imagine when answering the question, which may, in turn, be influenced by current or recent stimuli experienced close to the time of taking the survey (Helzer and Pizarro 2011). Moral relativism (and by extension, absolutism) can take different forms, including descriptive relativism, normative relativism, or metaethical relativism, and while it is unlikely that most respondents are consciously aware of these distinctions, they may unknowingly adopt a framework of one or another (Abend 2008). This would affect the extent to which transmission effects are measured in the models, since those who are religiously conservative versus liberal (or nonreligious) would be expected to differ in views of metaethical relativism, but may have similar perspectives on descriptive relativism. Inconsistencies of this kind, however, should be minimized by the use of a 5-item scale to increase reliability, and the robustness of the results here indicate that despite these complicating factors, the relationship between religious conservatism and moral absolutism is strongly supported.

Transmission effects are most apparent for religiosity and belief in transcendent authority. These elements reflect religious conservatism the most strongly and unambiguously. Religious conservatism is characterized in part by strong prescriptive norms of behavior and belief, those aspects of religiosity best captured by survey data. In addition, belief in a morally-authoritative and personally-involved transcendent authority (God) is a defining feature of religious conservatism (Froese and Bader 2007). Thus, transmission for these outcomes may be stronger because it is more direct. Differences in strength of effect may also be due to a variety of factors which affect the process of intergenerational transmission. Past studies suggest that children's *perceptions* of their parents' attitudes are more influential than their parents' *actual* attitudes (Acock and Bengtson 1980). This means transmission of attitudes should be more

successful when parents clearly communicate what they believe, and do so consistently over time. Transmission is also more effective over time for traits which are "concrete, central, and affect-laden," or which pertain to general moral or ideological orientations (Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009). Religiosity can potentially meet all these qualifications, as it involves tangible behaviors and objects, provides core spiritual and moral orientation, and can produce unique or intense emotional states (Durkheim 1995 [1912]). Similarly, belief in a personally-involved God is contained explicitly in the doctrine, practice and rhetoric of many religious traditions, perhaps most visibly in the act of prayer. Compared to their more liberal counterparts, religious conservative parents may be at an advantage in having more emphatic and clearly-defined prescriptions of religiosity which facilitate effective transmission. In addition, to the extent that they define themselves as being in tension with wider social norms such as those which dominate popular media or educational institutions, religious conservative parents may provide their children more clear and frequent cues of their belief systems (Stark and Finke 2000). Moral absolutism, though it is logically entailed by many religious conservative beliefs, is a more philosophical concept unlikely to enter the lexicons of most households, which may account for a somewhat weaker transmission effect. As indicated above, favorability toward religious people or organizations may also be more context-dependent and less reflective of enduring worldviews, and thus less subject to intergenerational transmission (Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009; Vaisey and Lizardo 2016).

### ***Other Predictors of Religiously Conservative Beliefs***

While the results of this study suggest parental religious conservatism has a robust relationship with child religiosity and moral attitudes distinct from that of denomination, they do

not contradict the conventional wisdom and scholarly consensus on the importance of denomination. Sectarian Protestant and Baptist family background is a significant and positive predictor for all four outcomes. This is the most consistent and striking denominational difference observed, though respondents with Mormon parents are especially likely to be favorable toward religion and to believe in moral absolutism, while children of Catholics are significantly more relativist. Respondent history of enrollment in religious school, and family prayer in the home during adolescence, also positively predicted most outcomes, indicating the importance of concrete religious socialization for future religiosity.

Effects of educational background are seemingly contradictory. Higher levels of parental education are associated with lower religiosity, favorability toward religion, and belief in transcendent authority, while respondent possession of a Bachelor's degree positively predicts all outcomes except belief in transcendent authority. This finding is consistent with past literature, which finds a secularizing effect of higher education among older age cohorts such as Baby Boomers, but not among millennials, and may reflect either changing effects of college attendance or shifts in the population of those who enroll in the first place (Sherkat 1998; Mayrl and Uecker 2011; Uecker, Regnerus and Vaaler 2007). Married status and presence of children are highly significant predictors of religiosity and belief in transcendent authority, while marriage (but not children) is associated with moral absolutism. Family formation has been linked to higher religiosity in the past, and may be due to greater value placed on the communal and institutional family support that comes with religious engagement, as well as benefits of shared spiritual practice in solidifying marriage bonds (Denton and Uecker 2018; Marks 2005). Previous literature has not examined the link between marriage and moral absolutism, but it is

likely that those with a belief in inviolable moral absolutes are more open to the putative indissolubility and permanent security that marriage provides.

### *Limitations*

In this analysis I apply theory and past literature to examine the relationship between parental self-reported religious conservatism and a number of respondent outcomes which reflect various aspects of religious conservatism. I am not able to examine direct correlations between identical survey items for parents and children, as has been the approach of most transmission literature. Respondents are not asked about religious ideology at any wave of the NSYR, nor are parents asked about moral attitudes at Wave 1. While the richness of NSYR survey items allows for in-depth analysis of parental effects on children's moral attitudes which provide strong support for the conclusions drawn here, additional research using different data will be needed to assess correlations between parents' and children's subjective reports of religious ideology.

The analytic sample here is substantially reduced from the full NSYR sample, including only those whose parents found “Compared to other religious Americans, do you usually think of yourself as [liberal, conservative, etc.]?” to be a meaningful question. It excludes those who “haven’t thought much about this,” or report no religious practice or affiliation whatsoever. The conclusions presented here should be understood to pertain only to those whose parents are at least minimally religious, and who perceive a religious liberal-conservative spectrum in the country on which they can place themselves, thus exhibiting a level of cultural awareness and engagement which a substantial minority of the population does not share.

I establish here that, net of all controls, children of religiously conservative parents exhibit higher levels of overall religiosity as well as conservative moral attitudes. I do not examine the strength of religious transmission in absolute terms. It is possible that what I frame here as stronger religious transmission for this group of millennials could simply be viewed as weaker decline. In other words, young adult children of religious conservative parents may be undergoing the same process of secularization as the rest of their age cohort, moving at a slower pace but toward the same destination. However, these results may also be indicative of a particular facet of sociocultural polarization. Past research finds, in the first place, that religiosity has become increasingly associated with conservative ideology in recent decades, and in the second, that many millennials have distanced themselves from religion for this very reason, as mentioned above (Putnam and Campbell 2010; Hout and Fischer 2002, 2014; Campbell et al. 2018). The present study shows, however, that this aversion is least applicable to those millennials whose parents' religious ideology is most conservative. It follows that the religious gap between these different groups of millennials is widening, a conclusion consistent with other findings on current trends in the religious landscape (Schnabel and Bock 2017). These differences are not limited to religious behavior, but apply to underlying moral attitudes as well. This suggests that, even among millennials, religious ideology is as likely to be an ongoing source of division as it is a point of emerging consensus.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this study I used panel data from Wave 1 and 4 of NSYR to show that religiosity transmits between generations more strongly in religiously conservative than moderate or liberal families. I have further demonstrated the link between religious conservatism of parents and a variety of

conservative moral attitudes in their children, including favorability toward religion, moral absolutism and belief in transcendent authority. In controlling for parental religiosity and denomination, I find that these effects are due to religious conservatism specifically and cannot be entirely reduced to related factors. Finally, I have found evidence that this religious transmission occurs in part through the mediating effects of family religious practice when respondents were in adolescence. I conclude that religiously conservative family background serves as a buffer for millennials against the larger cohort trend of declining religious attendance and affiliation.



## REFERENCES

- Abend, Gabriel. 2008. "Two Main Problems in the Sociology of Morality." *Theory and Society* 37(2):87–125.
- Abramowitz, Alan and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *The Journal of Politics* 70(2):542–55.
- Acock, Alan C. and Vern L. Bengtson. 1978. "Religious Socialization on the Relative Influence of Mothers and Fathers: A Covariance Analysis of Political and Religious Socialization." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 40(3):519–30.
- Acock, Alan C. and Vern L. Bengtson. 1980. "Socialization and Attribution Processes: Actual Versus Perceived Similarity Among Parents and Youth." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 42(3):501–15.
- Allison, Paul D. 1998. *Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Pine Forge Press.
- Armet, Stephen. 2009. "Religious Socialization and Identity Formation in High Tension Religions." *Review of Religious Research* 50(3):277–97.
- Bader, Christopher D., Scott A. Desmond, J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris. 2006. "Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors Upon Religious Transmission." *Sociology of Religion* 67:3–313.
- Baker, Wayne E. 2005. *America's Crisis of Values: Reality and Perception*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bengtson, Vern L. 1975. "Generation and Family Effects in Value Socialization." *American Sociological Review* 40(3).
- Bengtson, Vern L. 2017. *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations*. Oxford University Press.

- Bengtson, Vern L., Casey E. Copen, Norella M. Putney, and Merrill Silverstein. 2009. "A Longitudinal Study of the Intergenerational Transmission of Religion." *International Sociology* 24(3):325–45.
- Boutyline, Andrei and Stephen Vaisey. 2017. "Belief Network Analysis: A Relational Approach to Understanding the Structure of Attitudes." *American Journal of Sociology* 122(5):1371–1447.
- Campbell, David E., Geoffrey C. Layman, John C. Green, and Nathanael G. Sumaktoyo. 2018. "American Religious and Secular Orientations." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(3):1–15.
- Chatters, Linda M., Robert Joseph Taylor, Kai McKeever Bullard, and James S. Jackson. 2009. "Race and Ethnic Differences in Religious Involvement: African Americans, Caribbean Blacks and Non-Hispanic Whites." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32(7):1143–63.
- Davis, Nancy J. and Robert V Robinson. 1996. "Are the Rumors of War Exaggerated? Religious Orthodoxy and Moral Progressivism in America." *American Journal of Sociology* 102(3):756–87.
- Dellaposta, Daniel, Yongren Shi, and Michael Macy. 2015. "Why Do Liberals Drink Lattes?" *American Journal of Sociology* 120(5):1473–1511.
- Denton, Melinda Lundquist and Jeremy E. Uecker. 2018. "What God Has Joined Together: Family Formation and Religion among Young Adults." *Review of Religious Research* 60(1):1–22.
- Dudley, Roger L. and Margaret G. Dudley. 1986. "Transmission of Religious Values from Parents to Adolescents." *Review of Religious Research* 28(1):3–15.

- Dudley, Roger L. and Randall L. Wisbey. 2000. "The Relationship of Parenting Styles to Commitment to the Church among Young Adults." *Religious Education* 95(1):38–50.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1995 (1912). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press
- Edgell, Penny. 2006. *Religion and Family in a Changing Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy Pope. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Froese, Paul and Christopher D. Bader. 2007. "God in America: Why Theology Is Not Simply the Concern of Philosophers." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46(4):465–81.
- Glass, Jennifer, Vern L. Bengtson, and Charlotte Chorn Dunham. 1986. "Attitude Similarity in Three-Generation Families: Socialization, Status Inheritance, or Reciprocal Influence?" *American Sociological Review* 51(5):685.
- Greeley, Andrew M., and Michael Hout. 2008. *The Truth about Conservative Christians: What They Think and What They Believe*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hayes, Bernadette C. and Yvonne Pittelkow. 1993. "Religious Belief, Transmission, and the Family: An Australian Study." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 55(3):755–66.
- Helzer, Erik G. and David A. Pizarro. 2011. "Dirty Liberals!: Reminders of Physical Cleanliness Influence Moral and Political Attitudes." *Psychological Science* 22(4):517–22.
- Hoge, Dean R., Gregory H. Petrillo, and Ella I. Smith. 1982. "Transmission of Religious and Social Values from Parents to Teenage Children." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 44(3):569–80.
- Hout, Michael and Claude S. Fischer. 2002. "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations." *American Sociological Review* 67(2):165.

- Hout, Michael and Claude S. Fischer. 2014. "Explaining Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Political Backlash and Generational Succession." *Sociological Science* 1:423–47.
- Hunter, James Davison. 1991. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. Basic Books.
- Iannaccone, Laurence R. 1994. "Why Strict Churches Are Strong." *American Journal of Sociology* 99(5):1180–1211.
- Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. 2009. "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." *Journal of Politics* 71(3):782–99.
- Jensen, Lene Arnett. 1998. "Moral Divisions within Countries between Orthodoxy and Progressivism: India and the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37(1):90.
- Lehman, Derek and Darren E. Sherkat. 2018. "Measuring Religious Identification in the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.
- Leonard, Kathleen C., Kaye V Cook, Chris J. Boyatzis, Cynthia Neal Kimball, and Kelly S. Flanagan. 2013. "Parent-Child Dynamics and Emerging Adult Religiosity: Attachment, Parental Beliefs, and Faith Support." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 5(1):5–14.
- Marks, Loren D. 2005. "How Does Religion Influence Marriage? Christian, Jewish, Mormon, and Muslim Perspectives." *Marriage and Family Review* 38(1).
- Mayrl, Damon and Jeremy E. Uecker. 2011. "Higher Education and Religious Liberalization among Young Adults." *Social Forces* 90(1):181–208.
- Miles, Andrew and Stephen Vaisey. 2014. *Comparing Alternate Theories of Moral Influence on Political Outcomes*. Duke University.

- Min, Joohong, Merril Silverstein, and Tara L. Gruenewald. 2017. "Intergenerational Similarity of Religiosity Over the Family Life Course." *Research on Aging*.
- Myers, Scott M. 1996. "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context." *American Sociological Review* 61(5):858–66.
- Perry, Samuel L. 2015. "Bible Beliefs, Conservative Religious Identity, and Same-Sex Marriage Support: Examining Main and Moderating Effects." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54(4):792–813.
- Pew Research Center. 2018. "Attendance at Religious Services." Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/>.
- Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster.
- Putnam, Robert D., and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us*. Simon and Schuster.
- Rigney, Daniel and Michael Kearl. 1994. "A Nation of Gray Individualists: Moral Relativism in the United States." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 25(1):20–45.
- Scheitle, Christopher P. and Elaine Howard Ecklund. 2018. "Perceptions of Religious Discrimination among U.S. Scientists." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57(1):139–55.
- Schnabel, Landon and Sean Bock. 2017. "The Persistent and Exceptional Intensity of American Religion: A Response to Recent Research." *Sociological Science* 4:686–700.
- Schwadel, Philip. 2017. "The Positives and Negatives of Higher Education: How the Religious Context in Adolescence Moderates the Effects of Education on Changes in Religiosity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56(4):869–85.

- Sherkat, Darren E. 1991. "Leaving the Faith: Testing Theories of Religious Switching Using Survival Models." *Social Science Research* 20(2):171–87.
- Sherkat, Darren E. 1998. "Counterculture or Continuity? Competing Influences on Baby Boomers' Religious Orientations and Participation." *Social Forces* 76(3):1087–1114.
- Smith, Christian. 2012. *The Bible made impossible: Why biblicism is not a truly evangelical reading of scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos.
- Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton. 2003. *Methodological design and procedures for the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR)*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Study of Youth and Religion.
- Smith, Christian and Michael O. Emerson. 1998. *American Evangelicalism : Embattled and Thriving*. University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, Christian and Patricia Snell. 2009. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith : Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. University of California Press.
- Steensland, Brian, Jerry Park, Mark Regnerus, Lynn Robinson, Bradford Wilcox and Robert Woodberry. 2000. "The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art." *Social Forces* 79:291-318
- Stolzenberg, Ross M., Mary Blair-loy, and Linda J. Waite. 1995. "Religious Participation in Early Adulthood: Age and Family Life Cycle Effects on Church Membership." *American Sociological Review* 60(1):84–103.
- Uecker, Jeremy E., Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret L. Vaaler. 2007. "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood." *Social Forces* 85(4):1667–92.

- Vaisey, Stephen and Omar Lizardo. 2010. "Can Cultural Worldviews Influence Network Composition?" *Social Forces* 88(4):1595–1618.
- Vaisey, Stephen and Omar Lizardo. 2016. "Cultural Fragmentation or Acquired Dispositions? A New Approach to Accounting for Patterns of Cultural Change." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 2: 1-15.
- Voas, David and Mark Chaves. 2016. "Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?" *American Journal of Sociology* 121(5):1517–56.
- Wilson, John and Darren E. Sherkat. 1994. "Returning to the Fold." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33(2):148–61.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 1988. *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- YouGov. 2017. *Annual Report on US Attitudes towards Socialism*. Retrieved from <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/sites/default/files/2020135-pruzkum.pdf>.