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Religion and Crime
Theory, Research, and Practice

Edited by
Kent R. Kerley

MDPI

Religion and Crime: Theory, Research, and Practice

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Special Issue Editor

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About the Special Issue Editor

Kent R. Kerley , Ph.D., is Professor and Chair in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at Arlington. Dr. Kerley's primary research interests include corrections, religiosity, and drug careers. His research has appeared in top journals such as *Aggression and Violent Behavior, Deviant Behavior, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Justice Quarterly, Social Forces, and Social Problems. He is author of Religious Faith in Correctional Contexts* (2014), *Current Studies in the Sociology of Religion* (2015), *Encyclopedia of Corrections* (2017), and *Finding Freedom in Confinement: The Role of Religion in Prison Life* (2018). He has received research funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF Award # 1261322 and 1004953), Google, and the Religious Research Association.

Preface to "Religion and Crime: Theory, Research, and Practice"

The scientific study of religion is a rather recent development in colleges and universities in the United States and in other nations. Beginning in the 1960s, researchers from many social science backgrounds began conducting data-driven studies of the extent to which religiosity is related to crime, deviance, and delinquency. Since the 1980s, social scientists have also studied the nature, extent, practice, and impact of faith and faith-based programs in prisons and other correctional contexts. This volume contains the most contemporary and cutting-edge research on religion and crime, which includes data-driven (quantitative and qualitative), conceptual, review, and policy-oriented papers.

Kent R. Kerley
Special Issue Editor

Editorial

Editor's Introduction: Religion and Crime: Theory, Research, and Practice

Kent R. Kerley

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76019, USA; kent.kerley@uta.edu; Tel.: +1-817-272-0318

1. Introduction

The scientific study of religion is a relatively recent development in colleges and universities around the world. Researchers from many social science backgrounds began conducting studies in the 1960s to determine the extent to which religiosity is related to crime, deviance, and delinquency (Hirschi and Stark 1969). This line of research expanded beginning in the 1980s to include studies of the nature, extent, practice, and impact of faith and faith-based programs in prisons and other correctional contexts (Johnson 2012; Kerley 2014, 2015, 2018).

Religion and Crime: Theory, Research, and Practice contains 16 comprehensive and contemporary studies of religion and crime. The papers include review studies, quantitative studies, qualitative studies, legal studies, and case studies. The papers reflect a diversity of authors, locations, topics, and faith traditions. Such diverse collaborations are important for maintaining the continuity of high-quality research over time.

I have faith that readers will be pleased with the diversity, breadth, and depth of these papers. My sincere appreciation is given to the authors of these important works, as well as to the editors and staff members from *Religions* and MDPI.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Article

Child Sexual Abuse in Protestant Christian Congregations: A Descriptive Analysis of Offense and Offender Characteristics

Andrew S. Denney [1,*], **Kent R. Kerley** [2] **and Nickolas G. Gross** [2]

1   Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL 32514, USA
2   Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76019, USA; kent.kerley@uta.edu (K.R.K.); nickolas.gross@mavs.uta.edu (N.G.G.)
*   Correspondence: adenney@uwf.edu; Tel.: +1-850-474-2784

Abstract: Utilizing data from 326 cases of alleged child sexual abuse that occurred at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian congregations, this study examines demographic and contextual characteristics of alleged child sexual abuse that took place within the most prevalent religious environment in the United States. Research questions are addressed in this study. First, what type of child sexual abuse most commonly occurs at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian congregations? Second, where do such offenses physically take place? Third, who are the offenders and what role(s) do they assume in the congregations? We find that the overwhelming majority of offenses were contact offenses that occurred on church premises or at the offender's home, and that most offenders were white male pastors or youth ministers who were approximately 40 years in age. We conclude with policy implications and recommendations for future research.

1. Introduction

Child sexual abuse that occurs within religious settings has been the subject of widespread media attention for approximately the past fifteen years (Bailey 2013; Bohm et al. 2014; Clayton 2002; Boston Globe 2004; Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project 2010; New York Times 2015). This increasing media and political attention has largely been the result of highly publicized instances of alleged sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church, which has involved an estimated 16,000 victims and 3700 Roman Catholic clergy (Bishop Accountability 2011; Bohm et al. 2014). Consequently, members of various religious faiths, the media, and politicians have begun to question the frequency of child sexual abuse that occurs within other faith traditions in the United States (US), such as in Protestant Christian congregations (Bailey 2013). With an estimated 314,000 Protestant Christian congregations and a membership base of about 60 million, an exploration of alleged child sexual abuse is needed (Grammich et al. 2012; Pew Research Center 2007; Johnson et al. 2016).

Although Protestant Christian congregations are both the most prevalent and frequently attended of all religious institutions within the US (Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life 2015), research on instances of child sexual abuse within these settings has been sparse. Some of the only estimates that exist are from faith-based insurance companies that have released data on claims paid for religious institutions. Specifically, three faith-based insurance companies that provide coverage for 165,500 churches—mostly Protestant Christian churches and 5500 other religious-oriented organizations—reported 7095 claims of alleged sexual abuse by clergy, church staff, congregation members, or volunteers between 1987 and 2007 (Seattle Post-Intelligencer 2007). This is an average of 260 claims of alleged sexual abuse per year, which resulted in $87.8 million in total claims being

paid (Seattle Post-Intelligencer 2007). Although information on the extent and context of abuse is preliminary and limited, these previous statistics suggest to us the need for systematic research on child sexual abuse within US Protestant congregations. This study will provide a more comprehensive understanding of alleged child sexual abuse that occurs with Protestant Christian congregations, while also serving as a strong foundation for future research on this understudied topic.

1.1. Background on Sexual Abuse by Clergy

With the exception of a few loosely related studies that have examined issues surrounding clergy sexual misconduct and abuse (see, for example, Chaves and Garland 2009; Garland and Argueta 2010; John Jay College 2004), examination of alleged child sexual abuse in Protestant Christian congregations has been limited. To provide some context, however, it is helpful to review studies of general instances of sexual victimization within faith congregations. Since the Boston Globe's (2004) report on the molestation of 130 boys by Boston Reverend John Geoghan of the Catholic Church from 1962 until 1993, academic studies attempting to uncover instances of sexual abuse within religious, primarily Catholic, environments have increased. John Jay College (2004), for example, was granted unprecedented access to official Catholic Church records, finding that 4% of all priests within the US from 1950 to 2002 had some sexual abuse allegation(s) made against them. Moreover, this study revealed that the alleged instances of sexual abuse involved nearly 11,000 children with a mere 3% referred to law enforcement authorities (Terry and Tallon 2004). The revelation made by the John Jay College (2004) report led many from Protestant Christian organizations to question the extent of abuse in their congregations, as well as their protocols for preventing and controlling such abuse in their congregations (Bailey 2013).

The overwhelming majority of studies that have been published on this topic have focused on either individual cases of abuse, how to stop abuse from occurring, how to recover from such instances of sexual abuse, or some combination of those (see Capps 1993; Flynn 2003; Horst 2000; Muse 1992; Poling 1999). Even though the above issues are crucial for study, there is even less information about what offenses occur at a national level, where they physically take place, and who offends. This information is especially crucial when considering Capps' (1993) three key reasons why religious leaders have the strong potential to engage in sexual abuse. These reasons are the (1) power of access throughout the church and victim accessibility; (2) power from not being under the surveillance of others; and (3) power over congregants by being privy to personal knowledge (e.g., marital issues and addictions).

Garland and Argueta (2010) later identified factors that may be related to sexual abuse committed by religious leaders. These factors are (1) *family members, friends, and victims ignored warning signs*; (2) *the niceness culture* (i.e., discounting sexual flirting for being friendly); (3) *ease of private communication*; (4) *no oversight*; (5) *multiple roles* (e.g., pastor, marital counselor, etc.); and (6) *inherent trust in the sanctuary*. With the lack of specific research on sexual abuse within these environments, it is pertinent to briefly examine the sexual misconduct literature within these environments for contextual purposes.

1.1.1. Clergy Offender Characteristics

One universal trait that has been found in prior studies pertaining to both sexual misconduct and abuse is that the overwhelming majority of known offenders are male (Francis and Baldo 1998; Friberg and Laaser 1998; Garland and Argueta 2010; Thoburn and Whitman 2004). This characteristic should not come as a surprise since most Christian denominations (88%) only allow males to assume leadership positions within the church (Cooperative Congregations Studies Partnership 2010).

A second key characteristic found regarding clergy that do engage in sexual abuse is that only a small percentage are believed to have some form of paraphilia, which is an extreme fixation on a certain individual, object, or situation that results in intense sexual arousal (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Specifically, 2% are believed to be potentially diagnosable as a *pedophile* (i.e., sexual focus on prepubescent children), while 4% could be diagnosable as an *ephebophile* (i.e., sexual fixation on those between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age) (Sipe 1990, 1995). Other psychological issues

that have been attributed to priests that have been known to engage in child sexual abuse include addiction, depression, and even cognitive dysfunction (Blanchard 1991; Plante and Aldridge 2005).

A third key characteristic found regarding clergy who have reported to have engaged in sexual misconduct have had higher-than-normal levels of narcissism when using Raskin and Hall's (1979) Narcissistic Personality Inventory (see Brock and Lukens 1989; Francis and Baldo 1998; Hands 1992; Muse 1992; Muse and Chase 1993; Seat et al. 1993). Narcissism is seen as a key trait that can amplify instances of sexual abuse for individuals in positions of power.

1.1.2. Victim Characteristics

The John Jay College (2004) report is one of the few studies to have examined sexual abuse victim characteristics within religious environments. In their study, they found that 81% of victims were male, and the majority (51%) were between the ages of 11 and 14. Other studies that have examined victim characteristics within religious environments have solely examined adult victim characteristics of both sexual misconduct and sexual abuse (see Chaves and Garland 2009).

1.1.3. Offense Locations

Where offenses physically take place is also crucial to understand, as it can have differential impacts on victimization experiences, particularly for children (Culbertson et al. 2014). The two most common factors identified that are related to the location of child sexual abuse are that (1) the abuse occurs in a private setting and (2) the private setting chosen is typically the offender's home (Wortley and Smallbone 2006). Only a few studies that have examined either clergy sexual abuse or misconduct have reported where the alleged sexual misconduct physically took place, with John Jay College (2004) finding that 41% of all alleged sexual abuse occurred within the priest's home. Moreover, Calkins-Mercado, Tallon, and Terry (Calkins-Mercado et al. 2008) found that priests that had more than one victim were more likely than those who had just one victim to sexually abuse within the offender's home.

For instances of sexual misconduct and abuse that occurred within Protestant Christian churches, Chaves and Garland (2009) found that most (92%) sexual misconduct occurred in a private setting. Garland and Argueta (2010) found that most sexual misconduct/abuse occurred inside the offender's church office while conducting a counselling session. Since Protestant Christian clergy generally live off the church campus, this may restrict their attempts to commit sexual abuse due to less absolute privacy (Bohm et al. 2014; Fegert et al. 2011).

Despite research that has examined sexual misconduct and abuse within religious settings, there still exists a need for research pertaining to offenses that occur at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian churches. Such information is crucial with an estimated 314,000 churches in the US, with a substantial portion of that population being occupied by the ages with the highest known sexual victimization rates (Grammich et al. 2012; Pew Research Center 2007). Any environment that may be conducive for instances of sexual abuse is essential to study because of long-lasting side effects, such as depression, increased substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts/attempts/completions (see Beitchman et al. 1992; Dube et al. 2005; Najdowski and Ullman 2009; Rossow and Lauritzen 2001; Simpson and Miller 2002). As such, the expansion of research into specific and contextual information regarding child sexual abuse that occur at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian churches is imperative.

1.2. Clergy Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct refers to clergy that have engaged in legal, sexual relations, adultery, or some other related sexual action with a congregant that is deemed unethical or improper within these environments. Several studies have attempted to understand the prevalence of clergy sexual misconduct among Protestant Christian clergy (see Cooper 2002; Francis and Stacks 2003; Meek et al. 2004; Seat et al. 1993; Thoburn and Whitman 2004). Studies have revealed that as few as

1% to as many as 38.5% of all clergy, across a wide range of Christian denominations, have engaged in sexual misconduct of some form (Francis and Stacks 2003; Meek et al. 2004; Seat et al. 1993; Thoburn and Whitman 2004).

2. The Present Study

There are three foci for the present study. First, we examine the types of child sexual abuse alleged to occur within Protestant Christian congregations. Second, we provide information on where these offenses are alleged to occur. Third, we examine who commits alleged offenses within these environments and which role(s) they assume within their congregations. It is important to understand these core contextual characteristics, to provide a framework for additional research on this topic, and to provide law enforcement officers and faith leaders with information that could be useful in preventing and controlling child sexual abuse in faith environments.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Data

The sample for the present study consists of a collection of digital news articles from local news outlets who reported on issues of child sexual abuse alleged to have occurred at or through activities involving Protestant Christian churches. News articles were retrieved from three separate websites, with each acting as a depository for news articles reporting on church sexual abuses. These three individual websites were (1) www.reformation.com; (2) www.stopbaptistpredators.org; (3) www.mojoey.blogspot.com/p/the-morally-corrupt.html. Collectively, 2240 cases appeared across all three websites for the period of 1982 to 2014. However, duplications, alleged offenses at non-Protestant Christian churches, civil lawsuits, cases outside of the US, and a combination of each appeared across all three websites. As such, the present study focused on individuals who were *arrested* for child sexual abuse that occurred at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian churches from 1999 to 2014, as follow-up information per case prior to 1999 was rarely available. The final sample size was 326 individual cases.

3.2. Data Analysis Strategies

Occasionally, the archived news articles did not contain all desired information (e.g., victim's sex, offense location, etc.) for the research questions. As such, search terms that included the purported offender's name, church name, and/or a combination of each were used in Google™ and/or Google News™ to identify other related news articles. Similar methods have been implemented in other qualitative studies that utilized a content analysis of news articles (see Denton 2010; Stinson et al. 2013). On average, each case yielded approximately three news articles from a local news agency or newspaper typically near where the alleged offense(s) occurred, resulting in a total of 969 news articles viewed.

Once each news article was identified, all articles were read multiple times to pull data necessary to meet the four research goals of the present study. Cases involving incest were not included as they do not directly pertain to the dynamics of the church. Themes among data pulled from articles were formed using principles of analytic induction via a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006).

4. Results

4.1. Offense Type

Across all 326 cases that resulted in an arrest, a total of 454 individual offenses were alleged to have occurred. Since the 326 cases occurred in 41 total states, numerous local and state jurisdictions were crossed. As such, the name for a particular offense in one jurisdiction may be entirely different in the legal definition, severity, and overall scope than an offense with the same/similar name in another jurisdiction. As such, sexual offenses were organized into the two categories of (1) *contact offenses* and

(2) *non-contact offenses*. A similar categorization strategy has been employed in prior studies examining sexual offenses (see Babchishin et al. 2015; MacPherson 2010). *Contact offenses* are criminal actions that involved the offender making some form of direct physical contact with the victim's body, whereas *non-contact offenses* are still sexual in nature, yet do not involve the offender making direct physical contact with the victim. A third category of *property offenses* was also developed to include the property offenses (e.g., possession of criminal tools, and burglary) that were alleged to have occurred during the commission of the alleged sexual abuse.

4.1.1. Contact Offenses

Contact offenses refer to alleged offenses that involved some direct physical sexual contact between the offender and the victim(s) (Mair and Stevens 1994). Notable examples of contact offenses include, but are not limited to, sexual assault, rape, and groping. In total, contact offenses represented fully 80% (*n* = 363) of the 454 total offenses. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of all offenses included direct physical sexual contact between the offender and the victim(s). The total number of victims per case ranged from one to as many as 20 individuals. However, the vast majority of cases involved only one known victim at 61.7%. We must note here that cases involving child pornography were not included in this part of the analysis. Therefore, the number of cases is 321.

4.1.2. Non-Contact Offenses

Non-contact sex offenses refer to those where the offender did not have physical sexual contact with any victim(s) (Mair and Stevens 1994). Some examples of non-contact sex offenses include stalking, sexual harassment, and possession of child pornography. Across all 326 cases, non-contact offenses represented 18.9% (*n* = 89) of the 454 separate offenses. Although this is a sizeable minority, it is important to consider that 79.1% (*n* = 258) of cases involved the offender being charged with both contact and non-contact sex offenses when arrested, and only 7.4% (*n* = 24) were charged with solely a non-contact sexual offense.

4.1.3. Property Offenses

Some individuals within the present study were also charged with a property offense at the point of arrest in conjunction with a sex offense (i.e., contact and/or non-contact). In total, a mere 1.1% (*n* = 5) of all offenses at the point of arrest were for a property crime (e.g., burglary and theft of a victim's clothing).

4.2. Offense Locations

A total of 41 states were represented in the present study. The top five states that had the most reported instances of alleged sexual abuse were as follows: Florida (9.6%; *n* = 32), Texas (8.4%; *n* = 28), California (7.5%; *n* = 25), Illinois (5.1%; *n* = 17), and Tennessee and Alabama, respectively, at 4.2% (*n* = 14). Across the 326 cases, the specific offense location was available in 70.9% (*n* = 231) of the cases. Fully 29.1% (*n* = 95) cases did not have a specific location reported. Findings were divided into two primary subsections, being (1) *general offense locations* and (2) *specific offense locations*.

4.2.1. General Offense Locations

General offense location was divided into three distinct categories. These three categories were if the offense(s) occurred either exclusively (1) *on church grounds*; (2) *off church grounds*; or (3) *both on and off church grounds*. Among cases with a reported location (*n* = 231), 45.5% (*n* = 105) occurred exclusively off-site. Specifically, most cases with a reported offense location occurred within the offender's home, victim's home, or some other off-site location (e.g., hotel/motel room). In contrast, fully 35.5% (*n* = 82) of cases with a known location occurred exclusively *on church grounds*. Examples of such locations on church grounds included church offices, the parking lot, and the sanctuary. A sizeable minority of all offenses with a reported offense location took place *both on and off the church grounds* at 19.0% (*n* = 44).

4.2.2. Specific Offense Locations

Across all 326 cases, there were a total of 311 reported offense locations. Five unique offense locations were reported across the 311 offense locations. Table 1 presents the findings for the specific offense locations, percentages, and the total numbers.

Table 1. Offense locations.

Location	Percentage
at the church	38.9% (n = 121)
offender's home	31.2% (n = 97)
off-site	12.9% (n = 40)
off-site church-sponsored activity	10.6% (n = 33)
victim's home	6.4% (n = 20)

n = 311.

The most frequent specific offense location reported was that it occurred someplace *at the church* (e.g., office, basement, bathroom, etc.). Altogether, 38.9% (n = 121) of all offenses allegedly took place on the church premises, with 15.4% (n = 48) occurring within the personal office of the alleged offender. The second most frequent specific offense location was at the *offender's home* (31.2%; n = 97), thus suggesting some degree of planning and/or grooming by the offender to isolate the victim inside a relatively controlled environment. The third most frequent offense location was at a sponsored *off-site church-sponsored activity* (e.g., mission trips, camping trips, etc.), accounting for 10.6% (n = 33) of all cases with a known location. The fourth most frequent offense location was at an *off-site* (e.g., offender's car) location at 12.9% (n = 40). The fifth and final specific offense location was alleged to have occurred within the *victim's home* at 6.4% (n = 20).

4.3. Offender Characteristics

To meet the third goal of this study, the offender characteristics are presented. Altogether, 332 offenders across the 326 identified cases were identified. The remainder of this section is divided into the four subsections of (1) *offender sex*; (2) *offender race/ethnicity*; (3) *offender age*; and (4) *offender role*.

4.3.1. Offender Gender

The overwhelming majority of identified offenders were male. Specifically, male offenders were represented by 98.8% (n = 328) with female offenders at only 1.2% (n = 4) of the offender sample.

4.3.2. Offender Race/Ethnicity

There were five total races/ethnicities represented among the offender sample being *White*, *Black*, *Hispanic*, *Asian*, and *Native American*. A total of 18.3% (n = 61) of the race/ethnicity of the offender was missing. The overwhelming majority of offenders were identified as *White* (73.1%; n = 198) with *Black* representing 18.8% (n = 51) of all offenders. The remaining three races/ethnicities of *Hispanic*, *Asian*, and *Native American* accounted for less-than 10% of all offenders.

4.3.3. Offender Age

In total, 56 distinct offender ages were represented in the sample. Specifically, offender ages at the time of the alleged sexual abuse ranged from 18 to 88 years of age. Altogether, only 2.7% (n = 7) of all offender ages were missing, yielding 325 total cases. The mean age was 40.4 years of age with a standard deviation of 13.7 years.

For male offenders (n = 315; 7 missing), the mean age was 40.5 with a standard deviation of 13.7 years. For female offenders (n = 4), the mean age was considerably younger at 23.5 with a standard deviation of 12.8 years. One's age is oftentimes associated with one's role within a church, with many

positions relying upon a seniority system. Thus, the offender's role held within the church is an important characteristic for understanding who occupies the role and how such a role can potentially influence one's opportunities for victim access.

4.3.4. Offender Role

The specific role that the offender held within the church was available in 92.2% (*n* = 306) of the cases with 7.8% (*n* = 26) having no reported role. Across all cases, 12 distinct offender roles were represented within the sample. The overwhelming majority (80.1%) of offenders were employed in an official capacity within their respective churches with a substantial minority (19.9%) being volunteers. Table 2 presents the findings for both male and female offender roles.

Table 2. Offender Role within the Church.

Offender Role	Percentage
Male Offender Roles	
Pastor	34.9% (*n* = 110)
Youth Minister	31.4% (*n* = 99)
Youth Volunteer	8.3% (*n* = 26)
Associate Pastor	5.4% (*n* = 17)
Music Minister	4.8% (*n* = 15)
Volunteer	3.2% (*n* = 10)
Sunday School Teacher	2.9% (*n* = 9)
Deacon	2.2% (*n* = 7)
Church Member	2.2% (*n* = 7)
Church Camp Worker	0.6% (*n* = 2)
n = 315	
Female Offender Roles	
Youth Volunteer	50% (*n* = 2)
Youth Minister	25% (*n* = 1)
Pastor's Wife	25% (*n* = 1)
n = 4	

Male Offender Roles

Of the 328 male offenders in the present sample, 94.7% (*n* = 305) of their roles were known with 4.0% (*n* = 13) missing. The most frequent male offender role was a *Pastor* at 34.9% (*n* = 110) of the sample, followed by *Youth Ministers* at 31.4% (*n* = 99). The third most frequent offender role of *Youth Volunteers* was a sharp contrast in frequency compared to the first two roles consisting of 8.3% (*n* = 26) of the sample. *Youth Volunteers* can range from someone that is an unpaid church member to a young adult who assists with the youth ministry. Combined, those who occupy roles that require the direct supervision and/or interaction with youth (generally under 18 years of age), comprised 38.8% of the total offender sample.

The fourth most frequent offender role was that of *Associate Pastor*, followed by *Music Ministers*. Specifically, *Associate Pastors* represented 5.4% (*n* = 17) of the sample, whereas *Music Ministers* held 4.8% (*n* = 15) of the total sample. Even though all but one of the male offender roles at this point have been employees of the church, the remainder of offenders held some volunteer role.

Volunteers, the sixth most represented male offender role, made up 3.2% (*n* = 10) of the total sample. *Volunteers* is a general category that includes a wide-range of individuals serving in various capacities, such as a sports coach or bus driver. Yet another form of volunteer that was also represented were *Sunday School Teachers* at 2.9% (*n* = 9). Typically, *Sunday School Teachers* are tasked with preparing and instructing individuals with religious materials on a weekly or more basis. The eighth most represented offender role, *Deacons* (2.2%), are also individuals that provide a wide-range of services

to the church, such as collecting tithes and visiting church members in the hospital. The ninth most represented male offender role was a general *Church Member* at 2.2% (*n* = 7) of the offenders. Somewhat unique when compared to the other offender roles present, *Church Members* do not occupy a specific role within the church, nor do they hold an official title.

The final two male offender roles were *Church Camp Workers* (0.6%; *n* = 2) and *Choir Volunteers* (0.6%; *n* = 2). *Church Camp Workers* are individuals that worked for a short-term summer camp or other camp operated by the respective church. *Choir Volunteers* are those that sing within the respective church's choir. Although male offenders held 10 distinct roles, the female offenders occupied only three individual roles.

Female Offender Roles

Even though there were only four female offenders represented, these offenders also warrant discussion. The three female offender roles were a *Youth Volunteer*, *Youth Minister*, and the *Pastor's Wife*. *Youth Volunteers* represented 50% (*n* = 2) of the female offender sample while *Youth Minister* and the *Pastor's Wife* had one case (i.e., 25%), respectively.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to uncover common offense, offender, and victim characteristics of child sexual abuse that occurs at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian churches. Through examination of news articles that covered arrests pertaining to this issue, this study found that there are common offense, offender, and victim characteristics of child sexual abuse that occurs within these settings. The results of this study shed light on an important topic, while simultaneously laying the foundation for future examination into this vital issue.

We found that the overwhelming majority (80%) of offenses included *contact offenses*. This means that most offenses involved direct and physical contact between the offender and their victim(s) (e.g., sexual assault, groping, or a degree of rape) in comparison to non-contact offenses (e.g., child pornography on a church computer) at 7.4%. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of sexual abuse within this environment appears to be what is generally considered as the more severe types of sexual offenses. As with 41 states included in the study, individual differences between specific offense-types at the state-level were not examined. Future research should explore individual crimes using cases at the state-level to assess the specific types of crime present, not solely general categories of contact or non-contact sexual offenses.

Five specific location-types of *at the church*, the *offender's home*, *off-site*, *off-site church-sponsored activity*, and the *victim's home* emerged. This finding of sexual abuse likely occurring at the *offender's home* was echoed by Calkins-Mercado et al. (2008) where they found that 41% of all instances of Catholic sexual abuse perpetrated by priests occurred inside the offender's home. Whereas many Catholic Priests live in a Rectory directly located on church grounds, Protestant clergy do not. As such, the present study's findings of offenses occurring at the *offender's home* suggests substantial contextual differences that surround how and in what manner the offender was able to isolate the victim to their residence.

Findings in the present study support the notion of the church office as a location for sexual abuse, as other studies have suggested as high as 92% of all instances of sexual misconduct occurred primarily in a church office (Chaves and Garland 2009; Garland and Argueta 2010). Thus, when considering only the offense location(s), findings generally support Fegert et al.'s (2011) notion that sexual abuse that occurs at the church seems opportunistic in nature (e.g., during a counseling session). Future research needs to examine the specific context in which sexual abuse arises, how the individual location for instances of sexual abuse is selected by the offender, and what role opportunity may or may not play.

Findings revealed a number of key characteristics pertaining to offender characteristics being mostly white males. Offenders being male should not be a surprise since the majority of known adult sex offenders are male (Rennison 2001; Rennison and Rand 2003) and occupy 88% of all head pastor

positions in US Protestant Christian churches (Cooperative Congregations Studies Partnership 2010). This is a notion also supported in literature examining clergy offenders for sexual misconduct and abuse (Francis and Baldo 1998; Friberg and Laaser 1998; Garland and Argueta 2010; Thoburn and Whitman 2004). Thus, women in most congregations may not be in positions of power that can influence the propensity to engage in sexual abuse. That offenders are mostly white also mirrors what is known about most sex offenders (Ackerman et al. 2011) and those who identify as Protestant Christians (Pew Research Center 2007).

With the average offender age at 40.4 years, these findings are considerably younger in comparison to a prior study on clergy sexual misconduct by Francis and Baldo (1998), where they found the age range of clergy who have engaged in sexual misconduct to be between 51 and 60 years of age. However, when examining the average age of registered sex offenders found by Ackerman et al. (2011), the findings in the present study are close to the wider population of registered sex offenders. Simply put, this could mean that younger offenders are more likely to be reported to law enforcement. It is important to note that Francis and Baldo (1998) defined *sexual misconduct* as, "any activity in which a clergyperson, single or married, engaged in sexual behavior (sexual intercourse, kissing, touching or hugging with sexual intent, or use of sexually explicit language) with a parishioner, client, or employee of the church" (p. 82).

It is also important to note that the aforementioned study did not include respondents disclosing their commission of child sexual abuse, but only instances of sexual misconduct with adult parishioners in Lutheran churches. As such, this may result in a comparison of a wholly different offender. There are two possible reasons for this. First, it is possible that there is an inherent difference between men who engage in any sexual misconduct compared to those that engage in sexual abuse within these faith settings. Regarding sexual misconduct, the setting in which sexual misconduct occurs is crucial as it changes the power dynamics of relationships that exist, such as educational environments (Knoll 2010), counseling settings (Simon 1995), and faith congregations (Francis and Baldo 1998; Horst 2000). In the context of congregations, clergy who commit sexual misconduct have been found to suffer from high levels of narcissism, need for affirmation of their sexual identity, and sexual compulsion (Friberg and Laaser 1998). However, men who commit child sexual abuse are likely to suffer a range of issues from being less likely to pursue romantic relationships with individuals their own age to suffering from severe mental disorders and related issues (Miller 2013). Second, *Youth Ministers* were the second most commonly represented offender role (31.4%) in the present study. Generally, individuals who occupy the role of youth minister are younger because of their perceived ability to reach child and adolescent church members, recently graduated seminary school, or a combination of these and related factors.

For the final offender characteristic measured in the present study of offender-role, there were 10 individual roles represented. However, nearly two-thirds of all offenders held the roles of *Pastor* or *Youth Minister*. This finding is echoed in the John Jay College (2004) report, where 25% of offenders held the position of Head Priest, the equivalent of Pastor in most Protestant Christian churches. However, this finding is in contrast to a sexual misconduct finding by Thoburn and Whitman (2004) that individuals most likely to engage in sexual misconduct were *Associate Pastors*.

It may be that those in the primary position of power and control in the church are those that are the most likely to offend in this environment. It is also possible that those in the primary position of power within their church view sexual offending as a mere extension of their power and control over their environment and their congregants. This is especially probable since power and control have been identified as key traits for male rapists with female victims (Brownmiller 1975; Stermac and Segal 1989). Future research needs to explore the specific mechanisms of how power and control inherent in one's role within the church are utilized, if at all, by the offenders in order to sexually abuse child congregants.

The third most frequent offender role was that of *Youth Volunteer* at 8.3% (*n* = 26) of offenders. Similar to *Youth Ministers*, *Youth Volunteers* may also have considerable power and control over youth group activities and members. However, the volunteer nature of the role may severely restrict the

amount of total control one could exert. One important consideration in regards to *Youth Volunteers* is that these individuals may be more likely to have originally sought such a position in order to sexually offend, as unguarded access to a child has been identified as a key characteristic in child sexual abuse (see Colton et al. 2010; Sullivan and Beech 2004; Wortley and Smallbone 2006). The role of unguarded access to children may also prove useful for explaining four of the remaining seven offender roles (25.7%) that consisted of a volunteer position within the church, similar to offenders known to target other youth-centric organizations (e.g., daycares and youth athletic organizations) (see Brackenridge 1997; Bringer et al. 2001; Finkelhor and Williams 1988; Stirling and Kerr 2009). Future research needs to explore the motivations for individuals to take on these volunteer roles. The original purpose for seeking-out such a role could be non-sexual in nature, yet the sexual offending develops over time. It may also be that individuals who are actively seeking volunteer roles within these organizations are for the sole purpose of sexually offending and seeking specific victim characteristics.

Although the present study has contributed to the lack of research pertaining to child sexual abuse in Protestant Christian settings, this was not achieved without limitations. The first limitation is in regards to the websites where the news articles were located. The possibility exists that each entity and/or individual that owned/operated each website that contained the news articles worked under their own bias or agenda. As such, an individual website administrator's agenda could potentially have influenced the nature and overall type of offenses that were included. The second limitation is that news articles only reported on those who had been arrested for the alleged offense(s). Consequently, not all individuals included as offenders in the present study have been or were convicted of their offense(s). The third limitation is that, due to the use of news articles as the primary source of information regarding each case, some useful contextual information may not have been present. Thus, the lack of some contextual information, such as the use of partners (e.g., administrative assistance or other staff members) to assist in the sexual abuse of children as was found to have happened among Catholic clergy offenders, was not present in examined news articles (Boston Globe 2004; Calkins-Mercado et al. 2008).

There is one primary policy implication of the present study. Findings provide information on major Protestant Christian organizations (i.e., Southern Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church, etc.), in the US and abroad, pertaining to the types of child sexual abuses that occur in Protestant Christian settings and offense characteristics. Therefore, major Protestant Christian organizations can potentially use this information to craft actual and model policies to be adopted by member churches to assist in prevention, intervention, and response efforts. For example, policies prohibiting adults being alone with minor congregants on-site or off-site could potentially curtail a significant number of offenses that become known to law enforcement as has been suggested previously (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2007).

Continued examination of sex offenses that occur at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian churches is crucial, with millions of youth estimated to participate in church-sponsored activities on a weekly or more basis in the US, with thousands of males in key power positions. Thus, the potential for continued sexual victimization remains high. Unless future research continues to examine this important topic, effective prevention, investigation, and intervention methods cannot be fully developed to counter such issues of sexual victimization within the estimated 314,000 Protestant Christian churches currently in the United States.

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Article

'Better as a Buddhist': An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Reflections on the Religious Beliefs of Buddhist Men Serving a Prison Sentence for a Sexual Offence

Katie Bell [1], Belinda Winder [2,*] and Nicholas Blagden [2]

[1] HMP Whatton, HMPPS, Nottingham NG13 9FQ, UK; katie.bell@hmps.gsi.gov.uk
[2] Sexual Offences, Crime and Misconduct Research Unit, Psychology, School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham NG1 4FQ, UK; Nicholas.Blagden2@ntu.ac.uk
* Correspondence: belinda.winder@ntu.ac.uk; Tel.: +44-115-848-5525

Abstract: This paper presents a qualitative analysis of the accounts offered by individuals ($n = 7$) convicted of a sexual offense who describe themselves as Buddhists. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews within a custodial environment and analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This paper presents the two superordinate themes that emerged from the data: (i) Better as a Buddhist and (ii) Ebb and Flow. Reflections and analysis from the Buddhist prison chaplain are integrated within the analysis of prisoner-participant data. Implications of the analysis are discussed with reference to interventions that use Buddhist principles, factors that underpin factors that help reduce reoffending and those that fit with the formation of a desistance narrative for religious individuals who have committed sexual offenses

Keywords: Buddhism; qualitative; sexual offense; interpretative phenomenological analysis

1. Introduction

The purpose of prisons has changed over time. Initially, prisons were promulgated as a place of punishment; increasingly, they came to be places of rehabilitation (O'Connor 2005). Religion has been entwined with the concept of rehabilitation from its nascence, with the earliest ideas of rehabilitation involving religion as a correctional intervention. This included religious activity and the atonement for sinful behavior as the focus of individuals' sentences (O'Connor 2005). Over time, and with a move toward a more secular society, religion has become separated from rehabilitation, with the latter now comfortably ensconced alongside psychology. Despite this, many prisoners still identify as religious and/or find religion and/or convert to a different religion while in custody. As such, there continues to be a strong religious presence within prisons, with the prison service chaplaincy accommodating a range of faiths. In the site of the present study, 72 percent of the prisoners identified as religious, with 7.6 percent (5.5 percent of the total population for the prison) registered Buddhists (Jo Honour, Coordinating Chaplain, personal communication, 2017).

The changing role of religion in society is echoed by the changing perception of what it means to be religious in prison: more cynical attitudes to religion "on the outside" find parallels with more skeptical attitudes to those in prison who self-identify as religious. Whilst some evidence suggests that prisoners who "find" religion while incarcerated believe that this will indeed help them to desist from offending in the future (Clear and Sumter 2002), prison staff may take a more cynical stance. Prison staff (and indeed the general public) may conclude that prisoners self-identify as religious to take advantage of a range of benefits, both major and minor. Clear et al. 's study (2000) suggests that long-term prisoners may think that being religious will be viewed positively by a parole board

when making decisions about their possible release. Minor benefits may include apparently trivial things, such as eating meals that are different to the standard fare, or receiving visits from sessional chaplains, brought in from the outside. This may not seem much of a benefit; however, prisoners relish the opportunity to interact with staff who have not been saturated by working constantly within the prison system and who therefore may help prisoners to feel more "normal" and less like a prisoner.

There has been a plethora of research examining the putative impact of religion on desistance from offending, seeking to explain how religion may inhibit an individual from continuing to commit crime (Hallett and McCoy 2015; Salas-Wright et al. 2016; Eshuys and Smallbone 2006; Kewley et al. (2015, 2016)). As a mainstream religion in Western society, Christianity is typically the religion that is the focus for this type of research. Such studies have predominantly reported an inverse relationship between religion and offending, although this is not consistently the case (Clear and Sumter 2002). Researchers have subsequently proceeded to generalize these findings from Christianity to all religions, echoing early research difficulties in the psychological study of religion when Christianity dominated people's construal of what a religion was. Yet religions vary in personality, practice, and reputation. Generalizing religious desistance research from studies predominantly conducted in the US, including high proportions of Christian participants, and with many prisoners serving prison sentences for violent/anti-social crimes, has limitations. Examining why people have desisted from crime, through the analysis of rich, idiographic data, allows us to conceptualize the mechanisms through which each faith may inhibit reoffending. Where the type of offense is driven by different motivations and risk factors to generic violent/anti-social offending, as is the case with sexual offenses (Mann et al. 2010), idiographic data additionally offers explanatory depth to the quantitative association between desistance and faith.

Sexual crime is increasingly being recognized as a serious societal concern. Secondary prevention initiatives, such as Dunkelfeld in Germany (Beier et al. 2009), the work of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and Safer Living Foundation in the UK (Winder et al. 2017), and the Utah Prevention Project in the US are emerging across the world. The number of people being convicted of sexual offenses is rising in the UK, with the highest number of sexual offenses (since national recordkeeping commenced) being reported in December 2015. For the first time, the total number of sexual offenses in a year exceeded 100,000 (Office for National Statistics 2015). The number of individuals who have been convicted of a sexual offense has risen by 9 percent in the past 12 months, with the total now at 12,771 sentenced individuals, representing 15 percent of the total prison population (Offender Management Service 2016). This means that an increasing number of people who have been convicted of a sexual offense will now be living in the community. For these individuals, nasty societal attitudes to "sex offenders" will be just one of the challenges they face on release from prison.

Kewley et al. (2016) highlighted how religious prisoners could find that the process of reintegrating with society is helped by their engagement with a religious group or community, yet the authors state: "However, some caution is needed as the transition from offender to non-offender was not seamless or straightforward for those with an innate sexual interest in children" (p. 21). This is one element that distinguishes sexual offenses from other types of offenses, as sexual interest can be difficult or sometimes impossible to change (Beckstead 2012). With sexual offenders, reintegration can also be far more difficult (Harper et al. 2017), yet emotional isolation is also a dynamic risk factor for sexual reoffense. The capacity to engage with a social group, and to identify with them, could function as a protective factor; moreover, engagement with a social group in the community could help to reduce the "social curse" (Stevenson et al. 2014) that the label of "sex offender" brings with it.

Although the interrelationships between religion and desistance of sexual offenses has only recently started to be investigated, there have been several studies examining the interrelationships between religion and desistance from generic, non-sexual, offending (McGuire 2013). Offending behavior programs have been developed and adapted over time to reduce an individual's likelihood of reoffending. In recent years, techniques such as mindfulness have been introduced, and there are a number of studies highlighting its potential effectiveness within offender populations

(Bowen et al. 2006; Dunn 2010). This technique stems from Buddhist practice and has been present for hundreds of years, with Buddhists all over the world engaging in mindfulness on a daily basis. Research has reported that practicing mindfulness is an effective therapy for a variety of psychological problems, being especially effective at reducing anxiety, depression, and stress (Khoury et al. 2013). Researchers have reported that participants that engaged in mindfulness and other Buddhist-derived interventions showed improvements across a range of criminogenic variables, including substance abuse (Simpson et al. 2007), anger and impulse control (Derezotes 2000), hostility (Dunn 2010), relaxation (Derezotes 2000), self-esteem (Dunn 2010), and increased optimism (Bowen et al. 2006). These Buddhist practices have now been included in mainstream sex offender treatment programs run by the UK prison service.

During a period of custody, an individual's religious practice is unlikely to be considered unless it has been found to be directly linked to their risk of reoffending. This is also the case within structured risk assessments that are often completed, particularly with long-term prisoners. With the current movement to consider and develop individuals' protective factors (De Vries Robbé et al. 2015), it is possible that religiosity could play a more important role in the future as elements of religious behavior could assist in protecting individuals from future offending. This study attempts to develop an understanding of the role Buddhism plays in the lives of men convicted of sexual offenses as a starting point for considering the role it could play within risk or protective factors for individuals.

2. Results

The experiences and reflections of individuals serving custodial prison sentences for sexual crime who are practicing[1] Buddhists map into two main themes, presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Superordinate and Subordinate Themes.

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
1: Better as a Buddhist	1.1: Buddhist qualities 1.2: I can see clearly now 1.3: Better future 1.4: Attachment is futile 1.5: Rose-tinted spectacles
2: Ebb and flow	2.1: Karma 2.2: Emotional balance 2.3: Acceptance 2.4: Open to abuse

2.1. Better as a Buddhist

This superordinate theme articulates the positive qualities that participants expressed they had gained from becoming a Buddhist and engaging in Buddhist practices; this theme reflects participants' beliefs that they had changed their lives and themselves for the better. All the participants explained that the way in which they viewed and interpreted situations had altered, and they had become better people because of their practice.

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[1] Buddhist training can be divided into three sections: moral discipline, concentration, and wisdom. Moral discipline begins with the observance of precepts, which anchor one's actions in principles of conscientious behavior and moral restraint. Generally, lay Buddhists adhere to five basic precepts: to avoid harming sentient beings, to avoid taking what is not freely given, to avoid sexual misconduct, to avoid harsh or false speech, and to avoid intoxicants including drugs and alcohol. Concentration in the form of meditation is intended to stabilize the mind and clear away the obstacles to the unfolding of wisdom and greater clarity. When applied conscientiously and consistently this structured approach does lead to, amongst other things, greater clarity and insight into the "process" we call "me" (Kumar 2002; Rodrigues 2005).

2.1.1. Buddhist Qualities

One of the most common themes that emerged from the dataset was how participants had changed and how their perception of the world around them had changed since they started practicing Buddhism.

"Buddhists are striving, if they're practicing Buddhists, to erm improve themselves, to improve their perception of the world, be mindful and kind". (Hengist)

Participants asserted that the changes in themselves and their perceptions of the world had come about from an active process of "striving," where individuals actively seek to change the way they think and make decisions. In the extract above, Hengist highlighted the constant development that he (and the others) believed was taking place as their Buddhism encouraged them to constantly strive to be better people. By taking notice of his actions and decisions, Hengist feels he can deliberately choose more positive actions and, over time, become a better person because of his ability to observe himself and to decide to behave in a more positive way (see Maruna 2001). This appeared to be an important Buddhist quality and participants took pride in their increased level of self-awareness and morality. By making the distinction of "practicing Buddhists," Hengist suggests that these skills are not available to other individuals (or to himself previously) and increases his belief that he is better as a Buddhist. It has been asserted that religiosity is frequently the source of desistance for those who manage to live offense-free lives (Hallett and McCoy 2015).

Building insight and understanding our behavior and decision-making is something that is of value not only within Buddhism, but to anyone working within a custodial environment. Many offending behavior programs provided in prison spend a significant amount of time attempting to improve people's insight in their offending behavior to help prevent them from reoffending. For most of the participants, being Buddhist meant being a good person both in the current moment and for the foreseeable future. This takes the insight-building one step further by applying morals to decision-making and making the choice to apply any learning about themselves in a positive manner.

"I think the main value I take from it [Buddhism] is just how to be a better person erm both now and in the future". (Alphonse)

Identifying as a Buddhist appears to promote self-improvement in a way that was apparently not possible for the individual previously. The above extract is one characterized by moral reform in that, through Buddhism, one can become a better person, that is, someone who engages in more pro-social acts and fewer selfish ones. Such narratives of moral reform are common in prisoners who are "getting right with God" (Presser and Kurth 2009). For Alphonse, Buddhism appears to have provided him with a set of guidelines that help him to be a better person. It appears to be not merely personal introspection but the active application of Buddhist principles to their lives that helped them to feel that they were transforming into "good selves" (Perrin and Blagden 2014). Participants highlighted characteristics they had developed since beginning to practice Buddhism; these included being more compassionate and understanding of others' foibles.

"I don't judge anybody you see, I've got no right to judge anybody . . . friendship towards other people not to harm other people, you know, just to be an all-round good guy . . . not criticize anybody". (Keith B)

"R: so how do you define being a Buddhist?"

"P: erm nice . . . yea that's just what it is, it's just being nice". (Alphonse)

All participants reported they had developed and improved themselves through their Buddhist practice; consequently, they also espoused a more positive self-identity of "Buddhist." This master status (Goffman 1963) of "Buddhist" is a helpful move away from a denigrating label, or social curse (Stevenson et al. 2014), which should help them move on from their previous stigmatized

identity, the "old me" who offended. The qualities they outlined (compassion, being understanding) are presented as not being part of themselves before (i.e., while they were offending); therefore, by developing these qualities, participants are distancing themselves from their offending and the person they were at the time. Not only do they perceive themselves to be better people for having developed themselves through their Buddhist practice, but this also helped to take them further away from their identity as a "sex offender."

2.1.2. I Can See Clearly Now

This theme encapsulates the notion that becoming Buddhist had helped participants to become more objective in their outlook, and to have a greater awareness of themselves and others. Participants felt that Buddhism had given them a clear purpose and path in life.

"It's more a case of refining the way that I view the world into a way that's more skillful". (Keith)

"[T]he main thing, by stepping back and thinking about things first and seeing things for what they are straightaway . . . it teaches you to see the bigger picture . . . you can see the right way of doing something". (Paul Swift)

All participants spoke about how Buddhism helped them think more clearly and gain a better perspective on life. Being Buddhist appeared to allow participants to enter a process of self-reflection. This in turn allowed individuals to change their self-narratives. Presenting a positive self-conception has been demonstrated as leading to positive behavior change (see Presser 2004), becoming a cycle of hope and promise, where a positive self-image leads to positive behavior that further reinforces a positive sense of self. There was a sense not only of being less insular in their thinking and of now being able to see the "bigger picture." Participants also spoke about things appearing to "make sense," and of gaining more structure to their decision-making and problem solving. The notion of now having the right way to approach situations was consistent across participant narratives, the sense that being able to be objective provided them with an ability to deal with situations in a way that non-Buddhists (which included their former selves) could not. The ability to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation are cornerstones of self-regulation, which in turn can posit behavioral change and contribute to desistance (Göbbels et al. 2012).

This increased clarity was linked with practicing mindfulness and being present in the moment, of paying attention to one's surroundings, thoughts, and emotions. By behaving mindfully, participants felt they developed an increased awareness of situations and were therefore better able to make the "right" decision. Consequently, they gained confidence and self-esteem through acting more mindfully and objectively.

"Mindfulness has to be mindful of, in my view, of things as they are. To see things, the negatives and the positives at the same time, as they are, to see the reality of it because if you start looking at it in a skewed way then I think that's unhealthy". (Keith)

This participant suggests the way that he viewed things previously was detrimental to himself (and perhaps others). The use of "skewed" implies he is aware that he was not perceiving things accurately before, which may have led to unhealthy thoughts or actions. This fits with social information processing theories where misattributions can precipitate harmful and antisocial behavior (see Huesmann 1998).

2.1.3. Better Future

Participants asserted that their Buddhist practice helped them both "in the moment" but also to cope with their daily experience of being in custody. Moreover, participants also highlighted how they believed their Buddhist practice offered them a better future, and a chance to atone for their past actions.

> "Buddhism will have a big influence on the way I live from now on . . . it's going to keep
> me safe . . . the choices that I make is going to make my life what I want it". (Keith B)

In this extract, Keith B sets out how his Buddhist practice will affect his future life. Keith B
is asserting that he will now have control over his life through being able to actively make good
choices; he also explains how he will be kept "safe" by Buddhism. Keith B explains Buddhism will,
through practices such as mindfulness, through changes in personal characteristics, such as greater
self-awareness, and by living in harmony with the Buddhist Noble Truths, allow him to lead a safe
and offense-free life.

Participants' narratives in this subtheme also linked to possible future selves. A possible self
is a future-orientated construct of "self" formulated by an individual in relation to hopes, fears,
and aspirations for the future. Possible selves draw on versions of the self in the past and how
they would like to be in the future (Markus and Nurius 1986). Buddhism appeared to be assisting
participants to formulate pro-social selves that they wanted to be in the future. The possible self can
allow for practical identities to be formed i.e., those that are oriented toward pro-social goals.

Several participants expressed the hope that they would have the opportunity to make amends
for their past "unskillful" behavior. Skillful thinking and behavior, the practice of upaya in Mahayana
Buddhism, represent intentions rooted in selflessness, kindness, or wisdom as opposed to unskillful
means derived from greed, delusion, or hatred (Schroeder 2000). A cultivation of positive mental states
allows one to think and act skillfully and with compassion; to associate with others practicing upaya
or embracing a similar mind-set encourages one's own practice and adoption of the positive outlook
described by the participants.

Participants felt that their future behavior would help them to atone for their previous "unskillful"
behavior and that Buddhism offered a framework to understand this change and development of the
self in a way that society was not willing to do for someone who had committed a sexual offense.
This corresponds with the indication that participants felt shame, guilt, and remorse for their offense
and for the bad decisions they had made that led them to that offense. Practicing Buddhism appeared
to be a method by which they could atone for past actions and deal with the negative emotions they
felt regarding their offending.

> "I won't hurt people I love anymore I think Buddhism is, for me, the best thing I can do
> . . . if I can really really get to grips with making myself a good person in prison I can do it
> really well on the outside so I mean the concept of atonement comes to me a lot, it really
> really seems a priority for me to atone for what I did. When I get out I can structure my
> life properly to (A) not do any harm and (B) atone and that will be for the rest of my life".
> (Hengist)

Here Hengist talks about the structure Buddhism offers him, which helps him to atone for his
past behavior. Right now, in prison, with the help of Buddhism, he is becoming a better person,
a different person. This narrative shift is an important aspect in the creation of a pro-social identity
and for desistance from reoffending. Religious narratives can provide powerful vehicles for people to
reinterpret their sense of identity into something far more palatable (Maruna et al. 2006). There are
clear links through participants' narratives and within this theme with redemption and atonement
for their past (bad) behavior. The redemptive self is a powerful motivator of change because one's
identity becomes invested in this narrative of change (McAdams 2006), within the themes here this is
achieved through participants' adoption of "Buddhist qualities." In many cultural narratives, common
redemptive narratives incorporate forms of atonement (ibid.). A negative emotional event becomes the
opening act in a transformative and redemptive sequence. The positive ending, here, being a "new"
person, transformed through Buddhism. Here, faith and practice provide people with an enduring
sense of positive self-transformation within the identity-defining life story (McAdams et al. 2004).
The "redemption script," for example, is characterized by wanting to "give something back" and

by a recognition that, although individuals cannot change the past, they are aware that no one but themselves can control their present and future (Maruna 2001).

Participants claimed that their Buddhist practice and changed outlook on the world would reduce the likelihood of their reoffending on release. This appeared to stem from being more mindful about their actions, as well as now having the Sangha for support.

> "I hope [Buddhism] will help me fit in because erm the world is a valid place out there and I used to be a part of it so I want to stay calm and focused". (John Doe)

> "[other Buddhists] would have responded [to my offending] in a different way to the kind of tabloid reaction or propaganda . . . they'd see that for what it is [respond] with a very understanding kind of way". (Paul Jones)

For some participants, Buddhism was helping individuals obtain a sense of belonging, to allow them to belong to the world. This is important, particularly with this client group who experience a stigmatizing, hostile, and rejecting world (Jahnke et al. 2015). Indeed, finding "belonging," can act as a protective factor (De Vries Robbé et al. 2015). Participants envisaged a better future due to their Buddhist practice—not only because of the skills they had learned (mindfulness, objectivity, and compassion), but because they would now be part of the Buddhist community. Participants expressed confidence that other Buddhists would accept and forgive them for their offending since Buddhism promulgated compassion and a non-judgmental stance. Participants spoke confidently about the future, downplaying concerns regarding other Buddhists' responses to their offending.

Attachment to a cohesive group, such as a religious community, can indeed be a social cure, bringing numerous wellbeing benefits and mitigating the "social curse" of belonging to a group that is seen as unwanted by society, that of "sex offender" (see Stevenson et al. 2014). Furthermore, the hope of "better futures" and possible selves cannot be underestimated, as research has found that self-identification and positive self-image are significant predictors of post-prison outcomes (LeBel et al. 2008). In contrast, feelings of stigmatization and a fear of being "doomed to deviance" are associated with increased rates of recidivism (McCulloch and McNeill 2008).

2.1.4. Attachment Is Futile

This subordinate theme captured participants' aim to have less attachment to things in the future. This fits with the teachings of Buddhism which states that all things are temporary, that attachment equals suffering; thus, Buddhists should try to remove their attachments to (for example) material possessions to reduce personal suffering.

> "I get quite attached to people, I make friends and I expect them to be there all the time so when they're not then that gets me down a bit but then I'm learning not to attach myself to people or things". (Paul Swift)

> "There really isn't anything called the future there is only the present moment". (Hengist)

Participants spoke about how, since becoming Buddhists, they have tried to adopt a less anxious attitude apropos their relationships with others, following this Buddhist notion of impermanence in life. Being able to step away from attachments might be helpful for those convicted of sexual offenses, who have often lost relationships by virtue of the nature of their offense and have been stripped of possessions as one of the pains of imprisonment (Crewe 2011). Thus, a teaching that helps people to rationalize how attachment could be unhelpful may be a positive for these men, giving meaning to what they have lost.

Attachment to sex was a key area that was highlighted within the interviews and is relevant to the participants' offending. Participants highlighted how they felt Buddhist teachings would help them to manage this in the future.

"[Sexual] pleasure is an attachment and in forming these attachments with these things erm one teaching of Buddhism is that there is suffering in attachment because you know you either crave for something that you're attached to or you fear that you're going to lose something so there's the suffering in the worrying". (Paul Jones)

Applying the Buddhist notion of non-attachment to sexual preoccupation, a dynamic risk factor for sexual reoffense (Thornton et al. 2003), could be extremely helpful for individuals convicted of a sexual offense. Viewing the need for sexual pleasure as an attachment that causes suffering could help individuals to challenge sexual preoccupation when they experience this and would offer them a framework to support their attempts to detach from sexual drives that may have underpinned their offending.

2.1.5. Rose-Tinted Buddhist Spectacles

This theme highlights several challenges with potentially unrealistic expectations around themselves, an exaggerated sense of superiority over non-Buddhists, and a sense that, because they were Buddhists, previous offenses could merely be part of a larger pattern of what was "meant to be." Some participants used Buddhist principles to look at their future in such a positive light that they failed to consider challenges they may face on release. Buddhism was the answer to all problems. Although some participants talked about taking responsibility for their actions and having the choice to do "good," others maintained that "Karma decides" what happens, thus absolving responsibility and removing personal control.

"The way Karma works is that you realize you've done something wrong . . . but it maybe gives you an incentive to make sure that in the future you do something incredibly good for people . . . to balance out what you've done wrong . . . it's a major permission giver isn't it . . . if somebody can get away with it in some respect . . . that's not the right principles [sic] behind it but that's not to say people don't do it like that". (Alphonse)

In this extract, Karma seems to balance out previous transgressions through doing a "good" act later. This description of Karma also provides a vehicle for the suffering of victims, which could potentially be justified on these grounds. As stated in Alphonse's extract, such a conceptualization may act as a "permission giver," explaining away actions as being "Karma."

2.2. Ebb and Flow

This superordinate theme brings together subthemes relating to harmony and equilibrium; it is a balance that comes about through the adjustment of disequilibrium, of constant calibration, and change rather than a result of stasis.

2.2.1. Karma

A number of participants discussed how practicing Buddhism has helped them to recognize that their actions are their responsibility, that they have the choice to do good and must accept the consequences of their actions if they do not. Participants spoke about the balancing out of good and bad.

Karma and what this means to the participants was a substantive topic in participants' narratives. It appeared that this had a substantial impact on how the participants made decisions.

"If you dish out bad Karma all the time you're going to end up coming back in these places so try and good Karma and things will go nice . . . I find it a lot more enjoyable to erm have good Karma . . . I've got a clear conscious I can go back to my cell and I can sleep every night whereas before I found it very difficult". (John Doe)

In the extract above, John Doe describes the notion of Karma as providing himself with a level of inner peace. The emphasis placed on the concept of Karma appears to change how participants feel

about their life and decision-making. Learning about Karma appears to have provided them with a reason to behave well, which they said they were previously lacking. When practicing Buddhism, behaving positively has the added incentive of providing good Karma, which may motivate individuals to make more positive decisions. The combination of increased responsibility-taking for behavior combined with the morality and ethics taught by Buddhism and the concept of Karma encouraged participants to want to behave in a way they perceived as being "good" or "kind."

> "I was just going through this process of trying to understand things . . . just looking at me . . . why my life had been such a disaster . . . the conclusions that I come to was it was, erm, it was my decision erm, no matter how clouded my mind was it was, you know, no matter what I had experienced up to that point, it was still my decision". (Paul Jones)

This links with research that indicates that an internal locus of control has been associated with increased benefit from treatment in a sample of people who had abused children. Further, having an internal locus of control prior to treatment was an important predictor of treatment success (Fisher et al. 1998). Believing they have a choice in their decisions provides the participants with a sense of control over their lives. Combined with the decision to try and do good (as set out in the previous superordinate theme, *Better as a Buddhist*), a belief in Karma could contribute to the men living a fulfilling and pro-social life in the future. In the extract above, participant Paul Jones twice emphasizes the difficulties he was encountering when he offended. However, he also affirms that he must nevertheless take responsibility for his decisions. The feeling of being in control and taking responsibility for one's actions, as exemplified in an internal locus of control, would be considered a positive outcome for treatment intervention and consequent desistance, certainly for those convicted of sexual offenses (McAnena et al. 2016).

2.2.2. Emotional Balance

This theme highlights how participants have used Buddhist practice, and in particular mindfulness and meditation, to help them to manage strong negative emotions including anger and depression. Research has shown that people with sexual convictions can lack emotional management skills; developing skills to be able to deal with unhelpful emotions can be extremely beneficial to such individuals (Gillespie et al. 2012).

> "I was going into heavy depressions . . . I have to fight the urge to kill myself in all of the negative energy . . . using the meditation and skills when I was going through the negative process I was able to get on top of the downward spiral before it was able to get hold of me and drag me down . . . I'm able to recognize when it's coming and I can then go and meditate and control it to stop it from coming". (Keith)

This extract suggests that Buddhist practice has provided him with the tools to be able to recognize and manage bouts of depression more effectively using techniques of mindfulness and meditation. Being better equipped to cope with negative emotions will benefit a range of areas of individuals' lives, including relationships, employment, physical health, and desistance of sexual offenses. Another participant reflects on how Buddhism has helped him change his angry outlook on himself and others.

> "If I hadn't stumbled across [Buddhism] I'd be really really angry with myself and with everybody else as well . . . I wouldn't be, you know, even a vaguely pleasant person I don't think, erm I'd be very very sad as well... It helps you deal with stress it helps you deal with deep emotions and gives you perspective". (Hengist)

Providing a healthy and helpful coping strategy for dealing with emotions, and a better base from which to problem solve ("perspective") is a healthy part of the desistance process (Ward and Mann 2004).

Participants also talked about how their Buddhist practice and identifying as a Buddhist helped them to deal with the stigma of being labeled as a "sex offender" by providing them with an alternative "good" identity, which they could develop and focus on, relating back to the earlier theme of atonement.

> "The normal human being inside you is disgusted and ashamed by it [offending] and the Buddhist inside you perks up a little bit and you are still disgusted and ashamed but you're also, you also understand, it takes account of the fact you can be a better person in the future". (Alphonse)

It is possible that developing a Buddhist identity helps prisoners to cope with the problems of being in custody. By developing and changing themselves during their sentence, they can manage the emotions associated with having their freedom restricted, lacking control, and being away from friends, family, and their normal coping strategies. This positive identity may also provide them with hope for the future, which in turn helps them to cope with the difficulties of serving a custodial sentence, and the pains of imprisonment associated with this (Crewe 2011). In this sense, changes in identity through Buddhist practice strike at the heart of the "Good Lives Model (GLM) of offender rehabilitation (see Ward and Stewart 2003; Ward and Marshall 2007). The GLM aims to help offenders construct more adaptive narrative identities while also giving the offender the tools to enable them to attain those goods which are important to them post-release. This parallels Vaughan's (2007) argument that change in one's internal narrative identity comes from a reconsolidation of their ultimate concerns. There is evidence to suggest that religion can represent the core from which many of these mechanisms can flourish and assist the desistance process in offenders (Perrin et al. 2018).

2.2.3. Acceptance

This subtheme highlights how the participants described their approach to problems in life as a Buddhist. They spoke about the notion of "impermanence": that things are constantly changing. Participants explained that this helped them to accept how things are in the present moment and to reduce craving and desire for things to be different.

> "You shouldn't crave for things because craving is what causes the suffering...be satisfied with how it is there and then...things are forever changing, nothing stays the same, people come and go". (Paul Swift)

Paul Swift states you "shouldn't" crave for things. Here he is setting himself a strict rule which he reports to live by. It appears this is an ideal to strive for rather than being an easy goal to achieve as he later highlights how he does experience cravings and struggles to stay "in the moment" at times.

> "I'm more focused . . . more considered kind of life . . . how to respond on a daily basis in a better way . . . look at the chain of consequences". (Paul Jones)

Here, Paul Jones uses the concept of acceptance to explain how he approaches situations. By considering how behavior and thoughts impact each other allowed him to make better decisions. One participant described getting to the "it-doesn't-matter" stage before getting annoyed and frustrated with a person or problem. This highlights how accepting the current moment can help the participants to manage difficult situations: to the Buddhist, since things are not permanent, but will change, one simply needs to wait as negative feelings will not last.

> "It takes a lot of time even now I sort of get annoyed with certain things people's actions but again it's just a passing moment". (Paul Swift)

2.2.4. Open to Abuse

One further element to this subtheme was the idea that Buddhist prisoners are left vulnerable within the establishment due to the nature of their beliefs and their practice. Practicing Buddhist

principles and being thoughtful of others allows individuals to take advantage of them. The fact that other individuals do not live by the same principles that they do leaves them open to potential victimization.

> "Because of our um giving freely people will take advantage of it they'll come into my cell and they'll say I want a cigarette by rights I have to give them one coz they've asked you know I give freely but some of them jump on board and they use that excuse to say oh I want this I want that you know I don't say anything, it's not my problem, they're the ones with the problem not me you know, if I've got it they can have it, if I haven't got it they don't [fully] stop ... you've got to be very careful you can be taken advantage of". (Keith)

Within this extract, Keith acknowledges his duty to give freely as a Buddhist, but he also appears to resent this at times.

3. Discussion

This research highlights how participants serving custodial sentences for a sexual offense perceive that they have changed through becoming a Buddhist and engaging in Buddhist practices. Participants reported how they used Buddhism to cope with daily life within custody as well as to develop themselves into "better," more pro-social individuals ready for release. While the sample size was modest, it was appropriate for the phenomenological method used, which requires detailed analysis of rich, idiographic data. It should be acknowledged that the sample was self-selecting and constituted 15 percent of the Buddhist population in the prison.

So why Buddhism? The current study with prisoners who identify as Buddhist is part of a larger research program with individuals of different faiths (see Winder et al. 2018; Blagden et al. 2018). Research on the link between recidivism and religion has demonstrated a weak association between the two (Johnson 2004): research such as this has, however, led to calls for more research on the impact of religious involvement and, in particular, faith-based treatment programs in prison (see, for example, Thomas and Zaitzow 2006). Alongside quantitative studies, it is important to undertake qualitative research that helps to inform our understanding of the theoretical and clinical basis for any statistical relationships. The current study was designed to achieve this idiographic exploration of Buddhist faith and practice.

One of the main aims of cognitive-behavioral-based interventions (the main form of intervention in the UK prison service) is to provide individuals with skills that they lack, which may have contributed to their offending. Participants highlighted how Buddhism and their Buddhist practice had enabled them to develop in ways that improved their emotional regulation and their problem solving skills and to develop an internal locus of control. These are all psychologically meaningful risk factors related to committing sexual offenses (Mann et al. 2010). Indeed, several parallels between Buddhist teachings and skills taught in offending behavior programs became apparent. Both appear to encourage individuals to change unhelpful negative behaviors, both encourage insight and consideration of problems and feelings and both support building healthier, more content identities while reducing harm to others. As noted in the analysis, Buddhist practice had links to the GLM of offender rehabilitation, a strength-based treatment approach, which moves away from focusing on risk factors and instead looks to galvanize any pro-social traits in offenders (Ward and Stewart 2003). The GLM aims to help offenders construct more adaptive narrative identities, and some participants articulated that their Buddhist practices assisted in the transition to more positive/good selves. What is apparent is how both programs and Buddhism have the potential to support each other in assisting people who have committed a sexual offense to live an offense-free life. This is possibly unusual. Typically, the chaplaincy works separately form offending behavior programs, and therapists may fear or avoid touching on areas relating to an individuals' faith, for fear of offense or accusations of prejudice (Wakame 2014). However, it is important that the existence and impact of the beliefs presented by religious individuals are not avoided by the prison service. Religious illiteracy (Moore 2007) amongst

therapists working with individuals convicted of sexual offenses hinders the unravelling of faith-linked rationalizations for offending behavior, an integral part of cognitive-behavioral treatment programs.

From understanding Buddhist practices, there seemed to be a substantial number of benefits for participants. Indeed, some of the Buddhist practices such as mindfulness and compassion are being adopted into mainstream, secular treatment programs. However, as with any faith, misunderstandings are indubitably going to arise apropos beliefs and practices that may foster unhealthy attitudes or behavior by adherents. Prisoners, in their somewhat isolated existence, may cultivate to extreme faith-based attitudes or behavior, some of which may be unhealthy for this particular service user group. The main example of this here is regarding attachment; while participants highlighted how Buddhism would discourage having attachments (toward people or objects), research has demonstrated that having an emotionally intimate relationship with a partner (which would involve an attachment) can help to protect individuals from further sexual offenses. This is a clear conflict between what an individual's Buddhist practice may tell them and what professionals involved in helping someone to remain offense-free may encourage. Of course, having an emotionally intimate relationship (or an attachment) is not the sole factor involved in remaining offense-free and it is possible that someone could live pro-socially without this; however, it is an element that could cause conflict for individuals who are incarcerated for a sexual offense and who are Buddhist. Another example of Buddhist practice potentially conflicting with risk management is the idea that the future does not exist. This concept is linked to mindfulness and that individuals should live in the moment as much as possible. Although most participants were realistic about needing to plan for the future, it is possible that some Buddhist prisoners may choose not to do this, choosing to manage themselves in the moment instead. This could be problematic for an individual as they would not be foreseeing any potential consequences of their actions or anticipating any future risk that could be a result of their actions or behavior. Previous research has found that religion could be used in self-serving ways by individuals who interpreted religious doctrine in a way that allowed them to justify their behavior, exacerbating their offending (Topalli et al. 2013).

It should also be acknowledged that this research cannot comment on the utility (or otherwise) of Buddhist practices in the community. Feeling accepted by a community can be an important protective factor for desistance by individuals with sexual convictions; the current study is unable to comment on the experiences of Buddhist participants in the community, nor the participants' ability or desire to continue to practice Buddhism when they are released. Future studies would find a useful area to explore.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Participants

The sample consisted of seven adult males convicted of a sexual offense who were currently serving sentences at a UK prison that specializes in working with men convicted of such offenses. Although the sample size is modest, thorough analysis of the data was prioritized over a larger sample size, as this allowed a richer exploration of the idiographic data.

Participants were all white and British, with a mean age of 42 (SD: 16.02). All participants had completed an offending behavior program—either a specialist sex offender treatment program or a living skills program. The inclusion criteria for the research were prisoners serving a custodial sentence for a sexual offense and identifying themselves as Buddhist. The sample comprised 15 percent of the Buddhist population at the prison.

Participants' names were changed to pseudonyms to protect their identities and provide them with anonymity throughout the study. See Table 2 for information regarding the participants.

Table 2. Participant information.

P	Pseudonym	Occupation	Religious before/after Offending	Offending Behavior Programmes Completed
1	Hengist	Worked on night club doors and pub doors	Discovered Buddhism in prison	Core SOTP
2	Alphonse	Student	Buddhist since age 8	Thinking Skills Programme
3	Paul Swift	Only in the community for a short time, worked as a joiner, as a barman, and in a burger bar	Raised Church of England, discovered Buddhism in prison	Core SOTP; Enhanced Thinking Skills; Controlling Anger and Learning to Manage It
4	Keith	Medically retired/previously a lorry driver	Discovered Buddhism in prison	Becoming New Me SOTP; Adapted Better Lives Booster
5	Keith B	Emergency Medical Technician	Raised Church of England; practicing Buddhism at times throughout life	Thinking Skills Programme; Core SOTP; Extended SOTP
6	John Doe	Electrician	Raised Roman Catholic	Prison-Addressing Substance-Related Offending; Enhanced Thinking Skills; Core SOTP; Extended SOTP
7	Paul Jones	Police Officer	Discovered Buddhism in prison	Core SOTP

4.2. Data Collection

Access to participants was granted following ethical approval by Her Majesty's Prison Service and a UK university. Potential participants were recruited via visiting the establishment Buddhist group, posters on the wings, and an interview on the prison radio station. Volunteers contacted the lead researcher who arranged an information and consent appointment with potential participants.

All participants were interviewed on a one-to-one basis by one of the researchers in a private room within the prison, offering a respectful environment for participants to discuss their experiences. Each interview was recorded on a passcode-protected dictaphone and transcribed verbatim.

Interviews

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 1.5 and 3 h. The interview schedule was developed from that used for previous research investigating Christianity within this population (Winder et al. 2018), and the questions were adapted to reflect the differences between Buddhism and the Christian faith. The questions were categorized into five main sections:

1. questions about their Buddhist practice and the values they associated with this;
2. self, home and family environment, and personal information (such as occupation and age);
3. their Buddhist beliefs in relation to their offending;
4. treatment interventions and their Buddhist beliefs;
5. future plans, goals, and coping outside prison.

4.3. Analysis

The research utilized the analytic method of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This method was chosen as its aim is to explore the lived experience of individuals and the meaning they attribute to that, while also acknowledging and including the impact of the researchers' interpretations.

IPA is concerned with the quality of the experience rather than with the identification of cause–effect relationships (Willig 2013). This means it can attempt to explain events and experiences but cannot predict them. Although it is subjective, it is systematic. Through analyzing the semi-structured interviews, we aimed to facilitate the understanding of experiences of Buddhist individuals convicted of a sexual offense. Analysis was guided by previous precedents (see, for example, Smith 2004;

Smith and Osborn 2008), entailing a detailed reading and re-reading of transcripts, the production of notes pertaining to possible subordinate themes, and the systematic generation and clustering of subordinate themes into superordinate themes.

5. Conclusions

It appears that many aspects of Buddhism could be helpful for individuals both on a risk management and a personal level. The interviews highlighted how Buddhism has the potential to act as a protective factor for some individuals by helping them to build insight and awareness, as well as skills to manage emotions, become part of a pro-social community, and develop morality and compassion toward themselves and others. These are all positive elements and it was clear from the research how much the participants felt they had benefited from their Buddhist practice.

One concern was the potential for misinterpretation from individuals, despite clear guidance from the Buddhist Chaplain. It is possible that individuals will the Buddhist teachings in their own way; in fact, one element of Buddhist teaching pertains to about taking responsibility and making up your own mind about how to behave (The Eightfold Path). This could potentially lead to individuals choosing risky behaviors and justifying them either with Karma or through cognitive distortions.

One outcome of the research was the idea of teaching ethics alongside mindfulness in order to promote compassion and kindness. This is something that the participants and the Buddhist Chaplain were passionate about when discussing the use of mindfulness within interventions. As the concept of mindfulness comes from Buddhism this is particularly relevant, and it is interesting that compassion-based therapy is becoming more popular within psychology. This could suggest an increase in the belief that building compassion can help to improve individuals' lives.

One positive outcome from this research is that all participants noted a need and a motivation to make changes to themselves, and a wish to be offense-free in future. Participants all spoke hopefully about being able to manage their risk in the community. Although there is no clear indication that Buddhist practice in itself reduces the risk of sexual recidivism, it appears to provide adherents with an element of hope and motivation to change. Emerging evidence would indicate that this is a positive finding indeed.

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Religious Contexts and Violence in Emerging and Traditional Immigrant Destinations

Casey T. Harris [1,*], Ben Feldmeyer [2] and Raymond Barranco [3]

[1]   Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, University of Arkansas, 211 Old Main,
      Fayetteville, AR 72701, USA

[2]   College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services, University of Cincinnati;
      Cincinnati, OH 45221, USA; feldmebn@ucmail.uc.edu

[3]   Department of Sociology, Mississippi State University, Bowen Hall 456 Hardy Road,
      Mississippi State, MS 39762, USA; RBarranco@soc.msstate.edu

*   Correspondence: caseyh@uark.edu

Abstract: Amidst both a resurgent interest in the impact of religion on social problems like crime, including its contextual effects, as well as scholarship directed toward the immigration-crime intersection, the current study examines how different religious traditions impact known violent offending uniquely in traditional versus emerging immigrant destinations. To do so, we employ negative binomial models regressing homicides, robberies, and aggravated assaults on adherence to three major religious traditions (mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Catholic), as well as immigration and other key macro-structural controls. We disaggregate our analysis for three types of United States counties in 2010: emerging, traditional, and other immigrant destinations. We find that religious traditions vary in their relationship with known violence across destination types: Catholic adherence is protective against crime (net of controls) only in established immigrant destinations, but evangelical Protestant adherence is associated with higher levels of robbery and aggravated assault in the same locales. Religious adherence has no links to violence in emerging immigrant destinations. Broadly, our findings reveal that the religious context is an important part of the evolving story of immigration, though it is multifaceted and context-dependent.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

Across the last half century, the scientific study of religion and its intersections with crime, deviance, and crime control policy has undergone massive growth. More recently, the early decades of the 21st century have also seen two largely independent literatures emerge within sociology, examining the ways that (1) religious contexts and (2) immigration are related to macro-level patterns of violence. Research on religious contexts and crime—which remains small but growing—has generally shown that religious adherence is associated with lower rates of violence (Lee 2006; Lee and Bartkowski 2004; Ulmer and Harris 2013). Likewise, a separate and generally much larger body of scholarship on immigration and crime consistently reports that places with larger immigrant populations have either similar or lower levels of violence than places with relatively few foreign-born residents (Martinez 2002; Ousey and Kubrin 2009; Sampson 2008; Shihadeh and Barranco 2010). In sum, high levels of immigration and religious affiliation both appear to make communities safer or (at worst) no more crime-prone than comparable places with less immigration or religious adherence.

However, two issues remain unresolved. First, research has yet to fully explore the relationships between religious adherence and immigration, especially as they intersect to shape macro-level patterns of crime and violence. Indeed, religion has long been viewed as a distinct cultural force within communities, purveying moral norms of behavior backed by sacred meanings and occasional sanctions (Smith 2003). Focusing on immigrant populations, both theoretical and empirical research on religious transmission across countries (Van Tubergen 2006), as well as scholarship on immigrant assimilation, suggest that the church is a central institution of support in immigrant communities that reinforces traditional value systems and strengthens social networks (Hirschman 2004; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Likewise, from a related structural position, the "immigrant revitalization" perspective suggests that attachment to pro-social institutions (including religious ones) among foreign-born individuals helps to stabilize immigrant communities in ways that strengthen informal social control and insulate them from social problems, including crime (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Martinez 2002; Shihadeh and Winters 2010). Yet, few studies have empirically examined these relationships to identify the potential connections between immigration, religious contexts, and crime (for an exception, see Harris and Feldmeyer 2015).

Second, there is a need to better contextualize the effects of both community religious permeation and immigration on crime by exploring how these relationships vary across (a) different types of religious adherence and (b) unique immigrant contexts. Although research on religion and crime at the macro-level remains underdeveloped, preliminary findings suggest that adherence to specific religious traditions[1] and includes such denominations as Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Methodist. may have unique effects on community rates of crime and related social problems (Beyerlein and Hipp 2005). Similarly, research on the immigration-crime nexus observes that immigration impacts violence in unique ways depending on a community's history of immigrant settlement (Painter-Davis 2016; Ramey 2013; Shihadeh and Barranco 2013). In particular, immigrants settling in the U.S. over the past decade have increasingly bypassed traditional urban points of entry in favor of towns, rural areas, cities, and states with little or no established history of foreign-born settlement (Frey 2006; Singer 2004; Shihadeh and Barranco 2010, 2013; Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005). How such a demographic shift intersects with patterns of religious adherence and, in turn, crime remains wholly unexplored.

Taken together, empirical research is needed that (1) establishes the ways in which immigration and religious contexts shape community patterns of crime; and (2) identifies whether these macro-level relationships vary across different types of immigrant contexts or are contingent upon the type of religious adherence present in a community. The current study seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationships between mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Catholic adherence and rates of serious violent crime across emerging, established, and other immigrant destinations throughout the United States in 2010.

1.2. Religion and Crime at the Macro-Level

Social scientists interested in patterns of crime across communities have overwhelmingly focused on structural features of communities, especially measures of disadvantage, to explain differences in crime across place. Over the past several decades, measures of poverty, unemployment, and mobility have been found to be "among the strongest macro-level predictors of crime" (Pratt and Cullen 2005, p. 397; see also Peterson and Krivo 2005). Increasingly, however, prominent scholars, both within the sociology of religion and criminology, have supplemented and extended such research by examining

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[1] Religious traditions are typically delineated using the RELTRAD scheme (Steensland et al. 2000), in which denominations are grouped into Catholic, Jewish, evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, black Protestant, and "other" religious traditions. For clarity, evangelical Protestantism emphasizes a personal relationship with Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the importance of sharing faith with non-believers (i.e., evangelism), and is usually seen as being more theologically and socially conservative. Examples of such denominations include Baptist, Pentecostal, and Church of God. In contrast, mainline Protestantism is considered theologically liberal or moderate (though this "tradition" is quite a bit more heterogeneous than evangelical Protestantism),

the way macro-level patterns of crime are shaped by cultural and civic characteristics of communities, especially religious ones, which are thought to buffer against crime and other social problems as suggested by sociological scholarship (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson 2013).

For example, religious organizations and their adherents promote cultural belief systems emphasizing morality, benevolence, and support for laws and societal rules that should work to reduce crime (Hirschi and Stark 1969) and, in some cases, may encourage intergroup contact, civic engagement, and informal supervision that reduces offending (Putnam 2000). Likewise, drawing theoretically from classic Chicago School themes, civic community perspectives stress that local religious organizations augment social networks and aid in the production of social capital that can, among other things, foster informal social control among community residents (Lee 2006) in ways consistent with Putnam (2000) emphasis on "bridging" residents of communities through faith works. Moreover, systemic models of social disorganization suggest that the permeation of religion at the macro-level strengthens social ties (both parochial and private) by increasing community-wide institutional engagement and social interaction (Bursik and Grasmick 1993). In turn, these social networks can increase community levels of collective efficacy and guardianship in ways that reduce crime (Lee and Bartkowski 2004; Tolbert et al. 1998, 2002), or even increase tangible social, economic, and material support (e.g., assistance with food, clothing, finances, transportation, housing, counseling, as well as physical and mental health care) that helps counter the disadvantages residents face and that are commonly linked to strain and crime (Merton 1938). Indeed, research by Johnson et al. (2000) demonstrates the critical role played by religion, especially in disadvantaged contexts, in reducing criminal behaviors. Finally, drawing from institutional anomie theory, greater religious adherence is thought to decrease crime rates by strengthening the role of non-economic institutions that provide normative control in communities (Chamlin and Cochran 1995; Messner and Rosenfeld 1994) or that provide conventional social bonds, as well as cultural belief systems that emphasize morality, benevolence, and support for laws and societal rules consistent with social bonding theories of crime (Hirschi and Stark 1969).

In support of these theoretical perspectives, research to-date finds that places with a greater presence of religious adherents have lower rates of juvenile homicide (Lee and Bartkowski 2004) and violent crime more broadly, net of other key structural features (Harris and Feldmeyer 2015; Lee 2006, 2008; Ulmer and Harris 2013). Yet, sociologists have long recognized that some religious groups (namely mainline Protestants and Catholics) are more likely to promote "bridging social capital" that enhances social networks, strengthens between-group ties, and encourages community-wide coordination (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999) than other religious groups (namely evangelical Protestants), which can foster "bonding social capital that creates strong ties among in-group members but does less to encourage wider outreach to the community" (Putnam 2000). Consistent with such expectations, several studies report either null or negative associations between mainline Protestant or Catholic adherence and crime, but find that evangelical Protestant adherence is positively associated with violence (e.g., Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Desmond et al. 2010; Ellison et al. 2003; Shihadeh and Winters 2010). However, outside of these few exceptions, research offers little insight about macro-level religion and crime relationships, especially across distinct religious traditions.

1.3. Religion and Crime in Immigrant Destinations

Paralleling this macro-level religion-crime literature, questions remain as to how religious adherence, especially to specific traditions, is linked to crime in different types of communities, including those into which immigrants migrate. Indeed, there is a growing consensus among social scientists that immigration does not contribute to crime in the manner often espoused in political and public rhetoric, and, in fact, is often negatively associated with community levels of violence (for a recent meta-analysis, see Ousey and Kubrin (2018)). In turn, scholars have suggested (but rarely tested) that religion may be a key protective mechanism through which immigration insulates communities from crime (Harris and Feldmeyer 2015; Shihadeh and Winters 2010). Certainly

the immigrant assimilation literature and leading "immigrant revitalization" perspectives emphasize religious institutions and their adherents as sources of social support, familiar cultural traditions, and social ties that help new (and not so new) immigrants overcome the barriers they face in their new communities (Lee et al. 2001; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Overall, then, the religious context may provide a "shot of morality" (Harris and Feldmeyer 2015, p. 229) or function as a central spoke in the "umbrella of social control" (Shihadeh and Winters 2010, p. 628) that insulates immigrant communities from social problems.

Yet, beginning around the turn of the 21st century, immigrant settlement within the United States began to expand outside the traditional, urban locales near the border in favor of emerging destinations within counties and states without much history of immigrant reception, including smaller cities, towns, suburbs, and rural areas (Frey 2006; Lichter and Johnson 2009; Shihadeh and Barranco 2010). Certainly, the story of immigrant population growth has been a profoundly uneven one in which "the immigrant population more than doubled in 19 states, many of which had little prior experience with the foreign born" (Terrazas 2011, p. 1). Still other communities fall somewhere in between, experiencing some small but steady immigrant population growth different than in traditional or emerging destinations. Central to our purposes here, the result is that immigrant communities differ greatly in their histories of settlement in ways that might condition the relationship between religion and crime at the macro-level, especially as it regards the three largest religious traditions: Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and mainline Protestant.

Indeed, there are good reasons to suspect that religious adherence as a milieu effect may operate differently across immigrant communities. First, a large proportion of immigrants arriving over the past several decades are of Hispanic origin, with many having long participated in the Catholic faith in their countries of birth (Navarro-Rivera et al. 2010; Pew Hispanic Center 2007, 2014). As such, they may look to the Catholic Church for help in organizing their social lives and for orienting themselves in their new communities. However, this may work differently in emerging destinations as compared to more traditional ones, with competing expectations as to whether Catholic adherence protects against crime more in one or the other types of contexts. On the one hand, emerging immigrant locales have fewer alternative civic organizations for new Hispanic immigrants (Shihadeh and Winters 2010) and, as such, the Catholic Church may function as a vehicle for assimilation and protection in more pronounced ways in such places. On the other hand, traditional immigrant communities have longer histories of Hispanic settlement and a larger "critical mass" of Catholic adherents (and more established institutions and places of worship). As a result, the Catholic Church may be more established as a pillar of the community in traditional immigrant destinations and may be better positioned to provide social capital and protective benefits to help minimize crime in established immigrant communities.

Second, while previous research has found evangelical Protestantism to be positively associated with crime (Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Shihadeh and Winters 2010), it may have stronger effects in some types of immigrant communities than others. For example, the relative presence of evangelical adherents has been linked to greater bonding capital that promotes in-group solidarity and insularity and that creates barriers to forming broader community-wide social networks (or exacerbates tension with outgroups that undermines cooperation and social control efforts across groups). As such, we might expect evangelical Protestantism to yield few (if any) benefits to crime prevention in emerging immigrant destinations because few immigrants arrive in the U.S. already attached to or seeking connections with such institutions. At the same time, evangelical adherence may not be associated with increased rates of crime in emerging immigrant communities, simply because the kinds of in-group/out-group tension suggested by prior research (e.g., Beyerlein and Hipp 2005) have not developed given the relatively recent presence of immigrants in such communities. In traditional immigrant destinations, however, evangelical adherence might be positively associated with crime, as observed in prior research, because the longer history of immigrant settlement and more established religious participation patterns engender more of the bonding capital dynamics that undermine community social control capacity (Putnam 2000).

Finally, there are reasons to suspect that mainline Protestantism may either (a) be negatively associated with crime in both emerging and traditional immigrant destinations; (b) be negatively associated with crime only in traditional immigrant communities; or (c) have little or no impact on crime in either traditional or emerging immigrant destinations. Specifically, mainline Protestant denominations are thought to produce more bridging capital than evangelical adherence at the macro-level, suggesting that such adherence is negatively associated with crime in all contexts (see Beyerlein and Hipp 2005). However, mainline Protestants represent only a small fraction of the religious landscape compared to evangelical Protestants (see Table 1 below) and are especially heterogeneous in their community outreach, with only a small proportion that are classified as "civically engaged" (Tolbert et al. 1998; see also Lee and Bartkowski 2004). As such, mainline Protestantism may be negatively associated with crime only in traditional immigrant destinations where civic outreach has had time to extend to the foreign-born population. In contrast, such adherence may also offer little crime-prevention benefits, regardless of destination type, because adherence to other religious traditions (e.g., Catholicism) matters more.

In sum, there are reasons to suspect that adherence to specific religious traditions could link to either higher or lower community crime rates (or null relationships) and that these associations may differ widely across established and emerging immigrant destinations. Yet, to our knowledge, only a single study has directly examined the link between religious contextual characteristics and crime in immigrant destinations. Using year 2000 Latino homicide victimizations, Shihadeh and Winters (2010) found that Catholic participation is unrelated to Latino homicide in emerging and traditional destinations, while mainline Protestant adherence is positively associated with rates of Latino homicide in emerging destinations (but not in traditional communities). Although it offers numerous contributions to this line of inquiry, their analysis is limited to the assessment of Latino homicide victimization and uses year 2000 data. Thus, our goal here is to extend the seminal work of Shihadeh and Winters (2010) and the broader religion-crime literature to examine how various types of religious adherence predict serious violence (both lethal and non-lethal) in emerging as compared to established immigrant communities. We now describe the parameters of the current study.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sources of Data

Data for the current study are drawn from three sources. First, we utilize the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program's county-level database of offenses known to law enforcement for the years 2009–2011 that record the number of offenses reported or detected by the police for each agency. Second, we pair our crime data with measures of macro-structural characteristics, including immigration and key control variables, derived from the United States Census summary files and American Community Survey for the year 2010. Third, characteristics of the religious context are drawn from the Religious Congregations and Membership Survey (RCMS) for the year 2010. The RCMS provides a county-by-county enumeration of religious bodies in the U.S. as tallied by the National Council of Churches and the Glenmary Research Center with each participating religious body supplying the number of churches, full members, adherents (affiliated members of a congregation or those who regularly attend services), and other church population estimates (Jones et al. 2002).

Though we are unaware of any viable alternative data sources for assessing the link between the religious context and crime across a large number of units at the macro-level, we recognize several caveats in using the RCMS. One limitation is that it likely undercounts some religious adherents, especially minorities (Finke and Scheitle 2005), even though the 2010 RCMS data have devoted considerable effort to alleviating this problem relative to prior data collection

efforts (Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies 2012).[2] Additionally, the RCMS data cannot capture degrees of participation or more nuanced aspects of adherence (e.g., level of involvement, belief, attachment, or race/ethnic-specific adherence). We acknowledge that these are important nuances impacting the religious milieu in a given community, and that should be explored. As such, we highlight these in our concluding discussion as important avenues for future research. Nevertheless, we rely on the population of religious adherents because it is an established measure of the institutional permeation of religion in a locale and because it captures the type of collective adherence that is thought to shape normative cultural milieu and foster social control, as suggested in prior empirical research (see Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Ulmer and Harris 2013).

2.2. Units of Analysis

Our unit of analysis is the county, which we use for three reasons. First, counties are the smallest aggregate units for which religious contextual data via the RCMS are available. Although some scholars might prefer smaller study units, many of the theoretical frameworks supporting macro-level research (e.g., civic community, social disorganization, institutional anomie) are not restricted to neighborhoods or smaller units, but have in many instances been applied to larger units of varying sizes (e.g., counties, states, and even nations) (see for example Lee and Bartkowski 2004; Ogsood and Chambers 2000). Second, counties provide a large enough sample size to include an adequate number of covariates while retaining statistical power to detect effects. Third, most prior research examining religion and crime at the macro-level has used counties as a unit of analysis and has illustrated that they are well-suited for identifying macro-level patterns of religious participation (e.g., Lee and Bartkowski 2004; Lee 2006, 2008; Shihadeh and Winters 2010).

We restrict our sample of counties to those that provide violent crime estimates to the FBI's UCR program for the period of 2009–2011, have a total population of at least 10,000, and at least 1000 foreign-born persons residing within them in 2010.[3] There are approximately 1359 counties meeting these criteria, together covering the majority of the U.S. population and violent crime in the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2010). Following prior research (Harris and Feldmeyer 2013; Lichter and Johnson 2009), we partitioned these counties into "traditional" and "emerging" immigrant locales: traditional destinations were defined as those counties in which the foreign-born population in 1980, 1990, and 2000 exceeded the national averages at each point, while emerging destinations were delineated as those counties where the percentage of foreign-born persons was less than the national average in 1980 and 1990, but where the foreign-born population grew by more than 100 percent between 1990 and 2000. All counties not fitting into either of these two categories but which met our basic population requirements were considered "other" immigrant destinations and are presented alongside our findings for the traditional and emerging destinations as a point of comparison. Our final sample includes 320 traditional, 135 emerging, and 649 other immigrant destinations.[4]

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[2] Some attempts have been made to correct the undercount problem in the 2010 RCMS, but minorities in marginal denominations (or those which are non-denominational) are often overlooked because they lack resources for data collection efforts. Though few alternative data sources exist, it is important to keep in mind that some adherents may still be missing despite efforts to capture them. This also hinders our ability to construct a longitudinal database for examining change over time, since there is an issue of reliability across multiple points.

[3] We also ran a full battery of diagnostic tests to assess the impact of influential cases in our sample of counties. No outliers were identified using standard DFFIT cut-off points, and Cook's D tests revealed several potential outliers that did not substantively influence the results when removed from supplemental models. We also conducted Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg tests and visually assessed plots of residuals versus fitted values, which revealed little indication of heteroskedasticity. In addition, we inspected the geographic distribution of counties to assess whether spatial autocorrelation could be a problem. Preliminary analyses using Moran's I statistics revealed no significant effects of spatial autocorrelation in our models with many spatial "islands" appearing in the subsamples of emerging, traditional, and other immigrant destinations.

[4] None of our counties were classified simultaneously as emerging, established, or "other" immigrant destinations (see Painter-Davis (2016) for a discussion of this issue). Alternative methods of defining immigrant destinations resulted in some of the counties in our "other" category being reclassified as "emerging" or (in fewer cases) "traditional" (see Harris and Feldmeyer (2013); Painter-Davis (2016) for similar alternative specification tests). Our primary results

2.3. Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this study are county-level homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault counts centered on the year 2010. Following prior research, violence counts are averaged across a three-year period (2009–2011) to provide greater stability to our measures as well as to ensure adequate offense counts for statistically rare offenses like homicide.[5] Data drawn from official justice agency sources are subject to well-known critiques, namely that they (a) underestimate true levels of offending and (b) are confounded to some degree by enforcement efforts, attention, and policies of state and local police. We recognize these caveats, but note that the current study's measure of crime includes "offenses known" to law enforcement (through report/detection), rather than only those that result in arrest. Our analysis also focuses on established measures of serious violence (especially homicide and robbery) that are more reliably measured and less subject to police discretion or enforcement practices across locales (Lafree et al. 2008; Steffensmeier and Haynie 2000). Finally, we include a control for police force size using a measure of logged police per capita.

Although some macro-level studies of immigration and crime have examined race/ethnic-specific crime rates (e.g., Harris and Feldmeyer 2013; Martinez et al. 2010; Shihadeh and Barranco 2010), many others do not (Feldmeyer et al. 2015; Lyons et al. 2013; Ousey and Kubrin 2009; Ramey 2013; Wadsworth 2010). The current study relies on overall or total county rates of violence for several reasons. First, race/ethnic-specific crime data that code Latinos separately from Whites and Blacks are not widely available for all of the offenses and U.S. counties examined here. Second, those that do are generally limited to either a single offense, like homicide (e.g., the mortality files from the Centers for Disease Control; Supplemental Homicide Reports, see Shihadeh and Winters (2010)), or to arrest figures from a few select states (e.g., California or New York databases—see Ulmer and Harris (2013)). Last, prior research has already provided analyses of religious context and Latino homicide victimization in immigrant communities (Shihadeh and Winters 2010). Yet, questions remain about whether these relationships apply to (1) serious violent offending; (2) other non-lethal measures of violence (e.g., robbery and aggravated assault); and (3) broader or overall populations (including but not limited to Latinos) in both new and established destinations.

2.4. Independent Variables

In light of our focus on the link between recent immigration, religious contextual characteristics, and violent crime, we include several key independent variables. First, we include a measure of the percent foreign born, defined as the proportion of the total population that is foreign born (hereafter, referred to interchangeably as immigration and immigrant presence). We use this measure because a careful review of prior literature demonstrates that this is one of the most common measures used to delineate the relative presence of foreign-born arrivals (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Second, following prior research on religion and crime at the macro-level, we utilize three measures of religious adherence: mainline (Protestant) adherence, evangelical (Protestant) adherence, and Catholic adherence, with each defined as the percentage of the total population of the county that adheres to each religious tradition (see also footnote 1).[6]

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remain the same regardless of how we classify communities by their recent histories of immigrant settlement (see our supplemental models and robustness checks section).

[5] Because we rely on three years of data (2009–2011), there are relatively few counties reporting zero offenses (only 128 out of 1359—or about 9%—report zero values for homicide). Diagnostic tests regarding the appropriateness of zero-inflated models revealed that standard negative binomial models were more appropriate.

[6] Relevant for our discussion of key religious contextual measures, we rely on estimates of adherents because (a) including only full members misses a large proportion of the religiously-affiliated population who might help to exert social control in the community; (b) prior research on religious contexts has almost exclusively used counts of adherents (e.g., Lee 2008; Lee and Bartkowski 2004; Ulmer and Harris 2013); and (c) membership is determined by the by-laws of each participating congregation, making the estimation of the member population sensitive to the particularities of congregations present to a greater degree than the measuring the adherent population (Jones et al. 2002).

In addition to our religious contextual variables, we include several measures to control for social and demographic characteristics of counties that may be linked to immigration, religious adherence, and violence. To account for county socioeconomic conditions, we created a concentrated disadvantage index using principal components analysis to combine four commonly used disadvantage indicators (see Land et al. 1990; Harris and Feldmeyer 2013): poverty (percentage of population below the poverty line), unemployment (percentage of the civilian labor force aged 16–59 years that is unemployed), female headship (percentage of families with children under 18 years headed by a female), and low education (percentage of residents aged 25+ years without a high school degree). In addition, because of their demonstrated relevance in previous studies, we include as controls: residential mobility (percentage of households that experienced housing turnover during the 2005–2010 period) and an entropy measure of racial/ethnic heterogeneity of the county population (Reardon and Firebaugh 2002). Additionally, to capture segregation/integration between immigrants and native-born residents, we also included a measure of immigrant-native segregation using the index of dissimilarity (Feldmeyer et al. 2015; Massey and Denton 1988). To separate out the impact of religious adherence from political conservatism, we also included a measure of the percent Republican voting within the county (out of all votes cast in the 2008 presidential election). Finally, as basic demographic controls, we also included variables for the logged population density, percent urban, logged police per capita as a control for variations across counties in law enforcement activity, and region dummy variables (the latter four measures are included in analyses but not shown given space constraints; see note in Table 2).

2.5. Analytic Techniques

Our analysis unfolds as follows. First, we present descriptive statistics with an emphasis on mean levels of violence, immigration, religious adherence, and our other key measures across traditional, emerging, and other immigrant locales. Second, because of the skewed distribution of known homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault incidents across counties and their over-dispersion (see Osgood 2000), we construct a series of multivariate negative binomial regression models regressing each of our three religious adherence measures—mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Catholic—on each violent offense along with our key independent variables. Each model includes exposure terms for the population at risk (aged 18–64 years) and state-clustered standard errors to account for variation across counties nested within the same states.

2.6. Primary Results

Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for all of our key dependent and independent variables broken out separately for emerging, traditional, and other immigrant destinations. We noted, first, that there are very small differences in mean violence rates across the different types of immigrant destinations. Only aggravated assault rates (per 100,000 as shown in Table 1) are somewhat greater in emerging and other immigrant destinations (means of 1436.05 and 1434.22, respectively) than in traditional immigrant settlements (mean of 1122.86), a difference of over 20 percent. Both homicide and robbery rates differ by less than 10% across destination types.

Second, religious adherence differs substantially across destination type. Where evangelical Protestants make up the largest adherent share in both emerging and other immigrant destinations (means of 26.86 and 24.18 percent of the population, respectively), evangelical Protestant adherence in traditional immigrant destinations is substantially lower as a share of the overall population (mean of 15.23 percent). Instead, Catholic adherents, on average, represent the largest single adherent group in traditional destinations (mean of 19.59 percent), whereas Catholic adherence in emerging destinations (mean of 9.54 percent) lags behind even mainline Protestantism (mean of 11.33 percent). Likewise, other immigrant destination communities have, on average, less Catholic adherence (mean of 11.52 percent) than traditional immigrant settlement communities.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) for key variables by destination type.

	Emerging	Traditional	Other
Dependent Variables: [a]			
Homicide Rate	4.49	4.76	4.93
	(4.27)	(5.78)	(3.75)
Robbery Rate	106.66	114.44	118.74
	(111.49)	(119.38)	(90.42)
Aggravated Assault Rate	1436.05	1122.86	1434.22
Religious Contextual Variables:	(1039.43)	(705.50)	(837.77)
% Catholic	9.54	19.59	11.52
	(10.18)	(13.56)	(11.34)
% Evangelical Protestant	26.86	15.23	24.18
	(12.28)	(12.07)	(15.61)
% Mainline Protestant	11.33	6.85	9.89
Control Variables:	(7.46)	(4.94)	(5.93)
% Foreign Born	8.12	13.14	4.58
	(2.93)	(8.63)	(3.22)
% Poverty	15.16	14.44	14.46
	(5.16)	(6.28)	(5.21)
% Unemployed	4.71	4.67	4.62
	(1.24)	(1.26)	(1.30)
% Female Headship	12.01	12.28	12.01
	(3.80)	(3.86)	(3.82)
% Without High School Degree	18.29	15.40	15.22
	(6.53)	(8.23)	(5.52)
Mobility	15.00	17.09	15.49
	(3.76)	(5.53)	(4.15)
Immigrant-Native Segregation	32.93	26.85	31.24
	(9.91)	(8.31)	(8.98)
Racial/Ethnic Diversity	0.56	0.57	0.41
	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.22)
% Republican	58.42	49.77	56.46
	(12.23)	(14.96)	(12.53)
% Urban	52.20	75.19	57.07
	(25.76)	(22.49)	(22.08)
N	135	575	649

[a] Violence rates are displayed for ease of interpretation but all subsequent models use offense counts.

Third, we also found some important differences in macro-social characteristics across immigrant destinations. Emerging immigrant communities have higher mean levels of poverty and educational deficits (i.e., the percentage of the population without a high school degree) than traditional and other destinations, which is broadly consistent with the profile of new immigrants drawn to low-skill labor opportunities in these locales (Shihadeh and Barranco 2010). Additionally, emerging destinations have higher levels of segregation and Republican voters as of the 2008 election cycle. In contrast, and as expected given their different histories of settlement, traditional immigrant destinations have larger foreign-born population shares (mean of 13.14) than both emerging (mean of 8.12) and other immigrant destinations (mean of 4.58). At the same time, traditional destinations tend to have somewhat higher residential mobility and are significantly more urban than any other immigrant community type.

We turn now to the primary focus of the current study and examine the ways in which adherence to each religious tradition is associated with violence across different immigrant contexts. To that end, Table 2 displays the results of our negative binomial regression models predicting homicide, robbery, and assault in emerging (panel A), traditional (panel B), and other immigrant destinations (panel C). Our focus here is on differences across religious traditions in their associations with violence, particularly as they vary by immigrant settlement type.

First, we found that, among our religious adherence measures, only Catholic adherence has a consistent, statistically significant, and negative association with violence. Furthermore, the protective effect of Catholic adherence is found exclusively in traditional immigrant communities. Across all three violence types, greater Catholic adherence is associated with lower incidence of homicide ($b = -0.007$, $p < 0.01$), robbery ($b = -0.007$, $p < 0.05$), and assault ($b = -0.004$, $p < 0.05$) in traditional immigrant communities, but has no association with violence in emerging destinations and is negatively associated with assault (but not homicide or robbery) in other immigrant settlements. In contrast, evangelical adherence is positively associated with both robbery and assault, but only in traditional immigrant destinations ($p < 0.05$). Religious adherence to any mainline Protestant groups has no significant effect on any forms of violence examined here. Similarly, we found no significant relationships between any form of religious adherence and crime (net of other key variables) in emerging destinations.

Second, the relative size of the foreign-born population is (when statistically significant) universally associated with lower rates of crime. This finding dovetails with a now sizeable literature showing that immigrants are generally less crime-prone than the domestic population (Bui 2009; Greenman and Xie 2008) and that immigrant concentration is commonly associated with lower macro-level rates of crime (see Ousey and Kubrin (2018) for a meta-analytic review). In short, there is little evidence that immigration coincides with elevated incidence of known violence, regardless of a community's history of immigrant settlement. However, we do note that emerging destinations show somewhat less consistent effects of immigrant concentration on violence (significant effects for robbery only) than either traditional or other destination counties.

Third, among our other control variables, disadvantage is the single most consistent and robust predictor: where disadvantages combine in a community, violence is more common regardless of immigrant settlement history. Greater racial/ethnic diversity is also significantly associated with higher rates of violence in all models (except for assault in emerging destinations). Residential mobility is associated with increased levels of robbery and assault, but only in traditional immigrant destinations, whereas percent urban is fairly consistently associated with robbery and assault (but not homicide), regardless of destination type. Finally, immigrant segregation from the native-born population impacts violence uniquely depending on the immigrant settlement type: greater levels of immigrant segregation from the native-born populations appears to protect against all types of violence in traditional destinations (perhaps exhibiting an ethnic enclave effect), but greater segregation contributes to more robberies in other destinations and more assaults in emerging locales. Notably, the consistency of our control variables and the strength of their associations with violence often surpass those of our religious contextual measures.

Table 2. Negative binomial regression of religious adherence and controls on violence in (A) emerging, (B) traditional, and (C) other immigrant destinations.

	(A) Emerging Destinations (N = 135)			(B) Traditional Destinations (N = 575)			(C) Other Destinations (N = 649)		
	Homicide	Robbery	Assault	Homicide	Robbery	Assault	Homicide	Robbery	Assault
Religious Variables:									
% Catholic	0.007	−0.002	−0.001	−0.007 **	−0.007 *	−0.004 *	−0.003	−0.001	−0.005 *
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
% Evangelical Protestant	−0.004	−0.004	−0.002	−0.005	0.009 *	0.009 **	0.002	0.003	−0.001
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
% Mainline Protestant	0.012	0.005	−0.005	0.004	−0.007	−0.008	0.005	0.007	−0.002
	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Control Variables:									
% Foreign Born	−0.055	−0.067 **	−0.031	−0.027 ***	−0.010 *	−0.007	−0.045 ***	−0.041 ***	−0.028 ***
	(0.030)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.008)
Disadvantage	0.299 ***	0.281 ***	0.154 **	0.357 ***	0.162 ***	0.120 ***	0.281 ***	0.281 ***	0.184 ***
	(0.082)	(.061)	(0.058)	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.032)	(0.029)	(0.025)
Mobility	−0.018	−0.021	−0.004	−0.005	0.042 ***	0.038 ***	−0.016 *	−0.005	−0.003
	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Immigrant-Native Segregation	−0.011	0.679	1.318 *	−1.268 **	−1.319 **	−0.687 *	0.390	0.746 **	−0.259
	(0.829)	(0.587)	(0.524)	(0.198)	(0.469)	(0.396)	(0.350)	(0.281)	(0.252)
Racial/Ethnic Diversity	1.817 **	2.084 ***	0.579	1.629 ***	1.455 ***	0.648 ***	1.170 ***	1.390 ***	0.410 **
	(0.614)	(0.434)	(0.388)	(0.198)	(0.213)	(0.185)	(0.203)	(0.171)	(0.157)
% Republican	0.006	−0.007	0.003	−0.001	0.002	0.003	−0.005 *	−0.004	0.003
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
AIC	483.28	1030.51	1945.21	2945.52	6222.02	9411.753	2188.35	5217.76	9606.53

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. All models include controls for percent urban, logged population size, population density, police per capita, regional dummy variables, and state-clustered standard errors. All variance inflation factors (VIFs) are below 4.8. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

2.7. Supplemental Models

In addition to our primary models, we also conducted a number of robustness checks and constructed supplemental models. Specifically, (a) we explored alternative portioning of counties whereby traditional destinations were defined as those with immigrant growth rates exceeding the national average in 1980, 1990, and 2000, while emerging destinations were reclassified as those with growth rates lower than the national average in 1980 and 1990, but greater than the national average in 2000; similarly, we constructed models that (b) used logarithmically transformed crime rates rather than counts; (c) included immigrant isolation rather than unevenness as a measure of segregation (Massey and Denton 1988); and (d) included interaction terms for the conditional effect of religious adherence by disadvantage (see for example Harris and Feldmeyer (2015)). All models provided substantively similar results and the interaction terms were non-significant across all destination types (available upon request).

3. Discussion

Our goal here was to address an underexamined issue both within the religion-crime literature broadly, and immigration-crime research specifically: whether different forms of religious adherence are associated with crime and violence uniquely across immigrant settlement contexts. The United States has seen recent demographic shifts of the foreign born toward "emerging" destinations within the interior of the United States and to suburban/rural locations even within traditional settlement states (Singer 2004). As such, there is a need to explore the role played by religious organizations and their adherents in providing social capital, norms and values, and social control in ways that might buffer against crime in different communities.

Overall, we found that religious traditions varied in their relationship with known violence across destination types. On the one hand, Catholic adherence was protective against crime (net of controls) only in traditional immigrant destinations. On the other hand, evangelical Protestant adherence was associated with higher levels of robbery and aggravated assault in the same locales. Religious adherence had no links to violence in emerging immigrant destinations.

Broadly, our results suggest, first, that religion plays an important role in shaping crime in immigrant communities above and beyond the more traditional structural measures employed throughout macro-level social science inquiry. However, not all contexts are the same. Theoretically, for example, our findings lend more support to perspectives emphasizing the bridging social capital, systemic social control, and social bonds engendered by widespread Catholic adherence (Putnam 2000). However, these effects appear to be limited to traditional immigrant communities, which are more likely to offer a large "critical mass" of adherents that can help establish the types of civic outreach and social controls needed for community crime control. Likewise, that evangelical adherence produces the kinds of bonding capital and in-group/out-group insularity thought to elevate rates of crime is bolstered by our findings, but only in communities without substantial histories of immigration. In short, the impact of religion on crime depends greatly on the kind of community in question.

Second, relative to the immigration-crime literature, our findings suggest that religious milieus offer mixed resources to immigrant communities depending on the relative presence of specific religious traditions. Our findings are consistent with prior research showing that Catholic adherence is linked to lower rates of crime and violence (e.g., Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Harris and Feldmeyer 2015), as well as those studies finding evangelical adherence to be associated with higher rates of crime (e.g., Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Shihadeh and Winters 2010). Critically, however, such relationships are only observed in traditional immigrant locales—the kinds of large, metropolitan, and historical points of foreign-born settlement that still receive the largest share of newly arriving immigrants today.

Third, we observed that the relative size of the foreign-born population was associated with lower rates of crime, regardless of where immigrants settle. Such a finding is consistent with a now sizeable literature within the broader social sciences (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Put simply, immigration coincides with lower rates of known violence, regardless of a community's history of immigrant

settlement (though emerging destinations show somewhat less consistent effects of immigration on violence).

Finally, many of our key control variables included in each of the models were robustly associated with violence, often having more impactful associations with violence than several of the religious contextual measures. This is not altogether surprising given that prior research has consistently found these variables to be among the strongest and most consistent predictors of macro-level crime rates (Pratt and Cullen 2005). For example, disadvantage was the single most consistent positively-associated predictor, net of religious milieu characteristics and other key controls. Likewise, greater racial/ethnic diversity was significantly associated with higher rates of violence in nearly all cases, while residential mobility was associated with increased levels of robbery and assault in traditional immigrant destinations. Percent urban was also consistently associated with robbery and assault, regardless of destination type. Interestingly, immigrant segregation from the native-born population was positively linked to violence in emerging and other types of immigrant destinations, but negatively associated with violence in traditional immigrant locales (even while overall racial/ethnic diversity was positively associated). This latter finding may reflect the protective formation of ethnic enclaves in established settlement locales (see for example, Feldmeyer et al. (2015)), despite the destabilizing and criminogenic impact of racial heterogeneity more broadly. In contrast, segregation of the foreign born from the native population provides no such benefits in emerging and other destinations—and, in fact, is linked to higher rates of crime—because fewer co-ethnics and cultural resources are available in these more isolated circumstances with little history of immigrant assimilation and incorporation. In sum, our findings mirror prior studies in showing that factors like disadvantage, heterogeneity, and residential mobility are among the primary sources of macro-level crime rates (Steffensmeier et al. 2010). More importantly, our findings go beyond prior work and extend this line of scholarship by showing that religious adherence and its intersection with immigrant communities is also an essential, and to date, understudied, part of the macro-level story of communities and crime.

Although we see our study as advancing research at the critical intersection of immigration, religion, and crime at the macro-level, we also recognize a number of limitations that warrant attention in future research. For example, it is beyond the scope of the current study to explore the impact of tradition-specific adherence on race/ethnic-disaggregated crime. Given the data constraints in doing so (e.g., limited types of crime, narrow geographic scope, etc.), questions remain as to whether religious adherence affects violence (or other forms of crime) equally across all race/ethnic groups in each type of immigrant destination. Likewise, scholarship in this area would benefit greatly from more nuanced religious adherence measures, including those reflecting the degree of personal participation and religiosity, as well as measurable religious characteristics at other units of analysis (e.g., cities, census places, or even neighborhoods). As we acknowledged in our methods section, these alternative dimensions of religious participation are not available across a large number of units at the present time, but would substantially bolster the unfolding story of how religion manifests in different types of locales, including immigrant communities.

Immigration remains a hot button issue across our nation, increasingly so after the 2016 presidential election. Amidst concern about how immigrant flows have reshaped communities and impacted social problems like crime, research directed toward immigration and the types of structural and cultural processes unfolding around (and in conjunction with) it will remain central to informing the broader public debate. However, the current findings reaffirm the growing consensus in social science research that these concerns about immigrant crime are often misplaced. Rather than increasing crime and violence, it appears that traditional immigrant settlement communities are home to strong networks of Catholic adherents that help to reduce, not generate, rates of serious violent crime.

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Article

Faith-Based Intervention: Prison, Prayer, and Perseverance

Shona Robinson-Edwards [1,*] **and Stephanie Kewley** [2]

1   Centre for Applied Criminology, School of Social Sciences, Birmingham City University, The Curzon Building, 4 Cardigan Street, Birmingham B4 7BD, UK
2   School of Natural Science and Psychology, Liverpool John Moores University, James Parsons Building, Byrom Street, Liverpool L3 3AF, UK; S.Kewley@ljmu.ac.uk
*   Correspondence: shona.robinson-edwards@bcu.ac.uk

Abstract: This qualitative article explores the impact of faith-based interventions through the lens of a self-identified practicing Christian: Joanna. For over a decade, Joanna has visited several prisons in the United Kingdom in a faith-based capacity: supporting prisoners, families, and prison chaplaincies. Joanna professes the role of faith and religiosity to be a positive and influential component in the lives of those imprisoned. This paper explores Joanna's journey of supporting individuals within the prison walls, reflecting on the impact of labels, imprisonment, faith-based intervention, and religiosity. Much of the current research pertaining to faith-based interventions are limited; therefore, the experiences of those who volunteer within prisons in a faith-based capacity is often overlooked. Yet, faith-based intervention and religiosity within a criminal justice context provides several benefits which impact on those in prison, their families, and people working within a prison environment.

Keywords: religiosity; faith-based intervention; support; voluntary work; desistance

1. Introduction

Faith-based activities play an integral role within society; therefore, it is critical that faith-based interventions are a key component within the prison regime. This enables those incarcerated to fulfil an active faith-based lifestyle. Indeed, the role of imams, pastors, rabbis, and other faith leaders in prison can provide additional counselling, support, and advice to inmates. Given the harsh conditions of prison, it is perhaps unsurprising that religious conversions within prisons are common and well documented (see Beckford 2012; Easton 2010; Flood 2016; Thornton 2016; Whitehead 2010). High profile criminal cases involving people who experience religious conversion are of particular interest within the media. One case from United Kingdom (UK) involved Karen Matthews, the mother of kidnapped school girl, Shannon Matthews, who reportedly embraced elements of Christianity (Thornton 2016). Karen Matthews played a significant role in her daughter's disappearance which has been described as the "'despicable and inconceivable' kidnap and drugging of her nine-year-old daughter" (Wainwright 2009, p. n/p). Likewise, in the United States (US), O.J Simpson, a former NFL player and convicted armed robber, heavily expressed a faith-based narrative at his 2017 parole hearing (Robinson-Edwards 2017). The rate at which people convert in prison is interesting. It has been reported that prison religious conversion serves as, amongst other things, a coping strategy for those attempting to make sense of their life as well as seeking forgiveness and reparation (Maruna et al. 2006; Schroeder and Frana 2009). Indeed, the phenomenon of faith-based conversion in prison has been explored to a great extent (see Hallett and McCoy 2015; Johnson and Larson 2003). However, an understanding of the role of volunteers within prisons in a faith-based capacity is often overlooked, especially within the context of the UK.

In the UK the Home Office regularly documents data relating to religion and the prison population. In December 2017, the total prison population in England and Wales stood at 85,494 prisoners, with male prisoners comprising 81,420 of the total prison population (Ministry of Justice 2017). If organized according to religious adherence, 48.5% (40,919) of the prison population of England and Wales identify as Christian compared to 61.3% of the general UK population; 15.2% (12,825) of prisoners identify as Muslim in comparison to 4% of the general population; 1.8% (1529) as Buddhist versus 0.5% of the general population; 0.9% (759) as Sikh versus 0.7% of the general population; 0.5% (400) as Hindu versus 1.5% of the general population; and 0.5% (449) as Jewish with a comparable percentage in the general population. 30.5% (25,749) of the prison population identifies as having no religion; 1.8% (1547) as "Other", and 0.2% (130) as "Not Recorded" (Allen and Watson 2017). Although over half the prison population appear to identify with a particular religion, the extent to which that faith is practiced by those who claim to follow it is unclear. Although a religious provision in prison can assist people to continue to practice their faith, arguably, such a context might also assist in helping people to reform and live a life free from crime. Indeed, this research comes at a time when knowledge relating to theories of desistance is growing (Giordano et al. 2008; Glynn 2014; Maruna et al. 2006). Faith-based interventions are thought to play a role in the desistance trajectory as they serve as a 'hook for change' (Giordano et al. 2008), supporting the development and construction of redemptive identities (Maruna et al. 2006) as well as acting as a social support network for those who often are socially isolated (Kewley et al. 2015; Maruna et al. 2006). Faith-based communities and chaplains play an integral part of most western criminal justice systems, allowing prisoners to engage and practice their faith. Indeed, the role of criminal justice practitioners, community leaders, and family members cannot be underestimated in the support process (Weaver 2015). Although significant literature exists on this issue, much of the work is largely drawn from the US (see Armour et al. 2008; Hallett and McCoy 2015; Koenig 1995; Sumter and Clear 1998) and focusses on the prisoner experience. Indeed, little scholarly insight has been dedicated to the experiences of volunteers working in prisons. Given that the role of volunteers within the criminal justice system is vital (see Abrams et al. 2016; Tomczak 2017), further exploration of this issue through the lens of volunteers is needed. Therefore, this paper responds to the need to examine religious activity within the UK from the perspective of those working and volunteering in this environment. This paper outlines the findings of a longitudinal study which explores the experiences of one self-identified practicing Christian: Joanna. The narratives of Joanna were documented and analyzed using narrative analysis. Several narrative identities emerged from this study and this paper focuses on the following six narratives: Mindfulness, Community, Preacher, Counsellor, Forgiveness, and Understanding. This paper concludes with recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

1.1. Religiosity, Religion, or Spirituality?

Religiosity is a complex term, according to VanVleet et al. (1999):

'Religiosity is a term researchers use to quantify an individual's commitment to any particular religion. Although the terms "religion", "religiousness", and "religiosity" are often used interchangeably, many researchers prefer "religiosity" because it denotes a specific measure of individual commitment (like "velocity" as a scientific measure in physics) rather than simply common belief held by a number of people' (VanVleet et al. 1999, p. 3).

Thus, defining religiosity is important. Clayton and Gladden (1974) argue religiosity is one-dimensional; it is "primarily a commitment to an ideology and the other so-called dimensions are merely expressions of the strength of that core commitment" (p. 142). Very few support this view; more readily accepted is the view that religiosity is multi-dimensional (Martos et al. 2010; De Jong et al. 1976; Sedikides and Gebauer 2010). However, the range and description of these dimensions varies (Cornwall et al. 1986). Religiosity literature has explored the relationship and interactions between dimensions as well as other variables; this has inevitably caused significant contradictions in the

measurement of religiosity (Cornwall et al. 1986). Likewise, research tends to focus upon mainstream religions and traditional world faiths which perhaps appear to lend themselves to easier categorization and measurement. This is often at the expense of 'New Religious Movements' (Wallis 1976) and fundamentalist belief systems. The terms religiosity, religion, and spirituality are frequently used when discussing the role and impact of faith-based interventions. Undoubtedly, people may identify and understand these terms differently. Although there are distinct definitions to these terms, some elements of religion and spirituality embody several similarities. Al Qaradawi (2010) defines religion as "the belief in a divine being, which is worthy of worship and obedience, this is the case when we look at religion from a psychological perspective in terms of religiosity" (Al Qaradawi 2010, p. 2). Spirituality, on the other hand, is described as 'a word that in broad terms stands for lifestyles and practices that embody a vision of human existence and of how the human spirit is to achieve its full potential' (Sheldrake 2012, p. 1).

Glock and Stark (1965) have been influential in developing the understanding of religiosity. Their groundbreaking *Religion and Society in Tension* (1965), found five dimensions to religiousness including ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential. However, it is important to acknowledge some of the challenges which relate to defining the key terms of this study. According to Ronel and Yair (2017), religion usually refers to a social institute of beliefs, knowledge, norms, rules, customs, and rites. They further state that "religion in general, and spirituality both represent human faith in the Supreme and a quest for ultimate meaning" (2017, p. 2). Tart (2012) explores the importance of a non-material realm, structure, set of values, a supportive community, and rituals of spiritual meaning. Abdullah-Johnson (2015) expresses a different perspective, arguing that spirituality and religion are separate concepts, suggesting that spirituality differs from religion. Abdullah-Johnson (2015) suggests that those who identify as spiritual are taught to become aware of the pre-existing relationship one already has with the creator; however, in religion, individuals are taught that you have to find God. Schroeder and Frana (2009) echo Abdullah-Johnson's point to some extent, explaining that religion and spirituality are considered separate concepts, suggesting that careful distinctions must be drawn between the two.

Faith-based interventions are not solely concerned with religious/spiritual labels; in fact, the relationship between religion and spirituality is complex and in need of further clarification (Hill et al. 2000; Jang and Franzen 2013; Schmidt 2011). Therefore, this study does not intend to draw comparison between the two; rather, in this study, religiosity includes corporate religiosity and private spirituality as two dimensions of religiosity (Giordano et al. 2008). Furthermore, this study is not interested in an objective observation of religious behaviors; instead, a subjective lived experience is of interest, allowing a distinctive voice to those engaged in religiosity and spirituality.

1.2. Faith-Based Intervention in Prison

Religious or faith-based interventions are not new phenomena. According to Cnaan and Boddie (2002), faith-based social service programs have existed long before the term "faith-based" was coined. Faith-based interventions have been applied across various disciplines and in various sectors ranging from intervention strategies developed by religious organizations (including a potential aim to interlink secular services with faith-infused services) to the legislative requirement for prisons to provide a faith-based framework in prison.

Faith-based organizations within the criminal justice system (CJS) play an increasingly important role. For some, their primary aim is to reduce re-offending; the faith element of their work is secondary. An example of one such organization is Circles of Support. Originally founded by a Christian minister, he gathered support within his local community to work with high risk sexual offenders who were released from custody without statutory restraint or support (Wilson et al. 2005). Similarly, the Mothers' Union, a Christian organization, helps with a wide range of issues which families often face when a member of the community is incarcerated. They offer help with prison visits, provide support for children and parents, run groups for women, and provide safe areas for children to play during

prison visits. There is no commitment required by beneficiaries to follow the Christian faith; however, members must be baptized and follow the Christian faith (The Mothers Union 2007).

Conversely, there are some faith-based organizations where the practice of faith is a predominant activity; rehabilitation is a positive outcome of engaging with offenders, secondary to the commitment of religious faith and practice. For example, at the InnerChange Freedom Initiative, offenders engage in a structured 16- to 24-month prison programme and a 6- to 12-month community programme which includes life skills, education, housing, employment referrals, mentoring, and developing relationships, along with regular support groups focusing on topics such as substance abuse and victim awareness. These activities are embedded within regular Christian spiritual and religious teachings, religious services, self-exploration, and moral guidance (Johnson and Larson 2003). Likewise, the Kainos Community's Challenge-to-Change programme combines structured cognitive behavioural therapy programmes with life in a therapeutic community. Offenders learn skills and have the opportunity to practice them within this community, receiving feedback from mentors and staff. They are exposed to pro-social interactions and are required to take responsibility for their community (Ellis and Shalev 2008). The fundamental religious preaching of the Kainos Community is Christian. Offenders are not required to be of the Christian faith, but the religious practice and teachings within the Kainos prison wings are overtly Christian (Adler et al. 2008). The Muslim Youth Helpline offers support to young Muslims over the period of Ramadan. The charity aims to ensure that young Muslims in custody are contacted particularly during this festival to prevent feelings of isolation from their wider Muslim community. Gifts, messages of support, and copies of the Quran are sent to young offenders (Aitken 2009). Prison Chaplaincy provides a presence of ministry; they offer support whilst offenders in custody and provide care for inmates whilst balancing the security needs of the prison. Chaplains work with inmates on a humanistic and spiritual level (Thomas and Zaitzow 2006).

Burnside (2008) found "faith-based units in England and Wales found that these units attracted three different types of prisoners, all of whom had different reasons for being there"' (Burnside 2008, p. 3): prisoners who genuinely wanted to change their behavior and saw religious intervention as an opportunity to do so; those who volunteered because they thought it would be an 'easy option'; and religious prisoners who wanted to be in a faith-centered environment. However, this literature is dominated by the examination of the role of faith-based interventions in the reduction of recidivism. Very few look at the role of volunteers. Indeed, in a policy report for reforming prisons and rehabilitating offenders, Aitken (2009) highlighted the significant role and positive impact offenders experience when working with faith-based groups delivered by caring volunteers. He argued their input helped improve offenders' sense of value and self-worth. Therefore, it is critical that we understand the perspectives of volunteers working in this context in order for us to understand how to continue to improve this offering to those incarcerated.

1.3. Narratives and Story Telling

Narratives are interpretive devices used by individuals to represent themselves and their worlds (Richardson 1996). Narrative analysis allows a variety of techniques to explore the different ways in which we tell stories those around us whether short stories told in everyday life (Labov 1982), lengthy narratives such as those found in a therapy session (McLeod and Lynch 2000), or interviews about a particular experience (Riessman 1990). Narrative analysis can be complex. As Lawler (2002) explains, narrative perspective sometimes assumes that individuals are able to openly express their thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and values through narratives. In addition, Brookman (2015) argues that narratives can shift between different discourses during interviews; individuals can therefore commit to a different narrative at different times. Indeed, as Carey (2012) argues, "there is no such thing as an unbiased account and stories are likely to be subjective and therefore biased" (Carey 2012, p. 175). We are not detached or "objective observers"' (Yardley et al. 2015, p. 165); instead, we are intertwined within the social world around us. Thus, findings and interpretation of narratives are impacted to some extent and given "meaning by culturally mediated concepts, names and labels"

([Yardley et al. 2015](#), p. 165) by the researcher themselves. Rather than fight this potential conflict, narrative analysis allows the researcher to embrace the subjective observation. Looking at narrative identities through oral expression is significant; language enables an exploration in understanding how the storyteller presents stories about their own lives as well as the lives of others. Narrative accounts of individuals who work within the criminal justice system are important to our collective understanding. It is acknowledged that solely using Joanna's narrative account can raise some limitations, as Joanna's subjective perspective is grounded in her personal beliefs and experiences. However, narratives are fundamental in enabling one to make sense of their journey. This study is not meant for generalization; rather, emphasis is placed upon depth rather than breadth.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Epistemological Approach

An interpretivist methodology is utilized, underpinned by a subjective ontology, which acknowledges that people's experiences will be different and therefore warrant unique and individual attention. Such an approach facilitates an understanding of complex, sensitive, and contextual factors. Utilizing a sample size of $N = 1$ eradicates the ability to generalize the findings of this study. However, this is not an aim of this study. Rather, the approach is to explore a detailed account of one participant's experiences of volunteering in a faith-based context in prison. This unique role heavily lends itself to the examination of experience through idiosyncratic focus and attention.

2.1.1. Sample and Sampling

Joanna is a self-identified Christian. And volunteers within prisons in the UK. She is 64 years old and identifies as Black British. Joanna was recruited through snowball sampling. While attending community meetings, events, and seminars, several people within the faith-based community advised the researcher to contact Joanna with regard to her perspective of faith within prison and the community. Joanna's experience of working within prisons in a faith-based capacity stemmed from a personal encounter. Joanna's son spent time in prison and this was one of the driving forces which influenced Joanna's decision to volunteer within the criminal justice system. Joanna has volunteered in a faith-based context for over a decade and provided an in-depth narrative in relation to faith-based interventions, religiosity, and desistance in prison. Joanna is involved in many community projects which center on rehabilitation, community support, and regularly supporting people whilst they are in prison and following release. Joanna is perhaps also somewhat unique as her voluntary experience is teamed with the experience of supporting her own son who was incarcerated.

2.1.2. Data Collection

A total of two interviews were undertaken in a public location agreed upon by both the participant and researcher. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews over a three-month period with each interview lasting 60–90 min. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were prepared for analysis in the form of listening and re-listening to recordings. This allowed a check of transcripts for accuracy and to ensure elements, such as the tone of voice and pauses, were accurately documented.

The following interview questions provided a guideline during the initial interview.

1. How long have you volunteered within prisons in a faith-based capacity?
2. In regards to religion, how do you self-identify?
3. What role does religion play in the lives of those imprisoned whom you have come into contact with?
4. What are the benefits of faith-based intervention?
5. What are the challenges of faith-based intervention?

The second interview captured development and change. The following interview questions provided a guideline.

1. Previously, you described the importance of supporting ex-offenders and families of ex-offenders, are you able to expand?
2. Are you still volunteering within male and female prisons?
3. You described being made to feel welcome by the prisoners, please expand?
4. What role does faith play in your community?
5. In what ways can faith-based initiatives be improved?

2.1.3. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using narrative analysis, an approach similar to content analysis. This enabled the researcher to analyze, develop, and understand the data through the lived experiences of Joanna. The model of narrative analysis utilized was thematic analysis, exploring the content, "what is said more than how it is said" (Riessman [1978] 2007, p. 2). Language is important to our understanding of past events and action (Munhall 2001). Narratives and the stories that people tell are unique; therefore, during the analysis process, it was important for the researchers to be mindful of the context in which the participant existed alongside other temporal and environmental aspects of where the interview took place (Yardley et al. 2015). Analysis is an important part of the research process; however, it is documented that participants occasionally do not reveal an entirely true self but perform a 'preferred self', (Yardley et al. 2015). In some cases, participants tailor how they want to be known by the stories they tell (Goffman 1959; Riessman 2001). The researchers were aware of the above complexities and were mindful of them when analyzing the data.

A thematic approach to narrative analysis was adopted; of interest was the "what" and not the "how" (Riessman 2005). Therefore, analysis relied on the conventional steps of thematic and content analysis. Thus, the following steps were adhered to by the first author, as advised by Joffe (2012). First, the transcript was read and re-read in its entirety. This enabled greater familiarity with the data. Initial ideas were noted down as potential codes and so as not to be lost; this allowed the first author to focus only on the analysis. Following this, a coding frame was developed to guide the analysis. This process used the inductive method, allowing initial codes to emerge from the data. For such a unique case, it was felt that prescribing codes would undermine the subjectivity of the participant's experience. Once an initial coding framework was developed, codes were further developed using theoretically driven inspirations from the research. Definitions of codes and developing themes were noted as well as examples from the data. This ensured the themes stayed close to the participant's words. A strong feature of identity emerged from the data and thus became a main thematic label. The coding frame and data was reviewed by the second author with development of the themes during reflective supervision.

3. Results

3.1. Narrative Identities in Joanna's Story

Following two in-depth interviews with Joanna, ten narrative identities emerged. Table 1 provides a summary of each. For the purpose of this paper, only six narrative identities will be discussed; these include (1) Mindful Narrative, (2) Community Narrative, (3) Preacher Narrative, (4) Counsellor Narrative, (5) Forgiveness Narrative, and (6) Understanding Narrative.

Table 1. A summary of the narrative identities highlighted by Joanna.

Narrative Identities	Summary
Community Narrative	The importance of community is focused on. This narrative explores Joanna's view relating to the role the community plays in the rehabilitation process for those in prison and following release.
Counsellor Narrative	The counsellor narrative highlights the multifaceted role Joanna plays. Joanna has frequently counselled, advised, and mentored individuals, both those in prison and the family members and friends of those behind the prison walls.
Family Narrative	The experiences of family members are explored: victimization and secondary victimization is referred to.
Forgiveness Narrative	This narrative draws upon the need for society to 'forgive' and understand the person who has been convicted of a crime. Joanna's view in relation to forgiveness, God, and faith is also explored within this narrative.
Gender Narrative	The impact of gender in a prison environment is discussed. Additionally, the implication of a person's offence history and volunteering within a male-dominated environment is explored.
Mindful Narrative	In the mindful narrative, Joanna expresses being mindful of her role in prison. Aspects such as attire, intentions, and the impact of gender are explored.
Observant Narrative	This narrative is concerned with working within prison settings and being aware of what is taking place within the prison and in the lives of those in prison.
Personal Narrative	This narrative highlights Joanna's personal experience of supporting her son whilst he was in prison. The personal narrative is emotive, drawing on past and current experiences and how these have impacted Joanna's faith-based practice today.
Preacher Narrative	The preacher narrative draws heavily on Christian beliefs, doctrine, and scripture. Reference is made to beliefs, forgiveness, the role of God, and the influential role of faith in the rehabilitation process of those in prison.
Understanding Narrative	This narrative expresses an understanding of the impact crime has on the person in prison and the family members of those incarcerated.

3.1.1. Mindful Narrative

The Mindful Narrative emphasized the importance Joanna places on being mindful of both her presence in prison and those around her. Joanna 'mindfulness' with regards to her position as a volunteer largely concerned her interactions and encounters in male prisons and frequently referred to the impact of various intersectional components. Joanna explored a range of complexities including but not limited to her position as a female practicing Christian and the impact of her identity in largely secular environments. The negative labels attributed to prisoners both within and external to the prison walls as well as the impact of this was at the forefront of Joanna's narrative. Moreover, Joanna was mindful of her femininity and the potential conflicts this had especially in male prison settings. Joanna drew upon this narrative in multiple episodes within the interviews and mindfulness was referred to in a broad context. Joanna's position as a female practicing Christian was at the forefront of all discussions. Joanna was aware that her spiritual journey and the journey of those in prison was not going to be fully understood by wider society; however, she was mindful of the role of faith in her journey expressing, *"I believe for me it's my faith . . . for me I believe you have to have a calling to go into the prison"*. Volunteering in prison is complex and Joanna was mindful of the challenges that can arise. Joanna referred to having a calling, with the view that this was not a role for the faint-hearted but one that is rooted in faith, patience, and belief that change is possible even with the most hard to reach in society. The role of gender and age was also recognized; Joanna was aware of the impact this had on communication with those in prisons, *"So I got the name they call me mommy, mummy, aunty and I'm thinking oh my goodness"*. Joanna was mindful of how she was perceived behind the prison walls; many saw Joanna as a mother figure and she was happy that those in prison were able to confide in

her, *"they were able to offload, you know confide and for me that was the onset of my journey in the prison, my role is also as a mother figure I am mindful of this"*.

The mindful narrative was broad in its nature and was adopted by Joanna on several occasions, making particular reference to the labels which society has placed on those in prison. Joanna was aware of the impact of negative labels on those both in prison and following release. Indeed, her mindfulness allowed her to empathize with people in prison: *"I don't like the word prisoner's . . . You know we are people who make bad choices"*. Joanna's narrative emphasized the label 'prisoner' to be detrimental, preferring to draw upon the commonality that we are all human beings, regardless of choices. The mindful narrative not only recognized the negative labels attributed to those in prison but explored the ways in which her faith encouraged to be mindful of an individual's physical and spiritual states, *"We have a spiritual life . . . because we stray away doing our own thing, we get caught up into the world (sin)"*. Therefore, the recognition of personal journeys and life choices was discussed and largely examined from the perspective of religious doctrine. The mindful narrative encompassed a variety of different elements, exploring the importance of being aware of one's environment in prison, one's attire, and the perceptions of people in a prison setting. In terms of to clothing Joanna discussed the responsibility of those going into prison explaining, *"You have to be mindful of how you dress . . . there men, they are sexual beings . . . So we have to be careful how we present ourselves"*. Joanna was mindful of some of the issues that may have impacted those in prison and suggested that those who work or volunteer in a prison setting should be mindful of these issues. Joanna was not naïve and was aware of the potential for some prisoners to have alternative motives and agendas explaining that *"you have to be on you guard, you have to be mindful . . . because you know some people have agendas"*. The mindful narrative was one that Joanna used to express her awareness of the countless issues that arise when volunteering in prison. It is particularly interesting to understand the role of gender, attire, and the impact of negative labels in connection to an exploration of how Joanna's spirituality and faith were always at the forefront of her explanations. This narrative was reflective and future-focused, in that it reflected on past experiences, whilst advising others what they should do in the future.

3.1.2. Community Narrative

Within the community narrative, Joanna was an advocate for the importance of the community in the rehabilitation process of people following release. The supportive role Joanna played in her community was key to this narrative and one she appeared to encourage others to adopt. Her community narrative was particularly drawn from the importance she places on the role of faith-based communities in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. Joanna described faith-based support within prison but simultenously the lack of this care and support for those who have been released, *"for me it's when they come out—you know because of how society negatively thinks it sends them (ex-offenders) backwards instead of forward"*. Her overarching position was that the community at large must rethink its position on those in the criminal justice system; they must *"renew there thinking to give people a chance and an opportunity"*. Her narrative presented a view that people ought to look at those in prison as human beings, not just people who have committed offences. Joanna's community narrative determined not only the type of action communities must take but she also provided a solution as to how to achieve this, that communities must *"retrain there thinking"*. This was important to Joanna as it was her *"passion, my heart beat is the community, we need to train, re train"*. Further expressing that the treatment of ex-offenders should be grounded in love, she insisted *"you should not reject them and abandon them but to love them, to embrace them, to help them"*. The community narrative was an interesting one for Joanna. On the one hand, she noted how society was responsible for the labels it attributes to people, as she states *"because of how society thinks it sends them backwards instead of forward"*. Joanna also argued that the community should play a role in providing a support system to the families of those in prison as they *"also need to be supported, because there going through their time in prison as well"*. Joanna viewed imprisonment, offending, reoffending, faith, and rehabilitation as a community issue, not an individual one. Indeed, throughout the interview, Joanna explored the aspect of the wider social structures which

she believed needed to play a key role, *"I believe the Government should play a bigger role, they're not playing enough of a part"*. This community narrative was one that Joanna used to express her beliefs about both her role as well as that of others in society when working with people in the criminal justice system. It is interesting to note that her concern extended beyond the person incarcerated but included both the inmate's family as well as society itself.

3.1.3. Preacher Narrative

The preacher narrative drew heavily on Joanna's Christian beliefs with reference to Christian doctrine and scripture. Belief, religion, forgiveness, and the role of God was central to this narrative. Joanna recognized that her religious views would not be understood by everyone; however, she was a strong advocate for her religious views. Joanna referred to the time when she became a practicing Christian, referring to this as *"coming to the Lord"*. Joanna's religious position was discussed throughout the interview and emphasis was placed on the role of God in the lives of those in prison. Joanna also expressed her personal journey to the Christian faith, *"I came to the Lord at later life, I was nearly fifty"*. This was an important point as Joanna went to suggest that she believe there is not a set age or a set place associated with religious conversion, further stating, *" There are many people in prison who have also acknowledged God at a later stage in life we have a understanding"*. The preacher narrative was an important one to Joanna and one that Joanna used to discuss her religious beliefs. Joanna clearly recognized that there are people in prison who openly practice other forms of religion, *"There are also Muslim prisoners I speak to everyone no matter the background"*.

The role of God in the lives of those in prison was frequently discussed. Additionally, Joanna's clear position in this narrative was to promote the role of God both in her life and the lives of those in prison. The preacher narrative enabled Joanna to openly speak about God, exploring the perception and the importance of God. This narrative explored Joanna's ability to openly discuss God, not just within religious circles but also within the criminal justice system. This narrative was centered on Joanna's perception of the role of God in prison, *"God always comes into the conversation, because he is allowed to, a lot of people in prison they turn to God"*. Joanna described the ability to openly discuss God and the consequences of faith-based intervention in prison, *"Some get saved, get baptized and they hold on to their religion, they hold on to their belief"* Joanna's perception of God is important. Through her speech, Joanna attempts to teach others about her belief system and the impact it has on those with whom she works.

There was frequent reference to the Word of God and the importance of not judging people especially those in prison, *"We don't judge, we read the Bible, read the word of God and teach and discuss"*. Joanna believes that working in a faith-based capacity within prisons is challenging; however, she often explained that judgement should only come from God. The preacher narrative was one that Joanna used to portray her views on forgiveness and the importance of the Bible. Joanna believes that religion plays an influential role in the lives of some individuals who are in prison, *"If we believe in what the word of God says we cannot judge, God is the Judge"*. Further, this narrative was used by Joanna to emphasize her position, *"I'm not going into prisons in vain, I'm helping people, religion and faith are important to them and me"*. Joanna's focus relates to teaching and supporting those in prison in a faith-based capacity, those who show an interest in learning more about religion.

3.1.4. Counsellor Narrative

The counsellor narrative expressed the multifaceted role Joanna has undertaken. Joanna believes there is a general assumption that volunteering in prison in a faith-based capacity solely involves partaking in Sunday services. Joanna strongly dismissed this. Joanna described her role both in a faith-based context and beyond, discussing that religion was not a new feature for those whom she had come into contact with. Rather, many had acknowledged religion and God, *"When I go in and I counsel them the reality is the majority of them have been to church, they know about God"*. Joanna provided an insight into religion behind bars, suggesting that the role of religion in the lives of those

in prisons was not a new concept, *"The benefits and role of religion in prison is not new, people in prison have a connection to faith in a lot of ways"*. Many of those whom Joanna had come into contact with had previous experiences of religion; for example, attending churches and various religious places of worship prior to imprisonment. Joanna also explored the impact of counselling those in prison who hah severe mental health challenges. Additionally, the counsellor narrative highlights the role of counselling prisoners and the family of prisoners in a faith-based capacity, *"he (prisoner) had some mental health issues . . . he was suicidal I took about a year to get through to him"*. Joanna recognized the severity of working in a prison environment with people who are sometimes deemed vulnerable. The importance of a prisoner's and their family's wellbeing was key; Joanna expressed some disappointment in regards to the lack of support for those in need. Joanna emphasized her role in counselling and supporting the families of those in prison, *"I get a lot of calls from family members and I listen to their problems, I'm happy to help"*. Joanna used the counsellor narrative to express the complex nature of volunteering within prisons; this narrative highlighted the challenges Joanna had experienced with regards to counselling those in prison. Joanna's counselling role was described as an unofficial role but one that was an integral part of her time in prison. Joanna has dealt with complex situations and has had to manage things accordingly. In some cases, Joanna expressed the impact of counselling people which had led her to blame herself when things went wrong, *"he was on suicide watch, we were there with him and he talked to, after I came home we found out he took his own life"*. This was a difficult time for Joanna; Joanna shared that she prayed with the prisoner, *"I asked the question would you like me to pray and I prayed with him"*. She added to this, further expressing, *"Maybe I could have done more, this was hard for me because I spoke to him on the very day he took his own life"*. Although many low emotional moments were shared in this narrative, Joanna also used this narrative to express the multifaceted role of volunteering in prison. The focus was not solely on those in prison but also on the families of prisoners. It is clear that, albeit an unofficial role, the qualities of a counsellor played a vital role in Joanna's experience.

3.1.5. Forgiveness Narrative

The forgiveness narrative was one that was constantly referred to throughout Joanna's narratives. Joanna expressed a belief that we are all sinners; however, she acknowledged the importance of religion and the role it plays in changing the lives of individuals. This narrative expressed that the acknowledgment of God, alongside the recognition of religious principles, can lead individuals to a life free from crime. Forgiveness was a central feature of this narrative, *"there is a God and we are all sinners, what makes us do things right is turning our life to the lord"*. The forgiveness narrative drew on Joanna's view that all human beings sometimes make mistakes, further suggesting that God is able to forgive people, irrespective of their crimes. Within this narrative, there was an acknowledgement of the impact of criminality and personal choice; however, the concept of a second chance, redemption, and forgiveness was also expressed. The forgiveness narrative was heavily influenced by Joanna's faith along with her personal and moral beliefs. This narrative frequently referred to biblical sayings to support and illustrate points, *"if we see it from a Godly perspective God loves sinners, he just doesn't love the sin"*. Emphasis was placed on the need for forgiveness; Joanna expressed a hope that people would be able to see the person beyond the crimes they had committed, distinguishing between the person and the crime. This narrative drew on the concept that people and society need to be more forgiving, suggesting that this would positively impact the rehabilitation process for individuals following release. Joanna used this narrative to highlight the need to refrain from judging or rejecting both those who are in prison and those who have been released. There was a heavy influence on the importance of care, love, and support for ex-offenders. Joanna expressed the importance of not judging people who are in prison, "we *judge people don't we, and going into that environment you cannot judge people*". Joanna further stated, *"We should not reject them and abandon them but love them, embrace them, and help them"*. This narrative mae reference to God's love for the sinner; Joanna attempted to highlight the similarities between all people, whether in prison or not. Joanna argued that we all have made

mistakes in our lives. Interestingly, this narrative tended to overlap with the views expressed in the understanding and preacher narratives.

3.1.6. Understanding Narrative

Joanna used the understanding narrative to describe the importance of understanding the offender's/ex-offender's journey and motives for criminality, *"We have to understand the person behind the offence"*. In this narrative, Joanna wanted people to view those in prison as human beings rather than hardened criminals. Additionally, Joanna used this narrative to educate and inform people of the experiences many offenders/ex-offenders face, *"We should know the challenges they face before prison and after prison, we should know their experiences it's very hard for some of them"*. This narrative portrayed understanding, compassion, support, and care. Joanna's personal experience of visiting inmates' family members fostered in-depth empathy for the inmate as well as the inmate's family, *"my first experience it was awful . . . my son went to prison, so that was my experience. It was horrendous it was heart wrenching"*. The understanding narrative was also based on personal experiences; Joanna made several references to her son's experience in prison and her ability to understand the experiences of others. Notably, Joanna consistently referred to understanding the experiences of prisoners and their families, *"I had to gain all these experiences so that when I go into the prison I had a understanding, a deep understanding of what's it's like for the offenders and for the families"*. She suggested that volunteering at the prison in addition to her personal experience of dealing with an incarcerated family member allowed Joanna an in-depth and compassionate understanding surrounding the issue, *"I've got to help people, not just the offenders but families"*, further stating *"I can embrace them you know, the visitors come and visit I can go with them"*. Joanna used the understanding narrative to highlight the breadth of her understanding, one which included but was not limited to speaking, counselling, and assisting prisoners and the families of those in prison. These narratives identified key elements in Joanna's story and presented the complex nature of volunteering within prisons in the UK. These narratives explored topics relating to Joanna's personal experiences, the experiences of those in prison, and the impact of imprisonment on the family of those in prison.

4. Discussion

The unique findings of this research are key to the development of further knowledge in understanding the experiences of people who volunteer in the prison service within a faith-based capacity. The discussion surrounding rehabilitation, desistance, and faith has begun to attract greater attention; accordingly, these findings are crucial in understanding the role of volunteers in this context. It is important to acknowledge the context of culture as it relates to this topic; significant research pertaining to faith, prisons, and rehabilitation stems from the US criminal justice system. However, our findings highlight that, although faith-based work is not a prominent feature in criminological academic research in the UK, it is one that has a profound impact on the lives of some individuals (Aitken 2009). This paper explored the role of faith-based interventions and religiosity in prison from the perspective of Joanna, a faith-based volunteer. This was done by focusing on the narrative accounts of one individual, Joanna. A total of ten narrative identities emerged, of which six were presented here. Although the Mindfulness, Community, Preacher, Counsellor, Forgiveness, and Understanding narratives were discussed separately, several of the narratives exhibited similarities and overlapped in significant areas.

The six narratives highlighted suggest that there are several elements that are foundational to Joanna's role as a faith-based volunteer. The mindful narrative was broad in nature and demonstrated that Joanna had to be mindful of her presence in prison and those around her. Joanna was not solely focused on going into prisons and speaking to those in need; however, other factors of working in prison were constantly at the forefront of Joanna's mind. Mindfulness also contextualized Joanna's acknowledgement of the crucial elements of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1995). Joanna recognized that her gender, religion, and age were 'enabling factors'; for example, as mid-60-year-old woman,

Joanna saw herself as an approachable figure, often likened to a mother figure by those with whom she worked. Arguably, if Joanna had been in her mid-30's, the interaction between her and those in prison may have been significantly different. Faith was another enabling factor: Joanna's Christian beliefs fostered a means by which she had the opportunity to support those in prison who followed a similar belief system. This similarity enabled the facilitation of providing support and services within prison and beyond. In contrast, gender may have been partially an enabling factor, contributive towards Joanna's role as a mother figure; however, it may also have been disabling in that the offences of those in prison are often heavily gendered. Therefore, for those who have particular issues with women, Joanna's gender could potentially be perceived as a disabling factor. Gender roles and gender norms seem to have been an influential factor (Wolbrecht et al. 2008); a women's stereotypical role of as a care giver, a good listener, and compassionate were perpetuated in this narrative. Having said this, this characteristic did not seem to be centered on Joanna's gender. Joanna's faith was the influential reasoning behind her actions. Lastly, the mindfulness narrative was heavily concerned with society's role in the rehabilitation and desistance process of ex-offenders. Joanna was mindful of the impact of negative labels and stigmatization (Becker 1966); she was also mindful of the impact of labels and stigma on those in prison and their life following release. Joanna is a strong advocate for those in prison and the Good Lives Model of offender rehabilitation appears to fit in this context (Ward 2002; Ward and Maruna 2007). Essentially, Joanna expressed the belief that people should be given a chance. Similarly, the good lives model argues that giving individuals opportunities to achieve in socially acceptable and meaningful ways is important. Therefore, understanding does not solely have to come from politicians and those who work within the criminal justice system. The wider society has to be aware of how labels, stereotypes, and stigma can impact individuals, especially those who are incarcerated.

Although both the mindfulness and community narrative had unique respective points, they also complemented one another with regard to what Joanna sought to express. The sense of community and team work in relation to rehabilitation was a key feature in both narratives. Although Joanna argued that we should be mindful of several things when encountering individuals enmeshed in the prison system, she further argued that communities needed to be more proactive in the rehabilitation process of individuals. Joanna expressed that there was a range of faith-based support in prison; however, a lack of support for those following release. This was a concern as religiosity, desistance, and rehabilitation are processes. Although some in prison benefit from support whilst they are imprisoned, this also needs to be echoed following their release. Although Joanna did call for the help of the government in this area, her focus was on the community to play an active role. According to Joanna, a discussion about faith-based work is needed before positive renewed thinking about the prison system, punishment, and rehabilitation can be accomplished. Rhetoric surrounding the presence and role of religion in prison recently has not been entirely positive in the UK media. In order for communities to become involved, they must be brought into the discussion. Additionally, the UK is a multicultural country with individuals from many different faith backgrounds. There needs to be some acknowledgement that the community can play a role in supporting ex-offenders following their release from prison, irrespective of one's religious views. For example, Joanna frequently expressed speaking to individuals from many different backgrounds. Although religion played an influential part in her process, the other roles Joanna undertook, whether as listener, counsellor, or mentor, were also appealing characteristics to those who are in prison and those post release.

The counsellor narrative showed that Joanna had taken on various roles within her work with prisoners. Although religiosity was an enabling factor in terms of her access to the prison system, clearly this was not the only appealing feature. Joanna's counselling narrative demonstrated that she provided support to those in prison and the family of those in prison. Although the families of those in prison may not have been directly concerned with the religious aspect of Joanna's role, she communicated how the families were appreciative of her time, support, and encouragement. Joanna's time in prisons had seen her take on several roles; this was something that was demonstrated across the narratives

discussed. Counselling and mentoring were frequent roles that Joanna undertook. Mentoring has several benefits; as a mentor, Joanna could be effective in providing informal and emotional support (Devilly et al. 2005) whilst promoting adherence to formal interventions (Jucovy 2006). Clearly, the voluntary sector has and continues to provide a substantial amount of support to the criminal justice system. It is easy to assume that faith-based intervention only involves, for example, Friday Jumm'ah services for Muslim prisoners; Saturday or Sunday services for Christian prisoners; or Bible study or other faith-based classes that take place in the week. However, this intervention is much more complex than what meets the eye. Those who work or volunteer within prisons will hear traumatic stories and deal with individuals who may be deemed as 'hard to reach' or vulnerable. Joanna talked about an occasion in which she spoke to a suicidal prisoner, learning afterwards that the prison had shortly thereafter taken his own life. Those who volunteer within prison face severe and life-changing experiences. The counsellor narrative captured this; however, it is also important to recognize the potential impact this can have on volunteers like Joanna. Self-blame and wanting to do more are only two examples of this emotional impact; however, the clear positive factor in Joanna's love and passion for this role is her faith and religious views.

The preacher narrative centered on Joanna's Christian beliefs, irrespective of the challenges and complexities of volunteering within prisons. Joanna's belief system was a constant driving force. Joanna expressed her confidence that Christianity can help some people in prison; however, she was also aware that other religions may serve as a similar support to others with different beliefs. Statistically, non-Christian religious groups are currently growing in the UK prison population (Allen and Watson 2017), showing a need for a multi faith perspective within the criminal justice system. Volunteering in prison in a faith-based capacity enables an open discussion surrounding religion, one which this study has shown to be a benefit to both those in prison and the volunteers who dedicate their time there, i.e., Joanna. There are numerous debates regarding the secularization of the UK; for example, the controversial decision to ban a Church of England cinema advertisement featuring the Lord's Prayer has been discussed in both political and media arenas (Pulver 2015). In a democratic society, peaceful religious speech should not be banned from public spaces (Fraser 2015); however, the role of religion and religiosity continues to spark debate in the UK. The debate about religious freedoms and the extent to which religious views are acceptable is a topic of continuous discussion. In contrast, Joanna expressed that she felt refreshed in her ability to openly discuss religion, faith, and forgiveness within her volunteering role not to mention her ability to provide a safe space in prison for those who also seek to express their religious views and practice their religion. Lastly, the understanding and forgiveness narrative went hand in hand. Joanna expressed a need to first understand the reasoning behind a person's offences, followed by a need to forgive individuals. Rehabilitating and reintegrating individuals back into society is thought to be a consequence of understanding and forgiveness. Joanna's perspective was grounded in her faith where forgiveness is a central component. However, those who may have been the victims of a crime or those who do not necessarily hold the same religious views as Joanna may not agree with this concept. Joanna was aware that her religious views and broader beliefs regarding crime and punishment were built upon the principles of her faith, a belief system that some will not understand or adhere to. However, Joanna's experiences have highlighted that volunteering within prisons is not simplistic; it is challenging, emotive, and constantly changing. Regardless of what religion an individual follows, faith-based intervention can play a vital part in the lives of those in prison or post release (see Robinson-Edwards and Pinkney 2018). In some cases, prisoners may not be particularly religious; however, the support received from Joanna and other volunteers in prison can be vital. Joanna illustrated the impact volunteering in prisons had on her personally; however, the overarching factor was Joanna's experience of seeing the benefit of religiosity in prison.

5. Conclusions

This paper has explored the narrative identities highlighted by Joanna. We acknowledge that this study cannot be generalized to larger populations; instead, its purpose was to engage in an exploration

of the context in which Joanna worked (McAdams 2012; Yardley et al. 2015) and conclude with the following points. First, we intend for this study to contribute to the criminological knowledge of faith-based interventions while also contributing to a pathway of research exploring current issues impacting rehabilitation, desistance, and religiosity for those in prison and post release. Second, we suggest that the narrative identities highlighted should be utilized by those working with volunteers to understand the complex nature of volunteering within prison in a faith-based context. Understanding such complexities will assist prisons, faith communities, and third sector agencies to appreciate the needs and interests of their volunteers. Such an understanding will support the recruitment, training, and supervision needs of volunteers. Third, we echo the need for policy makers, researchers, and prison practitioners to appreciate that engaging in a process of desistance and rehabilitation is a journey. Doing this through a religious pathway is not different. Fourth, further research is needed to explore the narratives of larger samples of volunteers; of interest would be to understand differences or similarities in volunteer gender, religion, varying prison population communities, and length of experience. Likewise, the experiences of faith-based volunteers within a wider criminal justice context should be explored, as prison is only one aspect of the journey and very little is documented on the experience of volunteers within the criminal justice system. Such research is important to our collective understanding surrounding the experience of volunteering, faith, and religiosity in prison.

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The Influence of Religion on the Criminal Behavior of Emerging Adults

Christopher Salvatore and Gabriel Rubin *

Department of Justice Studies, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ 07043, USA; salvatorec@montclair.edu
* Correspondence: RubinG@montclair.edu; Tel.: +1-973-655-5319

Abstract: Recent generations of young adults are experiencing a new life course stage: emerging adulthood. During this 'new' stage of the life course, traditional social bonds and turning points may not be present, may be delayed, or may not operate in the same manner as they have for prior generations. One such bond, religion, is examined here. Focusing on the United States, emerging adulthood is investigated as a distinct stage of the life course. The criminality of emerging adults is presented, a theoretical examination of the relationship between religion and crime is provided, the role of religion in emerging adults' lives is explored, research on the role of religion's influence on criminal offending is presented, and theoretical and policy implications are offered.

Keywords: emerging adults; crime; religion; social bonds; offending

1. Introduction

The role of religion as a key component of the lives of many American youth has been established by scholars, such as Salas-Wright et al. (2015) and Smith et al. (2002), across the social science literature. Previous studies have identified several beneficial outcomes related to the role of religion in youth populations (Koenig et al. 2012). For example, Johnson et al. (2008) found that young people who are religious are less likely to take part in substance use or abuse. Other studies, such as Salas-Wright et al. (2014), revealed that youth who are more religious engage in less violence, and Baier and Wright (2001) showed youth who engage in higher levels of religious participation exhibit fewer antisocial behaviors, like crime. Much of the literature exploring the role of religion as a factor influencing the antisocial behaviors of youth populations has largely focused on adolescent populations. For example, Johnson et al. (2000) used data from the National Youth Survey's fifth wave, in which the sampled participants were between the ages of 11 and 17 years old, to study how religious involvement mediates the effect of neighborhood disorder on youth crime. However, an area that has not yet been sufficiently explored in the study of the antisocial behaviors of young people is the relationship between religion and the criminal behavior of emerging adults.

The path to adulthood has radically changed in the United States, as it has in many other high-income nations since the 1960s (Arnett 2015; Cote 2000; Salvatore 2018). Scholars have found that the period between adolescence and adulthood has been extended with many traditional markers of adulthood, like marriage and completion of higher education, being postponed, leading to delayed transition to adulthood (Arnett 2015; Cote 2000; Salvatore 2018). This prolonged period between adolescence and adulthood has been identified by Arnett as emerging adulthood (Arnett 1998). Originally conceptualized by Arnett to occur between 18 and 25 years of age, the age range has since been expanded out to the end of the twenties (Arnett 2015). Others, such as Salvatore, Taniguchi, and Welsh (Salvatore et al. 2012), have argued it may expand to older ages as well. Emerging adulthood has been identified as a time of exploration and experimentation for young people which may manifest in a variety of areas (Salvatore 2018).

Since being introduced by Arnett in the 1990s, emerging adulthood has been an area examined across the social science literature, including sociology (e.g., Salas-Wright et al. 2015), psychology (e.g., Arnett 2000), social work (Haffejee et al. 2013) and, in particular, criminology (e.g., Jang and Rhodes 2012; Marcus 2009; Piquero et al. 2002). Studies have found high rates of risky and dangerous behaviors, such as binge drinking and unsafe sex, in emerging adult populations (Salvatore 2018). For example, studies by (Arnett 1998, 2005), Chassin et al. (2002), and White et al. (2005) found that risky driving and substance use are common in samples of emerging adults. Prior research has also found that emerging adulthood is a fertile stage for criminal offending and substance use (Haffejee et al. 2013; Piquero et al. 2002). Many emerging adults offend in a similar manner to adolescents, committing low-level, non-violent crimes (Salvatore and Taniguchi 2012; Salvatore 2017).

Many studies have focused on the role of religion as a factor that may influence risky behaviors in emerging adults (e.g., Salas-Wright et al. 2015) or have utilized religion as a variable to predict a decrease in offending during emerging adulthood. For example, in their 2012 study, Salvatore and Taniguchi examined the role of turning points and social bonds on offending during emerging adulthood. Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health revealed that turning points, like marriage and parenthood, as well as social bonds, like religious participation, reduced offending during emerging adulthood.

In this paper, we examine the role that religion plays on the criminal behavior of emerging adults in the United States of America. Since a large portion of the research in the area of emerging adulthood has been conducted in the context of the United States (e.g., Arnett 2015) or has used samples from the United States (e.g., Marcus 2009; Piquero et al. 2002; Salvatore and Taniguchi 2012), it was deemed fitting to keep the discussion of this article within that context. We will begin by explaining what emerging adulthood is and how it evolved as a distinct stage of the life course. Next, we will explore prior studies examining criminal offending during emerging adulthood. Third, we will present the theoretical role of religion on influencing antisocial behaviors, like crime. Fourth, we will briefly examine the religious beliefs and practice of emerging adults. Fifth, we will summarize the existing research dealing with religion, crime, and emerging adulthood. We will conclude with implications for theory and policy as well as a look at potential areas of future scholarship.

2. What is Emerging Adulthood?

In order to understand the role that religion plays in the offending of young adults in the modern era, we need first to define emerging adulthood. Originally presented by Arnett in 1994, emerging adulthood is a re-conceptualization of the lives of young people aged between 18 and 25, later expanded into the late 20s (Arnett 2015). The concept of emerging adulthood signifies that traditional paths to adulthood, like completing higher education, getting married, becoming a parent, and so forth are now postponed for many young adults (Arnett 2015). Due to these delays, Arnett argued that instead of just a transition from adolescence to adulthood, young adults now experience a completely new stage of the life course, which Arnett termed emerging adulthood (Arnett 2015).

According to Arnett, emerging adulthood is grounded in cultural changes that have occurred since the 1960s, which have resulted in changes in behaviors at a societal and an individual level (Arnett 1998, 2000, 2005, 2015). In his work, Arnett identified four key areas of change which fostered the development of emerging adulthood as a unique stage of the life course. First, was the shift from an economy rooted in manufacturing that generally did not require advanced education, to a more information-based culture which requires higher levels of education. As such, youth, who in prior generations could have lived a middle class lifestyle with just a high school education, were now expected to continue their education beyond high school, and seek employment in areas more geared toward service, such as health care and education. Next, was increased freedom for women in society, in particular in the areas of education and employment. These changes allowed more women to delay marriage and parenting, and pursue careers. Third, there we increased sexual freedom and tolerance of behaviors such as premarital sex. These changes led to the normalization of youth of

having sex before marriage. The final area of change was the youth movement which demonized the maturation of adulthood and lionized the unfettered freedom of adolescence. As such, many, who in prior generations would have viewed themselves as young adults, now saw themselves in a state of extended adolescence (Arnett 2005, 2015; Tanner and Arnett 2009; Salvatore 2018). Today's emerging adults speak of "adulting" as a foreign practice, complete with unfulfilling errands, "scary" encounters with older generations and dreaded responsibilities (Lierz 2017).

Even the popular press is examining emerging adulthood, as behaviors typically reflected in younger adolescents are now seen more in those in emerging adulthood. As *Time Magazine* noted, "Today, the researchers say, 18-year-olds act more like 15-year-olds from previous decades. That was true across all demographic groups in the study" (MacMillan 2017). This not only means that emerging adulthood continues to be an important phenomenon, but also that criminal behavior may be shifting from the teen years to the twenties and perhaps even the thirties. This is troubling given how criminal records are treated for minors versus adults according to the law. While minors can get their records sealed or expunged, adults typically cannot—and this will surely hurt the employment prospects, financial stability and family lives of future emerging adults.

3. Emerging Adults and Crime

One of the most important findings in criminology is the peak years of offending (Ulmer and Steffensmeier 2014). Quetelet (1984) observed that for those involved in crime, offending tends to peak in late adolescence and early adulthood, and then declines as people age. In the modern era, the Uniform Crime Report found that the peak crime years in all crimes reported are those younger than 25 (Ulmer and Steffensmeier 2014). The peak years of offending, as noted by criminologists, as well as national crime data, encompass not only adolescence, but emerging adulthood as well. Across the social science literature, a consistent finding is that emerging adults are prone to risky and dangerous behaviors, including criminal offending and illegal substance use (Salvatore 2018). Prominent scholars in the area of life course criminology have argued that emerging adulthood is a stage of the life course ripe for criminal offending (Moffitt et al. 2002). For example, in a study using a sample of male parolees released from the California Youth Authority, Piquero et al. (2002) found that arrest rates for non-violent and violent offenders reached a high point in the early 20s, during the emerging adulthood stage of the life course. These findings support the notion that emerging adulthood is a stage of the life course where criminality may be expressed. Data from national studies of crime further support these conclusions. For example, data from the 2016 Uniform Crime Report (UCR) found that people aged 18 through 25 had higher rates of arrest for violent and non-violent crimes relative to other groups in the population. For example, in 2016, there were 7860 individuals aged 15 arrested for violent crimes, compared to 14,040 aged 20 (Uniform Crime Report UCR). We found a similar pattern with non-violent arrests as well, with those aged 15 having 29,385 arrests for property crimes, and those aged 20 having 37,463 arrests for property crimes (Uniform Crime Report UCR).

The potential for emerging adults to engage in criminal behavior is perhaps most reflected in studies examining illegal drug use. As illegal drug usage is prominently examined in the literature dealing with emerging adulthood, this section begins with a look at illegal drug usage in emerging adults, followed by a discussion of studies examining offender typologies and types of offending prominent in emerging adults, and finally, criminological theories that can be applied to explain crime in emerging adults.

The emerging adulthood stage of the life course is ripe for experimentation and identity exploration through substance use, including the use of illegal drugs (Salvatore 2018). Walters (2014) stated that those in late adolescence and early adulthood (the emerging adulthood age range) have some of the highest rates of illegal substance use and abuse, compared with younger and older segments of the population. For example, using a nationwide sample, the Monitoring the Future Study, which followed a sample of high school graduates each year until adulthood, thus providing data through emerging adulthood, found that emerging adults have the highest prevalence of past-30-day

illicit drug use, ranging from 22 to 28% in those 18 to 24 years of age (Schulenberg et al. 2016). The use of illicit drugs in 2016 increased in the senior year of high school (age 18) from 24 to 28% percent in those aged 21 to 22 (Schulenberg et al. 2016), reflecting the high rates of substance use as discussed by Arnett (2005). Another national survey, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, a large state-based study which contains both historical and current data about the prevalence of drug use across emerging adulthood has yielded similar findings, with those in the 18 to 25 year age range having significantly increased levels of illegal substance use relative to younger members of the population as well as older members of the population (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality 2017). For example, in 2015, there were 4346 respondents in the 12 to 17 year age group who stated they had used illicit drugs in the past year, compared to 13,102 of the respondents in the 18 to 25 year old age group (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality 2017).

Previous studies suggest that experimental drug use is highest in emerging adulthood, and then tends to decrease starting at around age 25 as individuals assume adult social roles and build the bonds and attachments that act to inhibit crime and deviance in adults (Bachman et al. 1997). As discussed above, emerging adulthood is often a period of newfound freedom from the controls of parents and teachers as youth graduate high school and leave their parents' homes. With this new freedom may come experimentation with substance use, or increased substance use, especially in those who have established a pattern of substance use in adolescence (Arnett 2000, 2015; Rohrbach et al. 2005).

Illicit drug use is particularly problematic for emerging adults given their high rates of substance abuse disorders, as nationwide, emerging adults are three times more likely to report illicit drug dependence and misuse compared to the general population (Jones et al. 2015). This is problematic as drug crime often correlates with other types of crime (Craddock et al. 1997) as well as public health concerns, such as sexually transmitted infections (Dembo et al. 2009). These potentially negative outcomes could follow an emerging adult for the rest of their life, impacting their health, relationships, and status in society, as many of these issues, such as having a criminal record, are stigmatized in society.

In addition to illicit drug use, studies have explored the other types of crime prevalent in emerging adults. For example, Salvatore, Taniguchi, and Welsh (Salvatore et al. 2012) used data from the publicly accessible version of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to examine the types of offenses emerging adults were committing. Salvatore et al. (2012) created index variables to place offenses into two categories: (1) Life Course Persistent Offending (more serious, predatory offenses, such as burglary) and (2) Prolonged Adolescent Offending (less serious, non-predatory crimes, such as stealing items worth less than $50). The findings revealed that the bulk of emerging adults were engaging in less serious "Prolonged Adolescent" offenses; conversely, only a small percentage (around 6%) had committed the more predatory "Life Course Persistent" crimes (Salvatore et al. 2012) In another study using a sample of male parolees released from the California Youth Authority, Piquero et al. (2002) found that arrest rates for non-violent and violent offenders reached a high point in the early 20s, during the emerging adulthood stage of the life course. These findings largely mirror the work of Moffitt (1993) and Salvatore (2017) that suggests that emerging adults will engage in offending in similar patterns to adolescents, with most engaging in lower-level, non-predatory offenses, and a smaller percentage committing more serious offenses.

Other studies have examined specific types of crime more closely. For example, Loeber et al. (2008) used data from the Pittsburgh Youth Study (PYS) to examine violence and theft. The results of their study found that the annual rate of violent offending peaked at four offenses per year in the late teens and then dropped as the sample moved through emerging adulthood. The findings were similar regarding theft, with a peak of offending in the late teens, between 3.5 and 5.4 thefts annually, before dropping to about two thefts per year annually as the sample aged through emerging adulthood. This pattern reflects the relationship between age and crime, as presented by scholars like Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), with crime peaking in the late teens and tapering off as people age. In another study, Marcus (2009) looked at self-reported violence, including armed robbery, gang fighting, using a weapon in a fight, pulling a

knife on someone, or shooting and stabbing someone, using several of the Add Health data to cross sectionally analyze violence, including when the sample was in emerging adulthood. The presence of violence at wave 3 (during emerging adulthood) was predicted by having a history of violence as well as a lack of social bonds/attachments, such as marriage, and being at economic risk.

Several theories have been used to explain the prevalence of crime in emerging adult populations. In 2017, Salvatore presented the "emerging adult gap" thesis which argued that due to the delayed turning points and attenuated social bonds prevalent during emerging adulthood, many youths fall into an "emerging adulthood gap" similar to the "maturity" gap that Moffitt (1993) presented. According to Salvatore (2017), those caught in the "emerging adulthood gap" may be prone to committing offenses in patterns reflective of Moffitt (1993) developmental taxonomy of life course persistent offenders (a smaller, more predatory group of offenders who start offending earlier in the life course) and adolescent limited offenders (a larger group of youth who typically engage in less predatory crimes such as underage drinking and being loud and rowdy), who typically start offending later and desist sooner than the aforementioned life course persistent offenders.

Social control theory, as presented by Hirschi (1969), could be applied to the study of crime in emerging adults. Hirschi's theory argues that more strongly an individual is bonded to society, the less likely they are to commit crime. According to Hirschi (1969), there are four elements in a social bond: (1) attachment, which refers to the emotional bond one has with prosocial individuals like teachers, parents, and friends. Individuals would not want to engage in crime, for to do so would risk this emotional bond; (2) involvement—referring to an individual's level of engagement with prosocial activities, like school, sports, and religious activities. If an individual is engaged in these prosocial pursuits, they will not have time to engage in antisocial behavior like crime; (3) belief—the notion that if an individual believes in conventional society (e.g., laws), they will be less likely to engage in behaviors that go against convention; and (4) commitment, the idea that an individual will fear the consequences of committing crime that could involve punishment since, in such a case, the individual could lose social bonds and face sanctions.

Hirschi (1969) theory can be used to explain crime in emerging adults by incorporating the changes and experimental nature of this stage of the life course. Emerging adults tend to have different relationships with their parents, often moving out of the home and no longer being subjected to their control, and teachers, who (if they are attending college) do not have the power over them as they did in high school. Professors in college are typically occupied with other roles in their positions, such as research and services, and as such, they typically do not operate as "police" in the classroom who might call parents in, for instance, when students do not attend class or miss assignments.

Another theory that could be applied to the criminality of emerging adults is strain theory. Agnew (2001) general strain theory, argues that there are three types of strain: (1) strain arising from the difference between an individual's expected goals and actual results; (2) strain arising from the removal of positively valued stimuli (like a romantic relationship or job); and (3) strain arising from the introduction of negative stimuli. If an individual experiences any of these types of strain, they may experience negative emotions like anger and rage, which could lead to various types of behavior, depending upon the level of support the individual has in their social network. Agnew posited that the emotion of anger could be correlated with crime, especially violence crime. Criminal behavior could take the shape of attacking a source of strain (such as fighting someone who insults them) or coping with negative emotions/thoughts through illegal drug use.

Agnew (2001) theory could be used to explain the high rates of crimes found in emerging adults. For example, as emerging adulthood has been identified as a period of change and instability (Arnett 2005), emerging adults could react to the negative stimuli of uncertainty in areas such as relationships, employment, and housing using illegal drugs to self medicate and manage stress.

There have been several studies which have used the abovementioned theories to study their role in understanding crime in emerging adults. Using Add Health data, Jang and Rhodes (2012) explored the role of strain on crime and drug use for emerging adults. The unstable and exploratory nature

of emerging adulthood, fraught with changes in residence, romantic relationships and employment, provides ample forms of strain to examine. The results of Jang and Rhodes's study revealed that social bonds and self-control mediate the effect of strain on offending, supporting Arnett's theory and work in addition to studies that have found that social bonds (e.g., religion and education) can help to reduce offending in emerging adults. In another study, Salvatore and Taniguchi (2012) used Add Health data to test the effects of social bonds and turning points, as theorized by Hirschi (1969) social control theory and Laub and Sampson (2003) age-graded theory of informal social control. The results of Salvatore and Taniguchi's study found that traditional turning points, like marriage and having children, as well as social bonds/controls, like religion, are effective in reducing crime in emerging adults.

The above studies explain and verify the criminality present in emerging adult populations. As discussed, emerging adults typically engage in offending due to negative stimuli or the lack of social bonds and controls that were prevalent in prior generations and have prevented many young adults from engaging in crime. Due to being occupied with spouses, children, full-time employment, and military service, as well as religious, community, and familial attachments, young adults of the past did not experience emerging adulthood, and therefore, were less apt to participate in offending (Salvatore 2018). As this area of research continues to grow, more trends and patterns of emerging adult offending will surely be revealed.

4. Theoretical Role of Religion during Emerging Adulthood

Sociological inquiry regarding the effect of religion on crime began in the 20th century and continues to the present day (Bainbridge 1989; Lombroso 1911; Schur 1969). Organized religion has traditionally served as a method for bonding individuals with their families, communities, and societies, conveying societal goals and instilling morals in young and old alike. The religious bond not only holds families and communities together through common beliefs and rituals but provides a moral compass which can act as an internal social control, preventing individuals from engaging in antisocial behaviors, like crime. The value of religion is reflected in a response from an interviewee who explained to one of the authors, "Why do people send their kids to *madrasa* (religious school)? For the same reasons you might send your children to religious school: to teach them morals, values, discipline, and about their culture" (Mahmoud 2013).

Religious institutions provide youth with a normative set of guidelines through the creation of bonds to the religious group (Smith 2003). The effectiveness of religion as a social control is demonstrated by studies that have found that religion can act as an effective social control for adolescents and young adults (Johnson et al. 2000; Petts 2009; Salas-Wright et al. 2015; Salvatore and Taniguchi 2012). We know the potential value of religion as a social control for adolescents and emerging adults, but through what theoretical mechanism does it work?

There are several different theories of religion which may explain why it can act as a social control. Most of these theories are grounded in the notion of religious involvement, referring to the level to which a person is engaged in a religious organization and therefore connected to a social network in the context of that organization (Johnson et al. 2000). Religious involvement may encourage the development of social networks which decrease antisocial behaviors such as crime (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). As Krohn (1986) noted, social networks are key to providing not only social, but emotional support, which may help individuals resist or desist from engaging in crime. Through interactions with other members of the religious group and the controls established by being engaged in the religious organization, youth may be aided in avoiding antisocial behaviors which could damage their lives, instead seeking lives of greater meaning. As such, involvement in a religious community may prevent an individual from engaging in antisocial behaviors, like delinquency and substance use (Petts 2009). The idea of religious involvement as a factor that encourages social bonds and controls which prevent crime fits nicely into Hirschi (1969) social control theory where social institutions like the family and education act to build individual attachment, commitment and involvement with society, thereby acting to prevent crime—as the individual would not want to

risk endangering these attachments. Hirschi (1969) social control theory is reflected in the work of Sampson and Laub (1993) age-graded life course theory of crime which posits that stronger attachments to social institutions (like religion) are connected to lower levels of delinquency and crime. As such, we would expect an individual with higher levels of engagement with religious institutions (e.g., going to religious services more often, participating in religious oriented community events) to be less likely to commit crime.

The next major theory recognized for explaining the deterrence effect of religion is the so-called hellfire hypothesis. The hellfire hypothesis, most widely known from its presentation by Hirschi and Stark (1969), as well as a series of follow up studies, including Burkett and White (1974) and Stark (1996), proposes that religion deters individual level crime by using the threat of supernatural punishment and promotes normative behavior through the promise of a supernatural reward. For example, using the Christian Faith, if an individual engages in a crime such as murder, thus breaking one of the Ten Commandments, they will be subject to punishment in hell. On the other hand, if an individual does not commit crimes, they will be rewarded with an eternity in the paradise of heaven.

Rational choice theory is used to explain how crime connects an individual's self-imposed punishment with their level of religious commitment (Grasmick et al. 1991). According to Grasmick et al. (1991), people who strongly identify as religious have a greater likelihood of experiencing shame from committing deviant acts, and individuals saliently participating in religion-based social networks have a greater likelihood of experiencing embarrassment as a result of deviant acts (p. 253). As such, these processes would influence religious individuals to avoid committing crime by increasing the perceived chances of, and severity of, informal punishments (Baier and Wright 2001).

Another pair of theories explaining the role of religion in offending are reference group theory and differential association, both of which incorporate the role of the social group(s) on individual behavior. Reference group theory argues that individuals existing within reference groups in which they have backgrounds and beliefs that strongly resemble each other, "decisively" shape the behavior and attitudes of one another (Bock et al. 1987, pp. 91–92). Since each person juxtaposes and subsequently controls their behavior in a way that is reflective of the behavior and attitudes of the other members in their reference groups, an increase in morality within these groups will increase the level of morality for all members of the groups. Therefore, if reference groups become more centered on religion, religion will act to deter crime through the adoption and increased level of group level morality (Bock et al. 1987).

Using a differential association perspective, religion prevents crime by the processes of socialization and social selection (Burkett 1993). Through socialization, religious peer influence can change an individual's level of religious commitment though positive reinforcement, thereby deterring criminal acts (Baier and Wright 2001; Burkett and Warren 1987). In regard to social selection, religion shapes peer selection since individuals with a stronger commitment to religion will select peers with a similar level of (conventional religious) beliefs (Burkett and Warren 1987).

To take a somewhat different approach, the sociobiological perspective uses arousal theory to explain criminal behavior as being the result of an individual's need for neurological stimulation, with those prone to crime having a greater need for neural arousal than those who are not crime prone (Eysenck 1964). In other words, for individuals who need greater levels of neurological stimulation, normative social activities, such as participating in religious activities, will not provide enough stimulation; as such, they will seek out more stimulating activities, such as crime.

Based upon the abovementioned theories, we would expect religion to operate as an effective social control for emerging adults. Despite the somewhat different social circumstances, such as changes in the economy and nature of employment to which emerging adults are subjected, emerging adults are still connected to each other, their family, and their community through religious institutions. Being part of religious groups and institutions will shape the normative morality of emerging adults (as it has with prior generations), provide prosocial activities and role models, and help to instill internal social controls, preventing the individual from engaging in criminal behaviors.

As we will see in the next section, previous studies have suggested that recent cohorts of emerging adults may be less engaged with religion. It should be noted a decline in religion does not need to come with a decline in social or other values. Individuals can adopt their own moral systems, take to humanistic ideologies or philosophies, or simply indulge in altruistic behavior due to empathic impulses (Pinker 2012). In *Homo Deus*, Yuval Harari defines religion broadly, as any ideology that believes in a superhuman order. He thus includes Communism and Liberalism as "religions" (Harari 2017). However, most who speak of "religion" are referring to traditional, institutionalized religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. These institutionalized religions serve as "on the ground" moralizers that link the individual to the culture and the state. This is why Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others, proposed condoning a civil religion that would tie the populace together (Rousseau 1762).

5. Emerging Adults and Religious Beliefs

As noted above, religion is an important social control that can inhibit deviance and crime (Laub and Sampson 2001). Religion helps to guide and shape our view of the world, providing values that direct our behavior. In addition, developing religious beliefs may be an essential part of our identities (Arnett 2015, p. 211). Prior studies have found that youth with higher levels of religious involvement are less likely to engage in substance use and abuse (Johnson et al. 2008) and have lower rates of offending (Salvatore and Taniguchi 2012; Salas-Wright et al. 2015). Despite this, scholars like Arnett (1998) have found that emerging adults in college are less likely to attend religious services on a regular basis. However, even though lower levels of religious participation have been reported in college aged students, many still state that religion is important to them (Arnett and Jensen 2002). To put it another way, some evidence suggests that emerging adults may be less likely to participate in religious services, but they still report that it is an important factor in their lives. The role of religion in the lives of emerging adults is an important relationship for us to examine as there is a growing body of literature examining the relationship between variance in religious expression and high risk and antisocial behaviors in populations of emerging adults (Salas-Wright et al. 2015). The bulk of studies exploring the relationship between religion and antisocial behaviors, like drug use and crime, have centered on the belief that religiosity is a homogeneous factor (Salas-Wright et al. 2015, p. 67). Studies have tended to focus on the protective role of aspects of religiosity, like attendance at religious services, participation in religious groups or activities, or created scaled measures of items pertaining to religiosity (Salas-Wright et al. 2015, p. 67). Several studies, such as Salvatore and Taniguchi (2012), have taken one or both of these approaches, which certainly can measure the influence of religion on the aforementioned antisocial behaviors. However, studies in recent years have argued that the different aspects of religiosity may not always act independently; instead, they may reflect a distinct, consistent religiosity profile (Pearce and Denton 2011; Smith and Denton 2005; Smith and Snell 2009).

So, if religion is important to emerging adults, and religion is also a key social control, with prior studies finding higher levels of religious participation being related to decreased levels of offending and substance use, what does the literature say about the relationship between the two? As emerging adulthood is a relatively new area of research, there have been few expansive looks at the role of religion during emerging adulthood. However, there is an expansive body of literature exploring the religiosity of adolescents which provides us with a starting point and context to understand religiosity in youth populations. Below, we will briefly examine adolescent religiosity profiles, and then turn our attention to the research examining religiosity in emerging adults.

To date, one of the most comprehensive sources for data dealing with adolescents and emerging adults and religions is the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). The NSYR started in 2003 at the University of Notre Dame. Using a National Sample of teenagers who were followed through emerging adulthood, the study provides a detailed look at the religious practices and beliefs of a recent cohort of emerging adults. In 2008, Denton, Pearce, and Smith used data from two time points (wave 1, aged 13–17, and wave 2, aged 16 to 21 years) to report on several aspects of religious practices and beliefs

from emerging adults, including religious affiliation, beliefs, practices, religious choice, and personal religiosity and spirituality. Previous studies have examined religiosity profiles and their relationships with behavior in adolescents in the United States and other high income nations (Pearce and Denton 2011; Smith and Denton 2005) using NSYR data. For example, Smith and Denton (2005) constructed the "Ideal Types." These "Ideal Types" include a group identified by Smith and Denton (2005) as "the devoted", describing adolescents who go religious services once a week or more, state that their faith is very or extremely important, express a belief in God, and state they pray a few times or more per week. This 'devoted' type was 8% of the sample. There were three additional "Ideal Types" identified by the study: (1) "the regulars" (27%); (2) "the sporadic" (17%); and (3) "the disengaged" (12%). These groups were then used to study the relationship between being in one of these classes and several life outcomes, including antisocial behaviors, like substance use. Looking at the results from an adolescent-based portion of the NSYR gives us some context regarding the level of religious engagement in youth populations, as well as how the level of religious engagement may influence antisocial outcomes. As Hirschi (1969) social control theory suggests, being in a more engaged religious group (like "the devoted") builds stronger (prosocial) attachments to the community and society, thereby inhibiting delinquency in adolescent populations. We focus specifically on the role of religiosity on antisocial outcomes in the next section.

To better understand the role that religion plays in the lives of emerging adults, we present some of the key findings of the NSYR to help better understand how the different dimensions of religiosity are expressed in a population of emerging adults, followed by a brief discussion of a follow up study by Smith and Snell (2009) using the same "Ideal Types" as Smith and Denton (2005). The NSYR surveyed a scientific sample of Americans to see if they belonged to a variety of religions, including Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, no religion, or other religion. Denton et al. (2008) findings revealed that religious affiliations were similar between wave 1 and wave 2. This finding may suggest that the exploratory nature of emerging adulthood does not influence the formal religious affiliation one has during this stage of the life course. On the other hand, Arnett (2015) conducted interviews with several subjects who stated that while they did identify with a religion, they did not necessarily believe in it, doubted the beliefs, or just did not participate in religious services. What we may see is that even though religious affiliation is consistent during emerging adulthood, it does not influence what an individual believes, or how they practice their beliefs, during emerging adulthood (Salvatore 2018). It is worth noting that other studies, such as the 2012 Pew Foundation Survey, have found an increase in the number of 18 to 29 year olds who identify with religious affiliation (Hackett and Grimm 2012). This may suggest that emerging adults are less committed to the religious traditions they were raised with; however, it is possible that there may be a return to these affiliations as emerging adults age.

Turning our attention to Denton et al. (2008) findings regarding religious beliefs, the NSYR found minor changes in religious beliefs between waves one and two. For example, in the first wave, 13% of respondents reported that they did not know or were unsure if they believed in God, and in wave 2, the percentage rose to 18% (Denton et al. 2008, p. 7). Another question dealt with perceptions of God, ranging from seeing God as a personal being that influenced their lives, to a creator who is no longer active in the world, to a cosmic force. Results from wave 1 to wave 2 found a decrease from 67 to 63% of those who viewed God on a more personal level. This is a small but notable decrease, perhaps reflecting the uncertain nature of emerging adulthood. Next, those who viewed God as an uninvolved creator decreased by 1% between the two waves, and there was an increase of 2% in those who viewed God as a cosmic force. Denton et al. (2008) findings seem to suggest that while religion still matters to emerging adults, religiosity does decrease during this life stage.

The next area examined in the NSYR was public religious practice, which included attendance at religious services and at religious education classes, as well as youth group involvement. The results of the NSYR found that between waves 1 and 2, there was a marked decrease of 15% in the percentage of youth who attending religious services weekly (Denton et al. 2008, p. 14). This finding could be explained by the changes experienced in adolescence (in wave 1) and emerging adulthood (wave 2).

During adolescence, young people are typically subjected to household rules set by parents, one of which may be attendance at religious services. During emerging adulthood, youth may move into their own apartment, live with roommates, or be away at college, and as such, their parents' rules regarding participation in religious services may no longer influence their behaviors. Another factor offering a possible explanation for the drop in weekly attendance found by the NSYR was the level of individualism during emerging adulthood, which Arnett noted may make emerging adults more suspicious of organized religions (Arnett 2015). It is also possible that emerging adults may be living busier lives relative to their high school years, being occupied with work, school and day to day activities during the week, and their social lives on the weekends. As a result, they simply may not have the free time to go to religious services (Arnett 2015, p. 218).

The follow up study using Smith and Denton (2005) "Ideal Types" by Smith and Snell (2009) used data from the NSYR to apply the same "Ideal Types" employed to create religious profiles to the sample as adolescents, during emerging adulthood (when the sample was between the ages of 18 and 23). Reflective of the abovementioned findings from the NSYR, Smith and Snell found that there were changes in the groups, with the devoted class dropping from 8% during adolescence, to 5% during emerging adulthood. Not surprisingly (given the exploratory nature of emerging adulthood), the disengagement class more than doubled in size, from 12% in adolescence to 25% during emerging adulthood. There was little change in the "sporadic" type, with a 1% increase from adolescence (17%) to emerging adulthood (18%). There was a more marked decrease in the "regulars" class, dropping from 27% in adolescence to 15% in emerging adulthood. The findings of Smith and Snell (2009) follow up study are reflective of what is expected given the differences described above in the level of religious participation and religious experimentation. Interestingly, Smith and Snell found that those in the "devoted" and "regular" groups were less likely to have antisocial outcomes like binge drinking, marijuana use, and fighting, relative to those in the groups that were less religious. These findings suggest that, like during adolescence, religion may 'work' as a social control for emerging adults, albeit, to a lesser degree, being reflective of the decreased level of religious engagement in emerging adults. In our next section, we will examine the findings of studies that have used individual elements of religion, such as attendance at religious services, as well as those focused on religious profiles.

6. How Religion Impacts Criminal Behavior for Emerging Adults

So far, we have explained what emerging adulthood is, the criminal offending of emerging adults, theoretical explanations on how religion may act as a controlling or bonding force to prevent crime, and the religiosity of emerging adults. How the factors come together and how religion impacts criminal behavior in emerging adults can be determined by combining the existing research. Since religion is a social bond that is eroding, or at least attenuating, among emerging adults, it should be expected that this reduction in religiosity will lead to a rise in criminal behavior of the prolonged adolescent variety. The sort of criminal behavior that emerging adults typically engage in—namely, low level offending such as drug use and vandalism—might be particularly susceptible to religious teachings that link individuals to their communities and denounce substance abuse. In order to investigate the influence of religion on the criminality of emerging adults, we will look at research examining religious engagement and criminal behavior, followed by a look at how religious engagement has influenced the delinquency of youth and criminality of emerging adults and finally, studies examining the influence of religious profiles on offending during emerging adulthood.

While the study of the influence of religion on emerging adults' criminality may be a relatively new area of inquiry, the study of religion's role on criminal behavior is not. Prior research has found ample evidence to support the belief that religious engagement acts as a protective factor or deterrent against criminal behaviors (Salas-Wright et al. 2014). For example, in their meta-analysis of 60 articles exploring the relationship between religiosity and crime, Baier and Wright (2001) found that public religious engagement and personal religious beliefs have a stable inverse ($r = -0.13$) deterrent effect on criminal behavior. Interestingly, the deterrent effect was even stronger ($r = -0.24$) when examining

non-violent crimes, like drug crimes and other 'victimless' crimes (Baier and Wright 2001). More recently, another meta-analysis of 270 articles, published from 1944 through to 2010, studying the relationship between religiosity and crime, conducted by Johnson and Jang in 2010 (Johnson and Jang 2010), revealed that over 90% of the journal articles included had reported religiosity to be a protective factor against antisocial behaviors, like crime. Studies looking at multidimensional measures of religiosity have reported a deterrent effect of religion on crime in general (Johnson and Jang 2011; Pickering and Vazsonyi 2010. Other studies, such as Laub and Sampson (2003), have reported that religious engagement may be part of the institutional relationships that are key in the process of desistance from crime, though some research suggests that factors like race and ethnicity may influence the role of religiosity on influencing desistance (Stansfield 2017).

Research has yielded similar findings when focused on the two primary subcomponents of religiosity: religious service attendance and private religiosity (Salas-Wright et al. 2014). Attendance at religious services has been found to reduce the incidence of minor crimes, such as being loud and rowdy, and vandalism (Petts 2009; Salvatore et al. 2012), drug use (Salvatore et al. 2012), felony theft and selling drugs (Johnson et al. 2000), domestic violence (Ellison and Anderson 2001) and involvement in the criminal justice system (Johnson 2008; Johnson et al. 2000; Ryan et al. 2008). In regard to private beliefs, typically defined as how an individual views the importance of their religious beliefs in their lives, a similar deterrent effect as attendance at religious services has been discovered (Salas-Wright et al. 2014). For example, higher levels of private religiosity have been found to decrease the likelihood of engaging in minor crimes, like status and property offenses (Benda and Corwyn 2001), and more serious crimes, like armed robbery (Smith and Faris 2002). In sum, both attendance at religious services and private religiosity have been found to be effective as protection from minor and more serious forms of crime (Salas-Wright et al. 2014).

Turning our attention to the influence that religion may have on the delinquency and criminality of youth, we find that religiosity can reduce the antisocial behaviors of young people, including adolescents and emerging adults (Salas-Wright et al. 2014). Studies, such as Salvatore and Taniguchi (2012), have utilized attendance at religious services as a predictor to study social bonds and turning points that influence offending during emerging adulthood. The results of their study found that those who attend religious services more often have an inverse relationship with criminal offending during emerging adulthood. Other studies have found that religiosity can be a protective factor against substance use and abuse for adolescents, including alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana (Johnson et al. 2000, 2008; Wallace et al. 2003). Baier and Wright (2001); Smith and Faris (2002); and Salas-Wright et al. (2014), have found that youth who are involved in religious organizations and have a high level of religious engagement have lower rates of violent behaviors, such as hitting, carrying weapons, and violent attacks on others. Studies have also found an association between religiosity and decreased levels of behaviors like theft and selling drugs (Johnson et al. 2000). While the evidence strongly suggests that religion is a viable protective factor against delinquency and crime for adolescents and young adults, it is important to consider demographic factors such as race and gender are important when examining the relationship between religion and antisocial behaviors in youth populations.

Looking at demographic factors, evidence suggests that religion may act as a protective factor, but that how it does so may vary. For example, using a national sample of adolescents, Caputo (2008) found that gender moderates the relationship between religiosity and risk factors, with the protective influence of religion being stronger for females relative to males. Other studies have shown similar findings, such as Johnson and Morris (2008), who found that religiosity was also only significant in females, and not in males. More recently, Salvatore and Markowitz (2014) used data from Add Health to cross-sectionally examine the influence of social bonds on turning points in delinquency and crime from childhood through emerging adulthood. Using a life course perspective, they sought to identify and compare the turning points and social bonds previously identified in the life course literature that predicted offending across multiple waves of the Add Health data. At each wave, Salvatore and Markowitz found several gender-specific relationships between social bonds/turning points and

delinquency/offending. Many of their findings identified that previously-identified variables 'worked' as expected for both males and females. However, their findings in regard to religion as a social bond (measured by attendance at religious services) identified that religion only predicted a decrease in offending in males at wave 3 (when the sample was in emerging adulthood), and at wave 4, higher levels of religious participation were predictive of decreased levels of offending for both males and females. Other studies, like Salas-Wright et al. (2013), found little difference in the relationship between religiosity and violent offending based on gender.

Scholars have also theorized that race may be a key predictor in influencing the role of religion as a social control (Johnson et al. 2000). This theory is supported by studies such as Markowitz and Salvatore (2012) who used multiple waves of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine patterns of offending by race. Results of the study showed that during wave 3 (when the sample was emerging adulthood), there was a predictive effect of religion (measured by attendance at religious services) for more serious offenses by race, with African Americans who had lower levels of attendance at religious services, being more likely to report serious offending. This suggests that race may play a unique role in religion or mediate the role of religion as a social control during emerging adulthood.

As discussed above, religiosity profiles are key components in understanding the role that religion plays in emerging adult populations. However, to date, research exploring their influence has been limited. One such study that has addressed this area is Salas-Wright et al. (2014), which used data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol on Related Conditions to conduct latent profile analyses on the influence of latent religiosity classes and antisocial behaviors, substance use, and substance use disorders. The results of their study revealed a four class solution for both samples. In particular, the emerging adults classified as publicly and privately devoted to religion had a much lower likelihood of being involved in a variety of risk behaviors or meeting criteria for substance abuse disorders. Further, the study also found that the greater the level of religiosity an individual has, the lower the likelihood of risky behaviors.

In sum, the literature to date regarding the influence of religiosity on the offending of youth populations largely supports the idea that higher levels of religious engagement act as a protective factor against antisocial behaviors, including substance use and abuse, and non-violent and violent crime. For emerging adults, in particular, research has evidenced that this relationship holds true despite some evidence suggesting they have a reduced participation in religious services. Demographic factors, like gender and race/ethnicity, may also shape the role of religion as protective factors against antisocial behaviors, like crime and substance use, in youth populations.

7. Conclusions

This paper examined the influence that religion has on offending behaviors during emerging adulthood. While religion has been a component of prior studies examining emerging adulthood, there has yet to be a comprehensive summary examining the role of religion as a key social bond during emerging adulthood that further explores how that bond may influence offending. As much of the prior literature (e.g., Arnett 1998; Salvatore and Taniguchi 2012) has found religion to be a relevant variable, there is a need for further research examining the role of religion as a factor influencing offending during emerging adulthood and whether other social bonds can suitably take the place of religion in mitigating criminal offending. This is especially important given the diminished religiosity of emerging adults and the open question about whether these young people will turn to religion later in life. Studies are needed to explore the long-term effects of religion as a social bond on not only offending during emerging adulthood, but on the prevalence of other risky and dangerous practices during this life stage (e.g., unsafe sex, substance use/experimentation). Longitudinal studies need to be conducted as emerging adults age, to provide a retrospective look at how religion did or did not impact these behaviors for those who experienced emerging adulthood. As a relatively new stage of the life course, this is a much needed area of study and one that will continue to be of value as young

people continue to push off the responsibilities traditionally seen as part of becoming a full-fledged adult. Further, studies need to examine the role of religion as a social bond for emerging adult samples in non-Western nations. A large portion of the existing research has largely focused on Western nations, and as such, there is a lack of research examining how religion 'works' as a social bond for emerging adults in other cultures, such as in the youth-heavy Middle East.

Religion, with its emphasis on milestones and turning points, such as the Jewish bar-mitzva or the Catholic confirmation seeks to usher the individual from childhood to adulthood through a time-honored path. As post-modern values take hold, including diminishing religiosity in Western societies and a continued emphasis on individuality (Inglehart 1997), this set life path has lost its luster. Religious institutions are adjusting through, for instance, a renewal of initiatives to set up interfaith spaces on college campuses (see Dupuis 2016) as a means of bridging the values of emerging adults with older generations. Yet, these institutions need to continue to redefine themselves and their missions in a world where social justice goals are increasingly popular, but where traditional religious views on lifestyle choices, like homosexuality or premarital cohabitation, are out of sync with the youth. Any finding that links religious practice to positive outcomes, such as fewer arrests or reduced criminal behavior, should be touted by religious institutions as they seek to attract a new generation that may be suspicious of organized religion. Still, from a criminological perspective, religion is not the *sine qua non* of a safe, law-abiding society. So, while religion is an important factor to consider in the criminal offending of emerging adults, it should be noted that societies in Western Europe that do not highly value religion also have very low levels of crime (Theodorou 2015; Harrendorf et al. 2010). Many highly religious societies are also prone to high rates of violence, as depicted in the Old Testament (see Pinker 2012) and as seen in Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan (Theodorou 2015).

The role of religion as a key social bond and control that may influence the criminal offending of emerging adults has policy and theoretical implications. As criminal offending is common in emerging adults, albeit this being typically lower level (non-violent) offending, diversion programs could be utilized to process emerging adults who commit crime. As religion is a social bond which encourages prosocial behavior, religiously-oriented treatment programs could be utilized as a diversion tactic. In terms of prevention, churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues could develop programs to target emerging adult populations, offering guidance and support during the exploration common in emerging adults. Education and guidance could be offered in the areas of sexual behaviors, decision-making, and other faith-specific areas. These strategies could also be utilized on college campuses. As colleges struggle with on-campus drug use, sexual exploration and victimization, interfaith centers could offer prevention and treatment strategies aimed at bringing the college community together to help support emerging adults. These actions would all have the additional result of building community, an important facet of democracies (Putnam 2000).

In regard to theory, religion acts as a key social bond inhibiting criminal behaviors. Several studies dealing with samples of emerging adults support this idea and suggest religion as a social bond relevant for emerging adults. Theories, such as social control theory and the age-graded theory of social control, may want to add additional focus on religion as a social bond that offers a strong attachment to conventional society and may be useful in preventing offending during emerging adulthood and influencing desistance for those offending during this stage of the life course.

Targeting religiously-oriented primary and secondary prevention strategies towards emerging adults may prove challenging. Colleges and universities may look like ideal locations for such programs, but not all emerging adults attend college after high school, and further, not all institutions may support the use of religious-based programming or have the funds to provide such programming. As previously stated, emerging adults may not see religious institutions as particularly desirable or welcoming, especially if they participate in lifestyles traditionally denounced by religious leaders. Religious community-based interventions for emerging adults could serve as another potential venue. However, traditional youth centers may not provide services for those over the age of 18 and may face

funding challenges. For all of these reasons, the role of religion and its influence on emerging adults for theory and policy is a rich area which has only just begun to be explored.

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Religious Identity and Perceptions of Criminal Justice Effectiveness

Lee Michael Johnson [1], Todd L. Matthews [2,*] and Elizabeth K. Ayers [3]

[1] Department of Sociology, William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ 07470, USA; johnsonl56@wpunj.edu
[2] Department of Leadership and Organizational Development, Cabrini University, Radnor, PA 19087, USA
[3] Independent Scholar, Carrollton, GA 30117, USA; elizabethkayers@gmail.com
[*] Correspondence: tlm395@cabrini.edu; Tel.: +1-610-902-8172

Abstract: Religiosity and attitudes regarding the criminal justice system have remained largely unstudied to date, despite the centrality of religion as an aspect of one's identity formation. This study tests the hypothesis that perceptions of the effectiveness of police and the courts vary according to religious identity (affiliation, membership, and self-described religiosity or spirituality). A self-administered questionnaire was completed by 342 undergraduate students in introductory social science courses at a mid-sized university in the Southeastern US. Multiple Ordinary Least Squares regression analyses were performed on predictors of two outcome variables: perceived police effectiveness and perceived court effectiveness. Results offer partial support for a religious identity-based explanation of public perceptions of criminal justice system effectiveness. Membership of a local congregation, in general, was associated with higher ratings of police and court effectiveness. In addition, African Americans rated criminal justice effectiveness lower than non-African Americans. Once interactions between race and religious identity were incorporated, race itself became non-significant for both views on court and police effectiveness. However, these results showed that among African Americans, being a congregation member significantly reduced rather than increased ratings of police effectiveness. Religion thus continues to be complex and even paradoxical in shaping perceptions in the US.

Keywords: African American; courts; criminal justice system; law enforcement; religious identity

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1. Introduction

The current study explores the possibility that perceptions of formal criminal justice authorities are partly shaped by factors having to do with how citizens identify and perceive themselves. Specifically, the study tests if perceptions of the effectiveness of police and the courts vary according to religious identity (affiliation, membership, and self-described religiosity or spirituality) in a sample of undergraduate college students. Two opposing hypotheses are considered. One is that religious identity is positively related to perceived criminal justice effectiveness. Criminal behavior is inconsistent with religious identity. Perhaps religious identity fosters favorable views of the agencies officially designated to condemn crime. Alternatively, one could hypothesize that religious identity is negatively related to perceived criminal justice effectiveness. The criminal justice system operates largely according to secular principles. Perhaps religious identity fosters dissatisfaction with criminal justice responses, as they may be viewed as inconsistent with religious ideologies. The study moves beyond a simple explanation that religious persons tend to be more politically conservative, and conservatives tend to be more supportive of the criminal justice system.

Few, if any, studies have examined the impact of religion upon citizen perceptions of criminal justice agencies. A small number of studies have found religious involvement to be related to perceptions having to do with crime itself. For example, in a sample of residents in western Georgia

(United States), Matthews, Johnson, and Jenks (Matthews et al. 2011) found that attendance at religious services was negatively related to fear of property crime, suggesting that religious involvement reduces fear of victimization. In addition, several studies have examined the impact of religion upon criminal behavior, usually finding that religion variables are associated with lower criminality (Adamczyk et al. 2017). Akers (2010, p. 1) believes that this may occur because religion "provides institutional support for conformity to conventional norms."

Perhaps religious persons tend to have stronger ties to other institutions of social control, and we can expect them to have more favorable views of the agencies that officially condemn crime. Religious affiliation has been found to build general trust in others (Welch et al. 2007), which might be extended to governmental agencies. Then again dissatisfaction may emerge from perceived inconsistencies between the largely secular ways that police and courts deal with crime and what religious doctrine prescribes for the control and punishment of offending. Compared to others, religious persons may view criminal behavior with more moral indignation and have more punitive attitudes toward it. Some, however, may object to the perceived harshness of the criminal justice system, such as the use of capital punishment (e.g., emphasizing forgiveness over "eye for an eye"). Baker and Booth (2016) found that punitiveness varies among religious persons. For example, belief in transcendent evil (e.g., devil and hell) was associated with greater punitiveness, while religious practice (service attendance, prayer, and reading scripture) was associated with lower punitiveness.

At any rate, we may wonder if religious persons define themselves in contrast to actors in the criminal justice system—in other words, if criminal justice agencies serve as potential "out-groups" for members of a religion. While past research does not offer a basis for predicting that religion factors helps shape perceptions of criminal justice, social identity theory might.

2. Social Identity Theory

As first conceptualized by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, social identity is the part of one's self-concept that is derived from memberships in meaningful social groups or categories. People draw from group memberships and social categorization to help define themselves, in relation to others. Since one's self-image is at stake, individuals tend to have an "in-group bias"; one favors one's own group over comparable other groups, or, "out-groups." Turner, Brown, and Tajfel (Turner et al. 1979, p. 190) write:

> It is assumed that individuals are motivated to achieve a positive self-image and that self-esteem can be enhanced by a positive evaluation of one's own group. Own group is evaluated by comparison with others: positively discrepant comparisons between ingroup and some relevant outgroup (perceived evaluative differences favouring the ingroup) provide a positive group identity which enhances self-esteem. An individual's social identity is those aspects of his self-concept contributed by the social groups to which he perceived himself to belong. Very generally, then, individuals are motivated to establish positively valued differences (positively discrepant comparisons) between the ingroup and a relevant outgroup to achieve a positive social identity ... The search for positively valued distinctiveness can lead to biases in behavior, evaluations and perception.

Identities can be defined by both individual level attributes (e.g., physical and personality characteristics) and memberships in social groups or categories (e.g., religious congregation or denomination, community action group, professional society, or race or gender) (Clayton 2008). Perceived individual attributes and group memberships are used by others, observers, to identify the individual. However, the individual too draws from this information to identify oneself, although self-identification may or may not be relatively consistent with the perceptions of others. Regarding group membership, individuals often self-assign the stereotypes of the group to which they belong. Clayton (2008, p. 245) writes "Emphasizing similarities among group members (e.g., in experiences or values), following group norms, or expressing attitudes that are considered typical of the ingroup are all means of demonstrating a strong group identity." A strong group identity corresponds with

heightened loyalty to the group (solidarity). In addition, stereotyped attributes of relevant groups to which one does not belong—out-groups—are often assigned to its members and stand in contrast to the perceived attributes of the in-group. Group memberships therefore tell us "who we are" and "who we are not." Perceptions of out-groups are often unfavorable in comparison to the in-group, especially when groups are in conflict (Clayton 2008). Thus, group identities play a major role in shaping the individual's perceptions of reality.

Social identity is largely a theory of intergroup behavior, especially conflict. However, it articulates more specifically that intergroup behavior is explained by perceptions that group members have of their groups and others', as well as broader circumstances. Thus, social identity theory may be used to understand how individuals develop their perceptions regarding major social issues. Perhaps perceptions of criminal justice are shaped in part by in-group/out-group differentiation. Jang, Joo, and Zhao (Jang et al. 2010) found that acceptance toward deviant subcultures was negatively related to confidence in the police, or stated another way, less acceptance toward deviant subcultures is positively related to confidence in the police. Those who identify with, or at least have empathy toward, alternative groups may be more critical of criminal justice while those who strongly identify with the mainstream may be less critical.

Clayton (2008) explains that individuals' perceptions of justice reflect group memberships and ideologies. Salient group identities can influence the way that individuals perceive the justice of social and political events and potential responses (e.g., policy). These group identities "reflect a sense of belonging to or involvement with a group based on shared values, goals, or characteristics; they arise from ascribed characteristics such as race or gender as well as from experiences of similarity" (Clayton 2008, p. 242). Identities shared with others frames which events and actors are most self-relevant, thereby directing more attention to them, but they also suggest preferences as to how to evaluate them. Clayton (2008, p. 242) writes that "(p)eople want to maintain a positive sense of themselves as group members, so they may be predisposed to perceive outcomes that advance their groups' interests as fair, and to justify actions and values ascribed to these groups." In the current study, we speculate that to a large extent, individuals judge criminal justice in a manner that is consistent with what their social identities would seem (to them) to dictate.

As relates to religion and identity, research has traditionally held that religious institutions were powerful shapers of (relatively stable) individual identities, though this may be less true today as identity has become increasingly fluid, changing and intersectional (Loveland 2016, p. 281). Still, religious involvement and identity is considered important by sociologists of religion as a shaper of overall identity (Loveland 2016; Olson and Warber 2008). As relates specifically to crime and the criminal justice system, the general view has long held that religious involvement shapes a largely negative attitude towards criminal activity (Hoffmann et al. 2016). By extension, it seems reasonable to conclude that for those whose identity has been shaped meaningfully by religion, they would also hold more favorable views of institutions that serve a socially protective role against crime, such as police and the courts.

Few studies have explored the relationship between identity and perceptions of criminal justice, outside of the impact of demographic variables. Studies finding differences across social categories tend not to utilize an identity theory framework, and it cannot be assumed that these differences are attributable to participants' identification with these categories—gender, race, and ethnicity for example. Closed-ended demographic questions especially do not directly measure respondents' self or social identification with meaningful groups or categories. Under-explored is the influence of identification with smaller social units, such as groups and organizations, and self-designated characteristics. Perhaps these identities are more, or at least as salient as identification with broad social categories when individuals develop their perceptions of criminal justice.

However, a few studies found that explicit ethnic identity variables predict perceptions of the police. Lee, Steinberg, and Piquero (Lee et al. 2010) found in a sample of African American juvenile offenders that those with a strong ethnic identity perceived more police discrimination but reported

more favorable views of police legitimacy. This is not necessarily a contradiction, as strong ethnic identity is also associated with maturity and pro-social attitudes. Indeed, Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, and Knight (Lee et al. 2011) then found more specifically that higher ethnic identity exploration over time predicted higher perceived police legitimacy over time. In another study, Barboza (2012) found in a national sample of Mexican Americans that those with a strong sense of linked fate, a shared sense of purpose and interest, and strong ethnic identity were more likely to perceive that the police treat Mexican Americans unfairly.

3. Predictors of Perceptions of Criminal Justice

Some relatively stable predictors of perceptions of criminal justice are apparent in the literature. These include demographic variables. To begin, *race and ethnicity* are perhaps the most stable, with studies usually finding that minorities, especially African Americans and Hispanics, hold more unfavorable views of the police or courts compared to Whites (Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Cheurprakobkit 2000; Frank et al. 2005; Gabbidon and Higgins 2009; Higgins et al. 2009; Lai and Chao 2010; MacDonald and Stokes 2006; Miller and Davis 2008; O'Connor 2008; Salvatore et al. 2013; Schafer et al. 2003; Schuck et al. 2008; Sun and Wu 2006; Wenzel et al. 2003).

Sex or *gender* is also a major predictor, with studies usually showing that males hold more unfavorable views of the police or courts (Barboza 2012; Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Kaukinen and Colavecchia 1999; Lai and Chao 2010; MacDonald and Stokes 2006; O'Connor 2008; Schafer et al. 2003; Shelley et al. 2013). However, Gabbidon and Higgins (2009) found that women were more likely to believe that Blacks are treated unfairly by the police.

Age is a major predictor of perceptions of the police, with younger people tending to have more unfavorable views (Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Dai and Johnson 2009; Gabbidon and Higgins 2009; Jang et al. 2010; Lai and Chao 2010; Miller and Davis 2008; O'Connor 2008; Shelley et al. 2013). However, aging may work differently upon one's perceptions of the courts. Jones and Weatherburn (2010) found that younger persons were more confident in court sentences and Kaukinen and Colavecchia (1999) found that older persons were more likely to rate the courts low on their ability to help crime victims.

Socioeconomic status is yet another major predictor. Studies tend to show that lower SES persons have more unfavorable views of the police or courts, except under certain circumstances. *Income* is often negatively related to favor toward the police or courts (Barboza 2012; Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Frank et al. 2005; Hinds 2009), and *education* is often positively related to favor toward the police or courts (Frank et al. 2005; Jang et al. 2010; Jones and Weatherburn 2010; Miller and Davis 2008; Salvatore et al. 2013; Wenzel et al. 2003). However, Gabbidon and Higgins (2009) found that higher SES (income, employment, and education) persons were more likely to believe that Blacks are treated unfairly by the police; Schafer et al. (2003) found that education is negatively related to favor toward community policing specifically; Dowler (2002) found that college education was associated with lower ratings of police effectiveness but only among respondents with no recent police contact. Additionally, Kaukinen and Colavecchia (1999) found that more educated, and higher income persons were more likely to rate the courts low on ability to help crime victims.

Another demographic variable, *political orientation* (often how liberal versus conservative one is) has been found to predict perceptions of criminal justice in some studies. For example, political conservativeness has been associated with more favorable perceptions of the police (Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Gabbidon and Higgins 2009; Jang et al. 2010).

Relevant past experiences also shape perceptions of criminal justice. *Direct personal experience* with the police or courts is a major determinant of citizens' perceptions of the criminal justice system. In general, citizens with prior contact may tend to be more critical (Frank et al. 2005; Kaukinen and Colavecchia 1999; Sun and Wu 2006), although Higgins et al. (2009) found that those with recent experience with the courts were more generally satisfied with the courts. Criminal *victimization* also has an impact. Some studies show that victims, including both personal/violent and property crime victims, tend to have more unfavorable perceptions of the police or courts (Barboza 2012; Callanan

and Rosenberger 2011; Dukes et al. 2009; Giblin and Dillon 2009; Kaukinen and Colavecchia 1999; O'Connor 2008; Lai and Chao 2010; Sindall et al. 2012).

Neighborhood context is also important. Some studies have linked unfavorable perceptions of criminal justice to unfavorable perceptions of one's neighborhood. Studies utilizing a common neighborhood incivility/disorder variable associated it with unfavorable perceptions of police (Dai and Johnson 2009; Dowler 2002; Giblin and Dillon 2009; Schuck et al. 2008). Schafer et al. (2003) found that those who perceived their neighborhoods as generally good places to live and having a culture of collective responsibility for safety had more favorable perceptions of police services. MacDonald and Stokes (2006) found that perceived "community social capital"—community trust and civic engagement—was positively associated with trust in local police. Disordered neighborhoods can increase residents' fear of or worry about criminal victimization, which has been associated with unfavorable perceptions of the police or courts (Dukes et al. 2009; Giblin and Dillon 2009; Hinds 2009; Kaukinen and Colavecchia 1999; O'Connor 2008; Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Shelley et al. 2013).

Media variables have frequently, though inconsistently, predicted perceptions of criminal justice. Most studies associate media with unfavorable perceptions. Weitzer (2002) found that unfavorable citizen attitudes toward the police often dramatically increase following highly publicized incidents of police misconduct. Dowler (2002) found that hours of television viewing was positively associated with perceived police ineffectiveness, but only among respondents with recent police contact. Miller and Davis (2008) found that persons exposed to "bad news about police" and consumers of "highbrow news" were more likely (compared to news abstainers) to perceive the police as prone to misconduct, and tabloid news consumers perceived the police as less effective or responsive. Dowler and Zawilski (2007) found that frequency of network news viewing was positively related to perceived degree of police misconduct among nonwhites and persons with lower incomes. In addition, they found that frequent viewers of police dramas tended to believe that the wealthy receive preferential treatment from police but frequent viewers of crime solving shows did not. Thus, the impact of media may depend on type of representation. Callanan and Rosenberger (2011) found that viewing television news and crime reality shows were positively associated with confidence in police, but only among Whites and persons not arrested, and the relationship among victims was weaker.

Finally, incorporating religious identity measures creates the potential for significantly increased complexity and perhaps confounding results. Most notably, the way religion and race have intersected through history, particularly in the United States, has been fraught with contradictions. Most religious doctrines, particularly amongst the larger religious traditions, stress inclusivity and openness to all of humanity, yet religious justifications were often centrally deployed to support the enslavement of African Americans and the forced migration of Native Americans in 19th century America. The oft-cited "problem of the color line" noted by W.E.B. DuBois (1903) over 100 years ago is perhaps no more apparent than on Sunday mornings at "church hour," which has been called the most segregated hour of the week (Matthews et al. 2016). Furthermore, the African American church has served as the central and perhaps only social institution capable of providing both social protection and enabling mobilization for the long struggle for racial justice (Matthews et al. 2016; Brown et al. 2015; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). So even while some congregations have become more racially diverse in recent years, religious identity is largely and notably shaped in racialized ways. Thus, this study will also examine the interaction between religious and racial identities, as it is quite likely that this interactivity may confound or even alter the individual relationships these identities have on perceptions of effectiveness of police and the courts.

4. Methods

4.1. Sample and Procedures

A self-administered questionnaire was completed by 342 undergraduate students in introductory social science courses at a mid-sized university in the Southeastern US. These were seven face-to-face

courses (four sociology, one social problems, and two criminal justice) and three online courses (one sociology, one social problems, and one criminal justice). The survey took place in March and April of 2016. Quantitative data were collected on membership in groups and social categories, demographics, competing predictors, perceptions of crime, and perceptions of criminal justice agencies. No identifying information was collected; questionnaires were completed anonymously. No incentives were given for participation.

In each face-to-face class, the questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of the period by one of the researchers, with the assistance of a graduate research assistant. The same researcher and assistant administered the questionnaire in each class. The questionnaire was introduced with a verbal informed consent statement and instructions. After introducing the survey, the researcher left the classroom, before students began completing questionnaires. The graduate assistant collected completed questionnaires and delivered them to another researcher, who stored the questionnaires securely. Another graduate assistant entered data.

In online courses, an invitation to complete an anonymous questionnaire was posted in an announcement, which included a Qualtrics link to an electronic form with informed consent and directions. A reminder was sent about two weeks after the initial announcement. The announcement was also sent to an instructor of a small face to face criminal justice course at a distance campus. The instructor sent the announcement to students in the course through university email and made a verbal reference to it in class. Forty-four (13%) students participated online. In all classes, students were asked to avoid completing the questionnaire again if they attended another class in which the survey was conducted.

Multiple regression analyses examined predictors of two outcome variables: perceived police effectiveness and perceived court effectiveness. As the main predictors of interest, three variables are used as measures of religious identity: affiliation, religious membership (e.g., church), and level of religiosity or spirituality. Further, interaction terms for each measure of religious identity and race are included in a final model. A sizeable body of published research identifies demographic variables, past contact with police or courts, neighborhood quality, victimization, and media influence as major predictors of citizens' perceptions of criminal justice. Thus, measures of these constructs are included in models. In addition, while it has not been established as a predictor in past research, we reason that individuals' tendencies to be relatively optimistic or pessimistic about life in general may shape perceptions of how bad the crime problem is or how well the criminal justice system is doing. Thus, a measure of optimism is also included.

SES measures were not included in the questionnaire. Since participants were undergraduate students in introductory courses, it is likely that most had roughly the same education level. For the same reason, it is unlikely that they varied much in personal incomes. There would likely be little variation in parents' SES as well. Students at the rural, regional comprehensive university tend to be similar in social class backgrounds. In addition, past research tends to identify individual statuses, rather than parents', as predictors of perceptions of police or courts. Excluding SES measures helped keep the questionnaire as brief as possible and minimize personal information about participants. Additionally, the questionnaire included a measure of Hispanic identity separate from self-described race, but this variable is excluded as only 11 respondents identified as Hispanic.

4.2. Measures

The two *perception of criminal justice effectiveness* outcome variables were measured by asking respondents if police and courts in their area "are doing an excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor job?" Three measures are used to test religious identity as predictors. Respondents were asked to identify their *religious affiliation* from a list of choices including Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Evangelical, Some other type of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, other, and none. Because of very low frequencies in some categories, this variable was recoded as Christian (including the first five categories listed above) or non-Christian. For *religious membership*, respondents were asked (yes or no) if they are "a member

of a local church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious or spiritual community?" For religiosity, respondents were asked how religious or spiritual they consider themselves to be: very, somewhat, not particularly, or not at all.

Analyses controlled for five known predictors of perceptions of criminal justice. To provide a general measure of *perceived neighborhood quality*, respondents were asked how safe they feel being outside and alone in their neighborhood at night: very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe. For *victimization*, they were asked (yes or no) if they have "ever been the victim of a violent crime, like assault or robbery?" For past *contact with the police or courts*, they were asked (yes or no) if they (1) had any contact with their "local police or law enforcement officers in the past 12 months" for example "as a victim, witness, suspect, or someone who just called the police" and (2) ever had any contact with their local courts for example "as a jury member, victim, witness, or suspect?" For *media influence*, they were asked how often they watch "reality crime shows, like Cops, Real Policewomen, Cold Justice, and The First 48" in a typical week: 6–7 days, 4–5 days, 2–3 days, 1 day, or rarely. For *optimism*, they were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed (strongly or somewhat) with the statement: "The world is a good place."

Finally, four demographic variables were also included as controls. Respondents were asked to write in their *age*. They were asked to select which *race* category best describes them from a list of six categories and "other." Because very few respondents selected categories other than Black or African American and White, a dichotomous measure of whether one is Black or African American is used. Respondents were asked if they describe their *gender* identity as male, female, transgender, or other. No respondents selected transgender or other. For *political orientation*, they were asked how they describe themselves politically on a five point range from very liberal to very conservative, which were collapsed into three categories: liberal, middle of the road, and conservative.

5. Results

Descriptive statistics for each of the variables utilized in the models are available in Table 1. A solid majority of respondents (63.6%) reported a positive view of police effectiveness (excellent, very good, or good), while a similar percentage (62.9%) reported a positive view of the effectiveness of the courts. Regarding the demographics of the sample, 52.4% were African American, 31.6% were male, the average respondent age was 20.2 years old (3.71 SD), and the respondents were mostly self-described as "middle of the road" (48.2%) in terms of political ideology, with slightly more of those remaining (28%) identifying as conservative than liberal (23.8%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	% or Mean	N or SD
View of Police		
Poor	9.25	31
Fair	27.16	91
Good	35.82	120
Very Good	21.49	72
Excellent	6.27	21
View of Courts		
Poor	5.21	17
Fair	31.90	104
Good	45.71	149
Very Good	14.11	46
Excellent	3.07	10

Table 1. *Cont.*

	% or Mean	N or SD
African American	52.37	338
Male	31.58	342
Age	20.21	3.71
Political Ideology		
Conservative	27.97	87
Middle of the Road	48.23	150
Liberal	23.79	74
Safe at Night		
Very Safe	26.19	88
Somewhat Safe	43.45	146
Somewhat Unsafe	23.51	79
Very Unsafe	6.85	23
Crime Victim	11.61	336
Contact with Law Enforcement	41.84	337
Contact with Courts	20.18	337
Watch Crime Reality TV		
Rarely	56.92	185
1 day/week	9.85	32
2–3 days/week	15.08	49
4–5 days/week	7.69	25
6–7 days/week	10.46	34
World is a Good Place		
Strongly disagree	19.76	65
Somewhat disagree	35.26	116
Somewhat agree	40.43	133
Strongly agree	4.56	15
Religious or Spiritual		
Not at all or not very	15.64	51
Somewhat	49.69	162
Very	34.66	113
Congregation Member	48.47	326
Christian	84.52	323

Regarding the predictors of perception of criminal justice, a majority (69.6%) reported feeling very or somewhat safe at night. Just over 11.6% had been a victim of a violent crime at some point, while 41.8% had contact with law enforcement and 20.2% had contact with the courts in the past year. Most respondents (56.9%) rarely watched crime reality TV, with relatively equal percentages (roughly 10% each) watching from 1 day/week up to 6–7 days/week. Finally, a slight majority (55%) disagreed strongly or somewhat with the statement that "the world is a good place."

As relates to religiosity or spirituality, 34.7% reported being very religious or spiritual, 49.7% identified as somewhat religious or spiritual, and 15.6% were not particularly or not at all religious or spiritual. Almost half (48.5%) reported being a member of congregation or religious community of some sort. A clear majority of respondents (84.5%) identified with one of the categories of Christianity.

The results of OLS regression models predicting respondent views of police effectiveness can be found in Table 2. Four models were run, with each additional model including the variables from prior models: (1) individual characteristics; (2) predictors of perceptions of criminal justice; (3) religious identity; and (4) interactions between religious identity and race (African American).

In model 1, African Americans were found to hold highly statistically significant, less positive views of police effectiveness when compared to members of other racial-ethnic groups,

while controlling for all variables in the model. Males reported significantly more positive views of police effectiveness than females, and liberals and those who identified ideologically as middle of the road held less favorable views of police effectiveness than conservatives. Model R-squared was 16%, a relatively high value in this type of research. With the perceptions of criminal justice predictors included in model 2, race, gender and both political ideology variables retained their significance, while only the optimism variable was significant (and positive) amongst the new variables in the model. Model R-squared did improve modestly to 18%.

In model 3, the three religious identity variables were included. All variables that were previously statistically significant remained so, though past crime victimization also became significant at the $p < 0.10$ level. None of the religious identity variables were significant in this model, though, and model R-squared only improved to 19%. Finally, model 4 included interaction terms for the religious identity variables and race (African American vs. Other). In this model, race and political ideology became no longer significant, while the religious congregation membership variable and the interaction between congregation and race both were significant. Substantively, the interpretation of this finding points to the differential effects of participation in formal religious activities for whites and African Americans, as being a member of congregation heightens the already more favorable views that the average white respondent held about police effectiveness compared to the average African American respondent. Conversely, African Americans who are members of religious congregations have much less favorable views of police effectiveness than even other African Americans (0.62 points less in a five-point range), net of other variables, and certainly far less than white congregants (1.1 points less). This model also offered an improved R-squared, increasing to 22%.

The results of OLS regression models predicting respondent views of court effectiveness can be found in Table 3. As above, four models were run, with each additional model including the variables from prior models: (1) individual characteristics; (2) predictors of perceptions of criminal justice; (3) religious identity; and (4) interactions between religious identity and race (African American).

In Model 1, once again African Americans were found to hold highly statistically significant, less positive views of court effectiveness when compared to members of other racial-ethnic groups, while controlling for all variables in the model. No gender or age differences emerged here, but again those who identified ideologically as liberal or middle of the road held highly statistically significant, less favorable views of court effectiveness than conservatives. Model R-squared was 19%. In model 2, race and both political ideology variables retained their significance, while several of the past predictors of criminal justice effectiveness were significant statistically: contact with courts and optimism were positively related, while watching crime reality TV was negative only the optimism variable was significant (and positive) amongst the new variables in the model. Model R-squared improved to 23%.

The three religious identity variables were incorporated into Model 3. All variables that were previously statistically significant remained so in this model. For court effectiveness, unlike police effectiveness, two of the religion variables were found to be significant here, with those who identified as very religious or spiritual holding significantly more favorable views of court effectiveness than those who were not particularly or not at all religious or spiritual, and those were congregation members also being much more positive than others. Model R-squared again increased substantially to 28%. In the final model, interaction terms for the religious identity variables and race (African American vs. Other) were included. In this model, race was the only variable that lost significance, while gender and the somewhat religious or spiritual (versus not particularly or not at all religious or spiritual category) became marginally significant ($p < 0.10$). Other variables that were previously significant retained that significance in this full model, including: political ideology, contact with courts, watching crime reality TV, optimism, the very religious or spiritual category, and congregation membership. Not surprisingly, R-squared only improved slightly, to 29%.

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression Estimates Predicting View of Police (N = 286).

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
African American	−0.653	0.11	−0.12 ***	−0.631	0.12	−0.30 ***	−0.653	0.12	−0.31 ***	−0.511	0.37	−0.24
Male	0.297	0.12	0.13*	0.255	0.13	0.11+	0.308	0.14	0.14*	0.308	0.14	0.14 *
Age	0.157	0.15	0.06	0.017	0.02	0.06	0.021	0.02	0.07	0.023	0.16	0.08
Political Ideology												
Liberal	−0.375	0.16	0.15 *	−0.399	0.17	−0.02 *	−0.351	0.18	−0.15 *	−0.266	0.18	−0.11
Middle of the Road	−0.263	0.13	0.05 +	−0.299	0.15	−0.14 *	−0.271	0.15	−0.13 +	−0.191	0.16	−0.09
Safe at Night				0.034	0.08	0.02	0.003	0.08	0.00	−0.002	0.08	−0.00
Crime Victim				−0.272	0.18	−0.09	−0.312	0.19	−0.10 +	−0.344	0.19	−0.11 +
Law Enforcement Contact				−0.037	0.12	−0.02	−0.043	0.12	−0.02	−0.661	0.12	−0.03
Watch Crime Reality TV				0.004	0.04	0.01	0.104	0.04	0.14	0.015	0.04	0.02
Optimism				0.146	0.07	0.12 *	0.147	0.07	0.12 *	0.127	0.07	0.10 +
Religious or Spiritual												
Somewhat							0.220	0.20	0.10	−0.004	0.28	−0.00
Very							0.285	0.22	0.13	0.153	0.31	0.07
Congregation Member							0.137	0.13	0.07	0.476	0.20	0.23 *
Christian							−0.092	0.19	−0.31	−0.071	0.26	−0.02
Somewhat Religious X African American										0.387	0.40	0.16
Very Religious X African American										0.173	0.44	0.06
Congregation Member X African American										−0.619	0.27	−0.25 *
Christian X African American										−0.110	0.39	−0.05
R^2	0.16	0.18	0.19	0.22								
F for change in R^2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00								

Note: + $p < 10$; * $p < 0.5$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression Estimates Predicting View of Courts (N = 281).

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
African American	−0.443	0.93	−0.26 ***	−0.435	0.95	−0.25 ***	−0.452	0.95	−0.26 ***	−0.390	0.29	−0.23
Male	0.144	0.97	−0.08	0.053	0.10	0.03	0.160	0.10	0.09	0.177	0.11	0.10 +
Age	0.006	0.12	0.03	0.001	0.01	0.00	0.006	0.01	0.03	0.005	0.12	0.02
Political Ideology												
Liberal	−0.654	0.13	−0.34 ***	−0.597	0.13	−0.31 ***	−0.461	0.14	−0.24 **	−0.460	0.14	−0.24 **
Middle of the Road	−0.406	0.11	−0.24 ***	−0.377	0.12	−0.22 **	−0.289	0.12	−0.17 **	−0.293	0.12	−0.17 *
Safe at Night				0.002	0.06	0.00	−0.036	0.06	−0.03	−0.038	0.06	−0.03
Crime Victim				−0.199	0.15	−0.01	−0.088	0.14	−0.03	−0.084	0.14	−0.03
Law Enforcement Contact				0.255	0.12	0.12 *	0.288	0.12	0.13 *	0.279	0.12	0.13 *
Watch Crime Reality TV				−0.082	0.03	−0.13 *	−0.075	0.03	−0.13 *	−0.076	0.03	−0.13 *
Optimism				0.138	0.06	0.14 *	0.148	0.05	0.15 **	0.149	0.06	0.15 **
Religious or Spiritual												
Somewhat							0.242	0.15	0.14	0.362	0.22	0.21 +
Very							0.383	0.17	0.21 *	0.415	0.25	0.23 +
Congregation Member							0.285	0.10	0.17 **	0.345	0.16	0.20 *
Christian							−0.135	0.15	−0.06	−0.226	0.20	−0.09
Somewhat Religious X African American										−0.272	0.31	−0.14
Very Religious X African American										−0.010	0.35	−0.04
Congregation Member X African American										−0.102	0.21	−0.05
Christian X African American										0.193	0.30	0.11
R^2	0.19	0.23	0.28	0.29								
F for change in R^2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00								

Note: + $p < 10$; * $p < 0.5$; ** $p < 0.1$; *** $p < 0.01$.

6. Discussion

Results offer partial support for a social identity-based explanation of public perceptions of criminal justice system effectiveness. Membership of a local congregation, in general, was associated with higher ratings of police and court effectiveness. However, denomination was not significantly related to either, and spirituality/religiosity was only marginally (positively) related to perceived court effectiveness. Thus, results are more supportive of a group-based identify explanation rather than one that is self or social category based. It should be noted that the sample was likely not large and diverse enough to test the impact of religious denomination (half of the sample was Baptist, with another 35% identifying as one of a variety of types of Christian). Consistent with past research, political ideology was also a notable predictor, with liberals and centrists giving lower ratings of criminal justice effectiveness than conservatives.

Race predicted views in ways consistent with prior research. African Americans rated criminal justice effectiveness lower than non-African Americans. Once interactions between race and religious identity were incorporated, race itself became non-significant for both views on court and police effectiveness. However, these results showed that among African Americans, being a congregation member significantly reduced rather than increased ratings of police effectiveness. Thus, the tendency of congregation members to favorably view the police was restricted to non-African Americans—i.e., almost entirely whites in the sample studied. The interaction of race and religious identity (specifically congregation membership) did help suppress the effect of being African American to statistical insignificance, though the interaction itself was not statistically significant. In the first instance, it is completely reasonable that African Americans hold less favorable views of the criminal justice system than others, as the past and present relationship between African Americans and the criminal justice system in general, and law enforcement especially, could charitably be described as highly contentious at best and openly hostile at worst. It is also not surprising that religious identity on its own has a significant and positive relationship with perceptions of court and law enforcement effectiveness.

The seemingly incongruous findings related to these perceptions of the criminal justice system that emerge when racial and religious identities intersect also makes sense when one sees membership and active engagement in religious congregations as both central to individual identity and as a highly racially segregated and even often racialized experience—in other words, as Matthews et al. (2016, p. 422, italics added) note, religion "continues to have a paradoxical role in . . . American life, *such that faith can facilitate the empowerment of racial-ethnic minorities and can, alternatively, preserve racial-ethnic hierarchies*." It is thus no surprise that this empowerment of African-Americans manifests itself in significantly more negative perceptions of institutions that perpetuate and embody, both symbolically and quite literally, continued structured racial inequality.

The study also yielded other interesting results. Men rated criminal justice effectiveness higher than women, which may seem inconsistent with past studies. However, past studies may not have focused specifically on effectiveness at reducing crime. Perhaps women in the sample equated effectiveness with preventing victimization and/or fair treatment of suspects. The finding may be more in line with Gabbidon and Higgins (2009) finding that women were more likely to unfavorably view the police—they believed that officers tended to treat Blacks unfairly. Interestingly, contact with courts increased perceived court effectiveness, which is not necessarily unusual (Higgins et al. 2009). It may have been that subjects tended to have positive experiences with the courts. However, a vicarious experience—watching crime reality TV shows—was negatively associated with perceived court effectiveness. Past research on media influences are inconsistent, and their impact may depend on the type of representations they give (Dowler and Zawilski 2007). For example, if viewers frequently see scenarios they disapprove of, an offender receiving a seemingly light sanction for example, they may develop a negative view of the courts. Finally, optimism—which may be considered a personality trait—was positively associated with perceived effectiveness of police and courts. Like religious identity, one's tendency toward pessimism or optimism may help shape assessments of the criminal justice system.

Results have a general implication for improving relations between criminal justice agencies and citizens. It is important for the public to have faith in the criminal justice system. Distrust in governmental agencies potentially reduces support for the way that public administrators operate (Cooper et al. 2008; Wolak and Palus 2010) and interferes with the community collaboration needed to solve problems such as crime. Private community agencies and individual citizens, not just other governmental agencies, are important actors in carrying out public initiatives (Warm 2011). Tankebe (2013) found that views of the police as legitimate (procedurally and distributively fair, effective, and lawful) increased both citizens' felt obligation to *obey* police and their willingness to *cooperate with* the police (report suspicious activity and crimes and provide information). Although citizens too are responsible for good relations, it is in the best interest of authorities to proactively seek out and build public support.

However, citizens will often not be passive recipients of information and expectations conveyed by criminal justice authorities. When agencies engage in public outreach, collaboration, and education programs, it is important for them to know which members of the population will be less receptive to their efforts and why. Directing campaigns at citizens who already have significant faith in criminal justice agencies may be "preaching to the choir." While maintaining good relations is important, sufficient time and other resources must be directed toward building relations with citizens who have more negative views of, and are thus less likely to support, criminal justice authorities. The current study affirms past research showing that African Americans tend to have comparably less favorable views of the criminal justice system. It further suggests that this tendency is more pronounced among religious African Americans, regarding the police anyway. Thus, in addition to other organizations representing the needs of African Americans, criminal justice agencies should engage in outreach activities with African American places of worship and other faith-based organizations.

The study is of course limited in that cross-sectional data were collected from a relatively small sample. Results cannot be generalized to non-college students, nor to students at other institutions. This study is an exploration into an under-researched topic: the impact of religious identities upon perceptions of criminal justice agencies. Future research is needed to build upon it. This includes replication using other samples as well as qualitative and mixed-method studies. For example, the current study found a correlation between congregation membership and perceptions of police and court effectiveness (and a slight one between religiosity/spirituality and perceived court effectiveness), but qualitative descriptions of religious identities themselves and the processes by which these identities shape perceptions of criminal justice are also needed. The benefits of this line of research would include contributions to the development of social identity theory as an explanation of public perceptions of criminal justice, and to policies and practices intended to improve relations between citizens and criminal justice agencies.

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The Manipulation of Social, Cultural and Religious Values in Socially Mediated Terrorism

Claire Smith [1,*], Rosslyn von der Borch [1], Benjamin Isakhan [2,3], Sukendar Sukendar [4], Priyambudi Sulistiyanto [5], Ian Ravenscrroft [1], Ida Widianingsih [6] and Cherrie de Leiuen [1]

[1] College of Humanities, Arts and Social Science, Flinders University, Adelaide 5042, Australia; rosslyn.vonderborch@flinders.edu.au (R.v.d.B.); Ian.ravenscroft@flinders.edu.au (I.R.); cherrie.deleiuen@flinders.edu.au (C.d.L.)
[2] Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University, Melbourne 3125, Australia; benjamin.isakhan@deakin.edu.au
[3] Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg 2006, South Africa
[4] Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, Semarang 50185, Indonesia; sukendar@walisongo.ac.id
[5] College of Business, Government and Law, Arts and Social Science, Flinders University, Adelaide 5042, Australia; priyambudi.sulistiyanto@flinders.edu.au
[6] Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung 45363, Indonesia; ida.widianingsih@unpad.ac.id
* Correspondence: Claire.smith@flinders.edu.au; Tel.: +61-4243-88925

Abstract: This paper presents an analysis of how the Islamic State/Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia manipulate conflicting social, cultural and religious values as part of their socially mediated terrorism. It focusses on three case studies: (1) the attacks in Paris, France on 13 November 2015; (2) the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Iraq and Syria; and (3) the struggle between nationalist values and extreme Islamic values in Indonesia. The case studies were chosen as a basis for identifying global commonalities as well as regional differences in socially mediated terrorism. They are located in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. The integrated analysis of these case studies identifies significant trends and suggests actions that could lessen the impact of strategies deployed by extremist groups such as Da'esh, al-Qaeda and Hizb ut-Tahrir. We discuss the broader implications for understanding various aspects of socially mediated terrorism.

Keywords: socially mediated terrorism; the Islamic State; Da'esh; Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia; signalling theory; semiotics; cultural heritage; social media; Paris attacks; conflict in Syria and Iraq

1. Introduction

What the extremists want is to divide our world along fault lines of religion and culture and so a lot of people in the West may have stereotypes against Arabs and Muslims. . . . But really this fight is a fight between the civilized world and a bunch of crazy people who want to take us back to medieval times. Once we see it that way, we realize that this is about all of us coming together to defend our way of life. Queen Rania of Jordan (Miles 2015).

Queen Rania of Jordan's characterisation of the Paris attacks of 13 November 2015 as part of a wider conflict between cultural values accords with similar statements by President Barak Obama of the United States (Obama 2015) and British Prime Minister, David Cameron (Cameron 2015). As these world leaders recognize, terrorist acts by extremist groups emerge from and seek to amplify, conflicts in social, cultural and religious values. The issue that is of particular interest for this paper is how both

Da'esh[1] and Hizb ut-Tahrir use social media to manipulate the social, cultural and religious values of particular audiences and to widen the fault lines identified by Queen Rania of Jordan: How do conflicting social, cultural and religious values play out symbolically across the globe? How do the actions of others further socially mediated terrorism? This paper analyses social, cultural and religious values in the context of three case studies: (1) the attacks in Paris, France, on 13 November 2015; (2) the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Iraq and Syria; and (3) the struggle between nationalist values and extreme Islamic values in Indonesia.

The case studies were chosen as a basis for identifying global commonalities as well as regional differences in socially mediated terrorism. They are located in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Though they are both extremist organisations, Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir represent different extremes on the spectrum of these organisations. While Da'esh is firmly situated within jihadi frameworks, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia operates outside the jihadi milieu. The selection of jihadi and non-jihadi organisations for our case studies widens the purview of this study and increases our ability to obtain a nuanced understanding of the sophisticated global communication strategies that extremist organization are developing across the globe.

2. Background

This study considers how Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia manipulate the social, cultural and religious values of target groups to strengthen their socially mediated terrorism. Following Smith et al. (2016), socially mediated terrorism is defined as 'the use of social and networked media to increase the impact of violent acts undertaken to further a social, political and/or religious cause with the aim of creating physical, emotional or psychological suffering that extends beyond the immediate audience.'

Social media is integral to the communication strategies of extremist groups such as Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir. The modern communications environment provides an opportunity to garner public attention for extremist causes and, through this attention, to recruit support from sympathisers and increase the impact of extremist actions. Over a few short years, Da'esh developed fine-honed media skills, including the capacity to post around 90,000 messages a day online (House of Commons 2015). Thomas Hegghammer, Director of Terrorism Research at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, has described Syria as 'the most socially mediated conflict in history,' pointing to the 'enormous amount of audio-visual documentation produced by rebels themselves, documenting the things they do' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2014, p. 48). These materials are not collected haphazardly but as part of a sophisticated global communication strategy.

Current social media networks can quickly reach millions of people, some of whom are particularly vulnerable to Da'esh's recruitment strategies. These groups include Muslims (often nominal Muslims initially) who feel disenfranchised, particularly those living in the West, as well as Muslims across the globe who feel ready to participate in a cause and those who have long worked for Islamic causes in a localized way (IPAC 2017a). Some have been working on that same cause in isolation or in small groups but can now find community in larger groups. Nominal Muslims are drawn into more intensive practice and non-Muslims convert. While social media is used for active recruitment, it can have a role as part of normal communication strategies among groups of friends:

> Social media affects recruitment simply by linking people up—Facebook, for example. When someone travels to Syria and posts pictures from there and his friends see those pictures, those friends are more likely to be inspired to go. That is not really propaganda; that is just regular information conveyed through online social media that then facilitates recruitment (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2014, p. 48).

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[1]   Though it is best known as the Islamic State, we refer to this organisation as Da'esh, following international practice aimed at denying it legitimacy as either Islamic or a State (see Dragovic 2015).

Social media can play a covert role in extremist actions by reinforcing the social, cultural and religious values that underpin the acts of individuals and by providing people who may work alone with the sense that they are supported by a larger cause.

3. Semiotics, Praxis and Signalling

The theoretical framework for this research draws upon three interlocking approaches to the analysis of communication: semiotics, praxis and signalling. Semiotics interprets sounds or images as part of a system of signification and communication (De Saussure [1916] 1983). Social practice/praxis develops the notion that systems of signification are situated both socially and historically and, moreover, that symbolic behaviours are aimed towards the achievement of specific social goals (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). Signalling theory focusses on the evolution of socially motivated cooperation at small and large social scales (e.g., Bulbulia and Sosis 2011).

Broadly speaking, signals convey information from the signaller to the recipient. Signals can be honest or deceptive. Some signals are false because the signaller, though well intended, holds a mistaken view. If the President has declared war on North Korea but a signaller believes otherwise their signal "The President has not declared war on North Korea" will be unintentionally false. But not all false signals are unintended. Signals can be used to manipulate the recipient and both true and false signals can achieve this end (Guilford and Dawkins 1991). For example, in a xenophobic community a politician may find it useful to truthfully signal a crime committed by a member of an immigrant community to heighten anti-immigration rhetoric, or it may be useful for a politician to falsely signal to their electorate that the economy is doing well.

It is important that people ascertain whether a signal is true or false. Such an assurance can be inferred through the costliness of the signal (Brokensha et al. 2016). The classic example of costly signalling is the extravagant plumage of the male peacock. Female peacocks preferentially mate with fit males (in the evolutionary sense), so males need to signal they are fit. Since only very fit male peacocks can afford to carry the plumage—weak males who exhibited such plumage would be easy prey—the plumage truthfully signals the fitness of the male. Carrying the plumage is costly—a cost that weak birds cannot pay—and so the plumage acts as a reliable signal of the male's fitness (Zahavi 1975, 1997). Other forms of costly signalling rely on the investment of a significant amount of time, money or other limited resources (Bulbulia and Sosis 2011). The greater the investment, the more likely that the signal is 'honest,' since the substantial investment of limited resources impinges upon the signaller's capacity to invest in alternatives. From this viewpoint, religious beliefs, behaviours and rituals function as costly signals of cooperative intent (e.g., Murray and Moore 2009).

The materials analysed in this study were located on a range of internet and social media sites, including Facebook and Twitter and on online news coverage of the events. The data include promotional material produced by Da'esh and circulated on the internet. As Resnyansky (2015) points out, different types of society are characterised by different symbolic schemes. Accordingly, these materials were analysed in terms of the information they signalled to different social groups.

4. Case Studies

Three case studies were selected in order to identify global commonalities as well as regional differences in socially mediated terrorism. These case studies are located in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. The first case study is the series of attacks that included the Bacalan Theatre in Paris, France on 13 November 2015. The second is the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Iraq and Syria and the third is the struggle between nationalist values and extreme Islamic values in Indonesia.

4.1. Paris: 13 November 2015

A series of attacks on Paris by Da'esh were undertaken on 13 November 2015, resulting in the deaths of 130 people. Da'esh's representational coverage of the attacks suggest deep planning. Sophisticated and polished media materials were distributed immediately following the attacks,

designed to target specific audiences. The high cost of these signals served to establish the legitimacy of Da'esh's campaign. One clear target was the five million young Muslims who live in France. Among Da'esh's online recruitment materials are high-quality online videos calling young French Muslims to join other young French nationals who have joined Da'esh (CNN 2015). As Leander (2016, p. 18) points out, the commercial quality of such materials 'gives each a reassuring stamp of normality.' She contends that:

> These are not marginal aspects of DA'ESH politics. Rather, they are important for broadening the range of potential Western recruits the videos can speak to and crucial for enrolling them in circulating the videos (Leander 2016, p. 18).

Informed by such strategies, Da'esh's media outputs concerning the November Paris attacks included a polished and sophisticated image of an intrepid fighter walking away from a Paris that is engulfed in flames. This image keys into the heroic tropes of online gaming, particularly Prototype and inFAMOUS, (Figure 1). In a similar vein, the logo of the Islamic State Health Services (ISHS) mimics that of the British National Health Service (Leander 2016, p. 16). Given a creation strategy of emulation, it is clear that the Paris image was designed to garner new recruits—to turn virtual warriors into actual warriors. The image is inscribed with both Arabic and French text "France under fire."

Figure 1. A polished, pre-prepared representation of the Paris attacks by Da'esh, keying into the iconography of video games and the values of the young people who play them.

A sense of Da'esh's invincibility was projected through an image in which the Eiffel Tower was redesigned as a triumphal arch with Da'esh's flag flying victoriously on top. The tower is illuminated from below. It points to the heavens and a God-given victory (Figure 2). The inclusion of a road running through the Eiffel Tower provides a sense of speed, change, even progress. In Arabic, the white text states "We are coming, France" and the yellow text states "The state of Khilafa."

There were conflicting responses on social media. Da'esh supporters celebrated on Twitter, with threats of further action, especially against the United States (SITE Intelligence Group Enterprise 2015). This may have been predictable. What was not predictable was the emergence of the blue, white and red lights social action campaign to show support for the Paris victims and, tangentially, the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Blue, white and red lights shone in major cities throughout the world, including the US, Britain, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, Taiwan and across South America (Rodriguez 2015). These lights were shown in few countries with Muslim majorities, though they were displayed in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and the UAE. Support for the Paris victims was also embedded in a parallel Facebook function that allowed members to activate a blue, white and red filter (Horton 2015).

At first glance, the social media responses to the Paris attacks were caring approaches to such a tragedy. However, these actions inadvertently furthered Da'esh's agenda by highlighting conflicting

cultural values between different peoples and widening small fissures. As the blue, white and red activism played out around the globe it began to transform into a symbolic manifestation of an 'us' and 'them' mentality. Such a division supports xenophobic forces, which itself steers recruits towards Da'esh. Muslim countries were in an invidious position: display the lights and be vulnerable to being characterized as lackeys of the West, or do not display the lights and appear unsympathetic to the victims. This question was invidious at a personal level. Many Muslim people, particularly those who are recent immigrants, find themselves exploited and condemned to poverty by neo-liberal economic models. The blue, white and red activism put them into a difficult position. They felt sympathy for the victims. However, they were bitter about how they were being treated by the 'West,' including France.

Figure 2. The Eiffel Tower redesigned as a triumphal arch with Da'esh's flag flying victoriously on top.

The complexities and contradictions of action in such circumstances play out through symbolic communication (Figure 3). As visual artist and activist Charlotte Farhan, editor of the online magazine *Art Saves Lives International*, pointed out on Twitter and Facebook, the blue, red and white campaign emerged as support for the victims in Paris but was not enacted for victims of comparable attacks in other places (Lavender 2015). Why did similar global campaigns not arise in support of the 90 people killed by bombings on 11th October in Ankara, Turkey, (Letsch and Khomami 2015) the 43 people who were killed by bombings in Beirut, Lebanon, on 12th November (Barnard and Saad 2015) or the 26 people killed in Bagdad, on 13 November 2015 (The Associated Press 2015)? While this could be attributed partially to a level of war-weariness in relation to conflicts in the Middle East, it is also likely to be related to Paris' iconic status. In a similar manner to the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001, the attacks in Paris held a personal and symbolic dimension for the many millions of people who have visited this city. As Coller (2015) points out, an attack on Paris is likely to make the front page. However, the global campaign in support of the Paris victims highlighted the absence of that level of support for people who suffered similar atrocities in other parts of the world. In a system that celebrates liberté, égalité and fraternité, all lives are not mourned equally. The global manifestation of these values supported Da'esh's agenda.

Figure 3. Conflicting approaches to the blue, white and red campaign in support of victims of the terrorist attack in Paris, 13 November 2015.

4.2. The Destruction of Cultural Heritage Sites in Iraq and Syria

The second case study concerns the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Iraq and Syria. In the same way that lamenting the attacks on Paris can create or exacerbate a polarised worldview, so too can reactions to Da'esh's attacks on heritage sites. There are two key points. Firstly, the international community and global media framed the damage done by Da'esh at the Mosul Museum and the ancient sites of Palmyra or Nimrud as random by-products of wanton terror or as moments of unrestrained barbarism. The United Nations Security Council condemned the attack on the Mosul Museum as part of the 'ongoing barbaric terrorist acts in Iraq by ISIL' (Charbonneau 2015); UNESCO described the destruction of archaeological remains in Palmyra as evidence of 'how terrified by history and culture the extremist are . . . and exposes [their heritage destruction] as expressions of pure hatred and ignorance' (UNESCO 2015). More specifically, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova reacted to the destruction of the ancient Assyrian capital of Nimrud by arguing that such attacks were underpinned by 'propaganda and hatred' and that 'there is absolutely no political or religious justification for the destruction of humanity's cultural heritage' (Bokova 2015).

One of Da'esh's tactics is to elicit outrage from the West in order to reinforce perceptions of strength and facilitate local territorial control and expansion (Smith et al. 2016). Given the high value that Western cultures place on cultural heritage sites, it is a relatively simple matter to elicit this outrage through the dissemination of images that record the destruction of heritage sites such as the Temple of Bel, Palmyra, Syria (Figure 4, see also Worley 2016). In 2002, Colwell-Chanthaphonh (2002), analysed the impact of internet news coverage and associated social media such as internet message boards, of the destruction of the Buddhas in the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan in 2001. His work highlighted how differences in social, cultural and religious values informed reactions to this destruction. Some of the messages revealed attitudes to cultural heritage destruction that may be surprising to those who are steeped in Western values:

Saturday, 03/03/01, 1:59:07 p.m. (#383)14

As a Buddhist, I must say that, from a religious perspective, it makes no difference whatsoever if these statues are destroyed or if they are saved. They are merely representations of a man and they, like everything else, are impermanent and in a world of constant change—nothing lasts forever . . . .

(Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2002, p. 87)

Figure 4. The Temple of Bel, Palmyra, Syria, in December 2008, prior to its destruction by Da'esh in August 2015.

Since this time, vast changes in the media landscape, including the establishment of Facebook in 2004, Twitter in 2006 and Instagram in 2010, have provided new spaces for individuals and groups to express their views without the mediation of a third party. Combined with a transformation in the nature of conflicts, these changes are such that social media can now constitute a threat to cultural heritage. Within this rapidly evolving media landscape World Heritage sites are particularly vulnerable to extremists who seek maximum impact for their political agendas (Smith 2015).

The acts of cultural heritage destruction undertaken by Da'esh are much more than mere moments of barbarity, ignorance or propaganda devoid of political or religious justification (Shahab and Isakhan 2018). Instead, their iconoclasm is carefully articulated and deliberately designed, drawing on historical precedent and key Islamist principles to construct a coherent theological framework and to establish ideological purity and political homogeneity towards the creation of a new and serene 'Islamic State' (Isakhan and Zarandona 2018, p. 4). The religious and political dimensions to the iconoclasm conducted by Da'esh are evident throughout their propaganda outlets. In terms of religious iconoclasm, *Dabiq* is situated within an extremist Salafi/Wahhabi interpretation of Islam with specific religious rhetoric providing the theological framework that underpins their iconoclasm. For example, Da'esh frequently assert a temporal and spiritual link between their iconoclasm and key figures of Islamic history. They repeatedly emphasise the importance of following the path of the Prophet Ibrahim, the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (*Dabiq* 2015b, pp. 26–29). For example:

> the actions of the mujāhidīn [holy warriors] had not only emulated Ibrāhīm's . . . destruction of the idols of his people and Prophet Muhammad's . . . destruction of the idols present around the Ka'bah when he conquered Makkah but had also served to enrage the kuffār, a deed that in itself is beloved to Allah (*Dabiq* 2015a, p. 22).

In citing such historical precedent, Da'esh seeks to draw theological parallels between their actions and those of the founding figures of Islamic monotheism and of the first 'Islamic State.' In terms of the political dimension to their iconoclasm, issue one of *Dabiq* includes a transcription of Da'esh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's speech at the Grand Mosque of Mosul in which he announced the formation of the new Islamic State in June 2014. In it, the self-proclaimed Caliph warns the world that:

> The Muslims today have a loud, thundering statement and possess heavy boots. They have a statement to make that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism and boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy and uncover its deviant nature (*Dabiq* 2014, p. 8).

Here, the principle of iconoclasm is extended beyond the relics and monuments of ancient civilisations, to the 'Western' political ideologies of 'nationalism' and 'democracy.' More to the point, Da'esh seeks to connect these ideologies to the sites of ancient Mesopotamia or the Greco-Roman world. For example, in one *Dabiq* article documenting their destruction, they state:

The kuffār [unbeliever] had unearthed these statues and ruins in recent generations and attempted to portray them as part of a cultural heritage and identity that the Muslims of Iraq should embrace and be proud of. Yet this opposes the guidance of Allah and His Messenger and only serves a nationalist agenda (*Dabiq* 2015a, p. 22).

In this quote, Da'esh details two dimensions to their political iconoclasm. Firstly, it is an attack on the *kuffar*—presumably Westerners who, as part of the colonial period not only drew the modern borders and created the contemporary states of the Middle East but also excavated Mesopotamian archaeological sites and placed them in public museums to be admired. Following the end of colonial oversight in the mid twentieth century came the arrival of secular nationalist governments who sought to use the rich history of Iraq and Syria to inculcate a sense of collective identity (Baram 1991; Wedeen 1999). Attacks on pre-monotheistic sites are therefore not just an attack on the sins of polytheism and idolatry but also an attack on the Western colonial powers who unearthed the ancient relics and designed the modern state, as well as an attack on an entire epoch of state produced symbols that manipulated the region's rich history to serve their own 'nationalist agenda' (De Cesari 2015).

The attacks on pre-monotheistic sites are also a broader rejection not just of polytheism, colonialism and the modern state but also of the secular liberal norms that are enshrined within institutions such as the museum or multilateral bodies such as UNESCO (Gamboni 2001; Winter 2014). For example, in March 2015 UNESCO's Bokova issued a statement reacting to the destruction of heritage sites at the hands of the Da'esh, referring to them as a 'war crime' (Bokova 2015). Knowing that UNESCO was powerless to stop them, the following month Da'esh showed their clear disdain for such rhetoric in their *Al-Hayat* video filmed at the World Heritage Listed city of Hatra. The film not only shows militants using sledgehammers and assault rifles to destroy priceless reliefs engraved into the walls of the ancient fortress city, it also features a bold repost to Bokova: 'Some of the infidel organisations say the destruction of these alleged artefacts is a war crime. We will destroy your artefacts and idols anywhere and Islamic State will rule your lands' (Al-Hayat 2015, cited in Isakhan and Zarandona 2017).

A second dimension is worth consideration. In much the same way that the 'West' appears to care more about terrorist attacks in Paris than in Baghdad, it also appears to care more about heritage sites connected to the foundational myths of Western civilization than Islamic sites. Consider the outcry over sites featured in the Bible, such as the Assyrian capitals of Nineveh and Nimrud, or Greco-Roman sites such as Palmyra, when compared to the vast array of Islamic sites that have been damaged or destroyed by Da'esh. It is important to note that while a Mesopotamian artefact, or a Greco-Roman site are clearly important in terms of their heritage value, the Middle East's rich Islamic history may arguably hold more 'significance' to the everyday lives of many ordinary Syrians or Iraqis who derive elements of their identity from these sites.

As just one example, for the bulk of Syria and Iraq's Shia populations, various Shia Islamic monuments—shrines, mosques, schools and other buildings—may hold far greater significance and therefore more 'heritage value,' than, say, a Babylonian statue destroyed in a museum, or a cylinder seal looted from an archaeological mound. Since the onslaught of Da'esh across vast swathes of Syria and Iraq, the Shia people and their heritage sites have suffered terribly. One prominent example is the gold-domed Sayyida Zaynab mosque and shrine in southern Damascus which has come under repeated attack from at least as far back as October 2012. For Shia Muslims, the shrine is sacred as it is thought to house the remains of a significant female historical figure (Isakhan 2018). Another example occurred over three days in mid-2014, when Da'esh went on a rampage across northern Iraq destroying untold numbers of Shia mosques and shrines. For example, in just one Shia-majority town of Tal Afar, they destroyed a shrine dedicated to a founding figure of Shia Islam, Aqeel ibn Abi Talib and the mosque of Imam Sadiq, associated with the sixth Imam and a revered scholar (Danti et al. 2015, pp. 54–84). The neglect of coverage or concern for these sites in the Western media or by multi-lateral bodies such as UNESCO is indicative of a cultural hubris that is not lost on the people of the Middle East: our lives are more important than your lives; our heritage sites are more important than your

heritage sites. In other words, one of the many failings of attempts to interpret heritage destruction in Syria and Iraq has been the overwhelming reliance on normative assumptions about what constitutes 'heritage,' seen as it has been through the lens of Western culture, at the expense of cataloguing the destruction done at sites of everyday significance to ordinary Syrians or Iraqis.

4.3. National Values versus the Values of Radical Islam

Our third case study concerns the struggle between national values and the values of radical Islam in Indonesia. The organization chosen for this case study is the ultra-conservative Islamist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). The genesis of HTI was in Al-Quds (Jerusalem, Palestine) in 1953. Since then it has successfully developed a transnational network covering more than 40 countries (Setiawan 2018, p. 14). When it was established in the early 1980s HTI affiliated with Al-Baghdadi. The official name (HTI) was first used in May 2000 (Rubino et al. 2017, p. 245).

While Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir are both extremist organisations, they represent different extremes on this spectrum. Da'esh is firmly located within jihadi frameworks, while Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia stands outside the jihadi milieu. Though they are separate organisations, the similarities in their flags (Figure 5) signal some commonalities in social, cultural and religious values. At a very basic level, both organisations are joined by the notion of Caliphate that breaks down divisions between Muslim countries. Moreover, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia's active support for Da'esh is indicated in its participation in protests against Syria's President Bashar al-Assad in Surabaya, Indonesia, in 2012. (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Variant of the flag used by the Islamic State/D'aesh (top) and the Flag of Hizb ut-Tahrir (bottom).

Figure 6. Indonesian members of the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) attend a protest against Syria's President Bashar al-Assad in Surabaya on 3 March 2012, courtesy Freedom House.

Indonesia is one the greatest user of social media in the world, with an estimated 143 million internet users in 2017 (Yuniarni 2018). Ninety percent of Indonesian internet users are on social media. Facebook, Twitter and Telegram are the three most accessed platforms. Indonesians are the fourth most prominent Facebook users following the USA, Brazil and India (Indonesia Ministry of Communication and Information 2018).

In July 2017, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (Party of Liberation) was banned by the Indonesian government. This organisation distinguishes only two kinds of countries: the Islamic State (Dar al Islam), which consists of those who follow Islamic Law (Shari'a) and the Infidel State (Dar al-Kufr), which consists of those who do not follow Islamic Law. The HTI believes that Islamic laws consists of spiritual believe (*aqidah ruqiyyah*) and political ideology (*aqidah siyasiyyah*). For this, the HTI spoke person, Ismail Yusanto, urge all Moslem in the world to practice Islamic way of life through Shariá Law and lead by a Caliph (Setiawan 2018, p. 15). Therefore, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia strives to change the foundation of the Indonesia state. Its views can be found in its digital footprints, including a video of HTI's birthday anniversary on 2 June 2013, in Senayan, Jakarta, which features an oration by some of HTI's top rank. This video identifies four objectives for Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesian members:

1. To change the ignorance (jahiliyyah) law as a result of democracy into Shari'a law;
2. To change power from the hands of the owners of capital to the hands of (Muslim) people (ummah);
3. To destroy the national barriers that divide Muslims; and
4. To appoint one caliph to unite Muslims.

The HTI campaigns focuses on establishing the Transnational Islamic Imperium. The HTI Leader K.H. Muhammad Al-Khaththath, argues that any countries, including Indonesia, could start the formation of the Transnational Islamic Imperium (Setiawan 2018, p. 16). The HTI judges the Indonesian State ideology (Pancasila, see Morfit 1981) as kuffār ideology. The disagreement on Pancasila is cited by Ainur Rafiq from HTI in a circulation letter entitled *Al-Banshasila Falsafah Kufr laa Tattafiq ma'a al-Islaam* (Setiawan 2018, p. 17). These views led Mahfud MD, a Nahdlatul Ulama scholar and the former Head of Constitutional Court, to surmise that HTI is a radical organisation. In a televised debate, Mahfud MD argued that the radical feature of HTI is its endeavour to change the foundation of the Indonesia state, Pancasila (five pillars of the state), the state ideology which promotes diversity and pluralism. Mahfud MD rejected the idea of a Khilafah (Caliphate), which is endorsed by Hizb ut-Tahrir's Indonesian supporters such as Ismail Yusanto and Felix Siaw. Moreover, he asserted that in the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunna (tradition) of the Prophet, there is no instruction on the specific teaching on the system of politics, state administration and the rule of law and that this is left to Muslims in accordance to the demands of their particular contexts. Certainly, the Islamic world recognizes many different systems of government. Among these are the mamlakah system (kingdom), the emirate system, the sulthoniyya system (sultanate) and the jumhuriyya system (republic).

Some of the strongest advocates against radical Islam in Indonesia are the two prominent Muslim organisations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. With a combined following of some sixty million people, these organisations have instigated social media campaigns that disseminate the Islamic principles of justice, diversity and tolerance. These organisations have been involved in the soft power approach taken by the Indonesian government to debunk radical interpretations of Islamic teachings. Both organisations support education, cultural engagement and social and economic development. Nahdlatul Ulama, a conservative Sunni Islamic group, maintains that Indonesia's national identity needs to include all religious groups (Nahdlatul Ulama 2018). Muhammadiyah (2018) also promotes a modern Islam free of superstition and syncretism.

The leaders of both groups have used social media to pro-actively advocate against the tenets of radical Islam. Said Aqil Siradj, Chair of the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama, invited Nahdlatul Ulama's youths to use social media to spread friendly interpretations of Islam and debase *Wahhabis*' radical views. The video was uploaded on YouTube by IMNU Official. Responding to this message, IPNU and IPPNU (Nahdlatul Ulama student organisations) of the Mojowarno sub-district, of

Jombang District, initiated a '1000 Status of Facebook Movement/*Gerakan 1000 Status Facebook*' (Nahdlatul Ulama 2017). In addition, some prominent Nahdlatul Ulama's figures such as Ahmad Mustofa Bisri (Gus Mus) and Nadirsyah Hosen are active users of social media. Hosen is the chair of *Syuriah* Nahdlatul Ulama and is a Professor at Monash University. His views on countering the idea of HTI's *khilafa* can be found in his Facebook page 'Nadirsyah Hosen.' Muhammadiyah's use of social media includes the Facebook accounts *Muhammadiyah* and *Pemuda Muhammadiyah*. On an individual level, Takdir Ali Syahbana, a Muhammadiyah activist, initiated 'Movement to follow [Muhammadiyah's] Fatwas/*Gerakan Patuh Tarjih*.' Through Facebook, he has disseminated Muhammadiyah interpretations of Islamic teachings compiled in the book 'Muhammadiyah's Fatwas/*Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*.' His efforts aim to protect members of Muhammadiyah from following radical views.

In the view of Director General of Political and Nation State, Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs, Tanribali Lamo, HTI is considered as an illegal organization due to its disagreement on Indonesian State ideology as set out in Indonesian Constitution (Setiawan 2018, p. 17).

In 2017, this soft power approach was combined with a hard power approach against radicalisation through the issuance of PERRPU (a government regulation in lieu of law) No. 2, 2017, on Mass Organisation. Article 59 of the law states that 'mass organisations are prohibited from embracing, developing and disseminating any teachings or ideologies contrary to Pancasila.' The banning of HTI by the Indonesian government follows the banning of Hizb ut-Tahrir by Malaysia in September 2015 and an earlier banning of Hizb ut-Tahrir by other countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Syria. However, as HTI has millions of followers in Indonesia, its influence is significant and it is believed to work clandestinely.

5. Discussion

In this paper, we have discussed how social media is used to manipulate the social, cultural and religious values of target groups to increase the global impact of Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia. We have discussed how other groups have used social media in their responses to extremist threats by Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia. In this section of our paper we identify significant trends, suggest actions that could lessen the impact of Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir's strategies and discuss the broader implications for understanding various aspects of socially mediated terrorism.

5.1. The Appeal of Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia

Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia appeal to two distinct cohorts. For extremists, the appeal lies with their particular form of religious piety: righting of the injustices of colonialism, continuing the religious wars of the Crusades and the aim to establishing an Islamic state that is not bounded by international borders. For moderates, these groups are able to strike a chord by drawing on social and cultural issues with a broader appeal. These include asserting an identity that is not fettered by the material reminders of historical invasions by the West, redressing economic inequality and retaliation for the casualties of wars in the region perpetrated by the West.

> Certainly, Da'esh's media materials consistently speak to and amplify, perceptions of racism, inequality and oppression. These issues are directly addressed in a themed issue of *Dabiq* entitled *Wala and Bara versus American Racism*:

> The example of Ibrāhīm ... is for one to be prepared to reject his own people when they fall into kufr and shirk, and not to remain attached to them on account of tribal or blood ties. If this is the case with one's own people with whom a common lineage is shared, how much more so in the case of those with whom one shares nothing more than a superficial characteristic such as skin color!

> ... A Muslim's loyalty is determined, not by his skin colour, his tribal affiliation, or his last name but by his faith. He loves those whom Allah loves and hates those whom Allah

hates. He forges alliances for the cause of Allah and breaks relations for the cause of Allah (*Dabiq* 2015c, p. 19).

In an opinion article in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, Piketty (2015) argues that inequality is a major driver of violent extremism in the Middle East, including the attacks on Paris and that Western nations have to carry some of the blame for that inequality. He contends that jihadists are motivated by economic inequity as well as the asymmetrical wars perpetuated by Western powers. His argument does not mean that extremists are recruited only from low income groups, on the contrary, Kruger's (2018) study of people who join extremist groups found that educated, middle-class people are as likely to be involved in terrorist events as people with little education and low incomes. What joins members of extremist groups is ideology and one part of that ideology is redressing inequality. Da'esh also appeals to the social values of those who oppose the bombings of civilians in Syria:

> Atrocities committed by the Islamic State, he said, are aimed at "making the West get a taste of their own medicine," which part of him thinks the West deserves.
>
> Ahmad Walid Rashidi, cited in *New York Times*, 24 April 2015

5.2. A Regional Dispersal

Two case studies analysed in this paper relate to a period when Da'esh was holding large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria. One outcome of the Paris bombings was a concerted campaign in Iraq and Syria led by the governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States. This resulted in a dramatic contraction in the lands controlled by Da'esh between 5 January 2015 and 8 January 2018 (Figure 7) and a dispersal of foreign fighters to other parts of the world.
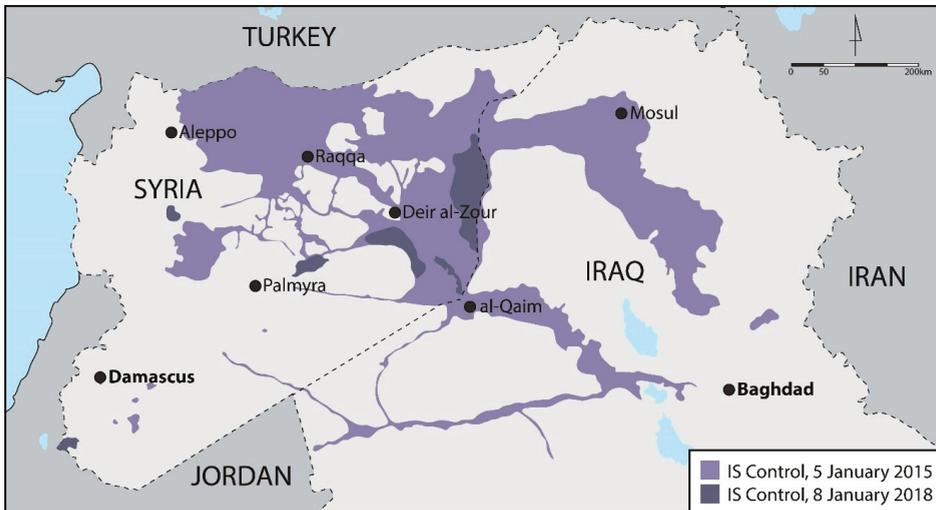
Figure 7. Contraction in the lands controlled by Da'esh/the Islamic State between 5 January 2015 and 8 January 2018. Source IH Conflict Monitor.

Da'esh's response to the loss of territory in Iraq and Syria in 2017 was to shift the focus to alternative fronts, including the Philippines:

If you find it difficult to go to Sham [greater Syria] because of cost and security concerns, why not try the Philippines? Truly, our brothers in the Philippines are awaiting your arrival, why are you so slow in answering their call?

Does it make sense that we have a neighbour being attacked by a swarm of criminals but we aim for a further neighbor rather than one closer by? We give more importance to the further neighbour and make the closer one lower priority? Brothers, this is not to demean efforts to emigrate to Sham but to advise those of you who are still in the land of kafir but have not yet set out on your journey: if you find it hard to get to Syria, strengthen the ranks in the Philippines.

<div align="right">(Telegram appeal, 8 June 2017, cited in IPAC 2017a, p. 4)</div>

5.3. Significant Trends

It is possible to identify a number of significant trends. Firstly, there is a weaponisation of social media, particularly by Da'esh. Kraidy (2017a) points to an aggressive media strategy that demoralises the enemy at the same time that it rallies allies, the weaponising of images and the use of 'savagery' because it attracts extensive media coverage. He argues that Da'esh 'has a clear media doctrine intended to do as much damage as its bullets and bombs.' Elsewhere, Kraidy (2017b, 2018) argues that Da'esh's visual warfare is best understood through the notion of a 'projectilic image' that mimics fast, lethal, penetrative objects. He contends that:

Using a visual repertoire provided by Hollywood film and the U.S. military and therefore familiar to American and global audiences, the Islamic State efficiently delivers its image-projectiles. Wrapping images of atrocity in a familiar visual and narrative format makes them more accessible and thus more potent, inflicting the effect of terror on viewers (Kraidy 2017a).

Secondly, social media is being used almost speculatively, to send an idea into the world and see if—and how—it resonates with global populations. Social media enables extremist organisations—directly or through their online communities—to inspire actions that can be carried out by individuals in their home countries. This capacity is well recognised by Da'esh, as indicated by published discussions regarding attacks that took place in Australia, Canada and the USA:

The significance of these attacks and others is enormous and cannot be underestimated. By calling on Muslims around the world to rise up in arms, the Shaykh launched attacks in Canada, America and Australia (three of the countries mentioned in his speech) with nothing more than words and a shared belief in the act of worship that is jihad. A general in a conventional army couldn't possibly hope to have such power over men he'd never met on the other side of the world, ordering them to attack and possibly be killed, even if he offered them money! (Cantlie 2014, p. 38).

Thirdly, both Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia exploit the capacity of social media to develop global allegiances and inspire action by individuals working alone:

So let every Muslim who wishes to taste the sweetness of walā' and barā' follow the example of Ibrāhīm and declare enmity towards the kuffār amongst his own people—whether black, white, Arab, or non-Arab—and then march forth and wage war against them with whatever means are available to him (*Dabiq* 2015c, p. 21).

As Michael (2013) points out, social media gathering points, such as electronic chat rooms, allow dispersed individuals to share information and develop a shared worldview and a common goal that can subsume local agendas. In Indonesia, the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict has identified an increasing willingness among Indonesian women to organise social media groups, set up fund-raising

charities and provide various forms of logistical support for Islamic State. Reports from this Institute identify how social media has facilitated the arrangement and enactment of marriages between supporters, the recruitment of new supporters through religious study groups and the promotion of sympathetic religious teachers (IPAC 2017a). Social media has played a role in the radicalisation of Indonesian female domestic workers in Hong Kong and Singapore who sought to provide financial support for Da'esh (IPAC 2017b; Siu and Carvalho 2017) and in failed acts, such as the attempt by Ivan Armadi Hasugian to bomb a Catholic Church in Medan, North Sumatra, in August 2016. Hasugian stated that he made several contacts with people online and conducted a bai'at (pledge of allegiance) online before he was ready to commit the act and that he learned to assemble the bomb through the internet (IPAC 2017b, p. 14; Sulistyawati and Dwinanda 2017). His recruitment is similar to that of Akbar Maulana, whose story is filmed by Noor Huda Ismail in the movie *Jihad Selfie* (see Ismail 2016).

5.4. What Can Be Done?

The current situation presents challenges to all countries, whether they have Muslim minority or Muslim majority populations. It is clear that extremist ideologies are nurtured by conflicts in social, cultural and religious values and by the social and economic disparities that often underwrite such conflicts. Unless these conflicts are addressed Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir—or variations—will continue to flourish.

What can be done? It is possible to identify two courses of action. The first is fostering the religious and cultural respect that underpins intercultural understandings, both within and between countries. These richer understanding make individuals and groups less open to manipulation by extremist groups and less likely to demonise other groups. The second course of action is to use the soft power of social media more effectively. Our case study on Indonesia provides a pertinent example of the effective use of soft power by prominent Muslim organisations to counter online radicalisation. Moreover, as Zaharna (2007, p. 221) points out, narratives that are supported by the soft power of cumulative, multicultural understandings have the capacity to attract and persuade across national, cultural and ethnic borders.

5.5. The Soft Power of Social Media

Social media holds solutions to the issues raised in this paper as well as complications. Torres Soriano (2012) and Benson (2014) contend that the internet creates as many vulnerabilities for terrorist organisations as it does strengths. On the one hand, networked media provides an array of unprecedented advantages for terrorist groups—interconnectivity, anonymity, cheapness, power enhancement, access to new audiences (e.g., Whine 1999). On the other hand, it also provides a host of disadvantages, chiefly opportunities for tracing and monitoring, hacking, individual and organisational attacks on sites, disinformation, confusion, counter claims, entrapment, paranoia and dilution (Torres Soriano 2012). As much as networked media facilitates communication between like-minded individuals, it also provides a forum for those who argue against it:

> Jihadist groups seeking an intensive Internet presence must contend with the paradox that interaction with Web users allows them to attain their goals by creating a sense of virtual community, consisting of individuals who share and mutually reinforce their radical beliefs but at the same time the same instruments that nurture the cyber-community also open the door to dissident actions or critical voices who can gradually erode the ideological orthodoxy of the terrorist movement (Torres Soriano 2012, p. 273).

Successful counter-radicalisation, however, particularly of the disaffected, socially isolated or existentially frustrated, depends on reaching those who are most capable of making a difference within any given community, many of whom may themselves be dissenters in various ways (Spalek 2014). At a more general level, social media can provide a physically and emotionally safe space in which to discuss contentious issues. The capacity of social media to engender cross-cultural understandings

is demonstrated in the following twitter conversation that took place on January 30, 2015 between Eleanor Robson, Vicious Assyrian and Dread Muslim:

> **Dread Muslim**: Walls are all you people care about.
>
> **Eleanor Robson**: I have several dear friends & colleagues in Mosul, worked with them for 25 years to help protect their cultural heritage. You?
>
> **Dread Muslim**: I have several brothers and sisters in Syria worked with them to save their future from dying. Saved many years of their life.
>
> **Eleanor Robson**: We're not so different; I use my professional skills to support life & work of Iraqi friends who care about its past & future.
>
> **Eleanor Robson**: I agree that too many people care more about the past than the present but I'm not one of them.
>
> Vicious Assyrian: Thank you.
>
> **Dread Muslim**: May Allah guide You. Please forgive me if what I said sounded rude to you.
>
> **Eleanor Robson**: That's very generous; thank you. There's nothing to forgive though :) I've been feeling the same way today . . .

This conversation is a fine example of social media redressing cultural distortions through the process of immediate and direct message exchange: even though the individuals are in widely different locations and have quite different backgrounds they are able to discuss a heated topic and resolve misinterpretations and misunderstandings that are, in essence, culturally based. As Zaharna (2007, p. 221) points out, the incorporation of culture into social media has the potential to become 'a rich source of team-coalition synergy' through creating consensus out of inherently conflicting positions. Narratives that are supported by the soft power of cumulative, multicultural understandings have the capacity to attract and persuade across national, cultural and ethnic borders (Zaharna 2007, p. 221). Holmes (2008, p. 532), in particular, argues for using the imagined reality of the internet as a means: 'to create solidarity across differences, to search for the common grounds of both oppression and liberation and . . . to create consensus on the basis not of tradition but rather of invention, experimentation in reality and collective self-critique.'

6. Conclusions

This paper has identified a number of ways in Da'esh and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia have been able to further their brands of socially mediated terrorism by exploiting conflicting cultural and religious values. Extremist groups are nurtured by conflict. Da'esh, in particular, is sophisticated in the manner in which it uses social, cultural and religious values to target specific audiences. It provides a model for other extremist organization, though the model has not yet been followed strongly by Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia. Sometimes, the symbolic responses of the opponents of extremist organisations can be predicted and some of these responses may inadvertently further extremist aims. When an attack happens, in the emotion of the moment, individuals wish to act. All of us need to be cautious, however, of symbolic reactions that signal division between Muslims and non-Muslims. We need emblems that act against the xenophobia that is a recruiting tool for jihadists. We need to be more aware of the role that cultural icons play in conflict situations. It is essential that we understand the diverse values of diverse people. Above all, we need greater understanding of and respect for, each other's social, cultural and religious values.

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Women's Engagement with Humanist, Spiritual and Religious Meaning-Making in Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Its Impact on Recidivism

Jeff Duncan [1], Richard Stansfield [2], Steve Hall [3] and Tom O'Connor [4,*]

[1]   Oregon Department of Corrections, Salem, OR 97301-4667, USA; Jeff.B.Duncan@doc.state.or.us
[2]   Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice, Rutgers University,
        New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8554, USA; Richard.Stansfield@rutgers.edu
[3]   Independent Correctional Consultant, Tom O'Connor, 1420 Court St. NE., Salem, OR 97301, USA;
        stevehall212@gmail.com
[4]   Transforming Corrections, Steve Hall 84A Vale Road, St Heliers, Auckland 1071, New Zealand
[*]   Correspondence: oconnortom@aol.com; Tel.: +1-503-559-5752

Abstract: This study explores the long-term impact on recidivism of the engagement of over 300 women prisoners with humanist, spiritual and religious ways of making meaning during their incarceration. Prison chaplains and community volunteers in the Oregon Department of Corrections offered a diverse range of humanist, spiritual and religious (HSR) events to the women, and 95% of them voluntarily engaged at varied levels with an average participation rate of about 3 h per month. The women who attended most often were motivated to do so by intrinsic or meaning-driven reasons and were more likely to have listened to a religious program on radio or TV in the six months before their incarceration. Controlling for ethnicity, risk of recidivism, participation in other programs (education, substance use, cognitive and work), length of time incarcerated, and infractions during incarceration we found an overall significantly positive impact of HSR involvement on recidivism during the first year after release and over a 13-year follow-up period post prison. The impact was concentrated among the 20% of women who attended most frequently (4 or more hours per month) indicating a dosage and consistency of practice effect. Prison chaplains and volunteers make a valuable contribution to the lives of women in prison and to the correctional system; the pro-social support/modeling and diverse help with meaning-making they offer in prison has a positive influence on the women's journey of desistance in the community after prison.

Keywords: women; prison; humanism; spirituality; religion; chaplain; volunteer; meaning; desistance; recidivism

1. Introduction

    At a time of growing prison costs and incarceration for women; with little sense of a positive return on investment; there is increasing need for every part of the prison system security; management and programming operations to show a tangible community benefit from its work. Prison chaplaincy and volunteer programs are not exempt from this need to demonstrate relevancy to the correctional mission of helping people to lower their risk, foster their prosocial skills/support and prevent post prison recidivism in a cost-effective way. In 2004 we began collecting data on the engagement of 349 women prisoners in Oregon with humanist; spiritual and religious ways of making meaning during their incarceration. In 2011 we published an article in the journal Religions called The Sociology of Humanist, Spiritual, and Religious Practice in Prison: Supporting Responsivity and Desistance from Crime that described the sociology of that engagement (O'Connor and Duncan 2011). Now, having

followed the women for up to 13 years post release we present our findings on the impact of that engagement on recidivism.

In his acclaimed book, A Secular Age, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor describes what it means to live in a modern secular democracy. For Taylor, every person now has choices around how they create a sense of ultimate meaning in their life; how they relate to the challenging human questions of suffering, evil, death, health, purpose, justice and love. The more traditional choice is the "religious" path that derives meaning from within one of a diverse range of religious traditions, all of which posit a transcendent source or ground of meaning usually called God or the Divine. Now that we live in a secular age, however, people can and increasingly do choose to make meaning in ways that make no reference to a transcendent God/Divinity, but only to human life and the human condition. This purely secular or "humanistic" way of making meaning only emerged in the last few hundred years; historically, this choice did not exist on a broad societal level. Nowadays most people take the humanist choice for granted (Taylor 2007). In his book "Good without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe" Greg Epstein, the humanist chaplain at Harvard University, shows how the secular choice is not about the absence or lack of faith or belief, rather it is a faith and belief in human life as the source of goodness and meaning (Epstein 2009). The third broad avenue for making meaning is the "spiritual" path in which people retain the concept of a transcendent source of meaning beyond the bounds of human life, but eschew any organized religious dimension to their meaning-making. People who are spiritual retain a sense of God, the Divine, or Transcendence beyond human life, but find it difficult to relate to or derive meaning within the context of the sources and practices of an organized religion (Taylor 2007). Researchers who study the impact of religion on well-being have found it helpful to distinguish spirituality from religion in this way (Hill and Pargament 2013; Idler et al. 2003), and Jang and Franzen (2013) have urged criminologists to add these kinds of distinctions to their study of religion and crime. We call these three paths of meaning-making: humanist; spiritual; and religious or HSR for short.

Most people serving a prison sentence are faced with a crisis or challenge of meaning in their lives that stems from the many losses they experience such as freedom, social status, family, sexual expression, and choice as well as from the need to construct a more complex way of relating to the world that will give them a new sense of identity, belonging, purpose and value even as they struggle with their feelings around loss, shame, guilt, anger, and regret. Prison chaplains have the potential and the calling to help people work through this existential crisis-opportunity and develop meaning within the context of the particular humanist, spiritual or religious path to which they are drawn. The training, skills, resources and role of prison chaplains make them uniquely suited to assess, support and challenge people as they navigate this task of meaning-making. Prison chaplains work for government prison systems, and because their role straddles both church and state they need to be able to work competently with all three systems of meaning-making. The first amendment against governmental establishment or restriction of religion calls prison chaplains to some very skillful and nuanced work; they must foster every prisoner's unique journey of meaning-making without using their government position to favor their own or any particular version of humanism, spirituality or religion (O'Connor et al. 2006).

2. Oregon's HSR Model

Women and men in Oregon who are convicted of crimes that carry a sentence of one year or more serve their sentence in the State prison system. People with shorter sentences go to local county jails. The Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) manages the female side of the State prison system with a 662-bed minimum security facility and a 713-bed medium security facility for women. These two centers for women, collectively called the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF), are co-located in Wilsonville, about 30 min south of Portland, Oregon. The Religious and Victim Services Unit together with the Volunteer Programs Unit in the ODOC organize a diverse range of humanist, spiritual and religious services that women at CCCF can choose to attend.

Oregon organizes its prison chaplaincy system differently to many other US and International prison systems. Many prison systems, for example, use unpaid volunteer chaplains, have very few chaplains for the amount of people in prison, or tend to have chaplains that represent only the dominant faith of the state or country. The Oregon Department of Corrections hires enough full-time professional chaplains who are relatively well paid, and have the capacity to reach the entire inmate population. Chaplains in other U.S. state prison systems are often recruited and supervised by the individual prison at which they work and belong to the chain of command within that prison. In Oregon, the chaplains serve under the Religious and Victim Services Unit which is part of a centralized Offender Management and Rehabilitation Division that has responsibility for overseeing the intake, education, training, treatment, health, HSR, victim, volunteer and reentry services for the prison system. The chaplains answer, therefore, to their own centrally-based Administrator/Head Chaplain who sets the direction for the chaplaincy work in all 14 of the state prisons housing about 14,800 men and women, and oversees the budget, goals, policies, practices, hiring, training and supervision of the unit staff.[1] This administrative structure relieves the chaplains from having to work within a chain of command that is primarily concerned with maintaining safety and security, and allows them to focus on their unique roles such as: (1) ameliorating the dehumanizing tendencies of the US penal system and cultural attitudes toward prisoners; (2) supporting and challenging staff to grow in their humanity and professional skills; (3) selecting, training, coaching and organizing volunteers and HSR opportunities; and 4) fostering a context that maintains and encourages the inmates to develop their meaning-making, humanity, pro-social skills/support, and positive ways of contributing to the community.

The ODOC vision is that each chaplain, regardless of his or her own humanist, spiritual or religious tradition serves the HSR needs of *every* woman or man in prison. Thus, while an Oregon prison chaplain may be a minister, imam, rabbi, priest, pastor or leader in their own humanist, spiritual or religious tradition, his or her function is not to advance their own tradition but to support and develop each prisoner's pro-social skills/support and unique history and narrative of meaning-making in life. The chaplain's primary job is to protect, ensure and advance the constitutional and legal rights and responsibilities of the women and men in prison to express, practice and grow in their way of making meaning whatever that path might be (O'Connor et al. 2006). The staff members in the Religious and Victim Services Unit in the Oregon prison system have come from many different backgrounds over the years including: Native American, Zen Buddhism, Sunni Muslim, Presbyterian, Jewish, Unitarian/Universalist, Baptist, Foursquare Christian, Lutheran, Shambhala Buddhism, Latter-day Saints, Humanist, Methodist, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Catholic etc. The Oregon model of prison chaplaincy has been featured in an award winning documentary film called CHAPLAINS made by Martin Doblmeier and Journey Films that aired recently on PBS stations across the country (Doblmeier 2015). The model has also been discussed on National Public Radio in a program produced by Interfaith Voices, called Lowering Recidivism Through Spiritual Care (Morris 2017).

In 2004, Congress passed a federal law called the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) to prevent its finding that "persons residing in institutions are sometimes subject to discriminatory or arbitrary denial of the ability to practice their faiths beyond what is needed for the security and proper functioning of the institution" from continuing. RLUIPA has dramatically reduced the ability of prison and jail administrations to restrict the practice of humanist, spiritual and religious expression because of security or practical concerns. Just as prisons and jails must provide inmates with health care, they must now provide inmates freedom to express and practice their belief and meaning systems, unless there is a compelling government reason to prevent such expression and practice. The Supreme Court has consistently ruled that people do not lose their First Amendment

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[1]   Tom O'Connor, one of the authors on this paper, held the Administrator of Religious and Victim Services position with the Oregon Department of Corrections from 2000 to 2008.

constitutional rights to practice their religion, spirituality, or way of life, when they are incarcerated. Before RLUIPA, prisons had fairly wide scope as to what they would and would not accommodate, but now they must approximate to the standards of expression that are found in the community (O'Connor et al. 2006). These First Amendment rights and responsibilities within prison contexts extend beyond spirituality and religion into humanism. In 2005, the US Court of Appeal held that atheism was afforded the same protection as religion under the First Amendment, and ordered a prison in Wisconsin to allow an inmate to form a study group for atheists alongside the religious study groups they already allowed (Kaufman vs. McCaughtry 2005).

The Oregon chaplains would not be able to meet the diverse and widespread HSR needs of the 14,800 men and women in prison without the help of a substantial cadre of over 2000 volunteers (O'Connor and Bogue 2010). The Oregon prison system has deliberately chosen to invest in supporting and developing these volunteers, and facilitating their work. Alongside the Religious and Victim Services Unit the department has a Volunteer Programs Unit that is likewise centrally based with its own Administrator. Approximately 75% of the volunteers work directly with the Religious and Victim Services Unit, and the two units work very closely with each other. The majority of the services and events organized by the chaplains and volunteers are religious or spiritual in nature, however, the chaplains and volunteers are increasingly involved in facilitating services that take place in a humanist or secular context, without any religious or spiritual content, such as non-violent communication classes, social study groups, victim-offender dialogues, restorative justice programs, third level educational programs, parenting, and secular meditation such as Transcendental Meditation (Nidich et al. 2016). Chaplains also do a great deal of one-on-one counseling, informal interaction, and death/grief work with the men and women in prison (Sundt and Cullen 1998, 2002). In 2011, O'Connor et al. sent a survey to 2217 volunteers listed in the ODOC's internal volunteer database and 401 (18%) responded. Interestingly, 47% percent of those who responded said they primarily considered themselves to be "a religious volunteer", 32% said they primarily considered themselves to be "a spiritual volunteer" and 22% said "a secular or humanist volunteer" (O'Connor et al. 2011). It should be noted that the HSR demographics of people who live in Oregon are different to many other parts of the US. For example, 77% of people in Alabama and Mississippi say they are "highly religious" compared to 64% in Utah, 47% in Oregon, and 33% in Maine. Fifty-three percent of people in Utah say they attend worship services at least weekly, compared to 39% in North Carolina, 29% in Oregon and 21% in Vermont (Pew Research Center 2014). Oregon has a very diverse set of religious traditions and it has a growing rate of people who consider themselves spiritual without belonging to a particular denomination (Oregon Values and Beliefs Project, 2013).

There are currently 21 full-time chaplains, one full-time victim services coordinator, and five full-time administrative staff in the Religious and Victim Services Unit, and three full-time staff in the Volunteer Program Unit. These 30 staff serve 14 prisons and approximately 14,800 prisoners with an annual budget of $3.7 million ($3.4 million for the Religious and Victim Services Unit and $0.2 million and the Volunteer Programs Unit). The word, "volunteer," comes from the Hebrew language and means, "to willingly give" (Cnaan and Amrofell 1994). *Giving willingly* is an apt description of the prison volunteers because the 2011 study of the Oregon volunteers estimated they give about 404,199 h of service each year. On average, the volunteers said they gave about nine hours of service and six hours of prep time each month to their prison or reentry work. This amounts to a $9.7 million contribution to the department each year using the Independent Sector's 2016 figure of $24.14 for the value of a volunteer hour (Independent Sector 2016). If staff were to provide an equal number of service hours the department would have to hire 194 full-time staff at a cost of well over $13 million. The volunteers also report driving an estimated 5 million miles each year to do their volunteer work at their own cost (O'Connor et al. 2011). So Oregon's prison chaplains and volunteers provide a great deal of "programming" at very lost cost to the department and the community.

To better understand this programming we used the ODOC computerized program signup and attendance system to track the HSR engagement of all women ($N = 349$) and men ($N = 3009$) who

entered the Oregon prison system in 2004 and served at least one year of incarceration. Mirroring gender-specific patterns of HSR involvement that are found in the community (Stark 2002; Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008), women in prison were much more likely to attend HSR events than men. However, both the women and men attended at very high rates. Ninety-five percent of the women and 71% of the men voluntarily attended at least one HSR event during their first year in prison. On average 58% of the total female population and 33% of the total male population attended HSR services each month during their first year in prison (O'Connor and Duncan 2011). This surprisingly high level of engagement is consistent with a national survey which found that religious programming was the single most common form of programming in US state prisons (Beck et al. 1993).

There were several other significant differences between the HSR engagement of women and men. For example, females (70%) were equally likely as males (68%) to have attended spiritual or religious services as a child, but women (23%) dropped below the rates for males (30%) as a teenager, and then the women rose (66%) to higher levels than men (54%) after they were arrested. Compared to the men, the women were less likely to have a sexual offence or to be a gang member, and they had lower levels of risk of recidivism. Women were also more likely to cross over and attend a wider variety of events organized by the different humanist, spiritual and religious traditions. Six factors predicted total number of HSR attendances by men—prior theft, type of crime (person, property, statutory), a current or prior sex offence, older age, spiritual assessment, and Hispanic ethnicity—but there were no discrete factors predicting attendance by women (O'Connor and Duncan 2011). Indeed the patterns of involvement for the men and women were so different that we decided we needed separate follow-up studies to properly understand this gender-specific HSR involvement in prison and its impact on post-prison success.

3. Theory and Research

In our judgement, the research on how or whether humanist, spiritual and religious engagement in a correctional environment might contribute to *desistance* (the evolving self-narrative and journey whereby one lifts oneself out of crime and into a pro-social life free of crime) is promising but inconclusive. The most methodologically rigorous review of the research is a meta-analysis conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) in 2006. While a little dated now, the WSIPP study is still probably the best bedrock to stand on due to its rigor. WSIPP found 291 studies on the impact of correctional programs on recidivism that met its methodological criteria, and these included six "faith-based" or "faith-informed" studies. Only two of the six studies found a positive effect on recidivism; one of which (Wilson et al. 2005) studied a later more-developed version of a faith-based transitional program in Detroit that was included in the four studies that failed to find an impact (O'Connor et al. 1997). The other study that found a positive effect was the study with the highest effect size (−0.388) for reducing recidivism across all of the 291 evaluations (Wilson et al. 2005). WSIPP's failure to find overall statistical significance for the six studies led it to conclude that the research in this program area was "inconclusive" and "in need of additional research and development" (Aos et al. 2006).

Johnson's review of the broad literature on religion and delinquency/crime is helpful because it examines a variety of ways of measuring religion and outcomes related to crime, and includes a large number (272) of studies but of varying methodological rigor. Johnson's conclusion is that "clear and compelling empirical evidence exists that religiosity is linked to reductions in crime" (Johnson 2011). Dodson et al. (2011) also review some of the literature and conclude that "faith-based programs "work" to reduce recidivism." Several studies, however, have failed to find a link between religious and spiritual support and reductions in recidivism (Burnside et al. 2001; Johnson 2004; Trusty and Eisenberg 2003; O'Connor et al. 1997). Other studies have found less direct and more nuanced links. For example, a study using data from the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative found that religious and spiritual support did not significantly relate to criminal reoffending, although the study did find that such support had a strong and robust effect on the likelihood of desisting from substance

use for ex-offenders who had a low risk of recidivism (Stansfield et al. 2017). A second study using data from the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative found that a person's baseline of religious support did not protect against substance use or reoffending post-release. A person's increase in religious support from the baseline did protect against substance use post-release, but not against reoffending. The interaction, however, between baseline and increase in support was significantly related to lower levels of offending post-release (Mowen et al. 2017).

Several studies have found that the spiritual and religious practices of male and female prisoners help them to have less prison infractions and adjust in a psychologically healthy way to prison life, manage guilt, and find motivation, direction, peace of mind, and meaning in life, as well as hope for the future and support to make a shift in their lifestyle and behaviors (Clear et al. 1992; Clear and Sumter 2002; Dammer 1992, 2002). O'Connor et al. found that participation in the Transition of Prisoners (TOP) program for men, originally created by Prison Fellowship, significantly reduced the number of *walk-aways* and escapes from a pre-release prison in Detroit (O'Connor et al. 1997). O'Connor and Perreyclear found that religious participation in a South Carolina prison for men reduced in-prison infractions (O'Connor and Perreyclear 2002).

A study of 214 women in prison found that the women who received significant support from religion had better adjustment to prison, and less depression and prison infractions (Levitt and Loper 2009). Dye and colleagues (Dye et al. 2014) found that more frequent religious engagement among a group of women serving life sentences was associated with better prison adjustment, largely through helping women deal with depression. Two Federal Bureau of Prisons studies explored the reasons why female and male inmates participated in a multi-faith prison program (Camp et al. 2006) and found that this participation reduced in-prison infractions (Camp 2008). A longitudinal study by Giordano et al. (2008) studied the influence of spirituality as measured by feelings of being close to God and religious participation on the life-course patterns of crime for 152 people, 51% female and 49% male. Controlling for traditional predictors of desistance they concluded that "although the longitudinal results do not show significant main effects on life-course patterns of crime for the sample as a whole, the in-depth life-history data do document positive effects of religion and spirituality for some individuals and under some conditions (Giordano et al. 2008)." These studies reveal a potentially important role for HSR practices for women in prison, especially given the high incidence of depression and other mental health problems faced by female inmates (Kruttschnitt et al. 2000), and how female inmates benefit particularly from positive relationships and social support (Severance 2005).

A study that links meaning-making and social support comes from the Minnesota Department of Corrections. This study found that the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI), a faith-based prisoner reentry program, significantly reduced reoffending in a sample of 732 offenders who had participated in the program and were released from Minnesota prisons between 2003 and 2009 (Duwe and King 2013). Importantly its authors qualify the meaning of their results by say the findings "suggest that the beneficial recidivism outcomes for IFI participants may have been due, in part, to the continuum of mentoring support some offenders received in the institution and the community. The results imply that faith-based correctional programs can reduce recidivism, but only if they apply evidence-based practices that focus on providing a behavioral intervention within a therapeutic community, addressing the criminogenic needs of participants and delivering a continuum of care from the institution to the community. Given that IFI relies heavily on volunteers and program costs are privately funded, the program exacts no additional costs to the State of Minnesota. Yet, because IFI lowers recidivism, which includes reduced reincarceration and victimization costs, the program may be especially advantageous from a cost-benefit perspective."

Another study of 16,420 people released from Minnesota prisons between 2003 and 2007 found that prison visits from siblings, in-laws, fathers, and clergy significantly reduced recidivism. The authors of the study recommended that prisons and jails become more "visitor friendly" and made the following important but simple point: "considering the impact of visits from clergy and, to a lesser extent, mentors

appear to have on reoffending, it may be beneficial for visitation programs to focus on facilitating visits from clergy, mentors, and other volunteers from the community (Duwe and Clark 2011). Since 2000, the Oregon prison system has been consciously and progressively making its prisons more visitor, clergy and volunteer/mentor friendly. The Duwe study on visitation (Duwe and Clark 2011) and other studies (Bales and Mears 2008; Mitchell et al. 2016) that have found a social tie/visitation effect gives us a clear hint that the HSR effect, if there is one, is connected in some way to power of increased social support. Meaning-making is an inherently social endeavor.

Germaine to this literature are important findings from a series of meta-analytic studies commissioned by the American Psychological Association (APA) (Norcross and Wampold 2011). These studies examined the outcomes from adapting psychotherapy to eight different patient characteristics one of which was the religious and spiritual (R/S) outlook or approach of patients. In the parlance of the Risk, Need and Responsivity model of reducing recidivism, these studies were examining the Responsivity principle. The meta-analyses categorized these R/S outlooks into four different types of spirituality based on the type of *object* a person feels a sense of closeness or connection to: (1) humanistic spirituality; (2) nature spirituality; (3) cosmic spirituality; and (4) religious spirituality (Worthington et al. 2011). Many humanists, secularists and atheists etc., however, do not like to use word "spiritual" to describe their perspective on life, so we prefer to collapse this fourfold categorization into the threefold classification we have been using in this paper based on a person's way of making ultimate meaning in the world and their affective connection to the world and the transcendent: humanist; spiritual (both nature and cosmic spirituality); and religious. This set of 8 meta-analytic studies found that four out of the eight patient factors, including HSR, were "demonstratively effective" and are thus considered to be evidence-based practices by the APA. When therapists brought their patient's unique and individual ways of making ultimate meaning into therapy, the patients had better psychological outcomes and they also had improved outcomes around meaning. It therefore behooves Corrections Departments in the context of programming to take note that the APA has recommended, as an evidence-based practice in psychology, that all psychologists and counselors integrate humanism, spirituality, and religion into their work in a way that matches each client's particular way of establishing ultimate meaning in life or feeling connected to something that is vitally important in their lives (Norcross and Wampold 2011; Worthington et al. 2011). In summary, HSR engagement cannot yet be considered as an "evidence-based practice" for helping people to better adjust to prison live and be more successful in the community after prison, but it certainly should be viewed as an encouraging practice that has good evidence to suggest its cost-effectiveness.

4. Data and Methods

The current study relies on data from the 349 women who entered the Oregon prison system during 2004 and who served at least one full year in prison. In 2017, we returned to the cohort of women who entered the prison system in 2004 and collected data on any rearrests and reconvictions since their release from prison. Of the original 349 women in our sample, 339 were eventually released from prison and spent at least one-year post-incarceration in the community, before we collected follow-up data. The 339 thus formed the sample for our analysis.

5. Dependent Variable

Recidivism: Given that our study sample exited prison at varying times from 2005 onwards, we used two different measures of recidivism to account for the significant variations in 'time at risk' (i.e., back in the community). Our first assesses whether an individual was rearrested for a new personal, property or statutory offense within their first 12 months after release. This method examined *re-arrest* within one year as a binary outcome (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Our second method follows recommendations by other researchers in this field (Duwe and Clark 2017; Stansfield and Williams 2014) to account for varying exposures to the risk for recidivism. We do so by examining any recidivism event over the entire 13-year follow up period for each person. For this we

use a Cox Regression technique to measure both the timing and likelihood of recidivism, using the number of days to a new arrest as time to (first) failure. There are well known limitations to using rearrests as a measure of recidivism (LoBuglio and Lymann 2006), including that rearrests can capture charges that are later dropped or changed, and that a person can be acquitted. Nevertheless, the use of official data on rearrests is methodologically consistent with many prior studies of recidivism. Furthermore, measures of reconviction or re-incarceration in Oregon would undercount reoffending behavior, given that technical violations are handled at the local county level.

HSR Attendance: A prior study found a significantly higher proportion of women begin their HSR participation earlier than men and maintain higher levels of attendance throughout their first year of incarceration (O'Connor and Duncan 2011). Given that 95% of women in prison attended at least one *HSR* event during their first year in prison, we wanted to capture the variation in *extent of attendance*. In the current study, participation in HSR programming was measured via the average monthly attendance of women, calculated by summing the total hours of attendance and dividing by the total number of months served. This ranged from a low of 0 h, to a high of 28 h per month. Eighty percent of the sample had 4 or less hours per month. We created a categorical variable indicating whether women attended on average less than one HSR hour per month = 1, up to two hours per month = 2, up to three per month = 3, up to four per month = 4, or four or more per month = 5.

Other Programs and Work: To adequately examine the relationship between HSR attendance and recidivism independent of participation in other rehabilitation programs, we also controlled for participation in the following most commonly attended programs: substance treatment, cognitive programming, job skills or on the job training/work, and education. We used a count measure where 1 point was ascribed for each additional program attended to assess participation in other programming.

Assessed Risk: The validated risk measure used to assess the risk of recidivism for an Oregon inmate is the Automated Criminal Risk Score or ACRS (Oregon Department of Corrections 2015). The department calculates the ACRS automatically by scoring 7 factors: age, earned time, sentence length, prior revocation, number of prior incarcerations, prior theft convictions, and the current offense severity (ODOC, 2009). The formula for calculating ACRS risk for women and men is slightly different, but the factors are the same. In the context of this study it is also important to note that the ACRS includes age as a factor and so it changes over time. We could have included a separate control measure for age at release, but for reasons of multicollinearity we decided not to do so and control for age via its inclusion in ACRS. Age is a very important control variable because it is so strongly related to recidivism, and the ACRS controls for this. We used the ACRS score for the women at the time of their release. The continuous ACRS is measured on a scale of 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating higher assessed risk. Assessed risk was included as a control measure to determine whether any relationship between HSR attendance and recidivism was sustained for all levels of risk, providing a more rigorous test of the impact of HSR.

We also used three variables that may be indicative of risk that are not captured in the risk measure. This includes whether the person was sanctioned for a minor disciplinary infraction at any point during their entire prison stay (1 = yes), whether a person was sanctioned for an assault or major disciplinary infraction while in prison during their entire stay (1 = yes), and the total amount of time served in the Oregon DOC prior to release (measured in years).

Demographic Variables: We controlled for ethnicity (*non-Hispanic white* = 1, *ethnic minority* = 0). Given the demographic make-up of Oregon, further disaggregation of racial and ethnic groups was not possible because of low cell counts.

Spiritual Assessment: A subset of our sample voluntarily filled out a spiritual and religious assessment offered to them by the Religious and Victim Services Unit during their prison intake process. The spiritual and religious assessment explored various aspects of the person's background and current practice such as their spiritual and religious orientation, upbringing, and spiritual and religious behavioral patterns prior to incarceration. The survey included the Age-universal Religious Orientation Scale (Gorsuch and Venable 1983) {Griffin, 1987 #19809) which measures two independent

dimensions of a person's religiosity, intrinsic and extrinsic orientation. Nine of the scale's 20 items (scored on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 indicating strong disagreement to 5 indicating strong agreement) pertain to intrinsic orientation, including: "I enjoy reading about my religion", "It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer", and "I would rather join a Bible study group than a church social group." Eleven items pertain to extrinsic orientation including, "I go to church because it helps me make friends", "Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life", and "I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there." The score on each subscale is obtained by summing the scores of the 9 or 11 items, providing a range of 11 to 55 for extrinsic orientation and 9 to 45 for intrinsic orientation. In addition to including the religious orientation scores in our analyses, we included whether or not a person was from a religious family (no = 0, yes = 1), and their recent religious behavior measured via the question: In the past 6 months, have you listened to religious programs on the TV or radio? Respondents could select never = 1, sometimes = 2, and often = 3.

6. Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive characteristics of our sample of 339 women, and the subset of 120 women who completed the spiritual assessment at intake. Almost 63% of the women in our sample had at least one re-arrest by 25 August 2017, the date we collected the recidivism data. Just over 22% of the women were re-arrested during their first year back in the community. As previously reported, upwards of 94% of women in the Oregon prison system attended at least one HSR program during their first-year prison, and Table 1 shows that the women in our sample had an average of 3 h per month. Interestingly, attendance level is not significantly affected by risk level. Prior studies of males in prison have found that higher risk men were significantly less likely to have HSR involvement in prison {O'Connor, 2011 #19801} (Stansfield et al. 2017). Our data revealed that women in the low, medium, and high risk of recidivism categories all had an average of just over 3 HSR hours of attendance per month.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics for Sample.

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Full Sample (*n* = 339)				
Any Re-arrest	0.626	0.484	0	1
Any Re-arrest in 1 Year	0.224	0.417	0	1
Days to Re-arrest (Total Period)	1100.578	1220.751	3	3989
Days to Re-arrest (1 year)	159.90	98.91	3	364
Avg. Monthly HSR Hours [+]	2.802	1.558	1	5
Total Time Served (years)	2.308	1.924	1	11.8
Assessed Risk	0.218	0.180	0	0.626
Ethnicity (White = 1)	0.861	0.346	0	1
Other Needs Programs	3.209	1.015	0	5
Any Education Hours	0.851	0.357	0	1
Any Substance Treatment	0.560	0.497	0	1
Any Cognitive Therapy	0.632	0.483	0	1
Any Job Hours	0.882	0.130	0	1
Minor Sanction in Prison	0.330	0.471	0	1
Major Sanction in Prison	0.459	0.499	0	1
Spiritual Assessment (*n* = 120)				
Intrinsic Score	34.042	6.132	11	45
Extrinsic Score	27.575	6.175	14	51
Religious Family	1.366	0.484	1	2
Religious Behavior	1.573	0.699	1	3

[+] Less than 1 h of attendance per month = 1; up to 2 h of attendance per month = 2; up to 3 per month = 3; up to 4 = 4; more than 4 = 5.

Our first analysis revisits the findings of O'Connor and Duncan (2011), as we explore what we can learn about the women who have higher HSR attendance using the subset of 120 women who voluntarily took a spiritual assessment at intake. Table 2 presents the results of an ordered

logistic regression estimating levels of monthly attendance at HSR services. Intrinsic religiosity was significantly and positively associated with average monthly attendance. The Odds Ratio indicates that for a one unit increase in intrinsic religious orientation, the odds of four or more hours of attendance per week versus the combined lower levels of attendance are 1.1 times greater, given the other variables remain constant. This suggests that women in the Oregon system with higher levels of attendance are attending for largely internal, *meaning-driven* reasons. This finding is consistent with reports of why men attend HSR services in Oregon (O'Connor and Duncan 2011), and supported by more recent work exploring why women turn to faith during treatment for drug addiction in a halfway house (Kerley et al. 2014).

Table 2. Ordered Logistic Regression Model of Women's Average Monthly HSR Attendance.

	OR	SE	$p > z$
Intrinsic	1.105 **	0.039	0.005
Extrinsic	0.986	0.034	0.689
Religious Family	0.737	0.278	0.418
Religious Behavior	3.032 ***	0.911	0.000
Assessed Risk	0.215	0.230	0.150
White	0.187 **	0.115	0.006
Needs Programs:			
Education	3.245 *	1.861	0.040
Substance	1.569	0.626	0.259
Cognitive	2.777 *	1.100	0.010
Job	0.528	0.867	0.697
χ^2	51.450		
R^2	0.147		
Log Likelihood	−149.440		

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Relatedly, recent religious behaviors prior to prison were also associated with higher HSR attendance. For a one-unit change in the amount women listened to religious programs on the radio or television in the six months prior to custody, the odds of a higher level of attendance versus lower levels of attendance are almost 3 times greater. Importantly, the number of other programs that the women participated in was also significantly associated with HSR attendance. This is an important finding for at least two reasons. First, it suggests that there is some overlap reflective of a higher motivation to seek change. Secondly, it suggests that future studies seeking to estimate the effect of HSR programs in prison on recidivism must be able to account for other rehabilitation programs, so as to measure how much HSR programming may actually support or enhance the impact of participation in other rehabilitation programs.

Table 3, Model 1 presents the results of our logistic regression model estimating the likelihood of re-arrest within the first-year post-release, as a function of our independent variables. We find that the average monthly attendance at HSR services was moderately associated with lower recidivism. This association is significant while controlling for the total number of other programs attended by women in the sample, demonstrating that HSR attendance may be associated with further reductions in recidivism above and beyond participation in other prison rehabilitation programs such as education, work and cognitive programming, and independent of risk of recidivism level. Consistent with prior research on prison experiences and recidivism, we also found that both minor and major sanctions in prison were associated with a higher likelihood of recidivism perhaps indicating that self-control or self-regulation skills are an important factor in reducing recidivism.

Because women in our sample exhibited a wide range in average monthly HSR attendance, we explored whether there is a threshold that must be met before recidivism benefits are conferred. Model 2 shows the results of a logistic regression model, that now include each category of HSR attendance. The odds of recidivism were significantly lower for the 20% of women with four or *more* hours of

attendance each month compared to women with less than one hour per month. This suggests that establishing a more regular pattern of attendance and participation may be important to incur the benefits of prosocial support and possibly a sign of higher motivation to seek change. This finding is consistent with most behavior change models, which stress that dosage and consistency of engagement, regardless of program type, are important factors for success.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Estimating the Relationship between HSR Attendance and Re-arrest within 1 year of Release (*N* = 339).

	OR	SE	*p* > z	OR	SE	*p* > z
Monthly HSR	0.738 **	0.071	0.002			
Up to 2				1.273	0.457	0.501
Up to 3				0.905	0.390	0.817
Up to 4				0.599	0.307	0.317
4 or more				0.272 **	0.125	0.005
Time Served	0.762 **	0.079	0.008	0.771 *	0.080	0.012
Assessed Risk	1.039	0.805	0.96	1.003	0.791	0.997
White	1.189	0.490	0.674	1.233	0.519	0.619
Education	0.999	0.387	0.999	0.975	0.378	0.948
Substance	0.557 *	0.158	0.039	0.548 *	0.157	0.036
Cognitive	1.981 *	0.627	0.031	1.988 *	0.636	0.032
Job	1.135	1.342	0.915	1.102	1.340	0.936
Minor Infraction	1.973 *	0.590	0.023	1.965 *	0.592	0.025
Major Infraction	2.031 *	0.616	0.019	1.953 *	0.603	0.030
Constant	0.427	0.516	0.482	0.253	0.313	0.266
χ^2	39.080			42.90		
Log Likelihood	−163.569			−161.662		

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Finally, we conducted a survival analysis to assess the rate of reoffending across our entire follow-up period to account for different periods at risk of reoffending among our sample. Survival analysis was particularly useful given that the women in the study entered the 'at-risk' period (i.e., released from prison) at different points in time and could be censored at any point over the 13-year study period. Survival analysis correctly accounts for censored cases in estimating the probability of recidivism, while allowing for the likelihood that more than half the women in the sample will never reoffend. Estimation of Cox proportional hazards models helped us to relate time to "failure" to covariates associated with that time as displayed in Table 4. The results again confirm that a higher level of HSR attendance is moderately associated with a reduction in reoffending. Furthermore, minor and major sanctions in prison were positively associated with the rate of re-arrest while a longer time served in prison was associated with a lower rate of re-arrest.

Table 4. Cox Regression Estimating the Relationship between HSR Attendance and the Rate of Re-arrest Across 14 Years (*N* = 339).

	HR	SE	*p* > *z*
Monthly HSR	0.773 **	0.063	0.001
Time Served	0.786 *	0.074	0.010
Assessed Risk	1.008	0.648	0.990
White	1.014	0.343	0.968
Education	0.891	0.275	0.709
Substance	0.566 *	0.133	0.015
Cognitive	1.728 *	0.465	0.042
Job	1.269	1.324	0.819
Minor Infraction	1.780 *	0.425	0.016
Major Infraction	1.916 **	0.475	0.009
χ^2	40.710		
Log Likelihood	−424.76		

Note: * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001.

7. Discussion

In this paper, we describe in some detail how prison chaplains and volunteers in Oregon are able, at low cost, to provide a great deal of humanist, spiritual and religious programming that reaches almost the entire female population in the prison system. This Oregon HSR model helps the incarcerated women to make new meaning and find support in their lives from pro-social citizens in a way that is congruent with the criminogenic principle of Responsivity, evidence-based practices in psychology, and the Constitution's first amendment prohibition on the establishment or prevention of religious exercise.

For a variety of reasons, that we were not able to fully determine, some women in prison self-select to attend these HSR services at increasingly higher levels, but we did find evidence to suggest that part of this self-selection process is driven by greater levels of an intrinsic desire and motivation to make meaning. We discovered that these higher levels of HSR dosage and intensity have a significant impact on both short-term (one year) and long-term (13 year) post-prison recidivism controlling for a wide range of factors including risk of recidivism (incorporating age), other in-prison program involvement, ethnicity, length of stay and in-prison infractions. We were unable to measure change in, or levels of post-prison involvement in HSR practices and future studies would benefit from the addition of such data. Previous studies have shown that the prison chaplains and volunteers, who build these HSR relationships with the women, have a great deal of pro-social, spiritual, and human capital to share with the women and the women have a great deal to share with the chaplains and volunteers. Presumably this capital and support "rubs off" on the women and the chaplains/volunteers. The chaplains and volunteers are deeply connected to and embedded in the all of the major social institutions of family, education, work, law, democracy (voting), community, and HSR meaning-making. The chaplains and volunteers model how to live with pro-social attitudes, beliefs and values, with pro-social friends and support, with satisfying work and intimate relationships, and without substance abuse and traumatic inducing behaviors such as poor communication and violence. In contrast to the rejection and condemnation narratives that are at least partially inherent in the culture of the US justice and prison systems, the chaplains and volunteers represent a narrative of restoration, redemption and belonging that is available to the women despite their past failures. Informally therefore, the chaplains and volunteers, create an environment or context that directly counters the many criminogenic risks and needs that are present in the herstories of the women. Context conditions consciousness and sufficient exposure or engagement with this enabling context encourages new identities and skills of pro-social agency to emerge.

It is our hypothesis that the context we are describing allows new meaning to develop that is unique to each woman and strengthens their motivation, social support and self-regulation skills.

These three factors—motivation, social support, and self-control/regulation—are crucial to human development and desistance from crime. The constructivist developmental model of Robert Kegan posits three major levels or stages of human achievement and complexity: (1) the socialized mind; (2) the self-authoring mind; and (3) the self-transforming mind ([Kegan 1998]). Many of the adults who end up in prison have not yet achieved the level of development that is represented by the socialized mind; their level of development is a sovereign mind where their needs and desires dominate and they are incapable of thinking abstractly and thus see things in concrete or black and white terms. This black or white way of constructing the world is cute in children but deeply problematic in adults who are frozen at this stage of development. People who attain to the level of the socialized mind are now able to think abstractly and can see things from the perspective of others and the needs of others. At this socialized stage people are "on the bus", they realize they are part of society and can work collaboratively with others to construct a meaningful life. After some time of being "on the bus" people develop further and they are ready, when they develop a "self-authoring mind" to "drive the bus". This more developed and complex way of constructing meaning involves a far greater degree of agency, leadership and internal decision-making capacity than the self-authoring mind. Studies have shown that about 13% of adults have a pre-socialized mind, 14% have a socialized mind, 32% are in between a socialized and self-authoring mind, 34% have a self-authoring mind, 6% are on the way to having a self-transforming mind, and only 1% have a self-transforming mind. In our experience almost all of the chaplains and volunteers have attained at least the level of the socialized mind and many are on their way to or at the level of a self-authoring mind. This means they able to assist many of the women in prison who may be stuck at the pre-socialized level of development to "get on the bus" and a few of them who are ready to start "driving the bus"

The main focus of our study is at a personal or individual level, as it concerns the relationship between the women in prison and their HSR behavior. As such the study does not specifically examine the influence on crime and desistance patterns of the broader situational, collective, and sociological structures such as the overrepresentation of minorities and the impact of class on incarceration; or the amount of trauma, sexual abuse and violence in the lives of women who are incarcerated. We understand that this narrower individual focus is a limitation of our study that cannot be overcome within the confines of its methodology. Furthermore, our question about whether or not the provision of and engagement with HSR services at X cost leads to individual desistance from crime tends to bestow an instrumental or "I-it" feel to the complex web of human relationships, engagements and meaning-making that we are trying to understand. Our argument is not that the purpose of developing HSR in prison is to reduce recidivism, as this would reduce HSR to a state instrument of social control that is used "on" the women in prison. Rather, our hope was to show that the co-creative process of diverse meaning-making engaged in by women prisoners, volunteers and state-paid chaplains that is protected by the US constitution is something good in and of itself, and that it also assists the women to advance in their journey of desistance. The main focus of our study is at a personal or individual level, as it concerns the relationship between the women in prison and their HSR behavior. As such the study does not specifically examine the influence on crime and desistance patterns of the broader situational, collective, and sociological structures such as the overrepresentation of minorities and the impact of class on incarceration; or the amount of trauma, sexual abuse and violence in the lives of women who are incarcerated. We understand that this narrower individual focus is a limitation of our study that cannot be overcome within the confines of its methodology. Furthermore, our question about whether or not the provision of and engagement with HSR services at X cost leads to individual desistance from crime tends to bestow an instrumental or "I-it" feel to the complex web of human relationships, engagements and meaning-making that we are trying to understand. It would be essential to support HSR in prison even if it did not have a direct influence on recidivism, because the prison chaplain's primary job is to protect, ensure and advance the constitutional and legal rights and responsibilities of women and men in prison to express, practice and grow in their way of making meaning whatever that

path might be. The fact that this job can be carried out in a way that also promotes the rehabilitation mission of the Correctional system is a welcome bonus.

For a variety of reasons, including the need for additional high-quality studies, it is our opinion that the research on whether faith-informed and meaning-making approaches within the correctional process help people to lift themselves out of habits and identities that involve criminal behavior is encouraging but still inconclusive. Yes, we have some studies that show positive outcomes, but other studies have found nuanced impact or failed to find an impact. There is also great variation across the definition of interventions and the rigor of the existing studies. We do not have sufficient evidence to say that HSR engagement is an *evidence-based* practice in corrections. We can, however, say that it is an evidence-based practice for therapists to include HSR in therapy. The life-course and desistance literature has taught us that meaning-making is part of the process for people who successfully lift themselves out of crime. There are thousands of prison chaplains and volunteers across the US who are willing to engage and support incarcerated women in their journey of desistance. It is highly likely that fostering and supporting this diverse pursuit of meaning-making, motivation, social support and self-control significantly increases the capacity of the US criminal justice system in a cost-efficient way to be more compassionate, just, and effective.

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Spiritual Occlusion and Systemic Integrity: Legal Evaluations of Due Process Protections and Freedom of Religious Expression and Practices Safeguards

Jason R. Jolicoeur * and Amy Memmer

Department of Criminal Justice and Legal Studies, Washburn University, Topeka, KS 66621, USA;
amy.memmer@washburn.edu
* Correspondence: jason.jolicoeur@washburn.edu

Abstract: As is the case with other constitutionally protected rights, the freedom of religion is not unlimited nor without restriction or constraint. Rather, the courts have long held that the state may have legitimate reasons for placing reasonable restrictions on the otherwise free exercise of religious practice. The courts have also held that the state cannot restrict religious practice in a capricious or gratuitous manner. However, the courts have also held that individuals have a constitutional right to due process legal protections. In many instances, these two freedoms exist independently of each other. In instances when they intersect, conflict may result from one right seeking hegemony over the other. In instances such as these, the courts may have to resolve conflicts by establishing legal principles and precedents regarding which of these constitutional protections will be granted contextual prominence over the other. Thus far, the legal evaluation of this important question has been confused at best and contradictory at worst. This has resulted in a number of substantive outcomes that pose significant challenges to the practice and application of both rights and an underlying avoidance of broader constitutional questions.

1. Introduction

The American legal system did not develop in a vacuum. Instead, other significant societal institutions, such as religion, developed alongside it. Over time, religion and the law developed a symbiotic, if somewhat contentious relationship. In fact, some (Miller et al. 2008) have argued that religion has become an inseparable part of the American legal system. Religion has influenced American legal processes and outcomes in a variety of ways, while the law has acted to constrain religious practice in at least certain manners. The relationship between religion and the law is not a concept of singular concern in the United States. Rather, it has been the subject of evaluation in many other countries, including the United Kingdom (Sandberg 2011), Germany (Robbers 2010), Spain (Martinez-Torron 2014), India (Baird 2005), and Hungary (Schanda 2011). However, given the unique role that religion has played in the founding, growth, and development of the country, it plays a rather unique role in contemporary American society.

Prior research in the United States has underscored the extent to which religion has exerted an influence on the legal system through judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and defendants (Bornstein and Miller 2009; Kislowicz 2018; Shahshahani and Liu 2017; Miller and Bronstein 2006; Henson 2001; Reza 1999). While religion's influence on all of these legal system stakeholders is important, its influence on juries and jurors is perhaps most significant symbolically, substantively, and

pragmatically. Ultimately, juries are responsible through their deliberations for making the majority of decisions regarding guilt or innocence during the criminal trials which serve as the most visceral representation of the broader American legal system and the representative ideals that the public espouses concerning this system. Perhaps most importantly, very little research has been done to date on religion's influence on juries. Research (Eisenberg et al. 2001; Bornstein and Miller 2009; Miller et al. 2011) has tended to focus on jury selection, jury composition, and juror attitudes. This lack of research has caused scholars (Miller et al. 2008) to call for additional evaluations of the nature of the religion-jury relationship. The relative absence of research in this area is surprising given the exponential growth (Failinger 2014) that has occurred in the broader religion and crime field during the course of the last several decades.

The lack of research noted above becomes even more apparent when the relationship between religious practice and legal due process protections are considered. Given the significant role that jury deliberations play in broader legal processes' outcomes, the importance that many place on the exercise of their individual religious beliefs, and the lack of current research in this area, the current evaluation will focus on the legal nature of the relationship that exists between religion and juries. More specifically, this exploratory evaluation will focus on the nature of the relationship that exists between freedom of religious practice and constitutional due process protections. The evaluation will be conducted through the collection and synthesis of relevant state and federal court decisions. The objective of the study is to determine the legal nature of the relationship that exists between legal due process protections and freedom of religious practice guarantees, as well as the constitutional issues (specifically those related to First and Sixth Amendment issues) that are raised by the oftentimes opposing nature of this relationship. Since this is an exploratory evaluation, it will rely primarily on relevant case analyzation and synthesis in an attempt to provide a broad general overview of the contemporary state of this relationship and as a means of identifying critical public policy issues that have yet to be addressed.

2. Background

The United States Constitution provides specific protections for the exercise of religious freedoms and due process rights regarding fair and impartial legal proceedings. Theoretically, each of these distinct freedoms are envisioned autonomously, in that they are thought to operate and be protected independently of one another. While there are certainly instances when autonomy is present, there are also occasions when simultaneous application or contextual circumstances create conflict, juxtaposing the two freedoms. In these instances, the resulting conflict between individual religious freedoms and broader due process protections may necessitate social, political, and legal assessments of the relative merits of each of these freedoms and an individual and collective evaluation of their relative place and purpose in contemporary American society. While balance and equilibrium are preferable when evaluations of this nature are undertaken, conflicting opinions and differing priorities often emerge during times of conflict, increasing the likelihood that symmetry will prove elusive. This can result in subjugation of one of these important freedoms in an effort to underscore the significance and legitimacy of the other. This creates a unique challenge to American idealism from both a pragmatic and theoretical standpoint.

From a theoretical standpoint, a dualistic fallacy regarding the depth and breadth of the true freedoms Americans enjoy is created and exposed by the conflict that is created between religious freedoms and due process protections. After all, if guarantees pertaining to these two liberties which are commonly taken for granted cannot enjoy a symbiotic relationship, what chance is there of the unencumbered exercise of the other freedoms that Americans have long assumed that they enjoy? From a more pragmatic standpoint, contextualized evaluations such as these may necessitate the prioritization of conflicting rights or protections in instances when full symmetry or integration is not a realistic possibility. As a result, individuals may encounter a forced systemic choice necessitating an individual decision regarding which of these rights is the most significant or important in light of

current circumstances and prior lived experiences. In extreme cases, this may ultimately mean that one of the protections in question simply ceases to exist in the shadow of the other.

Collectively, assessments of this nature can contribute to broader societal perceptions regarding the value or priority that is assigned to individual rights, resulting in the alienation of those who disagree with the broader existing consensus. The law represents a means of exercising societal power and its application, inevitably creating losers and winners (Maravall and Przeworski 2003). This contributes to the emergence of perceptions among those groups unable to advance their agendas that societal institutions are unable to appreciate or represent their views. As certain groups become increasingly alienated and marginalized, the engagement of these groups is undermined and the fabric of society can break down (Trudeau and McMorran 2011). Civil discourse becomes increasingly more fraught as deepening divides are created in response to the increasing tensions which undermine the processes that facilitate an organized and united society. While no one issue can claim full responsibility for societal issues of this nature, individually, they can chip away at the foundations of established communal norms and values. Given the individual and collective significance of issues such as these, gaining a better understanding of the legal conflicts that exist between the individual ability to exercise religious freedoms and legal standards related to the provision of due process protections is important. However, in order to better understand the potential conflicts in this area, a broader overview of relevant background factors and current contextual issues must be provided.

3. Freedom of Religion

Religious freedoms in the United States are defined, operationalized, and protected by several key constitutional standards and legislative provisions. More specifically, the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution provide language which outlines and underscores the comprehensive protections that exist in American society regarding religious thought, practice, and application. The First Amendment includes two key provisions which are commonly referred to as the establishment clause and the free exercise clause. The first of these provisions, the establishment clause, is a fluid concept that, while malleable, has historically been interpreted as prohibiting any legislative actions that attempt to establish a formal state religious denomination or governmental actions that seek to mandate the individual practice of religion (Brownstein 2008; Ravitch 2007).

In practice, this means that while individual citizens have a right to freely exercise and practice their religious beliefs, the state cannot force them to do so in either a church of their own individual choice or in one that is mandated or supported by the state. The second of these provisions, oftentimes referred to as the free exercise clause, has historically been interpreted as preventing the government from actions, behaviors, or the creation of legislation that that undermines or unnecessarily impinges upon an individual's ability to freely exercise their religious beliefs or to practice the legitimate tenets of their individual religious faith. Collectively, these two provisions have historically served to ensure that the government is prohibited from either mandating adherence to a particular faith or unduly restricting the religious practices of those individuals who desire to adhere to and practice one of their own volition.

Initially, many federally provided protections were only applicable to federal employees and federal agencies. In many instances, they did not apply to the states, creating a disjuncture between federal and state civil liberties and constitutional protections. The Fourteenth Amendment prohibited state governments from violating or preventing the exercise of many of the individual rights, privileges, and protections that are ensured at the federal level. This Amendment was brought into law in an attempt to prevent states from depriving newly freed slaves of their constitutional rights during the historical period referred to as reconstruction that occurred after the conclusion of the Civil War (Epps 2006). The rights in question pertained to a variety of different federal protections, but included those pertaining to the freedom of religion. In practice, this meant that the religious protections that were guaranteed at the federal level became more far reaching and universal, as they also had to be honored and enforced by both state and federal governments.

There are also a number of other substantively important religious practice protections that supplement those that are expressly provided by the federal Constitution. For instance, the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA) protects the religious practice rights of incarcerated populations (Jolicoeur and Grant 2018), and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) was passed by congress as a means of prohibiting government restrictions on religious practice (Tebbe 2017). Additionally, while specific provisions vary, virtually all states protect religious freedoms to varying degrees in their individual constitutions (Hammons 2013; Tarr 1988). Religious freedoms are only one set of protections that are guaranteed to residents of the states through the 14th Amendment. The amendment also provides protections pertaining to equitable treatment before the law and the provision of both substantive and procedural due process protections during criminal court proceedings. Given their importance to the current evaluation, these legal due process protections will be examined in greater detail in the following section.

4. Legal Due Process

The United States prides itself upon a legal system that provides an equitable system of justice that is based upon established rules and procedures which govern how legal proceedings are to be undertaken. As part of these protections, individuals facing legal processing are provided with certain rights, privileges, and protections to ensure that they are treated in a manner conducive with the protections established by the Due Process Clause of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. The Due Process Clause prohibits state and federal governments from depriving any person of "life, liberty, or property without due process of law." The amendments do not specifically define the term "due process of law," and since each state was originally thought to have the authority to define its own ideas regarding how the due process of the law would be operationalized, broader clarity was compromised. As a result, the courts, in reviewing claims of constitutional violations, had to look outside constitutional amendments for guidance in determining whether particular circumstances met constitutional requirements regarding the provision of due process.

In doing so, the courts established two distinct yet related veins of legal due process: procedural due process and substantive due process. Procedural due process requires the government to adhere to fair legal processes before depriving any person of life, liberty, or property. In considering procedural due process claims, courts have applied a two-part legal analysis. First, the court has to determine whether the plaintiff has a liberty or property interest that entitles them to procedural protections. Once it is determined that the interest exists and that due process applies, the question regarding what due process is required still remains (Blum et al. 2018). In *Morrissey v. Brewer* (1972)[1], the United States Supreme Court made it clear that the procedural requirements of due process are flexible and that due process "calls for such procedural protections as the particular situation demands." Nevertheless, when the government attempts to deprive an individual of life, liberty, or property, procedural due process typically will require that the individual be afforded, at a minimum: notice of intent, an opportunity to be heard, including presenting evidence and the opportunity to cross-examine adverse witnesses, and the right to a decision made by a neutral judge or an impartial jury (Blum et al. 2018).

The Due Process Clause, however, guarantees more than a fair process, and the "liberty" it aims to protect extends far beyond the mere absence of actual physical restraint. The concept of substantive due process provides heightened protection against government interference with certain fundamental rights and liberty interests. The interests protected by substantive due process are much more difficult to accurately define, and courts have continually struggled over the years with its application. In one attempt to do so, the United States Supreme Court, in *United States v. Salerno* (1987)[2], stated that

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[1] Morrissey v. Brewer, 408 U.S. 471, 481 (1972).
[2] United States v. Salerno, 481 U.S. 739, 746 (1987).

substantive due process prohibits governmental conduct that either: (1) interferes with rights that are deemed fundamental, or (2) "shocks the conscience."

The "shocks the conscience" standard was established by the Supreme Court in *Rochin v. California* (1952)[3], and was historically applied when the substantive due process violation in question resulted not from a piece of legislation depriving an individual of a fundamental right, but from an abuse of power by a state actor in the executive branch. Under those circumstances, the Court held that only an abuse of power that "shocks the conscience" will be actionable. In determining whether an act was "shocking to the conscience," courts typically considered whether the action was deliberate or was done with a purpose to harm that was unrelated to the legitimate governmental need (see *Wilkinson v. Torres*)[4]. However, the "shocks the conscience" standard has not been widely used since the 1960s, as the test received significant criticism for permitting judges to assert their individual subjective views of whether the asserted conduct was "shocking." Consequently, the main focus of substantive due process claims has resorted to determining whether the stated liberty interest is a fundamental right.

In determining whether a stated liberty interest amounts to a fundamental right, or a protected liberty interest, courts have used a variety of language in their attempts to explain their inquiries. However, the court will often refer to whether the right in question is "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty" or "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and traditions" (Rubin 2003). If it is, "strict scrutiny" is applied when analyzing the law. Under these circumstances, the state will be required to show some overriding governmental necessity, and even then, the state must further demonstrate that the law is narrowly tailored to serve that compelling state interest (Amendola et al. 2018).

Few laws are able to survive this heightened level of judicial scrutiny associated with strict scrutiny. On the other hand, if the court finds that the right being asserted in a given case is not a "fundamental right," the court will apply a "rational basis" standard for the resulting legal analysis. The rational basis test asks only if the law is rationally related in some way to a legitimate government purpose. As long as this question is answered in the affirmative, the court will let the law stand (Amendola et al. 2018). In comparison to strict scrutiny, this test is vastly more lenient which provides a more reasonable legal threshold. Put more simply, so long as the court can find some rational reason for the government to act in the way that it did, the law will usually be allowed to stand.

Courts have consistently held that state actions establishing religion or interfering with its free exercise infringe upon liberty without the due process of law. Because the analysis has been set up to evaluate claims on a case-by-case basis, however, the decision as to what constitutes a fundamental right is arguably more subjective. The Supreme Court has considered several issues with religious implications but has not always viewed issues related to the free exercise of religion as fundamental rights. For example, in *Washington v. Glucksberg* (1997)[5], the Court recognized that it has found fundamental rights to include a variety of intimate individual decisions related to marriage, procreation, contraception, abortion, family relations, child-rearing practices, and education. While these rights may be fundamental rights in and of themselves, most of them have substantial overlap with religion and the related religious beliefs, customs, and practices followed by adherents.

In spite of repeated evaluation, the specific legal principals and applications that are relevant to the intersection of due process protections and freedom of religious practice rights remain somewhat fluid and unsettled. The strict liability standard as it applies to freedom of religious expression and practice was first annunciated in *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963)[6]. The *Sherbert* Test as it has been labelled held that when examining restrictions on religious practice, the courts must attempt to balance the compelling nature of the state's interest in restricting religion against the threat to individual liberties that is posed by the government restriction in question. The balancing test established in *Sherbert v.*

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3   Rochin v. California, 342 U.S. 165 (1952).
4   Wilkerson v. Torres, 610 F. 3d 546, 554 (9th Cir. 2010).
5   Washington v. Glucksberg, 521 U.S. 702 (1997).
6   Sherbert v. Verner, 374 U.S. 398 (1963).

Verner (1963) was revisited in *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990)[7]. In this case, the Supreme Court held that unless legislative acts inordinately target specific religions for constraint or restriction, it does not amount to a bright line violation of the *Sherbert* Test. In essence, this decision served to relax the stringent nature of the legal test that had previously been used to judge the constitutionality of any governmental restrictions on the free exercise of religion and replaced them with a much lower legal threshold (Scharffs 2012).

In relaxing the standards originally established in *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963), the Supreme Court created public and political animosity. Public concern was particularly intense given growing fears regarding the possibility of further government constraints on the freedom of religious practice in the future. As a result of concerns of this nature, legislation was passed in the form of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in 1993. The RFRA was intended to reinforce existing legal religious freedom protections by mandating the compelling state interest test that was associated with the strict liability standard in both federal and state courts. The Supreme Court later reviewed RFRA in *City of Boerne v. Flores* (1997)[8], overturning several key provisions of the legislation. More specifically, the Court held that the act's provisions, which mandated federal legal standards on the states, amounted to an unconstitutional exercise of congressional power. With the elimination of state mandates, the RFRA strict liability mandate remained applicable in federal courts only. After this decision, many states created their own individual versions of RFRA, thereby mitigating the divide that had been created in this regard between federal and state systems.

One remaining vestige of the *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990) decision, was that it served to further the focus of government impartiality towards religious groups in an attempt to avoid the appearance of favoritism. One key way in which this transition has been most visible is in the tendency for government agencies to seek a position of neutrality towards various religions and religious groups and denominations. This can at least partially be seen in a reluctance to establish specific restrictions on only certain religions, but also in a movement away from any sort of state-provided funding of religion. While important, restrictions on state funding of religion are beyond the scope of the current investigation. However, it should be noted that these restrictions are also almost certainly the result of a desire among government officials to maintain an appearance of impartiality towards any particular religion. With a basic understanding of the factors that have historically been associated with the protection of both due process and religious practice, we can proceed forward to evaluate specific issues and applications that have arisen from ongoing attempts to reconcile these conflicting protections. As will be seen, some of the issues that have arisen might have been expected, while the means by which the courts have attempted to "resolve" them may not have been.

5. Due Process-Religious Freedom Dissonance as Reflected in Jury Deliberations

Some of the most profound examples of religion's influence on court outcomes and the conflict that can develop between due process rights and freedom of religious practice and expression can be observed in the jury decisions associated with capital punishment cases. While there are certainly many other instances in which religion influences the law and legal processes (Bornstein and Miller 2009), there is an absence of research regarding the nature of this relationship in regard to jury deliberations (Miller et al. 2008). Additionally, for most Americans, the trial process and its outcomes generate a sense of fascination and become the most visceral representation of the broader legal system (Friedman 2015). The fact that most criminal cases are disposed of through alternative means, such as plea bargains, does little to dissuade the public from its focus on criminal court trials (Neubauer and Fradella 2017). Additionally, jury deliberations offer an exceptional backdrop against which some of the more substantive aspects of the interplay between due process and freedom of

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[7]   Employment Division v. Smith, 494 U.S. 872 (1990).
[8]   City of Boerne v. Flores, 521 U.S. 507 (1997).

religious practice can be evaluated both socially and legally. The following analyzation of relevant cases will provide an opportunity to synthesize existing legal thought, but will also help clarify important legal questions that remain unanswered and at least one potential means by which this can be accomplished.

Religious beliefs and practices can influence the procedural and due process aspects of jury deliberations in a variety of ways during the course of legal proceedings. To complicate matters, religious influences on jury deliberations can originate with the actions of the prosecutor, the defense attorney, or the judge. Additionally, the religiously inspired actions or behaviors of jurors themselves during deliberations can raise due process concerns as jurors share spiritual beliefs, confer with religious counsel for guidance, and make use of religious texts and artifacts while making decisions. All of these different factors become more complicated when it is noted the decisions that different courts have reached when analyzing religion's influence on jury deliberations from a due process perspective have varied in much the same manner that individual religious beliefs and commitment vary between individuals based upon adherence and denominational commitment.

Numerous appellate jurisdictions have issued decisions related to the influence that religion, religious beliefs, religious practices, and religious artifacts have on jury deliberations. In some instances, the courts have found religious influence amounted to a prejudicial error. For instance, the Colorado Supreme Court held that a jury's use of the Bible during deliberations constituted extraneous information in violation of the Sixth Amendment, and there was a reasonable possibility of prejudice to the defendant, requiring the death sentence to be set aside (see *People v. Harlan*)[9]. Similarly, the Tennessee Supreme Court held that a jury foreman's reading of Biblical passages to the jury during deliberations in the penalty phase of a capital case was reversible error (see *Tennessee v. Harrington*)[10]. Additionally, a federal district court in Georgia reviewed a claim and found prejudicial error where the trial court had permitted the Christian Bible to be taken into jury deliberations at the request of the jurors for consultation in connection with their deliberations (see *Jones v. Kemp*)[11]. On a slightly different issue regarding religious influence during deliberations, the California Supreme Court analyzed a case where a juror actually consulted with his minister during the course of deliberations, speaking at length about mercy and the death penalty (see *People v. Hensley*)[12]. The minister did not directly tell the juror how to vote but clearly indicated that concepts like mercy and sympathy were inconsistent with "the law of the land," and that persons who kill must themselves be killed. The *Hensley* Court found the conduct prejudicial because the juror actively solicited the minister's comments while he was serving on a jury deliberating the death sentence and the advice he was given was inconsistent with the jury instructions advising the jury they could consider mercy in determining the proper sentence.

In comparison, in other jurisdictions, the courts are considering similar circumstances and finding no error at all, much less prejudicial error. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, for example, seems to consistently find that the potential for religion to influence a verdict does not rise to a constitutional violation. In *Robinson v. Polk* (2006)[13], the Fourth Circuit considered a case where a juror requested and received a Bible from the court bailiff, during the sentencing-phase deliberations. The juror apparently read aloud a passage concerning the Biblical mandate of "an eye for an eye" during deliberations in order to persuade others to recommend a death sentence. Finding that the Bible was merely present as an article of devotion for individual jurors and was not the focus of the deliberations, the *Robinson* Court found no constitutional violation. The Fourth Circuit has applied the holding in *Robinson* to

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9   People v. Harlan 109 P .3d 350 (4th Cir. 2006).
10 Tennessee v. Harrington, 627 S.W. 2d 345 (Tenn. 1981), cert. denied, 457 U.S. 1110 (1982).
11 Jones v. Kemp, 706 F. Supp. 1534 (N.D. Ga. 1989).
12 People v. Hensley, 59 Cal 4th 788 (2014).
13 Robinson v. Polk, 444 F. 3d 225 (4th Cir. 2006).

similar cases (see *Lenz v. Washington*[14]; *Lynch v. Polk*[15]). The Supreme Court of California applied a similar rationale to a claim involving jurors sharing their religious beliefs and praying together during deliberations (see *People v. Lewis*[16]).

In *State v. DeMille*[17], the Utah Supreme Court took this rationale even a step further and held that a juror's affidavit stating that another juror had informed the jury during deliberations that she had prayed and received a revelation as to the defendant's guilt could not be used to attack the guilty verdict because it did not demonstrate that the jury considered extraneous, prejudicial material during deliberations. There, the Court reasoned that a finding that it is inappropriate for a juror to rely upon prayer, or a supposed response to prayer, during deliberations would violate the religious liberties of the juror. Specifically, the Court noted:

> "Prayer is almost certainly a part of the personal decision-making process of many people, a process that is employed when serving on a jury. There is no necessary inconsistency between proper performance as a juror and reliance on prayer or supposed responses to prayer. So long as a juror is capable of fairly weighing the evidence and applying the law to the facts, one may not challenge that juror's decision on grounds that he or she may have reached it by aid of prayer or supposed responses to prayer." (*State v. DeMille*, 1988)

However, the dissent in *DeMille* makes an interesting point, as well. The dissent acknowledges that a juror may seek divine guidance through prayer in reaching a decision. However, the dissent seems to argue that, in this particular case, the juror at issue was relying more on a supposed divine indication of guilt, rather than divine guidance through prayer. In fact, in support of the motion for a new trial, the defendant submitted a juror's affidavit stating that the juror in question stated during deliberations that during the defense attorney's closing statement she prayed " . . . that if said attorney made eye contact with her she would know he was telling the truth, but if he did not she would know he was not telling the truth about the defendant; that he did not make eye contact with her, so she knew said attorney was not telling the truth." According to the affidavit, this juror went on to be one of the leaders during deliberations for a quick determination of guilt. Nevertheless, the Court found there was no constitutional error.

The Supreme Court of Louisiana applied a similar reasoning in a string of cases involving group prayer by the jurors during the trial and deliberation (see *State v. Graham*[18], *State v. Copeland*[19], *State v. Langley*[20]). In *Graham*, the court held that "[r]eligious services among jurors [did] not amount to a substantial deprivation of constitutional rights necessary to overcome the prohibition against juror testimony."

Some courts have avoided making a finding on the potential influence that religion may have on jurors and the deliberations process, and instead jumped straight to the finding of no prejudice. For instance, in *Fields v. Brown*[21], the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reviewed a claim that the foreman of the jury consulted a Bible in the evening, on his own, and made notes about arguments "for" and "against" the death penalty, which he brought with him into deliberations the next day. Without reaching at a conclusion as to whether this constituted misconduct, the Court assumes it was misconduct and relies on a finding that any error associated with the misconduct was harmless error; not prejudicial. The Court took this same tact in *Crittenden v. Ayers*[22], where a juror again consulted the Bible and shared passages with other jurors during deliberations.

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14 Lenz v. Washington, 444 F .3d 225 (4th Cir. 2006).
15 Lynch v. Polk, 204 F. Appx. 167 (4th Cir. 2006).
16 People v. Lewis, 26 Cal. 4th 334, 390, 28 P .3d 34, 73 (2001).
17 State v. DeMille, 756 P .2d 81 (Utah 1988).
18 State v. Graham, 442 So. 2d 123 (La. 1982).
19 State v. Copeland, 530 So. 2d 526 (La. 1988).
20 State v. Langley, 711 So. 2d 651 (La. 1988).
21 Fields v. Brown, 503 F .3d 755 (9th Cir. 2007).
22 Crittenden v. Ayers, 624 F .3d 943 (9th Cir. 2010).

Finally, other jurisdictions have found that the influence that religion exerts on deliberations does create a due process violation, but that this violation amounts to nothing more than harmless error which does not necessitate overturning an existing sentence. In *Oliver v. Quarterman*[23], the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the jury's consultation of specific Bible passages that described someone committing acts similar to those of the defendant and being put to death was a clear violation of the Sixth Amendment. However, the court did not find it to be prejudicial error. The Eleventh Circuit applied similar reasoning and found the foreperson's reading aloud from the Bible and leading the jurors in group prayer during deliberations amounted to harmless error. Other jurisdictions have applied a similar rationale (see *Perkins v. State*[24]; *State v. Robinson*[25]). The Supreme Court of California even found harmless error in cases where jurors went so far as to consult with a pastor or a retired priest about the death penalty during deliberations (see *People v. Danks*[26]; *People v. Tafoya*[27]).

While a review of these relevant cases clearly illustrates the divide in how courts are applying the Sixth Amendment analysis, the conflict and inconsistent opinions can often be seen within a single opinion. One particularly stark example of this conflict related to religious influence on deliberations can be seen in the court's opinion in *People v. Harlan* (2005). In this case, the defendant was convicted for the crimes of kidnapping, rape, and murder. The jury deliberated late into the evening after being assigned the case, but were unable to reach a verdict. Later that evening after finishing deliberations, several jurors read passages from the Bible in the hotel rooms they had been sequestered to. When sentencing deliberations resumed, at least one Bible made its way into the jury room, as did handwritten notes on the location of relevant biblical passages for one juror to share with others during the ongoing course of deliberations. The Bible verses in question commanded the death penalty for murderers, advocated an "eye for an eye" approach to punishment, and promoted obedience to civil authorities. After holding an evidentiary hearing, the district court judge vacated the death sentence and ordered that Harlan be resentenced to life without the possibility of parole. The judge in this case argued that there was a reasonable possibility that the manner in which the Bible was used in the jury room advocated for a sentencing of death and in doing so could have prejudicially influenced a typical juror to vote for a capital sentence.

On appeal, an unusually narrow majority of the Colorado Supreme Court affirmed the vacated death sentence. It should be noted, however, that the majority opinion in that case represented the views of only three of the seven justices. Justice Rice authored a strong dissenting opinion, in which Justice Kourlis joined, while two other justices decided not to participate. Nevertheless, the majority ruled that the Bible and notes on Bible passages constituted extraneous evidence since they had not been admitted into evidence in the case. As a result, their introduction into the jury deliberations was improper and constituted juror misconduct. The majority reasoned that a typical Colorado juror could be influenced to vote for the death penalty by the presentation of the biblical text. In doing so, the Court stated:

> "We do not hold that an individual juror may not rely on and discuss with the other jurors during deliberation his or her religious upbringing, education, and beliefs in making the extremely difficult 'reasoned judgment' and 'moral decision' he or she is called upon to make... We hold only that it was improper for a juror to bring the Bible into the jury room to share with other jurors the written Leviticus and Romans texts during deliberations..." (*People v. Harlan*)

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[23] Oliver v. Quarterman, 541 F .3d 329 (5th Cir. 2008).
[24] Perkins v. State, 144 So. 3d 457 (Ala. Crim. App. 2012).
[25] State v. Robinson, 303 Kan. 11 (2015), disapproved of by State v. Cheever, 306 Kan. 760 (2017).
[26] People v. Danks, 32 Cal. 4th 269 (2004).
[27] People v. Tafoya, 42 Cal. 4th 147 (2007).

In *Harlan*, the defense raised the relevant issues as Sixth Amendment violations. This is a common practice in cases involving religion and due process and one that is to be expected in this case given that the Bible and Bible notes, are considered extraneous information when not formally admitted into evidence for the jury's consideration. Under the Sixth Amendment, a defendant has a right to a fair trial and the courts have interpreted this to mean in part a trial that is free from extraneous influences. As appellate courts have noted, when a jury considers information in a criminal case that has not been properly introduced as evidence, the defendant is deprived of his or her right to confront that evidence in open court, be present and represented by counsel when it is presented to the jury, to cross-examine the witness who presents the evidence, and to offer rebuttal evidence or an attempt to put the evidence in context (*State v. Abdi*, 2012)[28]. Using this approach, the vast majority of courts have consistently found that jury misconduct occurs when jurors consult a Bible, or when jurors relied on some other religious artifact which had not been admitted as evidence, when attempting to reach a verdict. However, many of these same courts also found that the resulting error proves to be harmless when analyzing the amount of prejudice that is demonstrated by the error and the related harm that is done to the defendant's case. In practice, this means that no justification for reversal is found to exist. This has created an interesting situation in which defendants are winning their case by proving juror misconduct, but finding no real relief because that error is viewed as being harmless in relation to the final court outcome.

While the majority decision in the *Harlan* case found that the Sixth Amendment was applicable to the issues being considered, the dissenting opinion in the case also acknowledged that there were some important First Amendment implications associated with the case. More specifically, this dissenting opinion appears to provide an avenue for legal counsel to raise some more substantive issues related to the deprivation of religious freedom as represented in the establishment and free exercise clauses that are contained in the First Amendment. The dissent notes that the jurors in the Harlan case were instructed to make an "individual moral assessment" regarding whether death was an appropriate sentence in the case. The jurors were instructed to take into consideration their own moral and religious precepts, and their own general knowledge, in reaching a well-reasoned determination regarding the defendant's sentence. The dissent points out that many people know Bible passages by heart and are capable of quoting large portions of scripture verbatim, especially when the passages refer to well-known concepts like the *lex talionis* or "eye for an eye" biblical standard. In considering this possibility, the dissent notes that:

> "It is without doubt that a juror may relate passages of scripture from memory during deliberations, and that such recitation would not even be considered extraneous, much less prejudicial. It makes little sense, therefore, that the exact same passage in written form is somehow enshrined with an authority that the spoken or remembered passage lacks." (*People v. Harlan*)

As the dissent is able to effectively articulate, this places current and former jurors in a very precarious position. They are given judicial instructions to make principled individual assessments and decisions when examining cases. As part of this process, they are to take their backgrounds, upbringing, moral, and religious beliefs into consideration, but only so long as those assessments are made from their own memory and not from recorded or written passages. Those who do not possess the ability to memorize biblical passages, who wish to rely on pastoral counseling, or want to use other religious artifacts that cannot be committed to memory are placed at a substantive disadvantage in terms of their ability to exercise their religious faith as a result of this legal standard. In practice, this standard delineates the manner in which those wishing to exercise religious freedom during jury deliberations are legally able to, creating a divide between those who are allowed to do so and those

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[28]   State v. Abdi, 191 Vt. 162, Syl ¶ 1 (2012).

who are not. At a more substantive level, conflict of this nature really underscores deeper issues and more pragmatic aspects of restrictions on religious freedom of practice by forcing jurors to choose between abiding by legal due process directives and their own individual right to freely practice their religious beliefs as guaranteed by the First Amendment. This is a key finding of the current case analysis and synthesis evaluation, which will be examined in greater detail in the following section.

6. Discussion

A thorough and detailed examination of the intersection of personal religious freedom and legal due process protections as they apply to jury deliberations yields several critical insights for our collective consideration. These insights serve to both frame the current state of the law in this area and to underscore substantive future challenges that are likely to arise from these oftentimes competing civil liberties moving forward. One of the first significant insights to be drawn from a detailed examination of this nature pertains to the degree to which the law remains unsettled. In many other controversial areas, the law tends to be characterized by more settled principles and established practices which largely dictate the form, structure, and practice of the law. This is beneficial in creating a shared sense of understanding that helps to minimize confusion about the law and limits ongoing systemic conflict. However, that is not the case in regard to the law as it applies to due process-religious freedom conflicts in the area of jury deliberations. Variations exist in the applicable legal standards or thresholds that exist in federal and state level courts.

Differences in federal and state courts are aptly illustrated by the reversal of some of the provisions of the RFRA. In practice, this reversal resulted in the creation of a patchwork of legal standards regarding challenges to restrictions on religious practice related to jury deliberations that vary depending on where a case originates across the broader legal landscape. Federal courts still follow many of the standards that were originally established in *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963). After the Supreme Court overruled state provisions of RFRA, some states created their own versions of this legislation resulting in the implementation of standards very similar to those that exist in federal courts, while other states decided not to do so, creating additional disparities between the states.

These differences are further exacerbated by the divergent rules of evidence pertaining to jury deliberations that have developed in federal and state level courts. For example, in instances when courts wish to determine if juror misconduct has occurred in regard to a reliance on legally irrelevant or prejudicial information, like biblical texts, evaluative standards might best be viewed as disjointed and abstruse. Federal Rule of Evidence 606(b) underscores what juries may and may not consider during the course of deliberations and when the consideration of other materials might result in the legal need to set aside a final jury verdict. Given the somewhat ambiguous nature of this rule, differing opinions regarding the legal legitimacy of what amounts to extraneous information or information that is considered improperly by jurors can emerge (Baron 2009). As if the inherent vagueness of this federal rule did not individually contribute to the broader obscurity surrounding relevant legal issues and standards, it must also be remembered that each state has its own unique legislation of this nature. This legislation is oftentimes equally ambiguous to the previously examined federal standards, albeit in subtly different manners given that it has been drafted at the state level.

Some of the jurisdictional differences noted above are muted given that the vast preponderance of relevant court actions of this nature will take place within the federal court system. However, those differences that do remain are further complicated by the disparate findings that have been reached by courts relying on the different standards that are noted above. While a number of courts have examined Sixth Amendment claims related to the influence of religious practice on due process aspects of jury deliberations, their findings in regard to this common issue have varied. Some have found that religious practice in this context does amount to a due process violation, while others have not. In instances when due process violations have been found to exist, the courts have also differed in regard to their perceptions of the severity of these violations. Some courts have found that the severity of the violation is not sufficient grounds for overturning a conviction because it does not rise to the

level of reversible error. However, in other cases the courts have found differently in ruling that reversible error is present given the substantive amount of harm done to a defendant as a result of the exercise of religious practice. As a result of differences of this nature, the law remains unsettled, and it becomes increasingly difficult for both those within and those external to the legal system to determine the current state and substance of the law in this regard. An evaluation of the current state of these issues serves to underscore the need for the Supreme Court to directly address these issues in an effort to provide greater clarity regarding the legal nature of the relationship that exists between freedom of religious expression and individual due process protections during the course of jury deliberations (Baron 2009).

Interestingly, the unsettled nature of the law in this area can negatively influence the ability of those on both sides of this issue to use the legal system as a means of seeking redress for perceived violations. Those individuals who wish to exercise their religious freedoms may ultimately decide that it is not worth the effort necessary to do so given the difficulty associated with determining how the courts will respond to challenges of this nature. As a result of an uncertain legal landscape, attorneys may also be unwilling to pursue challenges of this nature as a part of any broader legal strategy. The collective hesitancy of both individuals and attorneys to seek legal redress regarding perceived due process violations of religious expression freedoms and practices during jury deliberations can pose a broader challenge. More specifically, this can minimize the likelihood of legal challenges being advanced even in instances when they are critically important for clarifying the underlying legal standing of the substantive rights involved. Further, limiting the ability of those with a sincere or intrinsic belief in the religious principles and practices of their individual faith during the course of jury deliberations may undermine other more substantive constitutional rights and personal liberties. As we have seen, for those with an intrinsic religious orientation, it is difficult to determine where they as an individual end and their religious beliefs begin. A failure to evaluate broader First Amendment concerns can facilitate substantive deprivations among intrinsically oriented religious populations that may very well outweigh the need to ensure due process protections. If so, this might dramatically change the legal landscape regarding these issues.

Those fearing that religious practice might undermine their due process protections may also be deterred from pursuing legal recourse as a result of the inconsistencies that exist within the law. More specifically, the legal representatives of those facing criminal court processing may suggest alternative courses of action if they believe that directly raising due process concerns linked to religious practice in the jury deliberation context offers a poor return for their efforts. This trend to avoid raising legal issues in this context may arise from the plurality of courts finding that no substantive harm or reversible error occurs even in instances when constitutional issues related to religious exercise in jury deliberations have been legally established. In essence, attorneys attempting to press issues of this nature may very well win their legal argument, yet find that doing so offers little tangible legal benefit for their broader case because doing so offers their client no legal relief. If reversible error is not found, findings that religious exercise during jury deliberations violates a defendant's due process protections amounts to little more than a moral victory for defense attorneys. A similar example might be found in a defense attorney that is able to prove that law enforcement officers violated their client's rights, only to find that the court refuses to mandate exclusionary sanctions regarding any illegally obtained evidence. If no appreciable benefit is associated with pursuing claims of religious freedom overreach during jury deliberations, the motivation for attorneys to legally challenge such actions is undermined resulting in fewer legal actions being filed and potential violations being overlooked. In essence, this could result in due process violations that go unchecked because of perceptions that the pursuit of such issues yields an uneven and unsure legal benefit.

Another critical conclusion that can be reached from the current synthesis of existing relevant cases can be derived from the degree to which existing legal challenges have focused on Sixth Amendment avenues for appellate review. While this approach has a great deal of intuitive appeal, given the systemic desire to preserve the integrity of established legal due process provisions, it does tend

to overlook other broader and perhaps more significant legal issues pertaining to the freedom of religious practice as expressed during the course of jury deliberations. More specifically, the focus on examining claims of this nature primarily from a Sixth Amendment perspective has resulted in the more substantive evaluations that must necessarily be examined from First Amendment perspectives going largely overlooked. As a result, the claims related to religious due process violations during jury deliberations have tended to provide systemic protections at the expense of individual religious freedom protections. Given the immense importance of religious practice to many believers, this tendency not only contributes to an incomplete evaluation of the due process-religious practice relationship, it can undermine evaluations of more meaningful constitutional protections.

Prior research has indicated that religion can have differing influences on an individual's perceptions and actions. While this differential influence has been operationalized using a variety of different measures and terminology, one approach that has a great deal of applicability to the current evaluation was developed by Allport (1966) and focuses on the meaning that religion has for the individual. Allport (1966) argued that religion could be expressed in individual adherents either intrinsically or extrinsically. For extrinsically-oriented individuals, religion has little real meaning or purpose and exerts little substantive influence on the worldview or behavior of believers. To the contrary, religion is often used by these individuals as a means of accomplishing other purposes, such as providing a means of solace regarding unethical or deviant behavior or advancing career aspirations by impressing a devout supervisor. For intrinsically-oriented individuals, religion exhibits a substantive influence on an adherent's core attitudes and beliefs. In essence, religion becomes a key part of the fiber of a believer's individual lived existence. As a result of this lived orientation, religion directly influences how intrinsically-oriented individuals live their lives and the decisions they make over time. For these individuals, religious customs, spiritual practices, sacred texts, religious artifacts, and guidance from religious officials become key provision that fundamentally guide and direct behavior. Decisions, especially those that are more challenging, tend to increasingly require the use of spiritual principles and a reliance on religious materials as an important means of helping facilitate judgments and decisions.

Limiting the free exercise of religion during jury deliberations, even to a minimal extent, can amount to a substantive deprivation for intrinsically religious individuals given the degree to which they rely upon religion when making important decisions. It would certainly seem that such a deprivation would amount to a First Amendment violation according to any of the various legal standards that the courts have established in relation to the previously examined Sixth Amendment claims. An overview of existing case law supports the broader assertion that the freedom of religious practice can be threatened when adherents are serving as jurors in criminal court cases. Prior decisions have challenged a broad spectrum of religiously-based activities during deliberations, including the ability of jurors to: consider Bible verses (*McNair v. Campbell*)[29], seek spiritual counsel regarding deliberations (*People v. Hensley*), rely on divine inspiration in reaching a verdict (*State v. DeMille*), consider biblically-inspired closing argument while deliberating (*Commonwealth v. Chambers*)[30], have a Bible present in the juror room while considering a verdict (*United States v. Lara-Ramirez*)[31], and engage in congregate prayer during the course of deliberations (*State v. Williams*)[32].

Those with an intrinsic religious orientation have an understandable impetus for arguing that the traditional legal recognition that jurors bring their backgrounds and histories with them to the deliberation process are violated with restrictions of this nature on religious practice. This is because those with an intrinsic orientation face difficulties when differentiating between their religious beliefs and principles and who they are as an individual. Asking them to discard spiritual beliefs and religious

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[29] McNair v. Campbell, 416 F .3d 1291 (11th Cir. 2005).
[30] Commonwealth v. Chambers, 599 A. 2d 630 (1991).
[31] United States v. Lara-Ramirez, 519 F .3d 76, 82 (2008).
[32] State v. Williams, 162 Ohio App. 3d 55 (2005).

practices and materials would be the equivalent in many ways of asking other prospective jurors to forget their lived experiences and the sense of self they bring with them to the jury room while deliberating. This realization provides support for the broader assertion that a need exists for a deeper form of legal analysis that gets beyond the structural nature of Sixth Amendment challenges by focusing on the legitimacy of more substantive First Amendment challenges.

A final related issue that can be culled from the current synthesis of relevant cases pertaining to religious freedom and due process protections in jury deliberations pertains to the rights that criminal court defendants have to use religion as a part of their legal strategies. Thus far, the courts have avoided this type of evaluation, choosing instead to focus on a more limited systemic evaluation of existing safeguards. However, a broader evaluation is necessary given the importance that religious beliefs hold for their spiritual adherents. Individuals with an intrinsic orientation towards religion tend to define themselves, their actions, and their larger place in the world largely in accordance with their religious beliefs and the established practices associated with their chosen denomination. Their behavioral motivations and the justifications for their actions oftentimes directly stem from or are substantively influenced by the core spiritual beliefs. For instance, research has found that an intrinsic orientation towards religion is associated with more ethical consumer decisions (Schneider et al. 2011), more prosocial interactions with peers (Stavrova and Siegers 2014), a reduced likelihood of aggression towards others (Johnson et al. 2000; Watkins 2003; Johnson 2011), more frequent volunteerism in the community (Ozorak 2003), and an increased propensity to be generous to others (Galen 2012; Johnson et al. 2013).

Given the degree to which religion influences many fundamental aspects of the behavior of these individuals, especially those with an intrinsic orientation, it is doubtful that a jury deliberation environment devoid of any meaningful understanding of religious practice and expression will be able to accommodate their ability to gain any real meaning from the introduction of legally permissible evidence. Doing so will likely create a substantive void and necessitate efforts to first place evidence in an appropriate religious context that at least recognizes or accounts for the religious beliefs, perceptions, and orientations of the individual jurors and defendants involved in a given case. Whether an environment similarly lacking for relevant representations of the artifacts and practices of those spiritual beliefs during jury deliberations is able to provide individuals with the full measure of religious freedom the Constitution guarantees is debatable. Ironically, in an attempt to ensure systemic integrity, the legal system may ultimately undermine the ability of at least some individuals serving as jurors to get a full and complete measure of one of the constitutional protections that form the foundation for that system.

7. Conclusions

Systemic efforts to adequately address the concerns of all relevant stakeholders regarding any important or controversial social, cultural, economic, legal, political or religious issue ultimately proves to be a difficult and challenging undertaking. This process is further complicated when these efforts involve making ongoing determinations regarding the best means by which the integrity of relevant system concerns and the individual expectations regarding the exercise of important freedoms must be balanced. Stakes increase when fundamental protections like those contained within the First and Sixth Amendment are involved. This is because protections of this nature go to the heart of broader societal and personal ideals regarding American exceptionalism and are representative of the systemic protections and freedoms that contribute to the creation of contemporary American cultural identity.

Theoretically, both of these provisions would coexist without necessitating broader societal or systemic judgments regarding their respective importance. However, in practice, contradictions and conflict have emerged. The efforts of the legal system to address conflicts of this nature have thus far provided vague, superficial, confusing, and oftentimes contradictory results, especially in the context of jury deliberations. Future efforts will need to examine the relationship that exists between due process protections and freedoms of religious expression and practice during the course of jury deliberations in a more definitive manner. Only through such an evaluation will a more meaningful holistic

understanding of the broader place and purpose of both of these critical protections in contemporary American society and culture be obtained.

One key aspect of this broader evaluative process must originate within the legal system itself. Clearer guidelines regarding the relevant legal standards that will be used when evaluating due process challenges to the application of religious freedoms in a jury deliberation context must be established. This will help pave the way for more universal standards and greater clarity in expectations among both legal professionals and members of the public. As part of this process, the Supreme Court needs to more fully address some of the conflicting decisions that have been reached by state and lower level federal courts. The contradictory findings have contributed to a confusing legal context that undermines the broader use of legitimate challenges to both due process and religious practice violations in the context of jury deliberations. Finally, while greater clarification is important, efforts must be undertaken to get beyond the procedural due process evaluations of religion's influence on jury deliberations that have predominated in the past. While Sixth Amendment claims are certainly an important aspect of this issue, more substantive efforts to directly examine First Amendment claims need to be undertaken. A failure to do so would appear to favor systemic protections related to due process over individual freedoms of free practice and ultimately amounts to little more than kicking an important legal can down the road.

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Article

Criminal Desistance Narratives of Young People in the West of Scotland: Understanding Spirituality and Criminogenic Constraints

Chris Holligan and Robert McLean *

School of Education, Interdisciplinary Research Unit on Crime, Policing and Social Justice,
University of the West of Scotland, Ayr Campus, Ayr KA8 0SX, UK; Chris.holligan@uws.ac.uk
* Correspondence: robert.mclean@uws.ac.uk; Tel.: +44-077-098-5940

Abstract: In our qualitative study of urban youth living in the West of Scotland, we argue that religion and spirituality give personal sustenance and hope from which a process of desistance can emerge. Religious worship offers a 'site' for undermining reoffending through the availability and adoption of socially supportive bonds. Desistance can occur through the development of different bonds and the recognition of transcendental authority. The results endorse the protective role of spirituality in desistance in relation to disadvantaged young people whose lives have been impacted by crime.

Keywords: desistance; religion; spirituality; crime; structure; offending

1. Desistance and Religiosity

Desistance is shaped when the former offender's identity becomes pro-social and self-critical in an enduring manner. The emergence of such identities predicts patterns of criminal desistance over the life course (Rocque et al. 2016). Classic scholarship in sociology and social psychology addresses the development of selfhood typically through stage perspectives (Erikson 1968; Goffman 1959). Adolescent youth is conceptualised in terms of transitional identities where the self becomes especially vulnerable as it progresses from the stage of childhood towards early adulthood. This is likened to a separation from a family-oriented identity to one that is more affiliated and supported by age peers. It is during this period that the separate sense of self-identity combined with independence emerges often after considerable "storm and stress" (Hall 1904).

Rocque et al. (2016), in their predictive longitudinal study of identity and desistance, found staunch support for identity change theories of desistance (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna 2001). They concluded that a theory of desistance should embrace the role of "subjective" factors such as the former offender's identity. However, they cautioned against optimism, with the caveat that desistance entails a combination of structure and agency. Identity change requires a certain type of contest in order for it to be authentically activated. Identity theories of desistance assume that for social control processes to have an impact on behaviour, social bonds are significant, a factor pervading classic treatments of desistance (Hirschi 1969). In this vein, Rocque et al. (2016) concluded that "our findings are supportive of 'redemption' policies", where a focus on the criminal identity is central. Community re-integration, upon which desistance is *a fortiori* dependent, demands criminal justice policies that recognise the consistent role of identity change in desistance outcomes. Prison or other related programmes that enable offenders to 'design' new narrative identities are therefore to be welcomed. Their caveat about the additional requirement for supportive environmental structures to establish the pre-conditions that allow a meaningful purchase of "redemption" cannot be underestimated, as our own data demonstrate.

Reoffending rates after release from prison tend to be high in most Western countries (Beijersbergen et al. 2016). These scholars argue that post-release recidivism is influenced by experiences of custodial treatment; Dutch prisoners who felt they had been approached respectfully were found to be less likely to reoffend within 18 months after release. A deterrence perspective holds that a reduction in reoffending rates occurs as the benefit of compliance exceeds its costs. Legitimacy is projected through procedurally respectful and just treatment: legitimacy as conceived by scholars in this area is understood in secular, rather than transcendental or spiritual terms, which is indicative of a gap in our knowledge about how it is perceived and socially constructed. Social support is a dimension of religious practice, and is "of great importance to most religious people"; those who pray "are healthier and recover from illness better than those who do not" (Breakey 2001, p. 63).

Beliefs in a higher power have been associated with grief through ritual and process which may, as we describe in the context of desistance, manifest as an epiphany rather than a gradual process of self-identity transformation, or an inexplicable feeling of transcendental support replacing the grief of loss and psychic disruption of well-being (Wayland et al. 2016). One trope of the complexity of desistance is captured through the image of "desister as nomad"; here, its "endless and multiplicitous" quiddity is foregrounded (Philipps 2017, p. 92). Hallett and McCoy (2014, p. 868) claim that "pathways to desistance involve highly subjective assessments of agency and structure", thus illustrating not only its complexity, but also the individual heterogeneity of routes to desistance, which more recent statistical research has demonstrated is premised upon the emergence of pro-social identities (Rocque et al. 2016). The question of how to judge the point at which desistance has occurred is an unresolved issue in the literature. Desistance is defined as the underlying process resulting in the termination of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity (Laub and Sampson 2001); it is the sustained absence of an event, impacted by concatenations of psychological and sociological processes (Maruna 2001). Lofland (1969) argued that people's views about themselves as either conformist or deviant impact on the ways in which they behave.

Spirituality and religion are not treated as mutually exclusive by criminologists who are interested in criminal desistance (Hallett and McCoy 2014, p. 856). Young people's perceived spirituality has been understood as a developmental asset that is linked with thriving behaviours, giving inner strength and the inclination to contribute positively to social institutions (Warren et al. 2012). While a large body of knowledge has been accumulated about risk factors for the development of anti-social behaviour, less is known about the later desistance of youths entering adulthood (Aiyer 2014). Studies by Ttofi et al. (2016a, 2016b) both found the development of certain attributes, such as intelligence, either via the ageing process or an effort to act, as protective factors against offending behaviour. Nevertheless, some important truths have crystallised about risk of offending and desistance: the importance of social and institutional bonds is a theme running throughout foundational work in this field (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2001).

"Spiritual but not religious" perspectives inform the practices of today's spiritual teachers (Gottlieb 2012). Scholars argue that religion has potential as a mechanism for desistance because of the overlap between its core concerns in religious communities, religious texts, and offenders' problem areas (Hallett and McCoy 2014, p. 856). Religiosity refers to belief in a Creator and observance, whether public or private, of an organised religion (Hardy et al. 2013; Holder et al. 2016; Kim-Spoon et al. 2014; Michaelson et al. 2014; Salas-Wright et al. 2017; Schiff 2006 and Shepperd et al. 2015). Several studies have found that higher levels of religiosity act as an important protective buffer linked with less risky or unhealthy behaviour and less substance misuse (Hardy et al. 2013; Kim-Spoon et al. 2014; Michaelson et al. 2014; Schiff 2006) and, to some extent, they are a predictor of well-being (Holder et al. 2016; Michaelson et al. 2014). A seminal study by Hardy et al. (2013), for example, found that religiosity had a protective effect against pornography to be present in adolescents with higher levels of religiosity; this "protective effect" finding conforms with the findings not only of Kim-Spoon et al. (2014), but also with those of Michaelson et al. (2014) and Schiff (2006).

The protective effect of high religiosity against unhealthy behaviour is also in accordance with the findings of Shepperd et al. (2015), who found that greater religiosity corresponded to lower levels of direct and indirect aggression. Greater religiosity was also associated with higher levels of compassion, and both Hardy et al. (2013) and Shepperd et al. (2015) found greater religiosity to be associated with more self-control. In their study of 419 children aged 15–18, Hardy et al. (2013) found that adolescents who were more religiously involved and had more deeply internalised religious motivations had greater self-regulation, more conservative attitudes towards pornography, and stronger social norms against pornography. These adolescents would also view pornography less frequently, whether intentionally or accidentally (Hardy et al. 2013).

Spirituality has been understood as the pursuit of spiritual virtues and one of the elements of traditional religion (Gottlieb 2012). Youths with coherent ideas of being spiritual have scored highest on measures of positive development (James and Fine 2015). Hallett and McCoy (2014) examined the life history narratives of 25 successful ex-offenders who professed Christianity as the source of their desistance. Their behaviour change and identity transformation was achieved through private religious practice and energetic church membership. Each of these experiences altered their subjectivities. Our examination of the altered subjectivity through psychiatric interventions that are informed by religion networks our paper with the ameliorative role of religion in mental health, which is a theme emerging from our earlier discussion of protective factors. The editorial of one leading psychiatric journal stated that "after decades of neglecting spirituality and religion in psychiatric discourse, research programmes are delineating the relationships between spirituality and health and casting light upon the processes by which spirituality may have positive effects" (Breakey 2001, p. 61). The "mutual suspicion" mentioned in this editorial between these areas and psychiatry carry parallels with criminology, and a common scepticism that may relate to the trend towards secularism in the West (Bruce 2002). That over 90% of prisoners have a mental disorder encourages us to take seriously interconnections between well-being with faith (Birmingham 2003, p. 191; Fazel and Baillargeon 2011).

2. Methodology

Qualitative methods afford the generation of inductively developed knowledge and understanding, and are typically utilised to pursue research into populations that are hidden or difficult to reach (Flick 2009; Hallett and McCoy 2014). In-depth interviews enable the researcher to achieve insight into the way individuals understand events and situations. The narratives presented are derived from fieldwork undertaken during 2013–2016 as part of a larger qualitative study addressing gang organisation as a means for gang business. Our qualitative interviews, lasting for about 60 min, were conducted individually and taped with a digital recorder following informed consent by the research participants, all of whom had criminal convictions and most of whom had been incarcerated in young offenders' prisons. Our sample numbered 35 persons who took part in in-depth interviews. They all had lengthy offending histories and had been participants in organised criminal activity (Scottish Government 2015). The interviewees were all male, apart from one, and classed themselves as an indigenous West of Scotland population; not all were white. The participants came from self-defined working-class backgrounds; the majority were domiciled in Scotland's 20% most socially deprived communities (Scottish Government 2012). While participants have the characteristics of life-course offenders, for ethical purposes, it was essential that they had to be seriously engaged in the desistance process in order to be included in our sample; it was evident that this commitment varied amongst participants.

Street workers attached to church-based outreach projects in the West of Scotland acted as initial gatekeepers to help us access the appropriate research participants. Following difficulties associated with accessing other hard-to-reach populations—given their participation in (re)offending—a snowball sampling technique via gatekeepers was deployed to access wider sample populations (Bhopal and Deuchar 2016). Becker (1963) suggests that this is relevant where the sampling frame is

limited. Accordingly, street workers and interviewed participants were asked to recommend additional appropriate contacts who would consider participation.

Deploying open-ended interview techniques allowed the interviewees to convey their unrestricted, distinct subjective experience of internal dynamics within familiar environments. Efforts were undertaken to keep interview questions open so that the researcher could be responsive to emerging data, and participants had scope to articulate. Data was recorded via audio devices and then analysed thematically (Creswell 1994). Ethical approval to undertake the study was granted by the researchers' university. Prior to interviews, an information sheet outlining relevant information was distributed to participants. Our general research questions in relation to desistance covered the following issues: What motivated participants to cease offending behaviour? How did the participants initially engage in desistance? Did spirituality play a role in the desistance process? Why did some participants reoffend? These questions arose from our analysis of the literature and reflect our judgement that they required further research attention.

3. Findings

3.1. Spirituality as Redemptive Capital

Hallett and McCoy (2014) qualitative study of offenders in the US shares clear similarities with our investigation, and offers an appropriate grounding for our spirituality theme. Their sample of 25 offenders had convictions for serious crimes and comprised non-denominational Protestants, Catholics, and Southern Baptists with an average age of 47. Previous studies have demonstrated that successful desistance occurs once exposure to spirituality and religion has enabled a reconceptualisation of identity (Maruna 2001; Hallett and McCoy 2014). These intangible nurturing and supportive resources are especially important where there is limited emotional and informal social support (Maruna 2001), as in the life context of disadvantage that was experienced by our own sample. The mechanisms involved in this type of desistance context relate to the forms that capital offenders have engaged with; religion and spirituality can be utilised as resources to create stories of change and foster an alternative selfhood (Paternoster and Bushway 2009). So, religiosity drives embryonic agency where a pro-social sense of being may emerge (Maruna and Ramsden 2004).

In each of the extracts below, the theme of behavioural control is raised in different forms and arguments; these nuances resonate with the individualistic subjectivity argument about desistance pathways (Hallett and McCoy 2014, p. 869). Maruna et al. (2004) suggest that the encouragement of spiritual practices within rehabilitative and intervention programmes plays a significant role in increasing civility and commitment to desistance. Control through conformity to localised criminal codes of behaviour and a dark morality emerged from our fieldwork, where shifting towards religiosity inspired a switch to a transcendental code of morality. The control effects of religiosity can involve fear of supernatural sanctions and the projection of conventional strictures of behaviour (Hirschi 1969). Participant James described his experience:

> I was already quite self-controlled, even though I had always been up to no good. I mean, doing the line of work that I did in the area, you got to be. No one would work wi' a hot-head. At the same time, you sometimes need to make [a] decision you might not actually agree with, like morally . . . . But you can justify it if you know what I mean. Say a guy needs his legs broken . . . . You might think he is sound (likeable) but if he had been out of line then you need to sanction him. Like in the criminal world that's justifiable. I say no more on that . . . . Those principles, like that kind of dedication, that helped shape me as a Christian. Like I knew when I put my mind to it, I could do it.
>
> (*Interviwee James*)

His account of desistance appears to involve a straightforward transfer of his determined mindset from the criminal world to Christianity, which is presented as a challenge that is achievable once he "put

his mind to it". It seems that his criminal associates provided a framework of support that impeded desistance. Whether or not more traditional forms of support—a spouse, a steady job—are correlates or causes of desistance is not clear (Maruna 2001). A more explicit mention of a controlling spiritual dimension subjugating the self is apparent in Jesse's analysis of his biography:

> Before I started practicing [spirituality] . . . . I was my own god. I would say what was right and what was wrong . . . . That was my moral compass . . . . That's why I kept fucking up, cause I'm just a man, just flesh. You don't think that way beforehand . . . . When I became a servant of God, I realised His morality was right, always is. I was nothing . . . . I can see that now . . . . Living my life around the moral principle He puts in me guides me to live right [nowadays].
>
> (*Interviewee Jesse*)

According to identity theory, desistance is a volitional process involving appraisal of the cost–benefits of a transgressive working identity. The idea of a "feared self" is the emphasis of this transgression and the type of self that they no longer wish to be (Paternoster and Bushway 2009). For Jesse, the "feared self" is an egotistical god, his own "moral compass", and its weakness is apparent in his realisation that he was forever "fucking up". The fresh identity is one of servitude or submission to God's moral guidance to "live right". As theorised in the literature, religiosity is a resource that is used to enable the fostering of pro-social bonds (Hirschi 1969) and a corresponding disinvestment in the criminal "moral compass".

However, while the spirituality of our participants primarily revolved around what could be considered Christian principles, practices nevertheless varied. While some attended church regularly, others did not. According to Giordano et al.'s model of cognitive transformation, openness to change is necessary, together with the envisioning of a "replacement self" and the growth of negative appraisals of previous criminality; Jesse's account resonates with this predicted negative self-assessment, which is a desistance pre-condition. However, the past and present need not be dichotomous. For Ryan, despite his desistance journey, that old, burdensome "feared self" coexists in his memory. Ryan explains this conundrum, as well as its symbolic interactional implications for how he practices his religion:

> I don't fit in there (church). The people in the church are always nice enough to me but sometimes, you know, something makes me think about my own past, and like, all the stuff that I've done man . . . . I'm no that guy anymore but that doesn't mean that I don't still carry that about wi' me . . . . But I know God's in here (pointing to his heart), He is everywhere so I know He is always with me anyways. I don't need to always go to church, say. I do go, but no pure regularly. I can worship him anywhere, y'know.
>
> (*Interviewee Ryan*)

Evidently, Ryan still felt the burden of his past deeds; abandoning criminal activity and taking on a new identity did not necessarily mean the complete shedding of his previous self. Other participants practiced a more holistic spirituality rather than one that fitted dominant religious doctrine. Bella, for example, spoke about God being "life itself, in everything, I see God in the land, trees, animals, all things"; Allan, on the other hand, said, "I share a spiritual brotherhood with everyone . . . . All beings have a spirit and its right to respect that . . . . I was so caught up in my own shit before I couldn't see that".

Few of the participants had experienced a profound sense of spirituality prior to beginning their desistance, but all reported that spirituality played some role in their desire to cease offending. Spirituality was an internalised matter growing, for the majority, as they continued along their personal path of desistance. Tam offers a staged theory impacted upon by personal trauma and loss (Wayland et al. 2016). His own sense of spirituality originated in adverse surroundings, places that tied Biblical narratives to the hardship and grief associated with real lives:

I didn't believe in God initially . . . . Doing the things I was doing, you kind of start to think of people as just sacks of meat. It's not a nice way to think, but it's how you deal with (involvement in violent crimes) . . . . At my worst, I think I was going mad . . . . But it was as though it wasn't me. Like evil was living in me . . . . I remember being scared to look into the mirror. You ever had that, like you're scared of yourself? I could look into my eyes and knew there was nothing behind them . . . . No soul, like I held my dad when he died and I remember seeing the life drain from his eyes . . . . that was like me, but I was alive . . . . After having a breakdown, I remember my [Christian] mate came and spoke to me in the hospital . . . . about being morally right. I still didn't believe in God but thought "that sounds good" . . . . helped me like establish a moral basis. We would read, like, philosophy and talk about it . . . . After we done readings on Jesus, you know the passage about making your house clean and filling it with good things, I thought about . . . . making my body clean and filling it with God . . . . [eventually] life was coming back to my eyes . . . . Like evil was living in me but when I accepted God into my life he filled my heart and pushed evil out, but I know it desires to have me still . . . . It's always crouching at my door, that's why I need to always fill my life with good.

(*Interviewee Tam*)

Tam's belief that he had been filled with evil prior to his "coming to faith" was a common theme: most of the participants spoke of cognate experiences. Indeed, even those who were only beginning to engage in the desistance process or had currently ceased engaging with the process regularly discussed having such experiences. Tam's agency was emboldened by his desistance companions and by intellectual resources; his studies of philosophy and religion gave meaning to his desistance journey, in a pattern that recurs in the literature. The next thematic section explores the personal struggles expressed by participants who explain the grip of conflictual social ties bound up with their hazardous reputational identities.

3.2. Endeavouring to "Make Good"

Maruna (2001) "Making Good" model of desistance predicates a redemption script involving the inherent goodness and conventionality of the narrator, who is the victim of a criminal society, and was compelled towards offending as a way of coping with inherited disadvantage. Through the support of outside agencies and individuals who "believe in" the ex-offender, this agentic narrator can move on to rediscover a morally upright outlook that had been temporarily suppressed, and accomplish what they had always truly intended. "Making good" stands for a reciprocal gift to society, representing an expression of gratitude and symbolising the release of the real or true self (Maruna 2001). McNeill and Maruna (2008) argued that the process of desistance begins with the wilful, and largely conscious, decision to cease offending behaviour, but our research participants rarely spoke of one singular, and conscious, decision, but rather talked of the decision as a lengthy process. Stephen, and "born-again" Christian Chris, explain:

I never had a, like what you say, a moment of pure clarity or nothing like that mate. More like I was getting fed up of the lifestyle, eh. Just waking up feeling pure shit in myself, and shit for the things I was getting up to mate. After a while it gets pure [tiresome] . . . . I had been kind of drifting away from it all for a while if [I] am being honest . . . . Cause I'm not involved in what's going on, my [criminal companions] stopped asking me to do this or that. No going to lie, I did feel a wee bit left out, [so] would phone them up and start hanging about again, but see afterwards I would just be thinking "what the fuck are you doing man, why get into all this shit again?" That's all it is, shit . . . . I still get that, but a bit. I am trying though to just be done with it. Difficult, when that's all your friends do (crime).

(*Interviewee Stephen*)

Stephen's struggle reflects an absence of the social and emotional resources that scholars of desistance emphasise as important. Instead, it is the risk factors of impoverished social ties, binding him to a criminal universe, that maintain material and emotional purchase. Stephen's biographical analysis is an endorsement of the findings of Hallett and McCoy (2014) research. One of their main results is that highly negative characterisations of self are catalysts for change. Stephen's emphasis is on "the lifestyle" and "waking up feeling pure shit", but his attachments to these friends present him with a dilemma. Entering the desistance journey echoes with another one of Hallett and McCoy (2014) findings; Stephen accepted personal responsibility, but with limited social support, he was more vulnerable than Hallet and McCoy's United States (US) ex-offenders. He was also expressing a painful confrontation with a "feared self", which is a further strand to desistance.

> I still do get myself into trouble, [but] the main thing is that I keep trying [to cease offending]. That's all that matters bud, aye? Not easy when I've been acting this way since I was a pup (child) . . . . I'm doing this for God. My life isn't my life no more, it's His and he will give me strength . . . . I had always felt called, but ignored it most my life. Then I just broke down one day in the bath. Just started greeting man. It's not been easy but I try.
>
> (*Interviewee Chris*)

Desistance demands energy and determination to succeed; Chris has social support in his relationship with God, which Hallett and McCoy (2014) discovered is a key to cognitive transformation. The resources that prevent his fuller involvement in crime now originate in feeling "called" and working on behalf of God. For neither Stephen nor Chris was the decision to desist from crime a single event; rather, it was a lengthy process during which mindsets had been evolving towards a different future. Even Chris, who experienced a crisis while bathing, had felt a sense of moral wrongdoing for a considerable time prior to this critical event in what appears to have been a lonely life narrative. The desistance journeys for our participants take place in a wider context of community marginalisation and multiple deprivation, where achieving a redemption script is a challenge that risks a disturbing cleavage with the only communities available to them.

While just over one-third of the participants interviewed admitted current involvement in regular offending behaviour, nonetheless, all of the participants were, or had been at some stage, wilfully engaged in the desistance process. Most participants had maintained efforts to disengage from criminal practice, while others had re-engaged in law violation for one reason or another. Yet, even for the majority who were actively engaged in the desistance process, periodic offending was still common, which was often the result of brief relapses whereby the individual felt that a criminal coping strategy was their only viable option in the given circumstance. Re-engagement with law violation was typically the result of straining factors such as financial pressures, lack of opportunities to re-enter conventional employment, peer pressure, or even due to persistent threats from former rivals in the criminal underworld (Agnew 2006). Participant Paul, who recently began practicing religion but still periodically reoffends, explains:

> You can't just remove yourself from it (the criminal underworld) all. It isn't as though you just say "I'm done, catch yous". People don't let you just walk away . . . . No like, you can't leave. Like it is in say with the Mafia or that. I can easily stop kicking about wi' my mates or stop doing drugs . . . . It's the people that are after you that don't let you just up and leave. Loads of times you might have outstanding bills, or drug debts, or say you're involved in a tit-for-tat with another [criminal gang], they are still going to be after you if they think you've still done them wrong. People don't forget. Fuck, sometimes people might just see the opportunity to do you (assault) and take it. Means sometimes you ended up getting dragged back into the fighting and that sort of crap.
>
> (*Interviewee Paul*)

As Paul points out, efforts to desist, particularly from serious offending or organised crime, are dangerous and layered with uncertainties; financial interdependencies anchor Paul in a criminal world.

This dimension of being trapped by obligations of a material and economic nature are overlooked in the desistance literature. Paul's situation illustrates the constraints that exist on agency, and the social space that is required to support it. One former criminal gangland enforcer, Ash, was required to transform his life in order to remain properly engaged in a desistance process. In this extract, agency and structural constraints are both palpable:

> I had gained a reputation when I was [young] for being able to fight. Just natural that I would progress to more serious stuff. Every cunt could see it, was pure obvious, even to my da[d] and sisters . . . [Eventually] ended up doing whatever for cash, get me aye . . . It's defo a buzz at first, thinking you're the big man, but it takes a heavy toll after a while . . . You get that far into it you can't see a way out; even if you wanted to . . . Doesn't help when you're heavy doing coke as well, fucks your brain man . . . I ended up drinking and pure gambling as well . . . I would get money for say chibbing (assaulting) somebody that my boss wanted done, but even though I wanted it, I didn't really . . . [And] would gamble the lot, plus my wage from my normal job. Was fucked up man . . . I hit rock bottom [after a duration] . . . no home, got sacked, pure trusted no one, [and] kept having pure fucked up thoughts man . . . I had to change, but see when you try to you can't if you're still around the same people and the same situations as before . . . I went from always having cash, basically free drugs, a [girlfriend], loads of mates, and always going out, to just hanging about myself and working a wee shitty job I managed to get. The money was pure pish but I needed a low income for the sake of my soul, 'cause I had been pure obsessed wi' money before. Was a pure humbling experience . . . What I lost in material things, I was making up for inside myself.

> (*Interview Ash*)

Ash's statement testifies to the willpower and the practical efforts required to cease offending behaviour. Materialism and a hedonistic lifestyle typify a successful imaginary of working-class aspiration and achievement. Bruce (2002) argued that diversity and individualism in lifestyles has created a market in world views where religion is marginalised. Ash presents us with conventional normality, which he inadvertently appears to employ as a way of neutralising his responsibility for his entrapment in a volatile way of being. Alcohol and drug abuse further enervated Ash's agency to change. Again, similar to the other interviewees in our sample, it is the inability or incapacity to extricate himself from his participation in this local market of dominant views that challenges desistance; as Aiyer (2014) demonstrates, environmental variables constrain identities and attempt to transform underpinning socio-economic realities.

3.3. Divesting Criminal Identities

Our exploration of the final narrative theme further pursues the contextual social constraints on identity transformation and opportunities to progress, which we suggest are insufficiently recognised in the literature on desistance, where class and neighbourhood factors do not seem to be sufficiently central to desistance issues. In a Canadian study of 29 desisting ex-offenders aged 21–70, F.-Dufour et al. (2015) argued that personal identity changes at a significantly faster pace than social identity; this finding illuminates the dualistic ontological plight of some of our participants, where offending persists in tandem with a general trend towards desistance. F.-Dufour et al. (2015) conjectured that it takes four years for the closure of these identities to coalesce. In their first two years of "going straight", they felt it impossible to entirely abandon crime. During these months, F.-Dufour et al. (2015) found that these ex-offenders adopted a script of condemnation that eventually modified underlying personal identities during the desistance process. According to these researchers, social structures are critically important to initiate the process of desistance; as Archer (2000) maintains: "the initiation of the desistance process comes from the structure". Without possibilities to rectify their lives, no offender could desist. Once the final stage of desistance is accomplished, the agency of the

ex-offender is essential in order to maintain the momentum. One or more pro-social identities must be endorsed and criminal identities jettisoned.

Former drug addict and ex-offender Brock, who is himself a self-proclaimed "born-again Christian", and now works voluntarily with a church-based outreach program to support offenders, offers insights into the transformation explicated by F.-Dufour et al. (2015) in a Scottish setting:

> Growing up I was always in trouble. If it happened on the [housing estate] I probably done it, or probably have been involved somewhere along the line ... Being bad was like second nature to me, ask anybody that knows me ... Ended up coming away from it ... Put it this way, it was no easy feat ... I'm not a criminal anymore. People that don't really know me might still say things, but I don't need to see myself like that now. It might have been who I was at one time ... Even though I might not do the things I [once did] anymore, I certainly don't regret them ... I'm no happy wi' them, but no regrets ... how can I? If I never went through those times I would never have become who I am now, [nor] could I use them experiences to help others who are in the position I [once] was.

> (*Interviewee Brock*)

He claims he's "not a criminal anymore", accepting that he was once an offender, but stating that this identity has now been abandoned, and illustrating a tacit condemnatory script. The looking-glass self is apparent in Brock's narrative: "I don't need to see myself like that now". The concept of the looking-glass self was developed in 1902 by Charles Horton Cooley (Cooley 2009); his argument that the development of one's self and identity occurs through interpersonal interactions within a given societal context resonates with Goffman (1959) dramaturgical perspective on society and the micro-sociology of everyday life. Cooley's ontology of society is that it consists in the interweaving and working of mental selves.

Brock illustrates in practice this construction of society from which the self is derived: his societal context is woven from life in a disadvantaged housing estate where he admits to "growing up". As a result of his change of identity, others' perceptions of him will be outdated, but his recognition of these symbolic interactional exchanges is tantamount to endorsing the theorisation offered by the looking-glass self. Through volunteering, he effectively recasts his self in a pro-social landscape. Giving back to society reinforces the extent of his desistance and is indicative of the existence of a pro-social self-identity. The structure of his past is a resource providing self-belief and credibility as a role model in his volunteer work. Agency was essential not merely towards the final phase of desistance, but rather it contributed significantly over whole duration of his desistance journey.

As Brock suggests, the process of taking on a new identity is '*no easy feat*'. For Brock, offending was often enjoyable; it was a deeply embedded feature of his identity for much of his life. During the interviews, Brock offered no insights about why he changed, nor did he detail his own experience of the desistance process beyond his drug addiction, yet he repeatedly emphasised the point that he no longer felt compelled to see himself as a criminal. He is effectively a "mirror" that offenders can reliably exploit for support in gaining a non-criminal identity. In differentiating between his own offending past and his new identity, Brock can draw upon his experiences to help current offenders begin the desistance process without once again becoming involved in criminal activities himself:

> I know how hard it is to stop [offending]. I know what it takes. So, if guy comes in here saying "you don't know man", I'm just like "shut the fuck up, I've been there and done all that so listen up". Course I don't say it like that, but you get the point. Some guys might need an arm round them, others just need a straight talker. That's what I am, a straight talker ... I can see when someone is really ready to change. People always come in [to the organisation] wanting to change, but don't really, really want it. You can see it in their eyes. So, when I see [someone who is ready to change] I just tell them "you're ready man, now the work can begin" ... That's why I don't go on about my past. Some of the guys here just

want to hear what you've done, it's a bravado thing. I only really open up and tell them guys who really want to change everything, because they are ready to hear it for what it is.

(*Interviewee Brock*)

When asked how he himself benefits from the help he now offers, Brock elaborates:

Suppose it helps me, know. Like it helps me acknowledge who I now am, if you get me. You need that to keep going, suppose, helping others feels good.

(*Interviewee Brock*)

His self-appraisal focusses our attention on the importance of experiencing the response of others to one's personal well-being. Desistance is affirmed through the affordances of these "mirrors" of recognition. Brock can make sense of his past experiences and put them to effective use (Maruna 2001). McNeill (2009) points out that by engaging in such endeavours, the provider of support simultaneously wins emotional and social resources that inform the pro-social identity and help shed the criminalised past self.

McNeill (2009) argued that the process of taking on a new identity is one that can only truly be embedded fully when such an identity is reflected back upon the individual in question by wider society, which is a conclusion that is resonant with the looking-glass self-orientation and its tacit labelling. De Coster and Heimer (2001) remind us that labelling harbours significant impact upon how individuals see themselves; a similar process, they found, impacted criminal desistance. As noted previously, Brock being seen as a reformed criminal helped strengthen his desistance, as this "mirror" served in the confirmation of a non-criminal identity. Bob and Ivie explain the symbolic interactional nature of the stultifying social dynamics of this "desister as nomad":

Took me a [long time] to get my act together. I would stop getting into trouble, then after a weekend on the [alcoholic drinks] I would be back out getting up to all sorts. Cause you're [drunk] as well it made [such behaviour] worse, not being able to control yourself properly . . . [so] you'd need to start [the desistance process] all over again . . . My mates, well, so-called mates at the time, would always be saying "you're a crook mate, get over it", and you do start thinking that way, asking [as] if you're really destined to be a criminal always . . . Can't be listening to them idiots but . . . and see, when you do get yourself all sorted, it feels good when they see you now and have to eat humble pie.

(*Interviewee Bob*)

Desistance entails the assembly of personal resources, and agency is required at many phases, not merely at an advanced stage. Substance abuse undermined Bob's capacity for control. Norms governing the structure of the lives of working-class young men impose barriers that weaken agency and resolve. Criminality is a backdrop to the depleted capital and pessimism that is experienced through the negative 'looking-glass' faced by Bob: his erstwhile friends thwart the transition to a new identity. Bob's associates are prominent in his desistance journey, even to the point of his needing to prove them wrong. The existence of the wider imaginary audience that this group represents is a powerful recognition of looking-glass theorising (Maruna et al. 2004). In the case of Ivie, an identical interpersonal schema governs his analysis of the social; he believed that "folk were always wanting to see me fail". His Christian affiliation and belief in God's support, as the literature described earlier indicated, meant that he could surmount a deficit of support. His adoption of religiosity impeded the negative effort of others to restrict his identity to his criminal past:

Folk were always wanting to see me fail . . . And I did fail every now and then. But God just picks me right back up . . . When I can't do it myself, He carries me . . . The people I used to go about with know I'm a Christian now. Before they would always be trying to entice me back in [to criminal activity], but now they see me as a Christian they don't . . . I

> kept telling them I was, but only when they actually seen me living for God did they then [acknowledge the new identity].

> (*Interviewee Ivie*)

Ivie's case illustrates that desistance is accompanied by role switching. From this juncture, he shifts his life towards a qualitatively different interactional order; his expectations about the ritualistic presentation of the self henceforth convene a newly initiated personhood (Goffman 1959) with resilience derived from spirituality. Submitting himself to a higher power helped the shedding of the criminal self. It is likely that he experienced the grief of loss in the separation process from the established criminal associates in his neighbourhood, but his immersion in a transcendental attachment seemed, for the time being at least, to have offered adequate compensation.

4. Conclusions

Offenders who evidence signs of desisting invent new identities for themselves. However, the fragile nature of this process of autobiographical analysis and interpretation is evident from our data, and can come at a personal cost to their physical safety and mental health. The participants in our study are not always confident about their own resilience, and indeed engagement with religious institutions and other spiritual based programmes aided participants in this process by providing support networks and allowing them to finding strength amongst peers (Gilbert et al. 2014). We have contextualised the data in the field of desistance literature, but the participants' narratives reveal more general truths about how it feels to experience the constraints of criminogenic environments. The narratives illustrate, besides struggles towards desistence, their attempts at self-understanding, personal loathing, and the ever-present threat of entrapment by perspectives foisted upon them by negative appraisals.

What is evident from the study is that the participants' move towards criminal desistance was a gradual one, which was often characterised by numerous pitfalls and periodic reoffending. However, as participants continued along a trajectory of desistance, these periods would become shorter over time, and the behaviour would become less extreme. While participants typically attributed this process of desistance to a growing sense of internal spirituality, other factors, both internal and external, undoubtedly played an important role in this process. For example, participants such as Stephen discussed being "fed up of the lifestyle" and feeling "shit" for perceived immoral actions. Farrington et al. (2016) found low neuroticism to be a protective factor that decreased the likelihood of offending. Whether or not the influence of other factors out with the internal development of spirituality was a conscious one to participants needs further analysis. Often multifactorial influences, such as: engagement with religious institutions, groups, and peers; feelings of self-loathing; physical and psychological maturity; and the introduction of new relationships, are significantly intertwined with the development of spirituality and religious practice.

Our research presents the voices of young people who have found themselves caught up in criminal justice processes, experiencing stigma and damaged esteem. The criminogenic constraints that the extracts reveal reflect a culture and its limiting cognitive scripts. The impact and perception of immediate social ties are pervasive in the reflections of the participants, who reveal an empathy towards a pro-social future supported by spirituality. A transformation of the orientation of their ego is clear in comments where we hear of a shift away from directing their own moral compass towards submission to a higher spiritual authority.

The shedding of "the criminal self" emerged as an issue: some participants are aware that their dominant autobiographical identities in dehumanising criminal violence continue to coexist with the endeavour to escape the perspective that this imposes, demonstrating the confusion that may feature as a phase in the desistance journey. The data indicates the importance of understanding their learning journeys, which include trauma, violence, vulnerability, and loneliness. The existence of this psychological world of oppression and personal grief makes desistance neither an isolated event nor a private matter constructed through solipsistic effort, but rather a process impacted by many factors.

Religion and spirituality are therapeutic resources. It is the opportunity to utilise these resources that can trigger a desistance process, altering mentalities and enabling young people to see their past and future differently.

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religions

Existential and Virtuous Effects of Religiosity on Mental Health and Aggressiveness among Offenders

Sung Joon Jang [1,*], Byron R. Johnson [1], Joshua Hays [1], Michael Hallett [2] and Grant Duwe [3]

[1] Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University, Waco, TX 76798, USA; byron_johnson@baylor.edu (B.R.J.); william_hays@baylor.edu (J.H.)

[2] Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL 32224, USA; mhallett@unf.edu

[3] Research and Evaluation, Minnesota Department of Corrections, St. Paul, MN 55108, USA; grant.duwe@state.mn.us

* Correspondence: sung_joon_jang@baylor.edu; Tel.: +1-254-710-1691

Abstract: Although prior research tends to show that religion has a salutary effect on mental health and a preventive effect on crime, studies explaining the religious effect, particularly those on offenders, have been limited. To address the issue, we examine whether religiosity is inversely related to negative emotions and aggressiveness among prison inmates. Additionally, we assess whether the relationships are attributable to an inmate's sense of meaning and purpose in life and/or their virtues. Specifically, we hypothesize that religiosity is inversely related to feelings of depression and anxiety and the intention of engaging in interpersonal aggression. We also hypothesize these relationships to be mediated by existential belief in life's meaning and purpose and virtues (compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, purpose of God, and gratitude to God). We tested our hypotheses using survey data collected from a random sample of male inmates from three prisons in Texas, applying latent-variable structural equation modeling. We found that the existential belief explained the effect of religiosity on negative emotional states and intended aggression. In addition, forgiveness and gratitude mediated the effect on state anxiety, whereas purpose in God and gratitude to God mediated the effect on state depression. Substantive and practical implications of our findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

As a "total institution", prison is expected to have a detrimental impact on mental health among inmates, because upon entrance, they are stripped of supports taken for granted in the outside world and their identity becomes mortified as a result of a series of degradations of self (Goffman 1961). The mortification of self, along with a sense of guilt, shame, and hopelessness, is likely to generate a loss of meaning and purpose in life, which results in feelings of depression and anxiety among inmates. These negative emotions are also known to be positively associated with various forms of deviance in prison, such as infractions and suicide (Agnew 2006; Blevins et al. 2010). Researchers have found that religion tends to reduce not only prison misconduct, but also reoffending after release from prison (Hallett et al. 2017; Johnson 2011). Explanations for these religious effects, however, have been understudied.

To address the limitations of prior research, we propose to examine whether religion has prosocial effects on mental health and aggressiveness among offenders in prison, and whether religious effects, if found significant, are attributable to two potential outcomes associated with involvement in religion: a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and personal virtues. Specifically, we first hypothesize that

religiosity is inversely related to feelings of depression and anxiety and the behavioral intention to engage in aggressive behavior toward other inmates. It is also hypothesized that these inverse relationships are explained by existential belief in life's meaning and purpose and virtues, such as compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude. To test these hypotheses, we analyzed survey data collected from a random sample of male offenders in three Texas prisons.

This paper begins with an overview of literature on religion, mental health, and crime. Based on the literature review, we then introduce our hypotheses, followed by a description of our sample, measurement, and analytic strategy (i.e., latent-variable structural equation modeling approach). Following this, we present results from estimating structural equation models, focusing on those for hypothesis testing. Substantive and practical implications of our findings, as well as suggestions for future research, are discussed.

2. Religion and Mental Health

The salutary effect of religious involvement on mental health has been well established in numerous studies from diverse disciplines, including psychology, psychiatry, epidemiology, sociology, and medicine (Koenig et al. 2012). Meta-analyses conducted by Hackney and Sanders (2003) and Sawatzky et al. (2005) show that the positive relationship between religiosity and psychological well-being was found across diverse definitions of religiosity and mental health, while the size of the relationship varied across different measures. A systematic review of 850 studies on religion and mental health by Moreira-Almeida et al. (2006) confirmed that religiosity tends to be inversely related to depression and suicidality, as well as being positively associated with emotional well-being. Levin (2010) review of psychiatric and mental health research on religion drew much the same conclusion.

Researchers tend to attribute religiosity's preventive function in relation to psychological distress to prosocial outcomes of religious involvement. In his theory of religious effects among adolescents, Smith (2003b) identified outcomes that would also explain the positive influence of religion in the lives of adults. For example, different religious traditions promote moral directives of self-control and personal virtue, such as compassion and forgiveness. Once internalized, these moral orders are reinforced in religious communities, where social support and positive role models guide life choices (e.g., avoiding drug use, helping others, and seeking reconciliation instead of vengeance). In this way, they reduce stressors and thus lessen psychological distress. Religions also "promote a variety of beliefs and practices [e.g., gratitude in adversity and forgiveness] that can help believers cope with the stress of difficult situations . . . , to process difficult emotions, and to resolve interpersonal conflicts" (p. 23), thereby enhancing psychological well-being.

Prior research provides empirical evidence for the proposition that social support is a key mediator between stressors and psychological distress (Aneshensel 1992; Mirowsky and Ross 2003; Pearlin 1989), and partly explains the inverse relationship between religiosity and distress (e.g., Hayward and Krause 2014; Jang and Johnson 2004; Krause et al. 1999). Similarly, the intersection of the psychology of religion, positive psychology, and the psychology of emotion suggests such a causal link; that is, religion has a salutary effect via its promotion of virtues or, in short, a "virtuous effect" on mental health. Stated differently, religion fosters virtues, such as forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and humility (Batson et al. 1999; Davis et al. 2017; Emmons and Paloutzian 2003; Krause 2018; McCullough 2000; Roberts 2004; Rye et al. 2000), and those virtues contribute to subjective well-being (Emmons and Crumpler 2000; Emmons and McCullough 2003; Froh et al. 2008; McCullough 2000). Though the religion/virtue/wellbeing link has not been studied often, compassion has been found to mediate the relationship between intrinsic religion and mental health, measured by depressive symptoms and perceived stress (Steffen and Masters 2005; see Krause (2018) for how humility and forgiveness explain the relationship between church attendance and physical health).

Besides the virtuous effect, researchers have also examined what we call the "existential effect" of religion by testing whether religion enhances mental health via its contribution to a human's existential need for meaning and purpose in life. According to Frankl (Frankl 1984; 1986), meaning in life is

essential to the spiritual (not necessarily religious) dimension of human life, and when the innate desire of "will to meaning" (Frankl 1984, p. 121) is not satisfied, it results in "existential frustration" (p. 123). Though it is not in itself a mental disease, existential frustration can negatively affect mental health unless the innate desire for meaning in life is met. Meaning could be claimed based on anything, but according to Frankl (Frankl 1984), the "true meaning of life" (p. 133) should be self-transcendent (i.e., discovered outside of the individual). For this reason, religion is a major source of ultimate meaning in life (Batson and Stocks 2004; Fry 2000; Martos et al. 2010), although it is not a necessary condition for having a sense of meaning in life, as meaning may come from outside of religion (e.g., caring for the environment or volunteering for people in need).

Consistent with Frankl's propositions, George et al. (2002) suggest that the relationship between religious involvement and health, both mental and physical, can be partly explained by a sense of meaning, or what Ellison (1991) calls "existential coherence". Furthermore, McKnight and Kashdan (2009) propose that purpose—a self-organizing life aim—provides a sense of meaning, as well as stimulating goals and managing behaviors, which in turn contribute to mental and physical well-being. Previous research not only provides empirical evidence that religiosity is positively related to meaning and purpose in life, but also that the sense of meaning and purpose in life is positively associated with subjective well-being. For example, Steger and Frazier (2005) found that meaning in life mediated the relation between religiousness and life satisfaction (see also Bernard et al. 2017). Similarly, Jang (2016) reported not only a positive correlation between religiosity and "existential spirituality," a belief in ultimate meaning and purpose in life, but also an inverse relationship between existential belief and symptoms of anxiety-related disorders (see also Wang et al. 2016). While religion was not examined, a recent study of three prisons in Belgium found that the experience of loss of meaning was positively associated with distress among prison inmates (Vanhooren et al. 2017).

3. Religion and Crime

In his theory explaining religious effects, Smith (2003b) proposed a preventive effect on crime, as well as a salutary effect on mental health, as religion provides dense networks of social control. In fact, criminologists have used theories of not only deterrence and control, but also social learning and strain to explain the religiosity–crime relationship, positing that the predictors of crime mediate the relationship (Johnson and Jang 2010). That is, religiosity is hypothesized to decrease crime by increasing fear of punishment, conventional bonds, and self-control (Gibbs 1986; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Hirschi 1969) and decreasing negative emotional reactions to strains, as well as deviant definitions and peer associations (Agnew 2006; Akers 2009). Previous studies and their synthesis via systematic review and meta-analysis provide empirical support for this hypothesis (Baier and Wright 2001; Burkett and Warren 1987; Desmond et al. 2011; Evans et al. 1995; Jang and Johnson 2011; Jang and Franzen 2013; Johnson et al. 2001; Johnson and Jang 2010; Kelly et al. 2015; Reisig et al. 2012; Ulmer et al. 2012), although the religiosity–crime relationship often remains significant after controlling for crime predictors and past criminality, as well as sociodemographic backgrounds.

A religion–crime relationship that remains significant after criminological predictors and statistical controls are taken into account implies that explaining the effects of religion on crime may require other non-criminological factors; for example, variables of religious process, such as religious coping (Johnson and Jang 2010). There could also be other non-religious factors, such as virtue and meaning and purpose in life, which criminologists have rarely examined, with the exception of self-control (e.g., Desmond et al. 2013). For instance, compassion, a strongly positive view toward the welfare of others and a desire to alleviate their suffering with an attempt to transcend all self-centered needs (Steffen and Masters 2005), is likely to decrease crime as it contradicts the very nature of crime, self-centeredness and insensitivity toward the suffering of others (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Similarly, people who exhibit a sense of ultimate, self-transcendent meaning and purpose in life are less likely to engage in crime than those who do not, since crime hardly has any existential significance.

While the existential effect of religion on crime has yet to be examined, the relevance of meaning and purpose in life to the study of desistance from crime has been proposed. In their "theory of existential identity transformation", built on Frankl (Frankl 1984), Jang and Johnson (2017) argue that all humans, including offenders, are spiritual or existential beings in the sense that we have an innate need to live meaningful lives, and thus search for narratives that arrange our actions into organized wholes in a way that bestows meaning in actions. We all have a "will to meaning" even though we are different in terms of spirituality (i.e., the extent of awareness of the existential need and pursuit of meaning to live accordingly). Therefore, Jang and Johnson posit that an offender's identity transformation should occur in the existential, as well as cognitive and emotional, dimensions of self-identity for criminal desistance (Giordano et al. 2002, 2007; Paternoster and Bushway 2009).

A recent study yielded a partial test of Jang and Johnson (2017) proposition by examining whether (1) individual religiosity was positively associated with existential, as well as cognitive and emotional, identity transformations; and (2) the identity transformations were inversely related to disciplinary convictions among offenders in a maximum-security prison (Jang et al. 2018; see also Hallett et al. 2017). The results showed that not only religious involvement, but also religious conversion were positively associated with the extent of existential identity transformation, which was in turn inversely related to disciplinary convictions via emotional transformation, particularly transformation in negative emotional identity. Thus, the study provides preliminary evidence of the existential effect of religion on a behavior analogous to crime, prison misconduct.

4. The Present Study

Based on the literature reviewed above, we intend to examine whether religiosity has a salutary effect on mental health and a preventive effect on aggression and, if so, whether the effects are in part virtuous and existential (i.e., attributable to virtues and a sense of meaning and purpose in life that religion is expected to promote and enhance). Among various ways to operationalize mental health, this study focuses on two negative emotional states, state depression and state anxiety; that is, the lower the levels of state depression and anxiety, the better the mental health. Next, aggression is measured in terms of behavioral intention; that is, an individual's intention to engage in aggressive behavior or, in short, intended aggression.[1] Finally, we examine three virtues deemed particularly relevant to the explanation of crime or an analogous behavior (e.g., aggression): compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude, which previous studies found to be positively associated with psychological well-being (see Section 2). Similarly, a sense of meaning and purpose in life is expected to enhance mental health and reduce crime and deviance.

Specifically, being the combination of empathy and altruism, compassion is likely to increase positive relations with others, not only the object of compassion but also those who support and commend compassionate behavior, which in turn contributes to mental health (Steffen and Masters 2005). Recognizing and appreciating an external source of an unearned gain in life (i.e., gratitude) tends to complete enjoyment of the positive outcome and generate more fulfilling experiences, which should increase emotional well-being (Emmons and McCullough 2003; Froh et al. 2008). Forgiveness is expected to enhance mental health partly because it repairs relations that have been damaged by interpersonal offenses (Krause 2018). A sense of meaning and purpose in life also has a salutary effect as it eliminates existential crisis (Frankl 1984; Krause 2018).

While relationships between virtues or existential belief and crime have rarely been explored, they are likely to be negative according to the nature of crime. For example, a compassionate act is the direct opposite to crime, which "often results in *pain or discomfort for the victim*" (Gottfredson and

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[1] We decided to measure aggression in terms of behavioral intention rather than actual behavior of the past to establish causal ordering between the key independent (*current* measure of religiosity; see Section 5.2. below) and dependent variables (aggression likely in the *future*). In addition, underreporting associated with self-reported instances of aggression was partly a concern, while a measure of behavioral intention was not fully immune to the potential reporting bias.

Hirschi 1990, p. 89). Similarly, forgiveness, restoring broken relationships (Krause 2018), and gratitude that involves empathic emotions (Emmons and McCullough 2003) are inconsistent with criminality. Moreover, having a sense that one's life matters and has a purpose or mission is cognitively dissonant with stealing and hurting or killing other people (Steger and Frazier 2005). Thus, the three virtues and existential belief are all expected to be inversely related to crime.

In summary, we test the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. *Religiosity is inversely related to state depression and anxiety, and intended aggression.*

Hypothesis 2. *The inverse relationships between religiosity, on the one hand, and state depression and anxiety and intended aggression, on the other, are in part mediated by a sense of meaning and purpose in life and the virtues of compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude.*

5. Methods

5.1. Sample

The data used to test our hypotheses came from a survey conducted at three maximum-security all-male prisons in Texas in February 2017. Several days before the survey was administered, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) provided us with a five-percent random sample of each prison's population, which included 244 offenders. Two-thirds of them (163, 66.8%) agreed to participate in the study. T-tests revealed that inmates who participated were, in general, not significantly different from those who did not participate, with a few exceptions. Specifically, they were not different in race and ethnicity; intelligence quotient (I.Q.) score; participation in vocational and cognitive intervention programming; number of confinements in jail; number of total, as well as property, drug, and other offenses; and minor and major infractions between 2007 and 2016. On the other hand, the participants were younger and higher than non-participants on the educational achievement (EA) score[2], participation in academic programming, and number of confinements in prison, but lower on number of violent offenses.[3] These differences need to be kept in mind in interpreting the results presented in the next section (Section 6).

5.2. Measurement

For the key exogenous variable, *religiosity*, a scale was constructed by summing standardized scores of five items: perceived closeness to God, religious salience (i.e., perceived importance of religion), religious service attendance, praying outside of religious services, and reading a sacred text in private. The items had high factor loadings, ranging from 0.55 to 0.86, and high internal reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.81 (see Appendix A Table A1 for details of all scales).

To measure a sense of meaning and purpose in life, we created a scale of *presence of meaning* using four items of the Search and Presence of Meaning scale from Steger et al. (2006). They were all clustered on a factor with high loadings (from 0.68 to 0.81) and a high inter-item reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$). The mediators of virtue were also measured using items of existing scales. Five items of *compassion* and two items of *forgiveness* came from the Landmark Spirituality and Health Survey from Krause et al. (2016). Compassion items had high factor loadings (from 0.49 to 0.82) and good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.78$), and the two forgiveness items also had good reliability ($\alpha = 0.74$). A scale of *gratitude* was constructed

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2   The score measures the grade level achieved based on an assessment by the prison's school district.
3   Specifically, on average, study participants were about four and a half years younger (42.85 vs. 47.43) and about one grade higher in education (8.77 vs. 7.64), had participated more in academic programming (0.45 vs. 0.21), and had been in prison (1.91 vs. 1.61) slightly more often than non-participants, whereas the former had committed lower number of violent offenses than the latter (1.74 vs. 2.34).

based on three items drawn from Gratitude Questionnaire–6 from McCullough et al. (2002), which had high loadings (from 0.65 to 0.99) and good reliability (α = 0.78).

Two additional scales of virtue were created in relation to God. One was a three-item scale of *God's purpose in life* with items showing high factor loadings (from 0.86 to 0.89) and excellent reliability (α = 0.91), and the other was a two-item scale of *gratitude to God* with good reliability (α = 0.74).

To construct an eight-item scale of *state depression*, we employed seven items of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale (Radloff 1977) and an item about feeling suicidal, which had high factor loadings (from 0.48 to 0.90) and high reliability (α = 0.87). On the other hand, *state anxiety* was measured by the seven-item scale of General Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) from Spitzer et al. (2006), with items having high factor loadings (from 0.68 to 0.84) and excellent inter-item reliability (α = 0.91).

The other ultimate endogenous variable, *intended aggression*, was measured using the vignette method. That is, survey respondents were given a hypothetical situation (see below) and asked how likely they were to act in the same manner as the character in the scenario, based on a six-point Likert scale (1 = not likely at all [0%], 2 = very unlikely, 3 = unlikely, 4 = likely, 5 = very likely, 6 = certainly [100%]).

> *It's Sunday afternoon. Mike is watching an National Football League (NFL) football game in the prison dayroom with other inmates. During a halftime break, Mike goes to the restroom. To reserve his seat, he asks a friend to "hold it down" for him. When Mike comes back, Joe is in his seat. Mike asks Joe to leave because it is his seat. Joe says he can sit anywhere he wants. Mikes asks Joe to leave one more time. This time Joe ignores Mike. Meanwhile, everyone is watching what's going on. Feeling not only dissed but also that he is right, Mike gets into an argument with Joe.*

Finally, we controlled for the respondent's sociodemographic and criminal background characteristics likely to be correlated with the key exogenous (religiosity) and ultimate endogenous variables (state depression, state anxiety, and intended aggression): *age*, race (the dummy variables of *black* and *Hispanic*, with white being the reference category), *EA* (educational achievement) *score*, number of *total offense* committed, *length of sentence* (in years), and religious affiliation (using dummy variables of *Catholic*, *other religion*, and *no religion*, with Protestant being the reference category).

5.3. Analytic Strategy

We applied a structural equation modeling approach to estimate the hypothesized relationships. Latent-variable modeling is appropriate given that our key concepts are all abstract and thus not observable. It also enables us to control for measurement errors so we can test hypotheses based on more valid and reliable results than those that would be produced by manifest-variable modeling (Bollen 1989).

For model estimation, we employed Mplus 8 (Muthén and Muthén 2017), which incorporates Muthén (1983) "general structural equation model" and full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation, which allows for not only continuous, but also dichotomous and ordered polytomous variables to be indicators of latent variables. Because variables were measured by ordered categorical (e.g., religious service attendance) and continuous variables (e.g., age), we used the "maximum likelihood parameter estimates with standard errors ... that are robust to non-normality and non-independence of observations" (Muthén and Muthén 2017, p. 668). We employed FIML to treat missing data, which tends to produce unbiased estimates, such as multiple imputations (Baraldi and Enders 2010; Graham 2009).

For model fit, besides the chi-square (λ^2) statistic, we report three types of fit index—incremental (CFI: comparative fit index), absolute (SRMR: standardized root mean squared residual), and parsimonious fit index (RMSEA: root mean square error of approximation). A model was determined to have a good fit to data if one of two joint criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999) was met: (CFI ≥ 0.95 and SRMR ≤ 0.08) or (SRMR ≤ 0.08 and RMSEA ≤ 0.06).

Finally, for statistical significance, we conducted a one-tailed test because the direction of the relationship was hypothesized using two levels of significance (α), 0.05 and 0.01.

6. Results

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distributions of nominal-level variables and the descriptive statistics of others, along with the number of observations for each variable. The survey respondents were, on average, approximately 43 years old, with the youngest and oldest being 21 and 79, respectively, and with 25.2% white, 48.5% black, and 26.4% Hispanic. The average grade level completed was less than the ninth grade, whereas they had committed an average of three offenses in total and were serving a sentence, on average, of 29 years at the time of the survey. Approximately 90% of the sample reported a religious affiliation: 69.6% Christian and 21.5% non-Christian religion (including 5.0% Islam, 1.9% Judaism, 1.3% Eastern religion, and 13.3% "other"; not shown in table). It is worth noting that while respondents typically said there was roughly a 50% chance (i.e., 3.53, about the midpoint between "unlikely" [= 3] and "likely" [= 4]) of getting into an argument in such a situation as described in the scenario, their reported probabilities were distributed across all six levels of likelihood: 19.9% "not likely at all (0%)", 12.2% "very unlikely", 13.5% "unlikely", 22.4% "likely", 13.5% "very likely", and 18.6% "certainly (100%)" (not shown in table). This observation might suggest that there was minimal reactivity due to social desirability on the part of respondents.

For hypothesis testing, we began with estimating two baseline models; one included only religiosity to explain state depression, state anxiety, and intended aggression (Baseline Model 1), and the other added sociodemographic and criminal background controls to the first baseline model (Baseline Model 2). We analyzed the three ultimate endogenous variables simultaneously by specifying their relationships as correlations via their residuals. Next, we introduced mediators (five virtue variables and the scale of existential belief) to the second baseline model, one at a time, to examine whether they individually explained the relationships between religiosity and the ultimate endogenous variables (Mediation Models 1 to 6). Finally, all six mediators were included together to estimate their collective explanation of religious effects on negative emotional states and intended aggression (Full Model). In this final model, relationships among the mediators were specified as residual correlations, like those among the ultimate endogenous variables.

Table 2 presents results from estimating the baseline and individual mediation models; with standardized coefficients and their standard error (S.E.) in parenthesis. All models had good fit to data, meeting one of the two joint criteria, SRMR ≤ 0.08 and RMSEA ≤ 0.06. First, when we included only religiosity in model (Baseline Model 1), we found it had inverse relationships with all three ultimate endogenous variables, as anticipated; that is, the higher religiosity, the less likely to report state depression, state anxiety, and intended aggression. The religious effects on the three dependent variables were similar in size (i.e., -0.23, -0.22, -0.21). Next, controlling for sociodemographic and criminal background variables, we found two of the three coefficients remained significant, with the exception being the effect of religiosity on state depression (Baseline Model 2). Thus, Hypothesis 1 received support with respect to state anxiety and intended aggression, but not state depression. That is, more religious offenders were less likely, when compared with their less religious or non-religious counterparts, to (1) have experienced anxiety during the last two weeks prior to the survey, and (2) get into an argument with another inmate if they had been put in a situation as described in the scenario, while religiosity made no significant difference among the offenders with respect to state depression.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Included in Analysis (*n* = 163). CES-D—Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression; GAD-7—General Anxiety Disorder.

Variable		*n*	Mean/%	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Age		163	42.85	12.45	21	79
EA (educational achievement) score		157	8.77	3.02	1	13
Total offense		163	3.30	2.24	1	11
Sentence length (in years)		163	29.10	20.97	2	60
Race	White	41	25.2%			
	Black	79	48.5%			
	Hispanic	43	26.4%			
	Total	163	100.0%			
Religious affiliation	Protestant	78	49.4%			
	Catholic	32	20.2%			
	Other religion	34	21.5%			
	No religion	14	8.9%			
	Total	158	100.0%			
Religiosity 1. Perceived closeness to God		151	3.85	1.10	1	5
2. Frequency of religious service attendance		153	5.42	2.54	1	8
3. Frequency of prayer outside of religious service		152	4.84	1.52	1	6
4. Perceived importance of religion		151	3.98	1.25	1	5
5. Frequency of reading the Bible or other sacred book		153	5.86	2.52	1	8
Presence of meaning 1. I understand my life's meaning		160	5.29	1.62	1	7
2. My life has a clear sense of meaning		162	5.36	1.51	1	7
3. A sense of what makes my life meaningful		162	5.68	1.32	1	7
4. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose		162	5.25	1.68	1	7
Compassion 1. Try to imagine how others feel in a difficult situation		160	3.16	0.67	1	4
2. Feel compelled to help others by going out of my way		159	3.18	0.73	1	4
3. Not enough to feel sorry for others in trouble		157	3.12	0.75	1	4
4. Feel sorry for others even when they caused the prob.		159	2.70	0.86	1	4
5. Feel sorry for others even when they have hurt me		157	2.48	0.81	1	4
Forgiveness: I have forgiven those who hurt me.		158	3.22	0.83	1	4
Gratitude 1. Everything I feel grateful for would make a long list		160	5.59	1.86	1	7
2. I am grateful to a wide variety of people		159	5.78	1.57	1	7
Variable		***n***	**Mean/%**	**S.D.**	**Min.**	**Max.**
God's purpose 1. God put me in this life for a purpose		151	3.55	0.78	1	4
2. God has a specific plan for my life		150	3.66	0.66	1	4
3. God has reason for everything that happens to me		151	3.54	0.76	1	4
Gratitude to God 1. Grateful to God for all He has done for me		153	4.58	0.81	1	5
2. Feel I have been richly blessed by God		154	3.93	1.33	1	5
3. Grateful for all He has done for my family/friends		153	4.54	0.80	1	5
Depression 1. Couldn't shake off the blues, even with the help of other		160	2.75	1.26	1	5
(CES-D) 2. Felt depressed		160	2.62	1.15	1	5
3. Felt sad		160	2.74	1.09	1	5
4. Not felt like eating and poor appetite		159	2.24	1.26	1	5
5. Felt that everything I did was an effort		159	3.28	1.24	1	5
6. My sleep was restless.		157	3.02	1.24	1	5
7. Could not get going		158	2.52	1.16	1	5
8. Felt suicidal		160	1.31	0.81	1	5
Anxiety 1. Feeling nervous, anxious		159	2.85	1.28	1	7
(GAD-7) 2. Not being able to stop or control worrying		159	2.54	1.21	1	5
3. Trouble relaxing		159	2.64	1.24	1	5
4. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still		158	2.34	1.26	1	5
5. Worrying too much about different things		160	2.83	1.27	1	5
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable		159	2.72	1.23	1	5
7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen		159	2.54	1.23	1	5
Intended aggression		156	3.53	1.76	1	6

Table 2. Baseline and Mediation Models of State Depression, State Anxiety, and Intended Aggression (*n* = 163); with Standardized Coefficients and Standard Errors (in parentheses).

	Mediator		State Depression		State Anxiety		Intended Aggression	
Variable	**β**	**(S.E.)**	**β**	**(S.E.)**	**β**	**(S.E.)**	**β**	**(S.E.)**
Baseline Model 1								
Religiosity			−0.23 **	(0.09)	−0.22 **	(0.09)	−0.21 **	(0.09)
Model fit: Chi-square = 280.12, [184, 0.00] [a]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.04, 0.07] [b]; CFI = 0.93; SRMR = 0.06								
Baseline Model 2								
Age			−0.01	(0.10)	−0.22 **	(0.09)	−0.22 **	(0.08)
Black			−0.13	(0.11)	−0.16	(0.09)	0.06	(0.10)
Hispanic			−0.04	(0.11)	−0.19	(0.11)	0.04	(0.10)
EA score			−0.22 *	(0.11)	−0.16	(0.10)	0.02	(0.09)
Total offense			−0.08	(0.10)	0.02	(0.10)	−0.01	(0.08)
Length of sentence			−0.02	(0.10)	−0.02	(0.09)	−0.06	(0.09)
Catholic			0.06	(0.12)	−0.01	(0.11)	0.02	(0.09)
Other religion			−0.07	(0.08)	0.04	(0.08)	0.01	(0.08)
No religion			0.02	(0.10)	−0.02	(0.09)	0.01	(0.10)
Religiosity			−0.18	(0.12)	−0.21 **	(0.10)	−0.20 *	(0.10)
Model fit: Chi-square = 537.68, [337, 0.00]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.07]; CFI = 0.88; SRMR = 0.06								
Mediation model 1								
Religiosity	0.46 **	(0.11)	−0.04	(0.14)	−0.07	(0.12)	−0.11	(0.12)
Presence of meaning			−0.34 **	(0.11)	−0.32 **	(0.11)	−0.20 *	(0.10)
Indirect Effect								
			−0.16 **	(0.06)	−0.15 **	(0.06)	−0.09 *	(0.05)
Model fit: Chi-square = 683.84, [446, 0.00]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.07]; CFI = 0.88; SRMR = 0.06								
Mediation model 2								
Religiosity	0.25 *	(0.13)	−0.14	(0.12)	−0.21 *	(0.11)	−0.13	(0.11)
Compassion			−0.20 *	(0.12)	−0.04	(0.12)	−0.27 **	(0.09)
Indirect Effect								
			−0.05	(0.04)	−0.01	(0.03)	−0.07	(0.04)
Model fit: Chi-square = 755.00, [479, 0.00]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.07]; CFI = 0.86; SRMR = 0.06								
Mediation model 3								
Religiosity	0.30 **	(0.12)	−0.14	(0.13)	−0.16	(0.11)	−0.16	(0.11)
Forgiveness			−0.17 *	(0.09)	−0.18 **	(0.08)	−0.14 *	(0.08)
Indirect Effect								
			−0.05	(0.03)	−0.06 *	(0.03)	−0.04	(0.03)
Model fit: Chi-square = 552.73, [354, 0.00]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.07]; CFI = 0.88; SRMR = 0.06								

	Mediator		State Depression		State Anxiety		Intended Aggression	
Variable	**β**	**(S.E.)**	**β**	**(S.E.)**	**β**	**(S.E.)**	**β**	**(S.E.)**
Mediation model 4								
Religiosity	0.32 **	(0.12)	−0.10	(0.14)	−0.13	(0.12)	−0.18	(0.11)
Gratitude			−0.26 **	(0.11)	−0.24 **	(0.11)	−0.02	(0.11)
Indirect Effect								
			−0.08	(0.05)	−0.08 *	(0.05)	−0.01	(0.04)
Model fit: Chi-square = 586.90, [383, 0.00]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.07]; CFI = 0.88; SRMR = 0.06								
Mediation model 5								
Religiosity	0.52 **	(0.14)	−0.09	(0.13)	−0.14	(0.11)	−0.20	(0.13)
Purpose of God			−0.19 **	(0.08)	−0.14	(0.09)	0.01	(0.10)
Indirect Effect								
			−0.10 **	(0.05)	−0.07	(0.05)	0.00	(0.05)
Model fit: Chi-square = 643.59, [414, 0.00]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.07]; CFI = 0.88; SRMR = 0.06								
Mediation model 6								
Religiosity	0.42 **	(0.18)	−0.06	(0.13)	−0.14	(0.11)	−0.19	(0.12)
Gratitude to God			−0.30 **	(0.12)	−0.17	(0.10)	−0.00	(0.14)
Indirect Effect								
			−0.13 *	(0.07)	−0.07	(0.05)	−0.00	(0.06)
Model fit: Chi-square = 671.95, [414, 0.00]; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.07]; CFI = 0.86; SRMR = 0.06								

[a] Chi-square statistic's degrees of freedom and *p*-value; [b] Lower and upper limits of RMSEA's 90% confidence interval; * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01 (one-tailed test). RMSEA—root mean square error of approximation; CFI—comparative fit index; SRMR—standardized root mean squared residual.

The significant effects of religiosity on state anxiety and intended aggression became non-significant, however, when virtue variables were entered individually into the second baseline model—with the exception of compassion model (see Mediation Model 2, where the effect on anxiety remained the same, −0.21, and was significant when compassion was added as mediator). In all mediation models, we found religiosity had a significant positive effect on the mediator, which in turn had a positive effect on the ultimate endogenous variables, with some exceptions. For example, religious offenders were more likely than non-religious offenders to report a sense of meaning and purpose in life (−0.46 in Mediation Model 1), which tended to decrease the probability of reporting negative emotional states (−0.34 and −0.32) and intended aggression (−0.20). On the other hand, while religiosity was found to be positively associated with compassion (0.25 in Mediation Model 2), the virtue was inversely related to state depression (−0.20) and intended aggression (−0.27), but not state anxiety (−0.04).

To test Hypothesis 2, we estimated indirect effects of religiosity on negative emotional states and intended aggression via each mediator. For instance, the indirect effects of religiosity on state depression, state anxiety, and intended aggression were mediated by a sense of meaning and purpose in life (−0.16, −0.15, and −0.09, respectively), as anticipated based on significant associations both between religiosity and presence of meaning (0.46) and between presence of meaning and the ultimate endogenous variables (−0.34, −0.32, and −0.20). The indirect effect, however, was not always statistically significant, even when the mediator had significant relationships with both religiosity and the dependent variable. Compassion is a case in point; that is, although the virtue had significant relationships with religiosity (0.25), state depression (−0.20), and intended aggression (−0.27), the indirect effects were found to not be significant (−0.05 and −0.07, respectively). This finding shows the importance of testing mediation hypotheses based on a statistical test of indirect effect, rather than separate examination of relationships involved in mediation for statistical significance.

In summary, the mediation hypothesis received full support in the presence-of-meaning model, but limited support in the virtue models; that is, the religious effects were existential and, to a lesser extent, virtuous in nature. Specifically, forgiveness and gratitude mediated only the effect of religiosity on state anxiety (−0.06 and −0.08), whereas purpose of God and gratitude to God explained only the effect on state depression (−0.10 and −0.13). We failed to find significant mediation of compassion.

Finally, we estimated the full model including all six mediators, and the results are presented in Table 3 (see Appendix B for estimated measurement models). The final model also had good fit to data, meeting the joint criterion of SRMR ≤ 0.08 and RMSEA ≤ 0.06. First, consistent with what we found in individual mediation models (Table 2), religiosity was positively associated with existential belief and all five virtues: presence of meaning (0.47), compassion (0.27), forgiveness (0.31), gratitude (0.36), purpose of God (0.53), and gratitude to God (0.43). While the two God-related virtues were expected to have relatively strong association with religiosity, it is noteworthy that religiosity had a similarly strong relationship with presence of meaning, which tends to confirm that religion is a major source of existential belief even among offenders. These results document that religious offenders are more likely to have a sense of meaning and purpose in life and virtuous characteristics than their non-religious counterparts.

Three of the six mediators were found to have significant relationships with two of the three ultimate endogenous variables. Presence of meaning and forgiveness were inversely associated with state anxiety (−0.25 and −0.17, respectively), and compassion was inversely related to intended aggression (−0.25). The inverse relationship that exists between presence of meaning and forgiveness and state anxiety tends to support the idea that (1) a sense of meaning and purpose in life is likely to decrease the chance of experiencing anxiety by avoiding existential crisis and frustration (Frankl 1984; Jang 2016; Vanhooren et al. 2017), and (2) forgiveness repairs relationships damaged by personal offenses, thereby reducing anxiety (Krause 2018).

Table 3. Final Model of State Depression, State Anxiety, and Intended Aggression with All Six Mediators Included (*n* = 163); with Standardized Coefficients.

Variable		Mediating Endogenous Variable					Ultimate Endogenous Variable		
	Pres. of Meaning	Compassion	Forgiveness	Gratitude	Purpose of God	Gratitude to God	Depression	Anxiety	Intended Aggress.
Age	0.20 **	0.10	0.07	0.11	−0.03	0.16	0.08	−0.15	−0.18 **
Black	0.15	0.15	0.02	0.32 **	0.24 **	0.16	−0.00	−0.07	0.10
Hispanic	0.16	−0.00	0.01	0.15	0.05	0.06	0.02	−0.13	0.06
EA score	−0.07	−0.14	−0.02	0.09	−0.01	0.04	−0.23 **	−0.16	−0.03
Total offense	−0.00	0.09	0.09	0.20 **	−0.02	−0.01	−0.06	0.02	0.02
Length of sent.	−0.14	0.09	0.02	−0.03	−0.07	−0.05	−0.06	−0.08	−0.05
Catholic	0.12	0.02	0.07	0.08	0.02	0.02	0.10	0.03	0.05
Other religion	0.15	0.08	0.01	−0.07	−0.04	−0.05	−0.05	0.06	0.06
No religion	0.12	0.17	0.03	0.17 **	0.03	0.13	0.09	0.01	0.06
Religiosity	0.47 **						0.10	0.02	−0.08
Pre. of meaning		0.27 *	0.31 **	0.36 **	0.53 **	0.43 **	−0.20	−0.25 *	−0.18
Compassion							−0.08	0.09	−0.25 **
Forgiveness							−0.10	−0.17 *	−0.05
Gratitude							−0.10	−0.08	−0.02
Purpose of God							−0.13	−0.13	0.01
Gratitude to God							−0.12	−0.02	0.15
						Total indirect effect			
							−0.31 **	−0.25 **	−0.11

Model fit: Chi-square = 1391.83, [920, 0.00] a; RMSEA = 0.06, [0.05, 0.06] b; CFI = 0.84; SRMR = 0.06.

a Degrees of freedom and *p*-value; b Lower and upper limits of RMSEA's 90 percent confidence interval; * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01 (one-tailed test).

We also estimated the *total* indirect effect of religiosity via all six mediators to see whether existential belief and virtues collectively mediated the religious effect on the ultimate endogenous variables. We found the total indirect effects of religiosity on state depression and anxiety were significant (-0.31 and -0.25, respectively), while the religious effect on intended aggression was not significant. This finding seems to be consistent with the earlier finding that three mediators explained the religious effects on state depression (presence of meaning, purpose of God, and gratitude to God) and state anxiety (presence of meaning, forgiveness, and gratitude), while only one did the same on intended aggression (presence of meaning); that is, the more mediators found to be significant in the individual mediation model, the more likely the significant total indirect effect. In summary, when we tested Hypothesis 2 in terms of collective mediation, we found support for two of the three dependent variables: state depression and anxiety.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Religion's salutary effect on mental health and preventive effect on crime are empirically well-established (e.g., Johnson and Jang 2010; Koenig et al. 2012), but those effects have not as often been studied among offenders as among people in the general population. This study intended not only to address the gap in prior research, but also to examine whether religious effects on mental health and aggression among offenders are attributable in part to personal virtues and existential belief in meaning and purpose in life, which religions tend to promote and enhance. While there is some evidence that religion has a virtuous and existential effect on mental health, the religion–crime relationship has not been explained in terms of existential belief and virtues, except for self-control.

In this study, we found that offenders' religiosity was positively related to a sense of meaning and purpose in life and virtuous characteristics (compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, purpose of God, and gratitude to God), which in turn tended to be inversely associated with the offenders' negative emotional states and intended aggression. When mediators were examined individually, offenders' existential belief was found to consistently explain the religious effect across all three dependent variables; that is, more religious offenders were less likely to report feelings of depression and anxiety and intention to engage in interpersonal aggression, because they were more likely to have a sense of meaning and purpose in life than their less or non-religious counterparts. This finding is in part consistent with previous research showing the psychologically detrimental impact of loss of meaning among prisoners (Vanhooren et al. 2017).

We found the religious effect to be existential and, to a lesser extent, virtuous in nature. Specifically, forgiveness and gratitude explained the effect on state anxiety, whereas God-related virtues (purpose in God and gratitude to God) mediated the religious effect on state depression. Finally, we found that virtues and existential belief collectively explained the religious effect on state depression and anxiety, whereas their combined mediation for intended aggression was not statistically significant, perhaps because the significant indirect effect via existential belief was negated by the non-significant mediation of the variables of virtue. In the final model, half of the mediators were found to have a direct effect on state anxiety (presence of meaning and forgiveness) and intended aggression (compassion), which implies that they might be proximate causes of the dependent variables relative to the other half.

While the direct effect of compassion on intended aggression tends to partly confirm the importance of self-control in explaining the effect of religiosity on crime (Desmond et al. 2013), the present study advances criminological research on religion by examining factors other than the major predictors of crime (i.e., deterrence, control, social learning, and strain), as Johnson and Jang (2010) called for. This study, however, did not examine those factors as alternatives to criminological variables that have been used to explain the religious effect, but rather as their complements. Thus, future research needs to explore relationships between traditional crime predictors and new explanatory factors in relation to the religion–crime association. For example, are the predictors more proximate causes of crime than virtues and a sense of meaning and purpose in life? Alternatively, are they independent of one another in explaining crime?

Although we focused on the explanation of religious effect, this study's potential contribution goes beyond criminological research on religion. Specifically, the evidence of existential belief and virtues (i.e., compassion and forgiveness) being directly inversely related to intended aggression is consistent with the premise of "positive criminology"; that is, the explanation of crime (or lack thereof) should include not only criminogenic factors, but also "forces and effects that are experienced positively" (Ronel and Elisha 2011, p. 307; Hallett et al. 2017), such as resilience, post-traumatic growth, exposure to positive human values (e.g., altruism), identity transformation, and reintegrative shaming. For example, a recent study shows how "hitting rock bottom" or existential crisis, like imprisonment, is likely to trigger a process of developing positive self-identity, not only cognitive and emotional but also existential, which in turn contributes to reduction in crime and deviance or criminal desistance (Jang et al. 2018; Elisha et al. 2012).

A practical implication of the present finding is that religious programs in prison are likely to help offenders rehabilitate themselves by having them find new meaning and purpose in life and become virtuous through spiritual transformation, as well as religious teachings and practices. Unless offenders find self-transcendent reasons for being hopeful and optimistic about their future (e.g., God still loves them and has purpose for their lives) and become self-motivated for change, rehabilitation efforts will remain an ongoing challenge for correctional authorities. Despite their potential benefits to prisoners, religious programs should remain voluntary for offenders in prison, regardless of their rehabilitative efficacy. Conversely, efforts to restrict voluntary participation in religious programs, whether facilitated through chaplaincy programs or community volunteers, would be a mistake.

A key methodological limitation of the current study is its use of cross-sectional data in studying causal relationships. Specifically, causal ordering between religiosity and the mediators was only partly established, as the former was operationalized by three previous measures (frequency of service attendance, prayer, and reading the sacred text) and two current ones (perceived closeness to God and importance of religion), and the latter by all current measures (i.e., levels of existential belief and virtuous characteristics at the time of our survey). Furthermore, causal ordering between the mediators (current measures) and negative emotional states (previous measures of state depression and anxiety during the last one and two weeks prior to our survey, respectively) failed to meet the necessary condition of temporal order for causality, while that between the current measures of existential belief and virtues and the future measure of intended aggression did meet the necessary condition. Future research should examine these relationships using panel data. Another limitation concerns generalizability of our findings, because we studied a convenience sample of prisons, although offenders were randomly selected from each prison. As a result, the present findings are applicable only to the three prisons. Finally, we analyzed data from male prisoners only, and thus do not know whether findings would be different for female prisoners. We call for future research that examines gender differences.

In conclusion, this study shows that religion tends to have prosocial effect on mental health and behaviors among offenders in prison, as their involvement in religion is likely to help them find meaning and purpose in life and become virtuous, which is in turn expected to reduce deviance in prison (i.e., infraction) and recidivism following release from prison. The current findings also provide evidence that offenders are existential beings in need of self-transcendent meaning and purpose in life, just like any other human being, particularly when they are in extreme adversity, like imprisonment (Frankl 1984). In addition, our study implies that offenders are in essence "moral animals in that [they] . . . not only have desires, beliefs, and feelings . . . but also the ability and disposition to form strong evaluations about [their] desires, beliefs, and feelings that hold the potential to transform them" (Smith 2003a, pp. 8–9) despite what they did in the past. Therefore, as Cullen et al. (2001, p. 268) suggest, prisons should be considered as "moral institutions" that foster virtue in inmates, while holding them accountable "to become virtuous people and to manifest moral goodness," while the "virtuous prison" would not be suitable for all offenders. Religion or faith-based programs would play an important role for such prisons.

Appendix A

Table A1. Variables Used in Analysis.

Variable	Items (Response Categories)	Factor Loading (α)
Religiosity	1. How close do you feel to God most of time? (1 = not close at all, 2 = not very close, 3 = somewhat close, 4 = pretty close, 5 = extremely close)	0.55 (0.81)
	2. How often do you <u>currently</u> attend religious services at a place of worship? (1 = never, 2 = less than once a year, 3 = once or twice a year, 4 = several times a year, 5 = once a month, 6 = 2-3 times a month, 7 = about weekly, 8 = several times a week)	0.61
	3. About how often do you <u>currently</u> pray outside of religious services? (1 = never, 2 = only on certain occasions, 3 = once a week or less, 4 = a few times a week, 5 = once a day, 6 = several times a day)	0.71
	4. In general, how important is religion to you? (1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat, 3 = fairly, 4 = very, 5 = extremely)	0.66
	5. Outside of attending religious services, about how often do you <u>currently</u> spend private time reading the Bible, Koran, Torah, or other sacred book? (1 = never, 2 = less than a year, 3 = once to several times a year, 4 = once a month, 5 = 2–3 times a month, 6 = about weekly, 7 = several times a week, 8 = everyday)	0.86

Variable	Items (Response Categories)	Factor Loading (α)
Presence of meaning	We would like you to take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can. (1 = absolutely untrue, 2 = mostly untrue, 3 = somewhat untrue, 4 = can't say true or untrue, 5 = somewhat true, 6 = mostly true, 7 = absolutely true)	
	1. I understand my life's meaning.	0.68 (0.83)
	2. My life has a clear sense of purpose.	0.70
	3. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.	0.81
	4. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	0.79
Compassion	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree)	
	1. When I see someone in a difficult situation I try to imagine how they feel.	0.63 (0.78)
	2. I feel compelled to help someone even when doing so requires me to go out of my way.	0.78
	3. It's not enough to feel sorry for someone who is in trouble. Whenever it is possible, I must also do something to help them.	0.82
	4. I feel sorry for someone who is in trouble even when they caused the problem that faces them.	0.49
	5. I feel sorry for someone even when they've something that hurts me.	0.51

Table A1. *Cont.*

Variable	Items (Response Categories)	Factor Loading (α)
Forgiveness	Please indicate how often you have done the following. (1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = often, 4 = always)	
	1. I have forgiven those who hurt me.	
Gratitude	Please indicate how much you agree with each of the statements, using the scale below. (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree)	
	1. If had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.	0.65 (0.78)
	2. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.	0.99
	3. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.	0.66
God's purpose in life	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree)	
	1. God put me in this life for a purpose.	0.86 (0.91)
	2. God has a specific plan for my life.	0.89
	3. God has reason for everything that happens to me.	0.87
Gratitude to God	Please indicate how much you agree with each of the statements. (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)	
	1. I am grateful to God for all He has done for me.	(0.74)
	2. I am grateful to God for all He has done for my family members and close friends.	

Variable	Items (Response Categories)	Factor loading (α)
State depression	During the past week, how often have you felt or experienced the following? (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often)	
	1. I felt I could not shake off the blues, even with the help of others.	0.61 (0.87)
	2. I felt depressed.	0.90
	3. I felt sad.	0.80
	4. I did not feel like eating, and my appetite was poor.	0.58
	5. I felt that everything I did was an effort.	0.51
	6. My sleep was restless.	0.74
	7. I could not get going.	0.80
	8. I felt suicidal.	0.48
State anxiety	Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often)	
	1. Feeling nervous, anxious	0.68 (0.91)
	2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0.80
	3. Trouble relaxing	0.84
	4. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still	0.78
	5. Worrying too much about different things	0.84
	6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	0.71
	7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	0.72

Appendix B

Table A2. Measurement Models: Full Model.

Item	Religiosity	Presence of Meaning	Compassion	Gratitude	God's Purpose	Gratitude to God	State Depression	State Anxiety
(1)	0.59 **	0.70 **	0.62 **	0.76 **	0.86 **	0.85 **	0.61 **	0.67 **
(2)	0.57 **	0.68 **	0.78 **	0.87 **	0.88 **	0.46 **	0.88 **	0.80 **
(3)	0.73 **	0.82 **	0.84 **		0.88 **	0.67 **	0.77 **	0.84 **
(4)	0.68 **	0.78 **	0.46 **				0.60 **	0.79 **
(5)	0.84 **		0.51 **				0.50 **	0.85 **
(6)							0.75 **	0.73 **
(7)							0.81 **	0.73 **
(8)							0.51 **	

Indicators (1) to (8) correspond to items 1 to 8 in Appendix A. ** $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed test).

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God and Guns: Examining Religious Influences on Gun Control Attitudes in the United States

Stephen M. Merino

Social and Behavioral Sciences Department, Colorado Mesa University, Grand Junction, CO 81501, USA;
smerino@coloradomesa.edu

Abstract: Mass shootings in the United States have generated significant media coverage and public concern, invigorating debates over gun control. Media coverage and academic research on gun control attitudes and reactions to mass shootings have paid little attention to the role of religion. Recent research sheds light on the complex relationship between religion and guns, including higher rates of gun ownership and stronger opposition to gun control among white evangelical Protestants. Using nationally representative survey data, this study examines the relationship between religious identity, gun ownership, and support for a range of gun control policies, including proposed remedies for preventing mass shootings. Compared with individuals from other religious traditions, evangelical Protestants are most opposed to stricter gun control laws and enforcement, even with statistical controls for gun ownership and demographic characteristics. Rather, they favor individualistic solutions and putting more emphasis on religious values in their social surroundings. I discuss how these findings reflect the cultural tools evangelical Protestants use to construct their understandings of social problems, including gun violence, and the broader implications for gun policy in the United States.

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1. Introduction

While mass shootings represent a small percentage of gun-related deaths in the United States, they generate a great deal of media coverage and public concern (Healy 2015; Greenberg et al. 2018). Mass shootings occur more frequently in the United States than in other comparable countries, with some of the most lethal incidents occurring in just the last few years. In October 2017, 56 people died in a shooting at a music festival in Las Vegas, Nevada. The next month, a shooting at a Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas claimed 26 victims. Several incidents have occurred at schools or universities: Virginia Tech in 2007, Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, and, most recently, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and Santa Fe High School in 2018. These and other shootings have intensified debate over the divisive issue of gun control. Many surveys show broad popular support for some policies, such as universal background checks for gun purchases, federal tracking of gun sales, and banning assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines (Pew Research Center 2017). Predictably, public opinion falls along political partisan lines (Pew Research Center 2017). Increasingly, public opinion reflects growing concern and interest over the issue of mental health as it relates to mass shootings (Jones et al. 2013). Surveys also point to religious cleavages in views of gun policy, with evangelical Protestants most wary of gun control (Jones et al. 2013).

Religious defenses of gun rights and calls for looser gun policies are common. After high-profile shootings, particularly in schools, content and memes shared on social media often blame a secularizing society and the decline of traditional values. One set of especially popular memes suggests that school

shootings occur because God and prayer are disallowed in public schools. Prominent political leaders and conservative media both echo and reinforce these ideas. After the shooting at Sandy Hook, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee suggested on a TV appearance, "We ask why there's violence in our schools but we've systematically removed God from our schools" (Merica 2012). Bryan Fisher of the American Family Association has argued, "we have mass school shootings because we don't have enough God on our campuses and we don't have enough guns," going on to lament the removal of prayer from schools and to call for concealed carry policies on schools and campuses (Fisher 2018). At the 2018 annual convention of the National Rifle Association (NRA), Texas governor Greg Abbott stated, "The answer (to gun violence) is to strengthen Second Amendment rights for law abiding citizens of the United States of America. It is to ensure we get guns out of the hands of criminals, and out of those mentally unfit to have guns. The problem is not guns. The problem is hearts without God. It is homes without discipline and communities without values" (Chang 2018). These and similar arguments suggest that flawed individuals, family dysfunction, and irreligious societal values are to blame for gun violence, and that looser gun control could be a defense against future violence.

Religion receives relatively less attention than other factors in discussions of gun control, including research on Americans' attitudes toward gun policies. Understandably, scholars and media analysts point to political ideology, cultural divides, race, gender, and geography as factors that shape individuals' relationships with firearms (Kleck et al. 2009; O'Brien et al. 2013; Pew Research Center 2017; Wolpert and Gimpel 1998). Recent research, however, sheds light on the complex relationship between religion, gun ownership, and gun policy preferences. Religion has an important influence on individuals' and groups' cultural tool kits, or the ways that they organize experience and evaluate reality (Swidler 1986). Since these cultural tools are transposable, or extended to a range of situations, they shape how people respond to claims about social problems and what should be done about them. The current study uses data from a nationally representative survey conducted in 2012 to examine the relationship between Americans' religious identities and their attitudes toward a range of gun-related policies and proposed solutions to address mass shootings. Following recent research, I focus primarily on white evangelical Protestants, who tend to have higher rates of gun ownership and opposition to gun control than do Americans who identify with other faiths (Zylstra 2017).

2. Religion and Guns

Several recent studies investigate the complex relationship between religion and guns. Noting that religion often appears only as a control variable in studies of gun ownership, Yamane (2016) examines how religious affiliation, theological conservatism, and religious participation are related to personal handgun ownership. Using data from the nationally representative General Social Survey (GSS), Yamane demonstrates that evangelical Protestants are more likely to own a gun compared to the general population. Net of demographic controls, however, evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely than only mainline Protestants and those who identify with "other religions," a category that consists of mostly non-Christian faiths. Theological conservatism is positively associated with handgun ownership, which the author suggests could reflect a sort of "risk reduction" strategy, given the link between theological conservatism and lower generalized trust. Finally, the study finds that religious involvement is negatively associated with personal handgun ownership.

Mencken and Froese (2017) examine the symbolic functions of gun ownership. Using the nationally representative Baylor Religion Survey, they develop an eight-item "gun empowerment" index that measures an owner's level of moral and emotional attachment to guns. Items measured, for example, the degree to which gun ownership makes the respondent feel safe, responsible, confident, more in control, and more valuable to others. The relationship between gun empowerment and religion is complex. Self-estimated religiosity decreases gun empowerment, while church attendance has a curvilinear relationship with gun empowerment. Gun owners who attend somewhat regularly report

greater empowerment than those who never attend, but this effect reverses for weekly attenders. Furthermore, in multivariate analyses, religiosity is associated with support for banning semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity clips. They argue that more devout individuals may have less time or need for guns, while also being wary of excessive violence and force. Pew Research Center surveys also find that more regularly attending Americans are less likely to own a gun. However, more religiously committed gun owners are more likely than less committed owners to belong to the NRA (Zylstra 2017).

Stroope and Tom (2017) also examine the link between religion and guns. Using nationally representative data from the Add Health study, they show that evangelical Protestant adolescents in the United States are more likely to have easy access to a gun at home compared with adolescents in other religious groups. They discuss several possible reasons for evangelical Protestants' attachment to and ownership of guns. They note an evangelical Protestant emphasis on individual autonomy and self-sufficiency. This relates to gun ownership and views of gun policy in at least two ways. First, this emphasis corresponds with a preference for less government involvement and interference in individuals' and families' lives. Second, it leads evangelical Protestants to make dispositional rather than situational attributions for wrongdoing (Grasmick and McGill 1994). In other words, evangelicals emphasize that individuals are to blame or credit for outcomes, rather than broader social circumstances or social structural factors. Presumably, this emphasis informs how evangelical Protestants think about gun violence and gun control as well. Celinska (2007) situates the issues of gun ownership and gun control attitudes in the struggle between individualism and collectivism in American society. Individualists emphasize self-reliance and personal achievement and possess a lack of faith in the institutionalized, collective means of security. Using GSS data, the author finds that Protestants score higher than others on two separate indexes of individualism, while Protestant affiliation and individualism are both predictive of gun ownership and opposition to a gun permit requirement.

Stroope and Tom (2017) point to still more factors that could explain the link between evangelical Protestants and guns. A cultural emphasis on masculinity and traditional gender roles could positively incline adherents toward gun ownership, informed by the position that a man's responsibility is the protection of others, particularly family. Additionally, evangelical Protestants' reading of American history leads them to see divine influence in the founding of the nation and in the Constitution. Thus, the Second Amendment, interpreted as ensuring the right to personal gun ownership, is granted religious legitimation and is intended to guarantee other rights, such as freedom of religion. Finally, a tension between evangelical Protestants and secular institutions in society contributes to their stance on firearms. A wariness toward the information provided by secular educational institutions and scientific research could incline evangelical Protestants to discount expert recommendations regarding gun control and safety procedures.

Drawing on the cultural tool kit metaphor, Emerson et al. (1999) shed light on how evangelical Protestants construct social problems and possible solutions. While their research focuses on how these cultural tools shape evangelical Protestants' understandings of inequality, particularly racial inequality, they also argue that these cultural tools are transposable to a variety of issues and situations. One important cultural tool is an emphasis on "accountable freewill individualism," a cultural trait noted by other scholars as well. From this view, people are individually accountable for their own actions—accountable to both other people and to God. Complementing the emphasis on individualism is the cultural tool of "anti-structuralism," or a profound wariness toward attributions of individual or social problems that point to social structure, or the "system," as responsible, rather than individual choices. Finally, evangelical Protestants emphasize "relationalism" by assigning great importance to interpersonal relationships. This is apparent in a "strong emphasis on family relationships, friendships, church relationships, and other forms of interpersonal connections. Healthy relationships encourage people to make right choices. As such, white evangelical Protestants often see social problems as rooted in poor relationships or the negative influence of significant others" (Emerson et al. 1999, p. 401). Thus, they favor a strategy of personal influence, particularly religious influence, as a means of improving social relationships and addressing social problems.

The aforementioned cultural tools of evangelical Protestants likely shape their attributions of gun violence, including mass shootings, as well as their preferred solutions. Reflecting their anti-structural and relationship-centered understanding of social problems, evangelical Protestants are wary of laws or policies designed to restrict firearm access or regulate them further. Evangelical Protestants are likely to favor solutions that do not target private gun ownership. They are also likely to attribute gun violence and mass shootings to the individual shooters or to relational factors like parenting or family relationships. While some scholars argue that evangelical Protestants wish to see their religious values inform public policy (Wald 2003), Smith (1998) asserts that evangelicals favor a "personal influence strategy." Specifically, they " . . . see themselves as uniquely possessing a distinctively effective means of social change: working through personal relationships to allow God to transform human hearts from the inside-out, so that all ensuing social change will be thorough and long-lasting" (Smith 1998, p. 188). This view of social change is apparent in many of evangelical Protestants' responses to gun violence and mass shootings, in calls for cultural changes that start with individual action and a greater presence of religion in schools and other institutions.

Adherents of other religious traditions differ from white evangelical Protestants in their relationship to guns and gun policy. Mainline Protestants are distinct from evangelical Protestants in their comparatively modernist theology and generally more moderate stances on social and moral issues. While mainline Protestants' gun ownership rates tend to be higher than those in non-Protestant faiths (Yamane 2016), they tend to be more open to stricter gun laws (Jones et al. 2013) and have historically been more likely than evangelical Protestants to support social reforms intended to address social problems. African American Protestants are less likely than their white counterparts to own a gun and more likely to support stricter gun laws. Black Protestant support of gun control stems partly from black communities' direct experience with gun violence. African Americans are more likely than other Americans to know someone who has been shot (Pew Research Center 2017). These factors make black churches and their adherents more likely to engage in gun control activism as well. The African American Church Gun Control Coalition, for example, brings together numerous predominantly black denominations to work for local and national reforms (Banks 2013).

Beyond Protestants, other notable differences exist. For example, Catholics' well-known pro-life ethic may apply broadly, including support for stricter gun laws to curb gun violence. Catholics who identify as "pro-life" are far more likely than like-minded evangelicals to support more gun control (Jones et al. 2013). In addition, gun control has institutional support from the Catholic church. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has publicly called for a range of gun control measures, including expanding background checks, banning certain high-powered weapons, and increased safety measures (Catholic News Agency 2017). In contrast, gun control tends to have less institutional support from predominantly white evangelical denominations, like the Southern Baptist Convention (Farmer 2017). Interfaith efforts at gun control exist as well, typically bringing together mainline Protestants, Catholics, black Protestants, and non-Christian communities like Muslims and Jews. For example, a campaign in the Northeast called Heeding God's Call focuses on local and legislative remedies for reducing gun violence (The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence 2018).

Using national survey data, I examine how adherents of major religious groups evaluate a range of gun policies, particularly proposals to make gun control laws stricter, more strictly enforce existing laws, or loosen existing laws. I also examine how respondents think specifically about mass shootings and what proposed remedies they find most appealing.

3. Data and Methods

The current study uses data from the 2012 PRRI/Religion News Survey. The survey was designed by the Public Religion Research Institute. Survey results were based on bilingual (Spanish and English) random digit dialing (RDD) telephone interviews conducted August 8–12, 2012 by professional interviewers under the direction of Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS). Interviews were conducted among a random sample of 1006 adults 18 years of age or older in the continental

United States (304 respondents were interviewed on a cell phone). The data set was downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives website (www.TheARDA.com). The recommended weight variable is used for all analyses.

The key independent variable is religious tradition. On the survey, respondents were asked, "What is your present religion, if any? Are you Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, something else, or nothing in particular?" Respondents who indicated that they are "Protestant" or "Christian/Non-denominational Christian" (*N* = 487) were also asked, "Would you describe yourself as a 'born-again' or 'Evangelical Christian,' or not?" Response options were "yes" or "no." I created a new variable that places respondents into one of several major religious groups, modeled after the widely used RELTRAD scheme (Steensland et al. 2000). Non-black respondents who identified as "born-again" or "Evangelical Christian" were coded as "evangelical Protestant" (the resulting category is 90% non-Hispanic white). Non-black respondents who did not identify as such were coded as "mainline Protestant." Black respondents who identified as "Protestant" or "Christian" were coded as "black Protestant." The new variable also included the categories of "Catholic," "None" to indicate respondents who selected "nothing in particular," and "Other religions" for respondents who identified as anything else. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Weighted descriptive statistics [a].

Independent variables	
Evangelical Protestant	0.24
Mainline Protestant	0.15
Black Protestant	0.10
Catholic	0.22
Other religions	0.09
None	0.20
Religious service attendance	
Never	0.16
Seldom	0.16
A few times a year	0.18
Once or twice a month	0.14
Once a week	0.24
More than once a week	0.12
Conservative	0.41
Moderate	0.33
Liberal	0.25
Female	0.51
Non-Hispanic white	0.67
Age	46.1
College degree	0.28
Married	0.47
Rural	0.19
Northeast	0.19
Midwest	0.22
South	0.37
West	0.23
Dependent variables	
Owns gun or gun in household	0.42
Favors stricter gun control laws	0.54
Favors stricter enforcement of existing laws	0.68
Favors loosening existing gun control laws	0.27
Supports concealed carry in churches	0.21
Most important for preventing mass shootings	
Stricter gun control laws and enforcement	0.28
Better mental health screening and support	0.24
Stricter security for public gatherings	0.15
Allow more citizens to carry guns	0.12
More emphasis on God, morality in school and society	0.21

[a] Proportions and means are reported.

Several additional independent variables were used in multivariate analyses. Religious service attendance was measured with the following item: "Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services . . . more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?" I reverse coded the six-item scale such that higher values indicate more frequent attendance. Political orientation was measured with the following item: "Generally speaking, would you describe your political views as . . . very conservative, somewhat conservative, moderate, somewhat liberal, or very liberal?" For regression analyses, I created dummy variables for conservative (1 = "very conservative" or "somewhat conservative") and moderate (1 = "moderate"), leaving respondents who identify as liberal as the reference group. Demographic control variables include sex (1 = female), race (1 = non-Hispanic white), age, whether the respondent has a college degree (1 = four-year degree or more), marital status (1 = married), whether the respondent lives outside a metro area (1 = rural), and region (dummy variables for the Northeast and Midwest, and West; South is the reference group).

A measure of gun ownership is used both as a dependent variable and as an independent variable in multivariate analyses. Respondents were asked, "Do you or does anyone in your home own a gun?" Response options were "yes, self," "yes, someone in household," "yes, both you and someone else in your household," and "no." I recoded the variable to indicate whether anyone in the household, respondent or otherwise, owns a gun (coded 1) or not (coded 0).

Measures of support for proposed gun control policies serve as dependent variables. Respondents were asked, "Now, I'd like to get your views on some issues that are being discussed in the country today. All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose . . . ?" Respondents were then presented with three items: "Passing stricter gun control laws," "Stricter enforcement of existing gun control laws," and "Loosening current gun control laws." To simplify bivariate and multivariate analyses, I created binary variables for each item by collapsing "strongly favor" and "favor" (coded 1) and "oppose" and "strongly oppose" (coded 0). Given the current study's focus on religion and guns, I also use a measure of support for concealed carry of firearms in places of worship. Respondents were asked, "In general, do you think people should be allowed or not allowed to carry concealed guns in a church or place of worship?" Response options were "yes, should be allowed" and "no, should not be allowed."

Finally, I use a measure of what respondents consider to be the most important remedy for preventing future mass shootings. Respondents were asked, "What do you think is the most important thing that could be done to prevent mass shooting from occurring in the United States?" Response options were "stricter gun control laws and enforcement," "better mental health screening and support," "stricter security measures for public gatherings," "allow more private citizens to carry guns for protection," and "put more emphasis on God and morality in school and society." In the results that follow, I present both bivariate analysis of how religious preference relates to each dependent variable, as well as logistic regression analyses predicting support for each gun control policy. For the item on preventing mass shooting, I perform a multinomial logistic regression with "stricter gun control laws and enforcement" as the reference category. This category is meaningful because a plurality of respondents chose it and the current study is interested in examining specifically evangelical Protestants' support for solutions that do not involve restrictions on firearms.

4. Results

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for each of the dependent variables. Forty-two percent of respondents report either owning a gun themselves or that another household member owns a gun. Support for gun control is mixed. A slim majority of respondents (54%) either favor or strongly favor stricter gun control laws. Stricter enforcement of existing laws is more popular, with 68% of respondents favoring this proposal. Loosening existing gun control laws is less popular. About a quarter (27%) of respondents favor or strongly favor loosening current laws. Allowing concealed carry of guns in churches is relatively unpopular, with only 21% of respondents in support. Finally,

when presented with five proposals to reduce the occurrence of mass shootings, respondents are divided. A plurality of respondents (28%) think that "stricter gun control laws and enforcement" is the "most important thing" for preventing mass shootings. Slightly fewer respondents selected "better mental health screening and support" (24%) or "put more emphasis on God and morality in schools and society" (21%) as the most important actions. Less popular are "stricter security measures for public gatherings" (15%) and "allow more private citizens to carry guns for protection" (12%).

Table 2 reports data on gun ownership and support for gun control proposals by religious tradition. Only among evangelical Protestants do a majority of respondents report having a gun in the household (57%). Nearly half of mainline Protestants (49%) and adherents of "other religions" (45%) report gun ownership. Only 37% of those with no religion report having a gun, followed by 32% of Catholics and 30% of black Protestants. Support for passing stricter gun control laws varies widely by religious group. Evangelicals are least likely to favor stricter gun control, at only 37%. Black Protestants are most supportive (76%), followed by Catholics (64%) and religious "nones" (61%). Mainline Protestants and those of "other religions" are both about equally split between favoring and opposing. Less variation exists in support for stricter enforcement of existing gun control laws. A solid majority of respondents in every religious tradition favor more enforcement, with evangelical and mainline Protestants both slightly less supportive. Evangelical Protestants are most in favor of loosening existing gun laws, but only 37% register support. Adherents of "other religions" are least supportive (17%), while between 23–28% of respondents in the remaining traditions favor a loosening of gun laws. Finally, while evangelical Protestants are most likely to support concealed carry of guns in churches, only 29% do so. Twenty-four percent of mainline Protestants support it, as do 21% of those in "other religions." Among Catholics, black Protestants, and those with no religion, less than 20% expressed support for concealed carry in churches. Finally, note that for all but stricter enforcement of existing gun control laws was the relationship between religious tradition and the variable in question statistically significant, according to chi-square tests.

Table 2. Gun ownership and support for gun control by religious tradition.

	Self or other household member owns gun[a]	Favors passing stricter gun control laws[a]	Favors stricter enforcement of existing laws	Favor loosening existing gun control laws[a]	Supports concealed carry of guns in churches[a]
Evang. Protestant	57%	37%	63%	37%	29%
Mainline Protestant	49%	48%	63%	23%	24%
Black Protestant	30%	76%	74%	23%	14%
Catholic	32%	64%	72%	23%	14%
Other religions	45%	46%	73%	17%	21%
None	37%	61%	72%	28%	19%

[a] Chi-square test statistically significant

The relationship between religious tradition and respondents' favored remedies to address mass shootings is examined in Table 3. Among black Protestants, Catholics, adherents of "other religions," and the religiously unaffiliated, a plurality of respondents indicated that stricter gun control laws and enforcement are the most important thing to do. Black Protestants were most likely to do so (46%). Notably, only 14% of evangelical Protestants selected this option, and 25% of mainline Protestants. A plurality of evangelical Protestants (36%) indicated that putting more emphasis on God and morality is the most important, while a plurality of mainline Protestants (34%) selected better mental health policies as the most important. Notably, less than 20% of respondents in every other religious tradition suggested that putting more emphasis on God and morality is the most important way to prevent mass shootings. Allowing more citizens to carry guns is most popular among evangelical Protestants (16%), mainline Protestants (15%), and those of "other religions" (19%). Notably, only 2% of black Protestants and 7% of Catholics favored this remedy. Better mental health policies and stricter security measures for public gatherings show less variation by religious tradition.

Table 3. "Most important" for preventing mass shootings by religious tradition.

	Stricter gun control laws, enforcement	Better mental health screening and support	Stricter security measures for gatherings	Allow more private citizens to carry guns	Put more emphasis on God, morality in schools, society
Evang. Protestant	14%	20%	15%	16%	**36%**
Mainline Protestant	25%	**34%**	12%	15%	14%
Black Protestant	**46%**	15%	21%	2%	17%
Catholic	**34%**	21%	19%	7%	17%
Other religions	**35%**	21%	10%	19%	16%
None	**32%**	24%	16%	12%	16%

Note: Bold text indicates most common response for each group

Table 4 reports estimated odds ratios from a series of logistic regression analyses predicting gun ownership and support for gun control proposals. Before adding other independent variables to the model, evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely than black Protestants, Catholics, and the religiously unaffiliated to report that they or someone in their household owns a gun (not shown in Table 4). In the full model, however, religious tradition is no longer a significant predictor. Conservatives, non-Hispanic whites, married respondents, and rural respondents are all significantly more likely to report gun ownership. Women are less likely than men to report owning a gun.

Table 4. Estimated odds ratios predicting gun ownership and support for gun control.

	Self or other household member owns gun	Favors passing stricter gun control laws	Favors stricter enforcement of existing laws	Favor loosening existing gun control laws	Supports concealed carry of guns in churches
Religious tradition[a]					
Mainline Protestant	0.79	1.23	0.91	0.60[+]	0.94
Black Protestant	1.75	2.47*	1.04	0.73	1.70
Catholic	0.69	2.17*	1.06	0.74	0.71
Other religions	1.04	1.21	1.55	0.43*	0.76
None	0.66	1.97*	1.08	0.96	0.89
Relig. attendance	0.94	0.92	1.00	1.10[+]	1.02
Conservative[b]	1.58*	0.34**	0.37**	1.60*	3.12**
Moderate[b]	1.30	0.59**	0.45**	0.90	1.16
Female	0.64**	2.39**	1.50*	0.49**	0.44**
White	3.53**	0.56*	0.64*	1.42	2.64**
Age	1.00	1.02*	1.01*	0.99	0.98**
College degree	1.04	1.56*	1.70*	0.42**	1.02
Married	1.70**	1.04	1.40[+]	0.66*	1.46[+]
Rural	2.41**	0.96	0.84	0.99	0.71
Region[c]					
Northeast	0.51*	1.59[+]	2.15*	0.45**	0.38**
Midwest	1.49*	0.78	1.76*	0.82	0.93
West	1.26	0.51**	0.94	0.92	1.18
Owns gun	--	0.24**	0.42**	1.74*	2.81**

[a] Reference group is evangelical Protestant

[b] Reference group is liberal

[c] Reference group is South

[+] *p*-value < .10; * *p*-value < .05; ** *p*-value < .01

Compared with southerners, those residing in the Northeast are less likely, while those living in the West are more likely to report gun ownership in the home. As for favoring stricter gun control laws, before demographic controls, evangelical Protestants are significantly less likely compared with black Protestants, Catholics, and the unaffiliated (not shown). The gap between evangelical Protestants

and mainline Protestants approaches significance (*p*-value = 0.067). Notably, in the full model, black Protestants, Catholics, and "nones" are still significantly more likely than evangelical Protestants to favor stricter gun control. Predictably, conservatives and moderates are less likely than liberals to favor stricter gun control, as are whites, gun owners, and those residing in the West. Women and those with a college degree are more supportive than men and those with less than college degree.

Before adding control variables, respondents in every tradition but mainline Protestants are more likely than evangelical Protestants to favor stricter enforcement of existing gun control laws (not shown). In the full model shown in Table 4, however, there are no differences by religious tradition. Conservatives and moderates are less likely than liberals to favor stricter enforcement, while whites and gun owners are also less supportive. Women and the college-educated are more supportive than men and those without a degree, while those in the Northeast or Midwest are more supportive than those in the South. When considering support for looser gun control laws, before adding other independent variables, evangelical Protestants are significantly more supportive than respondents in every other religious tradition (not shown). In the full model shown in Table 4, however, only those of "other religions" differ significantly, while the difference between mainline Protestants and evangelicals approaches significance (*p*-value = 0.069). Conservatives and gun owners are more likely than liberals and non-gun owners to favor loosening gun control laws. Women and those with a college degree are less likely than men and those with less than a college degree to favor such a loosening of gun laws. Finally, before adding additional variables, evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely than black Protestants, Catholics, and the unaffiliated to support concealed carry of guns in churches (not shown). In the full model, however, evangelical Protestants' support for concealed carry does not differ from any other tradition. Once again, conservatives, whites, and gun owners are more supportive, while women are less supportive. Those residing in the Northeast are less likely than those in South to support concealed carry in churches.

Table 5 contains estimated odds ratios from a multinomial logistic regression analysis predicting respondents' choice of the "most important thing" that can be done to prevent mass shootings. "Stricter gun control laws and enforcement" is the reference category in the model. Thus, odds ratios are interpreted as the likelihood of choosing each option over stricter gun control laws. Controlling for a range of other factors, black Protestants, those in "other religions," and those with no religion are significantly less likely than evangelical Protestants to indicate that better mental health screening and support are the most important over stricter gun control. Respondents who attend religious services more frequently are also less likely to do so. Conservatives and whites are more likely than liberals and non-whites to select better mental health policy as the most important to do instead of stricter gun control. Mainline Protestants, those in "other religions," and the unaffiliated are all significantly less likely than evangelicals to indicate that stricter security measures at public gatherings are the most important remedy instead of stricter gun control. Whites and gun owners are more likely than non-whites and those who don't own a gun to favor stricter security measures at public gatherings over stricter gun control. Net of other independent variables, only black Protestants (*p*-value = 0.08) and Catholics are less likely than evangelical Protestants to favor more citizens carrying guns as the most important remedy for mass shootings. Political orientation, race, and gun ownership are especially strong predictors of support for this proposal. Conservatives and moderates are far more likely than liberals to favor more citizens carrying guns as a means of preventing mass shooting, and whites are much more likely than non-whites. Women are significantly less likely than men to favor more citizens carrying guns.

The final column of Table 5 shows which variables predict selecting "put more emphasis on God and morality in schools and society" over stricter gun control as the most important thing that can be done to prevent mass shootings. Net of all other independent variables, evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely than respondents in every other religious tradition to indicate that more emphasis on God and morality is the most important thing that can be done. Those who attend religious services more frequently are also more likely to favor putting more emphasis on God and

morality. Conservatives and married individuals are more likely to do so compared with liberals and those who are not married. Living in a rural area and being a gun owner approach significance in terms of being predictors of favoring more emphasis on God and morality. Finally, those with a college degree are less likely than those with less education to suggest that this is the most important intervention instead of stricter gun control laws.

Table 5. Estimated odds ratios predicting what is "most important" for preventing mass shootings (reference category: "stricter gun control laws and enforcement").

	Better mental health screening and support	Stricter security measures for gatherings	Allow more private citizens to carry guns	Put more emphasis on God, morality in schools, society
Religious tradition[a]				
Mainline Protestant	0.91	0.46*	0.60	0.29**
Black Protestant	0.41*	0.67	0.20+	0.22**
Catholic	0.52*	0.59	0.39*	0.26**
Other religions	0.38*	0.25**	0.88	0.30**
None	0.38*	0.40*	0.60	0.48+
Religious attendance	0.85*	0.93	0.93	1.24**
Conservative[b]	1.74*	1.01	8.75**	2.55**
Moderate[b]	1.29	1.01	4.93**	1.55
Female	0.78	1.03	0.39**	0.86
White	1.62*	1.82*	3.56**	1.25
Age	0.98*	0.99	0.99	1.00
College degree	0.92	0.74	0.70	0.48**
Married	1.46+	0.84	1.03	1.61*
Rural	1.05	0.93	1.11	1.65+
Region[c]				
Northeast	0.74	0.74	0.19**	0.55+
Midwest	0.92	0.86	1.20	0.94
West	1.06	0.73	1.20	0.71
Owns gun	1.40	1.88*	4.44**	1.54+

[a] Reference group is evangelical Protestant

[b] Reference group is liberal

[c] Reference group is South

+ *p*-value < .10; * *p*-value < .05; ** *p*-value < .01

5. Discussion

Media analysts and researchers often depict the gun control debate as stemming from deep cultural and political divides between rural and urban Americans, gun owners and non-gun owners, whites and non-whites, and liberals and conservatives. The current study finds that each of these variables relates to gun control attitudes in predictable ways. My findings also suggest that religion contributes to individuals' understandings of gun violence and views of gun control. Evangelical Protestants consistently oppose stricter gun control laws and even support looser gun laws. In contrast, Americans in other religious traditions, particularly black Protestants, Catholics, and the nonreligious, consistently favor stricter gun control laws. Notably, these group differences persist even when numerous demographic characteristics are controlled for, along with gun ownership. Adherents of different religious groups in the United States also have contrasting views of mass shootings. Evangelical Protestants are much less likely than those in other religious traditions to view stricter gun control as an important way to prevent mass shootings. As Table 5 shows, evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely than those in other traditions to favor other remedies, particularly improving mental health treatment or infusing religion into schools and society.

These findings are consistent with the evangelical cultural tool kit described by Emerson et al. (1999): an emphasis on personal responsibility, anti-structuralism evident in their attributions of social problems and opposition to government intervention in citizens' lives, and a belief that healthy and religiously-based relationships are most effective at addressing social ills. Stroope and Tom (2017) argue that an emphasis on "rugged masculinity" and religious legitimation for the Second Amendment also contribute to a link between evangelical Protestants and guns. This is not to suggest that other Americans do not also possess these cultural tools. Individualism and anti-structuralism, for example, are widely held schemas among Americans. Rather, they are uniquely strong elements of evangelical Protestants' worldview and therefore contribute to how they view social problems generally, and gun violence specifically in this case. In contrast, my findings suggest that black Protestants, Catholics, the nonreligious, and to a lesser extent, mainline Protestants, tend to be more supportive of stricter gun control laws and enforcement as a means of reducing gun violence. Furthermore, these differences in support for gun control are not entirely attributable to race, education level, political ideology, region, gun ownership, and other variables accounted for in the multivariate analyses.

Religious service attendance displayed limited predictive power as a variable in the current study. In the multinomial logistic regression analysis, attendance was negatively associated with choosing "better mental health screening and support" over "stricter gun control laws and enforcement," and positively associated with "put more emphasis on God and morality in schools and society" as the most important thing to do to prevent mass shootings. Other studies have suggested a complex relationship between religiosity and gun ownership and gun policy preferences. More frequent attenders may have less attachment to or ownership of guns, relative to less frequent attenders (Mencken and Froese 2017; Pew Research Center 2017). More research is needed, however, to examine how religiosity influences Americans' relationships with firearms.

The current study has limitations. First, the relatively short survey and small sample size limit what data analyses can be performed. There are also few religion items on the survey, making it difficult to probe more complex questions about the link between religion and gun control attitudes. Second, the survey was conducted in 2012. Some of the most lethal mass shootings in American history have occurred in the years since, generating new media coverage and concern over the issue. There is some evidence of a shift in gun control attitudes in the United States, with growing support for new gun restrictions, even among Republicans (Khalid 2018) and evangelical Protestants (Jones et al. 2013). Future research should continue to take religion seriously as a contributor to Americans' gun control attitudes and probe for factors that mediate the relationship between religious tradition and support for or opposition to gun control. A recent study demonstrates that gun owners and non-gun owners have different attributions for mass shootings, with gun owners inclined to blame popular culture and parenting and non-gun owners more likely to blame the availability of guns (Joslyn and Haider-Markel 2017). Evangelical Protestants, too, may be more likely to have attributions that reflect their concern with individual responsibility and interpersonal relationships.

Research suggests that availability of guns and rates of gun ownership are positively related to gun-related deaths, including homicides and suicides (Harvard Injury Control Research Center 2018). While experts argue that more research is needed, there is some evidence that stricter gun control reduces gun-related injuries and deaths (Santaella-Tenorio et al. 2016; Webster et al. 2014), and could do so in the United States (Cook and Goss 2014; RAND 2018). Furthermore, experts argue that the growing focus on the role of mental health may be somewhat misguided and misleading, as gun violence committed by those with mental illness represents only a very small percentage of overall gun violence and the United States does not have higher rates of mental illness than other countries (Knoll and Annas 2016; Kodjak 2018). As religious influences steer Americans' understandings of gun violence toward individualistic and cultural factors and away from effective gun policies, building political support for reform will be difficult. Researchers, activists, and religious leaders should explore ways to engage with religious communities in the United States on this contentious issue.

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Religion and Crime Studies: Assessing What Has Been Learned

Melvina Sumter *, Frank Wood, Ingrid Whitaker and Dianne Berger-Hill

Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VI 23529, USA;
fwood@odu.edu (F.W.); iwhitake@odu.edu (I.W.); dbergerh@odu.edu (D.B.)
* Correspondence: msumter@odu.edu

Abstract: This paper provides a review of the literature that assesses the relationship between religion and crime. Research on the relationship between religion and crime indicates that certain aspects of religion reduces participation in criminal activity. A review of the literature indicates religion reduces participation in criminal activity in two broad ways. First, religion seems to operate at a micro level. Studies have pointed to how religious beliefs are associated with self-control. Second, researches have examined the social control aspects of religion. In particular, how factors such as level of participation and social support from such participation reduces criminal activity. Likewise, findings suggest that although there has been a sizable number of studies and diverse interests of researchers examining the religion/crime nexus, the research has not identified which aspects of religion have the strongest influence on crime reduction. In addition, the specific ways in which these factors are associated with crime reduction have not been comprehensively identified. Similarly, more than 40 years of empirical scholarship suggests that religion suppresses criminal behavior. Nevertheless, these findings remain controversial as the literature neither accentuates the mechanisms of religion responsible for suppressing criminal behavior, nor does the literature reject the spuriousness of the religion-crime association relative to mediating effects of self-control and social control. Finally, our review suggests that methodological constraints infringe on the capacity for sociological and criminological to accurately ascertain the validity of the religion-crime nexus, often generating mixed or inconclusive findings on the religion-crime association. Our paper concludes with recommendations for future empirical scholarship that examines the religion-crime nexus.

Keywords: religion; crime; methodology; spurious; inverse

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1. Introduction

"The devil made me do it!" could have been the mantra of many offenders during the era of demonological theories of crime. It was during this era, the late 17th and early 18th centuries, in which the offender was "viewed as a sinner who was possessed by demons or damned by other worldly forces" (Hagan 2017, p. 106). Since then, religion has played an important role in the way Western society has responded to offenders. From the 4th Century AD through the middle ages, no major distinction was made between civil and criminal offenses (Sumter 1999). Accordingly, sanctions for misconduct were derived from Roman Catholic teaching, arranged to accord with the Biblical command of an eye for an eye (Sumter 1999). Hence, religion pervaded all aspects of life during colonial America, a time where early settlers believed that God pre-determined some people to become criminals (Newman 1985). It is not surprising when reformers of later eras invented the penitentiary, probation, and parole, they structured their inventions as vehicles where offenders could go to atone for their sinful ways and embrace a spiritually right life (Clear and Sumter 2002; Sumter 1999; Sumter and Clear 2002). Hence, throughout the following centuries, including the

20th century and well into 21st century, many sociologists have nurtured the belief that attachment to and participation in religious events tend to suppress criminal behavior (Adamczyk et al. 2017; Brauer et al. 2013; Clear and Sumter 2002; Corcoran et al. 2017; Desmond et al. 2011; Ellison and George 1994; Hirschi and Stark 1969; Hoskin et al. 2017; Johnson et al. 2001, 2000; Lee 2006; Petts 2009; Regnerus 2003; Roberts et al. 2011; Schroeder et al. 2017; Sturgis and Baller 2012; Ulmer and Harris 2013; Sumter 1999). Eventually, the suppression of criminal behavior by religion became a focal point of empirical scholarship.

Specifically, the landmark study by Travis Hirschi and Rodney Stark, "Hellfire and Delinquency," pioneered empirical scholarship into the relationship between religion and crime (1969). Grounded in the Durkheimian discourse, which conceives of religion as essential to "ensuring and maintaining conformity to social norms," Hirschi and Stark (1969) found no difference between frequent church attendees and those who did not attend church frequently and their propensities for engaging in criminal behavior (p. 202). Furthermore, Hirschi and Stark (1969) found no difference between propensities to engage in criminal behavior relative to students who believed in the Devil and life after death and those who did not believe in an afterlife or supernatural world. Nevertheless, in his reconceptualization of "Hellfire and Delinquency," Stark (1996) argued that sustaining religion through interaction and fostering a collective consensus on the importance and value of religion fosters conformity to societal norms and reinforces religion as a structural safeguard against crime. Subsequent empirical scholarship, expanding over 40 years, have examined the relationship between religion and crime, often generating inconclusive and contradictory findings.

In general, available empirical evidence suggests an inverse relationship between religion and crime. According to over 40 years of empirical research summarizing the relationship between religion and crime, findings indicate that religion decreases propensities for criminal behavior (Adamczyk et al. 2017; Baier and Wright 2001; Johnson et al. 2000). Still, though this relationship seems viable, other research has shown that religion has little effect on criminal offending, instead suggesting that the religion-crime relationship is spurious (Hirschi and Stark 1969; Cochran et al. 1994; Kerley et al. 2011; Brauer et al. 2013). Though popularized as being inverse, the relationship between religion and crime within criminological and sociological scholarship remains conversational, given divergent conceptions of religion and how religion is often conceptualized (Sumter 1999). This inconsistency in framing religion undermines the ability of criminological and sociological research to empirically assess the religion-crime relationship. As Sumter (1999) has documented, the measure one uses to determine a person's level of religiousness is an important factor in determining the relationship between religion and criminal behavior. Therefore, "multiple dimensional measures of religiousness are generally considered preferable to unidimensional measures because they tap a variety of aspects of religiousness beyond mere participation" (Clear et al. 1992, p. 10). As noted by Clear and Sumter (2002), a multitude of social science disciplines have been limited in their ability to successfully define and operationally measure the core meaning of religion. This methodological constraint presents a unique challenge for empirical scholarship examining the religion-crime relationship, as researchers are inclined to utilize proxy measures that approximate or barely tap into the underlining core meaning of religion as a social construct. Nevertheless, two leading conceptions of religion exist which draw on the works of Durkheim and Marx. In particular, Durkheim conceives of religion as a set of sacred beliefs and rituals that foster a moral community or collective of willing members that adhere to the fundamental beliefs and practices, being themselves integrated in the wider social fabric and regulated toward pro-social behaviors. For Marx, religion represents an ideology used to legitimate existing social arrangements that are oppressive to the masses and function to perpetuate inequality and stratification. Though different conceptions, both Durkheim and Marx converge in their relegation of religion as a mechanism of social control. Hence, religion is a set of beliefs and rituals that are socialized and reinforced to a collective of individuals and groups and serve to control decisions and behaviors. To further expand the religion-crime relationship, self-control and social control have been advanced as potential moderators.

Available research examining the relationship between self-control, religion, and crime converge in their findings that low levels of self-control significantly increased criminal/deviant behavior (Welch et al. 2006; Laird et al. 2011). For instance, Laird et al. (2011) found that the more meaningful their religious beliefs and the more youth attended church services, the less likely youth were to have low self-control, thus the lower their propensity for anti-social behavior. However, additional literature highlights the independent nature between key social variables and self-control in predicting criminal/deviant behavior (Kerley et al. 2011; Antonaccio and Tittle 2008). In examining the relationship between an individuals' morality, self-control, and propensity for criminal behavior, Antonaccio and Tittle (2008) found that while morality and self-control exerted significant reductionist effects on criminal/deviant propensities, morality exerted the greatest effects in lowering propensities for engaging in criminal/deviant behavior. Such findings indicate that self-control alone is not responsible in explaining criminal offending and additional variables should be considered in explaining the religion-crime relationship.

For social control, available research indicates that higher levels of religiosity contributes to higher levels of social control which reduces the likelihood for criminal offending (Desmond et al. 2008; Johnson et al. 2001). For example, Desmond et al. (2008) found that the stronger youths' commitment to their religious beliefs, partly through their degree of involvement in religious activities and/or practices that socialized the moral transgressions of criminal behavior, the greater their disproval of delinquency and the lower their interaction with delinquency-affirming peer groups and the lower their involvement in delinquency.

Despite these findings, available research remains limited in accurately accounting for the role of self-control, social control, and religion in influencing criminal/deviant propensities. Similar to the methodological drawback of conceptualizing and operationalizing religion, the lack of a universal definition and measurement of self-control and social control within the context of religion further hinders criminological and sociological scholarship in understanding the religion-crime relationship and addressing the meaning and significance of self-control and social control to the empirical enterprise.

The current paper aims to unravel the meaning of religion and discuss the process in which religion functions as a safeguard for individuals against the allure of criminal/deviant behavior. Based on the extant research, the authors seek to provide a comprehensive compilation of the most salient self-control and social control aspects of religion that mitigate participation in criminal activity. In doing so, a survey of the literature addressing the role of social control and self-control, as potential mediators to the religion-crime nexus, is discussed. Furthermore, methodological constraints within available criminological and sociological scholarship on the religion-crime relationship is addressed. Finally, this paper concludes with recommendations to guide future studies that seek to explore the religion-crime nexus.

2. Theoretical Underpinning of Religion and Crime

The work of Emile Durkheim is considered one of the oldest and most comprehensive examinations of religion in sociology. Despite subsequent examinations of religion in sociology, Durkheim's examination provides a more holistic view of religion as a positive controlling force in society. According to Durkheim, members of society willingly adhered to core sets of beliefs that either integrated them into the fabric of society or regulated individual behaviors and decisions, promoting pro-social behavior. Karl Marx is also historically noted for his examination of religion which, in contrast to Durkheim, primarily focused on the extent to which religion operated as an ideology that had the ability to legitimate societal arrangements that perpetuated inequality in society. Although Marx's focus was on the role religion played in perpetuating inequality, core pieces of his work suggest that the acceptance of such religious beliefs was a fundamental aspect of such control. In theorizing religion and crime, an examination of Durkheim's theory of religion and a discussion of Karl Marx's perspective on religion is warranted.

According to Durkheim, religion consists of core sets of beliefs and rituals that are tied to items that designated as sacred. These practices unite members into a moral community or what Durkheim refers to as a Church. The following section examines the central elements of religion and how each of these is related to exercising control over the individual.

2.1. The Sacred and Profane

Religion is created by members of society but becomes a phenomenon that is transcendent and external to the members of society. According to Durkheim, an essential feature of religion is the designation of material objects in society as either sacred (religious) or profane (non-religious) (Regnerus 2003; Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017; Sumter 1999). The designation of pieces of the material world as sacred serves to reinforce religious sentiments/beliefs in society (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017, p. 97). As members of religious communities are consistently conscious of the distinction between the sacred and profane, so are they conscious of the beliefs that are represented in the sacred. This conscious awareness of the distinction between the sacred and profane ensures that members of religious communities avoid behaviors and decisions that desecrate the sacred. The following sections will discuss how religion exerts social control over members of society.

2.2. Rituals and Beliefs

Beliefs represent the non-tangible/non material element of religion. This aspect of religion is reinforced through rituals that typically incorporate sacred objects. Rituals serve to reinforce connections to a set of beliefs (Sumter 1999). In addition, rituals represent a set of collective behaviors and practices that reinforce the connection to a community of believers. Rituals are designed to promote a shared sense of belonging to something larger than the individual and elicit an emotional experience. This emotional experience typically reinforces beliefs embedded within the religion itself.

Durkheim (1951) states that religious beliefs reinforce norms and behaviors in society, thus promoting solidarity in society. This solidarity acts a form of social control as members of the group not only adhere to beliefs that guide appropriate and acceptable behavior because they are integrated into the group, but they also adhere to these norms and behaviors because they may fear being stigmatized for diverging from the norms and behaviors promoted by the group.

2.3. Morality

According to Durkheim, morality refers to the level of consensus in society concerning appropriate behavior. Morality in society is typically reinforced by sanctions against those who fail to adhere to behavioral expectations. Although morality is a societal phenomenon, Durkheim consistently saw a connection between the individual and society. Subsequently, individual behaviors are a reflection of the extent to which the individual is integrated in society.

Morality was considered a social fact that can guide an individual in his or her life (Desmond et al. 2011; Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017; Sumter 1999) in Durkheim's view. Without this morality, "the individual would be enslaved by ever-expanding and insatiable passions" (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017, p. 83). Therefore, the moral consciousness of a society would lead individuals to act in a manner that kept them tied to society rather than isolated from society.

To further explore why and how religion guides individuals, examining Durkheim's study on suicide warrants attention. In his study, Durkheim examined the ways in which level of integration in society was associated with the act of suicide. Religious affiliation was one factor Durkheim examined in predicting rates of suicide. In comparing two specific religions, one that was more exclusive and one that was more open, Durkheim found members of society who adhered to the more exclusive religion, the religion that has less outside interference, exhibited a lower suicide rate (Durkheim 1951). In comparison of these two religions, Durkheim (1951) also revealed that in both religions, the prohibition on suicide was "of divine origin" (p. 157) and that "God Himself is their authority" (p. 157). Therefore, it is easily understood that the divine word of God would create the

beliefs and thoughts of religious individuals, and, because God forbade suicide or any other action against His word as being immoral, the believer would abstain from taking part in that action. In other words, if God said it is wrong, it is wrong, and a believer will not take part in committing an immoral act. However, as Durkheim outlined in his work, it was not only the beliefs themselves but the extent to which believers felt a sense of integration in the religious community and bought into these beliefs. Thus, the extent to which believers were bound to this set of beliefs (level of integration) influenced rates of suicide. Although Durkheim studied suicide, we argue that this concept, the extent to which people are bound to a certain set of guiding beliefs, can be applied to any type of deviant behavior and practice, even if the activity is the social construction of crime.

Aside from Durkheim, the work of Karl Marx also examined the influence of religion on society and behavior. While Marx's views on religion are often viewed as very different from Durkheim's views, there are some similarities. For instance, Marx viewed religion as being a tool of oppression (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017), a form of false consciousness, premised on a set of beliefs that members of society are indoctrinated with and adhere to in daily living. Thus, just as Durkheim emphasized the extent to which these beliefs were internalized and adhered to, Marx made a very similar argument. Specifically, religious beliefs exercise control over the individual only to the extent that these beliefs are internalized and utilized by members of society in daily living.

Based on the work of Durkheim and Marx, we argue that above all else, religion will keep followers of a religious doctrine from participating in actions that are viewed as deviant or immoral, simply because they have internalized beliefs which deem certain actions to be immoral. These individuals are more likely to exercise control over their behaviors that stems from their religious beliefs, thoughts, rituals and actions. In doing so, they find in those elements of their religion a peace and a higher power, no matter the name of their God—Jesus, Allah, or Adonai, over their behaviors that stems from—that higher power (social control) that guides them in a moral direction, often without question, and away from what our society terms criminal activity.

As outlined above, religion is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that exerts a significant amount of control over members of society. In examining the relationship between religion and criminal behavior, it is important to note that the role of religion in reducing criminal activity can be dichotomized into two broad frameworks. The first framework discussed below examines how religion operates as a form of self-control. The second framework examines religion as a form of social control.

3. Survey of the Literature on Religion and Self-Control and Social Control

This survey of the literature explores the relationship between religion, self-control, social control, and criminal behavior. This review reveals an inverse relationship between religion and criminal behavior and unmasks the potential spuriousness present in the religion-crime nexus.

3.1. Religion and Self-Control

In examining self-control, researchers have typically examined the ways in which attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and values, which are internalized, have the ability to influence the behavior of the individual. Subsequently, in examining criminal activity, members of society who have incorporated a set of attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and values that condemn criminal activity will be less likely to engage in such activity. Religion represents one example of a system that incorporates these elements.

Advanced by Gottfredson and Hirschi, self-control theory states that individuals possessing high levels of self-control, conceptualized as "the differential tendency of people to avoid criminal acts whatever the circumstances [. . .]" (Akers and Sellers 2013, p. 122), are less likely to engage in criminal/deviant behavior. Comparatively, individuals possessing low levels of self-control are more likely to engage in criminal/deviant behavior when criminogenic opportunity structures are available, under certain circumstances (Akers and Sellers 2013). Accordingly, once self-control is developed during childhood through parenting practices and socialization, the degree to which individuals

possess the restraint to avoid criminal acts typically remains in place. Once developed, self-control remains the same throughout the life course and is resistant to change (Akers and Sellers 2013).

A number of studies have explored the relationship between self-control, religion, and criminal offending (Welch et al. 2006; McCullough and Willoughby 2009; Kerley et al. 2011; Laird et al. 2011; Reisig et al. 2012). In addition, the role of morality as a predictor of criminal offending has been examined (Antonaccio and Tittle 2008). Collectively, available literature reinforces Gottfredson and Hirschi's contention that self-control influences criminal propensity amongst individuals (Welch et al. 2006; Antonaccio and Tittle 2008; Kerley et al. 2011; Reisig et al. 2012). For instance, in their study, Welch et al. (2006) examined if the relationship between personal Christian religiosity (i.e., literalism or religious interpretation, salience or meaningfulness of beliefs, frequency of prayer, and attendance at religious services) and future misconduct (i.e., likelihood that respondents would engage in illegal gambling, petty theft, DUI, assault, and tax evasion in the foreseeable future) was spurious or associated with the variable self-control. More broadly, the focal point of their study centered on Gottfredson and Hirschi's assertion that the associations between "social variables and force, fraud or analogous imprudent acts" emerge in part by the "antecedent effect of self-control" (Welch et al. 2006, p. 1606). In this sense, the relationship between social variables such as religion and criminal offending is spurious in nature given the influence of self-control in aiding individuals to adhere to underlining expectations of one's moral community and conform and safeguard social bonds (Welch et al. 2006). Further, through self-control, individuals internalize and operationalize fundamental principles of their religion that further dictate and guide individual behavior towards conformity (Welch et al. 2006).

Results from Welch et al. (2006) revealed that, in opposition to Gottfredson and Hirschi, the association between religiosity, a social variable, and future misconduct was not "spuriously attributable to prior levels of self-control" (Welch et al. 2006, p. 1615). Instead, both religiosity and self-control were found to "operate independently of one another", net of socioeconomic indicators (i.e., gender, race, age, educational level, family intactness during childhood, and types of place of childhood residence) (Welch et al. 2006, p. 1615). This suggest that high levels of religiosity and self-control decrease the likelihood of future misconduct (Welch et al. 2006).

In another study, Kerley et al. (2011) examined the degree to which the religion-crime relationship was mediated by levels of self-control. Using data collected from a stratified convenience sample of 208 male parolees, findings from Kerley et al. (2011) coalesced with Gottfredson and Hirschi's contention that the relationship between religion and criminal offending is spurious, noting that levels of self-control serve as a compounding factor. Specifically, Kerley et al. (2011) found that self-control significantly predicted behavioral measures of religiosity (i.e., praying privately, watching religious television broadcasts, and attending religious classes or groups), as well, when regressed on prison deviance alongside behavioral measures of religiosity, criminal history, and inmate demographics, significantly and negatively explained inmates' involvement in prison deviance. These findings suggest that the relationship between religiosity and prison deviance is partially moderated by levels of self-control. Furthermore, findings indicate that levels of self-control and attendance at religious classes or groups operate independently of each other to predict prison deviance, buttressing Welch et al. (2006) findings.

Nevertheless, despite the deterrent effects of self-control relative to criminal offending, available literature deviates from Gottfredson and Hirschi's argument supporting self-control as the primary predictor of criminal offending (Antonaccio and Tittle 2008). In their study, Antonaccio and Tittle (2008) sought to isolate the effects of morality (i.e., dynamic moral beliefs and actions that are specific and contextual) and self-control relative to criminal propensity in order to gauge their relative predictive strength. For their study, religion, conceptualized as childhood religiosity (i.e., the degree to which respondents were religious as a child), served as a control variable. Based on findings from Antonaccio and Tittle (2008), although self-control has a statistically significant negative effect on criminal propensity, net of the control variables, morality possesses an even stronger association with criminal

propensity, net of the control variables, that is also statistically significant. In another study, Reisig and colleagues (Reisig et al. 2012) examined the degree to which the religion-crime association was spurious "after individual variations of self-control are controlled for in different multivariate contexts" (p. 1177). Conceptualized along three important domains of religiosity, religion was conceived as the frequency to which individuals engage in prayer and attend religious services (religious activity), the degree to which one's religious beliefs are integrated in their daily lives (religious devotion), and individual endorsement of life after death (religious belief) (Reisig et al. 2012). Reisig et al. (2012) found that, net of the control variables, all religious domains significantly reduced the likelihood that individuals would engage in ascetic offending (i.e., individual gratification prohibited by most religious traditions and criminal law, yet are not completely shunned by society at large), independent of self-control. In the case of secular offending (i.e., law-breaking behaviors with strong norms against conduct expressed by religious and nonreligious individuals), all religious domains were insignificant, net of all control variables, with self-control emerging as the key significant predictor (Reisig et al. 2012). Here, depending upon the nature of the offense, religion has a potential inhibiting effect that is independent of self-control.

The extant literature indicates that while self-control is a strong predictor of whether or not individuals will engage in criminal activity, religion also seems to play a significant independent role as well. The integration of beliefs, values, attitudes and ideologies associated with a particular faith can curtail involvement in criminal activity if these traits are an integral part of the individual's psyche. Furthermore, extant literature suggests that additional variables, such as morality, have a greater potential for predicting the inverse religion-crime relationship than self-control; self-control is not the only variable capable of predicting the religion-crime nexus.

3.2. Religion and Social Control

While religion may act as a form of self-control, it can also be argued that certain aspects of religion work as a form of social control as well. In examining religion as a form of social control, social scientists typically point to the ways in which being a member of a religious community may exert influence over decisions and behaviors people engage in. In this sense, control over behaviors has more to do with meeting the expectations of the group and maintaining a connection to the group. It is understood that failing to adhere to certain behaviors becomes a violation of the religious group's expectations. Thus, the reason individuals may shy away from behaviors that are considered deviant, is to avoid being ostracized by the group. In addition, it has also been argued that participation in religious activities serves as a form of social control as well. This is particularly true when these activities are engaged in a group setting. Group participation in religious activities can be a powerful influence over behavior.

One of the aspects of religion that Durkheim examined in his work is the notion of the collective conscience. For Durkheim, collective conscience is the "totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society" (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017, p. 83). Because Durkheim saw this collective conscience as a means to determine certain social facts, religion can be considered as a social fact that may or may not be a guiding factor in the lives of individuals. Therefore, religion, as a part of society's collective conscience, can exercise certain forms of social control over the society's members. Durkheim (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017) suggested that the social facts of integration, the "strength of the attachment that we have to society" and regulation, which refers to the "degree of external constraint on people" (p. 93) would determine the strength of social control over a society. Thus, integration and regulation could be applied to religion and the amount of social control that can be experienced.

Because individuals are so closely connected to religion, we would assume that religion can be a powerful influence in the lives of society's members. With the influence of religion, we could also assume that social control exerted by religiosity would prevent individuals from taking part in criminal activity.

In his study of suicide, Durkheim addressed the diverse types of religions, with those possessing more exclusivity having lower suicide rates (Durkheim 1951) due to the increased social control over the lives of individuals. As well, in Durkheim (1951) study of suicide, he found that religions that provided individuals with greater freedom, less social control, and "fewer common beliefs and practices" (p. 159) would have higher rates of suicide. These factors show the amount of social control some religions have over suicide, more specifically, but generalized criminal activity, more broadly. Recent studies have also examined the relationship between religion, social control, and criminal activity.

For example, Johnson et al. (2001) and Desmond et al. (2008) examined samplings of youth from the National Youth Survey (NYS) to determine if religiosity and moral beliefs had any influence on delinquency. Both studies (Johnson et al. 2001; Desmond et al. 2008) hypothesized that social bonds held the key to youth involvement, or the lack of, in delinquent behavior. Both studies (Johnson et al. 2001; Desmond et al. 2008) examined the theoretical elements of social bond theory (i.e., attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief) and the strength of these bonds as the guide for delinquent behavior. Findings from Desmond et al. (2008) revealed a strong connection between the socialization of youth and "strong moral beliefs" (p. 66). Specifically, Desmond et al. (2008) found that youth who were socialized to believe that criminal behavior, in any form, ranging from stealing to drug use, was "morally wrong" (p. 66) abstained from that type of behavior. According to Johnson et al. (2001), due to youth commitment to his/her religious beliefs, that "religiosity reduces delinquency partly because religious involvement increases his or disapproval for delinquent acts" (p. 38) as well as reduces the connection of youth to delinquent peer contacts.

Similar findings were presented by Knudten and Knudten (1971) in their review of previously conducted research on religion and crime. Knudten and Knudten found that the perceived "criminal deviance is a by-product of the unstated assumptions of our society" (Knudten and Knudten 1971, p. 131), and those assumptions were the integral part of the perceptions of crime in our modern society, stemming from the Puritan beliefs of the country's early history. As a result, Knudten and Knudten (1971) questioned the amount of social control fostered by religion and how those religious insights would affect public laws. Their research did find that, in many instances, fanatical religious groups would indeed abstain from any type of criminal activity, which would also prove the sustainability of social control religion holds over a society.

In another study, Curry (1996) used data collected from a 1993 study conducted by the Department of Sociology, University of Oklahoma, to measure if religion influenced a "perceived wrongfulness of crimes" (p. 453). According to Curry (1996), religion and punishment were closely connected, but his study investigated if there was an additional relationship between religion and the perceptions of crime in religious communities. The results of the Curry (1996) research did reveal "that conservative Protestants tend to view all criminal behavior as very wrong" (p. 462). Also, Curry (1996) found very little difference in these beliefs between minor crimes such as trespass to more serious crimes such as murder. Although research by Curry (1996) was atheoretical, the social control in a society, such as that of a conservative religious community, would have the most profound influence over that society. Hence, this conclusion is aligned with Durkheim's collective conscience of a group as well as Durkheim's notion of integration of beliefs within a group. Each of these factors influences whether individuals commit or do not commit crimes.

Later in 1999, Sherkat and Ellison examined the sociology of religion by reviewing academic journals that were considered prime in their fields during the time of the literature review. While conducting this examination, Sherkat and Ellison (1999) consistently found that socialization among religious families, along with "(b) gender, (c) social status, and (d) life course events and aging" would have a direct influence "through the socialization of beliefs and commitments" (p. 367). This review of the literature also provided a substantial support for the element of commitment in social bond theory to again steer individuals away from criminality. As well, similar to previous research by Knudten and Knudten (1971) and Curry (1996), social control exhibited by the more conservative religious groups created an atmosphere whereby criminality, in any form, would be considered wrong and

group members would be less likely to participate in crime in any fashion. At the conclusion of the Sherkat and Ellison (1999) review, the reviewers noted that more research was needed to determine if "religious value is collectively produced versus when it is a private good with intrinsic value" (p. 386), further supporting Durkheim and the power of collective conscience and religiosity (Durkheim 1951; Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017).

Contemporary scholarship examining the relationship between religion, social control, and criminal activity further illuminate the inhibitory role of religion on criminal/deviant propensities relative to social control variables. As an agent of social control, religion, as argued by Cochran et al. (1994), fosters conformity and reduces the likelihood for crime/deviance by "encouraging the internalization of moral values and acceptance of social norms" (p. 93). However, the degree to which religion alone decreases individual propensities for crime/deviance remains questionable. Hence, Cochran et al. (1994) assessed whether the religion-crime relationship was spurious by examining the effect of religious variables (i.e., religious participation, religious salience, and religious affiliation) on various indicators of delinquency (i.e., interpersonal delinquency, property-theft, property-damage, skipping classes, and use of drugs and alcohol), net of arousal (i.e., self-reported thrill-seeking, impulsivity, and physicality), and social control (i.e., internalized controls, parental controls, and institutional controls) variables. Findings from Cochran et al. (1994), though supportive of the inverse relationship between religion and delinquency, revealed that the religion-crime nexus was mediated by social control variables. Similarly, Brauer et al. (2013), in examining the validity of the inverse religion-crime relationship and assessing the effects of self-control, informal social control, morality, negative emotion, and social support on criminal probability, found that the inverse relationship between religion and crime was likely explained by theoretical mechanisms of self-control, informal social control, and morality.

Reinforcing Stark (1996) moral communities thesis, which posits that religion be sociologically studied at the macro-level as a group process and not that of individuals, Regnerus (2003) investigated the risk of delinquency amongst adolescents residing in religiously homogenous schools and counties that were characterized as being "above average social disorganization" (p. 529). In this study, religiosity was measured as adolescent's self-identified level of church attendance and their identity as "born again" Christians, while individual-level measures of social control included, school attachment, family satisfaction, and autonomy from parents (Regnerus 2003, p. 530). At the country-level, religiosity was measured in terms of church membership and adherence, as well indicators of social disorganization (i.e., family disruption, female headed-households, residential mobility, proportion children five years of age and older, proportion of Black population) and school-level factors (i.e., proportion of students from broken homes, proportion of students engaged in sexual intercourse, proportion of Black students, and level of intergenerational closure) were included (Regnerus 2003). Though not explicitly stated, findings from Regnerus (2003) suggest that the religion-crime relationship is spurious given that conservative Protestant homogeneity in schools and counties not only served to shield adolescents from engaging in delinquency, but further mediated the inverse relationship between religion conceived as self-identification as "born again" Christians and delinquency (i.e., theft).

Overall, available literature underscores the protective role of religion as an agent of social control, as well reveals the interactive nature between religious practices and informal agents of social control in reducing criminal/deviant propensities. Nevertheless, though these studies contribute to the growth in epistemologies within sociological and criminological empirical enterprises, these studies are not immune to having empirical drawbacks.

4. Empirical Drawbacks

Methodologically, available literature lacks a conceptualization of key predictor variables, particularly religion. Since the late 1800s, definitions of religion have been grounded in Western and Judeo-Christian conceptual frameworks that emphasize the effects of religion on various facets of social life over the underlying origins of religion. Furthermore, these conceptualizations reinforce

religion as a natural and materialistic construct, marginalizing the supernatural dimensions of religion and its derivatives (Berry 2005). As a result, the associated meanings and importance of religion as a construct have been constrained; in this respect, religion fails to accurately account for the multitude of religious ideologies and conceptual frameworks that exist within a globalized world. Within the social sciences, this limitation impedes on empirical scholarship into the role of religion on individual and group behaviors.

According to Clear and Sumter (2002), various social science disciplines have not successfully conceptualized religion relative to its core meaning. As a multidimensional construct, definitions of religion have been based on various dimensions, to include, belief (i.e., membership in a religious organization), affective (i.e., effect of religious systems on belief systems), and behavioral (i.e., frequency to which individuals are involved in religious practices or activities) (Fernander et al. 2005). The derivative of religion, religiosity, has also been defined in terms of organizational religiosity (i.e., attendance at religious services) or subjective religiosity (i.e., importance of religion and self-rated religiosity). Such ambiguous conceptualizations of religion yield a multitude of meanings that possess different indicators or measures that are not consistent and vary depending upon which dimension of religion is utilized. As argued by Clear and Sumter (2002), this lack of conceptualization translates into "no one [knowing] with complete assurance how 'religious' a person is" (p. 138).

The lack of conceptualization on religion equates to countless researchers employing proxy measures that approximate or barely account for the underlining core meaning of the construct of religion. In praxis, researchers are not building upon previous conceptual foundations; researchers are not modifying or advancing conceptual understandings of religion. This stagnation inhibits the development of more advanced measurements of religion and undermines the degree of methodological rigor in assessing the religion-crime nexus. As shown in available research, various operationalizations of religion and religiosity have been employed. For instance, Welch et al. (2006) measured religiosity as the degree of literary religious interpretation, meaningfulness of beliefs, and the frequency of prayer and attendance at religious services. Laird and colleagues (Laird et al. 2011) measured religiosity as the importance of religion and the frequency of attendance at religious services. Utilizing behavioral measures of religiosity, Kerley et al. (2011) operationalized religiosity as the frequency by which individuals "prayed privately, watched a religious broadcasts on television, and attended a religious class or group" in the time frame of a month or thirty days (p. 1258). Accounting for the multidimensionality of religion as a construct, Fernander and colleagues (Fernander et al. 2005) measured religiosity as behavioral (i.e., frequency by which individuals attended religious services), belief (i.e., whether respondents identified themselves as religious or non-religious), and affective (i.e., the degree to which religious beliefs shaped their behaviors). Such variation in measurement parallels variations in definitions of religion. As argued by Clear and Sumter (2002) religion encompasses "beliefs and behaviors that are often internal" and that exist independent of one's external religious practices (p. 138). This complexity complicates the development of a universal definition of religion that is agreeable across various disciplines.

Nevertheless, definitions of religion are emerging within various fields of inquiry. From the vantage point of the discipline of psychology, McCullough and Willoughby (2009) advanced religion as a psychological construct focusing on "cognition, affect, and behavior arising from awareness of, or perceived interaction with supernatural entities" that play a critical role in human affairs (p. 71). Within the field of criminology, Sumter and Clear (2002) also underscored the multifaceted nature of religion in terms of definition, stating that "the word, religion cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name . . . ," suggesting the need to conceptualize religion from the stance that, regardless of the religious tradition, all religions share common elements of transcendentalism, ritual, morality, history, belief, personal identity, and community or society (n.p.). Potentially, addressing these common elements shared by all religious traditions would provide a framework for developing a universal definition of religion that is measurable based on these different facets. Nevertheless, as long as this lack of conceptualization and measurement ensues,

empirical findings addressing the religion-crime relationship will likely remain inconclusive and without much meaning.

Beyond conceptualizing religion and religiosity, examining the role of religion at various units of analysis illustrates another empirical drawback. As illustrated by available research, conceptualizations and operationalizations of religion and religiosity are primarily focused at the micro- or individual-level. Specifically, within sociological and criminological scholarship, less attention is given to assessing the religion-crime relationship at the macro-level, though empirical shifts are emerging and the study of religion and crime is extending beyond the individual level to the structural level (Ulmer and Harris 2013). In examining religion at the structural level, Ulmer and Harris (2013) conceive of religion in a similar manner as Stark (1996); religion is viewed as an institution characterized by a "regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive element" that, when combined with religious rituals and resources, exerts control and provides meaning to social life (p. 613). In this sense, a macro-level understanding of religion posits that the more salient religion is in an area or place, the lower rates of criminal or deviant behavior for that area or place. The lack of macro-level analyses examining the religious context (i.e., overall religious adherence or diversity of adherents) relative to rates of crime forestalls the development of sociological and criminological epistemologies addressing how religion impacts crime at the aggregate level, as well how measures of religious context interact with macro-level predictors of crime (i.e., concentrated disadvantage) to shape crime rates in an area or place. Hence, research addressing the religion-crime nexus at the macro-level is warranted to further expand sociological and criminological understandings on the role of religion relative to criminal/deviant behavior.

Similarly, the lack of conceptualization and operationalization of self-control and social control influences the production of knowledge drawn from empirical conclusions related to religion and crime. From the field of criminology, self-control is conceptualized as "the differential tendency of people to avoid criminal acts whatever the circumstances [. . .]" (Akers and Sellers 2013, p. 122). From psychology, McCullough and Willoughby (2009) defined self-control as situations where individuals engage in behaviors designed to override or counteract prepotent responses in favor of responses judged to possess more long-term utility. Other studies examining self-control (Welch et al. 2006; Laird et al. 2011; Kerley et al. 2011; Reisig et al. 2012), though not conceptualizing self-control, appeared to have adopted various measures (i.e., behavioral-based and cognitive-based) attempting to gauge self-control as purported by Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime. For instance, Kerley et al. (2011) operationalized self-control using cognitive-based measures of impulsivity, egoism, temperament, risk seeking propensity, engagement in simple tasks, and physical ability.

In referencing Cochran et al. (1994), Kerley et al. (2011) suggest that the conceptual overlap between social control and self-control theories generates similar issues in conceptualizing and operationalizing social control as with self-control. For example, Cochran et al. (1994) utilized indicators from both self-control and social control theories to develop a general control measure that captured internalized control, parental control, and institutional control. In this sense, though not explicitly defined, control illustrates an exerted force designed to restrain behaviors and decisions that undermine normative and proscribed values and beliefs. Thus, for these authors, integrating theoretical concepts from both control theories into a "continuum of controls" would prove beneficial to the field of criminology by expanding how control in its most general form is conceived and measured (Cochran et al. 1994, p. 115). Yet, despite being proxy measures, without a clear definition of self-control and social control, these measures further generate knowledge and conclusions that are inconclusive and/or mixed.

In addition, the cross-sectional nature of available literature addressing the self-control, social control, religion, and crime nexus forestalls the production of knowledge that illuminates the potential variation in the effects of self-control, social control, and religion relative to criminal/deviant behavior. For example, given the findings from Reisig et al. (2012) suggesting that the association between religiosity and criminal offending is spuriously attributable to self-control, to what extent does this

spuriousness remain intact over time? Is it likely that, over time, religiosity becomes a stronger predictor of criminal offending and self-control evaporates? Or could religiosity exert a confounding effect on self-control, thereby influencing criminal/deviant behavior over time? Also, the noted spuriousness of religion and crime that is attributable to informal social controls, as suggested by Brauer et al. (2013). It is plausible that, over time, the quality of relationships (i.e., strength of relationships, number of relationship bonds, basis of relationships, and number of relationships) shifts in a manner that disrupts conventional values and norms for unconventional or criminogenic norms and values. For example, the loss of a parent or the eventual disconnect between an individual and their religious organization could weaken the strength of ones' relationships and reduce the number of prosocial relationships and interactions. This "freedom" from a moral center; this lack of integration and regulation could potentially manifest currents of anomie that increase propensities toward criminal or deviant behavior. Another case in point found that morality and self-control operate independent of each other, only interacting under certain situations and with certain criminal/deviant behaviors (Antonaccio and Tittle 2008). From a longitudinal vantage point, it could arguably be the case that, over time, morality and self-control interact in a way that is not situational, or the independence between the two constructs could possibly evaporate away and become spurious. To this degree, it is essential that longitudinal studies be employed in order to capture these variations and potential changes in causal ordering and sequence. In this respect, also, the lack of integrative theoretical frameworks that account for additional predictor variables, such as religion and morality, warrants attention. Focusing exclusively on one premier predictor variable for criminal offending, Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime ignores the possibility that other variables also possess predictive capabilities relative to criminal/deviant behavior. As illustrated by Antonaccio and Tittle (2008), morality was more strongly associated with future criminal behavior than self-control, lending credence to the need for more integration in theoretical frameworks. In doing so, these frameworks can address greater variability and generate a diverse array of empirical conclusions and findings. However, the need for greater conceptualization and operationalization of core constructs merits primary focus, for without these, empirical studies will fall victim to recycling previously used methods of measurement and definition that barely scratch the surface of religion. As a result, emerging findings will remain inconclusive and limited in their ability to accurately reflect and address the underlining meaning and significance associated with the empirical enterprise.

5. Summary

Speculation about the role of religion as an effective means of social control has a rich history with roots deeply imbedded in the functional perspective that assumes that the stability of society is maintained by teaching and reinforcing the same set of values, beliefs, and norms for everyone (Sumter 1999). This perspective is derived from Emile Durkheim, who viewed religion as a crucial and integrative mechanism for maintaining social order and fostering a set of common values and beliefs (Sumter 1999). Likewise, since the landmark study by Hirschi and Stark (1969), which questioned the effectiveness of religiosity as a social control mechanism, empirical investigations of the relationship between religiosity and crime emerged within the fields of sociology and criminology. In general, studies coalesced in revealing an inverse association between religiosity and crime; this suggests that religion helps to suppress criminal behavior (Brauer et al. 2013). Nonetheless, the religion-crime nexus remains an unsettled and controversial topic, for the evidence has not authenticated the specific mechanisms by which religiosity affects criminal behavior. As well, the research has neither rejected the possibility that the observed association between religion and crime is essentially coincidental or spurious, nor noted that the findings are inconclusive and mixed (Brauer et al. 2013; Kerley et al. 2011). Still, empirical scholarship into the religion-crime relationship persists.

Traditionally, studies that have examined this relationship apply two types of approaches. First, some studies examine how religion plays a role in the propensity to commit criminal acts. Such studies primarily examine relatively young populations whose members may have admitted to

criminal/delinquent acts but have not been incarcerated. For these studies, the main purpose is to assess the degree to which religion functions as a deterrent to the commission of crimes. A second set of studies examine the role of exposure to religious programs among those who are already incarcerated. While many of these studies do not examine previous religious beliefs, the goals of these studies focus on assessing the extent to which faith-based programs that are offered to inmates reduce reoffending.

With respect to studies examining adults, results are mixed with respect to reducing recidivism. Similar to studies examining youth, these studies also fail to account for the length of an inmates' experience with religious doctrine and practices. Is it the case that inmates who already have experiences with religion are more likely to benefit from prison ministry programs? In addition, similar to studies examining youth, studies focusing on adult inmates do not take into account the motivation behind inmates' participation in prison ministry programs. Hence, further examination on these issues is warranted given what evidenced based practices tell us about reducing recidivism.

Although most empirical evidence suggest an inverse relationship between religion and crime, challenges in the conceptualization and operationalization of religion, the methodological limitations of available data and studies to date, and the inconsistencies in the evidence, researchers cannot claim with certainty that religion suppresses criminal behavior. Yet, despite these empirical drawbacks, religion remains an agent of social control oriented toward reducing criminal/deviant propensities and fostering conformity and solidarity within society.

While the discussion presented here is not exhaustive with respect to studies that have examined the relationship between religion and crime, there are some themes that warrant further exploration. First, does the age at which one is exposed to religious doctrine make a difference in engaging in criminal activity? Some studies have examined the influence of religion on youth. While the results were mixed, there is some evidence that religion (measured in a number of different ways) does have some influence on reducing the propensity to engage in criminal and or delinquent behavior. However, the studies presented did not discuss how long the youth had been exposed to religious doctrine and activities. This raises a question about length of experience with a religious doctrine and practices. Does religion have a stronger influence on youth who have a longer experience with religion compared to those who may have a shorter experience? Second, the reason or motivation behind attending church was not addressed by these studies. One might expect to see different outcomes for youth who willingly attended because they like to do so verses youth who were forced to attend. Third, it will be important to examine the dimensions of religion to understand their relative significance. Does the amount of religious knowledge matter more than the amount of religious participation? Testing different measures of "religiosity" will help to develop a better theoretical understanding of the religion-crime nexus. Specifically, it makes a difference, for instance, if the amount of religious attendance and participation suppresses crime more than the degree of knowledge or belief (Clear and Sumter 2002).

In all, it is critical that subsequent empirical investigations of the religion-crime nexus address these empirical drawbacks in defining and measuring religiosity to include self-control and social control as well accentuate the mechanisms by which religion, as an agent of social control, suppresses criminal/deviant behavior.

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Article

Faith-Based Mentoring of Ex-Felons in Higher Education: Colson Scholars Reflect on Their Transitions

Judith A. Leary

Maranatha Baptist University, 745 W Main St, Watertown, WI 53094, USA; Judith.Leary@mbu.edu

Abstract: This qualitative study employs the framework of Schlossberg's Transition Theory to offer readers an introduction into recently-conducted research on ex-felons transitioning into, through, and out of higher education within the context of the Colson Scholarship program at Wheaton College[1], in Wheaton, Illinois. Through the material gathered from personal interviews of six completed Colson Scholars, faith-based mentors were consistently seen as significant sources of support in each stage of the college-going transition. Faith-based mentors played an important role in the outcomes of, specifically, faith-worldview development and emotional development. This article seeks to illuminate the problem of the lack of supportive mentors for ex-offender populations in our communities, and to illustrate how those mentors might be found in faith-based organizations, institutions, and houses of worship, as Johnson (Johnson 2011) asserted and also what gains could result from the involvement of faith-based mentors in the lives of correctional populations post-release.

Keywords: faith; mentoring; reentry; higher education; correctional education; Schlossberg transition theory; college student development; phenomenology; scholarship; ex-felons

1. Introduction

A world leader in incarceration per capita, the United States greatly expanded its carceral operations during the three decades of the "tough on crime" era that dominated its criminal justice system from the beginning of the 1980s (Schmitt et al. 2010). Despite the fact that crime declined overall since the early 1980s, the nation's prison population increased more than 350% during these decades—although the general population grew by only 33% during these years (ibid.). When prisoners were released from these oft-overcrowded correctional complexes, many returned without significant reentry support to address the structural, societal, and legislative impediments they would face transitioning to the community, leading to high rates of recidivism (Petersilia 2003), or the rate at which former inmates are re-arrested, re-convicted, or re-incarcerated (Gehring 2000). Although faith had

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[1] Wheaton College, in Wheaton, Illinois, is a selective private residential interdenominational college founded in 1860 (Benne 2001; Wheaton College 2018b). The college's mission is that it "serves Jesus Christ and advances His Kingdom through excellence in liberal arts and graduate programs that educate the whole person to build the church and benefit society worldwide" (Wheaton College 2018c, para. 2). As of 2016, Wheaton enrolls approximately 2400 undergraduates and 480 graduate students who attend from all fifty US states, forty-five distinct countries, and over fifty-five church denominations. Twenty percent of Wheaton's collegians identify as American ethnic minority students. Wheaton is a top-ranked college by such prestigious entities as *The Fiske Guide to Colleges, Kiplinger, The Princeton Review, U.S. News and World Report, The Insider's Guide to the Colleges, Colleges that Change Lives, Forbes, and The Ultimate Guide to America's Best Colleges.* According to Wheaton College, only twenty percent of its full-time students in the 2014–2015 academic year were Pell Grant recipients. The Colson Scholarship certainly removes a significant financial barrier to college for students who receive it; based on a four-year tuition scale at the current rate, Colson Scholars' total financial award is estimated to be over a $165,000 value (Wheaton College 2018b).

a significant and meaningful supportive role for many who experienced the pains of imprisonment (Sykes 1958), few researchers, social scientists, and policymakers in this era seriously considered the positive role that faith and faith-based mentors could have for ex-offenders post-release, especially when those variables were part of structured faith-based educational programming (Delgado 2012; Eisenberg and Trusty 2002; Johnson 2002, 2011; Johnson and Larson 2003; Johnson et al. 1997; Mears 2007; Zimmer 2005).

In the United States, 95 out of every 100 prisoners will eventually reenter society, meaning that the demographic profiles of the currently incarcerated closely align with the profiles of offenders post-release (Petersilia 2003). Throughout the US justice system, and especially in the correctional subsystem, persons of color—especially young impoverished Black males—are heavily overrepresented, and the possible social, political, and psychological causes and consequences are a routine theme in the criminological and criminal justice literature (Alexander 2012; Petersilia 2003; Tonry 2010). Summarizing the extant correctional research, Joan Petersilia (Petersilia 2003, p. 21) profiled the average US prisoner as one who is likely:

> to have been in custody several times before, has a lengthy history of alcohol and drug abuse, is more likely to be involved in gang activities and drug dealing, has probably experienced significant periods of unemployment and homelessness, and may have a physical or mental disability. Most of them have young children, with whom they hope to reunite after release, although in most cases, their children will have infrequently visited them during their incarceration. A significant number of inmates will have spent weeks, if not months, in solitary confinement or supermax prisons, devoid of human contact and prison program participation.

As Petersilia adeptly illustrated, inmates reentering society today will have served more time, be less educated, and be less marketable than those released in previous cohorts (Pager 2007; Petersilia 2003).

In addition, ex-offenders entering educational programs post-release are generally first-generation, underrepresented, low-income students who encounter barriers due to their high rates of illiteracy, learning disabilities, and mental/emotional/behavioral disorders, making them at particularly high risk for attrition (Brazzell et al. 2009; Crayton and Neusteter 2008; Erisman and Contardo 2005; Falk and Blaylock 2010; Gorgol and Sponsler 2011; Harlow 2003; Leone et al. 2008; Levin 2007; Petersilia 2003; Tewksbury et al. 2000). As Brazzell et al. noted (2009, p. 12), "little data are available on the involvement of formerly incarcerated individuals in educational programs in the community," and even less has been historically known about how faith and faith-based mentoring might influence the transition into higher education for those who attempt it. This particular research, then, is highly significant because it gives voice to a population that is extremely difficult to even identify on a college campus, much less to access, interview, and hear. Nevertheless, much can be learned from the perspectives of ex-offender college graduates on the vital role that both faith and faith-based mentors played in their higher education journeys.

Prior to discussing the results of this study on the faith-based mentoring of ex-felons in higher education—especially in the context of an international journal—it is important to provide a brief foundation of information as to the religious and faith identities that characterize the adult correctional population in the United States, since these also influence experiences and behaviors both in-prison and post-release. Since asking questions about the religious affiliations of inmates is considered by some to be a violation of the privacy rights of currently-incarcerated populations, researchers typically must consult the chaplains who work with these populations to investigate the religious and faith identities of those inmates to whom they minister as well as estimate the prevalence of certain religious practices in order to have some idea of their faith contexts. In one such study, federal chaplains surveyed by the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2008, p. 13) reported that among the inmates in their spiritual care, just over 66% professed some iteration of "Christian faith" (compared to 78.4% of the general population), and that the prevalence of "professing membership in [non-Christian] faiths [is] higher among inmates than in the U.S. adult population." State chaplains reported similar adherence

rates (Boddie and Funk 2012). Without discounting the importance of substance abuse treatment, mental health care, housing help, and quality in-prison education and job training, three-quarters of the chaplains surveyed considered "support from religious groups after release" (78%) and "access to quality religion-related programs in prison" (73%) to be "absolutely critical" to inmates' successful rehabilitation (ibid.).

Johnson (2011) reviewed 273 studies published between 1944 and 2010 investigating links between crime/delinquency variables and religiosity variables, finding that 90% of the studies revealed an inverse relationship between the two variables—leading him to conclude that a "faith-based program combining education, work, life skills training, mentoring, and aftercare ... [can] influence in a paradigm-shifting way the prisoner reentry process ... with the expectation that this approach will substantially enhance achieving the secular and correctional goal of rehabilitation" (pp. 116, 121). Recent research certainly supports Johnson's claims that this progress is occurring in US correctional facilities and suggests that *in-prison* religious activities are effective in helping change-motivated and solution-seeking prisoners understand their own criminal culpability, replace antisocial tendencies with prosocial behaviors, adjust to abrupt and prolonged losses of freedom, and experience hope in spite of their circumstances (Camp et al. 2006; Clear and Sumter 2002; Kerley et al. 2005; Zimmer 2005). Indeed, Giordano et al. (2002) discuss the significance of faith-based mentoring in its broader context, identifying both a former prisoner's faith and their mentoring as potential "hooks for change."

2. Results

The context of this study was the Colson Scholarship program at Wheaton College, Illinois. According to the school's website, the Charles W. Colson Scholarship "provides former prisoners with a college education and life formation program that develops them as Christian leaders" (Wheaton College 2018d). This program provides full tuition for ex-felons to pursue one degree or credential program at Wheaton, with the possible addition of room and board for undergraduate students (Wheaton College 2018a). Six Colson Scholars who completed bachelor degrees were personally interviewed to gather data on their experiences before, during, and after the program. For detailed background, see Materials and Methods.

2.1. Personal Assets and Liabilities: Participants' Individual Histories

Although not every participant in this study experienced abuse in his home, four of the six shared harrowing stories of verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or a combination. Often these tales of emotional neglect, mistreatment, and physical abuse were exacerbated by caregivers' substance abuse and continued to affect participants deeply even into adulthood. Half of the participants grew up as children left to fend for themselves, bouncing from house to house and boarding with whichever relative or friend or detention facility would house them. These emotionally dysfunctional upbringings often resulted in substance abuse and other destructive behaviors where criminal arrest was perhaps inevitable, and at least four of the six participants identified themselves as drug offenders. The connection between these upbringings and substance abuse was clearest in the case of Shawn[2], who specifically referenced episodes of childhood sexual abuse and felt that these abuses resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder, leading him to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol, and eventually to experience incarceration. The trajectory of most Colson Scholar participants seemed to include dysfunctional upbringings in abusive environments and/or abuses of controlled substances.

Nancy Schlossberg (1984) categorized the personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources most likely to influence the healthy sense of self and well-being of individuals in transition as "assets" and "liabilities." The liabilities participants mentioned having influenced their higher education transitional process included their histories of dysfunction and abuse,

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[2]   Participants chose pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

underdeveloped educational skills, a campus environment that they felt exacerbated these liabilities, factors related to age and family, financial instability and indebtedness, and relationship-building difficulties (Leary 2015). Participants' lack of academic skills, underestimation of Wheaton's rigor, and overestimation of their adaptability seriously hindered their engagement and performance. Several factors that accompanied Scholars' ages being higher than the average college student also intensified scholastic challenges and family tensions, such as deaths in the family (and time redirected to funerals, grieving, and estate-settling), greater sleep deprivation, lower energy levels, and increased pressure to achieve multiple marriage-related, familial, and personal goals simultaneously—meaning academic learning paralleled learning how to be a husband, a father, an employee, and even re-learning what it meant to be free (ibid.).

Despite also identifying marital and family relationships as an asset, participants felt that these relationships were liabilities in that they placed valid claims on the Scholar's discretionary time and energy, leaving married participants to feel guilty for their study time, and single participants to observe that their married peers may have "missed out" on Wheaton student life and community. Incoming financial instability or indebtedness exacerbated this dynamic as time spent gaining and maintaining employment to support one's family could have been invested in the pursuit of academic success or family and campus relationship-building (ibid.). Psychological distance between participants and student peers created by gaps in age, personal histories, emotional capacity, life stages, academic preparation, financial resources, and common interests presented significant barriers to relationship-building. According to Nate, these liabilities necessitated overcoming emotional dysfunction and disavowing past manipulative motives in order to experience healing and develop quality relationships. All Colson Scholar participants reported some combination of these concurrent liabilities weighing heavily on their transitions. Although many factors helped these participants to persist—secular and sacred—none seemed to play as significant and consistent a role as religious faith (Leary 2018).

Participants routinely expressed their religious faith as pivotal to their success and meaningful to them as individuals throughout their transitional process, offering several lenses through which to view the role of religious faith in their higher education transitions. Faith was perceived as significant to the participants' higher education transition as an asset offsetting a host of perceived liabilities, as a coping mechanism helping participants persist despite these perceived liabilities, as a reason for the disclosure of participants' criminal past and, finally, as a developmental outcome of the higher education transition—foreshadowing how powerful such a variable might be for the reentry of the greater ex-offender population (Leary 2015). Within-participant statements emerged another significant theme – that of the essential role of support that faith-based mentors played in the higher education journeys of these ex-offender students.

2.2. Faith-Worldview Development and Emotional Development as Mentoring Outcomes

James Olthuis (1985) suggested that there are universal ultimate questions and answers regarding our identity and purpose, the existence and source of deity, and the true path to happiness that constitute our worldview frameworks and give our lives context, direction, and meaning. He held that these worldviews are often based more on faith than deliberate rational thought and that they morph "as faith deepens, as insight into reality grows, and as individuals and cultures themselves move on to new stages in their development" (ibid., p. 9). Likewise, Marilyn Schlitz, Cassandra Vieten, and Elizabeth Miller (Schlitz et al. 2010) described a worldview as a complex and coherent conceptual framework, developed over time, that includes and organizes the beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, values, and ideas that influence how individuals comprehend and interpret reality. It is clear from these definitions of worldview that the participants developed a conceptual framework of faith that built on their previous professions and became increasingly significant to them throughout their time at Wheaton (Leary 2015).

2.2.1. Faith-Worldview Development

Participants consistently reported entering Wheaton with an underdeveloped understanding of a faith-centric worldview and that the biblical and theological perspective they gained at the college bolstered their faith, significantly shaping their worldviews. Alpha submitted that

> going to Wheaton . . . helps you grasp and wrestle with those questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Who is God, and what role does that play in my life? What am I supposed to do with this life? It helped answer some of those questions, and equipped you to be able to think and understand the world that you live in and how it works . . . [to] answer the theological questions of who we are and what God is requiring of us.

Jonah agreed that "my faith . . . the college has just enlarged that in such a way that I'm not even sure I can measure it."

Wheaton provided participants with access to the tools, time, and environment for growth in theological awareness, religious faith, and critical thought in order to formulate their worldviews while answering life's deep and abiding "big questions" (Parks 2000). John elaborated on precisely how his professors spiritually mentored him and enabled him to answer those big life questions:

> [Wheaton professors] talked about spiritual formation quite a bit . . . It wasn't just about the learning [but] the overall picture. The term they used is "faith and learning." . . . That was in the forefront of our minds. And we did devotions in class, and professors prayed for the students . . . It gave me a sense of purpose and it kind of completes something that was missing there for a long time and answers a question for me . . . [from] when I was 12, "Why am I even here?" And that's one of the major worldview questions people ask . . . Wheaton has helped to shape me in that way . . . It's definitely changed my life . . . I think Wheaton College gave me that sense of purpose that I had been searching for . . . It really defined me in terms of where my ministry passion is taking me. I don't think I would have had that just going to a junior college . . . Now I can say, I have a purpose.

Nate added that through exposure to the type of critical theological thinking that Wheaton offered, students grew more comfortable applying theology to life in order to answer these ultimate questions through biblically-informed worldviews:

> The spiritual formation that I received as a result of my education at Wheaton is—priceless. The very way that I think about life was really formed through my being exposed to critical . . . deep and passionate theological thinking . . . Researching and reading the ancient authors and the early church fathers, and really seeing how the work of theology was done over a long period of time, and being able to know that you can stake your life on it, that has changed me. As opposed to before I went to Wheaton . . . I was really full of passion and zeal, but no knowledge . . . I just couldn't believe that, after everything I had done and all the people I had hurt, that God was really at work in my life to provide opportunities for me to grow as a person and to learn, and to educate my heart and my mind . . . So to be given the chance to really grow and be exposed, and to have my faith sharpened, and really be able to perceive deep things, and scriptural truths, and theological truths, is just a phenomenal opportunity . . . Receiving a higher education is a rare and incredible privilege . . . [and even rarer is] the kind of education that's available at Wheaton College.

This context was a rich environment for the type of spiritual mentoring that not only welcomed the deep questions, but sought to help students answer them objectively.

Alpha described the importance of this faith development to life after Wheaton as follows: "You transition to the real world and you take all that stuff you had there and apply it . . . It's easy, you know, not to be in contact with hunger when your refrigerator is full, but when you leave those protective cocoons and enter the world and things start hitting you, you know? That [faith] is still able to maintain

you and keep you on course." Nate also explained how his Wheaton experience continues to have a pervasive effect on his faith development: "Everything . . . challenged my faith, informed my faith, convicted my faith, and stretched my faith . . . It affects every way I think in my life today because of the information . . . and the challenges and the knowledge [to which] I was exposed." Indeed, the faith development that a Wheaton education encouraged remained long after the graduation ceremonies concluded. Jonah even felt this faith development drove him to minister to others post-Wheaton because of the influence of faith-based mentoring in his life:

> I have an understanding of [God] because someone else helped me get it, so . . . I think I'll die trying to help other people get a better understanding of . . . ultimate truth . . . Maybe I will go out one day and minister to a homeless guy and he'll remove himself from the streets, and become a disciple and then go disciple . . . It's far-fetched, but it's like, when people have purpose, I just think their response is different, and you need educated people to actually give it to them—the blind can't lead the blind.

2.2.2. Emotional Development

Emotional development was a recurrent theme across all participants. Two individuals, however, communicated especially poignant stories of how they experienced emotional healing during their educational programs at Wheaton College, largely due the involvement of their mentors. Nate used emotional language to describe his struggles upon arriving at Wheaton: "I simply didn't have any framework in my emotional life or in my experiences for being a friend, or for making friends [and] for letting people in, because all my life I had been running from people." Nate attributed his emotional development over the course of his education to experiences with people at Wheaton College:

> [God] didn't remove from me the side effects of the brokenness, like the loneliness and the inability to emotionally connect to other people . . . but God gave me the opportunity and the time and the place to [relearn those skills] . . . It put me in a position probably most importantly though, to learn how to be a friend and to be loved . . . I wanted to be able to really love and genuinely care for somebody without having to manipulate them. And so over the course of those years at school I learned how to love people. And I think that was probably the most important thing that I took away from it, that I was able to learn to love people and to let people love me in return. And to let it be genuine without thinking that there was some strings attached, which in my former community [the drug subculture], there was always something attached to it.

John similarly experienced emotional healing and development through his reception at Wheaton. Initially, John had described his upbringing without his parents—his father left shortly after he was born and his mother gave him away to a grandmother when he was young. After several more adults in his life deserted him, John concluded that it was actually his mother's initial abandonment that left him searching for purpose:

> "Why did I even exist?" Like when I was twelve . . . I was in a foster home, and I [went] for a visit with my mom, and I knew she didn't want me . . . I'm twelve years old thinking, "God . . . why did you create me to live here, suffer, die, and go to hell?" That was my basic worldview. It was an ultimate question . . . I didn't feel worthy of existence . . . My mother had never said she loved me—well, she told me once when I was thirteen, when somebody told her to tell me. And she hadn't said it [again] until I was thirty-two . . . so from thirteen to thirty-two, no love.

So when he originally arrived on campus, he arrived with all of that hurt, abandonment, and rejection and found that Wheaton would be an emotional respite for him from all that pain:

> I experienced people not rejecting me for my past . . . once I let go and experienced their response, it helped me to really appreciate people more . . . As an . . . ex-criminal, you

don't want to be rejected . . . you want to be treated like a redeemed person . . . [Folks at Wheaton] embraced me and loved me. So emotionally speaking, it helped me to realize I'm not always going to be rejected. I'm not always going to be treated in this way . . . So it really was an encouragement for me, because not only was I not rejected, I was embraced for the first time. And it really opened up some deep friendships.

In John's case, his mentors affected not only his own emotional maturity but enriched his family, expanding their life experiences, opening future opportunities, and providing them with mentors of their own.

For our family, it gave them an opportunity to experience a different kind of culture, a Christian culture, a quality Christian culture like in the communities . . . There was a difference between what you experience in inner-city places versus what we experienced at Wheaton . . . Our children were able to be exposed to opportunities at Wheaton that they would not have been exposed to otherwise. And two of our children took music lessons from one of the students there, and he's been a major influence in their life . . . one of my sons who's now at Bible College . . . pursu[ing] a degree in music to serve in ministry. So a lot of other intangibles came out of that that didn't just directly impact me [but also my family].

2.3. Faith-Based Mentors as Significant and Consistent Supports

This research evidences that the mentors these participants had prior to attending Wheaton, during their time at Wheaton, and following their time at Wheaton played a significant supportive role of encouragement at each step of the transition process into, through, and out of higher education. The most-evident pre-Wheaton example of this type of mentor-support was shared by Nate:

One of my best friends is a retired county prosecutor . . . He knew me . . . well . . . He ended up . . . calling me for odd jobs . . . letting me live with him for a short period of time [and letting me housesit for him] . . . It was things like this and people in the community that really reached out to me and helped me . . . [When I was accepted to Wheaton], they had a surprise party! It was everybody that I knew in the whole community, my whole family, and all these people . . . They had set up a mock judge's bench. And they went through this whole routine, everybody. "This court is now in session." . . . [The judge] had a white wig on and a black robe. And, they went through this whole thing about, "What are the charges being brought before Mr. ["Nate Saint"] today?" And [he] stands up with this sheet of old computer paper . . . the kind that's . . . real long because it's [got] the perforated holes. And he says, "Well the charge against Mr. ["Saint"] is substantial. And we don't see any reason why he should ever be, ever released from parole or probation, or ever get a chance, ever again from anything that he's ever done." And, my friend stood up and he says, "Your Honor, I object, on the basis of the biblical principle in John 18, that Jesus Christ Himself said, "He whom the Son sets free, shall be free indeed." And the judge said, Mr. ["Saint"], this court now finds you a free man." It was just . . . I was weeping with so much joy. All these people here, there they had, all these little old ladies had brought, food and stuff and for somebody who had done all the things that I had done, and to know the quality of the love of these kinds of people . . . They had no reason.

The faith community in which Nate found himself had surrounded him with love, known him, and had chosen to overlook his criminal past based on the commonality of faith they had.

Kenneth communicated a similar example of how his mentor challenged him to begin the program with a great sense of sobriety, beginning in his pre-Wheaton days. Kenneth described this man as not only his mentor but his friend and "spiritual father" who gave him inspiration, encouragement and good counsel:

> [My mentor and I] became great friends . . . He . . . said, "I'm going to help you get into
> Wheaton, but you have no room to fail." He put the fear of God in me, because I was going
> to be a pioneer . . . So that's how I got into Wheaton College—through the back door . . .
> [He] met with me regularly; he made sure I was doing well . . . As a person, he became my
> spiritual father . . . [Another mentor challenged me that] I had to be careful because you
> could become cynical . . . He says, "Guard your heart . . . Don't let all this higher academia
> stuff mess you up with your genuineness of this Gospel." I've never forgotten that; that
> was real good advice that he gave me.

The investment Wheaton mentors made in the lives of these Colson Scholars did not stop at
the front door of the College. John describes how much he got out of his mentoring relationship
throughout the ups and downs of his Wheaton program:

> We had to have a mentor, which I thought was good, because I had a mentor who helped
> . . . me along in doing a discipleship program and help[ed] me to be a leader, [another]
> just spent time with me . . . Somebody who's older and more experienced and loves you
> and willing to spend time with you even though you've gotten in trouble . . . It says, "You
> know, I'm an important person." Not in a prideful way. But, "I'm wanted, or I'm loved, or
> I'm thought well of." And that goes a long way in helping you to stay encouraged along
> the way, when you do get down and out.

Although mentoring with the program coordinator was a mandatory part of his program,
John felt that this campus mentoring relationship was not the only one to provide him with
discipleship, leadership, love, and self-esteem. He experienced similar encouragement in the
non-mandatory impromptu mentoring inherent in his academic relationships with professors who
became additional mentors:

> I remember talking to a professor and I was writing a paper and it was very difficult . . .
> And I basically got really emotional because I felt inadequate. And he took the time. He let
> me save face . . . He showed me what—how to structure things, things that you should
> have already known growing up in school. But nobody—you didn't get exposed to that
> education. But he took the time to just encourage me and prayed with me right there in his
> office. And this is a top-tier scholar who was well known who has written books that are
> published. A person to invest in your life in that way makes a big impact.

Nate also described his experience with mentoring at Wheaton as two-fold. He benefitted from
the formal primary mentor designated by the institution (the scholarship administrator referred to by
others as the program coordinator) and the informal mentoring of his professors:

> The Colson Scholarship Administrator . . . really took me under his wing. He made himself
> available to me not just as an administrator but emotionally available to me as a friend.
> And his constant encouragement was vital in times of doubt, in times of anxiety. Several of
> the professors in the Bible Department . . . always treated me like I belonged there.

Repeated themes throughout these descriptions of Scholars' mentoring relationships during their
Wheaton programs are the emotional availability of their mentors, the encouragement the mentoring
relationships brought, and the love, belonging, and emotional healing these relationships seemed to
bring, as Alpha underscored:

> You know I really didn't experience [obstacles] at Wheaton. That was one of the real
> beauties of the program. And a lot of that, too, has to do with leadership, specifically. When
> we got there the coordinator . . . just as wonderful man of God with tremendous insight
> and sensitivity . . . This is why the coordinator of a program like this . . . is so important
> . . . [Housing] was the incoming challenge out the gate, but he knew exactly what to do

every step of the way . . . The challenges can be a little more difficult [for non-traditional students]. You already have the odds stacked against you in the first place, that you're not going to succeed, going in later in life, not having the academic background . . . and it's a pretty rigorous school educationally . . . The goal is to complete and accomplish . . . that coordinator [is] so vitally important to being able to meet their needs . . . You've got to have the right person with just the right heart . . . and try and accomplish the goal within the means that they have . . . I can tell you that he moved heaven and earth to do the right things . . . a very unique person. Just a wonderful man of God that knew how to minister to me, my family, love on my family as he did, my son, my wife, because when you come as a married couple, obviously it's the whole package coming, everybody goes to college . . . When I think of Wheaton, it's always grandiose, a wonderful experience, a learning institution. And the people—genuine people that have a calling, and those that I met there, the leaders . . . [down to] the people that work down at the janitorial shop, they were all extensions of the grace of God and the love of God.

There seems to be no real substitute for a mentor who can serve Scholars in practical ways, who understands the needs of non-traditional populations in higher education—like ex-offenders—and ultimately, who know how to communicate the love, forgiveness, and grace of God, as is evident in Alpha's mentoring relationship, as well as Shaun's mediated relationship, to Wheaton. As the only participant to recidivate[3], Shaun described how his mentor acted as a valued liaison upon his release from his second imprisonment, mediating between him and the College (against whom he had committed crimes for which he was reincarcerated):

He and I would just get together a lot. He just kind of took me under his wing and kind of mentored me in many ways. Also, a faculty member I was close to came to see me, and then after I got out, he kind of mediated [a meeting with me and President Liftin] because the president wanted to know why I was committing burglaries on Wheaton College campus . . . Surprisingly . . . he didn't ban me from campus; he actually told me that. Oddly enough, he not only forgave me, but I think he prayed [for me] at the time, which you know, how small do you feel then?

It appears that in the context of the meaningful mentoring relationships at Wheaton College—from the President's office down—forgiveness and grace were extended to everyone regardless of circumstance, demonstrating to them that if and when they failed, they still truly belonged at Wheaton.

This forgiveness, grace and encouragement made an immeasurable difference in each of the Scholar's lives in various ways, and several of the Scholars evidenced ongoing relationships with their mentors decades after their Wheaton graduations. Despite society's labels (Krohn and Lopes 2015), Jonah best illustrated this concept of biblical mentoring as confidence-building, regular, on-going, life-on-life encouragement:

The mentor ideal is biblically based; I think it really helps people in any regard. So having an older Christian man that really knew who I was kind of talk to me a lot and say things like, "You can do it. Be encouraged. Don't worry about stereotypes or labels that other people put on you. Be confident. Believe in God." The conversation . . . we would meet once a week, so we'd usually have a little debrief session to see what was going on, what issues I was having, if there were any, and kind of talk through those. So I think he was a great support . . . He was open to meeting more frequently if necessary, and if you needed to cancel he was okay with that. And then you would just kind of catch up the following

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3   The five Scholars interviewed who did not recidivate consistently cited personal dispositions and spiritual resources as the determining factors, while the Scholar who did recidivate (technically giving this participant pool a seventeen percent recidivism rate) suggested that an embittered Colson Scholar drop-out influenced him toward criminal activity.

week . . . I think he had great skills . . . We kind of hit it off there and we've been laughing and joking since . . . That's my mentor. He came out to my wedding. He has pictures of my daughter. And any time I'm in the Midwest I actually try to see him when I can.

3. Discussion

Johnson (2011) argued persuasively in his research for both the need and dearth of mentoring for US correctional populations post-release, and how faith-based volunteers could fill that gap effectively. On the importance of supportive mentors for ex-offender populations returning to their communities, Johnson (2011, pp. 195–96) asserted the following:

Research confirms that mentoring matters—for kids as well as for adults. The real problem is that we have a severe shortage of mentors, especially for prisoners and ex-prisoners. This is precisely why communities of faith, by far America's most volunteer-rich organizations, are uniquely positioned to assist in alleviating the mentoring deficit. Tragically, almost all the seven hundred thousand people leaving prison this year will do so without the benefit of a mentor . . . It is still very much an empirical question whether congregations will respond to this great challenge of mentoring prisoners and ex-prisoners. Effectively impacting prisoner reentry requires a paradigm shift for many within America's houses of worship.

Johnson's observations revealed an imbalanced reality among volunteer populations within faith-communities, suggesting that so much emphasis is placed on in-prison ministry that post-release ministry is roundly overlooked, requiring a paradigm-shifting corrective to return to equilibrium.

Elaborating, Johnson (ibid., pp. 197–98) reasoned that

As important as volunteer work within correctional facilities might be, it does not change the fact that most religious volunteers and organizations largely tend to overlook prisoner reentry and aftercare. Why this oversight? I would argue that compared to re-entry and aftercare, prison ministry is a much easier task to pursue. Although it may sound counterproductive, prisons provide a much safer and easier service opportunity for volunteers working with offenders. Prisoners tend to be very appreciative of the time and attention they receive from outside visitors, and these exchanges tend to be overwhelmingly positive and non-threatening for volunteers. Because the prison environment tends to be controlled and heavily monitored, prison ministry can be viewed as safe and easy. After completing a quick Bible study or mentoring session, volunteers can be on their way in an hour or two. This may have a great deal to do with the prevalence of prison ministries and why they can be found in many if not most US congregations, and why thousands of religious volunteers visit prisons every day. For the same reasons, I would argue that faith-based organizations disproportionately opt for in-prison ministry as opposed to out-of-prison ministry and the delivery of services to ex-prisoners. Prisoner reentry is anything but easy or safe to confront.

Johnson's (ibid.) assessment for faith-based communities certainly seems to be accurate broadly, but that does not mean that there are no certain faith-based volunteers and organizations on the micro-level making significant differences in the lives of ex-offenders in need of the reentry support that mentors can provide. Given their commitment to providing not only funding but also faith-based mentors for ex-felons in higher education, Wheaton College—while not a perfect institution—seems to be a leader in righting the imbalance that Johnson critiques in faith-based ministries in the United States.

4. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this research was to fill critical gaps in the correctional education literature by investigating the experiences of ex-offenders transitioning into, through, and out of higher education

(Leary 2015). A transition can be defined as "any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Anderson et al. 2011, p. 39).

4.1. Methodological Framework

Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory provided a fitting interpretive framework through which to understand and classify participants' experiences. Its structural emphases on *self, situation, supports,* and *strategies* aided the crafting of interview questions and the organizing of the participants' responses around the key themes of investigation including (a) assets and liabilities, (b) coping mechanisms, (c) factors influencing disclosure of ex-offender status, (d) educational outcomes, and (e) ways in which Wheaton College provided or could have provided support. Faith and faith-based mentoring were persistently significant themes among each of the five categories for all participants.

4.2. Phenomenological Qualitative Inquiry and the Post-Positivist Paradigm

While phenomenological qualitative research was the most appropriate fit to answer the research questions centering on participants' perceptions of their lived experiences as Colson Scholars (Creswell 2012), my philosophical paradigm as a researcher could be considered post-positivist. Post-positivism operates on three quintessential research tenets including: (a) axiologically, that a researcher's values inevitably influence the research questions and outcomes[4]; that (b) epistemologically, a researcher's theory, hypotheses, or framework (that is, an a priori theory) inevitably influences the research; and that (c) ontologically, our understandings of reality are constructed and fragment apprehensions of a singular overarching reality or truth (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1962; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2011). Post-positivist assumptions and Merleau-Pontian (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1962) phenomenological methods (that is, with emphases on perceptions, bodily interaction with the world, and subjectivity) share similar perspectives and are entirely congruent (Clark 1998; Racher and Robinson 2003).

4.3. Research Setting and Context

The Colson Scholarship at Wheaton College is unique in its provision for education, life-formation, and leadership training of ex-felons, along with fully covering tuition, room, and board for those who meet the application criteria and are selected by the scholarship committee (Wheaton College 2018a, 2018d). To qualify, an applicant must: (a) be a Christian, (b) be an American citizen, (c) have a felony record, (d) be out of prison and established in a local church for at least one year, and (e) submit standardized test scores and transcripts (Wheaton College 2018a). The application process also includes the submission of a completed application; a three-to-four paragraph essay including the individual's statement of faith, statement of goals, and statement of incarceration; incarceration and parole information releases and permission waivers; and three recommendations. Ineligible for the program are felony arsonists, felony sexual offenders, habitual violent offenders, and felony offenders under psychiatric care or taking anti-psychotic medication (Wheaton College 2018a). Funded Scholars may enroll in any of Wheaton College's forty major programs.

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[4] As a post-positivist, I understand that my identity, assumptions, and values regarding religious faith and criminality in my roles as a Christian and a criminal justice practitioner relate to my research. Although this means that my findings are incapable of being unbiased, I consistently attempted to own and identify those biases through processes of positionality and reflexivity. I closely and actively listened to my participants and their interpretations of reality in order to grasp their perspectives—while practicing epoché and bracketing my own perceptions—and do justice to their experiences (Jones et al. 2013). Jones, Torres, and Arminio (ibid.) explained epoché as the reflection and identification of one's preconceived notions relevant to the research and defined bracketing as the willful attempt to withhold judgment or appraisal of the research inquiry in focus by setting aside or suspending those presumptions from affecting the research process.

4.4. Participant Recruitment and Selection

I utilized the strategy of criterion sampling for this study (Creswell 2012), and the criterion was having completed a bachelor's degree at Wheaton College as a recipient of the Colson Scholarship. This early choice to delimit potential participants allowed me to remove certificate-level-only students, masters-level-only students, non-completing, and current students from participation, narrowing the potential participant pool from 40 to 17 individuals to invite. Wheaton's liaison had contact information for sixteen of the seventeen men[5] remaining and sent them an email including my recruitment letter and informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the value of participants' responses, what they could expect, their rights and responsibilities, the risks involved, and a confidentiality pledge, all in accordance with approved research ethics protocols.[6]

Contacting potential participants through the institutional liaison protected their confidentiality as the liaison did not know which Colson Scholars chose to participate and *I* never had information for those who did not participate. When certain demographic details appeared to have great potential for revealing participants' identities despite the pseudonym, those details were reported in aggregate form[7]. Over the course of three weeks, potential participants received two invitation emails and one regular postal letter. Recruitment remained open for three weeks and, within another month, six Scholars had participated in the three-hour interviews.

Philosophically, this group of six participants constitutes an acceptable representation for phenomenological research given Morse's (1994) urging that no fewer than six participants should be utilized and Creswell's (1998) recommended range that fell between five and 25. However, the goal of the interviews was to reach theoretical saturation and, based on the coding and categorization process, it was evident that this cohesion and the general unity across responses was genuine. Finally, Copenhaver et al.'s (2007) similar study regarding the social stigma of ex-felons in college had only four participants and yet reached theoretical saturation. Similar to that sample's unique contribution, this group was meant only to be valued for its individual and collective perspectives—and not the promotion of some widespread generalizability of findings—such as trying to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between recidivism and faith-based mentoring, for example.[8]

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[5] No women were in the group of 17, meaning that no women would be represented in the final participants; while unfortunate, this should be considered more of a reality of incarcerated populations proportionally, built-in limitations on recruitment to women, and suspicions that women have differing primary priorities upon release than education.

[6] Due to the fact that this study was conducted with people, ethical approval was required by Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). The content of these three documents was carefully crafted in accordance with the research ethics protocols supported by the HSRB and also approved by the board prior to distribution. The entire project also received expedited approval by the board for initial and continuing approvals for this study. The corresponding ethical approval code is HSRB IRBNet ID #587976, Initial approval: 4/14/14, Expiration: 4/03/15, Extention Approval: 3/6/15, Expiration: 5/05/16.

[7] Aggregate Participant Data. Despite the fact that only six individuals were interviewed, participants represented a surprisingly diverse demographic cross-section. As to race, three identified as Black, two White, and one Latino. One had graduated from high school, while the other five passed general education development tests (GEDs) while incarcerated. All entered Wheaton as full-time students averaging thirty-four years of age, and their attendance at Wheaton spans the four decades of the scholarship's existence. All participants entered Wheaton with transfer credits; as a result, the average stay at Wheaton was only three years. The Colson Scholar participants' majors spanned Biblical and Theological Studies, Communication, Sociology, Christian Education, Clinical Psychology, and Evangelism. All participants lived on campus while at Wheaton; two entered with families, three were unmarried students, and one was married and subsequently divorced while at Wheaton. Currently, five of the interviewees are still in their first marriages, while the one who was divorced at Wheaton has since remarried. These six Scholar participants are either fathers or stepfathers to seventeen children; three of these are young children, six are teenagers, and eight are adults. None of their adult children have attended Wheaton. All participants reported working while earning their degrees, averaging twenty-four hours weekly. Currently, none of the participants receives governmental assistance, and all are employed: two in prison ministry, two as owner-operators (one blue collar, one white collar), one in higher education, and one in independent contractor work as a local delivery driver. Only one participant recidivated after his Wheaton experience.

[8] That faith or faith-based mentoring may have played a role in the five post-release success stories is certainly not inconsistent with the extant literature; however, caution should be exercised against making broad statements regarding faith's or faith-based mentoring's impact on recidivism based on this study as it provides little direct information regarding the specific connection between the two variables, nor was it methodologically designed to do so (Gehring 2000). It would also be inappropriate to utilize this particular study as proof-positive that higher education in a faith-based setting results

The quality of this research is undergirded by my graduate-level study of qualitative research philosophy and methods, my prisoner reentry research work leading a data collection team conducting interviews across fifteen Ohio correctional facilities, and the in-depth risk classification interviews I have conducted with several hundred inmates over my thirteen-year correctional career (Leary 2015). I also enhanced the quality of my findings by paying rigorous attention to detail throughout the study, and by applying the four parallel criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In this study, credibility was enhanced by peer debriefing, intercoder reliability checking, member-checking, and researcher reflexivity through informal journaling (Creswell 2012; Guba and Lincoln 1989). Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of the research setting and context and thoroughly describing the Colson Scholarship (Creswell 2012; Guba and Lincoln 1989). Dependability was increased by documenting the decisions I made in a researcher journal throughout the process, providing thick descriptions while acknowledging my own researcher biases, using strong quotes, employing deductive and inductive coding, and conducting external audits to support the findings (Creswell 2012; Guba and Lincoln 1989; Saldana 2009). Finally, confirmability was improved by performing audits that insured that the data and findings originated from the research interviews, documenting my biases and experiences in my journal, noting the logic behind the conclusions I reached, increasing immersion in the relevant data, providing a high level of attention to subjectivity and reflexivity, and member-checking the findings to discern whether I adequately interpreted and represented what the participants offered as events and experiences significant to their higher education transitions (Creswell 2012; Guba and Lincoln 1989; Morrow 2005).

4.5. Interview Location and Protocol

Participants chose interview locations near their homes, and I began the face-to-face interviews by reviewing the parameters, risks, and benefits of the informed consent form. I followed the interview protocol that had undergone faculty scrutiny and multiple revisions until it contained questions I believed were well-crafted to foster rich feedback and facilitate answering the research questions. The semi-structured interview format not only enhanced my understanding of participants' experiences, but also allowed for misconceptions to be clarified as they occurred and provided space for the acceptance and support of disclosures (Moustakas 1994). All interviews were completed during summer 2014.

4.6. Data Collection and Analysis

As I reviewed the interview transcripts, and throughout the content data analysis and synthesis processes, including the phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and textural description phases, I gave attention to the practice of epoché and bracketing (Jones et al. 2013; Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1962; Moustakas 1994; Racher and Robinson 2003; Van Manen 1990). Immersing myself in the data and manually theming, coding, and categorizing the six interview transcripts (Creswell 2012), I identified deductive codes related to Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory and inductive codes not identified with the theory. I then engaged the participants in a "member-checking" discussion to ascertain whether or not I had genuinely captured their experiences (Van Manen 1990), and five of the six participants gave me the "phenomenological nod" that they saw their own experiences in the heart of the findings as captured (Munhall 1994), although one participant failed

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in lowered recidivism for several specific reasons: (a) participants self-selected into this study (potentially introducing self-selection bias), (b) recidivism for non-interviewed Colson Scholars may vary, (c) individual characteristics known to affect recidivism were not controlled, (d) the sample size was small, (e) participants attended the program across various decades and had diverse interactions, (f) participants had extremely variant criminal records, (g) no direct questions related to factors influencing recidivism were in the interview protocol, and (h) there are similar secular programs to which the Colson Scholarship can be compared.

to respond to two email attempts to contact him. The other five participants' consistent approval of the themes is just one measure of quality supporting the trustworthiness of my findings in light of potential limitations and ethical research considerations.

4.7. Potential Limitations

Despite this level of care, several potential limitations may have negatively affected the quality of the study, including a lack of sufficient prolonged engagement, the potential for researcher bias, and the potential for a power and privilege dynamic (Creswell 2012). Prolonged engagement over repeated visits with participants (who were dispersed as far as Florida, Massachusetts, and Illinois) was impractical due to the project's time constraints and my commitment to interview the participants in person, although multiple interviews may have enhanced the findings. Also, I hold many biases from my experiences as a Christian and as a criminal justice practitioner; and, although I took great pains throughout the research process to bracket these preconceptions and keep them from projecting themselves onto the participants' responses and my representation of their experiences, it is possible that these biases had some mitigating effect on the research. To abate this possibility, I extensively utilized peer checks and expert reviews of the themes, codes, categories, and findings to ensure that I was not omitting or overvaluing certain responses because of personal bias. Finally, a subtle power-privilege differential may have been present, especially among participants who may have had negative experiences within the criminal justice system, although I did not share my correctional experience until after the end of the interview, if at all. There is also the possibility that invitees who received the scholarship but recidivated may have been too ashamed to participate, or that invitees who may have had bad experiences at Wheaton may have refused to participate due to misinterpreting the study as a pro-Wheaton marketing attempt (since the invitation came from the Wheaton gatekeeper), although I have no evidence whether either of these affected the quality of the findings.

5. Conclusions

In light of these results within the context of the Christian faith, logical questions surface such as, "Is there any comparative data on other faith-based initiatives (that is, with Muslim, Jewish, or Buddhist, and other religions), or are these outcomes something unique to the Christian religion? That is, are these findings generalizable to other faith-based programs?" Another reasonable question is whether faith alone or mentoring alone (or the combination of the two) was most successful in supporting Scholars' desistance from crime? Essentially, the issue is to what extent did the participants' faith sustain them or the mentoring support sustain them, or both? It was evident from the participants contributions that both is an appropriate response, but to what actual extent was one aspect more important than another is perhaps a follow-up question best left to operationalize quantitatively at some future point in time. Other questions that still need to be addressed include those relating to the uniqueness of either Wheaton College broadly, or the Colson Scholarship more narrowly, that makes the scholarship program a model program for possible replication at other institutions. Perhaps when established and studied across multiple programmatic iterations in various institutional contexts, the program's ability to help students with periods of past imprisonment and manage society's labels and its social stigma will become more evident, along with how the role of the volunteer mentor serves to support Scholars and practically function for them within that scope. A final question revolves around compulsory aspects of the mentoring process and agency in desistance from crime—for example, John mentioned that mentoring was a mandatory part of his program, but how successful would the mentoring be at assisting the desistance process if the mentoring were voluntary versus compulsory? For now, all of these questions best serve as implications for future research.

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The Effects of Provincial and Individual Religiosity on Deviance in China: A Multilevel Modeling Test of the Moral Community Thesis

Xiuhua Wang [1,*] and Sung Joon Jang [2]

[1]   Department of Statistical Science, Baylor University, Waco, TX 76798, USA
[2]   Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University, Waco, TX 76798, USA; Sung_Joon_Jang@baylor.edu
*   Correspondence: xiuhua_wang@baylor.edu; Tel.: +1-254-710-1691

Abstract: This paper examines the moral community thesis in the secular context of China. Using multilevel logistic regression, we test (1) whether both individual- (measured by affiliation with Islam, Buddhism and Christianity) and aggregate-level religiosity (measured by the number of mosques, Buddhist temples, and churches per 10,000 people in province) are inversely related to law and rule violations at the individual level and (2) whether province-level religiosity enhances the inverse relationship between individual religiosity and deviant behaviors. Results from the 2010 China General Social Survey and the Spatial Explorer of Religions provide some support for the moral community proposition that contextual religiosity affects deviance at the individual level. Specifically, we find provincial as well as individual level of Islam to be inversely related with the violation of the law and rules. However, we find that neither the provincial level of Christianity and Buddhism nor cross-level interaction is related to deviance. The only exception, cross-level interaction involving the individual and provincial level of Islam, is in the opposite direction (i.e., positive, not negative). The implications of our findings are discussed.

Keywords: religion; law and rule violations; moral community; China

1. Introduction

The deterrent effect of religion on crime and deviance has been debated for more than 30 years, since Hirschi and Stark (1969) failed to find empirical support for the "hellfire" hypothesis. While many studies report that religion is inversely associated with various types of criminal and deviant behaviors (e.g., Benda 2002; Cochran and Akers 1989; Johnson 1987; Johnson et al. 2000, p. 2000; Johnson and Jang 2011; Marsiglia et al. 2005; Olson 1990), others find religion to be unrelated to crime and deviance, like Hirschi and Stark (Groves et al. 1987; Heaton 2006; Hirschi and Stark 1969). Some suggest that the relationship between religion and crime is spurious since both religiosity and criminal behaviors are fully attributable to the individual's neurological predisposition (Cochran et al. 1994; Ellis 1987, p. 220; Ellis and Peterson 1996).

Other scholars, however, propose explanations for the inconsistent findings. One key explanation is the moral community thesis proposed by Rodney Stark (Stark 1996; Stark et al. 1982). According to this thesis, religion is more of a group than an individual property. Thus, the effect of religious context on crime and deviance is conceptually distinct from that of individual religiosity. Moreover, the effect of individual religiosity on deviance and crime is expected to be contingent upon the religiousness of context, namely, the proportion of people who are actively religious in the context.

Not all studies, however, provide empirical support for the hypothesis that religiosity at contextual level affects individual deviance and crime (Adamczyk and Hayes 2012; Ellis and Peterson 1996; Finke and Adamczyk 2008; Stack and Kposowa 2011). Also, previous findings are not consistent

about whether contextual-level religiosity enhances the effect of individual religiosity on crime and deviance (Adamczyk and Hayes 2012; Corcoran et al. 2012; Regnerus 2003; Wallace et al. 2007). Besides, prior research focuses mostly on Western contexts, particularly the United States, which, due to its Judeo-Christian tradition, is more likely to have a moral community than less religious non-Western contexts. To date, the moral community thesis has not been tested yet using data from non-Western societies.

To fill this gap in the research, this study examines the moral community thesis in the context of contemporary China. Specifically, we apply multilevel logistic regression analysis to analyze two sets of nationally representative data to test (1) whether aggregate-level and individual-level religiosity are inversely related to violation of the law and various conventional rules at the individual level and (2) whether the aggregate-level religiosity increases the prosocial effect of individual-level religiosity on the odds of violating the law and conventional rules. We begin with an overview of the moral community thesis and religion in China, followed by a review of the literature on religion and deviance in Chinese contexts (Taiwan as well as mainland China). Next, we describe our theoretical approach and hypotheses before turning to a description of the data measurement and analytic strategy. Finally, we present results from a multilevel logistic regression analysis and discuss the implications of our study for the moral community thesis.

2. Moral Communities Thesis

The moral community thesis was originally proposed by Durkheim (1976) and popularized by Stark (1996). When religiosity was found to have no association with delinquency in California and the Pacific Northwest (Burkett and White 1974; Hirschi and Stark 1969), unlike in Atlanta (Higgins and Albrecht 1977), Arizona (Jensen and Maynard 1979), Nashville (Rhodes and Reiss 1970), and among Mormons in Utah and Idaho (Albrecht et al. 1977), Stark (1996) proposed that the deterrent effect of individual religiosity on deviance and crime should be conditioned by the religiosity of the broader social context, namely the proportion of people who are actively religious in a particular social context (Stark 1996; Stark et al. 1982). Stark (1996, p. 164), religion is "a group property" rather than "an individual trait." Thus, religion is expected to produce social conformity among individuals only when a religion is accepted by most of the community members and provides a normative guideline for social interaction in the community. Accordingly, in a religious community where religious commitment is a social norm, individual religiosity is likely to be inversely associated with crime and deviance. In contrast, in a non-religious or secular community, religious individuals are as likely as their non-religious counterparts to be deviant as the religion is not accepted by their community as a social norm (Stark et al. 1982).

Since its introduction, an increasing number of studies have been conducted to test the moral community thesis. To test the thesis, it is necessary to first examine whether context-level religiosity is inversely related to individual-level deviance and crime, although the relationship is not the key argument of the thesis. Most studies find a significant association between religious context and individual deviance.

For example, by applying multilevel analysis to cross-national data, studies find that individuals living in more religious countries have lower levels of premarital sex (Adamczyk and Hayes 2012), suicide acceptability (Stack and Kposowa 2011), and acceptance of white-collar crimes (Corcoran et al. 2012) than those in less religious countries. Similarly, American adolescents attending religious schools are less likely to smoke cigarettes than those in less religious schools (Bahr and Hoffmann 2008), and the risk of suicide attempts is found to be lower among youth living in neighborhoods that had a higher proportion of religiously conservative residents in the United States (Maimon and Kuhl 2008).

Furthermore, Regnerus (2003) found religious homogeneity rather than community religiousness at a school- and county-level to generate effective social control against delinquency (Regnerus 2003; Trawick and Howsen 2006), while Adamczyk (2008, p. 657) found neither generic religiosity nor

conservative Protestant religious context to make a difference in women's decisions regarding abortion. According to Finke and Adamczyk (2008), religiosity at a national level was among the most consistent predictors of the individual sexual morality, although it had no effect on the morality sanctioned by the state such as cheating on taxes, accepting a bribe, buying stolen goods, providing the government with false information, and avoiding a public transportation fare.

While the previous finding of an inverse relationship between context-level religiosity and individual-level deviance is consistent with the moral community thesis, the central argument of the thesis concerns whether context-level religiosity affects the individual-level relationship between religiosity and deviance. That is, Stark (1996, p. 165) argues that individual religiosity restrains crime and deviance "only in communities where the majority of people are actively religious." In a secular context, he suggests the individual-level effect of religion on crimes and deviance would substantially decline and even disappear (Stark 1996; Stark et al. 1982).

As the thesis would have predicted, Corcoran et al. (2012) found that religious context, measured in terms of belief in a personal and moral God, increases the inverse relationship between individual religious belief, specifically, a belief in a personal and moral God, and the acceptability of white-collar crimes. Scheepers et al. (2002) also showed that the effect of individual religiosity on moral attitudes (toward abortion, premarital and extramarital relationships, and homosexual relations) tended to be stronger in more religious countries than in less religious or more secularized countries. In addition, using a large representative sample of American public high schools, Wallace et al. (2007) found that adolescents attending highly religious schools were less likely to use alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana than their equally religious peers attending less religious schools.

While Regnerus (2003) reported that religiosity at the school and county level interacted with individual religiosity (religious affiliation) in reducing delinquency, he also suggested that religious homogeneity at a contextual level rather than religiosity interacts with individual religiosity reducing theft. Similarly, Ovadia and Moore (2010) found the percentage of evangelical Protestants in a county to be positively associated with the teen birth rate, whereas the percentage of Catholics was negatively associated, although the percentage of religious adherents in a county was not related to the birth rate.

Despite these positive findings, researchers have also failed to find evidence of the moral community thesis. For example, using data on suicide in Netherlands from 1936 to 1973, Van Tubergen et al. (2005) found that community-level religiosity can protect not only religious members of all denominations but also "religious nones" from suicide. Cochran and Akers (1989, p. 92) only found "minor" support for Stark's moral community thesis. That is, they did not find significant interactions between aggregate religiosity and the effect of individual religiosity on alcohol and marijuana use, although they found personal asceticism to affect alcohol use only in highly religious contexts and disappears in contexts with low levels of religiosity.

In response to the negative findings, some researchers have argued that the significant relationship between religion and delinquency at the individual level "may not have as much to do with where (or in what social context) we measure it as with how we attempt to measure it" (Junger and Polder 1993; Sloane and Potvin 1986, p. 103). In a meta-analysis of 60 studies, Baier and Wright (2001) found religious beliefs and behaviors to have a moderate deterrent effect on individuals' criminal behaviors, but the effect was not contingent upon contextual religiousness (Baier and Wright 2001). Benda and Corwyn (2001) even rejected Stark's thesis based on their finding that an inverse relationship between religion and crime exists on the irreligious East coast as well as in the South of the United States. These findings suggest that the effect of individual religiosity on deviance and crime is not conditioned by the religiousness of the context.

Welch et al. (1991) also found no significant interaction between both individual and parish-level religiosity on adult deviance, while they were inversely related.[1] Similarly, Bahr and Hoffmann (2008, p. 743) found that "the associations between individual religiosity and the four types of drug use were not affected by the level of school religiosity." Applying hierarchical modeling to cross-national data, Adamczyk and Hayes (2012) also found no significant cross-level interaction, while individual religious affiliation and the percent of Muslim residents at a country level both decreased the odds of premarital sex. Examining several deviant outcomes, Sturgis and Baller (2012) also failed to find significant interactions between contextual religiousness and the effect of individual religiosity on anti-asceticism. In sum, these studies indicate that individual and contextual religiosity tend to affect deviance independently.

Most previous studies have examined the effect of moral community on deviance and crime in the Western and particularly a U.S. context, where the Judeo-Christian tradition exists (Regnerus 2003; Stark 1996; Stark et al. 1982; Tittle and Welch 1983; Wallace et al. 2007). Few studies have examined the moral community thesis in a non-Western context, especially a society where religion is marginalized and regulated by the state. Previous researchers have suggested that the prosocial effect of religion on deviance and crimes should substantially diminish and even disappear in a secular social context because a moral community is unlikely to exist to strengthen individual religiosity (Corcoran et al. 2012; Stark 1996, 2001; Stark et al. 1982). Some have even argued that when certain religions are persecuted by the government, these religious groups would increase their grievance against the state and the broader society that did not support their agenda (Grim and Finke 2007; Hafez 2004).

To address this understudied issue, we intend to examine the moral community thesis in the context of China, where religion is regulated and even repressed in a secular society (Grim and Finke 2006, 2007; Potter 2003; Yang 2011). Thus, a brief description of the history and current state of religion in China is in order.

3. Religion in China

While different religions compete in a free market in the United States (Finke and Stark 2005), religion in China is marginalized and even persecuted by the government (Grim and Finke 2006, 2007; Potter 2003; Yang 2011). Historically, agnostic Confucianism is the cultural bedrock of secular orthodoxy (Creel 1932; Sun 2013; Weber and Gerth 1953; Yang 1961). After the Communist Party of China took power in 1949, Marxism-based atheism has remained the official ideology of China (Cao 2012; Yang 2004) and continues to monitor and restrict religious activities.

Since the Economic Reform in 1978, however, the Communist government has decreased its restrictions on religion, which initiated an intense growth of religion along with social and economic transitions (Potter 2003; Stark and Wang 2015; Yang 2005, 2011). Despite such growth, a large majority of the general population in China holds an atheistic or agnostic view with only a small percentage of Chinese population professing a religion. For example, while on the 2007 Spiritual Life Study of Chinese Residents 23 percent of participants reported their religious affiliation, the 2010 China General Social Survey (CGSS) revealed that only 13 percent of the population reported that they have certain religious affiliations. Similarly, according to the World Value Survey conducted in 2012, only

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[1] Furthermore, Tittle and Welch (1983) even found the opposite of what Stark's moral community thesis posits, although they relied on a proxy measure of aggregate religiosity constructed using individual-level survey data. That is, they reported that the inverse relationship between individual religiosity and self-estimated probability of future deviance was more likely to be significant when the proxy of aggregative religiosity was relatively low rather than high. To explain this unexpected finding, they speculated that religion might have been likely to "distinctly affect conformity only where the larger environment lacks the mechanisms that normally curtail deviance" (Tittle and Welch 1983, p. 674). Yet this finding needs to be interpreted with caution given the limited measurement of two key variables: contextual religiosity and deviance. That is, their measure of context-level religiosity based on the aggregation of individual religiosity may not be necessarily representative of the context, and the behavioral intention of future deviance may not be a good indicator of actual deviance.

14.7 percent of respondents claimed affiliation to a religion. According to the 2010 CGSS, 5.5 percent of the survey respondents identified Buddhism as their religion, with 2.2 percent Christianity, 2.4 percent Islam, 0.2 percent Taoism, and 2.3 percent folk religion.

Given its marginal social position in a secular society, many scholars have speculated that religion has no positive effect on morality or general trust in Chinese society (Hu 2013; Stark 2001). Even fewer studies have examined whether religion in China affects crime and deviance and promotes social conformity. At a micro level, the religion–deviance link in China is quite understudied, while most studies to date suggest no relationship or even positive association between religion and deviance. For example, religion is found to be positively associated with suicide attempts among both college students and rural women in China (Zhang and Jin 1996; Zhang and Xu 2007; Zhao et al. 2012).

Cross-national studies usually consider China a generally secular nation where religion barely has any social influence. For example, by comparing data from China, Taiwan, and the USA, Zhang and Thomas (1994) found that religion in both China and Taiwan does not increase social conformity among college students, perhaps because social conformity is primarily promoted by the Confucian tradition. Meanwhile, Stark (2001, p. 620) asserts that "the moral behaviors of individuals would be influenced by their religious commitments only in societies where the dominant religious organizations give clear and consistent expression to divine moral imperatives." In China, Confucianism and the dominant religions—Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religion—are somewhat amalgamated. In other words, gods of these religions are borrowed from each other, sometimes sharing the same teachings with one another (Shahar and Weller 1996). Consequently, religious beliefs and practices in China are likely to have little effect on moral judgments as those gods are "of very limited power and scope and usually lack moral concern and even dignity" (Stark 2001).

These studies, however, have three major limitations. First, they fail to differentiate institutional religions from folk religions despite their potential differences in affecting deviance. On the one hand, folk religions have very diverse and even inconsistent beliefs and practices (Dean 2003; Tamney 1998; Yang 2010), whereas organized religions, also called "institutional" religions by Yang (1961), have developed systems of religious orthodoxy, moral norms, ritual practice, and professional clergies or religious institutions distinct from secular social life. On the other hand, in institutional religions, especially Christianity and Islam, there are "all-powerful, all-seeing gods ruling the entire universe as the ultimate deterrent" (Stark 2001, p. 621). Therefore, individuals can develop higher morality and moral behaviors with a conception of a powerful and moral God in mind (Corcoran et al. 2012).

In contrast, innumerable gods and deities exist in folk religions, many of which are shared by or borrowed from each other (Dean 2003; Shahar and Weller 1996). Having folk religion seldom implies "a long-standing, deeply-felt relationship with a god but merely involves requests for favors from various divinities of small scope" (Stark 2001, p. 634). Consequently, folk religions have limited power and scope in influencing individuals' morality. Instead, they function as a placebo for self-centered and self-serving individuals (Stark 2001). Thus, folk religions in China are less likely to prohibit crimes and deviance than institutional religions. Even if some folk religions do have prosocial teachings, it is hard to find a significant association between folk religion and crimes and deviance behaviors in statistics considering such diverse religious doctrines and practices in folk religion (Yang and Hu 2012).

Second, those studies failed to consider that the levels of religious regulation may vary not only across religions but also among regions. Under state regulations, a triple religious market exists in contemporary China: (1) a "red market" approved by the government; (2) a "black market" banned by the government; and (3) a "gray market" ambiguously treated by the government (Yang 2006). The organized religions of Christianity (both Protestantism and Catholicism), Islam, Buddhism, and Daoism are in the red market recognized by the government, whereas Falun Gong, Eastern Lightning, and other new religions are in the black market forbidden by the government (Chan 2004). On the other hand, various types of folk religions (i.e., sectarian, communal, and individual folk religions)

have been thriving in the gray market due to their ambiguous legal status (Dean 2003; Wenger 2004; Yang and Hu 2012).[2]

Although the central government of China regulates and even persecutes religion in general across the country, the development of religion is highly dependent on the daily interactions and negotiations between religious organizations and local government (Koesel 2014). For example, Cao's (2010) ethnographic study of Wenzhou Christians demonstrates how Christian leaders cooperate with local authorities, and Wang and Ya's (2015) study describes in detail how the Three-Self Church succeeded in expanding their influence by establishing a stable relationship with the local officials. In addition, some local governments would decrease religious regulation and even provide opportunities for the growth of religion when they try to help local economies thrive by using local religious resources (Feuchtwang 2010; Koesel 2014; Palmer and Wickeri 2011). Thus, a variation in the level of religious regulation is likely to exist across provinces, though no empirical research has examined this phenomenon yet.

Third, previous researchers failed to incorporate the fact that different religions tend to concentrate in different parts of China into their studies. As described by Palmer and Wickeri (2011, p. 3), "Buddhists visit a popular temple in east China to burn incense or to ask the monks to conduce special service for their families. Villagers gather at festival time to usher in the lunar New Year and perform a communal sacrifice to the local gods [in Southeastern China]. Muslims in far Western China proceed to their neighborhood mosque five times a day for prayers. . . . Tibetan Monks demonstrate for religious freedom in a small city outside Lhasa." Protestant Christians are highly concentrated in Henan, Anhui, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Fujian, and Yunan province (Stark and Wang 2015; Ying 2009), forming three major "Bible Belts" in China (Yu 2010: the Huai River Basin Bible Belt (Henan, Anhui and Northern Jiangsu); the Minzhe coastal Bible Belt (Fujian and Zhejiang); and the Shaanxi-Yunnan Bible Belt (Shaanxi and Yunnan). Due to its long history of missionary work, Catholicism in China is highly concentrated in North China, especially in Hebei and Tianjin (Madsen 1998). Muslims are highly concentrated in Northwestern China, including Xinjiang, Ningxia, Gansu, and Qinghai Province (Davis 2008; Gladney 1996), while Tibetan Buddhists are the majority of the population in Tibet. On the other hand, Southeast China, such as Fujian, Guangdong, and Jiangxi Provinces are famous for their various folk religions (Dean 2003; Palmer and Wickeri 2011).

The concentration of a particular religion, especially homogeneous institutional religions, in a certain region may: (1) generate and influence shared social norms among individuals in that region through social interactions, rites, and rituals (Durkheim 1926; Stark 1996; Stark et al. 1982); (2) internalize individuals with the conception of powerful, morally conscious god(s) (Corcoran et al. 2012; Stark 2001); and (3) provide dense networks and social capital that enhance civic engagement, social trust, and social and psychological support and control for community members (Lee 2006; Lee and Bartkowski 2004; Regnerus 2003; Tsai 2007). We intend to examine whether institutional religion (Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) at provincial level shapes a moral community that alters the effect of individual religiosity on law and rule violation, focusing on three religions: Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity.[3]

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[2] This argument may not be that true after 2013 since the government began to have higher restrictions on Christianity and Islam. However, before 2013, folk religions were given less space to develop compared with institutional religions.

[3] We decided not to examine folk religion for two reasons. First and foremost, there are no data available to measure the presence of folk religion at provincial level. Second, based on our previous argument, folk religions are less likely than institutional religions to shape a moral community in secular China for three reasons: (1) folk religions are unlikely to generate a common moral order for individuals because of their numerous gods and deities (Corcoran et al. 2012; Stark 2001); (2) folk religions lack a systematic orthodoxy and structures to constrain individual behaviors (Yang 1961); and (3) folk religions serve primarily as a utilitarian tool for self-centered and self-serving individuals (Chen 1995; Stark 2001; Wang and Jang 2017).

4. Hypotheses

Taken together, using province as aggregate unit, we test the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: *Individual-level religiosity (i.e., affiliation with Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) is inversely related to individual-level deviance.*

Hypothesis 2: *Province-level religiosity (i.e., the prevalence of mosques, Buddhist temples, and churches) is inversely related to individual-level deviance.*

Hypothesis 3: *Province-level of religiosity enhances the inverse relationship between individual-level religiosity and deviance.*

5. Methods

5.1. Data

Data we analyzed come from multiple sources: the 2010 Wave of China General Social Survey (henceforth, CGSS 2010) and the Spatial Explorer of Religions, collected between 2002 and 2004. First, the CGSS 2010 resembles the General Social Survey of the United States and includes a series of questions about deviant behaviors, such as violation of the law and government, workplace, organization, and transportation rules. A multistage sampling design was used to obtain a nationally representative sample of individuals from each of 22 provinces and four municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing). The first 100 counties (or districts) were selected randomly across China, while five major cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen) were treated as the primary sampling unit. Second, from each county, four communities or villages were randomly drawn. Then 25 households were randomly selected from each community, and, finally, one individual, age 18 or older, was randomly chosen from each household. From the five major cities, a total of 80 communities were randomly selected. In the end, 480 communities of administrative units and villages were selected, and the total sample size of individual respondents was 11,770. Second, province-level religiosity is measured based on data from the Spatial Explorer of Religions, made available by the China Data Center at Michigan University.[4] The Spatial Explorer of Religion provides the number of religious sites of Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Islam that existed in 31 provinces during the period of 2002–2004 (Bao et al. 2014). Third, income inequality at provincial level is measured using the Theil Index, published by Lu and Xu (2004), while the index is not available for four municipalities: Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Chongqing. Fourth, total population in each province comes from 2010 China Census data.[5] Fifth, the percentages for the Communist party members in each province are clustered by the self-reported Communist party member in China GSS 2010. Finally, other provincial characteristics such as illiteracy rate, urbanization rate, GDP per capita, and ethnic composition were obtained from the 2010 China Census data.

As explained, we focus only on institutional religion, so followers of folk religion are excluded from our analysis. In addition, Tibet is dropped because the unit contains fewer than 30 valid cases at individual level. As a result, the final sample consists of 9528 valid cases from 25 provinces.

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[4] The link to the website: http://chinadataonline.org/religionexplorer/religion40/#; accessed on 2016-05-20.
[5] Administrative Divisions of People's Republic of China, from Chinese government website: http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-06/15/content_18253.htm, accessed on May 24th, 2016.

5.2. Measurement

5.2.1. Dependent Variables

To measure the violation of conventional authority, we use five items asking about conforming behavior: "To what extend have the following behaviors happened to you: abiding by the motor vehicle regulations/workplace rules and regulations/government policies and regulation/by the law/organizational rules?" (1 = not at all, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = very often, 5 = always). The response categories are reverse-coded so a higher score represents more frequent violation. As anticipated for a general population, the items' distributions are highly skewed. For example, 69.2 percent of respondents reported that they never violated the law, whereas the remaining 30.8 percent said they did rarely (29.0%), sometimes (1.3%), very often (0.3%), or always (0.2%). To address this skewness, the item is dichotomized: 0 = no violation and 1 = violation. For the same reason, four items of rule violation are also dichotomized.[6]

5.2.2. Individual-Level Independent Variables

Religiosity. Three dummy variables are created to measure an individual's religiosity, one for each of three religions. Respondents who identified themselves as Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian (including Protestants and Catholics) are coded as 1, and religious nones (i.e., no religious affiliation) is the referenced group.[7]

Sociodemographic Characteristics. To control for various sources of spuriousness, we construct sociodemographic variables: age, gender (0 = male, 1 = female), ethnicity (0 = Han majority, 1 = non-Han minority), education (0 = no education, 1 = elementary school, 2 = middle school, 3 = high school, 4 = Junior college; 5 = college and above), annual personal income (logged), employment status (0 = employed, 1 = unemployed), marital status (0 = single, divorced, separated, or widowed, 1 = married), place of residence (0 = rural 1 = urban), and Communist Party membership (0 = no, 1 = yes).

5.2.3. Province-Level Independent Variables

Religiosity. To measure aggregate-level religiosity, the number of mosques, Buddhist temples, and churches per 10,000 residents of each province is calculated. We use the rate of religious sites for two reasons: one is the lack of data available to measure the percentage of people affiliated with institutional religion in each province, and the other is the assumption that a higher percent of residents with religious affiliation in a province would lead to a higher number of religious sites in the province, which makes the rate of religious sites a reasonable proxy of province-level religiosity.

Sociodemographic Characteristics. GDP per capita of 2010 is used to measure the level of economic development of each province, and illiteracy rate is employed as a measure of province's educational level. Another measure of province-level socioeconomic status, the Theil Index (similar to the Gini Index), is included in analysis to control for income inequality within province. The urbanization rate is operationalized by the percentage of urban population in each province in 2010, whereas the total population of province is measured in units of 10,000 people. Finally, we measure ethnic heterogeneity

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6   Likewise, 63.3 percent respondents reported that they had never violated government laws, whereas 36.7 percent said that they did rarely (33.2%), sometimes (2.8%), very often (0.4), or always (0.3). Almost 60 percent (58.2%) of respondents reported that they had never violated transportation laws, whereas 41.8 percent said that they did rarely (36.3%), sometimes (3.8%), very often (1.3), or always (0.4). About the same majority (60.4%) reported that they had never violated workplace rules at all, while 35.2, 3.2, 0.7, and 0.5 percent reported they did very rarely, sometimes, very often, and always, respectively. Similarly, 65.5, 31.6, 2.2, 0.3, and 0.3 percent reported that they had never violated organization rules, very rarely, sometimes, very often, or always, respectively.

7   Respondents affiliated with folk religions are excluded. We also discard observations of Taoism and other religions because of their few observations (*N* = 22) in GSS2010.

in terms of the percentage of ethnic minority (i.e., non-Han) residents in the province and construct a variable of percent Communist Party members in province given its significance in China.

5.2.4. Analytic Strategy

To simultaneously account for the interdependence of individuals within the same social context and model both provincial-level and individual-level variance on deviance, we conduct multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression analysis (Raudenbush et al. 2004). Thus, in our model individual deviance is explained by both individual and provincial characteristics.

We first examine whether the three variables of individual-level (i.e., being affiliated with Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) and province-level religiosity (i.e., number of mosques, temples, and churches per 10,000 residents in province) are related to individual-level violation of conventional authority, while controlling for both provincial and individual characteristics. Then we estimate interactive model that includes three cross-level interaction terms (i.e., being affiliated with Islam × number of mosques per 10,000 residents in province, being affiliated with Buddhism × number of temples per 10,000 residents in province, and being affiliated with Christianity × number of churches per 10,000 residents in province) as well as their constituent terms to test whether the strength of the relationship between individual-level religiosity and deviance increases along with the provincial religiosity.

6. Results

Descriptive statistics of variables included in the analysis are summarized in Table 1. About 11 percent (10.7%) of the final sample (*N* = 8224 individual respondents in 25 provinces) are affiliated with an institutional religion (2.8% Muslim, 5.4% Buddhists, and 2.5% Christians), and less than half of them answered affirmatively the questions about violating the law, ranging from 31.8 percent (law violations) to 43.1 percent (transportation rule violations). Survey respondents are, on average, about 49 years old, and the sample is 51.9 percent female, 9.0 percent ethnic minority (i.e., non-Han), 81.0 percent married, 43.1 percent urban residents, 6.0 percent unemployed, and 11.4 percent Communist Party members.

The average number of religious sites in China is only 0.574 per 10,000 people, confirming that China is a highly secular country. The rates of mosques, temples and churches, however, varies across provinces. The rate of mosques is highest in Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Xinjiang; the rate of temples is highest in Qinghai, Fujian, Zhejiang, Ningxia and Jiangxi; churches are more prevalent in Zhejiang, Fujian, Anhui, Jilin, and Henan (see Figure 1).

The average GDP per capita is 25,638.77 RMB (≈$3845.82) with the minimum and maximum being 10,301.95 RMB (≈$1586.92) and 44,604.92 RMB (≈$6862.30), and economic inequality, measured by the Theil index, also varies across provinces, from 0.063 (Zhejiang) to 0.489 (Guangdong). The average urban population in the provinces is about 47 percent, with the minimum and maximum being 29.9 percent (Guizhou) and 63.4 percent (Guangdong), respectively. The illiteracy rate is, on average, 7.2 percent, with the rate ranging from 3.2 percent (Liaoning) to 15.9 percent (Gansu), whereas the percentage of ethnic minorities varies widely across provinces, from 0.3 percent (Jiangxi) to 59.4 percent (Xinjiang). Finally, the percentage of Communist Party members in provinces is, on average, 11.4 percent, ranging from 7.0 percent (Hebei) to 25.3 percent (Qinghai).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (individual variables *N* = 8224 provincial variables *N* = 25).

| Variable	Mean	S.D.	Range
Individual Level			
Law violation	0.318	0.466	0–1
"Have you ever violated the law?" (1 = yes; 0 = no)			
Government rule violation	0.377	0.485	0–1
"Have you ever violated government rules?" (1 = yes; 0 = no)			
Working rule violation	0.411	0.492	0–1
"Have you ever violated working rules?" (1 = yes; 0 = no)			
Organization rule violation	0.357	0.479	0–1
"Have you ever violated organization rules?" (1 = yes; 0 = no)			
Transportation rule violation	0.431	0.495	0–1
"Have you ever violated transportation rules?" (1 = yes; 0 = no)			
1 = affiliated with Islam, 0 = others	0.028	0.226	0–1
1 = affiliated with Buddhism, 0 = others	0.054	0.164	0–1
affiliated with Christianity, 0 = others	0.025	0.155	0–1
Ethnicity (1 = non-Han ethnicity; 0 = Han ethnicity)	0.09	0.286	0–1
Residence (1 = urban residence; 0 = rural residence)	0.431	0.495	0–1
Age (at the year of survey)	48.838	15.497	19–98
Female (1 = female; 0 = male)	0.519	0.5	0–1
Education (0 = no education; 1 = elementary school; 2 = middle school; 3 = high school; 4 = adult high education; 5 = college education and above)	1.971	1.338	0–5
Married (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.81	0.393	0–1
Unemployment (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.06	0.238	0–1
Annual personal income (logged)	8.037	3.184	0–14.845
Communist party member (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.114	0.318	0–1
Contextual Level			
Number of mosques per 10,000 people	0.239	1.44	0.0003–10.968
Number of temples per 10,000 people	0.147	0.144	0.0208–0.546
Number of churches per 10,000 people	0.141	0.195	0.001–1.125
Total Population (10,000 people)	0.032	0.02	0.001–075
Percent of communist party members	0.114	0.034	0.070–0.253
GDP per capita (10,000 RMB ≈ U$1500)	2.564	1.015	1.030–4.460
Urbanization rate	46.873	8.687	29.890–63.400
Theil index	0.156	0.098	0.063–0.489
Illiteracy rate	7.201	3.276	3.200–15.940
Percent of minor ethnicity	8.672	12.858	0.310–59.430
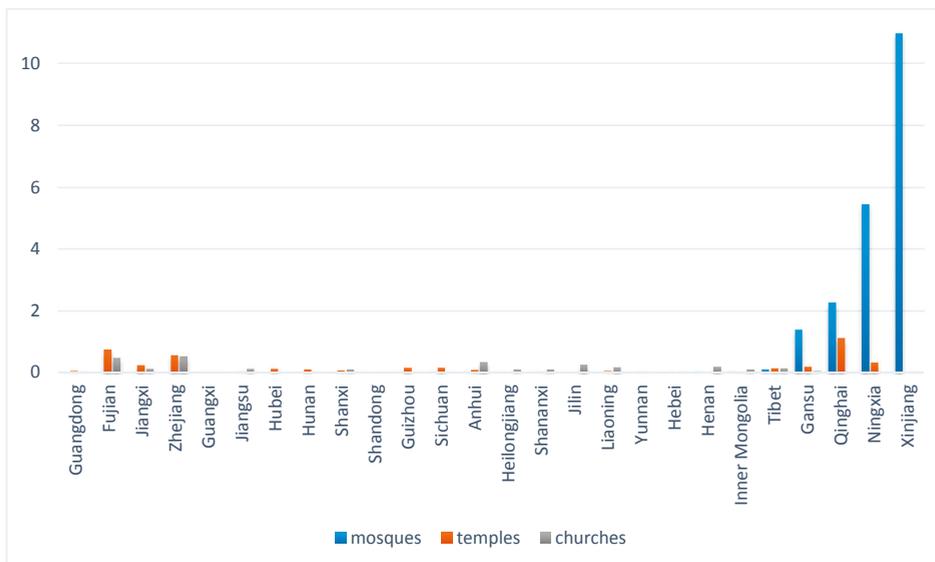
Figure 1. Number of religious sites per 10,000 people in 25 provinces in China.

Table 2 presents results from estimating multi-level models that include both the individual-level and provincial-level independent variables. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, respondents affiliated with Islam report lower odds of violating the law (−0.666), workplace rules (−0.498), and organizational rules (−0.781) compared to those without a religious affiliation. However, the odds of violating transportation laws are not significantly lower for Muslims and the odds of violating government laws is only marginally significant (−0.435, $p = 0.072$). Buddhists also report lower odds of violating the law (−0.245), workplace rules (−0.256), government laws (−0.292), and transportation laws (−0.341), but are not different from religious nones in terms of their odds of violating organizational rules. Respondents affiliated with Christianity are not different from religious nones in the odds of all types of violations. In sum, contrary to previous findings that religion has no protective effect on deviance in China (Stark 2001; Zhang and Thomas 1994; Zhang and Xu 2007), we find some evidence that Islam and Buddhism, though not Christianity, have a deterrent effect on deviance in China. Thus, Hypothesis 1 received some support.

At the provincial level, the rate of mosques (i.e., number of mosques per 10,000 residents in the province) is negatively related with the odds of violating the law (−0.155) and government rules and regulations (−0.153), but not associated with the odds of violating workplace rules (−0.101), organizational rules (−0.094), and transportation laws (−0.099). The rates of churches and temples had no significant relationship with the odds of any type of violation. Thus, empirical support for our second hypothesis is found only through Islam at a provincial level, but not through Christianity or Buddhism.

Sociodemographic variables are generally found to have significant relationships with law violations in the expected directions. For example, ethnic minority respondents report higher odds of violating the law and rules compared to their peers of Han ethnicity, which might have been due in part to their lack of assimilation into the Han-centric norms of China (Shahar and Weller 1996). Also, respondents of older age and higher socioeconomic status in terms of education and income are less likely to violate the law and various rules than those of younger age and lower socioeconomic status, with two exceptions, relationships between education and the government (−0.024, $p > 0.05$) and organizational rules (−0.050, $p > 0.05$). In addition, females are less likely to violate the organizational rule than males (−0.132), but Chinese males and females are no different in their odds of violating the laws and rules of the workplace, government, and transportation. Urban residents are less likely to commit violations than their non-urban counterparts, and unemployment is not related to law violations. Finally, respondents affiliated with the Communist Party are less likely to report deviance of all measures than those who are not Community Party members. At a provincial level, economic development (GDP per capita) is the only significant predictor of individual-level deviance, being inversely related to all but one law and rule violation, the exception being transportation rule violation (−0.157, $p > 0.05$).

To examine whether the individual-level religiosity's effect on law and rule violations is conditioned by provincial-level religiosity, Table 3 presents multi-level models that contain interactions between individual-level and province-level religiosity variables. In Table 3, we notice that the significance of the religiosity–deviance relationship at both individual and provincial levels remains almost the same as in Table 2. First, Muslims and Buddhists are less likely to report violations than religious nones, but Christians are no different from those with no religion. Second, at the provincial level, only Islam is significantly related to individual-level deviance in the expected, negative direction. Third, there is no significant cross-level interaction in predicting the odds of law and rule violations, with only one exception—there is a positive cross-level interaction between affiliation with Islam and the provincial level of mosques. That is, provincial-level Islam is found to weaken the deterrent effect of individual-level Islam on the violation of government laws instead of strengthening it, as expected in our third hypothesis. In sum, Hypothesis 3 failed to receive empirical support.

Table 2. Religion as an individual and contextual control (individual *N* = 8224; province *N* = 25).

	(1) Violating the Law	(2) Violating Workplace Rules	(3) Violating Government Laws	(4) Violating Organizational Rules	(5) Violating Transportation Laws
Individual level					
Islam	−0.666 *	−0.498 *	−0.435	−0.781 **	−0.352
	(0.263)	(0.236)	(0.242)	(0.257)	(0.223)
Buddhism	−0.245 *	−0.256 *	−0.292 *	−0.169	−0.341 **
	(0.119)	(0.112)	(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.110)
Christianity	−0.156	−0.110	−0.0116	−0.147	−0.266
	(0.165)	(0.156)	(0.154)	(0.160)	(0.153)
Ethnic minority	0.481 ***	0.428 ***	0.415 ***	0.447 ***	0.365 ***
	(0.107)	(0.107)	(0.105)	(0.108)	(0.104)
Urban resident	−0.208 ***	−0.215 ***	−0.143 *	−0.212 ***	−0.158 **
	(0.062)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.058)
Age	−0.008 ***	−0.008 ***	−0.010 ***	−0.008 ***	−0.007 ***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	−0.103	−0.053	−0.076	−0.132 *	−0.075
	(0.053)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.052)	(0.049)
Education	−0.069 *	−0.085 **	−0.024	−0.050	−0.077 **
	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.025)
Married	−0.034	−0.088	−0.094	−0.070	−0.108
	(0.066)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.064)	(0.061)
Unemployment	−0.191	0.076	0.114	−0.015	0.045
	(0.109)	(0.102)	(0.101)	(0.104)	(0.100)
Income(logged)	−0.031 ***	−0.043 ***	−0.034 ***	−0.028 ***	−0.031 ***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Communist party	−0.238 **	−0.284 ***	−0.361 ***	−0.398 ***	−0.227 **
	(0.089)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.087)	(0.080)
Contextual level					
Number of mosques	−0.155 *	−0.101	−0.153 **	−0.094	−0.099
	(0.064)	(0.053)	(0.055)	(0.065)	(0.055)
Number of temples	0.007	0.375	0.253	−0.176	0.217
	(0.532)	(0.449)	(0.455)	(0.567)	(0.492)
Number of churches	0.215	−0.363	−0.420	0.192	−0.068
	(0.779)	(0.655)	(0.664)	(0.826)	(0.714)
Population density	−1.311	−0.358	0.865	0.0623	−3.836
	(6.574)	(5.591)	(5.661)	(6.986)	(6.086)
Percent Communist Party members	2.400	2.509	2.373	2.879	2.386
	(2.736)	(2.328)	(2.354)	(2.926)	(2.556)
GDP per capita (10,000 RMB)	−0.401 *	−0.347 *	−0.357 *	−0.422 *	−0.157
	(0.202)	(0.172)	(0.174)	(0.214)	(0.187)
Urbanization rate	0.036	0.024	0.036	0.034	−0.002
	(0.028)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.030)	(0.026)
Theil index	−0.239	0.268	0.151	−0.233	1.221
	(1.169)	(0.992)	(1.003)	(1.246)	(1.085)
Illiteracy rate	−0.050	−0.034	−0.025	−0.046	−0.046
	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.040)	(0.035)
Percent of ethnic minority	0.002	−0.000	0.004	−0.002	0.001
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Intercept	−0.400	0.401	−0.493	−0.156	1.135
	(1.114)	(0.945)	(0.958)	(1.184)	(1.033)
ICC	3.43%	2.42%	2.48%	4.01%	3.05%

Note: standardized error in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table 3. Religion as an individual and contextual control, with cross-level interaction (individual $N = 8224$; province $N = 25$).

	(1) Violating the Law	(2) Violating Workplace Rules	(3) Violating Government Laws	(4) Violating Organizational Rules	(5) Violating Transportation Laws
Individual level					
Islam (A)	−0.904 **	−0.677 **	−0.686 *	−1.000 ***	−0.354
	(0.292)	(0.260)	(0.267)	(0.286)	(0.243)
Buddhism (B)	−0.263	−0.368 *	−0.402 **	−0.111	−0.442 **
	(0.159)	(0.149)	(0.151)	(0.151)	(0.146)
Christianity (C)	−0.418	−0.144	−0.213	−0.388	−0.276
	(0.278)	(0.260)	(0.257)	(0.271)	(0.254)
Ethnic minority	0.483 ***	0.429 ***	0.414 ***	0.452 ***	0.364 ***
	(0.107)	(0.107)	(0.106)	(0.108)	(0.104)
Urban resident	−0.207 ***	−0.214 ***	−0.142 *	−0.210 ***	−0.159 **
	(0.062)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.058)
Age	−0.008 ***	−0.008 ***	−0.010 ***	−0.008 ***	−0.007 ***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Female	−0.102	−0.0515	−0.0742	−0.131 *	−0.074
	(0.053)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.052)	(0.049)
Education	−0.067 *	−0.084 **	−0.022	−0.049	−0.078 **
	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.025)
Married	−0.033	−0.088	−0.093	−0.070	−0.108
	(0.066)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.064)	(0.061)
Unemployment	−0.193	0.076	0.112	−0.015	0.044
	(0.109)	(0.102)	(0.101)	(0.104)	(0.100)
Income(logged)	−0.030 ***	−0.043 ***	−0.034 ***	−0.028 ***	−0.031 ***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Communist party	−0.236 **	−0.282 ***	−0.359 ***	−0.395 ***	−0.227 **
	(0.089)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.087)	(0.080)
Contextual level					
Rate of mosques (D)	−0.609 *	−0.219 *	−0.543 **	−0.320	−0.100
	(0.263)	(0.0940)	(0.204)	(0.168)	(0.0677)
Rate of temples (E)	0.420	0.451	0.580	0.0423	0.191
	(0.502)	(0.430)	(0.426)	(0.535)	(0.492)
Rate of churches (F)	−0.430	−0.529	−0.972	−0.117	−0.089
	(0.738)	(0.626)	(0.618)	(0.780)	(0.713)
Total population	−3.589	−0.978	−1.173	−1.266	−3.833
	(5.613)	(5.293)	(4.892)	(6.408)	(6.067)
Percent of Communist Party member	3.610	2.831	3.397	3.524	2.394
	(2.337)	(2.199)	(2.029)	(2.682)	(2.548)
GDP per capita (10,000 RMB)	−0.410 *	−0.350 *	−0.366 *	−0.418 *	−0.160
	(0.169)	(0.163)	(0.148)	(0.195)	(0.186)
Urbanization rate	0.038	0.025	0.039	0.034	−0.002
	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.027)	(0.026)
Theil index	−0.146	0.332	0.253	−0.160	1.233
	(0.965)	(0.933)	(0.841)	(1.128)	(1.081)
Illiteracy rate	−0.025	−0.028	−0.0036	−0.034	−0.045
	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.035)
Percent of ethnic minority	−0.000	−0.001	0.002	−0.004	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Cross-level Interaction					
A × D	0.505	0.155	0.441*	0.272	0.00189
	(0.269)	(0.094)	(0.209)	(0.168)	(0.058)
B × E	0.091	0.538	0.525	−0.284	0.471
	(0.504)	(0.463)	(0.459)	(0.499)	(0.445)
C × F	1.413	0.197	1.117	1.318	0.055
	(1.171)	(1.171)	(1.113)	(1.168)	(1.128)
Intercept	−0.681	0.342	−0.724	−0.261	1.129
	(0.943)	(0.892)	(0.819)	(1.078)	(1.029)
ICC	2.17%	2.09%	1.60%	3.21%	3.02%

Note: standardized error in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

This study examined the effect of religion, measured at both individual and contextual level, on an individual's deviant behaviors in China, where religion is regulated and marginalized (Grim and Finke 2006; Grim and Finke 2007; Yang 2006, 2011). By doing so, we tested the moral community thesis in a non-Western context, which has rarely been done since it was proposed by Stark (Adamczyk 2008; Regnerus 2003; Stark 1996; Wallace et al. 2007; Welch et al. 1991). Previous tests conducted in the U.S. context show inconsistent results regarding whether contextual religiosity is inversely related to individual deviance or enhances the inverse relationship between individual religiosity and deviance.

The present study found mixed support for the moral community thesis. That is, consistent with Stark's argument that religiosity is a group or communal property that influences an individual's behaviors (Stark 1996; Stark et al. 1982), provincial-level Islam tended to be inversely related to violations of the law and various rules. This is also consistent with previous research that homogeneous religion rather than overall religiosity protects individuals from deviance (Ellison et al. 1997; Regnerus 2003; Trawick and Howsen 2006).

However, provincial-level Christianity and Buddhism were not related to individual-level deviance. Furthermore, non-significant cross-level interactions provided no support for Stark's proposition that the effect of individual religiosity on deviance is larger or more likely to be observed in a more religious than in a less or non-religious context (Stark 1996; Stark et al. 1982). The only significant cross-level interactions between the individual-level effect of Islam and provincial-level Islam on deviance was in the opposite direction—positive, which indicates that Muslims living in provinces that have a relatively large number of mosques were less likely to report violating government rules and regulations than those living in provinces with a small number of mosques.

While it is difficult to fully explain this unexpected finding, we suspect that the positive cross-level interactions might be to do with the unique circumstances of Islam in China, particularly given that the unexpected relationship was found only for violation of government laws. Although it is a strong institutional religion, Islam is not deeply embedded in the mainstream Han-dominated Chinese culture and has had conflicts and strained relationships with the Chinese government. In such a context, as provincial-level Islam strengthens, it might contribute to anti-government sentiment among Muslims and even create an alternative authority out of resistance to the government in Islam-dominated provinces. As a result, the individual-level deterrent effect of Islam on the violation of government rules and regulations might weaken as the provincial level of anti-government Islamic culture strengthens. Although this finding is inconsistent with the moral community thesis in terms of direction, it is consistent with the thesis in that it shows contextual-level religion moderating the effect of individual-level religion on deviance, which might have to do with the history and status of Islam in China.

We also speculate that the non-significant effect of both individual-level and provincial-level Christianity on deviance might be attributable to the fact that the Christian population is widely spread across Chinese provinces, unlike Muslims, which are concentrated in northwestern provinces. Thus, it is harder to shape a strong moral community that exerts a deterrent effect on Christians. If Christians were as concentrated in some provinces as Muslims, we might have observed a provincial-level effect of Christianity on deviance. Similarly, the protective effect of Buddhism might have been observed only at an individual level, not at a provincial level or in cross-level interaction, perhaps because Buddhists are widely spread across Chinese provinces. Besides the lack of geographic concentration of Christians and Buddhists in China, another reason for failing to find an effect of provincial-level Christianity and Buddhism might be the limited measurement: that is, if we used the proportion of Christians and Buddhists in the province, consistent with Stark's discussion of the moral community thesis, we might have found different results. Future research should explore whether these speculations have any merit.

The present findings also suggest other research topics for future research. First, we could not examine the individual and contextual effect of folk religions because no information about religious sites for folk religion was available in our data, while a previous study shows that folk religions can provide public goods and shaping local democracy for local community (Tsai 2007). Further research needs to measure the regional, provincial, and communal level of folk religiosity to examine the effect of context-level folk religiosity by taking two approaches to data collection. Specifically, the percentage of people who identify themselves with folk religion can be calculated for each province based on survey data. It should be kept in mind, however, that this percentage may be underestimated since many followers of folk religions do not necessarily report that they are affiliated with a particular folk religion despite practicing them (Palmer and Wickeri 2011). Alternatively, religious sites of folk religions, such as ancestor halls and temples of various deities, can be used as an indicator of folk religiosity in contextual level.

Second, further studies are needed to incorporate the thriving underground churches into the study of aggregate-level religiosity. Because the Spatial Explorer of Religion data include only officially registered religious sites, the number of total religious sites is surely an underestimate given that unregistered house churches and small-scale congregations are thriving in both urban and rural China (Bao et al. 2014; Wenger 2004; Yang 2005, 2010; Yu 2010). Cults with strong organization, such as Eastern Lightning and Falungong, that are forbidden by the government should also be taken into account (Chan 2004; Dunn 2008).

Additionally, future research on religion in China should examine the religion–deviance relationship using other common but culture-appropriate measures of both constructs. That is, researchers should test the moral community thesis using ascetic (e.g., substance use) as well as anti-ascetic deviance (e.g., law violation). They should also consider types of deviance particularly recognized by Chinese society (e.g., extramarital sexuality and lack of filial piety). Common measures of religiosity, such as religious salience and practices, should be examined as well. However, church attendance may not be a very good indicator of religiosity because Eastern religions (e.g., Zen Buddhism and Taoism) encourage private rather than public practice of religion, unlike Abrahamic religions, which emphasize frequent attendance at communal religious activities. In addition, religious attendance is suppressed as government regulation increases the risks and costs of public attendance (Hu 2013; Yang 2006).

Finally, further research is needed to examine the effect of religiosity at lower levels than the province, such as community, county, and village. While we found province-level religiosity to affect individual deviant behaviors, within-province variations in religiosity are worth studying given that not only religiosity but also economic development and historical characteristics related to religion would vary across counties and villages (Cai et al. 2002; Palmer and Wickeri 2011; Tsai 2007).

In conclusion, despite the limitations acknowledged above, our study partially supports the moral community thesis by finding Islam is inversely related to individual deviance at both an individual and a provincial level. Although no significant provincial influences of Buddhism and Christianity on deviance are found, we speculate that Buddhism and Christianity are not powerful enough to shape a strong moral community due to their lower religious populations and being more spread out geographically.

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Ethical Approval: This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Religious Liberty in Prisons under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act following *Holt v Hobbs*: An Empirical Analysis

Lewis M. Wasserman, John P. Connolly and Kent R. Kerley *

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76019, USA; lmwasser@uta.edu (L.M.W.); connolly@uta.edu (J.P.C.)
* Correspondence: kent.kerley@uta.edu

Abstract: Religion in the United States remains a consistent source of conflict not only because of the breadth and depth of personal religious commitment, but also because of guarantees from the United States Constitution. The First Amendment protects religious Free Exercise but also constrains federal, state, and local governments from establishing official government religions, endorsing religions or religion itself. Despite the risk of potential conflicts with the constitution's text, Congress has supported laws that expand religious liberty. One such example is the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (2000), which significantly enhanced prisoners' right to religious exercise above the minimum provided by the First Amendment. In the 2015 case of *Holt v. Hobbs*, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a Muslim prisoner who had been denied his request for religious accommodations under RLUIPA because the prison failed to satisfy the act's strict scrutiny standard before it denied accommodations to a prisoner to practice his faith. Via an analysis of case law since *Holt v. Hobbs* was decided in January 2015 until March 2018, we investigate the extent to which *Holt* has affected judicial voting in RLUIPA cases and how such voting may have been influenced by judges' ideological dispositions.

Keywords: religious rights; prisoners; prisoner accommodations; religious land use and institutionalized persons act; United States supreme court

1. Introduction

It is no secret that the exercise of religious liberty can be divisive.[1] Religion remains a perpetual source of conflict not only because of the breadth and depth of people's religious commitments, but also because of the text of the United States Constitution. The First Amendment protects religious Free Exercise[2] but also constrains federal, state and local governments from establishing official government

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[1] (Goodrich and Busick 2018, n. 3) (Collecting articles concerned with the threat caused by federal statutory enactments expanding protection for religious adherents).

[2] Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah, 508 U.S. 520 (1993) (city's ordinance, prohibiting ritual animal sacrifices, violated the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause failed to survive the rigors of strict scrutiny; it singled out activities of Santeria faith and suppressed more religious conduct than was necessary to achieve their stated ends); *but see*, O' Lone v. Estate of Shabazz, 482 U.S. 342 (1987) (so long as the policy is reasonably related to legitimate penological objectives, the Free Exercise Clause does not require prisons to show there are no reasonable alternatives that would accomplish its security needs before it infringes on an inmate's free exercise of religion).

religions, endorsing religions or indeed religion itself.[3] Despite the risk of potential conflicts with the constitution's text, Congress has supported laws that expand religious liberty.[4]

The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act ("RLUIPA" or the "Act"), passed by Congress in 2000,[5] is a paradigmatic example of such legislative activity. The law significantly enhanced prisoners' right to religious exercise above the minimum provided by the First Amendment.[6] Despite a growing body of case law interpreting the Act and commentary on its meaning,[7] empirical research into judicial decision making and RLUIPA have been sparse and rudimentary.[8]

In 2015 in *Holt v. Hobbs*[9] the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a Muslim prisoner who had been denied his request for religious accommodations under RLUIPA. This was because the prison failed to satisfy RLUIPA's strict scrutiny standard before it denied accommodations to a prisoner to practice his faith.[10] *Holt's* support for the prisoner's RLUIPA claim was striking, especially when *Holt* is compared to the only other Supreme Court case interpreting RLUIPA in prison settings, *Cutter v. Wilkinson*.[11] There, the *Cutter* Court spoke equivocally about RLUIPA rights. On the one hand *Cutter* reiterated RLUIPA's strict scrutiny standards but on the other hand simultaneously suggested that a substantial degree of deference is owed to prison officials in applying the strict scrutiny standard to justify burdens on religious exercise.

Oddly, the *Holt* decision does not even mention *Cutter*. This might suggest the *Holt* Court recognized the effect its deference language in *Cutter* might have in defeating RLUIPA's strict scrutiny standard. Could it be that *Holt* sent a message of retreat on the deference front? If so, have lower courts received the message and acted upon it as they are obligated to do? We raise this question because sometimes federal judges deviate from what precedent seems to dictate. Indeed, judges frequently vote ideologically when afforded the opportunity to do so.[12]

These considerations raise questions about *Holt* in the context of judges' tendency to vote ideologically.[13] Accordingly, in this study we investigate whether *Holt* has affected judicial voting in RLUIPA cases involving prisoners' requests for religious accommodations and how such voting may have been influenced by judges' ideological dispositions. We deploy a nonparametric matching technique using a dichotomous dependent measure, pro-prisoner plaintiff or pro-defendant, as our dependent measure to assist us in answering these and related questions. Finally, we attempt to draw

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3   *See, e.g.*, Engel v. Vitale, 370 U.S. 421 (1962) (holding that a state statute authorizing a short voluntary prayer for recitation at the start of the school day violates the establishment of religious clause of the First Amendment); Lee v. Weisman, 505 U.S. 577 (1992) (including clergy who offer prayers as part of an official public-school graduation ceremony is forbidden by the Establishment Clause); Larkin v. Grendel's Den, Inc., 459 U.S. 116 (1982) (vesting in the governing bodies of churches and schools the power to prevent issuance of liquor licenses for premises located near the church or school violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment); *but see*, Cutter v. Wilkinson, 544 U.S. 709 (2005) (Section 3 of RLUIPA, on its face, qualifies as a permissible accommodation to religious exercise that is not barred by the Establishment Clause); *Corporation of Presiding Bishop of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* v. *Amos*, 483 U. S. 327 (1987) (upholding against an Establishment Clause challenge a provision exempting religious organizations from the prohibition against religion-based employment discrimination in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

4   *See*, e.g., The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-141, 107 Stat. 1488 (16 November 1993), codified at 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb through 2000bb 4. This was introduced by Congressman Chuck Schumer (D-NY) on 11 March 1993. A unanimous U.S. House and a nearly unanimous—three senators voted against passage—passed the bill, and President signed it into law.

5   42 U.S.C. §§ 2000cc to cc-5 (2012).

6   *See*, e.g., Smith v. Perlman, 658 Fed Appx 606 (2nd Cir. 2016); Holland v. Goord, 758 F.3d 215, 224 (2nd Cir. 2014) (observing that RLUIPA stands in contrast to the Free Exercise Clause's less demanding rational basis test); Madison v. Ritter, 411 F.Supp.2d 645, aff'd in part, and reversed in part, 474 F.3d 118 (4th Cir. Year) (observing that RLUIPA provides more protection than the First Amendment) and O'Lone v. Estate of Shabazz, 482 U.S. 342, 349 (1987) (quoting Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 79 (1987)).

7   *See*, e.g., Case Comment, (Goce Beneficente 2015; Shapiro 2016a, 2016b).

8   *See, e.g.*, (Bollman 2018) (applying descriptive statistics to study among other things the effects of *Holt v. Hobbs*, U.S., 135 S.Ct. 853 (2015) on case outcomes at the U.S. District Courts and U.S. Courts of Appeals).

9   135 S.Ct. 853 (2015).

10   *Id.*

11   544 U.S. 709, 712–13 (2005).

12   (Sisk and Heise 2012) (observing strong ideological voting in Establishment Clause cases).

13   *Id.*

conclusions from the results to learn whether Congress has achieved its goal in enacting RLUIPA of affording institutionalized persons' broad protection for their genuinely felt religious commitments.

2. The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA)

Section 3 of RLUIPA states:

No government shall impose a substantial burden on the religious exercise of a person residing in or confined to an institution, ... even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, unless the government demonstrates that imposition of the burden on that person—(1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.[14]

RLUIPA's protections are enforceable against states and their subdivisions and persons acting under color of state law.[15] RLUIPA does not protect the interests of federal prisoners.[16] RLUIPA provides for a private cause of action for violations of its provisions.[17] However, RLUIPA does not create a cause of action for monetary damages against state entities,[18] and states have not consented to waive their sovereign immunity with respect to official capacity monetary damage claims under RLUIPA.[19] Moreover, RLUIPA does not impose on state employees individual liability for violations of the Act.[20] This is because RLUIPA was adopted pursuant to Congress's Spending Clause powers. As such personal liability may only be imposed on those parties receiving the funds.[21] RLUIPA provides an alternative ground for invoking judicial intervention through the Commerce Clause. That provision kicks in where the Act's substantial burden requirement affects "commerce with foreign nations, among the several states, or with Indian tribes."[22]

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14 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–1(a). *See*, Cutter v. Wilkinson, 544 U.S. 709 (2005) (describing test). "[A] prison cannot meet its burden to prove least restrictive means unless it demonstrates that it has actually considered and rejected the efficacy of less restrictive measures before adopting the challenged practice." Shakur v. Schriro, 514 F.3d 878, 890 (9th Cir. 2008) (quoting Warsoldier v. Woodford, 418 F.3d 989, 999 (9th Cir. 2005).

15 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–5(4). It states government under the Act "(A) means (i) a State, county, municipality, or other governmental entity created under the authority of a State; (ii) any branch, department, agency, instrumentality, or official of any entity listed in clause (i); and any other person acting under color of State law . . . " *See, e.g.*, Wood v. Yordy, 753 F.3d 899, 902 (9th Cir. 2014) (dismissing action against officials in their individual capacities, since RLUIPA does not authorize suits against persons other than in an official capacity).

16 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–5(4) (limiting reach of statute to state entities); Daley v. Lappin, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 100624 (M.D. Pa 7 September 2011) (holding that a federal prisoner is ineligible for relief under RLUIPA), *vacated and remanded on other grounds*, 555 Fed. Appx. 161 (2014).

17 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–2(a) ("A person may assert a violation of this chapter as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and obtain appropriate relief against a government").

18 *See, e.g.*, Sossamon v. Texas, 131 S.Ct. 1651 (2011); Sharp v. Johnson, 669 F.3d 144, 155 (3d Cir. 2012); Rendelman v. Rouse, 569 F.3d 182, 189 n. 2 (4th Cir. 2009); Wright v. Lassiter, 633 Fed Appx 150 (4th Cir. 2016) (*per curium*) (unpublished disposition).

19 Begnoche v. DeRose, 2017 U.S. App. LEXIS 1386*7, note 6 (3d Cir. 2017) citing Sharp v. Johnson, 669 F.3d 144, 155 (3d Cir. 2012) (citing Sossamon v. Texas, 563 U.S. 277, 131 S.Ct. 1651, 1655, 1660 (2011)).

20 Davilia v. Marshall, 2016 WL 2941929*2 (11th Cir. 2016); Begnoche v. DeRose, 2017 U.S. App. LEXIS 1386*7, note 6 (3d Cir. 2017); Holland v. Goord, 758 F.3d 215, 224 (2nd Cir. 2014) (RLUIPA does not authorize claims for monetary damages against state officers in either their individual or official capacities) (citing Washington v. Gonyea, 731 F.3d 143, 145-46 (2nd Cir. 2013); Stewart v. Beach, 701 F.3d 1322, page (10th Cir. 2012); Nelson v. Miller, 570 F.3d 868, 886–89 (7th Cir.2009); Rendelman v. Rouse, 569 F.3d 182, 188–89 (4th Cir.2009); Sossamon v. Lone Star State of Tex., 560 F.3d 316, 328–29 (5th Cir.2009), aff'd on other grounds by 131 S.Ct. 1651 (2011) Smith v. Allen, 502 F.3d 1255, 1271–75 (11th Cir.2007), abrogated on other grounds by Sossamon, 131 S.Ct. 1651.

21 See, e.g., *Smith*, 502 F.3d at 1272–75 ("[I]t is clear that the 'contracting party' in the RLUIPA context is the state prison institution that receives federal funds; put another way, these institutions are the 'grant recipients' that agree to be amenable to suit as a condition to receiving funds—but their individual employees are not 'recipients' of federal funding."). Although the Spending Clause basis for suits under RLUIPA is clear, whether there is as well a Commence Clause basis for such claims is unclear. See, Haight v. Thompson, 763 F.3d 554 (6th Cir. 2014) (Cole, concurring).

22 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000cc–1(b), 2000cc–2(a). See, e.g., Nelson v. Miller, 570 F.3d 868, 886 (7th Cir. 2009); Rendelman v. Rouse, 569 F.3d 182, 189 (4th Cir. 2009); Washington v. Gonyea, 731 F.3d 143, 146 (2nd Cir. 2013) (commenting without deciding that an adequate pleading under RLUIPA commence clause provision requires stating fact showing how the restriction on religious rights had an effect on interstate or foreign commerce).

Plaintiffs may not obtain declaratory or injunctive relief under RLUIPA where an order can have no effect on the defendant's behavior toward him.[23] Would-be plaintiffs must exhaust available administrative remedies before seeking relief under RLUIPA.[24] Since failure to exhaust is an affirmative defense that must be pleaded, it can be waived.[25]

With RLUIPA came a burden-shifting framework for claim resolution.[26] The RLUIPA plaintiff's initial burden is two-fold: he or she must show that (1) the relevant religious exercise is "grounded in a sincerely held religious belief" and (2) the government's action or policy "substantially burden[s] that exercise" by, for example, forcing the plaintiff "to 'engage in conduct that seriously violates [his or her] religious beliefs.'"[27] Under RLUIPA there is no requirement that plaintiffs' sincerely held religious belief be fundamental to, or a central tenet of, their religion.[28] However, an adherent's mere preference for a practice does not establish a substantial burden for the religious exercise.[29] Moreover, challenges to the sincerity of religious convictions by motions to dismiss the complaint may not be made until later phases of the litigation;[30] this is because plaintiff's beliefs are largely a credibility determination and sincerity can rarely be determined, even on a motion for summary judgement.[31] Finally, RLUIPA establishes a subjective test of whether religious beliefs are sincerely felt; thus, they need not be consistent with majority views of the tenets of a particular faith or even if some may find the beliefs illogical.[32] If the plaintiff carries this burden, the government bears the burden of proof to

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[23] See, Banks v. Secretary, Pennsylvania Dep't of Corrections, 601 Fed Appx. 101, **5) (3d Cir. 2015) (denying prison-specific injunctive and declaratory relief, holding that claims were moot on transfer because injunctive and declaratory relief for injury at institution where he no longer resided could have no effect on defendant's behavior toward him).

[24] The Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) provides that "[n]o action shall be brought with respect to prison conditions . . . by a prisoner confined in any . . . prison . . . until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted." 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a). The purpose of the exhaustion requirement is twofold. See, *Woodford v Ngo*, 548 U.S. 81, 89 (2006). First, it "protects administrative agency authority" by allowing the agency to "correct its own mistakes" rather than being immediately "haled into federal court." *Id.* (internal citations omitted). Second, it promotes efficiency insofar as administrative review processes are generally faster and more economical than is litigation. *Id.* Even where the parties subsequently seek judicial remedies, the administrative-review process often produces a useful record to ease and expedite further proceedings. *Id.* See also, *McCarthy v. Madigan*, 503 U.S. 140, 150 (1992).

[25] See, Daley v. Lappin, 555 Fed Appx 161, 167 (3 d Cir. 2014) (defendant's failure to assert exhaustion defense in district court cannot be raised for the first time on appeal).

[26] 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–2(b); *Chance v. Tex. Dep't of Criminal Justice,* 730 F.3d 404, 410 (5th Cir.2013).

[27] *Holt v. Hobbs,* 135 S. Ct. 853, 862 (quoting *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, U.S., 134 S.Ct. 2751, 2775, 189 L.Ed.2d 675 (2014)). See, e.g., Washington v. Klemm, 497 F.3d 272, 28 (3d Cir. 2007) (for purposes of RLUIPA, substantial burden exists where: a follower is forced to choose between following the precepts of his religion and forfeiting benefits otherwise generally available to other inmates versus abandoning one of the precepts of his religion in order to receive a benefit; or , the government puts substantial pressure on an adherent to substantially modify his behavior and to violate his beliefs); Smith v. Governor for the State of Alabama, 562 Fed. Appx. 806 (11th Cir. 2014) (granting summary judgment to defendant on ground that plaintiff failed RLUIPA's substantial burden test which "requires at a minimum that a RLUIPA plaintiff demonstrate that government's denial of a particular religious item or observance was more than an inconvenience to one's religious practice.").

[28] See, e.g., Holt v. Hobbs, 135 S.Ct. 853, 860 (2015); Williams v. Wilkinson, 645 Fed. Appx. 692, 216 U.S. App. LEXIS 6877 (10th Cir. 2016) (applying standard to prisoner's request to attend communal services and be provided kosher food despite his Muslim affiliation).

[29] *See,* e.g., United States v. Quaintance, 608 F.3d 717, 720–23 (10th Cir. 2010) (RLUIPA requires courts to protect against only burdens on sincere religious exercises, not personal offenses); Mutawakkil v. Huibregtse, 735 F.3d 524, 527 (7th Cir. 2013) ("[Plaintiff] says that it would be preferable (from his perspective) if he were allowed to use just his spiritual name . . . but preference or convenience is not the standard."); Jahad Ali v. Wingert, 569 Fed. Appx 562 (10th Cir. 2014) (no burden where prison officials used both committed and adopted religious name).

[30] *See,* e.g., Cutter v. Wilkinson, 544 U.S. 709, 725 n.13 ("[a]lthough RLUIPA bars inquiry into whether a particular belief or practice is central to a prisoner's religion, the Act does not preclude inquiry into the sincerity of a prisoner's professed religiosity."); Abdulhaseeb v. Calbone, 600 F.3d 1301, 1318 (10th Cir. 2010) (it is not until the summary-judgment phase that "the burden shifts to the defendants to show the substantial burden results from a compelling governmental interest and that the government has employed the least restrictive means of accomplishing its interest."); Spratt v. R.I. Dep't of Corrections, 482 F.3d 33, 38 (1st Cir. 2007) (citing 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc-2(b)).

[31] *See*, e.g., Kay v. Bemis, 500 F.3d 1214, 1219 (10th Cir. 2007).

[32] *See,* Yellowbear v. Lampert, 741 F.3d 48, 55 (10th Cir. 2014) (citing Thomas v. Review Bd. of Ind. Emp't Sec. Div., 450 U.S. 707 (1981).

show that its action or policy (1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that interest.[33]

The Supreme Court has emphasized that "[s]everal provisions of RLUIPA underscore its expansive protection for religious liberty."[34] Courts must construe RLUIPA "in favor of a broad protection of religious exercise, to the maximum extent permitted by . . . [RLUIPA's] . . . terms and the Constitution."[35] In addition, RLUIPA "may in some circumstances require [a][g] overnment to expend additional funds to accommodate [inmates'] religious beliefs."[36]

RLUIPA defines "'religious exercise' capaciously to include 'any exercise of religion, whether or not compelled by, or central to, a system of religious belief.'"[37] Although RLUIPA subjects governmental action to exacting scrutiny, "it also affords prison officials ample ability to maintain security."[38] When applying RLUIPA, "courts should not blind themselves to the fact that the analysis is conducted in the prison setting."[39] In particular, they must recognize that "[p]rison officials are experts in running prisons and evaluating the likely effects of altering prison rules."[40] However, judicial deference is not unyielding; courts are not "bound to defer" to a prison system's assertions.[41] "[I]t is the obligation of the courts to consider whether exceptions are required under the test set forth by Congress."[42] Thus, while courts "should respect" the prison officials' expertise, they cannot abandon "the responsibility, conferred by Congress, to apply RLUIPA's rigorous standard."[43]

RLUIPA creates certain procedural obstacles to which prisoners must adhere. As mentioned above the Act imposes on prisoners an administrative exhaustion requirement: "No action shall be brought with respect to prison conditions under section 1983 of this title, *or any other Federal Law*, by a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted."[44] RLUIPA sets out a four-year statute of limitations for bringing judicial actions for violations under the Act.[45]

RLUIPA and its predecessor statute, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA),[46] were Congressional reactions to the Supreme Court's decision in Employment Division., Department. of Human Resources of Oregon. v. Smith. [47] In this case the Court held that neutral, generally applicable laws that incidentally burden the exercise of religion usually do not violate the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.[48] *Smith* largely overruled the method of analysis used in prior free exercise cases that used a balancing test that considered whether a challenged government action that substantially burdened the exercise of religion was necessary to further a compelling state interest.[49] In its place *Smith* abandoned the strict scrutiny standard and substituted a rational basis test for asserting a Free Exercise claims against the government, thereby narrowing the constitutional ground

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[33] 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–1(a); *Holt,* 135 S.Ct. at 863; Ali v. Williams, 822 F.3d 776, 786 (5th Cir. 2016)(describing the least restrictive means test as "exceptionally demanding") (citing Hobby Lobby, 134 S.Ct. at 2780).

[34] *Holt,* 135 S.Ct. at 860.

[35] *Id.* (quoting 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–3(g)).

[36] *Hobby Lobby,* 134 S.Ct. at 2781 (citing 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–3(c)); *see also Holt,* 135 S.Ct. at 860.e

[37] *Holt,* 135 S.Ct. at 860 (quoting 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc–5(7) (A)). Indeed, atheism may fall within RLUIPA's protective ambit. *See,* e.g., Kaufman v. McCaughtry, 419 F.3d 678, 683–84 (7th Cir. 2005) (recognizing atheists as a religious group but denying an accommodation since it would be impracticable to spend limited resources on only two prisoners).

[38] Holt, 135 S.Ct. at 866.

[39] *Id.*

[40] *Id.* at 864.

[41] *Id.*

[42] *Id.* (quoting *Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal,* 546 U.S. 418, 434, (2006)).

[43] *Id.*

[44] 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a). *See,* Cutter v. Wilkinson, 544 U.S. 709, 723 n. 12 (2005) ("[A] prisoner may not sue under RLUIPA without first exhausting all available administrative remedies.").

[45] 28 U.S.C. § 1658(a). See, e.g., Al-Amin v. Shear, 325 Fed. Appx 190, 193 (4th Cir. 2009) [add citations].

[46] 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb *et seq.*

[47] 494 U.S. 872 (1990).

[48] *Id.* at 878–82.

[49] *See, Wisconsin v. Yoder,* 406 U.S. 205, 214, 219 (1972) and *Sherbert v. Verner,* 374 U.S. 398, 403, 406 (1963).

upon which to assert free exercise infringements against the government.[50] Thus, when inmates claim that prison policy substantially burdens their Free Exercise rights the state may defeat the claim by showing that its rules are "reasonably related to legitimate penological interests."[51]

Congress enacted RFRA to overcome the effects of *Smith* by returning protection for religious exercise to pre-*Smith* standards.[52] In the prison context Congress was concerned that government officials retained too much power in denying capriciously one more liberty to prisoners where they had already been stripped bare.[53] In making RFRA applicable to the States and their subdivisions, Congress relied on Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment.[54] In *City of Boerne v. Flores*[55] the Supreme Court held that RFRA exceeded Congress' powers under that provision.[56] *City of Boerne* did not, however, address enforcement of RFRA-created rights against the federal government.

In 2006, in *Gonzales v. O Centro Esperita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal*, the Supreme Court held unanimously that members of a Christian spiritualist sect could enforce RFRA-based rights against the federal government.[57] Since the question of whether RFRA exceeds Establishment Clause limits was not decided in *O'Centro* or in subsequent cases decided by the Supreme Court, it remains an open question whether RFRA oversteps constitutional limits. Those circuits that have addressed this issue have rejected claims that RFRA violates the Establishment Clause,[58] and considering the Court's unanimous ruling it seems likely that it would not find that RLUIPA exceeded Establishment Clause limits. The importance of RFRA in the present context is that its provisions, not those of RLUIPA apply to prisoners' right to religious accommodations in federal prisons.

In the next section we next discuss our research methodology. This includes an explanation of how we selected cases for our data base, the classification of judicial decisions, coding protocols, and statistical tools applied to answer our research questions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Case Selection

To isolate effects attributable to *Holt v. Hobbs*, we employed a nonparametric matching technique to estimate if there was a change in judicial voting after *Holt*. We selected cases decided at the U.S. Courts of Appeals before and after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Holt* on 20 January 2015.

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[50] The Court held that religiously motivated persons enjoy no special right to violate otherwise valid laws, provided the laws are of general application and do not single out religiously motivated conduct for adverse treatment. *Smith* at 878. Smith, who was employment by the Oregon government had participated in a Native American Church ritual that involved ingestion of Peyote, a banned substance in Oregon. Smith's boss found out about the ceremony and fired him. Smith sought but was denied unemployment benefits by the state on the ground that he lost his job through criminal misconduct. *Id.* 882–85. However, under rationale basis scrutiny, the Oregon law withstood the challenge since it was neutral and was not designed to target any religious group.

[51] O'Lone v. Shabazz, 482 U.S. 342, 349 (1987) (quoting Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 79 (1987)). That said, there is tension between O'Lone v. Shabazz and Turner v. Safley, "which create a First Amendment duty of religious accommodations in prisons, and ... *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), which *denies* a constitutional duty of religious accommodations in broad terms yet without overruling O'Lone or Turner." Lewis v. Sternes, 712 F.3d 1083, 1085 (7th Cir. 2013) (Posner, J.) (discussing issue).

[52] See, 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb(b)(I)(2004); Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., 573 U.S.,134 S.Ct. 2751, 2760–61 (2014).

[53] *See* (Laycock and Goodrich 2012; Gaubatz 2005).

[54] Section 5 states: "The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." U.S. Constitution, amend 15, sect. 5. In commenting on *City of Boerne* then Judge Gorsuch wrote: " ... the Court held that RFRA stretched the federal hand too far into places reserved for the states and exceeded Congress's Section 5 enforcement authority under the Fourteenth Amendment. As a result, the Court held RFRA unconstitutional as applied to the states, though still fully operational as applied to the federal government." Yellowbear v. Lampert, 741 F.3d 48, 52 (10th Cir. 2014) (citing City of Boerne v. Flores, 521 U.S. 507, 529–36).

[55] 521 U.S. 507 (1997)

[56] *Id.* at 532–33.

[57] *See*, Gonzales v. O Centro Esperita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal, 546 U.S. 418 (2006) (member of sect have RFRA right to sacramental use of hoasca, a hallucinogenic tea despite being banned by the Controlled substance Act, since the government could not demonstrate it had a compelling interest in barring the sacramental use of this drug); See, Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., 573 U.S.,134 S.Ct. 2751, 2760–61 (2014).

[58] *See*, e.g., Kikumura v. Gallegos, 242 F.3d 950 (10th Cir. 2001); In re: Bruce Young, 141 F.3d 854 (8th Cir. 1998). [find citations].

This approach enabled us to more plausibly attribute effects to the *Holt* decision in the specific legal environment surrounding the timing of *Holt.* We included decisions in the data base that met the following criteria:

1. The prisoner's claim was brought and *decided* under RLUIPA. Prisoners often brought claims under the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause or the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause. A decision was included only if the text of the decision revealed the case was disposed of under the Act rather than an alternative legal ground.
2. The data was derived from published and indexed/" "unpublished" courts of appeals decisions. Most of Courts of Appeals decisions are decided as "unpublished." This does not mean they are unavailable on various data bases but only that the circuit judges deciding the case concluded the holding will not be considered to have formal precedential value. However, in every other respect these decisions purport to following legal precedent applicable to the case before the court.
3. The decision was rendered by one of the United States Circuit Courts of Appeals. Thus, United States District Court and U.S. Supreme Court decisions were not included in the data base.
4. Prisoners bringing claims are or were incarcerated in state facilities. This is because RLUIPA only provides for religious accommodations to prisoners housed in state facilities.
5. The cases were decided during the period following the *Holt* decision in January 2015. Those cases ranged from June 2012 to March 2018.

Applying these criteria our dataset was constructed from 135 decisions at the Courts of Appeals before and after *Holt*, for a total of 405 votes.[9] Because courts analyze RLUIPA cases under a variety of procedural and substantive lenses we coded the decisions in a way that tracked the process courts followed in deciding them.

3.2. Decisional Categories

3.2.1. Procedural Dismissals

With some frequency RLUIPA claims are dismissed on procedural grounds for such reasons as the statute of limitations having expired or the prisoners' failure to exhaust administrative remedies prior to suing. Other non-merits grounds for dismissal include mootness and lack of standing. We categorized these decisions as non-merits dismissals ("NMD"). The idea here was to separate those cases from the ones which ruled on the merits of the RLUIPA claims and addressed core purposes of the Act. Of the 135 decisions 33 were categorized as NMD cases; these comprised 99 of the 405 votes.

3.2.2. Merits Decisions

On the merits side, RLUIPA plaintiffs must initially show that they hold a sincere religious belief and that the government substantially burdened its exercise. Here we distinguished those decisions that held the prisoner's claim failed to allege a substantial burden on religious exercise from those in which the courts found the prisoner did so. Among the 102 decisions that remained after the NMDs were subtracted from 135 decisions . . . 47 decisions (comprised of 141 votes) were dismissed for failure to allege or prove adequately a substantial religious burden. This left 55 decisions comprised of 165 votes to apply RLUIPA's compelling interest-least restrictive means test.

This approach tracked the Act's analytic framework since under RLUIPA analysis stops when no burden is found. In other words, there is no reason for the courts to continue with the compelling interest and least restrictive means tests when the prisoner fails to show the government imposed a substantial religious burden on the prisoner. On the other hand, where the court found the plaintiff alleged a substantial burden the court would have to decide whether the state showed it had a

compelling interest justifying its actions and had applied the least restrict means in doing so.[59] Among the cases where the prisoner made an adequate showing on the religious burden prong 40 decisions went in favor of the prisoner and 15 for the prison.

These numbers reveal that 24.4% of the RLUIPA claims were never reviewed on the merits because of NMDs. Most of these decisions were mootness-dismissals based on the prisoner's transfer to another facility, an outright release, or the provision of an adequate accommodation to the prisoner since the claim was filed. Far fewer of these dismissals were based on failure to exhaust administrative remedies or limitations failures.

About 34.8% of *all* 135 claims filed were dismissed because the prisoner failed to make a prima-facie case showing that exercise of sincerely held religious beliefs was substantially burdened. Of the 102 claims that survived NMD 47 of these, or about 46.1%, were dismissed on "no substantial burden" ground. Thus, out of the original 135 claims filed only 55 (165 votes) proceeded to a compelling interest-least restrictive means analysis. This represents only 41% of the initial 135. Of this group 40 plaintiff prisoners obtained relief from the courts in [state] cases.

3.2.3. Courts of Appeals Voting Patterns

A potential issue in our data analysis was the fact that prior to *Holt v. Hobbs* Courts of Appeals applied different degrees of deference to prison-defendants' claims that religious accommodations under RLUIPA should not be granted because they would compromise the states' interest in safety or the orderly administration of their oversight function, for example. Some circuits exercised substantial deference to such government claims while others applied the strict scrutiny required by RLUIPA in a more demanding fashion. The latter group took a "hard look" at compelling interest and least restrictive means claims made by prison officials; they examined much more closely the factual assertions made by the government to justify their refusal to accommodate the prisoners' requests for accommodations. Such circuits may be labeled "hard look" jurisdictions.[60]

In this regard Bollman concluded that the Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Tenth and Eleventh Circuits were "deferential" circuits and the First, Third, Fourth, Seventh, and Ninth Circuits were hard look circuits.[61] We concur with Bollman's contention but conclude the Second Circuit was a hard look jurisdiction pre-*Holt* and have adjusted our data analysis accordingly.

The voting dispositions and circuit court legal standards, deferential or hard look, applied pre-*Holt* had the potential to affect our ability to determine whether *Holt* affected judges' voting. Since *Holt* was definitive in its insistence that courts take a "hard look" at the reasons given and the availability of less restrictive means to accomplish prisons' policy objectives, *Holt* should result in less substantial movement in voting between the pre-*Holt* period and the post-*Holt* one since those circuits were already voting in a manner seemingly more consistent with what *Holt* required. On the other-hand the deferential circuits it would seem might move more substantially in a pro-prisoner direction since they had, so to speak, a greater distance to travel to meet the *Holt* standard. We accounted for the circuit effects in this regard in our statistical analysis as explained more fully below.

3.2.4. Case Locating and Coding

The data are drawn from all cases obtained from a search of the Westlaw and LexisNexis databases for all U.S. Court of Appeals cases meeting the criteria set forth above. We assigned a value of "1" to

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[59] We recognize that some judges might dispose of cases they were inclined to dismiss anyway by simply finding no substantial burden and thereby avoid the demanding work of analyzing the governmental interest asserted by prison officials and whether they applied the least restrictive means to achieve their policy objectives. Although the high proportion of cases dismissed on no substantial burden ground suggests this could be the case this is far from certain.

[60] (Bollman 2018) (Applying descriptive statistics to study among other things the effects of *Holt v. Hobbs*, 135 S.Ct. 853 (2015) on case outcomes at the U.S. District Courts and U.S. Courts of Appeals).

[61] Holt v. Hobbs, 135 S.Ct. at 841–42 notes 11 & 12; 851–57, notes 76–138 (citing cases).

votes that were in favor of the plaintiff-prisoner and "0" in favor of the prison-defendant. Votes for cases to be remanded for further proceedings were also coded as "1" since in such instances the prisoner achieved substantial success: the court of appeals required the lower court to apply RLUIPA in a way more favorable to the prisoner than it had when it first confronted the case. As such, of all the votes in our dataset, 137 (33.8%) were classified as pro-prisoner-plaintiff while 268 (66.2%) were classified as pro-prison defendant.

4. Results

Our main interest is in assessing whether the *Holt v. Hobbs* case decided at the US Supreme Court at the end of 2015 had any impact on judicial behavior. Of all votes cast, 192 (47%) were cast before *Holt* and 213 (52.6%) were cast after *Holt*. Figure 1 shows the distribution of pro-prisoner-plaintiff and pro-prison-defendant votes before and after *Holt*. As shown, the descriptive statistics show an increase in the percentage of votes in favor of the plaintiff-prisoners, going from around 29% of votes before *Holt* to 38% of votes after *Holt*.
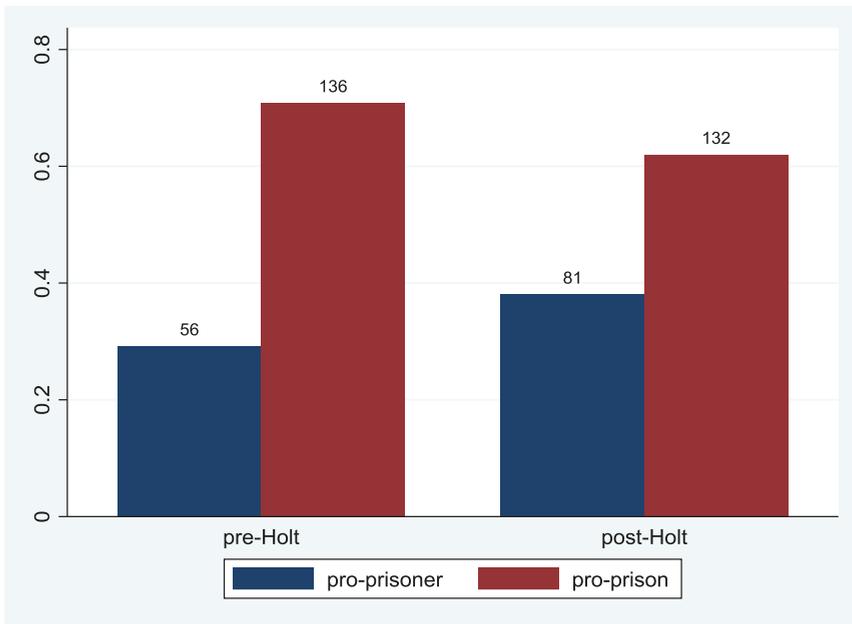
Figure 1. Distribution of Votes Before and After *Holt v. Hobbs* (June 2012 to February 2018).

To isolate the part of these outcomes that can be attributed to changes in judicial behavior, we consider the potential confounding impact of both party affiliation and political ideology. In our dataset, 197 (48.6%) of votes were cast by Democratic Party appointees, while 208 (51.4%) were cast by Republican Party appointees.

In all a higher percentage of Republican votes (36%) were cast in favor of the plaintiff-prisoners compared with Democrats (31%). As shown in Figure 2, this party difference is almost entirely attributable to the post-*Holt* era. Before *Holt*, just over 70% of both Republican and Democratic affiliated votes (77 and 59 votes respectively) were in favor of the prison-defendant. After *Holt*, the percentage of votes in favor of the prison-defendant decreased to 56% of Republican affiliated votes (56 votes) while the Democratic affiliated proportion of votes in favor of the prison only dropped to 67% (76 votes).
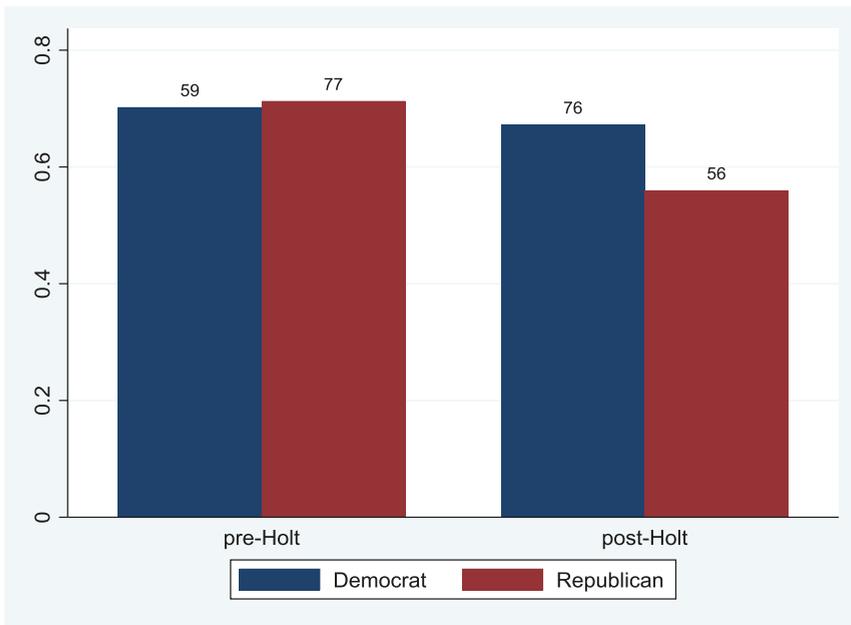
Figure 2. Distribution of pro-prison votes before and after *Holt* by party affiliation.

Party affiliation, while often used as a proxy for political ideology, may be an inadequate device by which to match judges, since it potentially masks significant ideological differences among those of the same party affiliation. This notion is captured by common phrases such as "blue dog" Democrat or "moderate" Republican which denote party members who are respectively somewhat to the right or left of members of their party in their voting records. As such, we also consider a more finely grained measure of ideology based on DW-NOMINATE continuous scores.

In total, there were 196 judges in our dataset, 90 (46%) of whom were appointed by a Democratic Party president, and 106 of whom were appointed by a Republican counterpart. The DW-NOMINATE score ranges from −1 (most liberal) to +1 (most conservative). The average score of Democratic Party appointees was −0.32 and that of Republicans +0.44. The distribution of these scores is shown in Figure 3.[62]

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[62] Here, we use the same formula employed in (Sisk and Heise 2012), where judges are assigned the DW-NOMINATE score of the appointing President if there is no Senator of the same party in the judge's state, the score of the Senator if there is one of the same party as the appointing President for the judge's state, or the mean of the scores of both Senators if there are two Senators of the same party as the appointing President for the judge's state. However, whereas Sisk and Heise use "common-space" DW-NOMINATE scores, we use the specific scaling for the Senate, since only Senators are involved in the judicial appointment process.
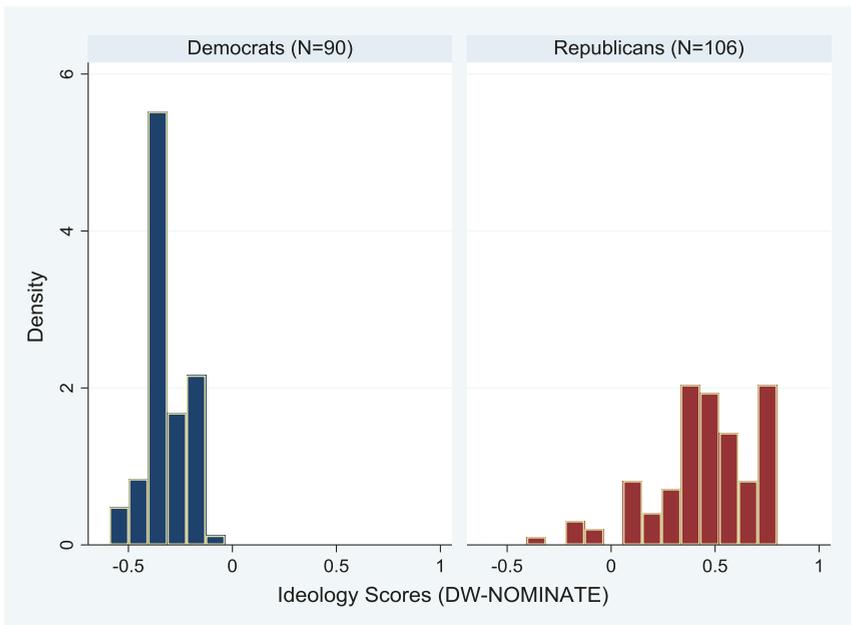
Figure 3. Distribution of ideology (DW-NOMINATE) scores by party affiliation.

Beyond judicial ideology, we also consider the nature of the jurisdiction in which a case was heard. As described earlier, there are strong theoretical grounds to distinguish between "deference" circuits and "hard look" circuits. Consequently, in assessing whether judges changed their voting behavior following the *Holt* decision, we would ideally want to compare the record of judges from a similar jurisdiction. We coded the Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Tenth and Eleventh circuits as "deference circuits" and the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Seventh and Ninth circuits as "hard look" circuits. In all, 189 (47%) votes were cast in "deference" circuits, and 216 (53%) were cast in "hard look" circuits. As discussed, there are reasons to expect that judges in deference circuits would be more likely to change their voting propensities following *Holt*, since the U.S. Supreme Court decision could be interpreted as sending a signal to the lower courts to accord more weight to the religious needs of prisoners.

Finally, we also consider the type of case. Our cases involved the following classifications: whether a non-merits dismissal(NMD)occurred on procedural ground such as statute of limitations or mootness, whether there was a determination of "no substantial burden" that would lead to an automatic victory for the defendant/prison, whether the court found the plaintiff-prisoner stated an adequate claim for a burden on religious exercise that would have proceeded to further analysis, and whether the circuit from which the decision was taken was a deferential or hard look circuit.

Matching Analysis

As explained above, our main purpose in accounting for whether the court found a substantial burden (or in which no such determination was made at all) require more analysis and therefore are more likely to invite differences of opinion. It would not necessarily be meaningful to compare the behavior of two judges, one considering a "slam dunk" case of NMD and the other considering a case that was considerably more complicated.

Our analysis to follow uses a nonparametric matching technique to ascertain if there was a change in judicial behavior pre- and post-*Holt*. This approach uses the "potential outcome framework" to estimate an Average Treatment Effect (ATE). This approach is perhaps best explained by an illustration.

Take, for example, the case of a judge considering an RLUIPA claim. Of interest is whether the same judge would vote differently on a similar case following the Supreme Court's *Holt* decision. As such the *Holt* decision is here a kind of "treatment effect." In this framework there are two "outcomes," one observed and one notional based on how the judge "would have" voted if the case had been decided in a different era. The average treatment effect is then the average of the differences between each observed and corresponding notional outcome.

Proceeding to our matching analysis, we were able to specify perfect matching on all the categorical covariates: party affiliation (Democratic or Republican), circuit type ("hard look" or "deference"), and case type (no substantial burden, substantial burden, or non-merits dismissal). This means the votes being compared—aside from occurring before or after the *Holt* case—are those in which we can assume that the judges involved were both of the same party affiliation, both from either a "hard look" or "deference" circuit, and both considering a case of the same type. For the continuous ideology score, we were also able to obtain near perfect matching. The success in matching judges according to ideology scores is also depicted in the balance plot of Figure 4, which contrasts the closeness of ideology scores for the matched data versus those of the original raw data. These statistics imply that in assessing whether *Holt* had an impact on individual judges we are essentially comparing judges of the same party affiliation and political ideology on cases of the same type and being decided in similar circuit types.
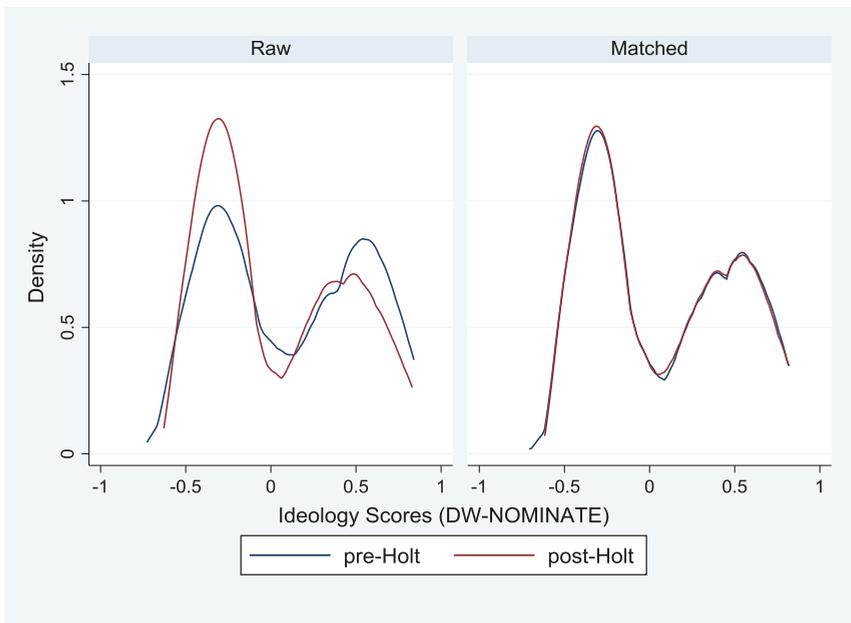

Figure 4. Balance Plot of ideology (DW-NOMINATE) scores for raw and matched data.

Based on this matching our results provide evidence that judicial voting propensities did indeed change following the *Holt* decision. The result is statistically significant although the effect size is quite modest. Specifically, we find that the marginal probability, here the average treatment effect or ATE, of a judge voting in favor of the defendant-prison dropped by 13% following *Holt* (Table 1) We should note here that this result is not evident from the descriptive statistics but is only obtained after close matching of judicial and case attributes when comparing cases before and after *Holt*.

Table 1. Estimated change in voting propensities following *Holt* matching by ideology, party affiliation, circuit type, and case type.

	ATE
Average probability change post-*Holt*	−0.13 ***
	(0.04)
N	*405*

Note: Nearest-neighbor matching estimates using Mahalanobis distance metric. *** $p < 0.01$.

5. Discussion

Using a non-parametric matching design and aligning judges with applicable case level [circuit-type (deferential or hard look)], judge-level [judges' ideology (party affiliation, DW-nominate scores)] and plaintiffs' religious affiliation into our model, we found a significant difference in voting outcomes before and after *Holt v. Hobbs*, which was decided on 20 January 2015. Judges' pro-prison voting decreased after *Holt*. We observe however the effect size was a modest one. Specifically, we find that the marginal probability, here the average treatment effect or ATE, of a judge voting in favor of the defendant-prison dropped by 13% following *Holt*. This result was not evident from the descriptive statistics; we ascertained this change only after close matching of judicial and case attributes when comparing cases before and after *Holt*. It seems then the *Holt* precedent matters and to some degree made the rights protected under RLUIPA a bit more secure.

In hindsight prisoners' claims tended to fall into three main types: grooming, ceremonies, or services, and requests for religious materials.[63] Among these categories, ceremonial or group services for prisoners would seem to pose (from a prison official's perspective) the most threat to good order; judges might take this same view. Since we did not account for accommodation- type in our study it is potentially a confounding factor that contributed to variance in judges' voting behavior. Future researchers may wish to include this as a variable in modeling judicial voting on RLUIPA claims.

Methodologically, the use of non-parametric matching for our subject [judges] served this study well and may be an improvement on traditional logistic regression modeling for dependent measures which are dichotomous Our matching approach enabled us to more accurately compare how judges voted before and after *Holt*; it enabled us to make more cogent comparisons between these precedential eras by accurately isolating *Holt*'s effects. Use of this approach may make more accurate the conclusions we draw about why judges behave as they do and should perhaps be employed more often in studying judicial behavior.

We now consider relevant issues as to why we obtained only a modest effect when it might have been reasonable to expect a greater impact of the *Holt* precedent. The 135 RLUIPA decisions we analyzed produced 408 judicial votes. At first blush it is striking that nearly 24.4% (33) of these claims were dismissed on non-merits ground, for example, filing the claim after the statute of limitations had run, mootness, based on prisoner transfer or release, and other reasons not related to RLUIPA's core purpose of protecting prisoners' sincerely felt religious commitments. The most likely reason for this result is that a substantial majority of these claims were initiated by *pro se* prisoners who are unschooled in the arcane world of civil procedure. It is hard to attribute these outcomes to anything but poor "lawyering."

Why 47 of the remaining 102 claims were dismissed for failure to allege or establish a substantial burden on religious exercise is less clear. The results are perhaps a bit surprising since RLUIPA defines religious exercise broadly as "any exercise of religion, whether or not compelled by, or central to,

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63   *Id.* at 848.

a system of religious belief."[64] Certainly *Holt* reinforced this Congressional directive by requiring an individualized assessment of the prisoner's subjective sincerity and a determination of whether the prisoner must actually choose between following religious belief or following prison policy.[65] While some portion of these claim failures may be attributable to pro se prisoners' poor drafting skills, this seems an incomplete explanation since trial courts are forgiving in processing pro se complaints which dominate the landscape in RLUIPA proceedings.

It is possible that claims dismissed for lack of substantial burden were simply weak ones where the prisoners assumed that rights created by RLUIPA covered mere religious preferences rather than the substantial burden RLUIPA requires. For example, prisoners would with some frequency admit in the papers they submitted that they could practice their faith without the prison accommodating those preferences. In other words, their requests for accommodations appeared to be only a gloss on their subjective beliefs about what their faith required. In the same vein, prisoners' assertions of what their beliefs required and what prison mandates were unconnected logically. Such claims were virtually guaranteed a dismissal on RLUIPA's substantial burden prong.

We can only speculate on the reasons for the high proportion of NSB dismissals since there could be ideological or other factors at play in explaining why 46% of the surviving claims were defeated on RLUIPA's first prong.[66] Our data, however, did not reveal substantial differences in voting patterns between Democratic and Republican appointees or conservative and liberal voters when judges' DW-nominate scores were considered. In any case, even if there had been such differences, our methodology that matches vote comparisons according to both judicial and case attributes gives us a strong basis for asserting that we have successfully isolated the impact of the *Holt* case alone, without other confounding factors.

Although it is possible that the substantial burden dismissals might be a mere cover for deference to prison officials' claims of security needs or orderly administration of prisoner concerns, our data gives us no reason to suspect this is true. Indeed, the limited research in this area suggests this theory may not be a viable one.[67]

Notably, of the 55 claims which proceeded to a compelling interest-least restrictive means analysis 40 plaintiff-prisoners obtained relief in the Courts of Appeals. This represents about 73% of these cases. Given RLUIPA's burden shifting approach, the direction of the results is not surprising. Recall that RLUIPA requires a compelling governmental justification to say "no" to the prisoners' request for an accommodation and proof that the denial is the least restrictive means of accomplishing that purpose. The legal challenge for the prison-defendants may be daunting once the plaintiff establishes that a substantial burden on his or her religious exercise has occurred, especially in the wake of *Holt*.

It seems then, on a practical level, prisoners and their advocates would be well advised to devote as much time and effort as may be feasible in drafting complaints which: link their religious beliefs and their implementation, clearly and precisely while being sensitive to the safety, budgetary and staffing issues prison officials typically confront. As to the latter point selecting locations and times where security will be adequate may be helpful in obtaining the requested accommodation. So too, selection of objects for use in religious activities which pose a diminished potential for use as weapons may help advance the strength of the RLUIPA claim. Perhaps those advocates, even those working in a ministerial capacity, could serve as advisors in connection with prisoners' requests for religious

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[64] 42 U.S.C. 2000cc-5(7)(A). The Supreme Court has held however, that this belief must be "sincer[e]." Cuttter v. Wilkinson, 544 U.S. 709, 725 n. 13 (2005). This standard broadened the definition of substantial burden compared to the one contained in RFRA. *See, e.g.*, Hunter v. Baldwin, No. 95-35330, 1996 WL 95046 (9th Cir. Mar. 5, 1996).

[65] Holt v. Hobbs, 135 S.Ct. 853, 862 (2015).

[66] Our findings tract those of Bollman who observed that nearly 47% of the post-Holt cases he studied were dismissed on no substantial burden ground. See, e.g., (Bollman 2018). Since his data base was comprised of both U.S. District Court and Court of Appeals decisions those results are not directly comparable to ours.

[67] *See, e.g.*, (Bollman 2018) (speculating about such a possibility but generally finding little empirical support for this proposition).

accommodations, especially in assisting *pro se* petitioners with basic writing assistance, especially in organizing their submissions to the court, for example with such things as word usage and sequencing of the complaint.

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