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Emergent Religious Mobility: Evidence from a Recent Young Cohort

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EMERGENT RELIGIOUS MOBILITY:
EVIDENCE FROM A RECENT YOUNG COHORT

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Emergent Religious Mobility: Evidence from a Recent Young Cohort

by Kari B. Alexander

has been approved for the Department of Sociology

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Jason D. Boardman

Date: January 9, 2014

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Emergent Religious Mobility: Evidence from a Recent Young Cohort

This dissertation investigates religious mobility among a recent cohort of young adults in the U.S. This population is of interest because their behaviors indicate whether trends in affiliation and mobility among the entire adult population are likely to continue. Using a national-representative longitudinal dataset, I examine the frequency of switching from the religious affiliation of adolescence, the prevalence of being unaffiliated, and the degree to which individuals engage in multiple switching. Patterns of mobility between affiliations are estimated using log-multiplicative modeling techniques, and three explanations of religious mobility are tested to determine which one best fits the observed patterns. In addition, logistic regression is used to estimate the probability of unaffiliated adolescents claiming religious affiliations by young adulthood. In sum, this research finds that switching frequencies appear to be increasing over time; the prevalence of being unaffiliated is higher now than at any time in U.S. history; and the degree of multiple switching suggests greater overall religious mobility than previously thought. The patterns of mobility confirm that the recent trends of switching away from mainline Protestantism and switching into evangelical and non-denominational Protestantism is continuing. Three explanations regarding religious switching patterns are examined — the secularization thesis, the strong rational choice model, and the weak rational choice model. Of the three, the weak rational choice model, which allows for the possibility of social influences and constraints on the choice process, best describes religious switching patterns. The findings
from this research improve our understanding of overall religious mobility, in general, and the religious choice to affiliate, in particular. Further, this dissertation underscores the importance of treating religious choices as socially embedded phenomena.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The choice to switch religious affiliations or disaffiliate altogether has been an important topic in the sociology of religion since the 1960s when, in the United States, the frequency and patterns of mobility began shifting significantly. After a half-century of relative stability among the mainline Protestant Christian denominations, their proportion of the population began to decline and what was known as “fringe” groups in the 1970s began to grow in popularity (Glock and Bellah 1976; Roof and Hadaway 1979; Stark and Glock 1968; Wuthnow 1988). In an effort to understand the changing landscape of religious affiliation in the U.S., scholars began documenting and explaining religious switching behaviors and the resulting new patterns of mobility (Roof and Hadaway 1979; Roof and McKinney 1987; Wuthnow 1993). In the 1980s, the religious composition of the United States shifted again with membership increases among what were known as fundamentalist and evangelical affiliations, and this generated another succession of sociological analysis and explanations of religious switching (Finke and Stark 2005; Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994; Hout and Wilde 2004; Smith 2000). In the midst of these compositional changes of affiliation, Stark and Bainbridge (1987) published *A Theory of Religion* that further energized the discipline and provided a theoretical framework with which to analyze, among other aspects of religion, individual religious choice.

Since the early 2000s, research into the patterns and determinants of religious switching has been less frequent. Given changes in religious affiliation decisions over the last 40 years, both qualitatively and quantitatively, there is no reason to believe that change is still not occurring. This dissertation addresses this gap by examining religious affiliation decisions made by adolescents as they age into young adulthood.
Religious switching research has used a variety of methods, but the data almost exclusively come from the cross-sectional General Social Survey (GSS). Whether the data is from a single year or is pooled to increase the sample size and enable period- or cohort-specific analyses, cross-sectional data poses problems for mobility research. Specifically, childhood affiliation is collected using a retrospective question, which introduces the possibility of measurement error. In addition, cross-sectional GSS data allows for only two time-specific measures of religious affiliation. Therefore, individuals who switched affiliations multiple times were not identified as being exceptionally mobile, and individuals who switched and then returned to the affiliation of origin were not identified as switchers. Therefore, previous estimates of switching may be biased downward.

One of the primary goals of this dissertation is to address this data deficiency by examining religious switching behaviors using a longitudinal dataset that represents a recent young cohort. The longitudinal nature of the data will allow for prospective reports of actual religious affiliation at different points in time. Further, measures of religious affiliation in this dataset are collected multiple times, so a fuller picture of overall religious mobility will be presented. Finally, this data allows for me to address the absence of a comprehensive examination of religious mobility over the last decade.

A second goal of this research involves examining the recent data from a young cohort to shed light on expectations regarding trends in mobility among the entire adult population. The switching literature has also neglected to examine the extent to which individuals switch affiliations multiple times, and I will document the frequency with which this occurs. Therefore, the first significant contribution of this research is to provide a look at the newest trends among a young cohort, which will inform our predictions about future trends. In addition, by examining
the prevalence of multiple switching by young adulthood, this research offers a more comprehensive picture of religious mobility among young adults than has previously been available.

A third goal of this research is to examine the affiliation patterns of religious switching among this cohort and to adjudicate between multiple explanations of religious choice that have been developed over the last 30 years. The notion of secularization, i.e. that religiosity will decline in general as a result of being subject to the forces of modernity, is tested, along with two versions of the rational choice model. Therefore, another broad contribution of this research will be to document switching behaviors across religions; to compare them to previous findings; and to use the results to offer support or refutation to the competing explanations of religious choice.

The fourth goal is to examine a type of religious choice that, to date has been ignored by the religious switching literature. Specifically, I investigate the decision to affiliate as a young adult among those who reported no affiliation as adolescents. This is an especially important line of inquiry, given that childhood religious experiences are thought to account for much of the variation in religious outcomes as adults (Armet 2009; Bader and Desmond 2006; McNamara Barry, Prenoveau, and Diehl 2013; Dudley and Dudley 1986; Hadaway and Marler 1993; Lawton and Bures 2001; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Sherkat and Wilson 1995; Smith and Sikkink 2003; Vaidyanathan 2011). The contribution from this chapter is not only to identify factors that influence the shift from an unaffiliated adolescence to an affiliated young adulthood, but to also raise the question of how to conceptualize and operationalize the lack of religious experiences in childhood.

In this chapter I first introduce terminology and concepts that are defined differently in the popular media than in academic research and that are even often defined differently within
research. Second, while this dissertation is primarily an examination of patterns of switching rather than determinants, it is important to acknowledge what is known about the factors that influence the decision to switch or disaffiliate. Therefore, I briefly discuss past research on religious switching and list the factors that are thought to positively and negatively influence switching behavior. I conclude the chapter by describing the logic and format of the dissertation.

**Key Concepts**

**Affiliation and Religious Identification**

Affiliation refers to self-reported identification with a specific religion. Affiliations are presented as originally reported (e.g. Presbyterian) or after aggregation into a manageable number of categories (e.g. Mainline Protestant). Religion is used interchangeably with affiliation and identification.

**Tension**

Tension refers to the degree to which a religion defines itself in opposition to surrounding culture. The most distinctive of religions (e.g. Mormons) are considered high-tension, while mainline Protestants are considered low-tension. Religions which identify as being separate from culture yet are willing to engage with culture are considered to have moderate tension (e.g. non-denominational Protestants).

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1 The original intention of this dissertation was to conceptualize religion in the United States as including non-Christian religions as well as Christian. Indeed, an increasing number of sociologists (Levitt et al. 2010) have noted the limits of Christo-Centrism in studies of religion in the United States and abroad. Unfortunately, data limitations prevent extensive analysis of non-Christian religions in the United States, but they are still included to provide a full picture of the affiliations claimed by the sample. However, as a result of prior Christo-centric research, some of the standard terminology used in the sociology of religion and in this dissertation is decidedly Christo-centric (e.g. church).
Protestant Labels

While it is relatively simple to identify a Catholic or a Muslim in a survey, identifying specific denominations, or lack thereof, among Protestant Christians has been problematic. Given that it is precisely this broad group of individuals among whom mobility has been the most significant, any research on mobility must specify exactly what is meant by terms such as conservative, evangelical, moderate, fundamentalist, and mainline.

There are generally two types of categorizations used for Protestants. One is by denomination and the other is by tradition. The denominational scheme has been appropriate in the past because the vast majority of Protestants claimed a specific denomination. However, two main difficulties exist in using the denominational approach. First, over the last two centuries, schisms in at least three of the major denominations have resulted in new denominations with similar names, but with decidedly different orientations. For example, a Presbyterian could be a member of the Presbyterian Church in America (relatively conservative) or the Presbyterian Church USA (relatively liberal), and a Lutheran could be a member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (relatively conservative) or the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (relatively liberal). Thus, individuals may belong to the same denomination but have very different theological and social convictions, two aspects of religion that are of interest to sociologists. The second problem is that the last 30 years have witnessed an increase in the number of Protestants who do not claim a traditional denomination, and those individuals are typically aggregated into an “other” or “non-denominational” category.

The other approach is to focus on Protestant traditions and include fundamentalism, evangelicalism, and mainline Protestantism. Fundamentalist beliefs include opposing the secular influence in society, inerrancy of the Bible, personal salvation by accepting Christ as savior, the
personal premillennial imminent return of Christ, an evangelical desire to reach out and save others, and acceptance of traditional notions such as the virgin birth and existence of angels and devils. Fundamentalists typically create a sheltered subculture that strongly discourages regular engagement with the culture at large. Evangelicals are somewhat more moderate than fundamentalists. They are more flexible regarding their beliefs and although they view themselves as separate from society, they are willing to engage in secular culture, especially if it serves a function in their ultimate goal of spreading the good news (Marsden 1991; Smith 1998).

Fundamentalists can be considered their own category (Smith and Sikkink 2003; Woodberry and Smith 1998) or as a subset of evangelicals (Steensland et al. 2000; Woodberry et al. 2012). Except for conservative Baptists, mainline Protestants have more moderate or even liberal approaches to theology and social issues.

Finally, black Protestants often have their own category in research that uses a tradition-based typology. This is necessary because the traditional black church emphasizes “different aspects and nuances of Christian doctrine, especially the importance of freedom and the quest for justice” (Steensland et al. 2000:294). Members of the Black Church are typically liberal on economic and justice issues, but conservative on theological and social issues. Two difficulties arise when using a Tradition-based typology. First, the word fundamentalist may be considered pejorative and is often conflated with a purely political rather than religious stance (Steensland et al. 2000). Second, when faced with these standard tradition categories (i.e. fundamentalist, evangelical, mainline, options) many individuals are unsure to which tradition they belong (Alwin et al. 2006; Hackett and Lindsay 2008). Hout and Wilde report that roughly one-third of Protestants do not identify with any of the tradition labels (2004: 233). Still, in some surveys,
researchers claim that respondents have little difficulty self-identifying with a tradition (Smith and Sikkink 2003).

In this research, the raw data was collected at the denominational level. I then categorized the data into three different typologies (see Chapter 4). These typologies are designed, in part, to be comparable with previous research. But, at times, the typological category does not directly translate into a concept that makes sense when reporting results. Therefore, I follow two key guidelines in the definition and use of these terms.

The first guideline is employed when presenting results from one of the three typologies defined in Chapter Four. Specifically, the jargon specific to that typology takes precedence. For example, the Sherkat (2001) typology identifies Conservative Protestants as those from sect-like denominations (e.g. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Mormons). Therefore, when reporting results from this typology, “Conservative Protestant” will be used to refer to this group. All categories from the three typologies will be capitalized in the text of this research.

The second guideline applies to the parts of the research in which I am not referencing a specific category from a typology. In these cases, I follow the following simple scheme: All Protestants will be categorized as conservative or mainline. Conservative Protestant is an umbrella term that refers to any Protestant affiliation that is not a mainline denomination. The three types of conservative Protestants are evangelical, non-denominational, and sect-like Protestants. Evangelical Protestants are those non-mainline Protestants who are denominationally defined and typically affiliate with the National Association of Evangelicals (e.g. Brethren, the Foursquare Church, and Evangelical Free). Non-denominational Protestants are those who are not denominationally defined but are similar to evangelicals in theology and doctrine (e.g. Flatirons Community Church in Lafayette, Colorado). Mega-churches also
typically belong in this category (e.g. Willow Creek Church in Chicago, Illinois). Sect-like Protestants are equivalent to what is commonly known as Fundamentalists. They hold strong beliefs and define themselves in direct opposition to modern culture (e.g. Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists, and Mormons).

In sum, when referring to specific typological categories, the name of the category will be used. At all other times in this dissertation, the categories will be Mainline Protestant (e.g. Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ) and Conservative Protestant (e.g. evangelicals, non-denominational, and sect-like Protestants).

*Church, Denomination, Sect, and Cult*

Church, denomination, sect, and cult have very precise technical definitions that are often not adhered to in research. Technically, churches and denominations are viewed from the outside as respectable religious organizations; the difference is that churches lay claim to the ultimate truth whereas denominations acknowledge that there may be multiple truths. For example, the Roman Catholic Church is a church, and Methodism is a denomination. Technically, sects and cults are viewed externally as deviant organizations. Sects teach one ultimate truth, whereas cults allow for the possibility of multiple truths. For example, Christian Science is considered a sect, whereas the American Gnostic Church is a cult (Bruce 1999:6).

*Church-Sect Cycle*

Churches are religious organizations that tend to have low tension, while sects are religious organizations that tend to have high tension. A sect typically results from a schism 2 Even though evangelical Protestants are defined as having a denominational identity (e.g. The Salvation Army), their claim to a unique ultimate truth categorizes them as a church in the context of church-sect-denomination classifications.
within a church in which some individuals felt that the organization was too accommodating to secular culture. The new sect is characterized by strict behavioral standards, extreme theological convictions, and separation from culture. The sect, in fact, defines itself in terms of its high tension. If the sect is successful and grows, it will transform into a large organization that requires time, money, and bureaucracy to maintain itself. It inevitably will become more focused on this world than on the next world, and therefore tension will drop and it will become a church. This occurrence will dissatisfy some members who desire high tension, a schism will occur, and the dissatisfied members will form a new sect. The church-sect cycle, then, is sect, transformation, schism, and rebirth (Finke and Stark 2005).

Table 1.1  Church, Denomination, Sect, and Cult

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Conception</th>
<th>External Conception</th>
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<tr>
<td>Uniquely legitimate (i.e. monopoly on truth)</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistically legitimate (i.e. acknowledge other truths)</td>
<td>Denomination</td>
</tr>
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Source: Roy Wallis's *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology*, as presented in Bruce (1999)
The Determinants of Religious Switching

The probability of individual religious mobility, whether switching or disaffiliating, has consistently been associated with a number of sociodemographic, religious, family, and life-cycle characteristics. Factors positively associated with religious switching include a liberal youth affiliation, moving from adolescence into young adulthood, inter-religious marriage, moving to a new region, getting or being divorced, and having a college degree. Factors negatively associated with religious switching include a conservative youth affiliation, parents not divorcing, belonging to a denomination that has strong social norms in favor of affiliation and participation, and having children (Armet 2009; Bibby 1997; Hadaway and Marler 1993; Lawton and Bures 2001; Loveland 2003; Petts 2009; Pew 2012; Sandomirsky and Wilson; Sands, Marcus, and Danzig 2006; Schwadel 2010; Sherkat 2001; Smith and Sikkink 2003; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy and Waite 1995; Vaidyanathan 2011; Wilson and Sherkat 1994).

Religious socialization has been shown to have an insignificant or a negative relationship with switching. Religious socialization has been operationalized as religious participation, religious salience, Sunday school attendance, religious school attendance, and as faith activities practiced within the home (e.g. praying, reading sacred texts). Vaidyanathan (2011) found that different types of socialization have varying effects on adult religious outcomes, depending on the religious tradition of origin. This could explain the inconsistent results of the effects of socialization on the probability of switching. Religious socialization remains the strongest predictor of adult religious commitment outcomes (Armet 2009; Bader and Desmond 2006; McNamara Barry, Prenoveau, and Diehl 2013; Dudley and Dudley 1986; Hadaway and Marler 1993; Lawton and Bures 2001; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Sherkat and Wilson 1995; Smith and Sikkink 2003; Vaidyanathan 2011).
Conclusion

This research proceeds with a theoretical background chapter; a data and methods chapter; and then three substantive chapters that directly address the goals described above. The theoretical chapter provides in-depth discussion of key theoretical constructs used throughout the research—the secularization thesis and the rational choice model. Both approaches have implications for religious mobility. The rational choice model subsumes a number of theses that themselves have unique predictions regarding religious mobility. I conclude the chapter by introducing broader discussions within the sociology of religion to which the results of this research will make contributions.

The data and methods chapter describes in detail the dataset used for this analysis and documents how religious affiliation was operationalized. This section is especially important given that assumptions were made in order to create consistent typological categories over different waves of the survey. In addition to describing measures, this chapter includes details regarding the specification and interpretation of association models (log-linear and log-multiplicative generalized linear models) and a brief description of logistic regression.

The three substantive chapters are aligned with the primary goals of the dissertation. Chapter 4 provides a descriptive account of single and multiple religious switches made among this cohort of young adults, overall and by affiliation in adolescence. These figures are compared with previous estimates to draw conclusions regarding future trends. Chapter 5 uses association models to specifically address mobility between affiliations, identify those affiliations that gain and lose within the switching game, and critique the ability of multiple theoretical perspectives to explain switching patterns. Chapter 6 uses logistic regression to
identify factors associated with the decision to religiously affiliate as a young adult after being an unaffiliated adolescent. Again, the results reflect on the success of the different explanations of religious decision-making. The concluding chapter summarizes the findings and highlights the contributions made to the literature. In addition, limitations are considered and suggestions for further research are discussed.
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the 1990s, in response to two key developments, the sociology of religion enjoyed considerable interest and garnered its own section in the ASA in 1994. The first key development was that the distribution of religious identities had begun to shift after almost 50 years of relative stability. Mainline Protestant denominations ceased growing and religions on the “fringe” (e.g. conservative Protestants and new Non-Christian religions like the Hari Krishna) began to attract members (Glock and Bellah 1976; Roof and Hadaway 1979; Stark and Glock 1968; Wuthnow 1998). The second development concerned the publication of Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge’s 1987 book *A Theory of Religion* which claimed to elevate the level of discourse in the sociology of religion by “bringing theory back in” (Stark 1997:4). These developments, in fact, brought interest back in.

In this chapter I discuss two broad schools of thought within the sociology of religion and highlight aspects of them that are relevant to this research. First, I briefly track the development of the secularization thesis, which is the primary theoretical construct in what has become known as the old paradigm in the sociology of religion. I then turn to the new paradigm which was originally stimulated by the work of Stark and Bainbridge and which has been extended by other scholars. The rational choice model, the heart of the new paradigm, claims not only to be theoretical, but purports to be a somewhat comprehensive framework for studying religion.

The Old Paradigm – Secularization

The roots of the secularization thesis can be found in the writings of the classical sociologists, although none developed a detailed account of secularization. More recently, Berger (1967)
established the bases for secularization, and most recently, Bruce (1999, 2011) continues to be the staunchest defender of the secularization thesis.

Any discussion of secularization must begin with a definition. Secularization has come to have a number of different connotations, and this has proven to confuse the secularization debate (Cassanova 2006). The three primary ways of conceptualizing secularization include (a) the privatization of religion, which is a precondition for democracy; (b) differentiation of the secular spheres, which means the transfer of persons, things, and meanings from ecclesiastical or religious authority to civil or lay control; and (c) the decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies (Cassanova 2006:7). In this research, secularization will primarily mean the decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies. However, in summarizing the development of the secularization perspective, other meanings are invoked and will be highlighted as necessary.

*The Classical Thinkers and Secularization*

It is not surprising that many of the founders of Sociology--Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber--also produced foundational texts for the sociology of religion. During the 19th and 20th centuries, social thinkers recognized that any study of society must include religion because religious institutions were so embedded in the fabric of society. While they differed in their conceptualizations of religion and their analytic approaches to studying religion, they all agreed on the possibility that religion, in the wake of progress, could eventually either fade away, or at least be transformed to an unrecognizable form.

The eventual rejection of religion, for Marx, begins with the functional role that religion plays in the social struggle. He was not concerned with the specific tenants or beliefs of specific
religious orientations; these were obviously absurd superstitions. Rather, Marx argued that religion functions to maintain the existing economic system, in which labor is exploited by those who own the means of production. Specifically, the proletariat relies on man-made religion for solace amidst its degradation and economic misery. Marx ([1843] 1982) wrote, “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, and the soul (or spirit) of the soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.” When the proletariat successfully mounts a revolt against the capitalists, religion will no longer be necessary, “The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness” (Marx [1843] 1982).

Thus, according to Marx’s theory of history, religion, because it will have lost its function, will ultimately recede from individual and social consciousness.

Max Weber’s work also had a secularization component, but unlike Max did not view secularization as an essential evolutionary trend. Secularization could occur at one point in socio-history and then be overcome by religious orientations at another point in socio-history (Weber [1915] 1958). Whether secularization is apparent at any point in time depends on the struggle for dominance between the competing spheres of religion, in various stages of rationalization, and other secular institutional spheres, also in various stages of rationalization (not the least of which was the burgeoning spirit of capitalism). As part of this process in which spheres compete for prominence, religion becomes subjected to reductive intellectualism that seeks to systematize the ideas and values of religion in order to make it internally logical as it explains the cosmos (Weber [1915] 1958:323). Making religion more logical, according to Weber, suppresses magic and disenchants the world.

In response to this rationalization from intellectuals, religious individuals, desiring to indulge their natural need for irrational expression, retreat to earlier constructions of religion that
were mysterious and irrational. But, at this stage, the irrational and mysterious are becoming devalued in a heavily systematized society, and, “The need for salvation responds to this devaluation by becoming more other-worldly…” (Weber [1915] 1958:357), and the process continues. According to Weber, the need for irrational expression is a metaphysical need and therefore it may not be possible for religion, one particular vehicle of irrationality, to be eliminated altogether. But, to the degree to which the practical and structural spheres of life are increasingly subjected to rationalization, the irrational force of religion may lose influence (Pals 1996).

Like Marx, Durkheim saw a functional role for religion; but unlike Marx, he viewed religion as having a positive influence on society. According to Durkheim, religion provides answers to existential and cosmological questions and also fosters social cohesion through the enactment of shared rituals and statements of shared beliefs. Living as he did about a generation after the conclusion of the industrial revolution, Durkheim predicted that functional differentiation would continue to occur over time. As functions became more specific and specialists rose to meet the needs of the people, Durkheim predicted that the traditional social functions of religion would be unnecessary as the government and business began providing these services (Durkheim [1912] 1995). However, religion not only serves the poor or explains the movement of the stars. It serves the function of fostering social cohesion, and therefore has an eternal component, “There can be no society that does not experience the need at regular intervals to maintain and strengthen the collective feelings and ideas that provide it coherence and distinct individuality” (Durkheim [1912] 1995: 429). Eventually, and perhaps cyclically, society will bring back religion, but in the meantime, “the former gods are growing old or dying and others have not been born” (Durkheim [1912] 1995: 429). When the time comes that a
According to Durkheim, religion shall not die; it may just be less recognizable.

Marx viewed secularization as an inevitable outcome of the overturning of capitalism; Weber saw the enchanted world declining in importance as religion (and society) succumbed to rationalization; and Durkheim believed that the social functions of religion will be assumed by other social institutions. It was not until Peter Berger’s 1967 work, *The Sacred Canopy*, that secularization began to be more formally developed.

*Contemporary Developments*

In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger (1967) begins by stating that the primary aim of a society is to reproduce itself, and the primary mechanism of social reproduction is socialization. Socialization succeeds when individuals believe that society’s existing worldview consists of objective truths that are unchangeable; in other words, the ways of society are stable and legitimate. Society must be under control and be predictable. Religion is an important component in maintaining a stable and legitimated society. One way it does this is by locating social institutions “within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference” (Berger 1967: 33). Another way it does this is by giving meaning to extraordinary experiences that fall outside of what is expected in the stable and legitimated society. Religion serves the purpose of bringing the exceptional back into the everyday order of things. One of the most important functions of religion is to explain meaningless suffering (e.g. the death of a child) or unimaginable inequality (e.g. death of thousands from lack of access to clean water). Religion is responsible for making these senseless occurrences meaningful (Berger 1967: 57). It provides reassurance that somehow, sometime, perhaps not right now, all experiences will eventually make sense.
After explaining the general role of religion in society, Berger explicates the process of secularization that occurred within the Christian context in Western Europe. Prior to the Protestant Reformation, the religious and secular spheres were so enmeshed that one was often indistinguishable from another (e.g. the Holy Roman Empire). When Martin Luther first tacked up his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517, the seeds of secularization were planted. The primary claim of the Protestant Reformation was that the Roman Catholic Church (and especially the Pope) was not necessary; individuals could enter into individual relationships with God through study of the Bible. Further, people were allowed to interpret the Bible using mind and conscience. This was the first indication in the Western world that religion could be an individuated phenomenon.

Given that the primary function of religion is to provide an all-encompassing meaning-making narrative for a society, religious individuation and eventual pluralism posed a problem. If there were multiple religions, could there be multiple truths as well? From this point on, religions claiming exclusive access to a single religious truth would be required to “market” their claim to potential adherents (Berger 1967: 137).

If the Protestant Reformation planted the seeds of secularization, The Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th Century began to grow the seeds. The world began to be explained through the lens of science, which challenged the traditional authority of religion. Success, which was previously defined only in relation to religion, began to be measured by the accumulation of wealth, a process fully developed by Weber ([1904] 1958). By disenchanting and controlling the natural world, wealth could be acquired. To sustain a society that allowed for this type of wealth accumulation over the long-term, the world needed to be controlled and predictable, just as Berger had initially claimed. This was accomplished not through religious authority, but through the development of legal and political systems and the bureaucracies to run them. Overall,
heading into the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, secular concerns began to supersede religious concerns (Warner 2010:33). Individualism, capitalism, and rationalism had taken root and would continue to marginalize religion over time.

Berger’s vision of secularization incorporates Cassanova’s (2006) three connotations mentioned above. Religion would be privatized in that the state would no longer control the religious arena; religious spheres themselves would become individuated and differentiated to such a degree that they would lose their ability to provide unassailable meaning; success would be achieved and acknowledged in the economic rather than religious sphere; and advancements in science and technology would begin to answer cosmological questions and would foster the control of nature. According to Berger, all of these factors would converge and produce a society without religion.

The most ardent proponent of secularization today is Steve Bruce (1999, 2011). Bruce has developed a thorough model of secularization, and while its complete explication is beyond the scope of this research, a short summary is in order. Bruce (1999: 8-21) identifies and analyzes four social forces that contribute to modernization in general, and secularization in particular. These forces include differentiation, which entails a fragmented social life as different aspects of life become functionally differentiated; societalization, which captures the way society is enmeshed and organized not locally, but societally, typically from the top down; rationalization, which includes changes in the way people think and act (e.g. less enchantment in thoughts and actions); and egalitarianism and cultural diversity. These social forces, according to Bruce, will coalesce to generate secularization.

By the early 1970s, the secularization thesis had been empirically supported in Western Europe. Berger had thought that the United States would follow suit because the worldview of
those who had colonized the United States (western-European descent with a strong Protestant ethic) was precisely the worldview that produced secularization in Europe. And certainly the United States was fertile ground for the forces of individualism, capitalism, and rationalism. But midway through the 20th Century, the United States continued to exhibit high levels of religiosity. Scholars began to wonder when secularization would become evident in the United States. Further, even Peter Berger himself questioned whether it would come at all, “The world today is as furiously religious as it ever was . . . This means that a huge body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled ‘secularization theory’ is essentially mistaken” (1999:2) Without unassailable empirical evidence to support it, the application of the secularization thesis to the United States is still subject to scrutiny (Greely and Hout 1999; Hadden 1987; Stark 1999; Swatos and Christiano 1999).

Consequences of Secularization for Liberal and Conservative Religions

In the United Kingdom and Canada, somewhat liberal denominations saw their membership fall by over half in the last 50 years of the 20th century. Conservative Protestant membership declined as well, but not by nearly as much (Bruce 1999: 135). In the U.S., Mainline Protestant membership dropped from about 30% of the population in 1970 to 15% in 2010 (Lindner 2010). Simultaneously, non-Mainline conservative Protestant bodies grew substantially (Sherkat 2001).

The secularization perspective explains the decline in liberal religion first by characterizing these religions as denominations, which means they do not claim a unique grasp on truth and allow for more than one pathway to God. As such, they are inclusive, egalitarian, and have a somewhat diffuse belief system. These characteristics provide advantages to liberal
denominations in that they can incorporate cultural pluralism and embrace postmodern relativism. But the disadvantages of this type of structure far outweigh the advantages.

According to Bruce (1999), several characteristics of liberal denominations, which are directly tied to the individualization of religion brought on first by the Protestant Reformation and then by the continued forces of modernity, block sustained growth: (a) individualism inhibits reaching organizational consensus; (b) relativism prevents development of strong ethical codes that allow for misbehavior and mistrust; (c) diversity of beliefs do not offer members a unique perspective that serves as the touchstone in defining themselves relative to the secular world; and (d) children are encouraged to discover their own beliefs. But the overall difficulty for the numerous liberal denominations with these characteristics is that their beliefs and rituals are insufficiently differentiated. If one denomination is no different than another, then do any matter? Bruce characterizes this phenomenon as “choice undermines faith” (1999:149). The secularization thesis, therefore, predicts a decline in liberal-to-moderate denominations.

From a secularization perspective, conservative churches will decline at a slower rate in the United States than in Western Europe, and in the short run perhaps even grow, because the social structure in the U.S. is somewhat protective. To understand why this specific structure is relevant, it is important to understand the typical ethos of a conservative church. Epistemologically, conservative churches tend to emphasize salvation and the existence of a single truth to which they lay claim. They tend to differentiate themselves from the wider society (i.e. construct a high tension environment) and to create a closed yet supportive system in which the church alone provides for as many of the needs of its members as possible. The social structure that enables organizations like this to sustain them in the United States is the freedom for people to create their own subcultures, especially with respect to religion (Bruce 1999:145).
In Europe, where religion and the state were, and still are, more integrated, the necessary ideological separation from the wider society that conservative churches need to thrive is not available.

Conservative churches are not immune to the church-sect cycle, however, and sects can form in response to what is seen as conservative churches becoming too accommodating to the wider society. Over time new sects may form and grow, but what makes sects strong also makes them vulnerable. Specifically, the belief of one truth binds a sect together, but when partnered with the standard Protestant notion of individually discerning the truth, factionalism and schism result. The sect then splits into one group that is moderate and another that is a true sect. But where does this new sect get its new members? We know that sects get the large majority of their new members from pools of other religious people. But with each wave of factionalism and schism, the pool from which exceptionally conservative sects can draw upon gets smaller. Thus, even though conservative churches may grow or decline relatively slowly in the short run, in the long run, even apparently vital conservative churches will eventually wither and die (Bruce 1999:139).

As the primary component of the old paradigm, the secularization thesis was expected to explain the marked reduction in religious vitality in the United States. When religious vitality did not decline, secularization proponents sought explanations for why the United States was so different from Europe (Bruce 2011; Warner 2010). Others have proposed modified versions of secularization that provide a better fit with the U.S. experience. Examples include (a) institutions becoming more secular, but individual religiosity remains intact (Yaman 1997); (b) an emergence of “believing but not belonging” in which individuals may not affiliate or participate but have not experienced diminished faith or beliefs (Warner 2010:49); and (c)
secularization is gendered in that women, who are more strongly religiously socialized, are more
reluctant to deviate from the norm (Stark and Miller 2002; Voas and Crockett 2005).

Regardless of whether a modified version of secularization is more appropriate for the
U.S. experience, the inadequacy of the secularization thesis left a void in the sociology of
religion. What became known as the new paradigm attempted to fill that void.

New Paradigm
The “new paradigm” (Warner 1993:1045) entered the sociology of religion discourse in the
1980s and early 1990s. Much of the new paradigm employs principles of economics, especially
rational choice theory and exchange theory, and market analogies that explain religious behavior
on both an individual and institutional level. Stark and Bainbridge (1987) laid the foundation
for an attack on the old paradigm with A Theory of Religion. Stark felt that sociology in general
and sociology of religion in particular lacked “real” theory (Stark 1997:4), so he and Bainbridge
constructed a comprehensive theory of religion that rested on seven axioms. Each axiom “…is a
very simple statement about humans or the human condition” (Stark 1997:11). From each axiom
are deduced propositions and definitions that, taken together, are purported to explain religion
from the smallest of human needs to the behavior of religious organizations and then to the
structuring of the religious marketplace. Collaborating with Stark and Bainbridge to build the
foundation of the new paradigm were Laurence Iannaccone, who theorized about the production
of religious value at the individual, family, and organizational level; and Roger Finke, the first to
report on market-level historical data that supported the rational choice model.

See Chaves and Gorski (2001) for an objection to directly connecting Warner’s “New Paradigm” with the rational
choice model.
The Strong Rational Choice Model

The rational choice model as applied to religion operates on three levels – the individual, organizational, and market levels. The individual and organizational levels consist of exchanges between individuals who are in the market for religious products (the demand side) and the religious firms who supply these products (the supply-side). The market-level indicators include numbers and types of religious firms, levels of membership, and overall religious vitality.

The Individual- and Organizational-Levels

The individual-level of the rational choice model begins with assumptions about what humans are like and how they interact (Stark and Bainbridge 1987:25). The fundamental assumption is that humans “act rationally, weighing the costs and benefits of potential actions, and choose those actions that maximize their net benefits” (Iannacone 1997: 26). A second key assumption is that “Ultimate preferences (or [needs]) that individuals use to assess costs and benefits tend not to vary much from person to person or time to time” (Iannacone 1997: 26). Applied to religious choice, this means that people will choose (or avoid) particular religious behaviors by maximizing the net benefit they receive through these actions.

On the demand side of the rational choice model, individuals weigh costs and benefits and make rational choices regarding religious products. Religious products are considered an array of what Stark and Bainbridge (1987) term rewards. Rewards provided by religious participation include being a member of community, which may confer status or legitimacy; attending services, which may provide special meanings and are also social occasions; participating in organizations and activities; and opportunities for child socialization (Stark and Bainbridge 1987: 46). Other religious rewards, such as answers to questions like, “What is the meaning of life?” and “Is there life-after-death?” cannot actually be proven or disproved and
therefore do not exist. What does exist, however, is a supernatural explanation that addresses these types of questions. These untestable explanations are referred to as compensators by Stark and Bainbridge (1987: 36) and are themselves religious products bought in the religious marketplace.

On the supply-side of the rational choice model, religious organizations are producers of religious products. The producers of religious products are also considered maximizers in that they seek to maximize their membership and net resources. One critical factor in maximizing membership is to clearly differentiate from other producers the religious goods they offer (i.e. rewards and compensators) and to clearly market these differences to potential members.

Religious consumers and religious firms come together to form a local religious market that operates very much like a market for other goods and services. Religious firms offer products, while individuals and families choose products, and the exchanges take place.

Some object to the assumption that religious organizations act as maximizers. But according to Iannaccone, “Evolutionary forces will favor maximizing behaviors even if religious firms do not consciously strive for “success,” since individuals, organizations, and policies that yield greater resources are more likely to survive and grow” (1997:27). In other words, competition from other religious organizations will require maximizing behaviors. Otherwise religious firms will not attract sufficient membership to sustain themselves.

Two controversial yet important features of the rational choice model must be addressed here. First, when religious behaviors change over time for an individual, the rational choice approach does not attribute this to changes in “preferences” which include tastes, norms, or beliefs. Rather, as stated above, preferences are considered stable across people and time, so any changes in religious outcomes are because the optimal response has changed. The optimal
response is a function of costs (prices) of religious goods, ability to pay the costs of religious goods (income), and skills, experiences, technologies, and resource constraints (Iannacone 1997: 27). In other words, changes in preferences for religious goods that result in different religious outcomes do not occur in the strong rational choice model.

The ultimate stable preference, according to Stark and Bainbridge, is the “…desire for very general rewards, such as everlasting life” (1987:315). Further, “Such unfulfilled desires serve as the universal motive for religion” (Stark and Bainbridge 1987: 315). This perspective suggests, then, that the demand for compensators will be constant across time and across people. Given a constant demand, the strong variant of the rational choice model favored by Stark and Bainbridge, Iannaccone, and Finke focuses on how supply rather than demand shapes the religious landscape. As such, the strong version of the rational choice model is referred to as the supply-side approach.

Second, the assumption of religious voluntarism underlies the choices made by religious consumers in this model. Religious consumers are thought to be free to choose any available religious product without regard to social or cultural constraints. These two controversial assumptions have been critiqued (Ammerman 1997; Ellison 1995; Hechter 1997; Lechner 2007; Lehmann 2010; Neitz and Mueser 1997), and a modified version of the rational choice model has been proposed.

The Market-Level

The new paradigm in the sociology of religion offers a fresh historical look the dynamics of the organizational health of religious groups. Old paradigm scholarship tended to focus on how changes in individuals’ religious preferences affected their demands for religion and therefore impacted the supply of religion. For example, some scholars have speculated that the
reduction in Mainline Protestant membership in 1960s and 1970s was due to cultural shifts toward anti-establishment viewpoints (Roof and Hadaway 1979). But the new paradigm attempts to explain shifts in religiosity using supply-side perspective (Finke 1997; Finke and Ianaccone 1993; Finke and Stark 2003). Specifically, supply-side proponents argue that pluralism and competition promote healthy and vibrant religious organizations and markets.\(^4\)

Of course, according to any competitive market model, actual market outcomes (in this case, quantities and prices of religious products) reflect the intersection of supply with demand. But, also according to this model, demand for religion is quite stable as “…the underlying determinants of religious demand … are rooted in fundamental human needs, whereas religious supply is strongly affected by governmental policy” (Finke and Iannaccone 1993: 28). To support the contention that supply is the main determinant of religious vitality in a religious market, proponents of the rational choice model first looked for historic correlations between pluralism and religious vitality.

The U.S. had two religious “Great Awakenings,” one from 1730 to 1760 and one from 1800 to 1830. Finke and Iannaccone argue that these periods were actually a result of “successful marketing campaigns of upstart evangelical Protestants” (1993:29). They linked religious growth during these periods to deregulation of religion as the United States transitioned from colonies to a country; the rise of itinerant evangelists dedicated to converting established New England Protestants; and to the highly successful conversion of the frontier to Methodism. All three, they point out, are supply-side factors.

A second correlation between religious competition and religious vitality was reported by Finke and Iannaccone (1993). In 1934, broadcasting licenses were granted to businesses as long

\(^4\) While the supply-side is not considered directly in this dissertation, I discuss it briefly here to locate the overall rational choice model in the sociology of religion debate and to situate it in contrast to predictions made by the secularization proponents.
as these broadcasters would “devote some air time to religious programs” (Finke and Iannaccone 1993:34). Established mainline Protestant religious organizations took advantage of the free airtime and lobbied to keep the fringe groups, especially sect-like groups, off the air. Beginning in the late 1950s, the FCC began loosening the requirement to provide free airtime to religions and by the early 1980s, all airtime was for sale. Conservative Protestants, including evangelicals and sect-like groups were then able to buy airtime and televangelism began to flourish. What demand-side advocates interpreted as a sudden conservative outbreak in religiosity spawned by economic frustration or “post-modern anxiety,” was, according to supply-side advocates, an ever-present and growing number of conservatives who had simply been kept out of the limelight and off the airwaves (Finke and Iannaccone 1993: 36).

Given these early correlations between religious pluralism and religious vitality, other researchers began to more systematically address this relationship. In 2001, a review of 26 published articles and 193 statistical tests found that empirical evidence does not support the claim that religious pluralism is positively associated, let alone causally associated, with religious participation (Chaves and Gorski 2001:261). Building on this research, Voas et al. claimed that all the previous research that suggested a positive or negative relationship between pluralism and vitality should be abandoned due to a “previously overlooked mathematical associations between the faulty pluralism index and religious participation rates.” (2002:213). After this critique, Montgomery (2003) constructed a formal economics-based mathematical model of religious economies that did not use the pluralism index that had been discredited by Voas et al. (2002). Montgomery used 1990 data and found that US counties with more competitive religious markets tended actually to have lower religious participation. Rather than simply dismiss the rational choice model, however, Montgomery suggests considering the
possibility that the weak version of the rational choice, that allows for a more dynamic demand-side, is a more appropriate model.

_The Weak Rational Choice Model_

One consistent critique offered of the strong rational choice model is that, consistent with rational choice models in economics, preferences for religious goods are treated as stable. Humans are assumed to “need” a supernatural component to their lives and therefore demand will always exist and be relatively stable. Some sociologists have argued that the demand for religious goods must be allowed to vary because markets, and especially religious markets, are embedded within social and cultural contexts (Ellison 1995; Sherkat 1997). The weak rational choice model seeks to incorporate explanations of _how_ people choose among religious options and what social forces or cultural contingencies govern these tastes (Ammerman 1997; Ellison 1995; Loveland 2003; Montgomery 2003; Sherkat 1997; Sherkat and Wilson 1995).

Sociologists attempting to incorporate demand factors into the rational choice model first looked to preference formation theory. Specifically, Sherkat (1997) and Sherkat and Wilson (1995) use the theory of adaptive preferences to argue that people desire that which is familiar, and that preferences for a specific good grow stronger with additional consumption of that good. Thus, previous experience with religion should play a role in current preferences for religious goods. In addition, scholars have introduced the notion of the duality between agency and structure in the production of preferences (Ammerman 1997; Loveland 2003; Sherkat 1997). Individuals and institutions are not immutable during interaction. As Ammerman states succinctly, “Institutions shape preferences and preferences shape institutions” (1997:125). Preference development based on previous experience and changes in preferences based on
interactions with institutions are two ways that sociologists have integrated non-static preferences into the rational choice model.

Sherkat (1997) also uses the work of Amartya Sen (1973) to claim that using actual behavior as a proxy for preferences, as the strong rational choice model does, ignores the fact that there often exists a gap between what a person prefers and what a person actually chooses. As Sen notes, “…the parties involved will be together better off following rules of behavior that require abstention from the rational calculus …People may be induced by social codes of behavior to act as if they have different preferences from what they really have” (1973: 258). This gap represents the effect of social influences on making social choices. The overall inclusion of these types of demand-side factors in the rational choice model was formally developed and articulated by Sherkat (1997).

Sherkat’s basic premise is that preferences are learned in childhood through socialization, and that preferences are adaptive in that they become stronger through repeated exposure. Thus, religious preferences are learned through interactions with family and religious organizations and preferences are stronger the longer the individual engages in that specific religious activity. The preferences should also be stronger if the individual characterizes the relationship with parents and the religious organization as positive. The other premise of adaptive preferences is that people prefer that with which they are familiar. Thus, given the choice, adults will prefer religious expressions that are equivalent or similar to their experiences as a youth.

Preferences can change over time. Two key mechanisms of change, according to Sherkat (1997), are counteradaptivity and learning. Counteradaptivity occurs when individuals simply prefer novel experiences to the familiar. Preference learning occurs when individuals come in
contact with new information about religious choices. This information may come through education, but is most reliable if it comes through trusted sources such as friends. Therefore any qualitative change or quantitative increase in social networks such as through the acquisition of education or geographic mobility can promote the gathering of new information and a learned preference change.

Whether preferences change or remain stable, they may not be accurately represented by choices. Sherkat (1997) initially explains that the gap between preferences and choices is influenced by social factors that produce sympathy, antipathy, and example setting behavior. These factors apply to situations in which individuals have clear personal preferences to make a specific religious choice but choose a different religious product; or when they prefer no religion at all, yet still identify or participate. Why might this occur? People may choose to attend a Catholic mass even when actually prefer a Presbyterian service out of sympathy (e.g. to make spouse happy). People who prefer no religion may choose to affiliate with a religion out of antipathy (e.g. “my parents were atheists and I want to make them angry”) or to set an example (e.g. “my children should think that religion is important”). Even when individuals themselves do not prefer religion, they may still choose it motivated by sympathy, antipathy, or example-setting.

The second important way that social relations can strongly impact religious choices without changing preferences is through social sanctions. Rewards and punishments related to religious identification and participation can easily influence individual behavior, even if an individual receives no specific religious satisfaction from participation. Examples of non-religious rewards for religious participation include friendship, opportunities for social legitimation, access to social and business networks, and prestige. Unfortunately, sanctions for
lack of participation may also exist. Individuals who eschew participation can be excluded from non-religious organizations, socially ostracized, or denied access to important resources.

Rewards and punishments will be especially powerful in certain types of communities. In some communities, individuals may have relatively less access to opportunities for social legitimation or business networks in the larger political or economic spheres. For example, Ellison and Sherkat (1998) found that African Americans, especially in the rural south, often chose to participate in what is known as the black church not necessarily for the religion itself but because that was where community existed for them; as such, that was where they gained access to social, business, and leadership opportunities that were otherwise not available in the larger community. Punishment for lack of participation may be especially effective in communities that exhibit consolidated social ties (Blau and Schwartz 1984). In these types of communities, “many people who share one kind of group membership also share other kinds; for example, they have the same natural background, religion, and class position” (Blau and Schwartz 1984: 85). In these cases, choices made in one sphere of social life will have consequences in other spheres of social life simply because the same people occupy those spheres. Therefore, in communities where there is a strong social norm for participating in religion, then the choices made by any individual have far-reaching consequences.

Individuals who live in communities that have strong social norms for religious participation and consolidated ties are especially vulnerable to social sanctions regarding religious affiliation or participation. These patterns have been observed among Hispanics with respect to Catholicism (Mora 2013; Perl, Greely, and Gray 2006; Roof and Manning 1994); African Americans with respect to black Protestantism (Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Sherkat and Cunningham 1998); Mormons (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990); Lutherans (Sandomirsky and
Wilson 1990); and Jews (Harrison and Lazerwitz 1982). A religious choice that is assumed by the strong rational choice model to be completely voluntary is better described as semi-voluntary for individuals from these communities. Thus, acknowledging the social contexts in which religious choices are made is an important demand-side issue to consider when analyzing religious outcomes.

By including demand-side factors such as preference development, preference learning, and the potential gap between preferences and choices, the market-level pluralism-vitality debate becomes less polarized. By including dynamics that allow for changing preferences and by modeling normative constraints on religious decisions, we may be able to explain why some markets of religious monopolies are vital and some stagnant, and while some pluralistic markets are vital and some stagnant (Sherkat 1997). As mentioned earlier, Montgomery (2003), using a product-differentiation model from economics, found that overall, more competitive religious markets tend to have lower religious participation, which is inconsistent with the strong rational choice model. But, when he allowed for the distribution of consumer preferences to vary across markets, he found that the relationship between competition and participation could be positive or negative. Specifically, once he conceded “…the possibility of demand-side variation, the weaker version of the religious economies argument is fully compatible with the conventional view that residents of urban areas tend to be less religious than those in rural areas.” (Montgomery 2003: 805). Montgomery encourages sociologists to move beyond the false dichotomy between supply- and demand-side explanations for religious participation.
Religious Human Capital

Iannaccone’s human capital approach to analyzing religious decisions brings together the individual- and the organizational- level and describes how the two interact to form religious value. This perspective also draws heavily on economics principles, especially human capital theory and the concept of household production. The central feature of household production is that families are assumed to act like firms in the sense that they produce household commodities that are typically consumed by members of the household itself (Iannaccone 1990: 298). The household brings together resources such as purchased inputs (e.g. wood and nails), household labor (e.g. time in the garage), and human skill (e.g. carpentry to produce a new set of chairs for the dining room table). Households also produce non-tangible items such as relaxation, which comes from the same set of inputs, resources, time, and skill (e.g. purchased television, time to watch the football game, and the skill of understanding the rules of football game and the stakes of a particular game).

Productivity enhancing skills such as carpentry or knowledge of football affect the quality and quantity of the produced good. This may be obvious that when producing a chair, requisite skill of carpentry is important. Less obvious is the example of football. Knowledge of football adds to the quality of the relaxation produced because not understanding the rules may create more anxiety than relaxation as the individual attempts to keep track of the action. These sorts of productivity enhancing skills are known in economics as human capital. Human capital derives from natural abilities, general education and training, and specific education and training (Iannaccone 1990:298).

When applying human capital theory and the household production approach to the concept of religion, the following scenario emerges: a household combines purchased goods
(e.g. tithing, driving to a worship service) with time (time spent in a service, on a church committee, or part of service project) and religious human capital (e.g. knowledge and skills related to participating in religion) to produce a religious product or experience which is then consumed by the household. The concept of religious human capital requires special mention. Just as better carpentry skills produce a superior chair for the dining room, the quality of the religious human capital has an impact on the quality of the religious product or experience. Being familiar with doctrine and rituals and/or being friendly with other members of the congregation adds to the satisfaction of the religious product or experience. When satisfaction levels are high, this becomes a motive for continued participation (Iannaccone 1990:299).

Importantly, continued participation (e.g. becoming more familiar with doctrine and rituals, becoming actual friends with other congregants) actually increases the stock of religious human capital. Religious participation can therefore be viewed as an investment in one’s religious human capital. “Religious capital is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of most religious activity” (Iannaccone 1990: 299), and as such there exists and interaction between religious human capital and religious participation.

According to the religious human capital perspective, adults should be more likely to participate in religions that are familiar (especially ones with which they have had extensive experience) because they are able to call on their religious human capital to create, along with the inputs contributed by the religious organization, the relatively higher levels of religious value. If individuals take part in a wholly new religious endeavor, they would initially be unable to create comparable levels of value because their own religious human capital would be specific to the former religion and not as valuable of an input in this different environment. Thus, this perspective predicts little religious mobility and, when people do switch religions, they should
choose religions that are similar so that they can take at least some advantage of their existing religious human capital.

*Strictness Thesis*

If decisions to religiously affiliate are based on cost-benefit calculations, then why would anyone ever join a high-cost religion? Iannaccone (1994) addresses this question by first stating that strictness can be thought of as costs that must be incurred to affiliate. Religions that are especially strict impose higher costs on members than religions that are lenient. Strictness may take the form of restrictions in diet (e.g. abstaining from caffeine, alcohol, or meat), requirements in appearance (e.g. side curls or yarmulkes), or simple requirements to refrain from engaging with the larger culture (e.g. abstaining from sex or listening to certain music). Recall that the rational choice model of religion states that choices are made based on net benefits. How do strict religions ensure that their members receive enough benefits to outweigh the costs?

This is an important question given that relatively strict religions have experienced increasing membership levels over the last 20 years. Iannaccone (1994) answers this question by arguing that making strict demands on members’ results in higher than average levels of commitment and participation. Individuals with relatively low levels of commitment will not accept the high costs of membership and will exit, leaving only the highly committed members. Highly committed members tend to participate more often than those less committed. Thus, in addition to strong overall commitment, average participation levels should be relatively high in strict religions as well. According to the religious human capital perspective, congregational energy and vibrancy is an input that combines with individual religious human capital to produce religious value. Thus, these kinds of active, committed congregations tend to produce relatively
high religious value (i.e. benefits) for its members. These benefits exceed the high costs incurred and, as a result, individuals make a rational choice to join a high cost religion.

Another way to look at this process is that by having strict requirements, these religious organizations eliminate the problem of religious “free-riding.” Free-riders are those who fully partake in the consumption aspects of religion (e.g. attend services, take counseling from the pastor, and attend all the potlucks), but do not provide resources to the congregation (e.g. they do not volunteer for committees, contribute financially, or bring dishes to potlucks). In this sense, the existence of free-riders contributes to a decline in the average levels of commitment. Thus, by eliminating free-riders through setting high costs of membership, strict religions are able to increase the value for their committed members to such a degree that the value of belonging exceeds the costs of belonging.

The idea that free-riders pose a significant threat to the vitality of a specific congregation has been theoretically questioned (Bruce 1999; Marwell 1996) and empirically challenged (Tamney and Johnson 1997). Religious leaders report that they offer their services as a quasi-public good, hoping that they can establish social ties with potential members, who are naturally less committed, and convince them to become committed members (Hadaway and Marler 1996; Bruce 1999). In this sense, religious leaders welcome free-riders. Marwell (1996) also points out that truly rational individuals would find a congregation that had high levels of commitment and participation and then join it as a free-rider to maximize his own net benefits. This would dilute the commitment and participation factors, but as long as the number of free-riders remained small, the indicators may still be above-average. However, if enough free-riders capitalized on opportunities to join congregations with above average commitment and
participation, eventually the market would exhibit equilibrium and all congregations would have average vitality indicators.

Regardless of whether free-riders are the mechanism through which strictness leads to congregational strength and therefore growth, empirical evidence for the strictness thesis is mixed. Qualitative research has not supported the strict church thesis (Tamney et al. 2003; Tamney 2005). Also, within the moderate-to-conservative Protestant groups (Evangelicals and non-denominationals), congregations tended to be somewhat more accommodating to American culture (i.e. less strictness, less tension) and yet experienced higher growth relative to the less accommodating (Wuthnow 1988).

Iannaccone (1994) has also had to face methodological criticisms of his initial analysis. Marwell (1996) points out that Iannaccone only used one institutional-level variable in his original analysis, which indicates that it captured all institutional characteristics, not just levels of strictness. Importantly, one key characteristic that could have been represented in the strictness coefficient is evangelical theology (Hadaway and Marler 1996), which typically is correlated with strictness.

In a re-specification of the strictness thesis, Iannaccone, Olson, and Stark (1995) indicate that reductions in free-riding actually lead to *surpluses* of congregational resources, which can be used to increase the value of the congregation’s programs and to improve recruiting through advertising campaigns. They provide modest empirical support for this model, and two more recent studies, that used congregational contributions as the measure of strength and potential for growth supported this re-specification (Finke, Bahr, and Scheitle 2006; Scheitle and Finke 2008). Even with this new version, the strictness thesis still faces criticism for not considering a more
parsimonious explanation – specifically, that the conservative theology that typically accompanies strictness is actually the causal factor in growth.

Conservative theology can causally affect growth in two ways. First, conservative theology is often evangelical and evangelism is one way that adherents can do God’s work on earth and therefore are active recruiters. Second, a conservative theology, one that is typically more exclusive, may simply be a more desirable religious product. Using Stark and Bainbridge language, the more strict religions may be more likely to claim exclusive knowledge about truth and therefore offer more reliable compensators.

The most comprehensive and recent quantitative examination of the strictness thesis (Thomas and Olson 2010) uses separate indicators for strictness and theology. They found that strictness had both a direct and an indirect effect on congregational growth and decline. Importantly, they also found that evangelical theology, fertility, and denominational identity were significant indicators of growth. Given these complex findings, they propose an integrated model that captures more than just strictness in characterizing the relative growth of some religions over others.

**Implications for Liberal and Conservative Religions**

Just as the secularization thesis predicts specific membership outcomes for liberal and conservative religions, so does the rational choice perspective. Both perspectives predict a continuing decline in liberal traditions, but they differ on the reasons for the decline. For secularization proponents, the reason is that the continuing differentiation of denominations dilutes their character, and given that none of them promise an exclusive path to God, choosing the correct religious home becomes less relevant. From the rational choice perspective, liberal
denominations will continue to schism as the elites within the congregation (clergy, powerful laity) become even more accommodating to American culture. Those members who want to maintain more tension with the culture will lose interest and eventually drift away from religion altogether. According to the rational choice advocates, these disenfranchised liberals make good targets for conversion because they still have preferences for religion or religious human capital that they can use to create religious value.

Adding disaffected liberals to the conservative rolls, according to rational choice proponents, is one way that conservative religions will continue to grow. Whether the reason is due to unused religious human capital, preferences for religion, or because conservatives are more willing than liberals to provide general compensators (such as assurances about the meaning of life and life after death), conservatives should continue to gain relative to liberals.

**The Growth and Decline Debate**

An ongoing discussion within the sociology of religion concerns the reasons behind the continuing decline in membership of mainline Protestants and continued growth among many evangelical and non-denominational Protestant groups. Many sociologists have offered multiple explanations for the trend (Bruce 1999; Hoge et al. 1994; Roof and McKinney 1987; Smith 1998; Wuthnow 1988). While this dissertation does not directly address the “why” of this trend, the findings do include empirical evidence regarding the trend and provide insight for the discussion of religious growth and decline. Therefore, I will briefly describe three existing explanations for mainline decline and evangelical and non-denominational growth.
The concept of denominationalism was originally constructed to identify the social differences between the denominations. Niebuhr ([1929] 2004) argued that denominational lines were due to differences in class, race, and region. Episcopalians and Baptists occupied different tiers of the structure of class; differences between Congregationalists and Methodists could be characterized as the differences between the Northeast and the Midwest. These differences were much more evident in the 1920s than they are today. Increases in geographic mobility during the 20th century have contributed to declining regional differences, and while still quite segregated, denominations are more racially integrated now than they were 50 years ago. Average levels of educational attainment by denomination have converged over the last 50 years. Denominations that had exhibited higher than average education (e.g. Presbyterian) fell toward the mean, and denominations that had exhibited lower than average education (e.g. Lutherans) increased toward the mean. An additional dimension through which denominations began to find themselves similar is on attitudes toward social issues. Attitudes on issues such as abortion or pornography are now similar across denominations. By the late 1970s, the denominations exhibited far greater cultural and social similarity than previously experienced (Wuthnow 1988).

In addition to these changes, economic growth within the 20th century led to greater ranges of life situation, which in turn led to social differentiation and cultural diversity. No longer could individuals plausibly believe in a single moral universe (Berger 1967; Bruce 2011:31). Without a divine claim to a single truth, Protestant denominations began to embrace varying degrees of relativism, and the lines between the denominations began to fade. With the decline in differences based on class, race, and region, coupled with cultural diversity and an amicable approach to relativism, denominations were beginning to experience “vanishing
boundaries” (Hoge et al. 1994). The absence of differentiation between denominations and lack of strong theological convictions contributed to an inability to “mobilize the energies of their members for a shared purposed . . .” (Hoge et al. 1994:184). According to the decline in denominationalism perspective, mainline denominations without a clear message or an energetic environment have been simply unable to keep or attract members.

**The Case for the Demographic Imperative**

The initial case for a primarily demographic account of the trend was made by Houte, Greeley, and Wilde (2001). Using GSS data for individuals born between 1903 and 1970, they found that 76% of the trend of mainline decline and conservative growth could be explained by higher fertility rates and an earlier age structure for childbearing among conservative women. The remainder of the trend is explained by a slight increase in mainline Protestants disaffiliating and a decrease in conservative Protestants switching to mainline denominations due to low rates of intermarriage among conservatives. They point out that the demographic momentum for conservatives has peaked as long as liberals do not further reduce their family size or conservatives increase theirs.

A more recent study (Scheitle, Kane, and Van Hook 2011) furthered the analysis and showed that an interaction effect between switching and fertility has a strong influence over group growth. Specifically, in-switching that occurs at a young age, when fertility can be taken advantage of, leads to more long-term group growth than in-switching later in life. This is especially true among women but is partly true for men as well. Skirbekk, Kaufmann, and Goujon (2010) projected the religious composition of the United States through 2043. They found, contrary to Hout et al. (2001) that liberal Protestants do and will continue to lose in
switching exchanges with conservative Protestants over time. In sum, to the degree that demographics has influenced the different membership trends, the effect should be over, and future differences between conservative and mainline should be attributable to switching and retention rates.

The Strong Rational Choice Model on Growth and Decline

As stated above, the strong rational choice model is basically a supply-side explanation for religious outcomes. Religious firms (e.g. congregations, denominations, religions) compete with one another for adherents who exhibit a somewhat steady demand for religion. Firms with superior organizational structures (polities), ministers or lay leaders, messages, and marketing will succeed. If certain religious groups are growing and others declining, the reason can be found on the supply-side.

Mainline denominations are, technically, churches in that they are large organizations with many levels of bureaucracy and are accommodating to modern culture. Within the United Methodist Church, for example, each congregation reports to a district, districts are grouped into annual conferences, and annual conferences make up the General Conference, which has 1000 delegates from around the world. The United Methodist Church also has its own supreme court – the Judicial Council. The evangelical movement, on the other hand, is characterized as a vast, loose network of small- to medium-size denominational churches and non-denominational churches (Smith 1998:87), which range in size from a few members to tens of thousands. Because these organizations are not bound together by a large, hierarchical, governing body, they can maintain an independent entrepreneurial spirit and attract the best ministers, provide an attractive message, and engage in marketing as they see fit. Through it all, however, they are
bound by a “set of minimal, baseline, supradenominational theological beliefs, and perhaps more importantly, by a distinctive, shared sensibility about strategy for Christian mission in the world” (Smith 1998:87). The organizational features of evangelicalism are thus well suited to compete and succeed in a competitive religious marketplace.

Sect-like Protestants, on the other hand, are not so well-suited because most of them, similar to mainline denominations, operate within a larger top-down structure (e.g. Assemblies of God, 7th Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses). These groups are at a further disadvantage in the competitive marketplace because they tend not to engage in the culture at large. Rather, they strive to maintain an insular existence that helps shelter them from the degrading effects of modernity. They are thus limited in attracting charismatic ministers and the overall message and marketing techniques are determined by global leaders.

From a supply-side perspective, then, evangelicals are at a distinct advantage over mainline denominations and sect-like Protestants. As long as these organizations continue to offer attractive messages with likeable or charismatic ministers they will be relatively successful in the religious marketplace.
CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODS

In this chapter I present information on the data, measures, and statistical techniques used in this research. This dissertation uses three waves of longitudinal data, following a sample from adolescence to young adulthood. Assumptions made in constructing religious affiliation measures across waves are described in detail. The statistical techniques of log-linear and log-multiplicative association models and logistic regression are described.

Data

Add Health

This research uses data from Waves I, III, and IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The Add Health study began in the 1994-95 school year as a nationally representative study of adolescents in grades 7-12. The initial Add Health sample was drawn from 80 high schools and 52 middle schools throughout the U.S with unequal probability of selection. The Add Health sample design incorporated systematic sampling methods and implicit stratification to ensure that the sample is representative of U.S. schools with respect to region, urbanicity, school size, school type, and ethnicity (Harris et al. 2009). The first wave of the Add Health study surveyed 90,118 adolescents who completed a brief in-school survey. A subsample of these students (n=20,747) and their parents were asked to complete an additional in-depth home interview survey. Wave II was collected in 1996 and excluded Wave I high school seniors. Waves III and IV were collected in 2001-02 and 2007-8, respectively, and consisted of in-home interviews with the original adolescent in-home sample. Most of the Wave III respondents were between 18 and 26 years old at the time of the interview.
and by Wave IV, the respondents had reached late young adulthood (most were between 24 and 32 years old). Because high school seniors were excluded in Wave II Add Health, I limit this analysis to Waves I, III, and IV.

The response rates for each wave of Add Health varied and some respondents did not provide data for all waves. For instance, Wave III contains data on 15,197 respondents and Wave IV contains data on 15,701 respondents, but 2,136 of the Wave IV respondents did not provide Wave III data. Because part of this analysis documents movement in religious affiliation for three points in time, and I wanted to maintain a consistent sample size throughout the dissertation, only individuals who participated in all three waves are included (n=13,034). After removing cases that were missing data on religious identification (3%), the final sample size used in this analysis is 12,582 observations.

Of course, the decision could have been made to use the maximum number of observations available for each calculation individually. For instance, for a Wave I – Wave III religious affiliation stability rate, I could have increased the sample size from 12,582 to 12,624 by using valid observations from Waves I and III even if there were no religion data for Wave IV. Similarly, I could have increased the sample size from 12,582 to 12,783 by using observations that were valid for Waves I and IV regardless of the status of religion data for Wave III. To ensure that the results, and more importantly conclusions, were not affected by the decision to keep the number of observations consistent, each analysis was run using the maximum number of available cases for each table in this dissertation. In some instances, the results did not change at all, and in some instances, the results changed minimally (e.g. 43.2% vs. 43.6%). In no cases did significance change and in no cases did substantive conclusions change.
Thus, the decision to keep the number of observations consistent in the entire analysis was supported by these ancillary analyses.

**Representativeness**

While the sample assures representativeness with respect to region, the definition of region may be so broad as to introduce bias when estimating the distribution of religious affiliation. Religious affiliation is strongly related to geographic location (See Appendix A for U.S. map of religious affiliation). For example, the percent of the population that is Mormon, Baptist, or Lutheran is much higher in Utah, Alabama, and Minnesota, respectively, than in the remainder of the country. Thus, data from the West region may over-estimate or under-estimate the proportion who are Mormon, depending on the location of the 17 sampled high schools from the West.

This only poses a problem if the research attempts to generate population estimates of the distribution of affiliates. While I do indeed calculate the proportions of the sample that belong to each affiliation, I do not interpret these as representative population distributions. Rather, I analyze the mobility behavior of individuals within each affiliation category. I ask whether they remain with their affiliations over time or do they switch, and if so, to which affiliations do they tend to switch? I am therefore analyzing movement, not static distributions. Of course, movement informs conclusions about static distributions. For example, if 90% of the non-Catholics switch to Catholicism and 100% of Catholics remain Catholic, then I can conclude that the number of Catholics is increasing without actually having to estimate the population distribution by affiliation. This distinction is important to keep in mind when reading this research.
Weights

The Add Health data provides various weights to be used under different analytic circumstances. The key mobility analysis in this research uses sophisticated log-multiplicative models -- specifically, the Row-Column II Model described later in this chapter. These techniques were developed quite recently (Goodman 1979) and the statistical modules constructed to run them (Hendrickx 2004) do not allow for the inclusion of complex survey-based weights. In addition, the logistic regression is conducted using a subsample of the overall 12,582 observations, and weights would therefore not be appropriate in this case either. Therefore, the decision was made not to use weights in this research.

Measures

The three categories of measures used in this dissertation are detailed religious affiliation, religious affiliation typology (i.e. detailed religious affiliations grouped for analysis in different ways), and individual characteristics. See Table 3.1 for a complete list of measures and source questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Wave Measured</th>
<th>Chapter Used</th>
<th>Source Question(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detailed religious affiliation</td>
<td>I, III, IV</td>
<td>4 to 6</td>
<td>WI: What is your religion? WIII: What is your present religion? What is the &quot;other&quot; religion? What is your denomination? WIV: What is your present religion? Is that a Christian religion? What is your den.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Are you male/female?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>What is your birthdate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>What is your race? Are you of Hispanic/Latino origin?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Affiliated</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>What is your religion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms</td>
<td>I, III, IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>CESD5: How often was each of the following things true during the last seven days:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You were bothered by things that don't usually bother you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You could not shake off the blues, even with help from your family and your friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You felt sad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You felt depressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful Life Events</td>
<td>I, III, IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>III, IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>WIII: What is the highest grade or year of school you have completed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>What is the highest level of education you have achieved to date?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>III, IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Are you currently married?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Household</td>
<td>III, IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>List those living in your household. What is this person's relationship to you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Detailed religious affiliation

In Wave I of Add Health, survey respondents were asked, “What is your religion?” and were provided 29 possible answers, including “none.” In Wave III of Add Health, survey respondents were asked, “What is your present religion?” If the respondent answered “other” they were asked, “What is this ‘other’ religion?” Some respondents were then asked, “What is your denomination?” In Wave IV of Add Health, survey respondents were asked, “What is your present religion?” Some were asked “Is that a Christian religion?”, and some were asked, “What is your denomination?”

Religious Affiliation Typology

This dissertation makes use of three different religious affiliation typologies. In other words, for each wave of data, each observations’ detailed religious affiliation is assigned to a category within each of the three typologies. Table 3.2 presents the typologies and the categories within them.

Assigning detailed religious affiliations to typological categories required an assumption because Wave I contained fewer possible Protestant denominations than did Waves III and IV. The implications of this data issue are best illustrated through an example. Brethren was not a denomination in Wave I but was in Wave IV. Faced with the Wave I questionnaire, I assume that a Brethren would answer Other Protestant. Then, in Wave IV, if he were a non-switcher he would answer Brethren. If no modifications were made, this non-switcher would be identified as a switcher – going from Other Protestant to Brethren—and the mobility rate would be biased upward. To combat this potential bias, I placed all Wave III and Wave IV denominations that were not in Wave I into the Other Protestant category. Now a Brethren would answer Other Protestant in Wave I and Brethren in Wave IV and not be counted as a switcher. While this
makes a rather large Other Protestant category, it is better to miss some switching due to broad
categories than to artificially inflate mobility rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 3.2 Religious Affiliation Typologies</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tradition Typology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual characteristics

In addition to the substantive variables involved in testing hypotheses in Chapter Six, I include a number of sociodemographic controls including age, gender, socioeconomic status during adolescence, number of depressive symptoms, and exposure to stressful life events. Age is calculated from birthdate and represents age at Wave IV. It is a continuous variable and is coded from 24 to 34 years of age. The gender variable, male, is binary and is coded as 1 if male and 0 if female. Socioeconomic status during adolescence is a composite of three census tract variables (proportion of tract age 25+ without high school diploma or equivalent; proportion of tract age 15+ with at least a college degree; and median household income), household income, and highest education level of a parent ($\alpha=.81$). The depressive symptoms measure is based on the five-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies depression scale. Respondents were asked how often during the last seven days (0=never to 3=most or all of the time) they felt the following: you were bothered by things that don’t usually bother you; you could not shake off the blues even with help from your family and your friends; you had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing; you felt sad; and you felt depressed. The sum of the responses to the five questions constitute the total depressive symptoms measure.

Stressful life events were identified using all three waves of Add Health (see Appendix B, Table B1). As a guideline for which events should be considered stressful, I used the list found in Adkins et al. (2009) and Boardman and Alexander (2011), both of which use Add Health to assess exposure to stressful life events. Stressful life events were identified using Waves I and III and tallied to obtain the early stress measure. Due to data limitations, stressful life events from Wave IV were limited to events that occurred within 12 months leading up to
the Wave IV interview. These two measures were summed to arrive at an overall measure of exposure to stress.

Race/ethnicity is coded as a series of dummy variables that measure whether respondents identify as non-Hispanic White (referent), non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, or other race. Parental religious affiliation was coded as a 1 if the parent who completed the in-home survey provided a religion when asked: What is your religion? If the parent answered “none” then religious affiliation was coded 0. South is a dummy variable that is coded as 1 if the respondent lived in the south as an adolescent; 0 otherwise.

Education is captured by two dummy variables. One is coded as 1 if the respondent has completed high school (diploma or GED); 0 otherwise. The other is coded as a 1 if the respondent has at least completed college, 0 otherwise. Marriage is a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent is married; 0 otherwise. Having children in the household is also a dummy variable. If the respondent identifies at least one person living in the household as a “son” or “daughter” then this dummy is coded as a 1; 0 otherwise. This definition allows for multiple understandings of children (e.g. step children, foster children) in addition to biological children.

**Methods**

This dissertation contains two primary statistical techniques. Association models, including both log-linear and log-multiplicative, are used in Chapter Six and logistic regression is used in Chapter Seven.
Log-linear and log-multiplicative association models

A cross-tabulation of individual-level data on religious affiliation at two points in time creates a mobility table. The statistical methods and techniques for analyzing mobility tables have changed rapidly in the past few decades (Powers & Xie 2000:1). In this analysis, mobility tables are summarized in terms of simple row percentages (i.e. percent of one affiliation switching to another affiliation), but are also modeled using log-linear and log-multiplicative association models. While row percentages provide a general idea of the destinations of switchers, modeling allows for the identification of patterns of exchanges across religious categories.

Association models treat the cell counts as the dependent variable and predict these values based on model specification. By altering model specifications and estimating the model multiple times, the model that best fits the data will emerge. Further, the actual output from the best-fit model provides estimates of the relationships between religious affiliations in terms of origins and destinations. Because I am using count data, I specify a generalized linear model with a Poisson distribution to ensure the predicted values are non-zero and to permit the estimation of unknown parameters using maximum likelihood techniques (Powers & Xie 2000, 9).

The Basic Model

As outline in Powers and Xie (2000:107), the general setup for a loglinear model to analyze a contingency table is:

$$F_{ij} = \tau^R \tau^C \eta_{ij}$$

(1)
where \( R \) denotes row, \( C \) denotes column, and \( F_{ij} \) (\( i=1 \) to \( I; j=1 \) to \( J \)) denotes the expected count in the \( i \)th row and the \( j \)th column; and \( f_{ij} \) (\( i=1 \) to \( I; j=1 \) to \( J \)) denotes the observed count in the \( i \)th row and the \( j \)th column. The model is specified with \( \tau \) representing the unweighted grand mean (i.e. fitting the sample size); \( \tau^R \) and \( \tau^C \) representing the marginal effects of rows and columns, respectively (i.e. fitting the row marginal and column marginal); and \( \tau^{RC} \) representing the two-way interaction between rows and columns (Clogg 1982a, 116). This interaction term, \( \tau^{RC} \), essentially measures the odds-ratios between rows and columns.

By taking the log, the model is then transformed into a log-linear form:

\[
\log F_{ij} = \log(\tau) + \log(\tau^R_i) + \log(\tau^C_j) + \log(\tau^{RC}_{ij}) \\
= \mu + \mu^R_i + \mu^C_j + \mu^{RC}_{ij} \tag{2}
\]

The \( \mu \) parameters correspond to the log of the \( \tau \) parameters. A positive \( \mu \) parameter raises the expected frequency of any combination of \( i \) and \( j \) while a negative \( \mu \) parameter reduces the expected frequency. Similarly, \( \mu^R_i \) and \( \mu^C_j \) represent the marginal effects of the row and columns, while \( \mu^{RC}_{ij} \) measures the logged odds-ratio between rows and columns.

**Specifying Alternative Models**

The general loglinear model can be specified in different ways to represent different processes that are assumed to generate the observed data.\(^5\) For instance, the Independence Model assumes that the two variables in the mobility table—religious affiliation in adolescence

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\(^5\) While there are no zero margins in any of the mobility tables, 11 of 81 cells, 6 of 100 cells, and 14 of 144 cells, contain zeros for the Tradition, R-Order and Sherkat Typologies using the WI-WIV data. To detect potential problems due to sparseness I followed Beller (2009), and examined the standard errors of the parameters and found that none were unusually large. I also ran the models with the more sparse categories collapsed into others and found no substantive difference in the results.
and religious affiliation in young adulthood—are unrelated. In other words, movement between religious affiliations is completely uninhibited (i.e., “perfect mobility”).

Mobility tables are often characterized by more immobility than is expected under conditions of independence, especially along the diagonal where “inheritance” effects tend to occur (Powers and Xie 2000:113). In other words, there is often an excess of cases along the diagonal of the table. The Quasi-Independence model assumes that once the “diagonal” is controlled for, the frequencies in the remaining cells are distributed independently (Hout 1983:20; Powers and Xie 2000:115). That is,

$$\pi_{ij} = \pi_{i+} \pi_{+j} \quad \text{for } i \neq j$$

(3)

This common specification of accounting for excess diagonal cell counts is implemented in all of the models except for the pure Independence Model. Thus far I have presented the Independence and the Quasi-Independence models, both of which assume the variables are nominal. Next I introduce the possibility of the variables being ordinal.

Even though the religious affiliation variables are technically nominal, studying the probabilities of individuals moving from specific affiliations to other affiliations introduces an ordinal aspect to the analysis. For example, individuals in Affiliation A may be more likely to switch than not switch, and, among switchers, they may be more likely to adopt Affiliation B than other affiliations. Thus, there may be implicit “distances” between affiliation categories that are evident in the data (Powers and Xie 2000:121; Sherkat 2001:1475). In fact, these “distances” may be governed by the theoretical explanations of religious switching behaviors described in Chapter Two. Identifying these associations will provide empirical evidence for whether various theoretical explanations of religious switching behaviors are supported in this
recent cohort of young adults. The following “scaled” association models accomplish this task (Hout 1983:51).

Four versions of the loglinear model address the possible ordinal nature of the data in the mobility tables. The basic form of the scaled model of association is:

$$\log F_{ij} = \mu + \mu_i^R + \mu_j^C + \beta x_i y_j$$

(3)

The primary difference in the scaled models from the Independence and Quasi-Independence models is that that $\beta x_i y_j$ replaces $\mu_{ij}^{RC}$. $\beta$ is the overall association coefficient between the two variables and $x_i$ and $y_j$ denote the scaling or score parameters of the row and column religious affiliation categories. The row and column scores ($x_i$ and $y_j$) can either be imposed on the model or estimated as a latent-score by the model. The three models that require the researcher to impose at least some score assumptions are the Uniform Model, the Row Effects Model and the Column Effects Model. Note that these three models assume that the researcher knows the order of the categories a priori, but imposes the “distances” between the categories.

In the Uniform Model, an interval-score structure is imposed on the religious affiliation categories. This method of assigning scores assumes that the distances between adjacent religious affiliation categories is the same. The convention is to assign scale values that are consecutive integers and begin with 1. Thus, $x_i = i$ and $y_j = j$. Substitution into equation (3) yields:

$$\log F_{ij} = \mu + \mu_i^R + \mu_j^C + \beta ij$$

(4)

The second and third of the scaled models presented here and used in the analysis are the Row Effects Model and the Column Effects Model. In these models, equal integer scales are not imposed on both rows and columns, but on either rows or columns. In the Row Effects Model,

$$\log F_{ij} = \mu + \mu_i^R + \mu_j^C + j \phi_i$$

(5)
j represents the integer scoring for the column variable, and the row score (or row effect) is assumed to be latent and is therefore estimated by the model. Thus, $\phi_i$ are the scores for each row. The difference in the magnitude of a specific row score to another row score indicates the “distance” between the categories. Also, $\phi_i$ can be thought of as the row effect.

In a similar manner, uniform integer scoring can be used for the row variable, and the Column-Effects Model estimates column scores ($\phi_j$) for the effect of the young adult religious affiliation on the adolescent affiliation.

$$log F_{ij} = \mu + \mu_i^R + \mu_j^C + i \phi_j$$

Of course, the Column Effects Model does not meet the time-order conditions of causality, but the model was estimated nevertheless to ensure it was not the best fit model.

The fourth loglinear scaled association model, Goodman’s RC I, specifies the row- and column- interaction as the sum of the interaction terms from the Row Effects Model and the Column Effects Model. Thus, the model simplifies as:

$$log F_{ij} = \mu + \mu_i^R + \mu_j^C + j \phi_i + i \phi_j$$

The primary difficulty with these four scaled association models is that they assume that both the row and column categories are correctly ordered (as in the Uniform Model and the RC I Model) or that either the row or column categories are correctly ordered (as in the Column Effects Model and the Row Effects Model, respectively). Unfortunately, there is no inherent order to the categories of religious affiliation; fortunately, recent advances in statistics have produced a model, Goodman’s RC II Model, that does not require advanced knowledge of the order of categories and instead estimates the row and column scores as latent (Goodman 1979, Clogg 1982a).
Goodman’s RC Model II is log-multiplicative and specified as (Xie 2007:32):

\[ \log F_{ij} = \mu + \mu_i^R + \mu_j^C + \beta \phi_i \varphi_j \]  

(8)

Where \( \phi_i \) represents the row scores and \( \varphi_j \) represent the column scores. \( \beta \) represents the overall association between the rows and column. The model itself estimates the latent row and column scores (\( \phi_i \)'s and \( \varphi_j \)'s) and therefore reveals the ordering of the categories implicit in the model.

The resulting row and column scores for a specific time frame can be used to establish the “distances” that switchers must make in order to move from a specific origin to a specific destination. These associations, or distances, can be calculated using the following equation (Goodman and Clogg 1992: 620):

\[ a_{ij} = \sqrt{\beta} \phi_i \ast \sqrt{\beta} \varphi_j \]  

(9)

The independence, Quasi-Independence, Uniform, Row Effects, Column Effects, and RC I association models are run using the STATA 12.1 glm command with a Poisson distribution. The estimation process for the RC2 model proceeds in two stages. First, the latent row and column scores are estimated using RC2, a specialized STATA module (Hendrickx 2004a, Hendrickx 2004b). Once estimated, the row and column scores are multiplied to create the \( \phi_i \varphi_j \) interaction term and this variable is entered into glm for the Quasi-Independence model.

In Chapter Seven I also use the generalized linear model. For an analysis in which the dependent variable is binary (1= joined a religious affiliation and 0= remained unaffiliated), I specify a logit link function to linearize the inheritably non-linear relationship between the independent variables and the binary outcome variable.

\[ g(x) = \ln \left( \frac{p(x)}{1 - p(x)} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(x) \]  

(10)

A binomial probability function is used to define the maximum likelihood function that identifies the coefficients.
Taken together, these various approaches provide several ways to examine the Add Health religious affiliation data. These techniques, coupled with the three typologies, will provide a comprehensive investigation of religious mobility and decision making behaviors within the religious marketplace.
CHAPTER FOUR: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND SWITCHING, EVIDENCE FROM A RECENT YOUNG COHORT

The frequency with which individuals switch religious affiliations, the patterns of their movement and their likelihoods of engaging with or disengaging from religion have been of interest to sociologists for decades. After more than a half-century of relative stability in these indicators, there has been an increase in the proportion of adults who report switching from their childhood religions, a sharp uptick in the prevalence of unaffiliation, and an overall shift in identification away from Mainline Protestantism toward more conservative Protestantism. In this chapter I analyze the religious switching behavior of a recent cohort of young adults to inform predictions of whether these trends are likely to continue.

Studies using data from the last 30 years of the 20th century have been somewhat consistent in their findings that about 30% of adults had switched from their childhood religious affiliations (Roof 1989; Babchuk and Witt 1990; Roof and Hadaway 1979; Hadaway and Marler 1993; Lawton and Bures 2001; Sherkat 2001; Loveland 2003). But the Pew Forum (2008) surveyed adults in 2007 and found that 44% had switched religious affiliations at least once. Similarly, studies using data from the 1970s and 1980s have consistently shown that about 7% of individuals claim to be unaffiliated (Roof and Hadaway 1979; Sherkat 2001). Yet, Hout and Fischer (2001) reported that in 1998-2000 14% of adults were unaffiliated, and the Pew Forum (2008) reported that 16% were unaffiliated in 2007. Thus, within the last decade, researchers have observed a sudden change in these standard measures of religious switching and affiliation.

In addition to an overall increase in mobility, the composition of religious affiliations among adults has shifted. In the late-1960s and early-1970s Mainline Protestant membership
declined and what were considered “fringe groups” such as non-denominational Protestants and Non-Christian groups experienced growth (Roof and Hadaway 1979:375). The 1980s and 1990s evidenced even greater losses among the mainline Protestants and continued growth among what was becoming known as evangelical and/or non-denominational Protestants.

Data and methodological issues complicate interpretations of these trends. Most previous studies on religious switching use cross-sectional data that relies on answers to retrospective religion questions, which introduces an unknown degree of measurement error. In addition, religious switching estimates are affected by the number of categories in the classification schemes, and the classification schemes of these studies vary widely.

I address the data and methodological issues in this chapter by using nationally-representative longitudinal data to describe the changes in religious affiliation of a recent cohort of young adults. The longitudinal nature of the data allows collection of prospective rather than retrospective measures of religious affiliation. Additionally, I employ three different schemas for categorizing religious affiliation and compare the results with previous estimates. While the results from a single young cohort cannot be directly compared to estimates made from the samples of all adults, analyses of this group will indicate whether the trends of more mobility, relatively higher rates of unaffiliation, and trends in the compositional shifts by religious affiliations are likely to continue.
Background

Data and Methodological Considerations in Religious Mobility Research

Data Considerations

The overwhelming majority of religious mobility research uses cross-sectional data from the General Social Survey (GSS). Whether the data is from a single year or is pooled to increase the sample size and enable period- or cohort-specific analyses, cross-sectional data poses problems for mobility research. Specifically, childhood affiliation is collected using a retrospective question. For example, the primary GSS question in 2002 was, “In what religion were you raised?” and follow-up questions included items such as “What specific denomination is that, if any?” and “Were you orthodox, conservative, reform, or none of these?” The questionable accuracy of answers to retrospective questions introduces measurement error and can compromise validity (Bernard et al. 1984). This is especially problematic when the question relates to religion because recollections of childhood religiousness, especially religious identity, tend to change over time to match adult religiousness (Hayward, Maselko, and Meador 2012). Consequently, religious switching estimates based on retrospective data may be biased downward. To alleviate this potential problem, I use longitudinal data that provides prospective measures of religious affiliation at three points in time. This should limit potential measurement bias due to inaccurate reporting and contribute to the validity of the research.

A second data issue is related to the possibility of multiple switching. The majority of studies on religious switching only use two data points to define a religious “switch.” Specifically, if the respondent is asked for current affiliation and affiliation at age 16, and he or she reports two different affiliations, then that person is determined to be a “switcher.” The problem with this approach is that if the purpose is to estimate an overall degree of mobility, then
any switching that occurred between age 16 and the time of the survey is not detected. Some
individuals do indeed switch from their childhood affiliation, but then return to their childhood
affiliation later in life (Roof 1989; Sherkat 1994). These people would be identified as non-
switchers if only two data points were used even though they were clearly mobile, having
switched twice.

Multiple switching may also be misidentified in studies that do not ask the retrospective
affiliation question, but ask directly, “Have you ever had a religious preference besides being …
(current religious preference).” If the survey continues and asks about switches made prior to the
most recent switch then multiple switches are accounted for, but otherwise any switching
estimates made with these data also underestimate mobility.

In this chapter I use religious affiliation data gathered at three points in time. This
allows for not only a more accurate identification of switchers, but also establishes the timing of
the switch (i.e. between adolescence and early-young-adulthood or between early-young-
adulthood and late-young-adulthood). Using three data points also serves to identify multiple
switchers, both those who return to their adolescent affiliation and those who do not. Even with
this rich data, the estimates of overall mobility may still be biased downward because surely
some respondents will switch religions more than once between data collections. While
imperfect, defining switching more dynamically will add to our understanding of religious
mobility.

The Religious Classification Debate

Thousands of religious groups exist in the United States; the exact number depends on
how a religious group is defined (Lindner 2010). Social scientists of religion are faced with the
task of somehow organizing these groups into a manageable number of categories for analysis. The most difficult task is to categorize Christian Protestant denominations. Prior to 1990 researchers often designed their own Protestant classification systems based on theology, traditions, and/or polity (Glock and Stark 1968; Roof and McKinney 1987). In 1990, Smith formalized a Protestant classification system that located denominations along a belief continuum from fundamentalism to liberalism. Smith maintained that this system works with different labels as well, such as “from the orthodox, conservative, or evangelical to the secular, modern, or humanistic” (Smith 1990:226). This classification system was built using data from the following multiple and varied sources: a) prior classification schemes, b) membership in theologically oriented associations, c) surveys of members, d) surveys of clergy, and e) documented theological beliefs. Using the GSS, Smith assigned final categories of Fundamentalist, Moderate, Liberal, or Excluded to religious identification variables beginning in 1990 and subsequently added these identifiers to the GSS 1972-90 cumulative files. The Smith classification system became standard throughout the 1990s.

Steensland et al. (2000) critiqued the Smith classification scheme, accusing it of not “adequately capturing essential historical differences between American religious traditions and offers no way of measuring some recent trends in religious affiliation” (Steensland et al. 2000:292). They argue that white Protestantism has been shaped by two distinct legacies – evangelical and mainline. Black Protestantism is distinctly different from white Protestantism because the religious spheres and public spheres among African Americans tend to intersect

---

6 Fundamentalist beliefs include opposing the secular influence in society; inerrancy of the Bible; personal salvation by accepting Christ as savior; the personal premillennial imminent return of Christ; an evangelical desire to reach out and save others; and acceptance of traditional precepts such as the virgin birth and existence of angels and devils; liberal beliefs include emphasizing concerns about the current state of the world over salvation which leads to support for social justice and reform; accepting secular change and science as not anti-religious; and having more faith in the Bible as a teaching tool that points toward God rather than as recorded fact (Marsden 2001).
more, and the denominational culture of the black church differs significantly from the white Protestant traditions. Steensland et al. (2000) therefore offer a classification system that groups Evangelical, Mainline, and Black Protestant denominations into three separate categories.

Steensland et al. (2000) view their classification system as an improvement over Smith’s (1990) in a number of ways, two of which are relevant here. First, the Tradition-based scheme avoids the term “fundamentalist” which they view as a subset of Evangelical. Second, they do not believe religious identity should be “ordinal” as Smith’s continuum-based classification suggests, but should be nominal. For example, they do not locate mainline Protestantism in ordinal relationship to evangelical (i.e. mainline as a “lesser” version Christianity).

Other researchers do believe that Protestant denominations can be understood in some sense as ordinal. Denominations may be more or less “similar.” In 1960, Rokeach developed a “similarity” continuum for Catholics and the five major Protestant denominations at the time. He developed this continuum by surveying people from these denominations and asking them to rank the other denominations based on perceived similarity. Similarity was not defined for the respondents. The resulting rankings assigned to the different denominations were: Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist. This order, known as R-Order, has proven consistent in later studies, and has been shown to reflect patterns in religious switching and assortative mating (Doughty and Rodgers; Johnson 1980; Ortega 1988; Sherkat 2004;).

A final classification alternative is to simply use a classification system that works with the available data, makes common sense, and is basically nominal. In Sherkat’s important 2001 study on changes in religious affiliation in the last quarter of the 20th century, the classification system disaggregated Steensland’s (2000) Tradition-based Evangelical and Mainline categories
into the extremes of conservative and liberal, allowed for Lutheran, Episcopal, and Baptist, and then assigned the remaining Protestants as “Other.”

Each classification system has advantages and disadvantages. The Smith typology requires specific data (i.e. the GSS) and may be misleading in terms of conflating theological fundamentalism and political conservatism, although it is far from clear that this conflation poses problems for much scholarship. It also suggests an ordering of the Protestant denominations, which could be considered an advantage or disadvantage, depending on the purpose of the study. Steensland’s Tradition-based typology is theoretically and empirically supported, but has relatively few categories and is less useful in identifying dynamics within categories. The R-Order Typology was developed before the rise of evangelical and non-denominational Protestants and therefore has a large “catch-all” Protestant category. However, R-Order does at least suggest ordinal categories which inform analyses that concern the “similarities” between affiliations. Finally, Sherkat’s typology has a relatively large number of categories (12), yet still supports adequate cell sizes with medium-to-large datasets. Like R-Order, however, Sherkat’s Typology has a rather large catch-all Protestant category. Which classification scheme should a researcher use?

The decision of which classification scheme to use hinges on the structure of the available data and the theoretical requirements of the research. This, in and of itself, poses a problem because different typologies may produce different results given the same research questions. Table 4.1 presents the detailed classification schemes used in this chapter. I use the Steensland’s Tradition-based Typology, Rokeach’s R-Order Typology, and a slightly modified version of Sherkat’s Typology\(^7\) to analyze religious switching behavior among young adults. I

\(^7\) See Chapter 3 for a discussion of why the Sherkat Typology was slightly modified in this research.
also assess whether the different typologies produce results that lead to different answers to the research questions posed in this chapter.
### Table 4.1 Religious Affiliation Groups, by Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tradition Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>Baptist (Black), Church of God (Black), Holiness, Methodist (Black)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Protestant</td>
<td>Anabaptist, Assembly of God, Baptist (White), Brethren, Charismatic, Christian, Christian &amp; Missionary Alliance, Church of Christ, Church of God (White), Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Covenant, Evangelical Free, Four-Square Gospel, Free Methodist, Independent, Just Christian, Just Protestant, Korean United, Mennonite, Methodist (White), New Catholic, Non-denominational, Orthodox, Other, Pentacostal, Reformed, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, Wesleyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional Conservative</td>
<td>Unitarian/Universalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Christian</td>
<td>Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, other Non-Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R-Order Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>Lutheran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>Episcopal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Christian</td>
<td>Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, other Non-Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modified Sherkat Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Denomination</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Protestant</td>
<td>Congregational/UCC, Friends, Presbyterian, Unitarian/Universalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Protestant</td>
<td>Disciples of Christ, Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>Lutheran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>Episcopal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Protestant</td>
<td>Assembly of God, Holiness, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, other Non-Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Christian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review of Estimates of Switching and Unaffiliation

Table 4.2 summarizes the results of nine previous studies that estimate the percent of adults who had switched affiliation at least once since childhood or adolescence and the proportion who claim to be unaffiliated. Two key features of each study have an impact on how to interpret the switching estimates. The first feature is whether or not retrospective data was used. This is important because using retrospective data increases the risk of measurement error, and in religious research, it biases switching estimates downward. The second feature is the number of categories in the classification scheme. This is important because a relatively small number of categories will not pick up mobility that a relatively large number of categories will, yet a very large number of categories might be misleading. The number of typological categories used in the studies listed on Table 4.2 range from four (Lawton & Burres 2001) to 31 (Pew Forum 2008). Clearly, comparing switching proportions across studies that employ typologies with different numbers of categories is problematic if not impossible. For example, Hadaway and Marler (1993), using a six category classification scheme, reported that from the mid-1970s through the late 1980s about 26% had switched affiliations by adulthood. Sherkat (2001), using a 12 category typology, estimated a 31.4% switching rate using pooled data from the 1990s. Had the switching rate actually increased in the 1990s or does Sherkat’s higher rate simply reflect that his typology has more categories?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Number of categories</th>
<th>Percent switching at least once by adulthood</th>
<th>Percent unaffiliated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roof and Hadaway (1979)</td>
<td>1973-76 Pooled GSS (Whites only)</td>
<td>Current &amp; Age 16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof (1989)</td>
<td>1988 GSS</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babchuk and Witt (1990)</td>
<td>1982-83 GSS</td>
<td>Current &amp; Age 16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadaway and Marler (1993)</td>
<td>Pooled GSS, by Period</td>
<td>Current &amp; Age 16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1973-76</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1977-80</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1982-84</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1985-87</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1988-90</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hout and Fischer (2001)</td>
<td>Pooled GSS, by period</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td></td>
<td>na</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1998-2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>na</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pooled GSS, by Period &amp; Cohort (Whites only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Periods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1973-82</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1983-90</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1991-98</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>before 1925</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1925-43</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1944-55</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1956-80</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherkat (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Current &amp; Age 16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loveland (2003)</td>
<td>1988 GSS</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Current & Age 16: Individual was asked current affiliation and affiliation at age 16.

Yes/No: Individual was asked if he or she has ever had a religious preference different from the current one. Yes answers are switchers.

2 For those individuals who provide current and past affiliation, the researcher groups affiliations into categories and then identifies switchers as those with dissimilar categories.
Even though the numbers of categories in typologies differ across studies, meaningful trend data can be interpreted within two of these studies. Hadaway and Marler (1993) showed virtually no increase in the proportion who switched across five time periods. Sherkat (2001) also showed very little variation in the proportion who switched using three periods and across four cohorts. What, then, is to be made of the 44% reported by the Pew Forum (2008)? Is this high percentage purely the consequence of a 31 category classification scheme (Pew 2008: 26); or has the first decade of the 21st century witnessed a dramatic change in the rate at which people are switching religious affiliation?

With respect to unaffiliation, retrospective data does not pose as much of a threat to validity because remembering whether or not one had an affiliation as opposed to remembering the specific affiliation is less subject to maintaining a “consistent perception of self” (Hayward et al. 2012: 81). Further, the number of categories in a typology is completely irrelevant because one either claims an affiliation or not, the number of other available options does not matter. Thus, it is much easier to compare estimates of unaffiliation across studies. In this case, there is a clear and strong trend toward an increased proportion of adults who are unaffiliated. Sherkat (2001) found that over 7% of whites were unaffiliated using data from the early-1970s through 1990, but then this figure grew to 10.0% using pooled 1991-98 data. Hout and Fisher (2001) also identified a significant increase in the 1990’s, from 7.0% in 1990-91 to 14.0% in 1998-2000. The trend is especially evident by cohort in the Sherkat (2001) data. Roughly 3.6% of individuals born before 1925 were unaffiliated. This number increased monotonically and reached 13.8% among the 1956-80 birth cohort. The Pew Forum (2008) estimated that the religiously unaffiliated comprised 16.1% of the adult population in 2007. Clearly the data suggest that the prevalence of not affiliating with religion has been increasing (Schwadel 2010).
Review of Research on Compositional Trends

Through the 1950s, the large majority of Americans affiliated with Mainline Protestantism and Catholicism; membership looked to be healthy and growing. However, beginning in the mid-1960s through the 1990s adults began switching at a higher rate. At the same time, mainline Protestant membership dropped from about 30% of the population in 1970 to 15% in 2010 (Lindner 2010). Simultaneously, conservative Protestant bodies grew substantially (Sherkat 2001). These trends gave rise to research that tracked the increase in switching and sought to explain the new patterns of religious mobility.

To explain this relatively sudden shift in religious affiliations, some scholars focused on the cultural and ideological changes that took place in the 1960s and early-1970s (Roof and Hadaway 1979; Sherkat 1998). At the time, many individuals, regardless of theology or doctrine, began to intentionally distance themselves from what was considered the established normative order. Mainline Protestants, especially the higher-status Episcopalian and Presbyterians, were not only members of the established normative order, but leaders within it. Not surprisingly, absolute membership levels and the proportion of the adult population began to decline for these denominations. Primary proponents of this view are Roof and Hadaway (1979) who argued that the changes in the 1960s and 1970s were due to anti-establishment cultural influences rather than any significant theological shift in the populace.

A second culture-based perspective attempted to explain the rise in the 1990s of the proportion of adults who claimed to be unaffiliated. Hout and Fischer (2002) argued that during the 1990s conservative religious leaders became more visible as they exercised influence in public spheres. Therefore, being religious “increasingly carries the meaning of being
conservative” (Hout and Fischer 2002:188). According to his perspective, political and/or social liberals, seeking to distance themselves from conservative Christianity, increasingly chose to disaffiliate completely from religion.

Others sought to specifically explain the rise of conservative Protestant organizations. One group of scholars (Hadaway and Marlet 1996; Marwell 1996; Roof et al. 1979) maintained that conservative and/or evangelical denominations simply had more of a commitment to evangelical action; they increased their membership levels by enticing the unaffiliated and mainline Protestants to their churches.

Rather than emphasizing the evangelical nature of the growing religious groups, Iannacone (1994) argued that the strictness (i.e. the high-cost) of a particular organization increases the religious value produced through participation (see Chapter 2 for an elaboration of Iannacone’s strictness thesis). By providing such high-value religious services, strict religions are presumably better able to attract the unaffiliated and adherents of less-strict denominations, and, once they have them, are better able to retain them. This, too, would result in the observed changing composition of religious affiliations. This perspective has been controversial (Hadaway and Marler 1996; Marwell 1996; Tamney 2005), but also has received some recent empirical support (Sherkat 2001; Thomas and Olson 2010).

A strictly demographic analysis was presented by Hout et al. (2001) that decomposes the changes in the shares of Protestant membership between conservative and Mainline Protestants using data from a 1900-70 birth cohort. They found that 76% of conservative denominational growth can be explained through higher fertility and earlier childbearing among conservative women. Most of the remaining change is due to a declining rate in the proportion of conservative switchers who go to mainline denominations. Importantly, they found no support
for the assertion that mainline affiliates were increasingly switching to conservative denominations.

Most likely, trends in the structure of religious affiliation are a function of both changes in demographic factors and switching decisions. In recent studies, an interactive effect between demographic factors and switching decisions has been shown to largely explain declines in mainline membership relative to increases in more conservative Protestant organizations (Scheitle et al. 2011; Skirbekk et al. 2010). One example of how this interaction may work involves the age of recruits. If a conservative group tends to recruit and retain young members, then the higher fertility of these young people will be especially impactful on a conservative group’s long-term membership. Attracting and retaining older members who will not have children increases membership only in the short run.

This chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the following questions: First, is the recent increase in the proportion who switch legitimate or a methodological artifact? Second, what can the inclusion of three data points suggest about overall religious mobility in early adulthood? Third, does the recent spike in the prevalence of unaffiliation appear likely to continue? Fourth, do these conclusions depend on typology? Fifth, do the patterns of mainline Protestant decline and conservative Protestant growth appear likely to continue?
Data, Measures, and Analytical Approach

Data

Data were drawn from Waves I, III, and IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The final analysis sample size was 12,582. See Chapter 2 for a detailed description of this data set and data management techniques.

Measures

The primary concept used in this research is religious affiliation and was collected at three points in time—in the mid-1990s when the respondents were 11-19 years old; in 2001-02 when the respondents were 18-26 years old; and in 2007-08 when the respondents were 24-32 years old. Religious affiliation responses were then categorized into different typologies (see Table 4.1). See Chapter 2 for a detailed description of how respondent responses were categorized by wave into each typology.

A special note of caution involving the Tradition Typology is in order. Recall that this typology is unique in that it includes the Black Protestant category. I used the method recommended by the originators of the Tradition Typology to identify Black Protestants (Steensland et al. 2001). Specifically, individuals are identified as Black Protestant if they name a historically black denomination; or claim Methodist, Baptist, or Church of God and are non-Hispanic black. The difficulty with this method is that blacks who are Protestant are likely to be considered Black Protestants even if they do not necessarily belong to a congregation that is predominantly black or exhibits the social characteristics of the traditional black church. Since the original construction of the Tradition Typology, many of the same scholars have revised their definition of Black Protestants to include only those in historically black denominations.
(Woodberry et al. 2011). The implication of this limitation is that mobility estimates of Black Protestants may be underestimated because the category is so broad.

**Analytic Approach**

The goal of this chapter is to examine religious switching data from a recent cohort of young adults and compare the results with recent trends in switching. The following indicators will be calculated for each typology using simple frequencies and cross-tabulations: The proportion who have switched from their adolescent religion (using two post-adolescent time frames), the proportion who are unaffiliated (point estimates for each Wave), in-switching, out-switching, and percent change in affiliates for each affiliation (using the longer WI – WIV timeframe). In the next chapter, mobility is estimated with log-multiplicative models to gain additional insight into specific relationships between religious.

**Results**

*The Prevalence of Switching*

Table 4.3 presents the religious switching frequencies of this young adult cohort using two time frames—from adolescence to ages 18-26 (WI-WIII); and six years later, from adolescence to ages 24-32 (WI-WIV). Three typologies were used — the Tradition Typology (nine categories), the R-Order Typology (10 categories) and the Modified-Sherkat Typology (12 categories).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3 Observed Switching Frequencies Using Two Time Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tradition Typology (Nine Categories)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Switchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Non-Switchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **R-Order Typology (Ten Categories)**                          |
|                                                              |
| Observed Switchers  | 4,144 | 32.9 | 5,209 | 41.4 |
| Observed Non-Switchers | 8,438 | 67.1 | 7,373 | 58.6 |
| Total               | 12,582| 100.0| 12,582| 100.0|

| **Modified-Sherkat Typology (12 Categories)**                  |
|                                                              |
| Observed Switchers  | 4,412 | 35.1 | 5,726 | 45.5 |
| Observed Non-Switchers | 8,170 | 64.9 | 6,856 | 54.5 |
| Total               | 12,582| 100.0| 12,582| 100.0|

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I, III, and IV

As expected, switching proportions were higher across all typologies for the longer time period. For example, using the Tradition Typology, the percent who reported switching affiliations increased from 20.5% when using the WI-WIII timeframe to 38.6% when using the WI-WIV timeframe. Also not surprising was that switching increased as the number of categories in the typology increased. The Tradition Typology, which has nine categories, produced a switching percentage of 38.6% (WI-WIV), whereas the Modified Sherkat Typology, which has 12 categories, generated a switching percentage of 45.5% percent (WI-WIV). All of the estimates are greater than the Hadaway and Marler (1993) estimate of a stable 26% through the 1980s, although they used a typology with only six categories. A better comparison would be between the Modified-Sherkat Typology used in this study with the original Sherkat (2001) typology, both of which are similarly-defined 12-category typologies.
The Modified-Sherkat Typology yielded a 35.1% switching rate for the shorter time frame and 45.5% for the longer time frame. Sherkat (2001) found that only about 30% of whites switched and that this was fairly stable across cohorts and periods. What accounts for this much higher rate for the recent young-adult cohort? To ensure that the difference was not race-based, I ran switching frequencies on whites only and found that the percent switching among whites in the young adult cohort was even higher (48.0% for the longer time frame). This is not surprising because blacks and Hispanics tend to have lower switching rates. Before concluding that these higher switching proportions definitely indicate a change in switching behavior, I consider the possibility that the proportion might change as the cohort ages.

Is it possible that a substantial portion of the young religious switchers will find their way back to their adolescent affiliation as they age, thereby reducing the observed switching rate? Sherkat (1994) found that among individuals who were raised in a religion but then moved to the unaffiliated group, about 8% reaffiliate with their childhood religion by their early 30s. If we assume that 8% of all switchers eventually return to their childhood religion, then this recent data would still produce a switching proportion of about 42%, which is a full 12 percentage points higher than Sherkat’s all-adult estimate.

Projecting how the rate will change as this cohort ages should also include the possibility of future switching. The mean age of first religious switch is about 23 years-old (Roof 1989), yet 5-20% of eventual switchers will not yet have switched by age 35 (Pew 2008:4). Thus, any decrease in the switching rate due to a return to adolescent affiliation may be offset by switching after young adulthood.

These relatively high switching proportions are consistent with the Pew Forum (2008) estimate of 44.0%. However, the Pew Forum classification scheme has 31 categories (2008:26),
so the switching rate using a Sherkat-Based Typology was expected to produce a lower estimate. Overall, the data from the Pew Forum, coupled with the evidence from this recent cohort of young adults, points toward a dramatic increase over the last decade in the percent of individuals who switch from their religious affiliation of adolescence. But measuring overall religious mobility consists of more than identifying a single a switch. The longitudinal data used in this study offers a unique opportunity to examine the actual degree of religious mobility.

Analyzing only two points in time produces a picture of religious switching that underestimates the actual degree of overall mobility. It is possible that individuals switched more than once and either returned to their adolescent affiliation, and would therefore appear as a non-switcher, or switched to a third affiliation, and was identified as a single-switcher. Table 4.4 breaks down WI-WIV observed switchers into those who switched once and those who switched twice. Observed non-switchers are broken down into immobile non-switchers (those who never switched) and mobile non-switchers (those who switched but returned to the adolescent affiliation in WIV and therefore appear as non-switchers). Switchers plus mobile non-switchers result in the overall mobility proportion.
Table 4.4. Switching Frequencies, by Actual Mobility: WI-WIV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tradition Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Switchers (38.6% from Table 4.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switched once</td>
<td>3,970</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple switcher</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Non-Switchers (61.4% from Table 4.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immobile Non-Switchers</td>
<td>6,611</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Non-Switchers (switched at least once, but returned to adolescent affiliation by WIV)</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12,582</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Non-Switchers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immobile Non-Switchers</td>
<td>6,087</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Non-Switchers (switched at least once, but returned to adolescent affiliation by WIV)</td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12,582</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Mobility</td>
<td>5,971</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**R-Order Typology**

| Observed Switchers (41.4% from Table 4.3) |           |         |
| Switched once                           | 4,097     | 32.6    |
| Multiple switcher                       | 1,112     | 8.8     |
| Observed Non-Switchers (58.6% from Table 4.3) |           |         |
| Immobile Non-Switchers                  | 6,087     | 48.4    |
| Mobile Non-Switchers (switched at least once, but returned to adolescent affiliation by WIV) | 1,286     | 10.2    |
|                                         | 12,582    | 100.0   |
| Overall Mobility                        | 6,495     | 51.6    |

**Modified-Sherkat Typology**

| Observed Switchers (45.5% from Table 4.3) |           |         |
| Switched once                           | 4,347     | 34.5    |
| Multiple switcher                       | 1,379     | 11.0    |
| Observed Non-Switchers (54.5% from Table 4.3) |           |         |
| Immobile Non-Switchers                  | 5,686     | 45.2    |
| Mobile Non-Switchers (switched at least once, but returned to adolescent affiliation by WIV) | 1,170     | 9.3     |
|                                         | 12,582    | 100.0   |
| Overall Mobility                        | 8,235     | 54.8    |

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I, III, and IV
The proportion of people who have experienced at least some form of mobility is anywhere from 9 to 20 percentage points higher than the observed WI-WIV switching proportion, depending on the typology. The typology with the fewest categories (Tradition) exhibits an overall mobility percentage of 47.5%. The Modified-Sherkat Typology reveals that 65.5% of young adults have switched affiliations at least once, and about one-third of these switching young adults are multiple switchers (this proportion is consistent with Roof 1989). The inclusion of multiple switchers illustrates the dynamic nature of religious affiliation over time, and as more waves of the Add Health survey become available, analysis of movements in and out of affiliations over the life-cycle will be possible.

*Prevalence of the Unaffiliated Status*

Sherkat (2001) found an increase in the prevalence of the unaffiliated status over the last 25 years of the 20th century by cohort and by period, and Hout and Fischer (2001) confirmed this trend by reporting that the percent of adults who claimed no religion doubled in the 1990s from 7.0 to 14.0%. The Pew Forum (2008) reported that 16.1% of adults were unaffiliated in 2007. Among the young adults analyzed in this research, 11.9% were unaffiliated as adolescents (Wave I), 18.8% were unaffiliated as early-young-adults (Wave III), and 17.9% were unaffiliated as late-young-adults (Wave IV). That the cohort was slightly more likely to be unaffiliated in the earlier stages of young-adulthood is unsurprising, given that the transition from adolescence to young-adulthood is often marked by a decline in religiosity (Petts 2009; Regnerus and Uecker 2006; Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler 2007). Whether the proportion will continue to climb is unclear, but a demographic analysis by Skirbekk et al. (2010) projects that the unaffiliated group
will grow substantially and reach about 26% of all adults by 2043. They attribute much of this
growth to the young age structure of the unaffiliated.

Net Changes in Affiliation Counts

The two factors that determine whether a religious organization grows or loses membership are
the percent that remain over time and the number of in-switchers. Table 4.5 presents these
figures from WI to WIV for each affiliation within each typology. Consistent with previous
findings, compared to other large affiliation categories, mainline Protestants were the most likely
to leave their affiliation (49.3% out-switching in the Tradition Typology). When mainline
Protestants are broken down by denomination in the Modified-Sherkat Typology, Liberal
Protestants, Episcopalians, and Moderate Protestants were all less likely than average to remain
in their adolescent affiliation. Of the mainline Protestants, only Baptists and Lutherans were
more likely than average to remain. Even with above average stability, the number of Lutherans
and Baptists were lower in Wave IV than Wave I because not enough people in-switched to
make up for the number of out-switchers.
Table 4.5. Changes in Religious Affiliation: WI - WIV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adolescents (WI)</th>
<th>% Not Switching</th>
<th>Net Switchers</th>
<th>Young Adults (WIV)</th>
<th>Overall % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tradition Typology (61.4% not switching)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>1,679</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>-359</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>-21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Protestant</td>
<td>3,799</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>4,419</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>-412</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>-27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditional Conservative</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>-124</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>-38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditional Liberal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3,218</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>-442</td>
<td>2,776</td>
<td>-13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Christian</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>-39</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>-8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>1,492</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>2,246</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R-Order Typology (58.6% not switching)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3,218</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>-442</td>
<td>2,776</td>
<td>-13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>-50</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>-29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>-84</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>-19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>-49</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>-20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>-183</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>-26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>2,850</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>-633</td>
<td>2,217</td>
<td>-22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Protestant (R-Order)</td>
<td>2,949</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>3,671</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Christian</td>
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<td>-39</td>
<td>419</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>754</td>
<td>2,246</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modified-Sherkat Typology (54.5% not switching)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Protestant</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>-108</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>-30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>-50</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>-29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Protestant</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>-162</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>-23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>-84</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>-19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>2,852</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>-635</td>
<td>2,217</td>
<td>-22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Protestant</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>-350</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>-40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>-15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Protestant (Modified Sherkat)</td>
<td>1,832</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>2,965</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3,218</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>-442</td>
<td>2,776</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>1,492</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>2,246</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This research is not intended to provide population estimates of the distribution of religious affiliations. Rather, the intention is to identify switching frequencies by affiliation.

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health
The other main trend in earlier research is the apparent growth among conservative affiliations. The typology that provides the most detail is the Modified Sherkat Typology. There were 40.5% fewer Conservative (sect-like) Protestants and 15.2% fewer Mormons in Wave IV than Wave I. Conservative (sect-like) Protestants displayed an especially low stability rate (32.2%). Mormons displayed a relatively high stability rate (65.2%), but were unable to draw enough new affiliates to offset those who left. The Other Protestant group, which is a catch-all category for Protestants who are not mainline or extremely liberal or extremely conservative, grew significantly (61.8%). With only an average stability rate (47.1%), this group benefited from a relatively large number of in-switchers. The trend of increasing numbers of evangelical or non-denominational Protestants appears to be continuing among this young cohort.

Discussion

In this chapter I investigated religious affiliation and mobility among a recent cohort of young adults. One goal was to compare these results with trends in affiliation and mobility among all adults to predict whether the trends would continue. The trends examined in this chapter include increases in switching frequency, recent sharp upturns in the prevalence of unaffiliation, continued significant switching away from mainline Protestant denominations, and continued switching toward conservative (sect-like) Protestantism.

Before a valid conclusion could be drawn regarding the continuation of trends, the effect of classification scheme on switching estimates was investigated. Importantly, the number of categories used to calculate the prevalence of switching significantly impacts the results, with relatively fewer categories resulting in lower switching rates. To eliminate the possibility of the
numbers of categories inflating switching rates, a typology was developed that mirrored the one used by Sherkat (2001) and comparisons were made in this context.

Using this typology, the prevalence of switching among the young adults in this sample (45.5%) is higher than even the most recent period (1991-98) evaluated by Sherkat (31.4%). Further, when switching was defined as having made at least one switch at some point from adolescence to late-young-adulthood, 65.5% reporting at least some switching behavior. Finally, the prevalence of unaffiliation among this recent young cohort (18%) is consistent with the most recent estimates.

With respect to which adolescent affiliates tended to remain and which tended to switch, those adolescents affiliated at the very liberal (Congregational/UCC, Friends/Quakers, Presbyterians, Unitarian/Universalist, and Episcopalian) and very conservative (Assembly of God, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostal, 7th Day Adventist, Mormons) ends of Sherkat’s Protestant continuum were the least likely to remain in their affiliations. While the ideological extremes were the most likely to switch, switching rates were above average (above 45.5%) for all Protestants except Lutherans and Baptists. Even adolescents who were affiliated with the large Other Protestant group exhibited a 52.9% probability of switching.

Given this above-average degree of mobility among Protestant adolescents, stability in affiliation must be the norm in the other typological categories. The adolescents with below-average switching rates were Jewish, Catholic, Mormon, Lutheran, and Baptist. Given that almost half of the Baptists are black, we can safely assume that the Baptist group reflects, in part, the Black Protestant group. Therefore, the five religions with below average switching rates are associated with communities where religious participation is considered only semi-voluntary. In short, these communities tend to place a high value on religion, which serves as a symbolic
center of the community, and the social norm is strongly in favor of participation. Thus, it is not surprising that these five religions exhibited the highest stability. This phenomenon will be discussed in great detail over the next few chapters.

Given these patterns, I can assess whether previous explanations of mobility patterns adequately explain the shifts evident in the last few decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The Roof and Hadaway (1979) explanation of mainline Protestant losses appears invalid because if distancing oneself from the establishment was the primary reason for Mainline decline, then the rates of decline should have leveled off by at least the early 1990s. This did not occur and these data suggest that it is not likely to occur. The rise of the evangelical and non-denominational Protestant organizations has been attributed to evangelical fervor (Hadaway and Marler 1996; Marwell 1996; Thomas and Olsen 2010), and these data do not dispute this possibility. Iannaccone’s strictness theory (1994), however, is cast into doubt because about 52.9\% of Conservative (sect-like) Protestants switched affiliations by young adulthood.

I conclude that the increase in mobility and the sharp upturn in the prevalence of unaffiliation are not just statistical anomalies or methodological artifacts. They represent a significant shift in the religious landscape of the U.S. The data also suggest that mainline Protestantism will continue to experience overall declines, while the evangelical and non-denominational Protestants will continue to grow. The future of the Conservative (sect-like) Protestants is unclear. The implications of these continuing trends on sociological theories of religion and our understanding of how individuals make religious choices will be further investigated in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER FIVE: DETAILED ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

The previous chapter illustrated that almost half of adolescents had switched their religious affiliations by young adulthood. In this chapter I analyze the likelihood of remaining with specific affiliations and the patterns of switching between affiliations using association models. The results from these analyses are used to test key predictions made by the strong and weak versions of the rational choice model of religious choice. Further, mobility predictions that follow from the secularization thesis and the rational choice model are judged against actual model results. The findings from this chapter support the adoption of the weak version of the rational choice model over the strong version, and also find that the rational choice model more accurately predicts mobility patterns than does the secularization thesis.

Religious Mobility: Theory and Hypotheses

In this chapter I test 14 hypotheses grouped into three substantive categories. The first set of hypotheses involves testing two competing explanations—the strong and weak versions of the rational choice model—of the likelihood of remaining in adolescent affiliations; the second focuses on differences in switching pattern predictions made by the secularization thesis and the rational choice model; and the third set brings together the different explanations to describe two other typical mobility patterns.

The Strong versus the Weak Version of the Rational Choice Model

The rational choice model applied to religion treats religious choices as behaviors that occur within a religious marketplace. Individuals are considered rational actors who calculate costs
and benefits and make religious decisions that maximize net benefits. As long as benefits continue to exceed costs, individuals will choose to remain with their affiliations. The strong version of the rational choice model emphasizes the supply-side of the religious marketplace and assumes that the demands for religious goods are basically stable (Finke and Iannaccone 1993:28). The religious human capital perspective and the strictness thesis, because they focus on the production (i.e. the supply) of religious value, are components related to the strong version of the rational choice model. Another version of the rational choice model is more inclusive with respect to demand factors. It acknowledges that choices occur within a social context and can therefore be affected by changes in preferences or by social circumstances that impact choices but not preferences. The addition of this socially embedded choice perspective to the strong rational choice model results in the weak rational choice model. Below I briefly describe the strong and weak versions, and present opposing hypotheses that follow from these models.

According to the religious human capital framework (Iannaccone 1990), the net benefit calculation depends, not surprisingly, on the religious value produced. Religious value emerges from the combining of products provided by the religious organization with an individual’s own religious resources. These resources include purchased inputs (e.g. gas to drive to services), labor (e.g. time spent in services), and skill. The skill component, known as religious human capital, is key to this framework. Religious human capital is defined primarily as, “religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine, and friendships with fellow worshipers” (Iannaccone 1990:299). Therefore, investment in these types of skills increases the stock of religious human capital, and to the extent that skills are specific to a particular religion, this stock is inefficiently transferable to other religions. Thus, to maximize the return on previous
investments in specific religious human capital, the majority of individuals will remain in the
religion in which they were raised. If they do indeed switch, they will tend to switch to religions
in which the transfer of their stock of specific religious human capital is the most efficient. For
example, a mobile Catholic may be more likely to become Lutheran than Presbyterian because of
familiarity with the formal rituals of worship. The religious human capital perspective implies
that the most distinctive religions, i.e. those with few close substitutes, will have adherents that
are the least likely to switch because their stock of religious human capital is especially specific
to that religion (Iannaccone 1990:300).

The socially embedded choice perspective also addresses the likelihood of remaining in
the religion of adolescence. The foundation of this perspective rests on the notion of adaptive
preferences (Sherkat and Wilson 1995; Sherkat 1997). The adaptive preferences framework
posits that initial preferences are developed in childhood and the more individuals consume the
preferred good, the stronger the preference becomes. In this case, parents and religious
organizations work in tandem to socialize and influence the religious preferences of youth, and
the longer youth practice a specific religion, the stronger their preference for that religion. As
adults, religious choices will be based on their preferences which are likely to have been
developed and strengthened in childhood and adolescence. Thus, like the religious human
capital perspective, the socially embedded choice perspective suggests that the majority of
individuals will remain in their adolescent affiliation.

While the foundation of the socially embedded choice perspective is adaptive
preferences, it also incorporates the possibility that preferences can change, and, more
importantly, that actual choices made in the religious marketplace may not reflect preferences.
The most significant manner in which preferences may not directly translate into choices
involves social sanctions. In communities that are characterized by religious centrality and consolidated social ties (Blau and Schwartz 1984, Sherkat and Cunningham 1998), incurring penalties due to lack of continued religious participation is a very real possibility. Sanctions can be far-reaching, ranging from loss of respect, to direct ridicule, to loss of access to important resources. Affiliation decisions have powerful consequences in communities where, “…family, religion, employment, ethnicity, neighborhood, and the like are entangled” (Sherkat 1997:76). In these types of communities, religious participation is considered “semi-voluntary,” and therefore actual affiliation choices may not accurately reflect preferences (Ellison and Sherkat 1995). By including the possibility that social sanctions influence religious decisions, it may be the case that some individuals remain in affiliations that they prefer to abandon. Therefore, adolescents from semi-voluntary affiliations will be the least likely to switch.

Two hypotheses are derived from the above discussion. First, if the religious human capital perspective is correct, adolescents affiliated with the most distinctive religions will be the most likely to remain (Hypothesis 1). Iannaccone maintains that the most distinctive religions are those with the least number of substitutes, which he identifies as Jewish and Catholic (1990:300). The most distinctive Protestants are therefore those with unique theologies and include the sect-like Protestants (Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Assemblies of God, and 7th Day Adventists). Presumably these would be followed by Protestants with distinctive rituals (Lutheran and Episcopal) and then Protestants with standard evangelical theology but little ritual (Evangelicals and non-denominational Protestants), and finally mainline Protestants with diffuse theology and little ritual (Iannaccone 1990:300).

The second and third hypotheses state that, if the socially embedded choice perspective is correct, adolescents affiliated with religions where participation is considered semi-voluntary
will be the most likely to remain (Hypothesis 2). Affiliations that meet the semi-voluntary criteria have been identified as Black Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, Jews, and Lutherans (Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Harrison and Lazerwitz 1982).

Of course, overlap exists in the affiliations that are expected to exhibit relatively high stability due to distinctiveness and social sanctions. However, instances in which no overlap exists provide an opportunity to distinguish between the predictions of these two empirically similar but conceptually different perspectives.

Another component of the strong version of the rational choice model, and also an extension of the religious human capital perspective, is the strictness thesis (Iannaccone 1994). The strictness thesis states that even though strict religions are high-cost in that they require adherence to strict lifestyle guidelines, they will continue to grow because of the added value produced by having congregations full of only highly committed members. In short, the high-cost nature of strict religions discourages free-riders (i.e. those who use resources but do not contribute resources) leaving only those who are highly committed, especially in terms of participation and donations. Recall that religious value is jointly produced by the religious organization, members of the congregation, and individuals themselves; therefore, highly committed members will contribute to production of exceptional value. As such, the strictness thesis posits that these highly committed religions will produce high value that exceeds the high costs.

If the strictness thesis is correct, affiliates from strict religions should be less likely to switch than affiliates from less strict religions (Hypothesis 3). Iannaccone identifies strict religions as those that “emphasize maintaining a separate and distinctive lifestyle” (1994:1190).
Therefore, the most distinctive are sect-like Protestants, Catholics and Evangelical Protestants, followed by moderate Mainline Protestants and then liberal Mainline Protestants.

_The Secularization Thesis vs. The Rational Choice Model_

Over the last 20 years, sociologists have debated the viability of the secularization thesis in the U.S. (Bruce 1999, 2011; Demerath 1995, 2007; Swatos and Christiano 1999; Stark 1999; Yaman 1997) and over the last ten years the appropriateness of using a rational choice model to study religion (Chavez 1995; Demerath 2007; Iannaccone 1995, 1997; Lechner 2007; Lehman 2011; Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Stark and Finke 2000). Both approaches anticipate specific patterns of religious mobility and these expectations are tested in this chapter.

_The Unaffiliated_

As described in detail in Chapter 2, one prediction of the secularization thesis is the gradual decline in individual religiosity. Religiosity has been measured in various ways (e.g. formal religious affiliation, membership, participation, spirituality), but in this research I assume that an increase in the proportion who are unaffiliated at least points to the possibility of a decline in religiosity, even though I offer no evidence that religious participation or spiritual inclinations are in decline (Hout and Fischer 2002). Because the rational choice model assumes that demand for religion is somewhat steady given human nature (Finke and Iannaccone 1993), any lack of affiliation is viewed as a problem with the supply-side. In other words, religious firms are not producing religious products that appeal to individuals who have a stable set of preferences (Stark and Finke 2000: 86). Because this research does not attempt to examine the behaviors of religious firms, only the secularization prediction is addressed here. If
secularization is still viable, the proportion who are unaffiliated will have remained steady or increased by late young adulthood (Hypothesis 4).

**Liberal Protestant: Switchers and In-Switchers**

The secularization thesis and the rational choice model both predict a relatively rapid decline in the number of liberal religion affiliates. Secularization proponents refer to two primary forces of modernity -- cultural diversity and individual autonomy -- that will contribute to the ultimate demise of liberal religions in the U.S. In short, liberal religions embrace the ecumenical ideals of cultural diversity and encourage individuals to decide for themselves what to believe. Thus, there is no exclusive claim to supernatural truth. This lack of differentiation leads to a decrease in the salience of the choice and eventually the choice becomes so irrelevant that it is not even made (Bruce 1999).

The rational choice model predicts a decline in liberal religions in general, and Mainline Protestant denominations, in particular, for two reasons. One reason is presented here and the other, which concerns religious rewards and compensators, is presented in a later section of this chapter. First, through the latter half of the 20th century, Mainline Protestant leaders embraced progressive cultural change (Sherkat and Wilson 1995). Through this association, the churches themselves became more liberal and accommodating. Members who wished to maintain a specific distance from the culture at large became disenchanted, felt marginalized, and eventually drifted away from religion (Stark 1997). These disaffiliated individuals became prime targets for conversion to more conservative Protestant denominations because they had either (a) a preference for religion in general (Sherkat 1995) or (b) an existing stock of religious human capital that could be used to create religious value (Iannaccone 1990).
While both approaches predict net losses in mainline affiliates, the predictions of the destinations of these mobile mainline Protestants differs. The secularization thesis predicts that disenchanted liberals will favor an unaffiliated status. The rational choice proponents expect that liberal defectors will either move into more conservative religions immediately or will be unaffiliated for only a short time as they find the right match for their existing stock of religious human capital. If the secularization thesis is supported, liberal switchers will tend to unaffiliate rather than join a more conservative Protestant religion (Hypothesis 5). If the rational choice perspective is supported, liberal switchers will be attracted to more conservative Protestant affiliations rather than becoming unaffiliated (Hypothesis 6).

The secularization proponents argue that the lack of a clear identity makes it difficult for liberal Protestants to attract converts. The lack of differentiation from each other and from secular organizations makes their only defining characteristic that of being “not conservative” (Bruce 1999:181). Thus, if the secularization thesis is supported, in-switchers to liberal Protestantism will tend to come from more conservative Protestant religions (Hypothesis 7).

Conservative Protestant: Switchers and In-Switchers

The secularization thesis predicts that conservative religions will decline at a slower rate than liberal religions and, in the short run, may even grow. According to secularization theorists, the U.S., with structural protections in place for religious group subcultures, provides a supportive environment for conservative religious groups to maintain their distinctive stance in opposition to the larger culture. Secularization advocates also point to high stability rates and fertility, rather than conversion, to explain the relative slowness of the decline of conservative

---

8 The language used in the hypotheses that will be addressed using the association models are intentionally vague (i.e. “tend to” and “attracted to”) due to the relative rather than absolute nature of the log-multiplicative model output.
groups (Bruce 1999:136). The rational choice model also predicts lower switching rates among conservative affiliates, but also advocates conversion as a significant component to continued growth. Thus, **those affiliated with conservative groups will be less likely to switch than affiliates from less conservative groups (Hypothesis 8)**. If the secularization thesis is supported, **conservative destinations will not be strongly associated with liberal origins (Hypothesis 9)**. If the rational choice model is supported, **conservative destinations will be strongly associated with liberal origins (Hypothesis 10)**.

**Three Typical Patterns**

Previous research has shown that religious mobility tends to follow three general patterns (Kluegel 1980; Sherkat 2001). The first pattern is a lack of mobility between Christianity and Judaism; the second is the lack of mobility across the Catholic-Protestant divide; and the third pattern is significant mobility within the Protestant category.

The Jewish and Christian religious experience in adolescence is quite different in terms of theology, ritual, history, and tradition. Therefore, Christian youth develop a different set of religious human capital (or socialization to a different set of preferences) than Jewish youth. Thus, if they choose to switch as adults, they will switch to religions that are similar, not to religions that are as distinctly different as Judaism and Christianity. A similar argument can be made regarding the switch across the Catholic-Protestant border. The religious human capital perspective and the socially embedded choice perspective both predict that **switches between Judaism and Christianity (Hypothesis 11) and between Protestantism and Catholicism (Hypothesis 12) will be extremely unlikely.**
The most common explanation for mobility within Protestantism is the decline in denominationalism perspective (see Chapter 1) and it is consistent with the secularization thesis. This viewpoint acknowledges mainline Protestant denominations have adopted an ecumenical attitude toward other religions and seek to de-emphasize differences in order to foster more cooperation and goodwill between religions (Wuthnow 1993:26). Competition without differentiation leads to more mobility because factors that pull individuals into certain denominations are the same factors that pull them into other similar denominations (Cress et al. 1997). If this perspective is correct, then *mobility between the various mainline denominations should be relatively high (Hypothesis 13).*

Another explanation for mobility within Protestantism requires that Protestants first be broken down into conservative (evangelical, non-denominational, and sect-like) and mainline (moderate and liberal) and then examined for patterns across these two types of Protestants. According to Stark and Bainbridge (1987) and Stark and Finke (2000) individuals will choose religious organizations, in part, based on the provision of rewards and compensators. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, rewards are benefits that are somewhat tangibly experienced through membership and participation. For example, status, social interaction, and recreation are three rewards that are enjoyed through membership, attendance at worship services, and singing in the choir, respectively (Stark and Bainbridge 1987:46). Compensators, on the other hand, are goods provided by religious organizations that take the place of desired rewards when those rewards are not available. One reward that individuals seek is the “use and manipulation of the supernatural” (Stark and Finke, 2000:90). This reward does not tangibly exist and therefore religious organizations provide explanations about or promises regarding the desired reward (i.e.
use of the supernatural). These explanations are termed compensators.\footnote{Stark and Bainbridge (1987) coined the word “compensators,” but Stark and Finke (2000) changed it to “explanations.” I will use the original term because most of the literature has not made the switch.} Compensators may include, but are not limited to, assurances of an afterlife, promises that “everything happens for a reason,” and guarantees that God is listening (Stark and Bainbridge 1987:46).

Mobility across the conservative Protestant–Mainline Protestant border may therefore reflect differences in the provision of compensators. Stark (1997) proposes that conservative religions are more willing to provide compensators than liberal religions. Indeed, liberal mainline Protestant denominations can be hesitant to provide, for example, assurances of an afterlife. But Bruce objects to this notion, claiming, “If the main cause of liberal decline was a failure to produce impressive enough rewards and compensators, we would expect to find large-scale adult defection” (1999:136). Thus, to the extent that the two groups provide different rewards and compensators, and conservative Protestants provide those that are more preferred, the exchanges between conservative Protestants and mainline Protestants should favor conservative Protestants (Hypothesis 14).

Analytic Method and Interpreting Results

Why Model?

Many of the hypotheses in this chapter will be addressed using the results of what will be determined the best-fit model from a set of association models (See Chapter 2 for details on the specifications of these models). Modeling mobility tables is superior to simple examination of cross-tabulations in a number of ways. First, mobility tables often have exceptionally large diagonal counts because people are likely to stay in the same religious category over time. By modeling this probability, the remaining cells can be analyzed for significant patterns. Second,
when examining cross tabulations it is difficult to account for switching in both the rows and the columns. Modeling controls for this as well. Thus, departures from what would be expected after controlling for inheritance effects and marginal gains and losses from switching are informative for the identification of patterns of exchanges across religious categories (Sherkat 1993).

**Analytic Method and Interpreting RC II Model Output**

First, WI-WIV mobility tables were constructed for each of the three typologies. Eight models with different specifications were run against the tables and the goodness-of-fit criteria were analyzed to determine the best-fit model for each typology.

Interpreting output from the RC II models requires special mention. Output from an RCII model will consist of a beta (β), row scores (upper case phi, ϕ) and column scores (lower case phi, φ). The β is interpreted as an overall correlation-type coefficient between the rows (origin affiliations) and the columns (destination affiliations). A positive β indicates that the overall origin affiliations have a positive effect on destination affiliations, and the higher the coefficient, the stronger the association.

The scores do not have an intrinsic meaning and therefore cannot be directly interpreted. Rather, row scores are to be interpreted as relative distances from one another with respect to destination distributions. As Goodman and Clogg note, the scores indicate “…in some sense, the stochastic ordering of the destination distributions corresponding to the different row origins and the stochastic ordering of the origin distributions corresponding to the different column destinations, respectively” (1992:616). For example, consider two adjacent origin affiliations with similar row scores. These two affiliations have very similar destination distributions (i.e.
their switchers are distributed similarly across the possible destinations). Affiliations that have very distant row scores have extremely different destination distributions (i.e. their switchers are distributed dissimilarly across the possible destinations).

Row and column scores alone are sometimes difficult to interpret intuitively. To simplify, relationships between specific origins to specific destinations among switchers can be calculated (Goodman and Clogg 1992: 620):

\[ a_{ij} = \sqrt{\beta} \phi_i \times \sqrt{\beta} \phi_j \]

These associations for each unique origin and destination combination will be presented. Positive associations indicate a positive relationship between origin and destination and the size of the estimate indicates the strength of the relationship.

Results

*Religious Human Capital versus the Socially Embedded Choice Perspectives*

Table 5.1 displays the percentage of young adults who remained in their adolescent affiliations. As expected, the majority of individuals remained in their adolescent affiliations regardless of the typology used in the calculation. While this is consistent with predictions from both the religious human capital perspective and the socially embedded choice perspective, this rate has dropped significantly over the past few decades (see Chapter 4) and may very well drop below 50% within the next decade.
The religious human capital perspective predicts that adolescents affiliated with the most distinctive religions will be the most likely to remain, while the socially embedded choice perspective predicts that adolescents affiliated with semi-voluntary religions will be the ones most likely to remain. Results presented in Table 5.1 (Modified-Sherkat Typology) indicate that affiliates from religions that are both highly distinctive and semi-voluntary (Jewish, Catholic, Mormon) are far more likely to remain in their affiliations than others (83.9%, 68.9%, 65.2, respectively). Black Protestants (Tradition Typology) and Lutherans (Modified-Sherkat Typology) also considered as semi-voluntary affiliates, exhibit higher-than-average retention as well (64.4% and 60.5%). Therefore, the social sanction component of the socially embedded choice perspective (Hypothesis 2) is strongly supported among this sample of young adults. Based on distinctiveness, the religious human capital perspective also predicts that sect-like Protestants (Conservative Protestants in Modified-Sherkat Typology) will exhibit a high stability rate, but this was clearly not the case (32.2%). The other Protestant affiliations that are
distinctive due to formal worship rituals are Lutherans and Episcopalians. As indicated above, Lutherans exhibited a higher than average stability rate (60.5%), but Episcopalians did not (41.5%). Given that the religious human capital perspective cannot explain the low retention rates among sect-like Protestants and Episcopalians, the religious human capital perspective (Hypothesis 1) is not supported among this sample of young adults.

The strictness thesis argues that strict religions tend to produce much higher levels of religious value such that members are more likely to stay than affiliates of less strict religions. The Modified-Sherkat Typology has two relevant categories – Mormons and Conservative Protestants (sect-like Protestants). About 65.2% of adolescent Mormons remained, but only 34.8% of adolescent Conservative Protestants remained. These vastly different results for two strict religion categories indicate that if strictness contributes to religious value, it is not enough in many cases to overcome the costs associated with affiliation. Thus, the strictness thesis (Hypothesis 3) is not well supported in this sample of young adults.

**Secularization Thesis vs. Rational Choice Model**

The Unaffiliated

As described above, one prediction of the secularization thesis is a decline in religiosity in general. One indicator of religiosity is being affiliated with a religion. Among this sample, 11.9% were unaffiliated as adolescents, 18.8% were unaffiliated in Wave III (18-26 year-olds) and 17.9% were unaffiliated in Wave IV (24-32 year olds). These figures suggest a possible increase in secular orientations in general, but two caveats should be mentioned. While the likelihood of being unaffiliated may increase, this does not necessarily indicate a decline in religiosity. Second, Wave IV still contains some individuals considered to be of the age in which
religiosity tends to drop temporarily (Petts 2009; Uecker et al. 2007; Regnerus and Uecker 2006; Wuthnow and Glock 1973).

Another indicator of secularization concerns the likelihood that unaffiliated adolescents will seek out religion as they age. Previous research has shown that unaffiliated adolescents tend to join religions at a much higher rate than the affiliated switch religions (Kluegel 1980; Sherkat 2001). For example, the mobility rate for the unaffiliated group was 24 percentage points higher than average in the 1944-55 birth cohort and nine points higher than average in the 1956-80 birth cohort (Sherkat 2001:1467). However, this data tells a different story. In this research, unaffiliated adolescents exhibited a 48.7% mobility rate, which is very similar to the 45.5% mobility rate for affiliated adolescents (Modified-Sherkat Typology). Thus, the gap in mobility between unaffiliated and affiliated adolescents appears to be declining, perhaps to the point where it is no longer a significant gap. That the proportion who claim no affiliation increased, coupled with adolescents who are not disproportionately drawn to religion, suggests that the secularization thesis is at least still viable in the U.S. (Hypothesis 4).

The remaining hypotheses will be addressed using the results of the association models. Table 5.2 presents the goodness-of-fit statistics using eight alternative models for each of the typologies. Using the BIC as the primary criteria for choosing the best model (Raftery 1987, Wong 1994), all three typologies were best described by Goodman’s RC II log-multiplicative model. The row and column scores from the best-fit model were input into the GLM model and the final model was executed. For ease of interpretation and explanation, only the Modified-Sherkat Typology results are presented and interpreted. Row and column scores are presented in

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10 The R-Order Typology data was best described by the homogenous version of the RCII model, which simply indicates that this classification scheme results in origin and destination affiliations that are equivalently “ordered” by the model.
Table 5.3 and associations between specific origins and destinations are presented in Tables 5.4 and 5.5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Type</th>
<th>Wave I to Wave IV</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>127</td>
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Table 5.3  Estimated Row and Column Scores from Best Fit Models, WI to WIV

Modified-Sharkat Typology -- RC II Model

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<tr>
<th>Adolescent Aff.</th>
<th>$\phi = \text{Row Scores}$</th>
<th>Adolescent Aff.</th>
<th>$\varphi = \text{Column Scores}$</th>
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*Intrinsic Association* $\beta = 4.504$
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<td>-0.267</td>
<td>-0.284</td>
<td>-0.291</td>
<td>-0.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>0.076</td>
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<td>-0.084</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.034</td>
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<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.193</td>
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<td>-0.119</td>
<td>-0.089</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
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<td>0.052</td>
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<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td>1.003</td>
<td>1.185</td>
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Table 5.5  Associations Between Affiliations, WI-WIV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Other Protestant</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Other Non-Christian</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Lutheran</th>
<th>Episcopal</th>
<th>Unaffiliated</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
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<td>-0.085</td>
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<td>0.172</td>
<td>0.121</td>
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<td>-0.069</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td>-0.113</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.018</td>
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<td>-0.040</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
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<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.057</td>
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<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
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<td>-0.085</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
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<td>Unaffiliated</td>
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<td>-0.404</td>
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<td>0.076</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.531</td>
<td>0.633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ a_{ij} = \sqrt{\beta_{i}} \times \sqrt{\beta_{j}} \]
Liberal Protestant: Switchers and In-Switchers

The destination of liberal switchers is a point of contention between secularization theorists and proponents of the rational choice model. Secularizationists predict movement to the unaffiliated group, while the rational choice model suggests that disaffected liberals will be attracted to more conservative religions. The model results presented in Table 5.4 indicate that the Liberal Protestant origin is strongly associated with the destinations of Other Protestant (evangelical and non-denominational) and Moderate Protestant (Methodists and Disciples). Importantly, the Liberal Protestant origin shows a negative relationship with the unaffiliated destination, indicating that it is unlikely that, after model controls, Liberal Protestants choose to become unaffiliated. The rational choice model substantially outperforms the secularization expectations with regard to the destination of Liberal Protestant switchers (Hypotheses 5 and 6).

The secularization thesis also predicts that of the few in-switchers to Liberal Protestantism, those from conservative protestant origins will provide the strongest relationship. Indeed, the Other Protestant origin (evangelicals and non-denominational) and the Conservative Protestant origin (sect-like Protestants) had the strongest positive relationships with the Liberal Protestant destination. Bruce may have been correct in positing that the greatest selling point for Liberal Protestants is that they “aren’t conservative” (1999: 181). Hypothesis 7 is therefore supported.

Conservative Protestant: Switchers and In-Switchers

Of the four conservative categories in the Modified-Sherkat Typology, Mormons and Baptists had higher than average stability, while Conservative and Other Protestants had lower than average stability. Given that Mormons and black Baptists (almost half of the Baptists in the
sample are black), belong to semi-voluntary religions; the social sanction argument may explain their relatively high stability rates. The relatively low stability among the other two conservative groups does not support Hypothesis 8.

With respect to the origin of in-switchers to conservative religions (Other Protestant, Conservative Protestant, Baptist, Mormon), Other Protestant and Liberal Protestant origins produce the strongest associations with the conservative destinations with the exception of the Mormon destination. Both the Other Protestant and Liberal Protestant origins are negatively related to the Mormon destination. The secularization thesis, which posits that in-switchers to conservative Protestant affiliations will not tend to come from Liberal Protestant switchers (Hypothesis 9) is not supported. The rational choice model, however predicted in-switchers to conservative Protestant affiliations would tend to be Liberal Protestant switchers is supported (Hypothesis 10).

Three Typical Patterns

Table 5.4 also indicates a strong negative association between Judaism and, not necessarily Christianity, but Protestantism in particular (Hypothesis 11). The model also shows that Catholics and Protestants are unlikely to cross the Catholic – Protestant border, but this is true only for the Protestants with whom Catholics do not share similar rituals (Hypothesis 12). Indeed, adolescent Catholic switchers have a positive relationship with Lutheran and especially Episcopal destinations. Interestingly, this relationship is not reciprocal in that adolescent Lutheran and Episcopal switchers exhibit a negative association with the Catholic destination.

With respect to mobility within Protestantism, the decline in denominationalism predicts that Mainline affiliates will switch frequently with each other. To test this, the R-Order
Typology must be used because it breaks down the major Mainline denominations. Table 5.5 reveals that, along the origins and destinations, the low-ritual Mainline denominations are grouped together and the high-ritual Mainline denominations are grouped together. This suggests that these denominations do, in fact, tend to exchange members with one another rather than with more disparate religions. The decline in denominationalism (Hypothesis 13) is supported by the model results, especially within the low- and high-ritual classifications.

Mobility across the Conservative - Mainline Protestant divide can be examined by comparing associations between origins and destinations. For example, the Other Protestant origin (evangelical and non-denominational) is relatively strongly associated with the Liberal Protestant destination, but the strength of the association (.299) is much lower than the strength of the association between the Liberal Protestant origin and the Other Protestant destination (.521). Therefore, due to differences in origin-destination associations, the Other Protestants are expected to experience a net gain and the Liberal Protestants a net loss in exchanges between the categories. The same pattern is evident when comparing associations between Conservative Protestants (sect-like Protestants) and Liberal Protestants. The model shows that Liberal Protestants suffer net losses to the more conservative Protestants.

However, Moderate Protestants do not suffer the same fate in this model. The Moderate Protestant destination has positive associations with four Protestant origins (Other, Liberal, Conservative, and Baptist). Further, as an origin, Moderate Protestant does not have significant relationships with those four destinations. Thus, the model shows that Moderate Protestants
enjoy net gains when exchanging with the other four Protestant groups. Therefore, Hypothesis 14 is supported for Liberal but not Moderate Protestants.

Discussion
Almost half of young adults have switched religious affiliation by young adulthood. In this chapter the patterns of religious mobility were analyzed and the results were used to adjudicate between competing theoretic perspectives of religious choice. Association models were used to assess patterns that are not easily observable with cross-tabulations. The best-fit model was the log-multiplicative model and it controlled for the likelihood of remaining and for the numbers of in-switchers and out-switchers among the specific affiliations. That is, estimates of relationships between affiliations were based on asymmetries between affiliations that still exist after controlling for inheritance effects and the marginal distributions of switchers.

Of the two versions of the rational choice model—the strong version and the weak version—the strong version focuses almost exclusively on the factors that relate to the production of religious commodities (i.e. supply-side). The religious human capital perspective and the strictness thesis are considered components of the strong model because individuals themselves play a key role in the production of religious goods. The weak version of the rational choice model includes the possibility of shifts in demand caused by changes in preferences or by changes in choices that may not reflect preferences (e.g. social sanctions likely to operate in semi-voluntary religions).

When comparing the religious human capital perspective and the strictness thesis against the socially embedded choice perspective, the results clearly favored the socially embedded choice perspective. The five affiliations that had above average stability rates were all predicted
by the social sanction component of the socially embedded choice perspective. These five affiliations, Jewish, Catholic, Mormon, Lutheran, and Black Protestants, meet the criteria of being semi-voluntary religions. Predicting retention based on distinctiveness, as the religious human capital perspective does, proved less successful. Episcopalians and Lutherans are equally distinctive, yet the religious human capital perspective cannot explain the much higher retention rate among Lutherans. The exceptionally distinctive Conservative (sect-like) Protestant group experienced the lowest retention, a result that casts further doubt on the strictness thesis.

Clearly the strong version of the rational choice model is insufficient to explain choices that individuals make in the religious marketplace. The success of the social sanction framework in predicting relative stability among different affiliations points to the necessary inclusion of demand factors when analyzing outcomes.

Even using the weak rational choice model to explain the likelihood of remaining in a religion will be subject to criticism in the next decade. The influence of social norms on religious decisions, even within semi-voluntary institutions, is declining (Sherkat 2002). This, coupled with the general trend of increasing religious mobility will result in a majority who switch religions. The religious human capital theory will be unable to explain this statistic. The socially embedded choice perspective, which relies on the notion of adaptive preferences, will need to be modified to include more possibilities of preference change over time.

A key debate between secularization theorists and rational choice model proponents involves the mobility of affiliates from liberal and conservative religions. Excluding those who are affiliates of the semi-voluntary religions, these include the Other, Moderate, Conservative, and Liberal Protestants. In general, secularizationists anticipate a rapid decline of liberal
affiliates, which was supported; a decline, albeit slower, of conservative affiliates, which was supported among Conservative (sect-like) Protestants only; and an increase in the number of unaffiliates, which was supported. A key point made by secularizationists is that liberal disaffiliates are becoming unaffiliated and not being converted to conservative Protestantism. This proposition is not supported. Conservative Protestants do in fact attract disaffected liberals. Overall, the findings regarding the secularization thesis were mixed.

The reason that disaffected liberals are inclined to join conservative denominations is, according to the rational choice model proponents, because they wish to take advantage of their religious human capital, or because they simply still prefer religion, or because they are seeking religious compensators that Liberal Protestants are less willing to provide. The model results support the religious human capital and preferences explanation over the compensator explanation because if compensators were the determining factor of choice, then Mormons as a destination, who offer exceptional compensators, would have been positively related to Liberal Protestant switchers.

One piece of evidence that supports the religious human capital perspective is the lack of reciprocity in the Episcopal – Catholic exchange relationship. While it is true that religious human capital includes familiarity with ritual, it also includes familiarity with church doctrine. Catholic and Episcopal rituals are quite similar, but doctrines are quite different. The Catholic doctrine is especially distinctive (Iannaccone 1994:300) and would therefore require a significant investment in religious human capital for an Episcopalian to experience the full satisfaction available within Catholicism. Episcopal doctrine, while somewhat unique, is not as distinctive and would not require as much of an investment for a Catholic switcher. Thus, the religious human capital perspective offers a plausible explanation for why there exists a positive
relationship between Catholic origin and Episcopal destination, but a negative one between Episcopal origin and Catholic destination.

Overall, the mobility patterns found among this cohort of young adults suggest that religious decisions are complex and cannot be reduced to simple supply-side explanations. The demand-side, which allows for the notion that choices are socially embedded, must be included in any analysis. With the exception of the Catholic-Episcopal relationship, the patterns explained by the religious human capital perspective can also be explained by social sanctions, leaving its explanatory power lacking and support for it inconsistent. In addition, the strictness theory found no support at all. Finally, it is still too early to give up on the secularization thesis in the U.S. The strongest strike against the secularization thesis is that disaffected liberals favor joining more consumer denominations instead of disaffiliating, but as long as the proportion claiming unaffiliation continues to grow, the secularization thesis still remains viable.
Sociology of religion scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to identifying the trends and patterns of religious mobility over the past 50 years (Hadaway and Marler 1993; Hout and Wilde 2004; Pew 1998; Roof and Hadaway 1979; Roof and McKinney 1987; Sherkat 2001, 2002, 2004; Smith and Sikkink 2003). Some have narrowed the focus to analyze mobility during specific points in the life course (Regnerus and Uecker 2006; Stotzenberg et al. 1995; Wuthnow and Glock 1973) while others have studied leaving religion altogether (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Uecker et al. 2007; Wilson and Sherkat 1994). An understudied aspect of religious mobility is the specific decision among religiously unaffiliated adolescents to affiliate as a young adult.

Two empirically similar but theoretically different perspectives seek to explain patterns of religious mobility (Iannaccone 1990; Sherkat 1997). Both perspectives hinge on childhood experiences with religion, and both predict that adults will tend to make religious choices that are similar to their experiences as children. But what is expected for adults who do not claim a religious affiliation as adolescents? In this chapter I examine the decision to affiliate from the religious human capital perspective, a component of the strong rational choice model, and the socially embedded choice perspective, part of the weak rational choice model. Results indicate that the religious human capital perspective fails to predict the likelihood of affiliating as a young adult among a sample of unaffiliated adolescents. The socially embedded choice perspective much more closely predicts the prevalence of affiliating and also identifies social factors that significantly influence the decision to affiliate. Therefore, these findings argue
strongly for the incorporation of social context and influences when analyzing religious decision-making behaviors in the religious marketplace.

**Background**

The Religious Human Capital Perspective

As detailed in Chapter 2, the concept of religious human capital is used by Iannaccone (1990) to describe decisions made by consumers in the religious marketplace. This perspective is a model of household religious production that mirrors the model of household production found in economics. In short, just as human capital, in the form of skills and knowledge, is used as an input for the production of household products such as maintaining a clean house, religious human capital is an input in the production of religious value and satisfaction. Religious human capital consists of skills and knowledge related to the religious experience (e.g. knowledge of doctrine and tradition, experience with rituals). The more religious human capital a person acquires the more religious satisfaction he or she will experience, which will in turn motivate increased participation in religion, which will then add, once again, to the stock of religious human capital.

Religious training (i.e. the acquisition of skills and knowledge) initially comes from parents and religious institutions. To take advantage of the religious human capital invested in during adolescence, young adults will “naturally” gravitate to their parents’ religion (Iannaccone 1990: 299). If, when they mature and make their own decisions, they choose to switch affiliations, they will choose religions similar to their religion of origin to more efficiently use their existing religious human capital.
A key assumption in the strong rational choice model, and therefore in the religious human capital perspective, is that preferences for religion are considered stable (Finke and Iannaccone 1993:23). Specifically, preferences for religious goods do not vary much across people, places, or time (Iannaccone 1997:26). An observed change in religious behavior is not a function of changes in norms, tastes, or beliefs, according to this perspective. Rather, behavioral change is a result of other factors related to the maximization calculus – more specifically prices (e.g. costs of religious attendance), income (e.g. ability to pay the costs of religious attendance), and skills and experience (e.g. religious human capital). If prices and income are assumed constant, then changes in religious consumption is a response to changes in religious human capital, not to changes in preferences. This reluctance to include a theory of preference into the human capital approach to religious decisions has drawn criticism (Ammerman 1997; Demerath 1995; Ellison 1995; Sherkat and Wilson 1995) and spawned the development of a broader perspective on religious decision making (Sherkat 1997).

The Socially Embedded Choice Perspective

The socially embedded choice perspective specifically allows for preferences to endogenously shift and also acknowledges that choices made in the religious marketplace may not always reflect preferences (Sherkat 1997). Thus, understanding the social contexts in which preferences are formed, changed, or are not accurately reflected in choices is imperative for analyzing religious behavior. Even though these two perspectives view the role of preferences differently, they begin their explication at the same place – childhood.

According to the socially embedded choice perspective, children undergo religious socialization by parents and religious organizations (Armet 2009; Bader and Desmond 2006;
Boyatzi and Janicki 2003; Sherkat and Wilson 1995; Smith and Sikkink 2003). Sherkat characterizes this socialization as encouragement to engage with “…particular religious understandings which give religion value” (1997: 9). These meaning systems constitute religious preferences that are adaptive in nature in that they get stronger with additional consumption of the religious good (Ellison 1995). Preferences that are formed through socialization may change over time primarily through learning about new religious goods. An expansion in the number or type of individuals in a social network or moving geographically offers opportunities to gain new information about religious goods. In addition to preference formation and change, choices made in the religious marketplace may not always reflect preference. For instance, individuals may choose religion even in the absence of a specific preference for religion if they (a) want to please another (i.e. sympathy); (b) want to irritate another (i.e. antipathy); or (c) set an example for another (i.e. example-setting). These behaviors are thought to occur in families when, for example, a wife attends mass to please her husband (sympathy); a young adult expresses independence from unaffiliated parents by becoming a born-again Christian (antipathy); or parents attend prayer services at the local Synagogue because they want their son to refrain from complaining about Hebrew school (example-setting).

The most empirically supported type of social influence on religious choices are rewards and punishments, or social sanctions (Harrison and Lazerwitz 1982; Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Roof and Manning 1994; Sherkat 2002). Rewards are non-religious benefits provided to religious participants and include items such as friendship, opportunities for leadership, and access to community resources. Non-participation may result in sanctions including the withholding of friendship, opportunities, and resources. The power of social sanctions on influencing choices depends, in part, on the centrality of the religion to the community and the
degree to which the congregation and the community exhibit a consolidation of ties (Blau and Schwarz 1984). When religion serves as the symbolic center of the community, sanctions for lack of participation can be especially powerful because opportunities for non-religious benefits are not available outside of the religious sphere. When communities exhibit a dense consolidation of social ties (i.e. few diverse connections across different aspects of social life), participation is not considered completely voluntary (Harrison and Lazerwitz 1988). Examples of these types of communities include African Americans in Protestantism, Hispanics in Catholicism, Jews, Lutherans, Mormons, and Catholics. Social sanctions favoring religious participation are especially effective in these communities, and serve as a primary reason religious preferences and choices do not always align.

In sum, the socially embedded choice perspective contends that children are socialized to a specific religious meaning system and these preferences can change over time, primarily through learning about other religious goods. Religious choices may not reflect religious preferences if sympathy, example-setting, or social sanctions are in effect. But how do these religious preference dynamics work if adolescents were unaffiliated and may have not been subject to religious socialization as adolescents?

Adolescents with No Affiliation

When analyzing the mobility of the unaffiliated, it is important to make the distinction between unaffiliated youth, who may not have invested in religious human capital or been socialized into specific religious preferences and unaffiliated adults who may have acquired religious human capital or religious preferences at some point previously. These two types of unaffiliated
individuals should be differently motivated when making religious decisions. Unfortunately, these important differences are not always highlighted in the literature.

The religious human capital prediction

In Iannaccone’s (1990) development of the religious human capital perspective, the possibility of not acquiring religious human capital as a child or youth is addressed only intermittently. At one point he discusses the expectations for individuals with highly distinctive religious human capital. Specifically, he claims that distinctive religious human capital acquired from religions such as Catholicism, is not efficiently transferable to other religions, and this is why individuals raised in these traditions are more likely to remain in their affiliation than switch. He supports this claim by citing retention rate data from Kluegel (1980) in which the more distinctive the religion, the higher the retention rate (Jewish 87%; Catholic 85%; Lutheran 78%; and Disciples of Christ 55%). He then states that, as expected, “Those reared with no religious affiliation, and hence little or no religious capital, remained unaffiliated only 38% of the time” (Iannaccone 1990:300). Although he doesn’t expand on this statement, he apparently views the lack of religious human capital as similar to having a diffuse stock of religious human capital that is highly transferrable. Stark and Finke note, “Lack of religious commitment makes it inexpensive (in terms of religious capital) to take up a new faith” (Stark and Finke 2000:122). Having invested in no religious human capital as an adolescent appears to serve as an active incentive to “try out” religion as an adult.

This is inconsistent with other statements Iannaccone makes regarding the value of religious human capital. Iannaccone states, “It is difficult if not impossible to appreciate religious services without first becoming familiar with the doctrines, rituals, and traditions that
under pin them” (1990:298). Thus, with this statement, Iannaccone is implying that the lack of religious human capital should act as a barrier to joining a religion, and we should therefore expect retention rates among the unaffiliated to be relatively high, not relatively low. Unfortunately, Iannaccone (1990) does not address this apparent inconsistency.

What then does the religious human capital perspective actually predict about the likelihood of affiliating as an adult given no affiliation as an adolescent? Stark and Finke clearly agree with Iannaccone’s initial comments, “…the single most unstable ‘religion’ of origin is ‘no religious preference’ . . . the great majority of those who say that their family had no religion join a religion as adults” (Stark and Finke 2000:121). Again, as proponents of the strong rational choice model, these scholars point to the lack of religious capital that makes it inexpensive to take up a new faith and conclude that unaffiliated youth will flock to religion as young adults.

The socially embedded choice prediction

Iannaccone’s definition of religious human capital (knowledge and skills related to doctrine, tradition, and ritual) is quite different from Sherkat’s (1997) description of religious socialization:

Through participation and immersion in religious community, individuals come to have particular religious understandings [religious preferences] which give religion value. These meaning systems provide us with a number of distinctly religious benefits which we come to appreciate, such as existential certainty, explanations for stressful life events, internal coping resources, attachments to divine others … (85)

Since Sherkat conceptualizes religious socialization as the acquisition of religious preferences and religious preferences are essentially, “favored supernatural explanations about
the meaning, purpose, and origins of life” (Sherkat 2003: 152), it is reasonable to assume that youth who are unaffiliated are still socialized into a meaning system by their parents. Whether this meaning system includes a supernatural component depends on the belief system of the parents. Indeed, an unaffiliated adolescent does not guarantee an unaffiliated parent. However, an unaffiliated adolescent can be assumed to be religiously socialized to a lesser degree than an affiliated adolescent, as is evidenced by the answer of “none” to the question, “What is your current religion?” Thus, if adults choose religious affiliations based on their youth socialization, unaffiliated youth will tend to remain unaffiliated.

But what of those who do not remain unaffiliated? Recall that the socially embedded choice perspective allows for religious choices to be based on preferences, changes in preferences, or on factors that influence choice but not preference. This chapter first tests the predictions of both perspectives regarding the prevalence of affiliating as a young adult. Then the socially embedded choice perspective is used to identify social factors that influence the decision to affiliate.

**Hypotheses**

*The Prevalence of Joining*

The religious human capital perspective views the lack of religious human capital as non-distinctive religious human capital, and therefore predicts the large majority of unaffiliated adolescents will affiliate by young adulthood (*Hypothesis 1*). The socially embedded choice perspective clearly articulates what religious socialization is, so it is clear about what lack of religious socialization looks like as an adult. It simply means that their preferred meaning systems do not involve identification with an organized religion. Given that the socially
embedded choice perspective predicts that adults prefer similar experiences to their childhood, I expect that the majority of unaffiliated youth will tend to remain unaffiliated in young adulthood (Hypothesis 2).

Factors Associated with Affiliating

While the socially embedded choice expectation is that individuals will remain unaffiliated, there are those who will indeed adopt an affiliation by young adulthood. Within the socially embedded choice perspective, this can occur in three ways: parental social sanctions, preference changing and/or learning, and community social sanctions.

First, it is possible that youth may have a preference for religion during adolescence but did not affiliate because of potential sanctions from unaffiliated parents. The possibility of social sanctions working within the family has not been explicitly explored in the literature, although it is similar to the literature regarding religious choices based on status (Stark and Glock 1968; Roof and McKinney 1987; and Sherkat 2001). If this is a significant pattern, then there should be a negative relationship between affiliation status of parent during the respondent’s adolescence and the likelihood of affiliating as a young adult (Hypothesis 3).

Second, preferences may change. Preferences change when an individual either receives new information or changes their perspective on the trustworthiness of existing information. Exposure to new information regarding religious options can occur in the form of new friends, education, geographic mobility, or changes in family structure (Bibby 1997; Hadaway and Marler 1997; Lawton and Bures 2001; Loveland 2003; Schwadel 2003; Smith and Sikkink 2003; Stoltsenberg et al. 1993; Wilson and Sherkat 1995). Therefore, I expect that education will positively influence the likelihood of affiliating as a young adult (Hypothesis 4) and getting
married will positively influence the likelihood of becoming an affiliate (Hypothesis 5). Because religious goods are in inherently uncertain, the perceived quality of the information is especially important (Sherkat 1995; Stark and Finke 2000). Receiving knowledge through trusted sources (e.g. friends and family) has the strongest impact on whether one will experiment with a new religious good (Sherkat 1995:998). If parents were supplying religious information during adolescence but the adolescent remained unaffiliated, it is possible the adolescent viewed the source of information as untrustworthy. Parents may provide the same religious information later in life but the perceived quality of the information may have improved simply because the individual has matured. If this is the case, then having an affiliated parent during the respondent’s adolescence will positively influence the likelihood of affiliating (Hypothesis 6).

In addition to social sanctions in the family of origin and learned preferences due to new information or improved quality of information, individuals may still prefer to be unaffiliated, but choose to affiliate anyway. The typical reasons for a gap between preferences and choice are sympathy, antipathy, example setting, and social sanctions. Sympathy with a spouse should be captured, in part, by including marital status (see Hypothesis 5). Antipathy-motivated affiliation may occur when a child grows up and makes religious choices to spite the parents, rather than to please them. These behaviors should be captured, in part, by inclusion of parents’ affiliation status (see Hypotheses 3 and 6). Finally, parents wishing to set an example of valuing religion for their children even if they themselves do not value religion may choose to affiliate. The presence of children should positively influence the likelihood of affiliating (Hypotheses 7).

Social sanctions tend to be the most effective within communities in which religious affiliation is considered semi-voluntary and in regions where religion is afforded high social importance, such as the southern U.S. Semi-voluntary religious environments are likely to occur
in Protestantism among African Americans (Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Sherkat 2002) and in Catholicism among Hispanics (Perl, Greely, and Gray 2006; Roof and Manning 1994).

Therefore, blacks (Hypothesis 8) and Hispanics (Hypothesis 9) will be more likely to affiliate than whites. Individuals who grew up in the south will be more likely to affiliate than those who grew up in the non-South (Hypothesis 10).

Methods and Analytic Strategy

Data

See Chapter 2 for an in-depth description of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and the data management techniques used in this analysis.

Measures

Affiliation status in adolescence (Wave I) is determined by the respondent’s answer to the question, “What is your religion.” If the respondent answers “none” then he or she is coded as unaffiliated in adolescence and is included in this study (n=1,492). Affiliation status in young adulthood (Wave IV) is determined similarly. If the respondent answers “none” then he or she is considered unaffiliated, and if he or she reports a religion, even if it is “other,” then the respondent is considered affiliated as a young adult. Of the adolescents who were unaffiliated in the sample, 72 (4.8%) did not have non-missing data for all of the variables. Listwise deletion was used and the analysis was conducted on 1,421 observations.
Analytic Strategy

The prevalence of becoming affiliated given an adolescent unaffiliated status is calculated using simple means (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Logistic regression is used to predict affiliation as a young adult given adolescent unaffiliation (Hypotheses 3-10).

Four control variables are introduced in the regressions in order to avoid bias. First, age and socioeconomic status during adolescence are included. Second, because religiosity has been linked to mental health (Ellison and Henderson 2011; Ellison et al. 2001; Krause 2010), depression has been included. Third, because religiosity has been cited as a potential coping mechanism in the face of social stressors (Ellison and Levin 1998; Krause 2011; Lin and Ensel 1989; Wheaton 1985), the number of stressful life events is included.\(^\text{11}\)

Results

Table 6.1 presents the descriptive statistics for the unaffiliated adolescent sample, by young adult affiliation status. All variables except age, gender, being a race/ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, or Hispanic are significantly different for those who remained unaffiliated compared to those who affiliated. Compared to those who did not affiliate, the newly affiliated are, on average, more likely to have been raised in the south, be of lower socioeconomic status, be non-white, be less educated, have more depressive symptoms, to have been exposed to more stressful life events, and to be married and have children.

With the exception of education, these descriptive findings are consistent with the hypotheses proposed by the socially embedded choice perspective. Education was initially

\(^{11}\) Self-reported general health and personality traits thought to be associated with religious participation were also included, but were not significant. They were removed for parsimony.
included because it is a potential pathway for preference learning that would lead to more knowledge about religious goods and should therefore have a positive impact on mobility.

Table 6.1  Descriptive statistics of unaffiliated adolescents by affiliation in young adulthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Remained Unaffiliated</th>
<th>Affiliated</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, WIV [25-32]</td>
<td>28.47</td>
<td>28.54</td>
<td>0.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Religiously Affiliated</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES, WI</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH White</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH Black</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race/ethnicity</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South, WI</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate, WIII</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate, WIII</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate, WIV</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms, W1 [0-15]</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms, WIII [1-15]</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms, WIV [0-15]</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married in WIII</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married in WIV</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid(s) in WIII</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid(s) in WIV</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful Life Events, through WIII</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful Life Events, WIII to WIV</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Stressful Life Events</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>12.29</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>675</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cell entries denote means (standard deviations in parentheses) for continuous variables and proportions for categorical responses.
However, previous empirical research has shown that education diminishes religious affiliation with exclusivist religious organizations (Schwadel 2010) and therefore, in this study, might negatively influence affiliation because so few affiliations offer non-exclusivist orientations. The differences in mean education between those who affiliated and those who did not supports the latter interpretation regarding the role of education in affiliation decisions.

Table 5.1 presents the proportion of individuals from each affiliation category that remained in the same category by young adulthood. Using the data organized into the Modified Sherkat Typology, the results show that the stability rate within the unaffiliated group was 52.3%, which is only slightly lower than overall stability rate (54.5%). This supports the prediction made by the socially embedded choice perspective, that the majority of unaffiliated adolescents will remain unaffiliated in young adulthood (Hypothesis 2). The religious human capital perspective, which anticipated that the “great majority” (Stark and Finke 2000:121) would affiliate is not supported (Hypothesis 1).

Table 6.2 presents results from the logistic regression predicting the probability of young adult religious affiliation among unaffiliated adolescents. Model 1 includes measures from adolescence; Model 2 adds characteristics from Wave IV and includes educational attainment, marriage, exposures to stressful life events, and changes in depressive symptoms from adolescence. The final model adds the presence of children at Wave IV.

\[\text{12} \text{ Of course, as illustrated in Chapter 4, the number of categories in the typology significantly impacts the overall switching rate among those who were affiliated as adolescents, but not among those who were unaffiliated adolescents. Typologies with fewer categories than the Modified Sherkat would show retention rates that were higher than unaffiliated adolescents, and typologies with more categories would show retention rates that were lower than unaffiliated adolescents. The main point is that the majority remain unaffiliated.}\]
Table 6.2 Logistic Regression Predicting Affiliation by Young Adulthood Among Unaffiliated Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coeff.</td>
<td>std. error</td>
<td>coeff.</td>
<td>std. error</td>
<td>coeff.</td>
<td>std. error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measures at Adolescence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.132</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>-0.115</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>0.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (WIV)</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.493</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.661</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.682</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status (WI)</td>
<td>-0.352</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.292</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Affiliated (WI)</td>
<td>0.439</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms (WI)</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.582</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measures at Young Adulthood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate (WIV)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.157</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful Life Events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Depressive Symptoms (WI-WIV)</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (WIV)</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child in HH (WIV)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.418</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Likelihood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-798</td>
<td></td>
<td>-786</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>119.23</td>
<td>128.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo r²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
The association between affiliation status of the parent when the respondent was an adolescent and affiliating as a young adult was significant and relatively stable in all three models. Unaffiliated adolescents with affiliated parents were roughly 53% more likely to affiliate than those with unaffiliated parents (p<.001). This supports the possibility that the information from parents became more trustworthy (Hypotheses 6) rather than the notion that unaffiliated parents were subjecting youth to social sanctions that favored unaffiliation (Hypothesis 3).

Preference learning was tested by the inclusion of educational attainment and marriage. In Model 2, compared to those who did not graduate from college, being a college graduate was not a significant predictor of the decision to religiously affiliate (Hypothesis 4). Also in Model 2, marriage is significant (p<.05), with married individuals 33% more likely to have affiliated than unmarried.

Sympathy and example-setting were tested by the inclusion of the presence of children in the household. If sympathy or learned preferences (e.g. gaining new information from a spouse) is the reason that marriage is significant, it should remain significant after the inclusion of the presence of children (Model 3). However, when the presence of children is included, marriage is no longer significant. In other words, having children in the household fully mediates the positive relationship between marriage and the likelihood of religiously affiliating. Those with at least one child living in the household are 52% more likely to have affiliated than those without children. Thus, learned preferences through marriage and sympathy behaviors within marriage are not supported as significant ways that the affiliation decision is made (Hypothesis 5). However, to the extent that having children represents example-setting behavior, this notion is supported (Hypothesis 7).
The test of the impact of social sanctions on the decision to affiliate focuses on the race/ethnicity variables. As a generalization, African Americans and Hispanics tend to live in highly socially integrated communities that place a great value on religion. This implies that religious participation is semi-voluntary in these communities. The significant relationships between race/ ethnicity and the decision to affiliate are extremely strong, with blacks about 60% more likely than whites to affiliate \((p<.05)\) and Hispanics 96% more likely than whites to affiliate \((p<.001)\). In addition, individuals who grew up in the south were 85% more likely to affiliate than those who did not grow up in the south. Therefore, the social sanction argument is strongly supported within this cohort of young adults (Hypotheses 8, 9, 10).

The unusually high positive coefficients for the social sanction indicators (e.g. being black, being Hispanic) suggest the possibility of omitted variable bias. Indeed, both race/ethnicity and religious affiliation are correlated with region. Thus, what appears to be a race/ethnicity effect may actually be, in part, a function of geographical location. To test this possibility, a fixed effects model of joining a religious affiliation was run that controls for average state effects. The coefficients from this model reflect within-state relationships between the independent variables and joining an affiliation and are therefore not biased by potential state-level omitted variables.

Table 6.3 contains the results of the fixed effects model predicting joining an affiliation. The results are very similar to the model without fixed effects. Among the non-race variables, all the coefficients were extremely similar and there were no changes in significance. The Hispanic coefficient maintained significance and increased from 0.67 (OR= 1.95) in the standard model to 0.81 (OR=2.25) in the fixed-effects model. The African American coefficient was still somewhat significant \((p<.06)\), and the coefficient fell from 0.47 (OR=1.60) in the standard model
to .40 (OR=1.50) in the fixed-effects model. Thus, after controlling for the average state-effects, Hispanic and African American unaffiliated adolescents were still far more likely than whites to affiliate by young adulthood. This significance of this finding is that the likelihood of joining is not simply a matter of social location. Specifically, socioeconomic status, parent’s religious affiliation status, depression levels, and having children by young adulthood are still important factors above and beyond omitted state-level variables.

**Table 6.3 Fixed Effects Logistic Regression Predicting Affiliation by Young Adulthood Among Unaffiliated Adolescents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures at Adolescence</th>
<th>coeff.</th>
<th>std. error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (WIV)</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.405</td>
<td>0.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.810</td>
<td>*** 0.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>0.411</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status (WI)</td>
<td>-0.251</td>
<td>* 0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Affiliated (WI)</td>
<td>0.433</td>
<td>*** 0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms (WI)</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>* 0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.314</td>
<td>0.888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures at Young Adulthood</th>
<th>coeff.</th>
<th>std. error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate (WIV)</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful Life Events</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Depressive Symptoms (WI-WIV)</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (WIV)</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child in HH (WIV)</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>** 0.141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Log-Likelihood: -718
Likelihood Ratio: 78

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
Discussion

The goal of this chapter was first to clarify the expectations of two perspectives of religious decision making with regard to the affiliation outcomes among religiously unaffiliated adolescents. The second goal was to identify factors associated with affiliating in young adulthood and to use these results to further the discussion regarding the roles of religious human capital and religious socialization and to better understand the pathways to religious affiliation among the unaffiliated.

The religious human capital perspective does not provide an unequivocal prediction of outcomes in this situation. On the one hand, the primary proponents of the religious human capital perspective explicitly state that that those without religious human capital acquired in adolescence will be far more likely to affiliate as adults than to remain unaffiliated (Iannaccone 1990; Stark and Finke 2000). On the other hand, the logic behind religious mobility is to capitalize on existing religious human capital. If no religious human capital exists, why would one expect mobility at all? Indeed, religious satisfaction is expected to be difficult to experience at all if one has no knowledge or skills related to the specific religion. To reconcile these two propositions, one could point to the theories of conversion which typically describe two phases of conversion (Lofland and Stark 1965). The first stage is recruitment in which people become interested in new religious goods through social ties to existing members (Stark and Finke 2000:123). At this stage recruits learn about beliefs and perhaps participate occasionally. The second stage is conversion. This is when they make the decision to fully commit. Because they have at least some religious human capital from the recruitment stage, their religious satisfaction at the instantiation of conversion is greater than null and begins to build rapidly with participation. Thus, both propositions—one that states religious satisfaction is unlikely without
existing religious human capital and one that states those without religious human capital will be extremely likely to affiliate—can coexist. Unfortunately for the religious human capital perspective, the prediction of a large majority of affiliation among the unaffiliated is not consistent with the data, and Hypothesis 1 is not supported.

Clarifying the expectations of the socially embedded choice perspective is much more straightforward. Because adaptive preferences suggest that individuals will continue making decisions consistent with the religious socialization of their youth, the majority of unaffiliated adolescents should, and in fact do, remain unaffiliated. Hypothesis 2 is supported.

The divergent expectations of these two perspectives provides an opportunity to further understand these two hypothesized mechanisms of religious choice. Both approaches focus on the influence of childhood experiences on adult religious behaviors. In the religious human capital approach, the actual experiences of worship, developing friendships, becoming familiar with rituals and doctrine constitute the elements that are acquired in childhood. In the socially embedded choice perspective, developed by Sherkat (1995, 1997, 2001, 2003), religious socialization consists of encouraging specific worldviews that focus on meaning, purpose, and the origins of life (2003:152). Given this definition of religious socialization as the impetus for developing religious preferences, clearly religious socialization can be secular in nature. If parents favor a more secular worldview, then they will foster this perspective in their children. Thus, in the case of the socially embedded choice perspective, religious socialization is occurring whether the youth is affiliated or not. But in the case of religious human capital perspective, religious human capital is not being acquired unless the adolescent is actually participating in religious activities, which is unlikely if he or she is not affiliated. Therefore, for the sake of simplification, assume that unaffiliated youth are not attending services and are therefore not
investing in religious human capital and their only source of religious socialization is from their parents.

Parents can be unaffiliated or affiliated and this will guide the content of their religious socialization efforts. If parents are affiliated, then they are probably socializing their children about the meaning of life from a religious perspective. If parents are unaffiliated, then we can assume they are socializing their youth about the meaning of life from a secular perspective. Consequently, if religious human capital is a primary mechanism of affiliation, then parental affiliation would be insignificant; if religious socialization is a primary mechanism of affiliation, then parental affiliation would be significant. This research found that having an affiliated parent is strongly and positively associated with affiliating as an adult. Therefore, in the case of this recent cohort of young adults, the socially embedded choice perspective is unambiguously supported and Sherkat’s conceptualization of religious socialization makes sense.

The other exceptionally strong support for the socially embedded choice perspective is the effect of having children on religious affiliation. Marriage is only significant inasmuch as it facilitates having children. Thus, example-setting is clearly one way that social context affects religious choices, even if preferences for non-religion still remain.

Finally, the increased likelihood of Hispanics and African Americans affiliating as young adults makes a strong case for social sanctions as an important influencing factor in religious decision-making. There is no reason to expect that Hispanics or African Americans would be more likely to affiliate than whites except that the cultural context within which they tend to live may have strong normative expectations for religious affiliation and participation. Affiliation may be rewarded and lack of participation may be punished. A similar fate may befall those who live in the South. Even after controlling for race, southerners were much more likely to
affiliate, which indicates that the cultural norms regarding religious affiliation are exceptionally strong social influences in the south.

The strong rational choice model that emphasizes the supply-side of the religious market is insufficient for explaining individual religious decisions. Further, when it is employed to demonstrate why unaffiliated adolescents affiliate as young adults, it proves incapable. The findings from this chapter suggest that when analyzing religious decision-making, one must understand that religious behavior is not completely voluntary, as proposed by the strong rational choice perspective, but is instead a function of socialization, preferences that can change over time, and social influences that can create a gap between preferences and behavior.
Scholarly interest in the sociology of religion increased during the last 15 years of the 20th century. The resurgence of the subfield grew from a shift in the religious affiliation of U.S. adults and a newly proposed theoretical perspective with which to study religious outcomes. Through the end of the 20th century, many studies documented the changes and proposed explanations for the shift in religious affiliations. Other research debated the appropriateness and efficacy of the new paradigm. However, the frequency of in-depth analyses of these topics has slowed over last decade. This dissertation takes a fresh look at the issue of religious decision-making at the individual level and discusses implications of these results for the overall distribution of affiliations. In addition, this research contributes to the on-going debate of secularization in the U.S. and makes strong recommendations regarding the most appropriate theoretical and analytic frameworks with which to analyze religious mobility. Finally, this research fills a major gap in the literature by examining the decision to affiliate as a young adult after being unaffiliated as an adolescent.

This research is unique in that it uses data from a recent cohort of young adults. This population is of interest because their religious behaviors indicate whether recent trends in affiliation and mobility among the entire adult population are likely to continue. Further, most of the young adults in this research had aged beyond the point where traditional declines in religiosity are expected to have occurred (Regnerus and Uecker 2006; Uecker et al. 2007; Wuthnow 1973). Therefore, the findings are more easily generalizable to the entire adult population than previous studies which have followed young adults only through their early 20s.
Substantive and Theoretical Findings

Individual Religious Switching

Documenting trends in the frequency of religious switching has been hampered by inconsistent religious affiliation typologies. The number of categories and the specific detailed affiliations within each category has varied considerably across studies and has contributed to an inability to compare estimates across studies. Two previous studies, however, used cross-sectional GSS data and tracked the frequency of switching over periods to uncover any trends (Hadaway and Marler 1993; Sherkat 2001). Both found that the proportion who switched was stable from the early 1970s through 1990 (Hadaway and Marler 1993) and from the early 1970s through 1998 (Sherkat 2001). The actual proportions for these two studies differed from one another because of the number of categories used in their typologies. In Chapter Three switching frequencies were calculated using a typology very similar to Sherkat (2001). Sherkat (2001) found that about 30% of white individuals had switched from the religion they were raised in, yet this research finds that about 45% had switched. Because of the similarity in typology, this difference is not a function of typological differences.\footnote{The difference is also not a function of race. When restricted to whites, this sample produced a even higher switching rate of 48%.
}

It is apparent that young adults, and possibly all adults, are switching religions more often than in previous decades. A second important contribution to the religious mobility research is the finding that if multiple switching were included in the mobility rates, the proportion switching would be much higher. In this sample of a recent young cohort, only 45% were identified as completely immobile. The other 55% switched once, switched to different affiliations multiple times, or switched multiple times but returned to their affiliation of adolescence. From this perspective, the majority of individuals have switched at least once.
The significance of this previously unknown degree of mobility is threefold. First, compared to affiliation stability, switching affiliations indicates a lower level of religious commitment. Declines in religious commitment suggest a future increase in the proportion who are unaffiliated because disaffiliation is often preceded by a period of increased switching.

Second, increased mobility may simply be a symptom of a vibrant competitive religious marketplace in which religious firms are vying for adherents and religiously minded consumers are “shopping” for the best fit. Third, increased switching may reflect changing social norms (Ammerman 2003) and/or a decline in potential sanctions for lack of participation (Sherkat 2002). As Ammerman notes, “If religious identity ever was a given, it certainly is no longer” (2003:207). Is it possible that we have reached a tipping point in the stability of religious affiliation?

*Rational Choice Model and Individual Decision Making*

The findings in Chapters Five and Six clearly show that any model of religious decision making that treats demand as fixed poorly predicts actual religious affiliation outcomes. As recently as 2000, Stark and Finke still maintained that changes in religious affiliation and participation outcomes were not because “people suddenly develop new, unmet, religious preferences, or ‘needs’” (2000:86). While it may be true that wholesale shifts in demand do not account for the rise and fall of religions, individual preferences do change and choices made in the religious marketplace do not always reflect preferences (Sherkat and Wilson 1995; Sherkat 1997). In short, this dissertation shows that religious choices are socially embedded phenomena influenced by a multitude of social factors, not just the marketing strategies of religious firms.
Having identified the stable preference assumption as the major shortcoming of the strong rational choice model, the findings from Chapters Five and Six overwhelmingly support using the weak version of the rational choice model as an analytic framework. By allowing demand for various religious affiliations to shift over time and across people, the rational choice model adequately explains much of the proportion who are unaffiliated overall, stability rates overall and by affiliation, patterns of switching across affiliations and within similar affiliations, and different factors related to affiliating after being unaffiliated as an adolescent can be explained.

The rational choice model gives structure to the analysis of religious choice. No longer are religious choices viewed as indiscriminate reactions to changes in life circumstances. Religious choices can be viewed as rational choices made by comparing the costs and benefits of different options, while simultaneously processing the social context of the decision and incorporating changes in preferences brought on by changes in life circumstance. The findings in Chapters Four, Five, and Six demonstrate the power of social influences on decisions, especially within communities where religious affiliation and participation are considered semi-voluntary.

While this dissertation primarily addresses religious choice at the individual consumer level, the choices made by this recent young adult cohort speak to the ability of the supply-side of the rational choice model to explain trends. As has been argued by Christian Smith, the polity of evangelical and non-denominational Protestants make them especially well-suited to take advantage of competitive religious marketplaces (Smith 1998, 2003). Linked together by a few primary theological perspectives, local churches are able to design their own reward and compensator structures, find the most effective pastors, and implement their own marketing
strategies specific to their locale. Mainline Protestants, sect-like Protestants, and Catholics are subject, in varying degrees, to top-down management in terms of message, pastors, and marketing. This proposition is strongly supported by the findings in Chapter Four in which evangelical and non-denominational Protestants were the only religious category to experience an increase in the number of affiliates.

Secularization Thesis

Over the last few decades, the secularization thesis applied to the U.S. has been subjected to scrutiny (Casanova 2006; Greeley and Hout1999; Hadden 1987; Houtand Fischer 2002; Stark and Finke 2000). Even Peter Berger has expressed that the thesis was “mistaken” (1999:2). In Secularization R.I.P., Stark writes, “Let us therefore, once and for all, declare an end to social scientific faith in the theory of secularization, recognizing it as a product of wishful thinking” (2000:78). The findings from this research suggest, however, that the report of the secularization’s death has been greatly exaggerated. Five specific findings from this research suggest that the secularizing thesis may still be applicable in the U.S.

First, the unearthing of much more religious mobility than previous encountered suggests that those who claim an affiliation are less committed than affiliates from earlier decades. Second, the proportion who claim to be unaffiliated has increased substantially over the last 20 years, and the results from this research suggest that the proportion has at least held steady if not increased. Third, past research has shown that among those who were raised unaffiliated, 65% (Kluegel 1980) and 55% (Sherkat 2001) had affiliated by adulthood. In this research, only 48% had affiliated. Of course, as this young cohort ages, some will undoubtedly affiliate, but some
will also disaffiliate. Thus, the decrease in the proportion who eventually affiliate is a significant trend and therefore has implications for the secularization debate.

In the past, researchers seeking to discredit the claims of signs of secularization would present evidence that decreases in affiliation and participation do not reflect dissatisfaction with God or spirituality, but reflect dissatisfaction with institutions (Stark and Finke 2000). For instance, Hout and Fisher, in their examination of the upsurge in the unaffiliated status from 7% to 14% in the 1990s (2002:176), illustrate that attendance and praying among the unaffiliated, while lower than the affiliated, is still quite substantial. Using 1998 and 2000 GSS data, they report that among the unaffiliated only 64% attended no religious services over the past year; 93% said they prayed at least sometimes; and 20% said they prayed every day. This research found very different results among the unaffiliated. Using Wave IV data, the unaffiliated reported that 80% attended no religious services over the past year and 19% attended “a few times.” Thus, virtually all of the unaffiliated demonstrated little to no religious service attendance. Further, in this young adult data, 40% said they prayed sometimes and 60% said they never prayed at all. This difference between the religious behaviors of unaffiliated adults in 1998-2000 and unaffiliated young adults in 2008-09 is startling. While some of the difference is no doubt attributable to the differential age structures of samples, the gap in behaviors is so great that I suspect a real difference is also evident.

The secularization thesis also predicts that liberals would continue to suffer net losses in affiliation (Bruce 1999), and this was documented in the Chapter Four results. However, the secularization thesis incorrectly predicts the destinations for disaffected liberals. The model showed that, after controlling for inheritance effects and gains and losses due to switching, liberal switchers tended to affiliate with a more conservative Protestant group than to become
unaffiliated. This may represent shopping before disaffiliation, or it could represent that conservatives have more suitable rewards and compensators. Proponents of the secularization thesis concede that this may occur and suggest that patterns such as this are simply factors that retard the secularization process in the U.S. (Bruce 2011).

_Growth and Decline Debate_

As outlined in Chapter Two, researchers have been attempting to explain the continuing decline in mainline Protestant affiliation and the continuing increase in conservative Protestant denominations. The findings in this dissertation confirm that mainline Protestants continue to suffer, but conservative Protestants did not gain affiliates across the board. Sect-like Protestants, including Mormons, suffered net losses in affiliates. The only religions to gain affiliates were the evangelical and non-denominational Protestants and the unaffiliated.

The demographic explanation posits that demographic effects were powerful but are now “spent” (Hout, Greeley, and Wilde 2001:498) and that liberal switchers do not tend to move to more conservative religions. If this explanation were correct, then mainline stability should have been about average, but it was actually quite low, about 37%. In addition, liberal switchers did, in fact, exhibit a strong relationship to evangelical and non-denominational destinations and moderate mainline destinations. The model results suggest that, after controlling for inheritance effects and gains and losses from switching, liberal Protestants suffer net losses through exchanges with all other Protestant denominations. Whether demographic characteristics are still in play is unclear with these data, but obviously liberal switching to more conservative religions is contributing to the increasing gap between liberal and conservative Protestant affiliation.
The decline in denominationalism could also be a reason that mainline Protestants choose to defect, but this perspective predicts more movement to the unaffiliated category than is apparent within the data. Clearly mainline switchers are at least giving the more conservative Protestants a chance. Whether this is primarily because of a change in preferences or because the evangelical and non-denominational Protestants are succeeding in the religious marketplace by providing better rewards and compensators, more likeable pastors, and a vibrant marketing campaign, as suggested by Smith (2000), or both, is unclear.

Thus far, little has been said about sect-like Protestants. Chapter Four documents that, excluding Mormons, sect-like Protestants had 40% fewer affiliates in WIV than WI. The number of Mormon affiliates also fell but only by 15%. The stability rate for sect-like Protestants was only 32%, while for Mormons it was 65%. Model results suggest that sect-like Protestants experience net losses in exchanges with all Protestants except liberal Protestants; Mormons experience net gains in exchanges with all Protestants except liberal Protestants. If religious decisions are made in a religious marketplace, then the success of Mormons relative to the other sect-like religions, who are similarly restrictive and extreme in cosmology, may reflect their superior marketing decisions.\footnote{These results exemplify why separating Mormons from other strict religions is important when conducting analysis on so-called strict or high-tension religions.}

Limitations

This dissertation suffers from a number of limitations. First, to ensure that the measure of affiliation across waves was consistent, assumptions were made. Specifically, Wave I contained fewer possible Protestant denominations than did Waves III and IV. See Chapter 2 for details on how this data issue was dealt with. In short, all Wave III and Wave IV denominations that
were not in Wave I were place in the Other Protestant category so as not to mistakenly identify non-switchers as switchers. While this makes a rather large Other Protestant category, it is better to miss some switching because of broad categories than to artificially inflate mobility rates because of misidentification of affiliation.

A second limitation is also a data limitation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the affiliation data is not necessarily nationally-representative because Add Health was not sampled using religious affiliation as a strata. This, coupled with the fact that religious affiliation is strongly correlated with region, suggests that the distribution of religious affiliations across the sample does not necessarily represent the distribution across the U.S. population. This is not problematic as long as the data are interpreted as decisions made by individuals that have implications for distributions rather than population estimates of the distribution itself.

A third limitation of this study concerns the lack of attention to potential age effects within the sampled cohort. Age has little impact on the likelihood of switching as evidence by similar switching rates among those aged 24-29 (45%) and those aged 30-32 (46%). While age should also have little impact on the specific destination of religious switchers, different factors may influence switching decision at different ages. For instance, ancillary analysis showed that among unaffiliated adolescents, the decision to affiliate is significantly influenced by different factors depending on age. Specifically, being black and being Hispanic is strongly positively related to the decision to affiliate for the younger sub-sample (24-29 years old, n=611), but not the older sub-sample (30-32 years old, n=619). In addition, having a college degree is negatively related to affiliating among the younger sub-sample, but positively related to affiliating among the older sub-sample. Clearly the life-course perspective could be applied here to further understand the role of race and socioeconomic status on individual religious decisions, especially
those related to key points in the typical identity formation process of young adults. Further research linking these factors to the life course would bear important fruit in understanding religious decision making.

Perhaps the most salient limitation concerns the generalizability of data collected on a recent young adult cohort (24 to 32 years old in Wave IV). Can results from this cohort be generalized to represent all adults? In short, the answer is no. However, it should be noted that most of these adults have aged past the point in which religious choices are the most volatile (i.e. emergent young adulthood), so switching rates based on the WI – WIV time frame bypass the most unstable time. Also, this sample of young adults still has many years to exercise religious decisions, and therefore overall mobility (i.e. at least one switch) will likely increase. Finally, if choices are substantially changing over time, then this cohort represents what can be expected as this cohort and even younger cohorts become a larger proportion of the adult population. Therefore, while these findings cannot directly be generalized to the entire adult population, I am confident that they serve as good indicators of trends that will continue to occur in the religious landscape of the U.S.

**Summary of Contributions**

Despite these limitations, this dissertation makes important contributions to the religious switching literature and the overall sociology of religion discipline in several ways. First, using prospective longitudinal data to examine the religious affiliation choices of a young recent cohort, this research showed that recent trends of increased mobility and a higher prevalence of unaffiliation are likely to continue. Second, by using multiple data points, the likelihood of a young adult having shown at least some religious mobility is well over 50%. These results
suggest a possible decline in religious commitment, although one must keep in mind that the sample is of young adults. Second, unaffiliated adolescents are much less likely to affiliate by young adulthood than has previously been estimated; and further, the unaffiliated also appear to be more secularly oriented than previously unaffiliated groups. These findings imply that the secularization thesis may still be viable in the U.S.

Sociology of religion scholars are still engaged in a debate over the appropriateness of using a rational choice model to understand religious decisions at the individual, organization, and market-level. The results from this dissertation strongly suggest that the version of the rational choice model, which acknowledges that religious decisions, at least at the individual level, are socially embedded and should be analyzed as such, explains a great deal of the patterns of religious switching. Components of the strong version, such as the strictness thesis and the religious human capital theory, should be replaced by the socially embedded choice perspective.

Finally, this dissertation addressed an issue that the quantitative literature has all but ignored – factors related to affiliating as a young adult after having been unaffiliated as an adolescent. Two competing hypotheses regarding the impact of childhood religious experiences on adult religious choices were tested. About 48\% of unaffiliated adolescents had affiliated by young adulthood. This finding was consistent with the socially embedded choice perspective, but inconsistent with religious human capital perspective. The socially embedded choice perspective also accurately predicted that race and the presence of children in the house would be key factors in whether an unaffiliated adolescent had affiliated by young adulthood. Also important was the finding that if the parent was affiliated with a religion during the respondent’s adolescence, then this had a significant and positive impact on the choice to affiliate as a young adult. This has implications for conceptualizing the nature of religious socialization.
In sum, this dissertation analyzed a unique set of data to help inform predictions about future trends in religious mobility and the prevalence of unaffiliation, two key indicators of religious commitment. Findings also suggest that the secularization thesis is not yet dead in the U.S. and the weak rational choice model, as an analytic framework, is exceptionally helpful in understanding religious mobility. Finally, a first step was taken to understand the path from unaffiliated adolescent to an affiliated adult.

Moving Forward

Given the findings in this research, further theoretical development and empirical research will shed light on important aspects of individual religious decision-making and the resulting patterns of religious identity that are produced within the religious marketplace. Below I discuss potential theoretical extensions that could be developed for the rational choice model as applied to religion and identify potential avenues of empirical research that would use this theoretical foundation.

While the strong rational choice model de-emphasizes the role of the individual in religious outcomes, this research clearly shows that this assumption is needlessly restrictive. As long as the analytical approach to studying individual religious behavior is theoretically sound, assuming that both consumers and suppliers make decisions based on a cost-benefit calculation should provide adequate predictions of religious outcomes. Christian Smith’s supply-side argument that evangelical and non-denominational success is a result of these organizations’ superior market-based approach is strong. It is consistent with Stark’s notion that religious organizations compete for the “business” of religious shoppers based on their provision of rewards (tangible experiences) and compensators (explanations of rewards that cannot be proven
to exist). These viewpoints, coupled with Sherkat’s development of the socially embedded choice perspective can be drawn together to more fully flesh out a more comprehensive theory of religious outcomes.

Before bringing these perspectives together, Sherkat’s demand-based perspective may need to be extended to more fully represent the ways in which choices are influenced by social factors. The first extension would be to expand our understanding of the different ways that learning about new religious goods, which ultimately influences preferences, takes place. In addition to the typical avenues of changing preferences due to learning (an increase in the quality and quantity of trusted individuals within a social network because of education or geographic mobility and an acquisition of religious knowledge through education itself) one could develop the process through which new knowledge about religious goods is gained through technology and/or social media. The original perspective on knowledge about new religious goods was that it was more likely to be acted upon if the knowledge came from trusted sources, such as close friends. However, as the internet and social media become more commonplace and embedded within daily life, this source of new information may become more trustworthy than considered previously. A second extension would be to theoretically enhance how changing needs translate into changing preferences. Changes in life circumstances, especially those that are not chosen but are thrust upon individuals, create needs that can only be satisfied by religion. The pathway from circumstances (e.g. social stress) to needs to preferences should be clearly articulated and then incorporated into the socially embedded choice perspective. Once the preference-based understanding of individual religious choice is more fully articulated, a clear link from consumer preferences to religious products can be made. It may be that individuals with certain preferences are more drawn to rewards, while others favor compensators.
These links between preferences and religious goods, of course, can only be assessed through research that incorporates both the supply- and the demand-side. Another benefit of this type of research is that it would allow for disentangling supply- and demand-side period effects. For example, the sample cohort in this research was born in the late 1970s and early 1980s and was therefore effectively subjected to religious socialization during most of the 1980s, a period that witnessed significant increases in non-denominational and evangelical Protestant membership. The growth of these Protestant organizations came primarily at the expense of mainline Protestantism, not from the disaffiliated group. The question, therefore, is whether religious mobility indicators would have been lower if the young cohort were making their religious decisions during a different period? To the extent that the non-denominational and evangelical denominations were able to take advantage of market conditions that made their rewards and compensators more desirable than mainline Protestants, then some of the findings in this paper are, in fact, due to period effects. Empirical research that supports this conclusion would require both supply- and demand-side data, but the importance of bringing both sides of the market together is critical to understanding individual religious decision making.
Bibliography


APPENDIX A. Religious Membership by Region: 2000

Source: www.geocurrents.info
**APPENDIX B.**

**Table B1. Stressful Life Event List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waves I - III</th>
<th>Within 12 months prior to WIV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ran away from home</td>
<td>death of mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was expelled from school</td>
<td>death of father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unwanted pregnancy</td>
<td>death of parental figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abortion</td>
<td>death of sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gave baby up for adoption</td>
<td>no health insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohabitation ended</td>
<td>seriously injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>romantic relationship ended</td>
<td>car accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marriage ended</td>
<td>lives in crowded conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-romantic sexual relationship ended</td>
<td>discharged from the military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diagnosed with an STD</td>
<td>left most recent job and currently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attempted suicide</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened someone</td>
<td>left job involuntarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shot or stabbed someone</td>
<td>no phone service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injured someone in a fight</td>
<td>made a low rent payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discharged from the military</td>
<td>evicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entered the military</td>
<td>made a low utility payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evicted from home</td>
<td>had utilities turned off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utility service cut off</td>
<td>worried about food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receiving welfare</td>
<td>family member of friend tried suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involuntarily cut from welfare</td>
<td>family member or friend committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juvenile conviction or detention</td>
<td>suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adult conviction</td>
<td>diagnosed with std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adult jail time</td>
<td>Has had sex with same-sex individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscarriage</td>
<td>has same-sex romantic attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death of biological father</td>
<td>was stole from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death of biological mother</td>
<td>witnessed a shooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death of parental figure</td>
<td>was shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death of spouse, cohabitant, or someone with home</td>
<td>was slapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she was in a sexual relationship with</td>
<td>was beaten up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death of a baby</td>
<td>was arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suicide of friend or family member</td>
<td>divorce or cohabitation breakup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baby with severe medical problems</td>
<td>abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship abuse</td>
<td>death of a child (baby or older)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was jumped</td>
<td>stillborn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saw violence</td>
<td>miscarriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was shot or stabbed</td>
<td>put baby up for adoption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
had sex for money
was threatened
mother or father on public assistance
was raped
was injured in a fight
skipped needed health care

baby spent significant time in hospital
baby lives elsewhere