ABSTRACT

NOONEY, JENNIFER ELIZABETH. Keeping the Faith: Religious Transmission and Apostasy in Generation X. (Under the direction of Eric Woodrum).

This research examines two social processes determining the religiosity of Generation Xers. One is the transmission of religious affiliation and behaviors from Boomer parents to their Generation X children. The other is apostasy -- the process of disengagement from religion -- measured over time as Xers aged into young adulthood. The study flows from and informs several theories of religious change at societal and individual levels, including secularization theory and the related cultural broadening theory, social learning theory, and rational choice theory. The study also speaks to questions of generational continuity and change. Hypotheses are tested using nationally representative data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

Analyses show that many of the potent predictors of transmission and apostasy found in past research continue to be strong predictors among members of Generation X. High levels of parental involvement in religion were associated with more effective transmission of religious affiliation. Other factors facilitating transmission included two-parent household structures, religious homogamy among parents, good parent-child relationships, and conservative Protestant or Catholic background. Lower levels of apostasy were associated with high levels of parental and adolescent involvement in 1995, good parent-child relationships, college attendance, and well-educated parents. Results show that Generation X adolescents are adopting the religion of their parents at relatively high rates and that their rates of apostasy compare favorably to those of their Boomer parents during the 1970s.
Support was found for each of the perspectives on individual religious change except cultural broadening theory, and by association, the societal-level perspective of secularization theory. None of the results suggest that college education -- a broadening experience that may challenge students’ world views -- contributes to apostasy. This research shows that there is no reason to suspect that the religious subsystem of American society is in serious danger owing to a high rate of religious defection in Generation X.
KEEPING THE FAITH: RELIGIOUS TRANSMISSION AND APOSTASY IN GENERATION X

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

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Chair of Advisory Committee
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Maurice (Buck) Green and Margaret (Peggy) Green. Their careful crafting of my early childhood allowed me to excel academically, morally, and psychologically later in life. Their constant love and support have been invaluable in all of my pursuits. My parents would have been proud of me if I had become a garbage collector, a plumber, a waitress, or a stay-at-home mom. It is only because of this unconditional pride and belief in my inherent worth that I have earned a Ph.D. I am quite sure that I can only dream of being as effective a parent to my future children.
Jennifer Elizabeth Nooney was born in Elizabeth City, NC in 1976. She has lived in North Carolina all of her life. She is married to William T. Nooney, Jr., who just barely qualifies as a high school sweetheart. They were married in 1996.

Jennifer graduated summa cum laude from Elizabeth City State University in 1998 with a B.A. in Sociology. She earned a Master of Science degree in sociology from North Carolina State University in 2000 and has pursued the Ph.D. at NC State since that time. Her research interests include quantitative methods, medical sociology, health services research, and sociology of religion.

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Without the support of NC State faculty members, I would never have developed intellectually in a way that would have made this dissertation project possible. Most of the faculty members who have worked with me would probably characterize me as a loner, at least in terms of how I accomplish research. I have always been interested in topics on which expertise is limited in our department. Yet my capacity to explore these topics would not exist without the basic foundation provided by my training in methods and theory. Thanks go to Cathy Zimmer, Ron Czaja, and Ted Greenstein for giving me firm methodological footing. Thanks go to Eric Woodrum, Ron Wimberley, and Anne Schiller for helping me to explore the nuances of human religious life. Special thanks go to Jim McClendon, my undergraduate mentor at ECSU, for introducing me to sociology and to the sociology of religion. Jim, you’ve been a tremendous resource and confidant for the last decade of my life, and this dissertation would not have been possible without you. Finally, thanks go to Maxine Thompson, who truly facilitated this project by helping our department acquire the restricted Add Health data and making me familiar with its possibilities.

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Chapter 1.
Introduction

In this dissertation, I report the results of a study of intergenerational and individual changes in religiosity. Using a multi-generation data set, I document the extent and predictors of successful transmission of parental religious affiliation, behaviors, and beliefs to their adolescent children. This same data set allows examination of how well group affiliations and religious behaviors hold up over a six-year period, during the time when these adolescents age into adulthood. The extent and predictors of religious apostasy -- leaving the faith -- are examined during this important life transition. Both religious transmission and apostasy are topics that have received less than their due attention by sociologists of religion. The data demands for empirical work on these topics are daunting. Rigorous studies of religious transmission require that data be collected from both parents and their offspring. Rigorous studies of apostasy require a panel design in order that dropping out of religion can be recorded as it occurs instead of relying on respondents’ memories of their religious history. This study employs data meeting both of these daunting demands.

The study of individual and intergenerational religious histories is relevant for scholars interested in a number of sociological and psychological topics. The more general problems of cultural transmission and generational conflict have captivated sociologists since the inception of the discipline (c.f., Durkheim 1961 [1925]). It is truly an amazing feat that any cultural elements successfully survive the passage of time, given that the content of any culture must be relearned at least three times each century as new generations are born. Much
like the “telephone game,” a popular playground activity where whispered phrases are
distorted as passed from child to child, the end result of cultural transmission often looks
much different from the culture’s original form. Indeed, it is not expected that cultural
transmission results in anything like a “chromosomal duplication” of the previous generation
(Keeley 1976). The question, however, is whether we have entered into a period of such
rapid social change that the large differences in generational cultures make them look more
or less unrelated. Will the oft-mentioned “generation gap” widen? Families (particularly
parents) have long been regarded as conservative and monolithic in their influence on society
because they slow the pace of change by serving as the primary transmitters of culture from
one generation to the next (Glass, Bengtson, and Dunham 1986). Scholars are increasingly
aware, however, that modern adolescents have diverse sets of reference groups (Sebald
1986), and some are concerned that the power of the family over adolescents is on the

decline.

Religion is an excellent field in which to observe generational conflict and change.
Religious beliefs are among the most important and deeply held beliefs parents wish to
impart on their children, and lapses in their ability to do so may signal profound changes in
the power of religion, the power of families, or both. The present study offers an opportunity
to observe religious transmission from Baby Boomers to members of Generation X, updating
our understanding of generational change from the dated studies of Boomer religiosity that
were published during the 1970s and 1980s.

and 1981, is different from previous generations in a number of ways. Gen Xers grew up in
an age of dual-earning family structures, which reduced the amount of time they spent under
the supervision of parents, increased the amount of time they spent in front of the television,
and prompted the labeling of Xers as the “latchkey generation.” They were much more likely
to be raised in single-parent households than previous generations. Because of economic
stagnation in the 1970s, Gen X was the first generation that could not reasonably expect to
do better financially than their parents had. As a result, Xers are more cynical, apathetic, and
suspicious of government. Religiously, Xers are described as eclectic, eschewing authority in
the religious realm and building alternative frameworks for communicating with the divine.

Miller and Miller (2000:2) put it this way: “It is no mystery that the mainline denominational
church has done a terrible job of holding on to these Gen X youth in the 1990s. There is an
obvious clash of culture here -- one more rigid and traditional, the other marked by
innovation and progression.” The present research will investigate whether Gen X has indeed
made a mass exodus from organized religion, and if so, what prompted it.

Generational labels are emerging phenomena. The mental image associated with
Baby Boomers has undergone significant changes as the generation has aged into mid-life.
The classic counter-culture image of young Boomers in the late 1960s and early 1970s has
given way to an image of Boomers as “rigid and traditional” (Miller and Miller 2000: 2), two
words that no one would have used to characterize the young Boomers in the 70s.
Generations are more easily defined in retrospect, when members of the generation have
moved through each stage of the life course. Only then can we identify distinctive qualities
of the generation that persist beyond specific stages of the life course. The process of
classifying Generation X is no different. At present, Xers are still quite young. The
generation is still building a reputation for itself, and scholars are still working to identify the distinctive qualities associated with Gen X. This dissertation is part of that scholarly effort. It is, in effect, building a religious reputation for the generation.

Generational labels are intellectually confining because they camouflage heterogeneity within the generation. It is important to make the point early in this dissertation that not all members of a generation fit the popular profile of that generation. Indeed, social statuses like race, gender, and socioeconomic standing likely give rise to more within-group heterogeneity than the between-group heterogeneity that exists because of generational differences. The more or less arbitrary boundaries of the years defining generations also create heterogeneity. Persons born in the early years of the Gen X definition may feel they have more in common with persons labeled as Baby Boomers, while those born in the later years may have more in common with Generation Y. These points do not mitigate the potential gains of considering social phenomena through the lens of the generational concept, and they do not preclude identification of unique qualities that members of a generation tend to share as a result of maturation in a common historical period. They do, however, provide reason to question the generalizability of research on a generation that is focused on one small and often flashy segment of it (c.f., Fey, 2000, on spirituality in the Gen X “goth” subculture). This dissertation takes the broadest view possible of Generation X by using a large random sample of Xers.

Both religious transmission and apostasy are topics nestled neatly within the nexus of religion and family scholarship. Religion and family are intimately connected social institutions because of their private and symbolic character and the obvious relationship of
family ties to the religiosity of individuals. Thus, scholars with an interest in sociology of the family must be attentive to the religious dimension of family life, just as scholars of religion must be attentive to the influence of families on the religiosity of individuals and the structure of institutionalized religion. However, Thomas and Cornwall (1990) report that very little work explicitly connected these two social institutions prior to 1980. In their review of the work accomplished during the 1980s, they note that family oriented variables -- sexual activity, gender roles, family relations, childbearing, marital quality and stability -- were far more likely to be the dependent variables of studies than were religious variables. Religious effects on these family variables have been studied rather extensively, which suggests that family scholars have been more attuned to religion than religion scholars have been to family. However, this family-oriented work is often plagued with methodological problems limiting its usefulness for those with a primary interest in religion. Often, religious variables are simply “thrown in” to the analysis with no respect for the multidimensional character of religiosity, which involves group affiliations, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. Church attendance is often used as a measure of overall religiosity even though it taps only one dimension of this construct.

From the opposite angle, regarding religion-oriented work, Thomas and Cornwall (1990: 986) report that “one looks almost in vain for research that treats religious orientations, attitudes, and behaviors as dependent variables and explains variation in them according to involvement in the family as a social institution.” They are particularly concerned with the neglect of family influence on studies of secularization and church growth or decline. The present study answers their call for more research that treats family as
exogenous, and it also offers opportunity to speak to the family’s influence on secularization.

Few debates in the sociology of religion -- indeed, in sociology more generally -- are as virulent as the debate over secularization, a term which describes the process by which modernization affects a decline of religion. The potential of our society -- and of individuals -- to become less religious has enormous significance for all scholars working in the area of social change. The present study, along with most other research, cannot confirm or deny that this process is in operation. However, this study can provide important clues by gauging our current ability to socialize youth into religion and retain them in religion once socialized. These are necessary and sufficient processes for the maintenance of a society’s religious subsystem. I will show in subsequent chapters how secularization theory leads to unique predictions regarding the impact of education and other variables on the processes of transmission and retention. In this introduction, I begin by clearly defining what is meant by the terms “religion” and “secularization” for the purposes of this research.

1.1 Definitions and Scope of the Study

There are nearly as many definitions of religion as there are religious researchers. It is easy to see why this is so once the implications of a particular definition are made clear. In general, there are two classes of definitions: functional and substantive. Functional definitions leave open the actual content of religion and instead define it by the unique functions it performs for individuals and societies. If religion’s primary function is to integrate individuals into a moral community through differentiation of the sacred (things set apart and revered) and the profane (things mundane and this-worldly) -- Durkheim’s
(1947 [1915]) definition -- then you will know something is “religion” when it accomplishes these things. Substantive definitions, on the other hand, leave open the functions religion performs and define religion by its content. If religion by definition requires belief in and relations with a god or multiple gods, you will know that something is “religion” when it has this content.

Functional definitions of religion are the most broad and least likely to lead to predictions of religious decline. If something is “religion” when it performs an integrating function for individuals or social institutions, the rise of an alternative moral framework devoid of true supernaturalism or mention of gods might be considered evidence that religion is alive and well. In essence, religion by definition cannot die. Substantive definitions of religion are more restrictive and more conducive to the study of secularization because they require that the content of religion -- the belief in gods, the practice of religious rituals, etc. -- be maintained for “religion” to be maintained (Dobbelnaere 1981).

The present study is concerned with institutional religiosity in the United States: the group affiliations that individuals hold, their attendance at worship services, and their private practice of prayer as taught and sanctioned by the religious groups with which they affiliate. For the purposes of this research, then, “religions” are the institutionalized denominations and religions that exist organizationally in this country, and “religiosity” is indicated by affiliation with and participation in these groups. Although privately developed systems of communication with the supernatural -- individualized religion -- may characterize the spiritual life of many Gen Xers, this type of religiosity is viewed as indicating the decline of organized religion. Likewise, belief in and adherence to the diffused Judeo-Christian ethic
that pervades American society -- in lieu of participation in organized religion -- is also viewed as indicating religious decline. I opt for substantive definitions of religion and religiosity in part because the data used in this study offer measures of religion that assume these definitions. I am also persuaded, with Dobbelaere (1981), that substantive definitions allow the most realistic assessment of a religious institution’s health.

The term “secularization,” then, will be used in reference to organized religion. Dobbelaere (1999) reports that secularization is a multi-level process involving effects at the societal, organizational, and individual levels. Secularization can be defined on the societal level as a declining influence of the religious subsystem -- i.e., the church -- on other subsystems -- i.e., law, medicine, education, etc. It can be defined on the organizational level as a growth of secular orientations within religious denominations in terms of doctrine and focus. Finally, it can be defined on the individual level as a decline in the religiosity of individuals. In this study, the religiosity of individuals is of primary interest, and “secularization” is used to describe the possibility of declining interest and participation in organized religion among individuals.

Although most research uses trend data on religious participation to evaluate the health of religious denominations and the larger institution of religion, this research follows a panel of individuals over time. Aggregate trends in religious affiliation and participation can produce erroneous conclusions about the health of religions. Greeley (1989), for example, demonstrates that the apparent decline in religious participation during the 1960s and 1970s was in fact due to a large cohort of Baby Boomers entering a period in their lives -- young adulthood -- when religious participation is typically lower. Once the aggregate rates were
adjusted for the age distribution, the “decline” disappeared. Similarly, Hout, Greeley, and Wilde (2001) adjusted aggregate trends in denominational membership for birth rates and concluded that “mainline” Protestant denominations -- liberal and moderate Protestant groups -- were declining as a proportion of all denominations largely because their birth rates were much lower than those of conservative Protestants. These studies highlight the need for more research that follows the religious history of families and individuals for the purpose of illuminating aggregate trends in American religion. The health of organized religion in the United States ultimately depends on the continued participation of nameable individuals and their willingness and ability to socialize offspring into religious traditions.

1.2 Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 of this dissertation details the theoretical perspectives that have been used in previous research to understand aggregate and individual religious change. Although this study examines intergenerational and individual-level religious change, Chapter 2 shows that theories of aggregate religious change often inform expectations about the religious histories of individuals. For example, if overall stability is expected for the future of institutionalized religion, it follows that the rates and predictors of religious transmission and apostasy are also expected to be stable -- i.e., comparable with results of previous studies. Conversely, secularization theory leads to predictions of less effective religious transmission and higher rates of apostasy. It also implicates specific variables, most prominently increasing levels of education, in the decline of religiosity across generations and individual life spans. Secularization, polarization, and cyclical change resulting in long-term stability are discussed
as possible futures for institutionalized religion in the United States. Individual-level theories of religious transmission and apostasy include social learning theory, cultural broadening, and rational choice theory. Relationships between the aggregate and individual-level perspectives are illustrated.

Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature and an analysis of intergenerational religious transmission. Readers interested only in religious transmission are welcome to skip to this chapter, as it is a stand-alone piece containing discussion of relevant prior work, methods employed, results, and concluding remarks. Transmission of group affiliation is examined first, and logistic regression models are used to determine effects on the odds of successful affiliation transmission from parents to their adolescent children. Second, transmission of overall religiosity -- frequency of participation and salience of religion for the individual -- are explored. All results are presented separately for intact (two-parent) and disrupted (single-parent) households since one key independent variable -- religious homogamy, a state in which both parents hold the same religious affiliation -- can only be assessed in intact households. The results are also presented by religious tradition of origin so that differences in the predictors of successful transmission can be assessed. Following this overview is a more detailed description of the data source used in this study, but a brief description of the data and information on specific items used in the transmission analysis -- including recoding and index construction -- can be found in Chapter 3.

Similarly, Chapter 4 is organized as a stand-alone piece on religious apostasy. It includes literature review, methods, results, and conclusion sections. In contrast to previous work on this topic, in this piece apostasy is conceptualized multidimensionally. Individuals
may eschew a religious identity altogether, or they may simply stop participating in the activities of a religious group. The analysis uses multinomial logistic regression to determine whether predictors of these two types of apostasy differ significantly. In addition, results are examined separately for each broad denominational tradition to identify specific causes of failure to retain members that may be unique to a denominational tradition.

Implications for parents, religious leaders, and others interested in the retention of individuals in a religion tradition are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 goes further by analyzing the implications of the study’s results for theories of both individual and aggregate religious change. Results from the two analyses are synthesized and a broader picture of contemporary trends in religious identification is drawn. Limitations to the study and fruitful avenues for future research are also discussed in more detail.

1.3 Description of the Data Source

Data for this research come from Waves I and III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The study was made possible by grant P01-HD31921 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and cooperative funding from numerous federal agencies. The Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill coordinated the study, and fieldwork was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (Waves I and II) and the Research Triangle Institute (Wave III). As the name implies, Add Health was undertaken to study effects on the health of adolescents, including differences in their social environments, their health-related behaviors, and their vulnerabilities and strengths.
One predictor of health behaviors and health status that has received considerable attention over the past few decades is religiosity, so its inclusion in this study is not surprising. Although likely unintended, Add Health offers an unprecedented opportunity to study religious transmission and apostasy in the same group of respondents because it includes a parent interview with religious items and follows adolescent respondents over time, tracking their religious affiliation and behavior at each survey wave. In this section, I will detail elements of the study design relevant to understanding its strengths and weaknesses for the purpose of studying religious transmission and apostasy. Complete details of the study design can be found in Harris et al. (2003).

Add Health employs a cluster sampling design with schools as the primary sampling unit, primarily because this is the best place in which to enumerate and recruit adolescents. Using a sampling frame containing 26,666 high schools, a stratified sample of 80 high schools was selected for participation. Each school that declined to participate was replaced by another school within its sampling stratum, and the end result is that the participating schools are nationally representative of the nation’s high schools with respect to region of the country, size, urbanity, and ethnic composition. Participating high schools were asked to identify feeder schools, which are junior high or middle schools that contributed students to its population. For each high school, one feeder school was selected with the probability of selection proportional to the number of students it contributed to the high school each year. A total of 132 schools are included in the study.

Data were collected through a variety of means, including school administrator questionnaires and in-school questionnaires for students. More than 90,000 students
completed questionnaires while in school. The data used for this research come from in-home interviews with respondents and their parents. All students on the enrollment rosters at participating schools comprised the sampling frame. A stratified sample of the 90,000 students completing in-school questionnaires was selected, based on grade and sex, that produced 12,105 in-home adolescent interviews. This “core” sample is supplemented with special oversamples of certain populations: black students with parents having a college degree; Chinese, Cuban, and Puerto Rican students; and students with physical disabilities. As well, several schools were recruited for a “saturation” component of the study. In these schools, all students were eligible for in-home interviews so that adolescents’ social networks could be studied. Finally, a “genetic” sample was constructed that included some of the respondents’ siblings, including all siblings that were respondents’ twins. The complete Wave I sample includes 20,745 adolescents in grades 7-12.

Wave I interviews, conducted between April and December of 1995, were accomplished with the assistance of laptop computers for interviewers. Adolescents provided more sensitive information by listening to questions through earphones and entering responses directly into the laptop using the keyboard (CASI method). Interviewers asked the remaining questions and entered the data themselves (CAPI method). A parent of each adolescent, usually the child’s mother, was asked to complete an interviewer-assisted questionnaire that could be read by an op-scan machine. Mothers were selected, if available, because of their greater knowledge of children’s health issues.

Wave III was conducted approximately six years later, and in-home interviews were conducted between August, 2001 and April, 2002. An astonishing 15,170 interviews were
completed with original Add Health respondents from Wave I using CAPI/CASI methods as in Wave I. As young adults ranging in age from 18-26, obviously the health and other contexts of their lives had changed since adolescence. Some items remained unchanged from Wave I, but many others were revised or dropped to better fit the needs of an older sample. New items were added to tap respondents’ marital history, childbearing, and labor force participation. Wave III also included a sample of the respondents’ romantic partners.

A grand sample weight was constructed for each respondent in each wave of the survey. When used in analysis procedures, this weight ensures that respondents are representative of the population of U.S. adolescents. The weight corrects for differences in the probability of high school and feeder school selection, differences in response rates by school and sex, and differences in the match between sample and population on key respondent characteristics. Population characteristics were derived from Census Bureau data.

Because of the sensitive nature of many items included in the Add Health data files, access to the files is restricted by the sponsors of the study. Although there are no identifiers attached to the restricted-use data files, it is possible to discover the identities of Add Health respondents through deductive means. Because so many adolescents participated in Add Health, and so many other persons know adolescents who participated in Add Health, it is possible to identify an individual respondent through the use of certain variable combinations. To protect respondents’ identities, access to the data files is granted by the Carolina Population Center only after provisions are made for storing the data securely and restricting intra-institutional access to the files. Several graduate students in NC State University’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology, including myself, participated in
the process of applying for the data with faculty sponsor Maxine S. Thompson. The present study of religious transmission and apostasy using the Add Health data was declared exempt from review by the Institutional Review Board at NCSU (IRB # 217-04-10).

Clearly, Add Health provides a unique and exciting opportunity to reexamine religious transmission and apostasy with a sample of Generation X respondents and their Boomer parents. The data, when weighted, are nationally representative of American adolescents (Wave I) and young adults (Wave III). The two-generation data requirement for transmission studies is satisfied, and the panel data requirement for studies of apostasy is also satisfied.

There are a few drawbacks to using Add Health that should be mentioned, however. Because Add Health is a school-based study, it does not include adolescents who have been home-schooled. It is unknown how these adolescents differ religiously from those who attend private or public schools. In addition, the complex sampling design requires special analysis techniques to account for shared characteristics held by adolescents who attend the same schools. These techniques, described in Chapters 3 and 4, happily do not complicate the interpretation of results. Finally, it is unfortunate that the incidence of religious apostasy can only be determined for a six-year period. On the other hand, this six-year span marks the critical transition from adolescence to young adulthood -- a transition worthy of study by religious researchers on its own. Wave IV of the study is currently being planned, with fielding set for 2007-2008. Fortunately we need only to wait for a richer understanding of Gen X religious histories as these young adults progress through the life course.
Chapter 2.
Theories of Aggregate and Individual Religious Change

Religious change occurs at multiple levels of analysis. At the societal level, we can observe changes over time in the proportion of persons who affiliate with an organized religion, attend worship services, engage in private religious activities including prayer and Bible reading, and profess belief in the tenets of organized religions. We can also study changes in the power of the religious subsystem to shape the overall operation of a society. To what extent are our legal, medical, and educational systems influenced by religion, and how has the balance of power changed over time? At the denominational and congregational levels of analysis, we can observe changes in the market share -- the proportion of individuals who belong to the group -- of specific religious denominations or congregations. We can also explore changes in the doctrines and liturgy of these groups. At the individual level, we can ask how the religious participation and affiliation of persons varies over the life course. We can determine how they learn religious beliefs and behaviors and to what extent these persist as individuals move through various stages of life. How and when do individuals leave the faith, convert, or return to the religion of their childhood?

This dissertation explores intergenerational and individual religious change. Thus, the units of analysis are parent-child dyads for religious transmission and individuals for life course changes. The thesis of this chapter, however, is that theories of religious transmission and apostasy are intimately connected to theories of aggregate religious change. Aggregate changes involving the overall religiosity of a population occur because of changes in the ability or willingness of parents to socialize their children into religion and changes in the
religiosity of individuals over the life course. There is a false dichotomy between the macro and micro levels of analyzing religious change. Individuals create societal religious change, and these changes affect the religiosity of individuals.

[See Figure 2.1 on page 160]

Figure 2.1 illustrates the interrelations between theories of religious change at the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, the dominant predictions of religious change include secularization -- a decline of religion; polarization -- increasing antagonism and difference between factions of conservatively and liberally religious individuals; and cyclic change resulting in overall stability. At the micro level, predictions of religious change over the life course can be viewed through the lenses of cultural broadening theory -- declines in religiosity over the life course with increasing education; social learning theory -- highlighting the continued importance of parental socialization across generations; the developmental or family life cycle model -- religiosity changes as developmental transitions are made; and rational choice theory -- religiosity changes as the costs and benefits of religion to the individual change. As the figure illustrates, three of the micro-level theories are compatible with the prediction of overall stability in the religious institution at the societal level. Only cultural broadening theory is compatible with an aggregate prediction of either secularization or polarization. The remainder of this chapter describes these perspectives and shows how they inform one another.
2.1 Theories of Aggregate Religious Change: Secularization

Undoubtedly the longest running prediction regarding the future of religion is secularization. Two of the great classical theorists, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, promulgated theories of secularization that followed from their grand theories of social evolution. Durkheim (1933 [1893]) argued that societies become increasingly differentiated and specialized in the process of modernizing. Where religion once pervaded all aspects of social life, it is now relegated to an increasingly smaller sphere of influence, its tenets less plausible in the face of differentiation. Durkheim not only saw secularization occurring at the level of social systems but also at the level of individual consciousness, and both resulted from the functional differentiation of the religious subsystem from the subsystems of law, medicine, and education.

Credit for the term “secularization,” at least in sociology, actually goes to Weber, who first used the term to describe a rationalization of action and ensuing disenchantment of the world that accompanied modernization. In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber (1996 [1904-5]) theorized that religion itself was becoming more secular. He argued that early Protestantism was uniquely focused on this-worldly topics including work and accumulation of wealth -- two foci that comprised the “spirit of capitalism” he thought was inherent in Protestantism.

After a period of relative calm in the secularization debate, social theorists picked up the arguments of Durkheim and Weber in the 1960s and 1970s. In part, their concerns stemmed from the rapid social change occurring during this time, much as Durkheim and Weber’s formulations stemmed from the rapid industrialization they witnessed in Europe during their times. The counterculture movement of the young Baby Boomers included a
rejection of all things institutional, and this included institutionalized religion. In Europe, sociologists were witnessing a similar rapid modernization in the decades following World War II and a concomitant decline in church attendance (Stark 1999).

Durkheim’s (1947 [1915]) later work in *Elementary Forms* had proposed a definition of religion that centered on its integrating functions for societies and individuals. Although his early work predicted the decline of institutionalized religion, his later work asked whether something might take over its integrating function. Robert Bellah (1967), among others, capitalized on this line of analysis in the 1960s. He posited the existence of a “civil religion” -- a diffused religious ethos separate from organized religion -- that serves an integrating function for social systems and also legitimates the activities of government in the minds of individuals. It provides an overarching morality for a nation as diverse as the United States. Civil religion in America is not identical to Christianity. It is diluted enough to appeal to Americans of Jewish or Christian origin. The god of civil religion is general, as attested to by the speeches of presidents, who make no reference to Christ or other historical characters in Christianity. This god is deist in cast but also actively involved in history, with a special concern for America (1967: 9). The civil religion thesis allowed for religion to transcend the institutional church, and although Bellah did not view it as a replacement for organized religion, the thesis certainly leaves open the possibility of decline in institutionalized religion without a simultaneous decline in the religious sentiment of individuals. Bellah (1975) later worried that a decline in collective expression and the rise of individualism in America would undo the ideals of commitment and community. He argued that the covenant of American civil religion was being dismantled by individualism.
Thomas Luckmann (1967) built upon this observation in his discussion of “invisible religion.” He argued that a private social institution, the family, would take up the task of religion. Luckmann believed that public institutions, including religion, no longer significantly contributed to the formation of individual consciousness and personality; personal identity had become an essentially private phenomenon. One reason for this is that questions of ultimate significance change from generation to generation while the official model of religion changes at a much slower rate. He thought the young Boomer generation concerned itself with different matters of ultimate significance resulting in “new sacred themes”: autonomy, self-realization, sexuality, and familism.

Luckmann’s definition of religion proved to be too broad for Berger (1967: 177), who opted for a reformulation of Durkheim’s earlier work. Whereas Luckmann saw religion transforming from traditional piety to self-actualization, Berger preferred to conceptualize religion in its traditional form and analyze the impact of modernization on institutionalized Christianity. He argued that secularization is more than a social-structural process; it affects the totality of cultural life and is observed in the decline of religious contents in the arts, philosophy, and literature and also in the rise of science as an autonomous and thoroughly secular perspective (1967: 107). Whereas religious beliefs once served as a “sacred canopy,” a cosmic umbrella which sheltered all aspects of life, religion is now relegated to the periphery of individual consciousness and social structure. Its plausibility has been undercut by the differentiation of life spheres and the resultant rise of competing systems of meaning.

The face of secularization theory has not changed much since 1970, although it has come under intense fire from those who subscribe to the “new paradigm” of religious change.
based on rational choice theory -- that became popular in the late 1980s. A relatively recent issue of *Sociology of Religion* (1999, v. 60 no. 3) was specially devoted to secularization. Rodney Stark’s (1999) article headlined “Secularization, R.I.P.” while in the same issue of that journal Karl Dobbleare (1999) assured us that secularization theory is alive and well. Those who hold fast to the thesis continue to argue that institutional religion is on the decline, although they disagree on the timing of this decline and on what, if anything, is rising to take its place.

2.2 Theories of Aggregate Religious Change: Polarization

Robert Wuthnow (1988) argued that American religion had undergone a restructuring since World War II. This restructuring involved what he called a “vertical cleavage,” a distinction between liberally and conservatively religious individuals that cut through the denominational structure of American religion. Americans were becoming more polarized in their religious beliefs. Some were opting for very strict interpretations of scripture and had very strong stances against abortion and premarital sex, while others had seemingly ridden the flow of modernization and the rise of science, opting for non-literal interpretations of scripture and holding liberal views regarding hot-button issues of the times. Wuthnow noticed that the significance of denominational affiliation appeared to be on the wane; strong interdenominational ties had developed among conservatively religious individuals, and within any denomination it was possible to find conservatively religious and liberally religious individuals.
Wuthnow described qualitative changes in the character of religion that had developed in the decades following World War II. Religion in general had modernized, he thought, and there was a greater self-awareness of symbolism as a feature of religion. Substantial numbers of people had achieved some degree of mental differentiation between their faith and the symbols it uses, resulting in a decline of biblical literalism in these persons. A greater emphasis on personal interpretation of religion and a decline in acceptance of official creeds was evident. The distinction between religious expression and religious institutions could be seen in high rates of religious switching and intermarriage. God concepts had changed as well. God remained prevalent in America primarily because He was comforting; for many, the fear of God as punishing and judgmental had vanished.

Although denominational significance had declined, Wuthnow notes that special interest groups came to the forefront, uniting conservatives across denominations and giving them political voice. Wuthnow regards these groups as a formidable force in American politics, but he also sees them as a reaction to the larger trend of modernization in American society and religion. Indeed, even these conservative special interest groups have accommodated to modern rationality in many ways. They fight battles over abortion and evolution in the rational-legal courts of American society, and they have attempted a “science” of creationism as a reaction to evolution.

What has caused this polarization? Wuthnow (1988: 315) regards the growth in government as one factor, although he does not think that the “expanding social presence of the state” determined the character of polarization in a straightforward way. The most important influence of government has been its emphasis on higher education: its willingness
to fund education in order to compete in the international knowledge-working economy, and its general support of science as a way of knowing. This support of education had, Wuthnow argued, generated an “education gap” within the Baby Boom generation that corresponded closely with individuals’ identification as conservative or liberal.

Wuthnow (1996) revisited his arguments from Restructuring a decade later. Using data from five nationally representative surveys, he documented an increase in polarization. Fewer individuals were undecided about their liberal or conservative orientations, and fewer felt they belonged in the middle of the distribution. On the other hand, the education gap he documented in Restructuring had diminished. Many Boomers had, it appeared, returned to the religion of their childhood despite involvement in the counterculture and commitment to higher education. Although Wuthnow had not considered religious socialization a primary determinant of the change in his original arguments, he found in 1996 that religious socialization plays a strong role in maintaining religious conservativism across generations. People whose parents regarded religion as important and who engaged in devotional practices with family as children were more likely to identify as religious conservatives as adults, with educational experiences controlled.

The polarization thesis as developed by Wuthnow (1988, 1996) thus modifies the secularization thesis in important ways. He acknowledges that religion has undergone substantial changes associated with modernizing, but these changes do not amount to a monolithic decline of religiosity in American society. On the contrary, developments suggest that a substantial reaction against the modernization of religion and the secularization of society have developed among conservatively religious individuals, who hold steadfastly to
their literal interpretations of the Bible. Although it is less important today than evidence in
the 1980s indicated, education remains one divider between conservatives and liberals.

2.3 Theories of Aggregate Religious Change: Cyclic Change Resulting in Overall Stability

Greeley’s (1989) Religious Change in America documents empirically the 40 years of
American piety prior to his work’s publication. The majority of his findings support a
stability model of American religion. The central doctrinal beliefs of Americans have not
changed: nine of ten Americans believe in God, and three-fourths in an afterlife. Changes in
attendance patterns are mostly explained by cohort effects, in this case the size of various age
cohorts at different survey times. The apparent “decline” of religion in America resulted
from the large Baby Boom generation reaching a period in their lives -- young adulthood --
when they were less interested in religion. With this cohort effect controlled, religion in
America appeared quite stable.

According to Greeley, two-fifths of the American population can be described as
“quite religious,” praying, going to church regularly, and participating in religious
organizations. Only one-fifth are not religious in the traditional sense, and most of these
people still profess belief in God. These proportions appear to be unchanged over the 40
years of Greeley’s analysis. In fact, the secularization model fit only the evidence on sexual
ethics and literal interpretations of the Bible.

On the other hand, Greeley (1989) did document some important denominational
changes. Mainline Protestant denominations, particularly Methodism, had lost market share
to conservative groups. Religion may be alive and well, but it is not an entirely static
phenomenon. In the end, Greeley was persuaded by the ability of a new paradigm in the sociology of religion -- rational choice theory -- to explain the persistence of religion in America. Development of this new paradigm during the 1990s illustrated its utility for explaining denominational change as well.

Briefly put, rational choice theory is a perspective within sociology that recognizes humans are rational actors who make life choices on the basis of the costs and benefits that alternative decisions provide. Humans seek to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of their actions. Of all spheres of life, scholars have been most reluctant to recognize that rational choice operates with respect to religious decisions. Religion is regarded as the realm of the non-rational, where even rational actors are sometimes unreasonable. The most basic question is: why religion? How could a rational actor make sacrifices on behalf of an unforeseen supernatural entity (Stark and Finke 2000)? Scholars of religion have long made apparent that they doubt the verity of religious claims and the rationality of persons who would accept such claims (e.g., Freud 1964 [1927]).

Why is religion a rational choice? Bainbridge (1997) explains that it offers a product that currently has no secular alternative: explanations for death and the afterlife. Some scholars have suggested it is a risk averse choice (e.g., Miller and Hoffman 1995). Harkening to Pascal’s wager, one loses little, ultimately, by participating in religion. If a god does not exist, worshiping the god should not create negative consequences. The potential losses of disbelief -- eternal damnation -- appear quite large. Other scholars emphasize that the choice of religion is inherently risky (Iannaccone, 1997, 1995). Religious institutions, regarded as the conduit to God in some religions, exact scarce resources in the form of time and money
for uncertain rewards. In either case, the choice of *some* religion is rational, provided risks are minimized institutionally in the face of religious pluralism (Iannaccone 1995).

Rational choice theory draws on economic principles to explain how the behavior of individuals creates social structure. Through the combined actions of individuals practicing maximizing behavior, various “markets” -- mating markets, markets for commodities, etc. -- are brought into an equilibrium where supply and demand are balanced. When applied to religion, rational choice theory posits the existence of a “religious market,” an arena in which suppliers of religion, denominations and congregations, compete for the loyalty of consumers, persons who spend time and money on religion. The principles of rational choice theory, as applied to religion, can be broken into supply-side and demand-side components. For analysis of aggregate religious change, the supply-side component is most useful. It specifies, using a church-sect typology developed decades ago, how religious change can be described as cyclic. The typology of church and sect familiar to students of sociology was introduced by Max Weber and his student, theologian Ernst Troeltsch. Since this time, sociologists have classified religious groups along a continuum ranging from sect to church, using the two terms as ideal types. Troeltsch (1960 [1931]) conceptualized a church as an organization that supports the secular social order. Its membership is inclusive, ideally, of everyone in a society. A church, then, is at low-tension with its surrounding secular environment and is very closely allied with the state and other secular powers. The church type is exemplified by the Roman Catholic church of the late Middle Ages; it was all but synonymous with the state and claimed the membership of all citizens. Churches, because
they lay claim to all members of society, also lay claim to exclusive truth; they exercise a monopoly on religious truth, often through rigorous suppression of heretics.

In contrast, a sectarian organization is at high tension with the surrounding secular environment. Its membership is exclusive, limited to those true believers who accept the uniquely legitimate religious truth offered by the sect. Johnstone (1997) describes the essence of sectarian organization as protest. Sects protest against established religious bodies that have accommodated to the secular environment, and they protest against the secular culture more generally, which is perceived as evil. Sects are more demanding of adherents, encouraging extended group participation and prohibiting many secular forms of entertainment.

Niebuhr (1929) added the concept of denomination to the Troeltsch typology. Denominations, like churches, are accommodated to secular society. Yet unlike churches, denominations accept pluralism and do not claim unique legitimacy with regard to religious truth. Niebuhr's interest was in understanding the evolution of sects to other organizational forms. He recognized that sects develop through the process of schism, in which a subset of a denomination leaves the group to pursue a higher-tension religion. As he saw it, sects must accommodate to the world -- become denominations -- or be organizationally weakened beyond the first generation. As Johnstone (1997: 96) puts it, "a sect cannot remain a sect."

To thrive, young sects seek to gain members. As group size increases, heterogeneity within the group increases. Network density, too, is related to group size such that larger groups have lower density; not everyone in a large group can know everyone else, and commitment is reduced as network density is reduced (Stark and Finke 2000: 160). Greater
coordination is required to manage the activities of a large group. Deviance within the group becomes more widespread, and control efforts become more costly. The doctrine of the group must become more tolerant of the secular environment and competing religious beliefs in order to appeal to a more heterogenous group. Secular concerns, including costs of paying for full-time employees and building maintenance, come to the fore. Specialization is required to manage the diverse needs of the group. The sect, then, holds within itself the key to its own accommodation: the desire to grow.

Even though these supply-side considerations -- ability of religions to serve stable market niches and organizational pressures of growth -- were considered by Nieburh in 1929, sociologists of religion had long espoused theories of religious change which focused on religious demand. Secularization theories represent one such variant, referring to reasons why people should demand less religion in the modern era: rationalization (Weber) or functional differentiation (Durkheim), for example. The demand influences hypothesized by secularization theory accord well with the movement of sect to denomination, but they do not predict schism and growth of sectarian movements. Dean Kelley’s (1972) Why Conservative Churches Are Growing thus rocked the academic community, presenting figures that showed U.S. mainline liberal denominations were losing members while “strict” conservative churches -- sect-like organizations -- were growing. This appears at first glance to be a perversion of a key economic principle: people should prefer religion that is less costly, and strict churches impose costly demands. Kelley realized, however, that religions which cost little offer little, and he attributed mainline decline directly to its leniency. While Kelley’s
work was hotly debated soon after its publication, researchers could not long ignore that the general trend he documented was indeed operating.

Rational choice theorists, building on Kelley’s work, have been quick to explain the success of strict churches with economic principles. Iannaccone (1994) reports that strict demands strengthen a church in three ways: they raise overall levels of commitment, they increase average rates of participation, and they enhance the net benefits of membership. Religious satisfaction is produced socially, and it is most effectively produced and evaluated most positively where the overall level of members’ commitments are high. Strict demands increase levels of commitment and participation because they most effectively mitigate the free-rider problem common in human groups (Iannaccone 1997, 1994). Free-riding occurs when individuals try to benefit from the collective goods produced by the group without contributing to their production (Hechter 1987). This is the most logical choice for the rational actor since it involves maximum gain at minimal cost. Religious free-riders derive the benefits of religion -- salvation, rituals for critical life events -- without contributing time or money to the upkeep of the organization providing these services. Strict religions mitigate free-riding through extensive demands and often through the stigma that is attached to membership in deviant religious groups by the larger society (Iannaccone 1992). Half-hearted members are jettisoned from the group, and the remaining members have a higher average level of commitment than do less strict groups (Iannaccone 1997). Prohibitions against secular activities, a costly demand of strict churches, create an increase in the value of religious activities. If gambling and drinking are prohibited, the church social becomes the hottest ticket in town.
The dynamics of change at the level of religious denominations are thus: 1) sectarian groups grow and liberalize over time, 2) schism occurs from liberalized mainline groups and sectarian groups are born, and 3) mainline denominations ultimately lose market share to sectarian groups until the sects have grown and liberalized into denominations. While Kelley marveled at the growth of conservative churches, regarding it as a historically specific development, rational choice theorists have placed the growth into a larger historical context, documenting the birth and decline of major denominations.

Bainbridge (1997) and Finke and Stark (1992), for example, document the development of Methodism. The denomination first began as a revival movement within the Anglican Church that stressed the necessity of a personal relationship with God connected to a strong individual faith. This was in opposition to the traditional focus on salvation through the sacraments administered by clergy. Methodism was successful in establishing a stronghold in America due to its high-tension, sectarian character. However, continued growth required the development of bureaucracy and concern for monetary matters including building maintenance and full-time, paid clergy. The sect was becoming more like a low-tension denomination, and the stage was set for a schism. Those who preferred a high-tension, otherworldly orientation eventually broke off to spawn the Holiness movement, which remains strong today. It is essentially a tale of Christianity running in place.

In sum, rational choice theory regards the choice of religion over atheism as rational, and it explains denominational change using organizational and economic principles. This “new paradigm” in the sociology of religion sees a permanent place for organized religion in
society, and it regards the repetition of schism and growth cycles as evidence of overall stability in the American religious institution.

2.4 Individual Theories of Religious Change: Cultural Broadening

Wuthnow and Glock (1973) conducted a study of college students during the heyday of the counterculture movement in an effort to discover the sources of religious loyalty, defection, and experimentation with new religious movements among young Baby Boomers. In particular, they wanted to understand whether the college experience contributed in any way to the rising numbers of unchurched young people that had been documented extensively in the literature. Understanding the effects of college was critical, they reasoned, because college enrollments had exploded exponentially during the 25 years preceding their study. Their survey of freshmen and senior students at UC-Berkeley uncovered some interesting trends. First, seniors were more likely to have left the religion in which they were socialized than were freshmen, suggesting that some students leave religion during their college careers. Second, they discovered that the students who left the religions of their childhood had higher GPAs and exhibited less of a tendency to worry about grades than those who stayed. They concluded that religious defection is in part a function of the “more sophisticated cognitive functioning” that defectors exhibit (1973: 173).

Wuthnow (1988) further developed this idea in his book on aggregate religious restructuring in America. His polarization thesis suggested that the increased tension and difference between conservatively religious and liberally religious individuals resulted from the broadening experience of persons educated in liberal arts colleges. When Hoge, Johnson,
and Luidens (1993, 1994) set out to determine the sources of Presbyterian defection, they regarded this “cultural broadening” hypothesis as one of two main theories of individual religious change. The other, social learning theory, is discussed below. They noted that past research had tended to uncover a liberalizing effect of college on religious and other social beliefs and attitudes. College education -- particularly in four-year liberal arts colleges -- exposes young people to alternative beliefs and lifestyles, many of which are inconsistent with their hometown religious training. Cultural relativity -- the inherent equality of all cultural traditions -- is emphasized in course content. This exposure to alternatives and training in cultural sensitivity throws existing beliefs into question, leading some to ultimately reject their childhood training.

Hoge and his colleagues (1994) also pointed out potential deficiencies in cultural broadening theory. In contemporary America, they note, cultural relativity and exposure to different cultures often occurs well before students attend college. Indeed, many high schools now include course content on these things that were once used only in college courses. Second, the model of college influence set forth by cultural broadening theory assumes that “college” is synonymous with four-year liberal arts colleges and universities. Many of today’s college students, they point out, attend technical schools, commute to campus each day instead of living in the dorms, and specialize in scientific disciplines that include very few courses which would challenge their culturally specific beliefs. These two points do not negate a theory of individual religious change based on cultural exposure and relativity, but they do clarify the probability of being exposed to alternative belief systems in various educational settings, high school and beyond.
Their own analysis of cultural broadening among Presbyterian confirmands (Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1993, 1994) found weak support for the hypothesis. Experiences in college and in the counterculture had significant effects on the religious beliefs of their respondents but did not influence their adult church involvement directly. Rather, these effects were indirect, with religious beliefs and adult experiences (including marriage and childbearing) generating most of the variation they observed in adult church involvement. They ultimately rejected a hypothesis of strong liberalizing effects of college attendance. The door is left open for continued evaluation of the cultural broadening theory, however, because the contexts and content of college education continue to change. It is unclear based on the current literature what the effects of college education have been on the religiosity of Generation X. Most of the literature on individual religious change -- including the studies of Wuthnow and Glock (1973) and Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1993, 1994) -- analyzed effects on Baby Boomers.

Cultural broadening theory most explicitly applies to changes in individual religiosity over the life course, but it can easily be applied to religious transmission as well. Miller and Miller (2000) argue that Baby Boomer parents were less likely to insist that their children assume the religious affiliations they held, instead wanting their children to choose for themselves. If true, it is likely that this sentiment developed among the Boomers during their exposure to cultural relativity in college and in the counterculture movement, and it has enormous implications for religious transmission to Generation X. Well-educated Boomers may be less likely to effectively transmit their religious beliefs, behaviors, and group affiliation to their Gen X children. In essence, cultural relativity may not only be learned
during college; it may be a perspective that is passed from parents to children well before formal education begins.

### 2.5 Individual Theories of Religious Change: Social Learning

By far, the most frequently referenced theoretical perspective on religious transmission is social learning theory. Hunsberger (1983, 1980) also champions the theory as an explanatory paradigm for religious apostasy. Bandura and Walters (1963) nicely outline the features of social learning approaches that are relevant for a study of generational transmission and the maintenance of learned beliefs over the life course. In stark contrast to cultural broadening approaches, social learning theorists are “impressed with the continuity of social learning from childhood to maturity, and with the importance of the learning experiences of childhood and adolescence” for adult behavior patterns (Bandura and Walters 1963: vii). In short, social learning approaches highlight the primacy of childhood experience over potential conflicting experiences individuals may have as adults. The enduring effects of parental socialization are striking considering the multitude of opportunities for rejection of parental teachings in adulthood.

Social learning theory developed as a response to previous learning theories that highlighted operant or instrumental conditioning as the primary vehicles for learning. These approaches emphasized reinforcement, both positive and negative, as the guiding force in behavior acquisition. Children are guided into the appropriate response patterns during a process in which each attempt to behave appropriately is rewarded or punished, or not rewarded, until the actual behavior or response becomes closer and closer to the desired
response. Children thus learn appropriate behaviors through a series of “successive approximations” which are guided to perfection with rewards and punishments. Bandura questioned whether most, or even many, of the desired behaviors in society could be learned solely through this method. Conditioning approaches failed to appreciate the role of imitation and modeling in the learning process. Indeed, in most cultures “children do not do what adults tell them to do, but rather what they see other adults do” (Bandura and Walters 1963: 49, italics in original).

Bandura thought the power of parental example was strong enough to endure the life transitions that children ultimately make in the course of becoming adults. In contrast to “stage theories,” social learning theories lay stress on interindividual differences and on intraindividual continuities. Stage theories regard adolescence, for example, as a period of life characterized by storm and stress as young people struggle to emancipate themselves from their parents. They are thought to align themselves with peers instead, creating a conflict of generations. Most research, however, fails to support this view (Bandura and Walters 1963: 25). The majority of adolescents have already achieved some degree of independence from parents and have little need to “struggle” away from them. Moreover, adolescents typically choose peers in concert with the beliefs and virtues parents taught them. Anti-social behavior, Bandura argues, rarely begins in adolescence; histories of delinquency and violence usually extend back into the early and middle childhood years. In sum, continuity of behavior is more apparent than discontinuity, and there is no serious conflict of generations.
As applied to religion, social learning theory predicts substantial continuity in religiosity across generations since individuals learn religious beliefs and behaviors by modeling parents. Bandura (1977) recognized that the characteristics of role models and the quality of models they provided would facilitate or impede effective socialization. Not surprisingly, then, researchers have found that religious socialization is effective when parents are consistent in their modeling and verbal teaching, when they provide affective support and reinforcements for behaviors, and when parent-child relationships are generally good (Bao et al. 1999, Taris and Semin 1997, Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994).

Hoge and his colleagues (1994) state that if social learning theory is true, children with genuinely religious parents are likely to be religious and involved in church life as adults. They also point out, however, that not all parents work equally hard at religious training, and they differ in what they think the training should accomplish. Their study found that some parents sent a “muted signal” because they professed the importance of religion to children but did not “back it up” by modeling the importance of involvement in church life. Some of their Presbyterian Boomers were hesitant to put religious pressure on their children - - a point made even more recently by Miller and Miller (2000) -- and thus failed to effectively model religion.

As developed by Bandura, the “continuity” perspective of social learning theory suggests obvious hypotheses for the study of religious apostasy. Hunsberger (1980, 1983, Hunsberger and Brown 1984) has emphasized parental example in his studies of apostasy among adults. These studies demonstrated that the emphasis placed on religion during childhood was the most important determinant of religious participation in adulthood. In
most of his work, Hunsberger has found that intellectual orientation, psychological adjustment, and political orientation play comparatively minor roles. For this reason, Hunsberger regards theories of apostasy that focus on rebellion or education as inadequate for understanding the phenomenon.

2.6 Theories of Individual Religious Change: Life Cycle Model

Life cycle, or developmental, models of religious change have in common the focus on changes in religiosity over the life course corresponding to life course transitions, e.g., transitions from childhood to adolescence, adolescence to adulthood where marriage and parenting are introduced, and adulthood to old age. Research on age differences in religiosity has long made use of life course models. Unlike social learning theory, life cycle models stress that religiosity changes significantly over the life course for most people, and these changes are more often related to the relevance of religion to the individual in a given stage of the life course than to a strongly cognitive reconsideration of religious beliefs because of exposure to new information or alternative belief systems. As adolescents age they become increasingly concerned to develop unique identities relative to their parents, and their religiosity tends to decline. But as young adults these former adolescents typically encounter family circumstances -- e.g., marriage and child rearing -- that push them back toward the religious orientation of their parents as they strive to instill core values in their own children (Glass et al. 1986). Developmental models caution us not to expect stability over the life course, but they predict ultimate stability in religiosity across generations when offspring have matured and become parents themselves.
The basic life cycle model specifies changes in religiosity we should expect as individuals make important life transitions, but the model does not provide much in the way of a unified perspective from which to explain these changes. Obviously the relevance of religion for a person in some stage of the life cycle plays a role, but we are left without a convincing theoretical explanation for the ways in which individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of religion at each stage of the life cycle. Luckily, the “new paradigm” for understanding aggregate religious change -- rational choice theory -- convincingly explains life course variation and overall stability across generations with the same basic engine used to explain cyclic denominational evolution and overall stability of the religious institution.

2.7 Theories of Individual Religious Change: Rational Choice Theory

Recent work has produced a “sociological” demand-side complement to existing “economic” supply-side rational choice models of religious change. Where supply-side models analyze aggregate changes in the religious economy and specify economic principles guiding its development, the demand-side models ground the basic maximizing assumption - - the idea that individuals make decisions on the basis of a cost/benefit analysis -- in a web of social and information constraints, borrowing from perspectives outside of rational choice theory. The demand-side models also take seriously the task of understanding the nature and development of preferences for religion that people have. These efforts represent a move to integrate rational choice theory across levels of analysis and to show how it can be integrated with other perspectives in sociology.
Iannaccone (1990, 1997) posits a more sophisticated vision of preferences than that assumed by most supply-side models. Religious preferences are essentially synonymous with religious human capital or religious capital in his formulations: the stock of knowledge, skills, and experience individuals build with respect to a religious tradition. First, religious practice must be conceptualized as a productive process. The “product” of religious commitment is religious satisfaction, and it is achieved through inputs of time -- church attendance, private devotional activities -- and money. Because religious satisfaction is primarily a collectively produced and consumed commodity, it makes sense to examine the production process at levels of analysis higher than the individual. Iannaccone (1990) argues that the “product” of religion is produced at the household level, through the inputs of individuals in families. The meaning and value of a religion, and religious participation, are defined and allocated at this level of analysis.

The religious capital of individuals develops throughout the life course, influenced by household-level decisions regarding allocation of time and money to religion. Importantly, religious capital is both a requisite for and consequence of religious participation. That is, religious satisfaction cannot be produced in the absence of the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to appreciate a religious doctrine and group. The greater the amount of religious capital available, the greater the satisfaction derived from religious participation. Participation in a doctrine and group, in turn, increases the stockpile of religious capital available to individuals. Thus preferences, as conceptualized by Iannaccone, are adaptive in that they grow stronger with consumption. Harkening to Bordieu, people prefer that with which they are familiar, and the greater the degree of familiarity, the stronger the preference.
for a given good. Religious capital is largely nontransferable since religious doctrine and ritual varies from group to group.

The religious capital approach to preferences suggests hypotheses regarding religious transmission and apostasy that square with the hypotheses suggested by social learning theory. Most obviously, “the household production model predicts that adults rates of religious participation will be strongly correlated with childhood religious participation and training” (Iannaccone 1990: 309). In addition, the household production model is consistent with studies finding that parents are better able to transmit religious values when their interactions with children are good, when families are intact, and when parents agree about religion and get along with each other more generally (Taris and Semin 1997, Martin et al. 2003, Myers 1996). Under these circumstances, religious capital is not only more easily produced, it may have greater value for the individual.

To date, most applications of rational choice theory have focused on supply-side constraints on religious choices of individuals, particularly the degree of regulation -- state-imposed legal constraints on religious expression -- and general availability of religious alternatives or the degree of pluralism inherent in any religious economy. A decrease in regulation at the societal level obviously reduces the average level of constraints on choice for individuals, but the availability of plausible alternative sources is not completely dependent on the level of pluralism in a society. For example, members of strict and “unique” denominations -- those which lack close religious and secular substitutes, often tied to ethnicity -- are less likely to become apostates than those in mainline liberal denominations, even in a pluralist religious economy (Hoge et al. 1982). In these cases,
although alternatives are known to individuals and may conceivably alter preferences, their choices are constrained socially.

Sherkat (1997), Sherkat and Wilson (1995), and Ellison (1995) move beyond supply-side constraints on choices to articulate constraints applied by the social embeddedness of individuals: sympathy or antipathy, example setting, and sanctions. First, they note that people make consumption choices in part because of the effect of their choices on other people’s satisfaction. Choices are influenced by sympathy when it is felt that a given choice will make an important other happy; they are influenced by antipathy when it is felt that the choice will upset or anger an important other. We have seen that children who feel close to their parents more readily adopt their religious orientation, while children who feel distanced from their parents evince more distance from their religious orientation. Although this finding might be explained vis-a-vis social learning theory, it could also be explained in terms of sympathy and antipathy: distanced children are less motivated to please their parents with religious choices.

Example-setting influences religious choice when choices are made in order to model behavior or show others a particular image of ourselves. Theorists of secularization and those who argue for larger cultural influences on religious demand note that younger people are less religious than older people. Yet we have seen that analyses of religious change over the life course indicates that a substantial portion of apostates return to religion when they form a family of procreation or when their children are in their formative years (Hoge et al. 1994, Sherkat 1997). This finding does not accord with secularization theory, but it does accord with a life cycle model of religious change. Rational choice theory adds meat to this general
model by recognizing that people perceive benefits from religion that are inoperable outside the family of procreation; the desire to set an example for children, and the enhanced benefits of religious participation for this purpose, make religion a particularly valuable commodity once a family of procreation has been formed. Changing involvement in religion over the life course thus reflects changes in the perceived ratio of costs to benefits of religion.

Finally, religious choices are impacted by sanctions, the reactions of those around us to our consumption choices. Sanctions help to explain situations in which monopoly religions thrive. Examples are Baptists in the South, particularly among African-Americans; Mormons in Utah; and Catholics in Ireland (Sherkat 1997: 75). They also help explain why “unique” denominations -- those lacking close substitutes under pluralism -- better retain members. Suppose that people desire religion because of some mixture of religious benefits - explanations of existence, or supernatural compensators -- and non-religious benefits -- social status, friendship, and network density. Suppose further that this desired mixture varies from person to person. If non-religious benefits are primarily desired, and these benefits can be obtained outside the group, sanctions for noncompliance, i.e., free-riding, are minimally consequential. The free-rider may be jettisoned from the group, but she can attain desired goods elsewhere. In some contexts, religious groups provide the only supply of desired secular benefits including status and friendship. Where social ties are consolidated and religious decisions are interwoven with considerations of ethnicity, family, and neighborhood, the consequence of a deviant religious decision could be the dissolution of important secular social ties.
Demand-side models amend and expand existing supply-side explanations of religious change without denying the importance of the supply-side. Instead, demand-side theorists advocate a unified rational choice approach that is applicable at various levels of analysis: individual, religious group, and religious economy. Some supply-side theorists (e.g., Warner 1997) remain unpersuaded by demand-side models. This likely stems from the connection of demand-side influences with theories of secularization; secularization means that people demand religion less and less over the generations. Demand-side rational choice models, however, do not predict secularization. Rather, they predict individual religious choices in view of considerations additional to changes in religious supply. As such, they represent a more complete and contextual model of religious decision-making.

2.8 Conclusions and Implications for the Study of Religious Transmission and Apostasy

This chapter has reviewed three perspectives on aggregate religious change -- societal trends in religious participation -- and four perspectives on individual religious change -- theories of religious transmission and retention across the life course. Among theories of aggregate change, both secularization and polarization emphasize the impacts of modernization on the religious landscape of the United States. Secularization theory proposes, in general, a declining influence of religion on society. Variants of the theory predict different routes to this decline: a monotonic decrease in the influence of religion via rationalization and functional differentiation of societal subsystems, a secularization of religion such that it becomes more worldly and less devoted to spirituality, the co-opting of religion by the state such that it becomes a general and diffuse civil religion, or the rise of
private, non-institutionalized systems of communication with the divine. The polarization thesis developed by Wuthnow (1988), while not a simplistic vision of religious decline, shares with secularization theory a view of religion as being squeezed by modernizing forces. The rise of science, higher education, and an information economy liberalized the religious beliefs of some Americans, and others began to define their beliefs in opposition to this liberal and more secular trend. As such, the polarization Wuthnow describes is, in fact, a reaction to larger changes in society that smack of secularization and secularism.

A very different prediction regarding the future of organized religion is made by the supply-side wing of rational choice theory, which specifies the forces giving rise to denominational evolution, schism, and overall stability in a pluralistic religious market such as the United States. Regardless of modernizing forces, religion will continue to play an important role in the life of society because it offers the only source of information regarding the purpose of existence and what can be expected following death. Changes in institutionalized religion that baffled secularization theorists, including the growth of conservative religious groups, are easily explained by the cycles of growth and schism that inevitably follow from the economic rules governing religion in American society. Further, supply-side theorists document that these cycles have occurred regularly in American history. In fact, the changes that have occurred in American religion since World War II look very much like the changes that occurred after the American Revolution and during the push westward. Times may have changed, but the religious battles fought between conservatives and liberals within religious denominations look very much the same as they always have.
What are the implications of these sweeping visions of history and future for analysis of individual religious histories? It is clear that expectations about intergenerational and individual religious change are closely associated with the general character of religious change expected for a society. One of the four perspectives on individual religious change is compatible with secularization theory or the closely related polarization thesis. Cultural broadening theory highlights the liberalizing effects of education, and a highly educated society likely means either a more secular society or a society racked with tension between the more educated liberal and less educated conservative religious groups. The other three perspectives on individual change are all compatible with a cyclic change/stability model of aggregate religious change. Social learning theory emphasizes the enduring impact of religious socialization by parents and specifies the conditions under which it will be more or less successful. The developmental or life cycle model does not deny enduring effects of socialization, but it clarifies how interest in religion changes over the life course along with important life transitions and particularly the transition into parenting. The demand-side component of rational choice theory arguably subsumes and gives life to both developmental and social learning models. It grounds their predictions in a basic model of human decision-making based on analysis of costs and benefits of religious participation. All three of these perspectives predict significant intergenerational similarity in religion, at least once the younger generation has formed a family of procreation.

Which came first, the macro or micro predictions? Much like the chicken-and-egg question, it is ultimately unimportant whether macro predictions feed the micro predictions or vice versa. It is important, however, to see how they inform each other. The actions of
individuals create the religious change we observe at the societal level, and once in motion, social structure influences the actions of individuals. Although this dissertation is a study of intergenerational and individual change, the findings have ramifications for our understanding of the American religious institution and our theories of aggregate religious change.
Chapter 3.
Transmission of Religiosity to Generation X

Cultural continuity in a society depends on successful transmission of values and beliefs from one generation to the next. As Wieting (1975: 137) notes, social philosophers since the time of Plato have focused on “the threat to society posed by the possibility that the young might not adopt the essential wisdom and values of that society.” As applied to the religious institution, this threat is termed secularization, a process whereby the importance of religion declines in the face of modernization. The persistence of the religious institution in part depends on how well religion is transmitted from one generation to the next. Indeed, any lapses in the process of intergenerational transmission jeopardize the stability of the religious institution (Myers 1996).

In spite of the obvious importance of religious transmission for predictions regarding secularization, less research exists on this topic when compared with research on national-level trends in religious participation. Myers (1996) highlights the unusual data demands for examination of religious transmission. In order to assess its nature and extent, data from both generations are required. Children tend to regard their parents as more religiously traditional and conservative than the parents’ reports justify (Acock and Bengtson 1980), so use of the child’s report of parental religious attitude may skew attempts to assess transmission effectiveness. The two-generation data requirement has generated many illuminating small studies limited to cities, samples of church members, and convenience samples. Only a handful of studies use large, nationally representative samples (c.f., Hayes and Pittelkow

Further, many of the studies on religious transmission are dated. Potvin and Sloane (1985:3) report that 95 percent of the adolescents in their 1975 sample of late Baby Boomers had the same religious affiliation as their parents and argued that “the young child’s religion is simply an extension of parental religion.” Yet the nature of religiosity transmission from “The Greatest Generation” to Baby Boomers may be significantly different than the transmission from Boomers to Generation Xers. Beaudoin (1998) and Miller and Miller (2000) theorize that Gen Xers are more skeptical about the value of the religious institution and put greater emphasis on personal experience than religious authority. Thus, intergenerational transmission cannot be regarded as an invariant process over time. The success of transmission in each generation may depend on larger historical forces affecting the character of generations differently.

The present study explores transmission of religiosity from Baby Boomer parents to their Gen X children using a large, nationally representative sample of adolescents and their mother or father in 1995. I assess two aspects of religiosity, acknowledging that the concept of religion is multidimensional. First I assess the extent of group affiliation transmission from parents to children and explore the impact of major factors thought to influence transmission effectiveness. Then I assess the distance between parents and children in intensity of religiosity, operationalized as frequency of attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer, and professed importance of religion. I gauge the ability of family and denominational characteristics to explain this distance. Although a significant literature explores factors influencing religious transmission, very little of it examines multiple
dimensions of religious commitment in a national context with intergenerational data. This study will update and augment our existing knowledge of religious transmission by addressing these gaps and using a sample of Generation X adolescents.

3.1 Preliminary Concerns: The Nature of Religious Thinking and Religious Socialization

A useful starting point is the development of religious thinking in childhood and adolescence, since cognitive capacity for abstract religious thought might be a factor to consider when addressing transmission of religious values and beliefs to adolescents. Ronald Goldman (1964) proposed a Piagetian outline of religious development in which children advance through three stages: pre-operational or intuitive, concrete operational, and formal or abstract operational. He found using Piagetian interview methods that the change from second to third stage occurred on average between the ages of 13 and 14.5. Thus, by mid-adolescence people have roughly the cognitive capacity necessary to evaluate religion in an adult way. Goldman found, however, great variation in level of religious development at any chronological age. Further, religious development tends to lag behind overall cognitive development.

Goldman theorized that the size of gap between religious and overall cognitive development helped to determine whether adolescents would ultimately reject religious teaching as childish. Hoge and Petrillo (1978), on the other hand, found just the opposite: more abstract religious thinking was associated with greater rejection of doctrine and church. It is unclear, then, whether the level of religious development or the gap between religious and overall cognitive capacity has implications for adolescents’ rejection of parental
teachings. Based on their chronological age, most of the adolescents in the present study have probably passed into the most advanced level of religious development. As I cannot assess their religious development with the available data, I treat them as equivalent to their parents on this dimension.

A second preliminary concern is the appropriate agent(s) of socialization to consider. Are children taught religion primarily by their parents, or are peer and congregational influences more important? Proponents of a generational change perspective have argued that peers are now more influential owing to the development of a distinct youth subculture in modern societies. Research on agents of religious socialization suggests that the influence of peers is overstated by arguments for generational differences. De Vaus (1983) finds that parents are much more important than peers and that little evidence of a distinct youth subculture regarding religion exists. Further, there is evidence that peer effects may occur due to channeling, a process whereby parents influence their children’s church and peer networks (Martin et al. 2003). The extent of parent and peer influence across value domains may depend upon the issue at hand. Sebald (1986) finds that financial, educational, and career concerns are parent-oriented, whereas social activities are peer-oriented. Jennings and Niemi (1968) state that religious agreement between parents and children is generally high relative to agreement on other topics.

There is less agreement regarding the relative importance of parents and congregational influences on children. Ozorak (1989) reports in her literature review that most research finds parents to be the biggest source of religious influence, accounting for as much as 60 percent of the variation in child religiosity. On the other hand, Newcomb and
Svehla (1937) found that the relationship between parent and child religiosity was sharply attenuated when the relationships were examined by denomination, suggesting that denominational influences shape the extent of agreement between parents and children. Hoge et al. (1982) found that denomination more strongly predicted children’s values than did their parents’ values, emphasizing not family but rather the cultural subgroups in which value transmission takes place. In the present study, both family-level and denominational influences on transmission are examined. As a measure of peer religiosity is unavailable in the data used for this study, peer influences are assumed to be minimal and largely due to parents’ channeling efforts.

A final preliminary concern is the nature and directionality of religious transmission. The dominant social learning approach to religious socialization provides a model whereby parental input is absorbed uncritically; children simply model their parents. Flor and Knapp (2001), on the other hand, explore whether transmission might be replaced by transaction, a model in which children absorb but then reorganize parental input. Their study appropriately places emphasis on the cognitive element of religious development, but their findings suggested transmission was more important, underscoring the effect of parental religious behavior on children’s religiosity.

The word transmission implies a movement from older to younger generation, yet some research has documented that movement also occurs in the opposite direction, from younger to older generation (Glass et al. 1986, Piquart and Silbereisen 2004). Piquart and Silbereisen (2004) argue that young people are an innovative force, demanding social adaptation in the parental generation. Examining multiple values, they find more influence of
parents on adolescents than vice versa. However, they report that adolescents had more effect on parental religiosity than they did in the realm of attitudes towards technology, work, or national defense. Interestingly, parents in this study thought they were least influenced on religious values. Although there might be substantial transfer of attitudes from children to parents, in the present study only parent to child transmission is assumed. Because parents are interviewed only once in the data used here, it is impossible to track changes in parental beliefs over time.

3.2 Theoretical Approaches to Religious Transmission

Theory development in the area of religious transmission is weak (Martin et al. 2003), in part owing to a lack of available data with which to test intergenerational hypotheses. I distinguish four major approaches in the literature: social learning theory, the developmental model, cultural broadening, and most recently, an approach derived from rational choice theory.

The social learning approach was advanced in the general social psychological literature by Bandura (c.f., Bandura 1977). The approach regards learning as a modeling process, primarily based on continued observation of attitudes and behaviors performed by persons who serve as roll models. Parents are central to this modeling process, as children have the most direct association and interaction with parents. According to Bandura’s formulations, transmission is facilitated or impeded by the characteristics of roll models. For example, parental warmth and acceptance facilitate transmission because parental values become associated with the positive feelings children have toward their parents (Bao et al.
Alternatively put, it becomes easier for adolescents to see the reason behind the value their parents are trying to transmit when relationships with parents are good (Taris and Semin 1997). Parents’ characteristics are viewed positively, which motivates children to imitate those characteristics. A look across the literature reviews of transmission studies indicates this is the most frequently referenced theoretical approach.

Social learning theory predicts, in the absence of significant changes in the average quality of relationships between parents and children, substantial continuity in religious values over the generations. What change does occur should be a result of generational changes in model characteristics that facilitate or impede modeling. The approach denies that children are differently motivated to conform to parents while in different phases of the life cycle, assuming static consistency between parents and children (Bandura and Walters 1963). It cannot predict generational differences in transmission effectiveness due to historical events or trends in society above the family level. Social learning theory also downplays the cognitive element of religiosity acquisition, reducing acceptance of religion to imitation/reward and denying careful evaluation of the fit of religion to one’s personal preferences. These shortfalls are addressed by other theoretical approaches.

Developmental models have in common the focus on changes in the religious distance between parents and children corresponding to children’s life course transitions. Research on age differences in religiosity have long made use of this focus. As adolescents age they become increasingly concerned to develop unique identities relative to their parents, and their religiosity tends to decline. But as young adults these former adolescents typically encounter family circumstances -- e.g., marriage and child rearing -- that push them back
toward the religious orientation of their parents as they strive to instill core values in their own children (Glass et al. 1986). Potvin and Lee (1982) argue that in early adolescence religion is characterized by constraint and authority but that by late adolescence it is more properly characterized by mutuality and cooperation, with adolescents “co-constructing” a system of religious beliefs. Developmental models caution us not to expect similarly strong relationships between parent and child religiosity during every year of adolescence. Although they predict a greater distance between parents and late adolescents, they predict ultimate stability in religiosity across generations when offspring have matured and become parents themselves. This approach, while sensitive to change over time in individuals, does not address potential changes in the transmission process across generations.

In contrast to both of these approaches, generational change is predicted by the cultural broadening approach suggested in the work of Wuthnow (1988, 1996) and Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1994). Wuthnow (1988) suggested that college education -- which skyrocketed among Baby Boomers relative to previous generations -- caused a liberalizing of religiosity because it exposed students to alternative lifestyles and cultures. Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1994:199) note that among other factors, the decline of mainstream Protestantism witnessed recently was due to “the gradual increase in relativism, individualism, and pluralism in middle-class culture.” Their indirect evidence of intergenerational weakening came from in-depth interviews with their Baby Boomer respondents. Several stated that their parents held more orthodox beliefs than they themselves held, but none said their own views were more orthodox. Most wanted a religious education for their children, but many were reluctant to impose their own religious views on
them. Miller and Miller (2000) also suggest that Boomers were reluctant to impose religion on their Gen X children. If cultural broadening driven by increasing levels of education among Baby Boomers is indeed operative, we might find that Generation X adolescents were indeed socialized less well into the religious tradition of their parents.

The final theoretical approach, and the one perhaps least developed for the study of religious transmission, is based on rational choice theory. Rational choice has become popular in the sociology of religion because of its ability to explain the success of religion in the United States where secularization theory long predicted its demise. The main assumption of rational choice theory applied to religion is that consumers of religion make choices -- about group affiliation and time spent on various religious activities -- based on the utility of those choices. They seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs of religious participation (Iannaccone 1995). This model identifies actors as logical, cognitive creatures, quite in contrast to the relatively unthinking and emotional human of social learning theory.

The supply-side formulations of rational choice theory regard a society as possessing a “religious economy,” an arena in which producers of religion -- denominations and congregations -- compete for the loyalty of consumers, those who spend money and time on religious groups. Equilibrium between the producers and consumers of religion is achieved through the maximizing behavior of individuals, as it is in other market sectors, and knowledge of the value of various religious commodities for consumers helps to predict changes in denominational market share. Theorists explain the decline of mainline Protestant denominations and the success of more conservative religious groups in simple economic language: religions which cost little in terms of time, effort, and money also offer very little
in terms of rewards. Hence, in the relatively large and diverse religious market of the U.S., strict religions better retain their members because they are more costly yet provide a more compelling good (Iannaccone 1994).

At the micro-level, Iannaccone (1990, 1991) develops a rational choice approach to religious transmission. He regards religious production as primarily occurring at the household level, with religious satisfaction being produced through inputs of time and money. In addition to satisfaction, individuals produce and accumulate religious human capital, the stock of knowledge, skills, and experience an individual holds relative to a specific religious tradition. Iannaccone theorizes that accumulation of religious capital works to reinforce an individual’s choice of religious affiliation and behavior by making it both more satisfying to consume and more costly to change; religious capital is non-transferrable, so changing religious affiliation involves the “start-up cost” of learning to produce satisfaction in a new way.

The most obvious prediction of the household production approach is that adults rates of religious participation will be strongly correlated with childhood religious participation and training (Iannaccone 1990: 309). Like social learning theory, the approach thus predicts continuity in religious beliefs across generations. Also like social learning theory, it is capable of specifying factors affecting the success of transmission efforts at the family level. Individuals make choices not only to maximize utility in the religious realm; they may also make religious choices to maximize utility in secular realms. Their religious choices may be based on 1) sympathy, the desire to please an important other, 2) antipathy, the desire to upset an important other with a choice, or 3) example-setting, the desire to model a behavior
in hopes it will be adopted (Sherkat 1997). Relationship quality with parents, then, becomes an important determinant of whether adolescents express sympathy or antipathy toward their religious values.

Rational choice approaches, in addition to articulating family characteristics which facilitate or impede the transmission of religion, also subsume the developmental focus on changes in religiosity due to life-course transitions. Far from stable over time, the utility of religion is expected to change as individuals age through adolescence and into adulthood where they form families of procreation. The value of religion increases when individuals have children, who they expect to behave in ways that religious teachings typically encourage. Unlike social learning theory and developmental approaches, rational choice theory builds in predictions regarding denominational characteristics that stem from supply-side formulations about the religious economy: individuals in more conservative denominations should be better retained.

The rational choice approach can be viewed as a unifying perspective for many of the existing theories on the effectiveness of religious transmission. It predicts broad cultural continuity over time but allows for variation at the denominational and household levels in effectiveness of religious transmission efforts. What it does not predict are secular changes at the societal level which might alter the demand for religion, changes that secularization theory and cultural broadening approaches expect. Since in this study I examine transmission from Boomers to their Gen X adolescents -- only two generations -- I cannot speak directly to generational changes in transmission effectiveness. I do not in this study directly evaluate rational choice theory or the other approaches as explanations for religious transmission, but
I use them as guiding frameworks that suggest important explanatory variables and help to organize conclusions of the study.

3.3 Factors Facilitating and Impeding Transmission from Parents to Children: Hypotheses

[See Table 3.1 on page 161]

Table 3.1 lists the hypotheses tested in Chapter 3. Both social learning theory and rational choice theory regard the strength of religious example set by parents as the most important determining factor in adolescent religiosity.

\[ H_{3.1} \text{: Transmission of religious affiliation and overall religiosity (hereafter, “transmission of religion”) will be most effective where parental participation in religion is high.} \]

A number of studies document more thorough transmission of values and affiliation when parents are religiously homogamous -- when they both hold the same religious affiliation (Clark and Worthington 1987). From a household production approach, a child’s religious capital is more easily produced when both parents are transmitting the same type of religious capital (Iannaccone 1990). From a social learning approach, modeling is made easier when parental example is consistent. Children may feel conforming to either parents’ religious orientation is unnecessary if the parents don’t conform to one another; parents may feel the same way and attempt to transmit their beliefs and affiliations less forcefully. Interchurch parents may be less likely to emphasize religion in raising children (Williams and Lawler 2001).

Indeed, some theorists argue that the extent of religious intermarriage implies the extent of secularization in a society. If marriage is not affected by religious group affiliation,
then religious affiliation is by definition less important to society (Glenn 1982) and to the individuals who intermarry. Voas (2003) presents evidence linking religious intermarriage to transmission failure and ultimately to secularization in Great Britain. He proposes a genetic analogy to understand the “demography of secularization” among Anglicans, the largest religious group in that country. A recessive situation is in place if both parents must be Anglican for the common result to be the Anglican christening of their offspring. A neutral situation is in place if half of children are christened in cases where only one parent is Anglican. A dominant situation is in place if either parent being Anglican results in a christening. Since WWII, Voas finds that a recessive situation is in place and that the extent of intermarriage has caused a marked decline in Anglican christenings. In the U.S., religious intermarriage increased over the period from 1957 to 1978 (Glenn 1982).

$H_{3.2}$: Transmission of religion will be most effective when parents share the same religious affiliation.

Previous studies find that parents are better able to transmit their religiosity when marital fighting and tension are low and when marriages are intact (Hayes and Pittelkow 1993, Max et al. 1997, Nelson 1981). Disruption of marriages through conflict and divorce may undercut the plausibility of religious beliefs for children since they are in direct conflict with religious teachings. Children may be less likely to see their parents’ behavior as consistent with their professed values. Marital fighting logically reduces the amount of time available for talking about religious beliefs and behavior with children, and it may make parents reluctant to attend religious services with each other. Marital disruption may also decrease religious participation (Stolzenberg et al. 1995) in the remaining parent with primary child-rearing responsibility. Max et al. (1997) report that no other studies at that
time had examined religious transmission in disrupted households. Most researchers used samples of intact households so that data from both parents could be collected. Clark and Worthington’s (1987) thorough review of factors affecting religious transmission includes no studies looking at marital disruption and only two studies examining marital discord. This is clearly a factor that deserves more careful evaluation.

\[ H_{3.3}: \text{Transmission of religion will be most effective when the level of marital fighting is low.} \]

\[ H_{3.4}: \text{Transmission of religion will be most effective when the adolescent’s household is intact, with both parents present.} \]

The most heavily studied family factor influencing transmission effectiveness is the warmth or quality of parental relationships and the absence of conflict between parents and children. A number of researchers find that parent-child relationships that are close, warm, and satisfying facilitate the transmission of religious values (Myers 1996, Ozorak 1989, Hayes and Pittelkow 1993, Herzbrun 1993, Hoge et al. 1982, Taris and Semin 1997, Hunsberger et al. 2002). As noted above, good parent-child relationships make it easier to see the value of parental teachings, motivate children to make sympathetic choices, and increase the ability of children to produce religious satisfaction and capital.

\[ H_{3.5}: \text{Transmission of religion will be most effective when parent-child relationships are good.} \]

Parental control or parenting style is a final family factor considered in this study. Dudley (1978) finds that authoritarian parenting styles -- which are high on control of adolescents but generally low on social support -- lead to adolescent alienation from religion. Potvin and Sloane (1985) theorized that effects of parental control vary by age such that high control facilitates transmission for early adolescents but impedes it for older offspring.
General level of parental control, since it may include control over adolescents’ religious participation, may signify enhanced efforts to religiously socialize children. Yet high levels of control, particularly for older adolescents, may cause relationships with parents to deteriorate. Even in the face of low conflict and warm relationships, transmission of religion may fail if parents’ childrearing practices are aversive to adolescents (Clark and Worthington 1987).

**H3.6:** Transmission of religion may either be facilitated or impeded by high levels of parental control, but some effect is expected.

The present study investigates whether transmission effectiveness varies by denomination. Hunsberger (1976) reviews a number of early studies indicating that youth from more conservative, traditional Protestant denominations reacted against parental religious teachings more than did youth from Catholic or liberal Protestant groups. The assumption was that fundamentalist religious teachings in the home force young people into conflict with the more liberal and tolerant attitudes taught in school. Hunsberger’s own study, and the bulk of more recent research, finds that youth from Catholic and conservative religious homes are more in line with the teachings of their parents than are youth from more liberal Protestant homes (Sloane and Potvin 1983, Ozorak 1989, Ellis and Wageman 1993). Since parents in conservative religious families may be more likely to value obedience (Ellison and Sherkat 1993), they may be better able to exercise parental control over religious participation. Rational choice explanations for differences in the success of denominations posit that strict religions offer a more compelling product.

**H3.7:** Transmission of religion will be most effective in Catholic and conservative Protestant households.
A final factor explored in this analysis is the intellectual orientation of adolescents. Although Hoge and Petrillo (1978b) find that intellectual development is unimportant for church participation and attitudes among youth, a rational choice perspective suggests that intellectual development and autonomy may encourage adolescents to search for religious orientations which better fit their preferences rather than accepting uncritically the religious attitudes of parents. In addition, Hoge and Petrillo (1978a) find that more abstract thinking on religion is associated with greater rejection of religious teachings. In this study I investigate whether intellectual development more generally influences transmission effectiveness.

H$_{3.8}$: Transmission of religion will be less effective when adolescents are more cognitively sophisticated, as indicated by a measure of intelligence.

The analysis that follows controls for the gender, age, race, and household income of adolescents in the sample, all variables which might confound the relationship between predictor and outcome variables. Some research indicates that female children more closely resemble their parents than do male children (Ellis and Wageman 1993) and that they may have a more stable religious value system over time (Sloane and Potvin 1983). If the developmental model is accurate, we should expect that older adolescents will be more distant from parents’ religiosity than are younger adolescents. Because most research on religious transmission is limited to very small and convenience samples, there is little research on the effect of race on transmission; its effect is explored. Scholars have long pointed to the obligatory character of religious affiliation and attendance among African-Americans (Ellison and Sherkat 1995), and both Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism are strong in the Hispanic American community. There is reason to suspect that religious
transmission will be most complete for nonwhite adolescents. Wilson and Sherkat (1994) found that higher income parents transmitted their religiosity less well than did lower income parents. This is consistent with a cultural broadening approach, since income is typically closely aligned with level of education.

- H3.9: Transmission of religion will be most effective for female adolescents.
- H3.10: Transmission of religion will be more apparent for younger adolescents.
- H3.11: Transmission of religion will be more effective in nonwhite households.
- H3.12: Transmission of religion will be most effective where parental income is lower.

### 3.4 Data Source

The data analyzed are from Wave I of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Add Health is a school-based study which recruited adolescents from 132 schools selected to be nationally representative of 7th through 12th grade schools. The school-based design allowed for ease of recruiting members of the target population and also allowed for collection of detailed information on respondents’ school peers. Wave I of the study was conducted in 1994 and 1995, and the restricted use sample for Wave I includes 20,745 respondents. Information on each respondent was collected from an in-school questionnaire, an in-home interview, and an interview with one of the respondent’s parents or guardians. The series of questionnaires provided information on demographics, neighborhood characteristics, friends and romantic relationships, drug use, sexual behavior, school achievements, and many other attitudes and behaviors. Details of the study design can be found in Harris et al. (2003).
Add Health is among the few nationally representative datasets that elicits information on religious affiliation and practice from both parents and children. Most surveys of individuals ask respondents to estimate their parents’ or child’s religious beliefs and behaviors, which introduces perception bias. It should be noted here that the majority of parents interviewed are mothers, owing to their greater average knowledge of the child than fathers. Some research indicates that fathers’ and mothers’ influence on children differs, with fathers being more influential on instrumental religious matters -- e.g., attendance patterns -- and mothers having more influence on the general religious orientation of children (Hayes and Pittelkow 1993). Since much research posits mothers’ religious orientation as more critical than fathers’, it is not viewed as a limitation that most parent respondents are mothers.

Where households are intact, data are available on the religious affiliation of the reporting parent’s spouse. This allows for a more strict measure of parent-child affiliation agreement in which children are compared with both parents in intact households. For this reason, and because disrupted households cannot report data on religious homogamy or marital fighting, the analysis is done separately for intact and disrupted households.

3.5 Variable Construction

Two dependent variables were constructed for regression analyses. The first measures affiliation agreement between parents and children. Both sets of respondents were given a list of over 20 religions and denominations from which to choose. In intact households, parent-child dyads were coded 1 (agreement) if the child’s report of affiliation agreed with either the
reporting parent’s affiliation or her/his spouse’s affiliation. If the child reported a different affiliation from both parents, 0 (disagreement) was assigned to the dyad. In disrupted households, children were compared with the one reporting parent using the same coding scheme.

The second dependent variable used in regression analysis is a measure of religiosity distance between reporting parents and children. Both sets of respondents were queried on their frequency of attendance, frequency of prayer, and on the importance of religion to them, a concept called religious salience. Each item was coded on a four-point scale where low values indicate less religious participation. A measure of overall religiosity was constructed by adding the three measures together and subtracting 3 so that the final measure ranged from 0 (low religiosity) to 9 (high religiosity). The measure of religious distance used in regression was computed by subtracting child’s score from parent’s score and taking the absolute value of the result. Although the majority of dyads had positive scores -- most children scored lower on religiosity than the reporting parent -- the few cases where children had higher religiosity were scored similarly in terms of absolute distance from parents. I work from the assumption that parents wish to transmit not only their religious background but also their level of involvement and commitment to religion. Parents whose children think very differently in either direction may still be validly regarded as failing to transmit religious values and attitudes.

A measure of relationship quality between parents and children was constructed from one or two sets of four single items, each rated on a five point scale ranging from 1 = “not at all to 5 = “very much.” The items asked whether children 1) felt their mothers were warm
and loving toward them, 2) were satisfied with their overall relationships with their mothers, 3) felt their mothers cared about them, and 4) felt close to their mothers. Questions were then repeated for fathers. In intact households, items on both mothers and fathers (8 total) were summed to generate a scale ranging from 8 to 40. In disrupted households, items on the reporting parent, either the mother or father, were used, generating a scale ranging from 4 to 20. Chronbach’s alpha for the index is .84 in intact households using all eight variables. Alpha values are even higher, above .90, in disrupted households when perceptions of only one parent are used.

Marital fighting was assessed with an item answered by the reporting parent about the frequency with which the respondent argues or fights with her or his spouse. Respondents were coded as low on fighting (0) if they responded that they fought “not at all” or “a little.” They were coded as high on fighting (1) if they responded “sometimes” or “a lot.” A measure of religious homogamy was created by comparing the parent’s reported religious affiliation with the affiliation reported for her or his spouse. Cases are coded 0 on this measure if reporting parent and spouse do not agree on affiliation and 1 if the same affiliation is reported for both parent and spouse. To assess the impact of parental religious involvement on transmission of affiliation and overall religiosity, frequency of parental religious attendance was used as an independent variable. It is dichotomized into 0=low-attending parents (frequency reported as “never” or “less than once a month”) and 1=high-attending parents (once a month or more).

A measure of parental control was created using seven items from the child’s interview schedule. Adolescents were asked whether they had control over various decisions
in their lives, including what time to go to bed, what to eat, choice of friends, hours and type of TV programming watched, what clothes to wear, and at what time curfew is set. Each item was recoded such that 0 = child control over the decision and 1 = parent control over the decision. Responses were summed to generate an index ranging from 0 (total child control) to 7 (total parent control). Chronbach’s alpha was lower for this index (.64), reflecting the fact that parents were likely to control some aspects of a child’s life but not others. Control over curfew was least strongly related to the total scale, a fact which is not surprising since nearly all adolescents have a curfew set by parents. Control over TV watching, on the other hand, had the strongest relationship to the overall scale. When parents control TV, they tend to control many other aspects of children’s lives.

To assess the impact of parental religious background, the 20+ religious denominations selected by respondents were collapsed into six broad religious traditions. Because of group size and conceptual distinctness, persons reporting no religious affiliation, Jews, Catholics, and those reporting “Other” (non-Protestant) religious affiliations were separated from the Protestant religious groups. Protestant groups were classified as liberal, moderate, or conservative based on the classification scheme created for the Add Health geocode file by Rodney Stark, a noted scholar in the sociology of religion. Conservative Protestant affiliations available for respondents to choose were Adventist, AME/AME Zion, Assembly of God, Baptist, Holiness, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, and Pentecostal groups. Moderate Protestants included Disciples of Christ, Lutheran, and Congregational groups. Liberal Protestants included Episcopal, Quaker, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Unitarian groups.
Gender of adolescents was recorded by interviewers, and a measure of age in years was generated by subtracting adolescents’ birth year from the interview year for that adolescent, either 1994 or 1995. Race was reported by adolescents as White, African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Other. Respondents could report more than one racial identity if they so chose, and they could also report a Hispanic ethnicity alongside a racial category. A separate question asked which racial category best described adolescents who identified more than one race, and answers to this item were used to code multiracial respondents. In this analysis, white non-Hispanic respondents are compared with all other racial/ethnic categories. Household income was collected from reporting parents and is measured in thousands of dollars. Income values were imputed for cases missing data on this variable. Imputation was done separately for intact and disrupted households because a large difference in income was found for these two groups. In intact households missing income information, the mean income value for intact households was assigned. In disrupted households, the mean income value for disrupted households was assigned.

Intellectual development is measured with Add Health’s Picture Vocabulary Test, an exam based on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test for measuring receptive vocabulary. The Peabody series has been used primarily as a screening device to measure intelligence and is strongly associated with other measures of intelligence (Carvajal et al. 2000). The Add Health Vocabulary Test is standardized by age and has been scaled to the sample average. A score of 100 indicates average ability.
3.6 Analysis Procedures

Analysis of Add Health requires correcting estimates and significance tests for the cluster sampling design. Because adolescents are sampled inside schools, they share characteristics with other adolescents in their schools. Regression analyses depend on the assumption that observations are independent, an assumption clearly violated by the cluster sample design. To correct for the bias introduced by cluster sampling, I use the survey routines available in STATA 7.0. These routines allow for data on all clusters to be incorporated even when subpopulations are analyzed, as is true in the following analyses. To take advantage of these routines, I created variables for each subpopulation that indicated whether the case should be used in analysis or whether it exists only to represent a cluster, following Chantala and Tabor (1999). When modeling transmission among conservative Protestants in intact households, for example, the variable COMPLETE is set to 1 if the case is an intact, conservative Protestant household with complete data on all variables; it is set to 0 in disrupted, non-conservative Protestant households and those missing data on any analysis variables. STATA’s survey regression commands are then invoked for subpopulation=complete.

3.7 Descriptive Statistics

[See Table 3.2 on page 162]

Table 3.2 presents descriptive statistics for intact and disrupted households. The number of cases containing complete data for Table 1 is 11,663 -- 7,105 intact households and 4,558 disrupted households. In nearly 40 percent of households used in this analysis,
then, only one parent is present. Given the increasing number of single-parent households, transmission differences between intact and disrupted households appear all the more important to uncover.

In intact households, about 85 percent of children report the same religious affiliation as parents. Although parent religiosity is higher, on average, than child religiosity, both score relatively high (7.20 and 6.58, respectively) given the index range of 0 to 9. About 79 percent of intact households are cases where parents share religious affiliation. In the majority of these households, reporting parents state that their frequency of fighting is “a little” or “not at all,” but around 30 percent report higher levels of marital conflict. Parent-child relationship quality is quite high on average, with the average index score at nearly 36 (on a scale ranging from 8 to 40). Parental control is relatively low, with the mean number of behaviors controlled below two. The religious distribution of these households -- using parental report to characterize the household -- is comparable to reported distributions for the nation. Only 5 percent claim no religious affiliation, 50 percent are Protestant, with conservative Protestant household most numerous, and about one-third are Catholic. Although the full Add Health sample has a mean Vocabulary Test score of 100, in intact households used in this analysis the average is slightly higher at 103.01. Intact households can be described demographically as 1) having roughly half female children and half male children, 2) being approximately 37 percent nonwhite, and 3) having average household income of $56,000 annually. The average age of reporting adolescents is 16 years, ranging nine years from 13 to 21. Over 50 percent of adolescents are 16 or 17 years old, resulting in a small standard deviation of 1.7 years.
Many of these values look strikingly different in single-parent or disrupted households. In disrupted households, only 70 percent of children report the same affiliation as the reporting parent -- a 15 percentage point difference compared with intact households. Both parent and child religiosity scores decline in disrupted households, consistent with previous research. Parent-child relationships are still quite good in disrupted households, judging from children’s reports. The mean score on the relationship quality index is nearly 18 (range is 4 to 20). Single parents understandably exert slightly less control on adolescents, with the mean number of behaviors controlled by parents moving from 1.88 in intact households to 1.76 in disrupted households. Over half of disrupted households in this sample are nonwhite, and the average income drops from $56,000 to $30,000.

3.8 Bivariate Analysis of Transmission Effectiveness

[See Table 3.3 on page 163]

Relationships between predictor and outcome variables at the bivariate level are presented in Table 3.3. In the second and third columns, I compare the percentage of cases where parent and child affiliation differ by categories of the independent variables. In the fourth and fifth columns of the table, I report correlation coefficients for the relationship between parent and child religiosity by categories of the independent variables. For this table, the independent variables have been dichotomized to facilitate bivariate comparisons, typically at their medians.

Sample sizes for religiosity distance between parents and children are slightly smaller than those for affiliation agreement because of skip patterns in the Add Health interview
schedule. If either parents or children reported no religious affiliation, they were skipped through the items on attendance, prayer, and salience. These cases could not be used for computation of religious distance. I wanted to include “Nones” in the bivariate analysis of affiliation transmission even though no data on religious distance were available for this group. Thus, I arrived at the four sub-samples reported in Table 3.3. Using only cases where both parents and children reported information on attendance, salience, and prayer, the sample size is 6,246 in intact households and 3,661 in disrupted households. Using cases where parents and children reported information on affiliation, but not necessarily on attendance, salience, and prayer, the sample size is 7,105 in intact households and 4,558 in disrupted households.

Parental religious attendance is a significant and strong predictor of affiliation transmission in both intact and disrupted households, with over ten percentage points separating the rates of affiliation transmission between high and low attenders. In intact households, religiously homogamous marriages result in 87 percent of children adopting the parents’ affiliation, while only 78 percent choose either parent’s affiliation in intermarried households. Martial conflict does not make a significant difference, but high parental control and good parental relations with children result in higher rates of affiliation transmission in both intact and disrupted households. Rates of transmission differ dramatically across the religious traditions of parents. Catholic, Jewish, and Conservative Protestant parents have higher rates of transmission, while lowest rates of transmission are recorded in the “Other” and “None” categories. In intact households, female adolescents, those aged 15 or younger, and nonwhites are slightly more likely to report the same affiliation as a parent. In disrupted
households, a similar relationship holds for age, but the gender effect disappears and the race effect on affiliation transmission increases in both magnitude and significance. Notably, there are no significant income or Vocabulary Test differences in affiliation transmission for either disrupted or intact households.

In the final two columns of Table 3.3, the relationship of parent to child overall religiosity is examined. Where marital conflict made little difference for affiliation transmission, it matters much more for transmission of overall religiosity. Denominational differences in religiosity transmission are intriguing when compared with affiliation transmission: although Catholics, Jews, and conservative Protestants were most likely to transmit their affiliation, they appear least likely to transmit their overall level of religiosity as measured by attendance, prayer, and salience. In contrast to affiliation results, white children are more likely to look like parents in terms of overall religiosity than are black children.

[See Table 3.4 on page 165]

When parents and children differ on religious affiliation, what types of differences are most common? Table 3.4 presents intergenerational mobility in religious affiliation for all households. Results indicated that intact and disrupted households show similar patterns. The diagonal of this table -- in bold face -- reports the percentage of adolescents retained in each denominational tradition. In this table, the collapsed measure of religious affiliation is used for both parents and children. Thus, movement to another denomination within the broad tradition is not captured. This table allows examination of cases where children report an affiliation outside the broad religious tradition of parents.
Households where parents reported no religious affiliation were among the least likely to transmit this: 35 percent of their adolescent children report an affiliation. Over 10 percent of them report affiliation with a conservative Protestant group, and another 10 percent report they are Catholics. While conservative Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions retain more adolescents, when they do report a different affiliation from parents it is most likely to be “None.” Liberal Protestant parents have a high percentage of children who report no affiliation. But like cases where parents report no affiliation, the children of liberal Protestants are also quite likely to report affiliating with a conservative Protestant denomination.

In sum, parents of all religious traditions lose more children to the None category than any other religious group. Yet parents in liberal religious traditions -- and those with no religious affiliation -- also lose a substantial proportion of children to conservative Protestant groups.

3.9 Multivariate Analysis of Religious Transmission

[See Tables 3.5 and 3.6 on pages 166 and 167]

To gauge the relative impact of denomination and the other predictor variables, logistic regression was used to model the probability of affiliation transmission. Odds ratios from these models are presented for intact households in Table 3.5 and for disrupted households in Table 3.6. Age, income, Vocabulary test score, relationship quality, and parental control are used in continuous format. Gender, race, religious homogamy, parental religious attendance and marital fighting are dichotomized, and parental religious tradition is
represented with dummy variables. The first model includes the full sample of intact households with complete data on all variables. The remaining models present results of models run separately for four religious traditions. Persons reporting None, Jewish, or Other religious affiliations have been excluded. There are too few Jewish families to include in this analysis, and the Other category is not conceptually meaningful. Models for parents with no religious affiliation, not reported, had nonsignificant measures of model fit and no significant predictor variables. Results demonstrated that the factors predicting the transmission of an affiliation are not the same factors that predict whether Nones transmit lack of a religious affiliation. In Tables 3.5 and 3.6, then, Nones are excluded.

For intact households, results for the full sample indicate that the strongest predictors of successful transmission of affiliation are religious homogamy, parental religious attendance, and Catholic background. Odds ratios show that odds of successful transmission are 50 percent higher in religiously homogamous households, and they are more than three times higher in dyads where religious attendance of parents is high. Catholics had odds of successful transmission more than 2.5 times those of liberal Protestants, but no other tradition was significantly different from the liberal group when other characteristics were controlled. More modest effects were found for parental relationship quality, gender, and adolescent’s age -- all in the expected direction. The remaining models in Table 3.5 show that the predictors vary somewhat inside the major religious traditions. The effects of religious homogamy, gender, and parental relationship quality are quite strong for conservative Protestants but not significant for the other groups. In contrast, strong age effects were detected for moderate Protestants; a one year increase in adolescents’ age
yielded a 21 percent decrease in the odds of successful transmission. Although parental religious attendance was a strong predictor for all groups, it was a particularly important factor for liberal Protestants. Those adolescents with high-attending parents more nearly 4 times more likely to report affiliation with a liberal Protestant group than were adolescents with low-attending parents.

Table 3.6 shows that results are slightly different in disrupted households. Parental religious attendance has a somewhat less dramatic effect for this sub-sample, but the importance of relationship quality increases slightly in magnitude. Further, both conservative Protestant and Catholic traditions outpace liberal Protestant traditions significantly in retention of adolescents. The Catholic effect is considerably stronger for disrupted households; Catholics were about three and a half times more likely to transmit their affiliation than were liberal Protestants. In this sub-sample, the impact of religious attendance is again highlighted primarily for liberal Protestants. This time, however, the effect of parental relationships is also notable for liberals.

[See Table 3.7 on page 168]

OLS regressions of religiosity distance in both intact and disrupted households are presented in Table 3.7. Almost all of the predictor variables have a significant effect on the religious distance between parents and children. It is surprisingly altered by parental religious attendance such that high attending parents have more distant children. Equally surprising is the finding that distance is decreased by higher Vocabulary Test scores. Religious homogamy, higher parent-child relationship quality, and higher parental control all result in more similar levels of religiosity for parents and children. Interestingly, religiosity
distance is decreased with increased marital fighting. Less surprising, and in contrast to bivariate results, conservative Protestant adolescents are more similar to their parents in religiosity compared with other religious groups. Distance increases with adolescents’ age, male gender, and white race. Results for disrupted households show that adolescents’ gender, parental religious attendance, relationship quality, and parental control exhibit similar effects as in intact households. The comparison of conservative Protestant to liberal Protestant yields a stronger effect in disrupted households.

3.10: Discussion and Evaluation of Hypotheses

Analysis of the Add Health data shows that many of the predictor variables highlighted in previous studies are important for understanding religious transmission in this sample of Generation X adolescents and their parents. This study used two different dependent variables, one tapping affiliation and the other tapping religiosity as measured by religious attendance, prayer, and religious salience. The same predictor variables were used in models of affiliation and religiosity transmission, yet significantly different results emerged for many of the variables, complicating evaluation of hypotheses since there was no a priori reason to suspect different results for affiliation and religiosity.

Parental religious attendance was by far the strongest predictor of successful affiliation transmission, supporting hypothesis 3.1, yet high parental attendance resulted in more distance between parents and children in terms of religiosity. This hypothesis is thus partially supported. One possible explanation for this finding is the existence of a ceiling effect: if parental religiosity is at its maximum, there are few alternatives for adolescents
other than to have lower religiosity than parents.

Hypothesis 3.2 expected greater transmission when parents in intact households share the same religious affiliation. Results show that religious homogamy increased the odds of affiliation transmission and decreased the distance between the religiosity of parents and children. This hypothesis is strongly supported.

Marital fighting had no significant effect on affiliation transmission but had a significant negative effect on distance. Parents and adolescents were more similar religiously when levels of fighting were higher, a counterintuitive finding that was not anticipated in hypothesis 3.3.

Hypothesis 3.4 stated that intact households would produce more complete transmission of religiosity. This hypothesis is strongly supported. Only 15 percent of adolescents from intact households chose different religious affiliations from their parents, while nearly 30 percent of adolescents from disrupted households did so. The correlation between parent and adolescent religiosity in intact households (.56) was stronger than that in disrupted households (.46).

Hypothesis 3.5 specified that transmission would be facilitated by good relationships between parents and children. Results show that better relationships facilitated both affiliation and religiosity transmission, and this hypothesis receives strong support.

Hypothesis 3.6 predicted a relationship of some sort between parental control and religious transmission, but the nature of the relationship was unclear based on previous research. Analysis of the Add Health data showed that parental control was unrelated to affiliation transmission but had a moderate effect on religiosity distance. In this case, higher
levels of control lead to less distance between the religiosity of parents and children. The hypothesis is partially supported.

Hypothesis 3.7 predicted denominational differences in transmission effectiveness stemming from rational choice theory. Affiliation results provide support for the hypothesis; Catholic and conservative Protestant parents, the latter in disrupted households only, did better transmit their religiosity. With regard to religiosity distance, however, only conservative Protestant households differed from liberal Protestants in distance, and in the expected direction. The hypothesis is supported. Curiously, bivariate results indicated an opposite conclusion. The correlations between parent and adolescent religiosity were weaker among conservative Protestants. Differences in religious homogamy, parental relationships, control, and demographics are held constant in the multivariate models, however, so these results are viewed as more definitive.

Intellectual development as measured by the Add Health Vocabulary Test was unrelated to affiliation transmission, but it had a small significant and negative effect on religiosity distance. Greater cognitive sophistication appears to result in greater transmission of religiosity, quite in contrast to hypothesis 3.8.

Hypotheses 3.9 and 3.10 predicted that female and younger adolescents would look more similar to their parents in terms of religious affiliation and overall religiosity, and results indicated this is generally true although the age relationship did not hold for affiliation transmission in disrupted households. These hypotheses are supported.
Multivariate analyses confirm the expectations of hypothesis 3.11 that transmission of religious affiliation and religiosity are stronger in nonwhite households than in white households. This hypothesis is supported.

Hypothesis 3.12 predicted that higher income parents would transmit their religiosity less well, drawing from cultural broadening theory. Results did not support this hypothesis in any way; there were no income differences in ability to transmit either affiliation or religiosity.

The decision to model results separately for intact and disrupted households was made primarily due to data constraints. Results show this was a good move for conceptual reasons; transmission effectiveness was predicted differently for the two groups. Parental religious attendance was much more important for transmission of affiliation in intact households, but denominational differences were larger in disrupted households. Denomination was also more important for religiosity transmission in the disrupted group, and in contrast to results for affiliation, religious attendance was a stronger predictor of religiosity transmission for this group. Results by parental religious background show that the process of transmission also works differently depending on the cultural subgroups in which families are located. Parental religious attendance is much more important for affiliation transmission in liberal Protestant homes, and among disrupted households, so is parental relationship quality. It is important to examine the process of religious transmission within the context in which it occurs.
3.11 Conclusions

I draw several broad conclusions from this study relevant for the efforts of parents and denominations -- indeed, society itself -- to retain youth in religious traditions and keep their interest in religion alive as they move through a critical developmental period. For parents seeking to retain their youth in a religious tradition, the single most important factor is example-setting. “Do as I say and not as I do” is shown here to be a poor strategy for raising children who identify with parents’ religious denomination. High parental participation in the life of that denomination is critical for passing on the group affiliation. Maintaining good relations with children is also important for transmitting both group affiliation and overall religiosity. Children who feel that relations with parents are cold, distant, and unsatisfying tend to be religiously different from their parents. Finally, parental control over at least some aspects of their adolescents’ lives tends to result in greater similarity in overall religiosity. Parents who are more involved in decision-making in their child’s life are probably more involved in religious decision-making for the child. At the very least they set a consistent precedent of involvement in decision-making, which would make an extension of this control to the religious realm more palatable for adolescents.

Results clearly show that conservative Protestant and Catholic denominations are more successful in retaining adolescents in the tradition than are others. This was expected based on previous research findings and the argument of rational choice theory that conservative Protestant denominations offer a better cost/benefit ratio for consumers of religion. Particularly interesting was the loss of adolescents in liberal Protestant and “None” traditions to the conservative camp, where other traditions lost members primarily to the
“None” category. Conservative groups are clearly appealing more to today’s youth than would be expected based on a cultural broadening approach. More research must be done to delineate how conservative groups are accomplishing this feat. They may offer more compelling religious rewards, as rational choice perspectives claim, or they may simply be attracting youth with more programs and activities. For liberal Protestants, parental involvement in religion is especially important. Given the more tolerant and pluralistic bent of liberal Protestantism, retaining youth depends on demonstrating through example the attractiveness of the tradition.

It is also interesting, but not altogether surprising, to find that parents with no religious tradition often have adolescent children who do affiliate. A significant number claimed to be Catholic, a finding which might be explained by the nominal affiliation of many Catholic adults. Since Catholicism is an ethnic and cultural category as well as a religious one, it would be likely that children understand themselves to be Catholic even when their nominally affiliated Catholic parents -- who judge their affiliation to be “None” -- do not attend mass regularly. The movement of children without a religious background to the conservative Protestant camp requires a different explanation, since conservative groups have higher levels of adult participation that are often a requisite for continued membership. Again, the effect may be due to the cost/benefit ratio for conservative groups, or it may be due to the enhanced efforts of these groups to attract youth.

For societies to affect replication of the religious order, some socially structured family arrangements appear to be necessary. A striking gap exists between the ability of intact and disrupted households to transmit religious affiliation and religiosity. Given the
high number of single-parent households in this nationally representative sample, there is cause for concern. If single parenting becomes even more prominent in U.S. society, it is likely that the religious imprinting of the next generation will be jeopardized. This does not necessarily signal the demise of any one religious tradition, but it suggests a realignment whereby children increasingly forge their own religious connections. Given their overall lower levels of religiosity, these results suggest that children of single-parent households may be less interested in religion altogether. The strong influence of religious homogamy also suggests that societal changes in the rate of religious intermarriage may influence imprinting of generations to come.

An unexpected finding from this analysis deserves special discussion. It was found at the bivariate level that, perhaps paradoxically, nonwhites are better able to transmit religious affiliation to their children but that whites are better able to transmit overall religiosity. Relevant to these findings is the work of Ellison and Sherkat (1995) on religion as a semi-involuntary institution for African-Americans in the rural South. They argued that African-Americans -- especially in the South -- often regarded religious affiliation as involuntary; it is simply part of the Southern black social structure and may have little to do with individual rewards gained through religious participation. On the other hand, frequency of individual prayer and professed importance of religion to an anonymous interviewer are not governed by this special social structure. When the race effect on religiosity distance is examined in multivariate context, however, nonwhites are less distant from parents. Here, family and parenting characteristics are controlled which might vary by both race/ethnicity and effectiveness of religious transmission.
This study has highlighted family and denominational influences on the effectiveness of religious transmission in a more thorough and nuanced way than much of the previous research on this topic. Yet much remains to be done. Limitations to this study include: 1) inability to assess religiosity among respondents who are religiously unaffiliated, 2) parent data reported by only one parent, usually mothers, and 3) lack of more sophisticated measures of religiosity which tap religious beliefs or doubts. As well, racial differences could be more fully explored. In this analysis, all respondents were classed as white or non-white. This limiting coding scheme was adopted to facilitate analysis of other factors thought to influence transmission effectiveness since little research addressed racial influences. The results show that race and ethnicity should indeed be explored further. A final limitation to this study is the confusing litany of sample sizes presented in order to overcome limitations of the Add Health skip patterns. Surveys should, whenever possible, solicit information on religious activities of individuals even if they do not affiliate with a religious group.

A particularly useful direction for future research is denominational differences in transmission effectiveness. We need to determine more definitively the reasons why Catholics and especially conservative Protestants are more likely to retain adolescents in the tradition and whether these groups also allow parents to better transmit their overall religiosity. We also need to better refine the dated theories that describe influences on religious transmission. These results most definitively rule out cultural broadening theory. Baby Boomers are relatively successful in transmitting religion to their Gen X children, and their success does not appear to depend on social status. On the other hand, secularization theory more generally may still be a useful perspective for understanding generational
change. Where families were once held together until the death of parent, largely by the religious institution, this is no longer the case. Divorce is largely acceptable in most religious traditions, as is religious intermarriage, indicating a potential decline in the influence of religion on family structure. A gap in transmission effectiveness between intact and disrupted households -- and religiously homogamous vs. heterogenous families -- was predicted based on rational choice theory and social learning theory. However, these theories do not speak to potential increases in household disruption and intermarriage that may be related to larger, societal changes -- in this case, a declining influence of the religious institution on family structure.

It is difficult to reconcile the predictions of secularization theory with the results presented here on denominational differences in adolescent retention. Even if family structure is no longer as sensitive to religious influence, adolescents are being drawn to conservative Protestant groups at a much higher rate than would be predicted if the religious institution is indeed on the decline. These denominations appear to be successfully recruiting adolescents from a multitude of traditions, whether through more appealing doctrine, more appealing social offerings, or simply more recruitment effort. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I ascertain whether they are as capable of retaining young people as they are in recruiting them.
Chapter 4.
Religious Apostasy in Generation X

The religious landscape of the United States has changed over the past few decades. Scholars of religion have observed a decline in mainline Protestant membership and a simultaneous increase in the size of conservative Protestant denominations. Some research suggests that mainline decline is largely traceable to a shortage of young people in the pews of liberal Protestant congregations (Hoge and Roozen 1979). In the 1960s and 70s, researchers documented a sharp increase in the proportion of persons who claimed that their religious preference is “None” (Hadaway and Roof 1988). These two trends -- the increase in both religious Nones and conservative Protestants -- flummoxed scholars on both sides of the longstanding debate regarding the course of secularization (Bromley 1988). On the one hand, secularization theorists, who thought modernization would bring an end to religion in industrialized societies, were unprepared to explain the expansion of sect-like conservative Protestant groups. On the other hand, scholars whose paradigms did not predict secularization in the United States were unprepared to explain the increase in religious Nones.

These trends prompted sociologists of religion to focus more attention on the nature of religious commitments, and they spawned numerous studies on aggregate trends in religious affiliation and religious conversion in the 1970s. Yet studies on the topic of disengagement from religion remained relatively rare (Bromley 1988), even though disaffiliation from a religious group is often a prerequisite for affiliation with a religious group. Studies of individuals’ religious careers -- their movements out of and into religious
affiliations over the course of their lives -- were sparse, a curious fact given that speculation
about the course of secularization or other aggregate trends in American religion depends on
changes in the religious affiliation of individuals as they move through the life course.
Attention to the transmission of religious identities from parents to children, and their
maintenance into adulthood, is required in order to understand larger changes in the
American religious landscape. The present study sheds light on individual-level processes
creating aggregate religious change by exploring the extent and causes of religious apostasy,
or dropping out of religion, during young adulthood.

It also shifts attention from the heavily studied Baby Boom generation -- whose
religiosity is well-documented -- to the understudied religiosity of Generation X. Some
recent work has highlighted the unique nature of this generation and drawn implications for
religiosity. Generation X is the first generation that cannot reasonably expect to exceed the
financial gains of their parents, and as a result they are more cynical and more suspicious of
social institutions and rigid rules for behavior or beliefs. Miller and Miller (2000) argue that
traditional religious denominations are losing this generation in very high numbers; they
pursue eclectic and private forms of spirituality consistent with the “rootlessness” of their
generation. On the other hand, scholars similarly thought that the Baby Boomers were lost to
traditional religion during the heyday of the counterculture movement in the 1960s and
1970s. This study will investigate whether there is anything unique about the rates and
causes of apostasy in Generation X. Have they made a mass exodus from organized religion?
If so, what caused it?
4.1 Apostasy: A Neglected Social Process

In the 1970s and early 1980s, many studies of the unchurched -- people who claim no religious affiliation or do not attend services -- were undertaken (Hadaway and Roof 1988). At this time a few large, nationally representative survey efforts were underway that offered new opportunities for exploration of this topic: the General Social Survey, which asked questions about the current religious affiliation of respondents as well as their affiliation at age 16, and the 1978 Gallup survey of unchurched Americans. Along with studies of the unchurched, this time period saw numerous studies of religious switching or conversion (Albrecht et al. 1988). Few studies addressed the topic of apostasy specifically, although studies of the unchurched often included respondents who once held a religious affiliation.

Continuing membership losses in mainline Protestant denominations, an increase in defections from Catholicism, and the abrupt decline of new religious movements spurred interest in disengagement from religion in the 1980s (Bromley 1988). Although there is more attention to the topic today, most studies focus narrowly on one religious group or suffer from methodological shortcomings (Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1993). Dudley (1999) observes that nearly all studies of apostasy are cross-sectional, requiring the adult to recall childhood experiences and affiliations. This is problematic because childhood experiences may be reinterpreted during adulthood as more consistent with the religious choices respondents made as adults. Bromley (1988) discusses the difficulties involved in recruiting apostates for studies on this topic. Disaffected church members often have some residual loyalty to the group and are disinclined to provide information on why they cast off their religious affiliation. The most methodologically rigorous study of apostasy, given the concerns above,
would follow affiliated respondents over time to determine when or if they disengage from religion. It might also benefit from being couched in a larger study focusing on an unrelated topic such that changes in religious affiliation do not appear central to the study and thus do not motivate respondent attrition. The research reported here is from just such a study: a longitudinal survey focusing on health and well-being.

Already we have seen that numerous terms are used to describe “leaving the faith”: apostasy, disengagement, disaffiliation, and defection. Others include dropping out, exiting, disidentification, religious leavetaking, or from the opposite angle, retention. Bromley (1988: 23) describes apostasy as a “terminological thicket” that reflects the newness of the topic, lack of consensus on precisely what it means to be an apostate, and the restricted nature of data sources on the topic. For example, when data only include measures of religious affiliation, the measurement of apostasy is necessarily based on identification with a group. Terms referring to religious identity would be invoked in this case: disidentification, disaffiliation, and defection.

I follow the lead of several authors (c.f., Hadaway and Roof 1988, Albrecht et al. 1988, Hoge 1988, Roozen 1980) who regard apostasy as multidimensional, involving both identity/attitude and behavior. An apostate may qualify as having relinquished the components of identity -- a feeling of belonging to a named group and a willingness to report membership in the group -- or behavior -- activity within the group that signifies substantial involvement in and commitment to the group. There is disagreement regarding the primacy of these two components. Which is the more serious step? Hadaway and Roof (1988: 30-31) regard loss of identity as more definitive:
It is normal in this society to hold a religious identity... A religious identity is more than an affirmation of a particular religious faith, and, in fact, for many people a religious identity is not religious at all, but rather an affirmation of what a religious group symbolizes. Religious denominations in America are culture-affirming institutions that symbolize the values that a “good American” should hold... Apostasy is a much more serious step than simply becoming unchurched... Apostasy implies a rejection, not just of a religious identity, but, in part, of the dominant culture’s values. It is much simpler in this society to remain “something.”

For Hadaway and Roof (1988), to be American is to hold a religious identity, and to relinquish that identity is to risk being viewed as un-American. Hoge (1988: 81), on the other hand, regards disaffiliation as measured in survey research an inconsequential “short-term self labeling” that merely requires a specific response to the interviewer. Disengagement from a religious group on the behavioral dimension may be similarly temporary. Neither may have anything at all to do with religious beliefs held by respondents.

It is unclear whether the identity and behavioral components of apostasy are very different processes or whether they can be treated together; very little research separates these two types of apostates analytically. Albrecht et al. (1988) report developing a typology of Mormon apostates using belief and behavioral dimensions, yet they find that in this group, everyone maintains some degree of attachment with the label “Mormon,” and they do not model membership in their typology categories. Other typologies of apostates have been created based on respondents’ demographic characteristics or reasons given for apostasy (e.g., Hadaway 1989). We clearly need a better understanding of the process leading to apostasy on both identity and behavioral dimensions. It stands to reason that disengagement on the behavioral dimension is often a precursor to disidentification, although the reverse might also be true; some individuals may abandon their religious identity -- at least when
reporting to an anonymous interviewer -- yet still attend religious services in order to please others. It is not clear whether there are different factors leading to a stagnant “disengaged but identified” status and a “fully disidentified and disengaged” one. The present study will take us some distance towards understanding the differences between these two apostate categories.

It is clear that apostasy is a very different process than is religious switching or conversion. The earliest studies of apostasy were built into studies of denominational switching, with the movement from “something” to “nothing” considered a type of switch. In these studies, switchers to “None” stood out as very different (Hadaway 1989). This was yet another reason that attention to disaffiliation became more prevalent. Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) explain the difference in terms of extra-religious community ties, often bound with ethnicity, which operate strongly for quasi-ethnic religious groups including Catholics and Jews. A person can disengage from Catholicism or Judaism and continue to maintain the supportive community relationships that these religions provide, and in fact, behavioral apostasy is quite common in both of these groups. Switching to another religion, however, strains those community ties. Switching is unlikely to happen unless a person is willing to sever the ties and forge new ones with the new religious community. For this reason, Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990: 1213) theorize that denominational labels are more likely to predict switching than to predict apostasy. On the other hand, they argue that family-oriented variables are much more likely to predict apostasy than switching. The literature on religious switching is both older and more comprehensive than the literature on apostasy. It therefore
makes sense to study apostasy on its own and in more depth than switching studies have allowed.

Rates and causes of apostasy are of tremendous importance for our understanding of religious trends in the United States, including the potential of our society to become more secularized. Secularization can be viewed as a *macro* level process affecting the religious character of societies -- the numbers of church members and influence they have on secular matters -- and it can also be described on the *micro* level as a process affecting the religiosity of individuals (Dobbeleare 1998, 1981). Need and de Graaf (1996: 88) illustrate the importance of studying secularization at the individual level. A similar number of church members at two points in time does not necessarily imply that no one left the church. In the Netherlands, the number of Catholics increased slightly from 1947 to 1960. But when the very high birth rate of Catholics in this country relative to other groups is taken into account, it is clear that a large number of Catholics became disaffiliated. Macro-level indicators of religious change cannot tease out competing influences on membership numbers, including birth rates, death rates, conversion, and apostasy. It is necessary to study the process of disaffiliation at the micro level. In sum, “it is impossible to predict the fate of organized religion in postmodern society without an understanding of those who turn their backs on the church” (Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1993: 235).

Beyond secularization, however, the study of apostasy has much to offer which is of general sociological interest. Affiliation and disaffiliation -- both religious and secular -- are general social processes that deserve careful study. Our affiliations with voluntary groups provide us with a network of ties to the larger public sphere. Religious groups are among the
most important secondary groups to which we belong. Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990: 1212) put it this way:

Each of the ties that bind an individual to secondary groups is multidimensional. Affiliation does not consist of a single thread but many interwoven strands... combining racial, religious, gender, and social status dimensions...[Religion] is an excellent field in which to study disaffiliation. First, belonging to a church is typically a mixture of ascriptive and achieved statuses. On the one hand, religious affiliation in the absence of an established church is the quintessence of voluntarism...On the other hand, many religious identities are formed early in life and cemented in place by quasi-ethnic ties which are extremely difficult to shake off.

Bromley (1988) calls attention to the social psychological contributions studies of apostasy may make. In particular, he underscores that both affiliation and disaffiliation must be understood in processual terms. Studies of apostasy have reinforced the fact that membership in groups is dynamic, involving establishing and maintaining commitments, and often, dissolving them as well.

4.2 Causes of Apostasy: Rebellion or Maintaining the Status Quo?

Hadaway and Roof (1988) report that the percent of persons dropping out of religion increased steadily from 1960 to 1978. It stabilized in the late 1970s and dropped slightly during the early 1980s. For Catholics, apostasy levels remained relatively low until the late 1960s, when defection increased drastically and quickly caught up with apostasy among Protestants (Roozen 1980). The increase during the 1960s and 1970s was primarily among young adult Baby Boomers, and it occurred during a period of deep social unrest, when all American institutions were called into question, including religion. This prompted scholars to conclude that apostasy was primarily a function of generational change and was heavily
influenced by the counterculture movement of the era. Once the movement cooled and more conservative winds prevailed, apostasy dropped in due course. The implication is that rejection of religion is a form of rebellion against the dominant culture, representing a deep dissatisfaction with the life that conventional society offers (Wuthnow and Glock 1973).

Caplovitz and Sherrow (1977) published what was then the most comprehensive study of apostasy to date in their book, *The Religious Drop-outs: Apostasy among College Graduates*. This work seems to have stimulated much debate and much of the subsequent research on apostasy among young people. Their thesis was that apostasy was indeed a form of rebellion, and specifically, it was a rebellion against the conventional wisdom of parents. They argued that apostasy was symptomatic of familial strain and dissociation from parents, and it also followed from a commitment to the modern values of universalism and achievement that college education instilled in students. Their thesis implied a conscious consideration and rejection of previous beliefs and adoption of new identities and beliefs. They concluded that “college is a breeding ground for apostasy” (Caplovitz and Sherrow 1977: 109). Four traits were found to be important factors leading to apostasy: poor parental relations, symptoms of maladjustment, a radical or leftist political orientation, and a commitment to intellectualism. Earlier work by Zelan (1968) similarly found that apostates were more likely to have come from elite colleges, to prefer academic careers, and to think of themselves as intellectuals and political liberals.

A related line of thinking might be called the modernization theory of apostasy, following Need and de Graaf (1996), or cultural broadening theory, following Wuthnow (1988) and Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1993, 1994). While maladjustment and rebellion are
not referenced in this perspective, the liberalizing influence of education is highlighted. Hoge and his colleagues note that high school and college education in today’s educational system bring with it cross-cultural learning and related cognitive broadening. This training throws existing culturally specific beliefs into question, challenging the religious beliefs of students. Wuthnow (1988) argued that this might account for decline in the Protestant mainline because these youth attend college in large numbers, and in the process they acquire worldviews that are inconsistent with childhood training. Cultural broadening, instead of rebellion, may also account for the increased apostasy among those involved in the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1993). The liberal attitudes regarding race, sex, and drug use prevalent during this time were largely cultivated in college environments.

A theory of apostasy based on cultural broadening or modernization seems closely linked to secularization theory as proposed by Peter Berger (1967, 1979). Berger theorized that religion historically functioned as a “sacred canopy” which sheltered all aspects of life. But the rise of competing systems of meaning, and the exposure of individuals to these systems, unsettled the plausibility structures on which religious beliefs are based. Berger predicted this would lead to a declining influence of religion on individuals and on society. We might expect that an increase in liberal arts education among young people would lead to a rise in the numbers of apostates, based on this thinking. One possibility neglected by this theory, however, is that colleges might become more friendly to traditional worldviews, including religion. Alternatively, individuals may become more adept at maintaining their beliefs in the face of cultural relativity.
Work by Hunsberger (1980, 1983, Hunsberger and Brown 1984) has called into question the assumption that apostasy can be explained as a rebellion or a consequence of liberal arts education. Using social learning theory, Hunsberger links the likelihood of apostasy to the strength of the religious example set by parents. His work finds that apostasy is most likely when religious socialization is weak during childhood. When parents do not attend church regularly or have a weak commitment to their religious identity, children are likely to become apostates when they grow up simply by following their parents’ example. Religion is viewed as unimportant by individuals when their parents do not demonstrate its importance. Hunsberger’s initial tests of the Caplovitz and Sherrow thesis found that apostates did not differ from non-apostates in terms of intellectualism, academic orientation, adjustment, or symptoms of rebellion against parents (Hunsberger 1980, 1983). A later test found, however, that intellectualism was a very strong predictor alongside childhood socialization (Hunsberger and Brown 1984).

Sandomirskey and Wilson (1990) likewise argue that the roots of apostasy are to be found in the family, as family and religion are the least differentiated social institutions in society. A person’s family of orientation socializes her into religion, so they expect that low levels of parental and childhood participation lead to weak religious socialization. As well, the extent of control held by parents over their children influences the effectiveness of religious transmission. Weaknesses or inconsistencies in example, including household disruption due to divorce or parents who do not share the same religion, also lead to weaknesses in religious socialization. Families of procreation, however, also exert strong influences on religious commitments. People who marry and have children are less likely to
apostasize because these life transitions often carry religious obligations; most people believe that parents should give their children a religious education.

A final perspective from which to view the causes of apostasy is rational choice theory. This perspective has become popular in the sociology of religion recently for its ability to explain the failure of secularization theory in modern America and the rise of conservative Protestant groups at the expense of the mainline (Warner 1993). The theory begins by conceptualizing the U.S. as having a religious market in which denominations compete for members. General laws of supply and demand operate such that religions which do not offer the most valuable goods do not survive in the face of competition from groups which do offer valuable religious goods. Strict religions offer the most compelling religious goods and flourish, while liberal mainline groups both ask little of members and offer little to them, with a net result that their “product” is less demanded by consumers of religion. More generally, rational choice theory predicts the survival of religion in a free-market religious economy because no other institution provides answers regarding ultimate questions of existence (Stark and Bainbridge 1985).

Iannaccone (1990) formulated a demand-side component to the largely supply-side formulations of rational choice theory as applied to religion. He argued that individuals develop religious human capital, a stock of knowledge and skills regarding religion, as they participate in religious activities. This religious capital is the basis for deriving increasing satisfaction from religious participation: participation becomes more meaningful with continued investment in a religion. Because religions have different historical narratives and rituals, religious capital is largely non-transferrable. For this reason, persons who have built
up more religious capital are less likely to switch to another religion. If they do, they are likely to switch to a denomination that is very similar in order to preserve their religious capital. Iannaccone (1990) bases the development of religious capital in the family, arguing that production of religious satisfaction generally occurs at the household level through inputs of time and money from family members. Like social learning theory, then, rational choice theory points to family influences as most prominent in decisions to leave the church or switch to another denomination. The theory predicts that religious homogamy and a stable household structure are necessary for production of religious capital in a person’s family of orientation.

Previous research finds that religiosity is inversely related to age among adolescents; as they mature, they become less religious (Potvin and Sloane 1985). Secularization theory predicts that this decline should be more or less permanent. McAllister (1988), for example, argues that declines in religiosity over the life course may be passed on to children, resulting in overall secularization. Rational choice theory, however, recognizes that during adolescence a person’s reference group may change, and apostasy may signal a rational choice based on the desire to distinguish oneself from parents and interest in devoting time to other activities. Dips in adolescent attendance are typically followed by increases in religiosity as young adults form families of their own (Sherkat and Wilson 1995). The benefits of religious participation outweigh the costs of time and money when young parents consider the need to socialize children into a religious tradition.

While cultural broadening theories of apostasy predict a general decline in religion, rational choice theory predicts overall stability, allowing for dips in participation during
adolescence and young adulthood. The theory also specifies, with social learning theory, the factors which predispose an individual to experience these dips in attendance: the strength of socialization in childhood. Unlike social learning theory, which highlights early life experiences, rational choice theory compellingly addresses why individuals return to religion when they form families of procreation. Sherkat and Wilson (1995), in their formulation of a demand-side explanation of religious preferences, point to example-setting as a primary motivator of parents to reaffiliate or to continue affiliation with a religious group.

Rational choice theory also speaks to denominational differences in rates of apostasy. The literature on apostasy makes it clear that conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Jews are least likely to lose members due to disaffiliation, while mainline and liberal Protestants are most likely (Nelson and Bromley 1988, Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990, Roozen 1980, Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1993). Nelson and Bromley (1988) report, using General Social Survey data through 1985 on childhood and current religious affiliation, that Catholics retained 83.1 percent of their members, conservative Protestants 73.7 percent, mainline Protestants 68.0 percent, and liberal Protestants only 63.4 percent. Dudley (1993), whose work focuses on Seventh Day Adventists, found that about 75 percent were retained, a number that is consistent with those for conservative Protestant groups combined. Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) found that Mormons had a very high retention rate, which again meshes with previous findings.

Rational choice theory predicts this high retention rate because of the value of strict religions, and this finding also squares with their overall predictions regarding the shape of the religious economy. On the other hand, if the finding is due to the differential rates of
college attendance among members of these denominations -- e.g., mainline and liberal

Protestants attend college at higher rates and drop out because of experiences during college -- perhaps the cultural broadening approach better explains denominational differences. In this study, I examine denominational differences in young adult apostasy controlling for college attendance, which should help to sort out the effects.

Most of the literature has painted apostasy as a phenomenon that occurs for similar reasons among all persons. That there is disagreement about these reasons suggests this may not be a fair assumption. A very sparse literature considers apostates as a heterogenous group, noting that they disaffiliate for different reasons and are most appropriately understood in terms of apostate “clusters.” Condran and Tamney (1985) isolated two types of apostates. One type they labeled “cultural,” and this group consciously rejected prevailing belief systems in favor of new cultural norms. The group was primarily composed of younger persons, many of whom had been involved with the counterculture and had attended college. The other type they labeled “structural” because the group was typified by persons who had been “left behind” by the religious system for structural reasons. These persons tended to face the barriers of spatial isolation and rurality, and they were often members of the working class who saw religion as antagonistic to the interests of labor. Hadaway (1989) identified five types of apostates through cluster analysis. Four of the clusters included young people who were very liberal but varied in terms of happiness, financial well-being, and family structure. The fifth cluster included older persons who held conservative stances on social issues but did not believe in God or an afterlife. These findings suggest that attention be
given to reasons people give for leaving the church and the association of these reasons with age and other correlates.

A few studies of apostasy elicited self-reports of reasons for apostasy from respondents. The most important of these studies was undoubtedly the 1978 Gallup survey of unchurched Americans. The Gallup survey offered 9 reasons respondents could choose as precursors for leaving the church. Condensing the statements, these reasons were a) grew up and decided to stop going, b) moved to different community and never got involved, c) found other interests more appealing, d) had specific problems with the church, its teachings, or its members, e) church no longer a help in my life, f) my lifestyle is not compatible with the church, g) health reasons, h) work schedule, i) divorced or separated. Roozen (1980) analyzed these data and found that personal contextual reasons (moving, health, work, or divorce) were most prominent among the reasons respondents selected. Belief that the church is irrelevant to one’s life was second most common, followed by maturation. Intra-church discord played a comparatively minor role in the process. Roozen found that maturation -- being old enough to make one’s own decisions and deciding not to attend church -- was most frequently cited by young people and men. Contextual reasons were cited much more often by females. Other studies echo or clarify the findings from the Gallup survey. Hoge et al. (1993, 1994) found that moving was among the most important reasons for Presbyterian confirmands becoming uninvolved, again highlighting contextual factors. Albrecht et al. (1988) found that specific objections to the church did not play a major role in Mormon apostasy, which is consistent with the Gallup survey. They found maturation a more important reason for Mormons leaving the church than all others, however, and they also
documented substantial sentiment that respondents’ lifestyles were incompatible with Mormon teachings. It is possible that Albrecht et al.’s (1988) findings have much to do with the denomination-specific nature of their study.

The prominence of contextual reasons for apostasy in previous studies fits well into the structure of rational choice theory, where religious decisions are made through a cost/benefit analysis. Moving, divorcing, or other time commitments which constrain religious participation, making it more costly in terms of time commitments or less valuable - moving and divorcing can render religious capital less meaningful in a new context -- would be expected to generate apostasy. On the other hand, the prominence of contextual reasons does not fit well with cultural broadening approaches that assume a rejection of beliefs due to changing worldviews.

4.3 Conclusions and Hypotheses

[See Table 4.1 on page 169]

In the present study I test hypotheses drawn from the different theories of religious apostasy. A list of the hypotheses is presented in Table 4.1. In many cases, the theories of apostasy are complementary in that they make equivalent predictions about the causes of apostasy but use different explanations. In others, the theories suggest quite different correlates and causes. Because of this, the present study cannot explicitly test the competing theories, although it can provide more or less support for the various paradigms.

Social learning theory and rational choice theory both stress the prominence of early childhood experiences on later religious participation. They suggest that:
H₄.₁: High levels of religious participation by parents will reduce the likelihood of apostasy in their young adult children.

H₄.₂: High levels of religious participation by adolescents will reduce the likelihood of apostasy as these adolescents age into young adulthood.

H₄.₃: Children of intact households will have a reduced likelihood of apostasy as they age into young adulthood.

Both rational choice theory and the rebellion hypothesis of Caplovitz and Sherrow (1977) suggest that parental relations and control are important predisposing factors for apostasy because they signal the propensity for rebellion against authority or they relate to the effectiveness of the context in which socialization is taking place.

H₄.₄: Good relationships with parents during adolescence will reduce the likelihood of apostasy in adulthood.

H₄.₅: High levels of parental control may either increase (rebellion) or decrease (rational choice theory) rates of apostasy in young adulthood.

Cultural broadening and the rebellion hypothesis suggest that college education will increase the rate of apostasy. They also suggest that participation in the counterculture, which today continues to include use of illicit drugs, will increase the rate of apostasy. Cultural broadening specifically suggests that increased levels of education leads to higher apostasy because it attacks plausibility structures. Hadaway and Roof (1988) found that education, but not income, affected the probability of apostasy. This cannot be tested directly in the present study because many sample members have not had sufficient time to complete their education. I do, however, examine the effect of parental income and education for comparison with Hadaway and Roof.

H₄.₆: Young adults who are currently in college will manifest higher rates of apostasy.
H₄.7: Young adults who use drugs will have higher rates of apostasy.

H₄.8: Parents with higher levels of education will produce children with higher rates of apostasy.

H₄.9: There will be no impact of parental income on adult rates of apostasy.

Rational choice theory and Sandomirsky and Wilson’s (1990) overall theory of the family suggest that adult household context will also have an effect.

H₄.10: Married individuals will have a lower rate of apostasy.

H₄.11: Young adults with children will have a lower rate of apostasy than childless adults.

H₄.12: Young adults who live away from their parents will have a higher rate of apostasy.

It is important to point out here that not all research finds a consistent effect of marriage and childbearing on apostasy. Stolzenburg et al. (1995) found that the effect of these life transitions depends on the age of individuals. People experiencing these transitions at non-normative points in their lives tended not to experience the apostasy-reducing effects of the transitions. People who have children at very young ages, for example, may be shunned from the church if that childbirth occurred out of wedlock or during the teenage years. Otherwise, very young parents may find they have little in common with fellow congregants who have children the age of their own. Because the sample in the present study is very young -- mean age is 22 -- childbirth may have little or no effect.

Rational choice theory also suggests effects of geographic mobility, propensity for risk, race/ethnicity, and denominational characteristics. Mobility reduces the usefulness of religious capital and requires individuals to establish new ties and acquire a new type of religious capital in order to benefit from religion. With regard to denomination, rational
choice theory suggests that conservative and quasi-ethnic religious groups -- conservative Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic groups -- will be more likely to retain members because they offer more exclusive, non-transferrable, or compelling types of religious capital. A similar explanation may be made for the impact of race/ethnicity, with nonwhite respondents being less likely to apostasize because they often participate in a denomination that is bound with their ethnicity. It may be riskier to leave the black church in America, for example, because the church has been so central to the African-American community’s political voice and history. Finally, apostasy and switching are viewed by rational choice theory as risky moves, given that they involve risk to an assumed afterlife and risk to current ties with community members. Individuals who have a low propensity for risky behavior should be less likely to leave the church.

H_{4.13}: Geographically mobile individuals will have higher rates of apostasy.

H_{4.14}: Persons with a high propensity for risk will have higher rates of apostasy.

H_{4.15}: Non-white persons will have lower rates of apostasy.

H_{4.16}: Conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Jews will have lower rates of apostasy than mainline and liberal Protestants.

Social learning theory suggests that religious socialization is gender-specific, with women being more thoroughly socialized into religion, bearing a more central role in the socialization of offspring, and more likely than men to be viewed negatively by others for eschewing religion.

H_{4.17}: Women will have lower rates of apostasy than men.
As noted above, no previous research has examined the differential impact of these correlates by whether the apostasy involved identity or behavior. I have only one hypothesis, drawn from rational choice theory, regarding the potential difference.

\[ H_{4.18} \]: Catholics and Jews, as members of quasi-ethnic religious groups, are more likely to become behavioral apostates than identity apostates in order to preserve extra-religious community ties.

4.4: Data Source

The data analyzed are from Waves I and III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Add Health is a school-based study which recruited adolescents from 132 schools selected to be nationally representative of 7th through 12th grade schools. The school-based design allowed for ease of recruiting members of the target population and also allowed for collection of detailed information on respondents’ school peers. Wave I of the study was conducted in 1994 and 1995, and Wave III was conducted in 2001 and early 2002. Wave II of Add Health was fielded one year after the initial in-home survey, which does not provide sufficient time to document religious changes during the transition out of adolescence. For ease of analysis, any religious changes occurring between Waves I and II are ignored.

Information on each respondent in Wave I was collected from an in-school questionnaire, an in-home interview, and an interview with one of the respondent’s parents or guardians. The series of questionnaires provided information on demographics, neighborhood characteristics, friends and romantic relationships, drug use, sexual behavior, school achievements, and many other attitudes and behaviors. In Wave III, many of the same
measures were repeated, and additional information was collected regarding respondents’
current household context, including marriages and children. A total of 14,322 cases contain
data from Waves I and III and also the grand sample weight, necessary for conducting
analyses that can be generalized to the national population of persons in this age group.
Details of the study design can be found in Harris et al. (2003).

Add Health is among the few nationally representative studies that elicits information
on religious affiliation and practice from both parents and their children. Most surveys of
individuals ask respondents to estimate their parents’ or child’s religious beliefs and
behaviors, which introduces perception bias. It should be noted here that the majority of
parents interviewed are mothers, owing to their greater average knowledge of the child
compared with fathers. Some research indicates that fathers’ and mothers’ influence on
children differs, with fathers being more influential on instrumental religious matters -- e.g.,
attendance patterns -- and mothers having more influence on the general religious orientation
of children (Hayes and Pittelkow 1993). Since much research posits mothers’ religious
orientation as more critical than fathers’, it is not viewed as a limitation that most parent
respondents are mothers.

It is unknown how and whether the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United
States affected specific responses to the survey instrument in Wave III. The survey was in the
field both before and after September 11th, 2001, so some respondents had already completed
the interview at the time of the attacks while others had not. The young adults interviewed
after the attacks may have reported more unhappiness, uncertainty, or psychological distress.
Their identification as Americans and their feelings about the government may also have
been affected. Many Americans turned to religion during the period following the attacks, so it is also possible that the extent of apostasy is underestimated in this study. Since this study covers only the period from adolescence to young adulthood, the extent of apostasy is not the central focus. Rather, this study focuses on the causes of apostasy, which should not be heavily influenced by reactions to the September 11th terrorist attacks.

4.5 Variable Construction

The dependent variable in the analyses to follow is apostate status of respondents at Wave III. Only respondents who reported a religious affiliation at Wave I of the survey are eligible for a value on this dependent variable, since apostasy by definition requires that a person previously held a religious affiliation. In addition, respondents were assigned missing values on apostasy if they held an affiliation at Wave I but reported that they never attended services. These respondents are already behavioral apostates. Respondents who reported an affiliation and reported attending services at least a few times in the year preceding the survey were classed according to their affiliation and attendance patterns at Wave III. Those who reported being agnostic, atheist, or having no religious affiliation at Wave III were classed as identity apostates. Those who reported an affiliation but reported that they never attended service in the year prior to Wave III were classed as behavioral apostates. Those who reported an affiliation and reported that they attended religious services at least a few times in the year prior to Wave III were classed as stalwarts. Note that respondents in the behavioral apostate and stalwart categories may have switched religious affiliations during the six years separating Waves I and III of the survey. The stalwart category likely includes
many more switchers than does the *behavioral apostate* category because switchers generally increase their attendance after a switch and typically view themselves as highly religious. This study thus compares people who remain religious -- whatever their denominational mobility pattern may be -- to those who truly “lose the faith.” It should be noted here that restriction of this analysis to those with a religious affiliation and at least marginal religious service attendance at Wave I means that the analysis group does not constitute a nationally representative sample of young adults. It instead constitutes a nationally representative sample of young adults who were religious as adolescents. This group contains slightly more women and substantially more nonwhite respondents than does the full sample.

The independent variables are organized into groups representing major factors thought to influence apostasy: parental and adolescent religiosity, adolescent household context, adult household context, lifestyle, religious tradition/denomination, and demographics. Parental and adolescent religiosity were assessed with three items, each measured on a four-point scale: frequency of religious attendance, frequency of prayer, and professed importance of religion, a concept known as religious salience. The three measures were summed to produce a measure of overall religiosity for each respondent at Wave I and for each respondent’s reporting parent at Wave I. These indexes measure the strength of parental example and the level of prior adolescent involvement in religion for the young adults.

Adolescent household context includes measures of intact vs. disrupted status of the household, relationship quality with parents, and parental control over adolescents -- all generated from Wave I data. Respondents with both parents living in their adolescent
household were assigned a value of 1, representing an intact household, while respondents with only one parent living in the household were assigned a value of 0, representing a disrupted household. A measure of relationship quality between parents and their children was constructed from one or two sets of four single items, each rated on a five point scale. The items asked whether children 1) felt their mothers were warm and loving toward them, 2) were satisfied with their overall relationships with their mothers, 3) felt their mothers cared about them, and 4) felt close to their mothers. Questions were then repeated for fathers.

In intact households, items on both mothers and fathers (8 total) were summed to generate a scale ranging from 8 to 40. In disrupted households, items on the reporting parent, either mother or father, were used and the summed value was doubled for ease of comparison with intact households. A measure of parental control was created using seven items from the child’s interview schedule. Adolescents were asked whether they had control over various decisions in their lives, including what time to go to bed, what to eat, choice of friends, hours and type of TV programming watched, what clothes to wear, and at what time curfew is set. Each item was recoded such that 0 = child control over the decision and 1 = parent control over the decision. Responses were summed to generate an index ranging from 0 (total child control) to 7 (total parent control).

Adult household context includes measures from Wave III of the survey. Persons who were in college, married, and had children at the time of the survey were coded 1 on these three measures. If they were not in school, not married, and had no children, they were coded 0. Likewise, persons who lived with their parents at the time of the survey were coded 1, while those who lived away from parents were coded 0. Residential mobility was measured.
with two items. The first asked whether respondents lived at the same address in 2001-2002 as they had in 1995. Those who answered in the affirmative were coded 0 to represent their lack of mobility. The second item asked how many additional addresses they had held during the time period from 1995 to 2001-2002. The mobility measure used here captured that number, representing the number of times respondents had moved between 1995 and 2001-2002. The measure ranges from 0 moves to 10 moves, although the average number of moves is quite low at 2.0.

Two measures of lifestyle at Wave I were constructed. The first measures the number of drugs respondents used. The interview schedule inquired regarding use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, inhalants, and “other” hard drugs. For adolescents, all of these drugs are illegal. The measure used here is simply a count of the number of drugs respondents had tried, ranging from 0 to 6 drugs. This assesses a type of behavior which is incongruent with religious teachings in most denominations. The second measure is of propensity for risk. Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree that they like to take risks. They answered on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These lifestyle and personality factors were measured at Wave I to make certain that the factors are temporally precedent to the outcome of interest. For example, individuals who leave the faith may be more likely to take up use of drugs since they no longer subscribe to religious beliefs that prohibit this behavior. Assessing drug use and risk at a time when the respondents are involved in religion helps to sort out cause and effect.

To assess the impact of religious background on apostasy, the 20+ religious denominations selected by respondents at Wave I were collapsed into six broad religious
traditions. Because of group size or conceptual distinctness, Jews, Catholics, and those reporting “Other” non-Protestant religious affiliations were separated from the Protestant religious groups. Protestant groups were classified as liberal, moderate, or conservative based on the classification scheme created for the Add Health geocode file by Rodney Stark, a noted scholar in the sociology of religion. Conservative Protestant affiliations available for respondents to choose were Adventist, AME/AME Zion, Assembly of God, Baptist, Holiness, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, and Pentecostal groups. Moderate Protestants included Disciples of Christ, Lutheran, and Congregational groups. Liberal Protestants included Episcopal, Quaker, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Unitarian groups.

Gender of adolescents was recorded by interviewers, and a measure of age in years was generated by subtracting adolescents’ birth year from the interview year for that respondent, either 2001 or 2002. Race was reported by adolescents as White, African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Other. Respondents could also report a Hispanic ethnicity alongside a racial category. In this analysis, white non-Hispanic respondents are compared with all other racial/ethnic categories. Household income was collected from reporting parents and is measured in thousands of dollars. Because these young adults have a very low mean income -- around 13K -- owing to their age and, for many of them, current college attendance, it was determined that parental income would be a better measure of social class background. Since a substantial number of cases are missing data on income, missing income cases were assigned the mean of those respondents who had data on the dependent variable -- about one thousand dollars higher than the overall sample.
mean. Parental education was coded in four categories ranging from 1=less than high school to 4=college graduate. Again, parental education is a better measure of social class background than respondents’ Wave III education because many respondents have not yet completed their college careers.

4.6 Analysis Procedures

Analysis of Add Health requires correcting estimates and significance tests for the cluster sampling design. Because adolescents are sampled inside schools, they share characteristics with other adolescents in their schools. Regression analyses depend on the assumption that observations are independent, an assumption clearly violated by the cluster sample design. To correct for the bias introduced by cluster sampling, I use the survey routines available in STATA 7.0. These routines allow for data on all clusters to be incorporated even when subpopulations are analyzed, as is true in the following analyses. To take advantage of these routines, I created variables for each subpopulation that indicated whether the case should be used in analysis or whether it exists only to represent a cluster, following Chantala and Tabor (1999). When modeling apostasy among conservative Protestants, for example, the variable COMPLETE is set to 1 if the case is a respondent with a conservative Protestant background who has complete data on all variables; it is set to 0 for non-conservative Protestants and those missing data on any analysis variables. STATA’s survey regression commands are then invoked for subpopulation=complete.

The analysis proceeds in three phases. First, descriptive statistics on the respondents eligible for classification on apostate status are presented. Second, bivariate associations
between apostate status and the independent variables are presented. Third, multinomial logistic regression models are used to model membership in the three apostate categories with multiple covariates included. To assess whether effects differ by denominational background, multinomial models are run separately for each religious tradition group.

4.7 Results

[See Table 4.2 on page 171]

A total of 8,424 cases contained complete data on all variables used in this analysis. This represents a substantial reduction from the 14,322 respondents to the Wave III survey. The majority of cases were lost because respondents did not have a religious affiliation and/or did not attend religious services at Wave I. Some were also lost due to missing data on religiosity measures in either Wave I or Wave III. Relatively few cases were lost due to missing data on the independent variables.

Table 4.2 presents descriptive statistics for these 8,424 cases. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of those who were involved in religion at Wave I of the survey had become apostates by Wave III. Slightly more had become identity apostates (12.5 percent) than behavioral apostates (10.5 percent). As adolescents, respondents manifested rather high levels of religiosity: on a scale of 4 to 13 their mean level of religiosity was 10.9. Their parents had even higher levels of religiosity, with a mean of 11.4. Both parents and adolescents had mean levels of religiosity very near the upper limit of the index.

Slightly more than one-quarter of the sample (27.3 percent) came from disrupted households, where only one parent was present at the time of the Wave I survey.
Respondents generally felt their relationships with their parents were good; on a scale ranging from 8 to 40, the mean score was about 36. They reported that levels of parental control were relatively low. Out of seven behaviors potentially under parental control, the mean number actually under control of parents was 1.9. As adolescents, the respondents were evenly spread in their responses to the item on risky behavior. However, very few of them reported substance use. The average number of drugs they had tried was 0.9, and over half reported that they had tried none, including cigarettes and alcohol.

The household context of the respondents in young adulthood generally reflects their age, which averaged 22 years. About 40 percent were in college at the time of the survey, and 41 percent reported living with their parents. Only 16.3 percent were married by this point in their lives, and about 20 percent had children of their own living in their household. About half of respondents had changed addresses at least once since 1995, but most had not moved excessively. The average number of addresses held since 1995 was 2.

The sample is about evenly split between men and women, and 54.3 percent of the sample is nonwhite. This large number of racial/ethnic minorities results from their greater tendency to have reported a religious affiliation at Wave I of the survey. Mean parental income was about $48,500 annually, with a large standard deviation. About 56 percent of parents had gone beyond a high school education. In terms of religious background, the largest group of respondents selected conservative Protestant denominations at Wave I (38.8 percent). Catholics were second most numerous (32.1 percent), while moderate and liberal Protestant groups were somewhat smaller.
Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show effects of the independent variables on apostate status at the bivariate level. In Table 4.3, each of the independent variables excepting religious tradition has been dichotomized at its mean -- if not already dichotomous -- for ease of presentation. The cells contain the percentage of persons falling into each apostate category for each value of the dichotomized independent variables. Rows sum to 100 percent of all respondents, and comparisons are made down, between categories of the independent variables. The Stalwart column shows what percentage of respondents were retained in religion over the 6 year span. Among all respondents, 77.0 percent were retained.

The largest percentage difference between categories in the percent retained -- the Stalwart category -- occurred for adolescent religiosity levels. Where adolescent religiosity was high, 85.4 percent of respondents were retained. Only 69.2 percent were retained when adolescent religiosity was below average. A similar relationship holds for levels of parental religiosity. Adolescents from disrupted households apostasized at higher rates in young adulthood, as did those with below average parental relationship quality and low levels of parental control. Interestingly, being in college tended to reduce apostasy. Among those who did drop out, college students were slightly more likely to eschew their religious identity than to merely drop out behaviorally. Also surprisingly, living with one’s parents did not have much effect at all on retention in religion. Again, however, being away from parents resulted in proportionately more identity apostasy.

As expected, being married increases retention in religion, but unexpectedly, having children in one’s household has no statistically significant effect. One explanation for the
finding that marriage is beneficial but childbearing is not can be found in Stolzenberg et al. (1995). Because these parents are very young, their status as parents may not be respected by the church, particularly if they are unmarried. Controlling for marriage and age may help to sort this relationship out in the multivariate analysis.

A weak effect of residential mobility was detected, with persons who had not moved at a slight advantage in retention. Only a percentage point separates the retention of those who had not moved since 1995 and those who had. The relationship is found to be statistically significant at the .05 level using chi-square, but the large sample size means that even very weak relationships will be statistically significant.

The two lifestyle measures were both associated with apostasy as expected, but the relationship of adolescent drug use with dropping out was much stronger. About 81 percent of those who had used no drugs in adolescence were retained, compared with 72.6 percent of those who had tried one or more drugs. The difference in strength of effect of these two risk behavior measures -- self-reported propensity for risk and drug use -- suggests that drug use is not solely a function of willingness to take risks.

The social class background of adolescents did tend to influence their rate of retention, with higher education and income of parents leading to lower rates of apostasy. Education appears slightly more important than income. Both of these findings are in opposition to cultural broadening theory, which predicts that cultural broadening should lead to increased apostasy among highly educated, and presumably more wealthy, persons. As expected, women and nonwhites were better retained. Owing to the small age range in this sample, age was unrelated to apostate status.
Membership in conservative Protestant or quasi-ethnic traditions also lead to higher retention rates when compared with membership in moderate or liberal Protestant traditions. The Jewish respondents had the highest retention rate at 80.3 percent, followed closely by conservative Protestants (79.1 percent) and Catholics (77.0 percent). The lowest retention rates were had by persons in “Other” non-Protestant traditions (71.3 percent) and liberal Protestant groups (75.0 percent). Jewish and Catholic apostates were more likely to be behavioral than identity apostates. The opposite is true for all of the Protestant groups: apostates are more likely to be identity than behavioral apostates. “Other” non-Protestant apostates were especially weighted towards identity apostasy: nearly 19 percent of respondents in this group became identity apostates.

Table 4.4 presents a correlation matrix of all study variables with the exception of religious tradition, which is nominal. In this table, both types of apostates are combined to produce a dichotomous variable. Indexes are presented as continuous variables, as are all Likert response questions. The remaining variables are naturally dichotomous. Column 1, which presents Pearson’s correlation coefficients for apostasy (1=any apostasy, 0 = stalwart), confirms most findings from Table 4.3. Notably, the strongest negative effects on dropping out come from adolescent and parental religiosity at Wave I. The strongest positive effect on apostasy comes from Wave I drug use.

The remaining columns detail relationships among the independent variables. Strongest among these is the relationship between parental and adolescent religiosity, which attained an r of .46. Drug use at Wave I was strongly related to many of the Wave III independent variables. Drug users were less likely to be in college, more likely to be married
and have children, less likely to live with parents, and more likely to have moved. This appears to result from the association between drug use and age: older adolescents at Wave I were more likely to have experimented with drugs. They of course continue to be older in Wave III and therefore more likely to have transitioned into a family of procreation. A final notable bivariate relationship is that between adolescent social class background and respondents’ college status. Respondents from households where parents had higher education and more income were more likely to be in college at the time of the survey.

[See Tables 4.5 and 4.6 on pages 176 and 177]

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 present the results of multivariate analyses of these effects. Because the dependent variable has three categories, multinomial logistic regression was used to model membership in apostate categories. The tables present two sets of estimates for each model; each set compares effects on membership in either the identity or behavioral apostate category with the reference category (Stalwarts). The coefficients presented are relative risk ratios, which describe effects on the odds of belonging to identity or behavioral categories relative to the reference category. Jewish respondents are omitted from these models because of the very small sample size, and “Other” respondents are omitted because of their heterogeneity. The models show how the causes of apostasy differ by the type of apostasy.

Table 4.5 shows a set of nested models in which independent variables are added in groups to observe the net effect of the variable groups with demographic characteristics controlled. All models are statistically significant. In Model 1, the demographic characteristics are entered. It is clear that being female and nonwhite reduces the odds of
both identity and behavioral apostasy -- by around 30 percent. Parental education, however, only distinguishes behavioral apostates from stalwarts -- it has no effect on identity apostates. This pattern holds in each of the models regardless of which covariates are added. Income and age have no significant impact in any of the models.

Model 2 shows strong independent effects of both adolescent and parental religiosity. Increases in each of them reduce the odds of membership in both identity and behavioral apostate categories. A single unit increase on the nine-point scales causes the odds of apostasy to drop by 15-20 percent. Note that the introduction of these variables renders the effect of nonwhite race/ethnicity nonsignificant, suggesting that racial differences in apostasy can be accounted for by nonwhites’ higher average adolescent and parental religiosity at Wave I.

Model 3 substitutes adolescent household variables. Coming from an intact household has a clear benefit for these young adults, reducing the odds of identity apostasy by 33 percent and the odds of behavioral apostasy by 37 percent. Parental relationship quality also has a significant effect; each unit increase in the index (ranging from 8 to 40) reduces the odds of apostasy by about 5 percent. Model 4 examines adult household context. Being married dramatically reduces the odds of identity (by 59 percent) and behavioral (by 46 percent) apostasy. Living with parents and having children both increase the odds of behavioral apostasy but have no effect on identity apostasy. Residential mobility has a weak but positive impact on both identity and behavioral apostasy. Being in college has a strong negative effect on the odds of apostasy, consistent with bivariate results. It reduces the odds of identity apostasy by about 30 percent and behavioral apostasy by 48 percent. The latter
finding is surprising, since being in college often means living away from one’s hometown and home church.

In Model 5, lifestyle variables are entered. There is no effect of self-reported propensity for risk, but drug use has a strong positive effect on both identity and behavioral apostasy. Each additional drug used by respondents as adolescents increases the odds of apostasy by over 20 percent. Model 6 incorporates respondents’ denominational tradition at Wave I. Recall that retention rates differed significantly by denomination in the bivariate analysis. With demographic characteristics controlled, however, the effect of denomination is not statistically significant. Model 7 includes all covariates, and some of the previously significant effects are reduced and rendered nonsignificant. The effects that remain significant include gender, parental education (for behavioral apostasy), parental and adolescent religiosity, parental relationship quality (for identity apostasy), college attendance, marriage, living with parents (for behavioral apostasy), and drug use (for identity apostasy). Note that in the full model, age becomes a significant predictor of identity apostasy, with each year of age yielding an 8 percent reduction in the odds of apostasy.

Table 4.6 presents full models of apostasy by the religious tradition respondents reported at Wave I. These models show how the predictors of apostasy vary by the religious tradition in which respondents were raised. Some interesting differences are apparent. Recall that in the models for all respondents, higher parental education had a protective effect against behavioral but not identity apostasy. The models in Table 4.5 show that this effect only operates for liberal Protestants. Further, higher parental education actually increases identity apostasy among Catholics. The model for all respondents showed a strong protective effect...
effect of both parental and adolescent religiosity. In Table 4.5, this effect fails to hold among moderate Protestants. Among liberal Protestants, adolescent but not parental religiosity has a protective effect.

Current college attendance was previously shown to reduce the odds of apostasy. The models in Table 4.6 show that the strong effect occurs primarily for Catholics. Conservative Protestants also benefit from college attendance, but only for behavioral apostasy. Similarly, marriage is not equally beneficial for all religious groups. It reduces the odds of apostasy among conservative Protestants dramatically but has no effect for Catholics. The models show that being married reduces the odds of behavioral apostasy by a massive 82 percent for moderate Protestants but has no effect on identity apostasy. Conversely, marriage reduces identity but not behavioral apostasy among liberal Protestants. Finally, these denomination-specific models show that drug use significantly increases behavioral apostasy only among moderate Protestants.

4.8 Discussion and Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypotheses 4.1 and 4.2 stated that parental and adolescent religious participation would decrease apostasy. These hypotheses are strongly supported; the effects of these variables were stronger and more consistent than any other effects. Contrary to the expectations of cultural broadening or rebellion explanations for apostasy, the most important predictor is the extent of religious socialization during childhood. As Hunsberger (1980) argues, apostates are not rebelling but rather are following the example set by parents who are comparatively uninvolved in religion. Hypothesis 4.3 stated that respondents from
intact households would be less likely to drop out of religion. The analysis demonstrated that this is so, although the effects of adolescent household structure are subsumed by other variables in the full models. Consistent with the expectations of hypothesis 4.4, good relationships with parents did indeed reduce apostasy. Parental control, however, had no effect in multivariate analyses. Weak support for the rational choice theory expectation regarding parental control (hypothesis 4.5) is found in bivariate analysis; adolescents under higher levels of parental control were less likely to drop out of religion.

Some surprises were found with respect to the group of hypotheses regarding the “broadening” effects of education and social status (hypotheses 4.6-4.9). Being in college currently and having parents with higher levels of education were expected to increase apostasy because they bring challenges to the worldviews associated with religion. Instead, both of these had strong negative effects on dropping out. Clearly, the contemporary effects of education are quite different from those had during the 1960s and 1970s. Today’s college campuses provide numerous opportunities for students to get involved in religion, including Campus Crusade for Christ and denomination-specific student unions. As well, it is likely that today’s college students are better prepared to face the challenges to their beliefs that liberal arts education brings. They may be better able to handle the cognitive dissonance imposed by holding strong beliefs of their own while respecting the very different beliefs of others. Hypotheses 4.6 and 4.8 are not supported, and the results strongly call into question a cultural broadening interpretation of apostasy. Hypotheses 4.7 was supported. Use of illegal drugs, indicating a lifestyle that is incompatible with religion, did increase apostasy. Hypothesis 4.9 was also supported, as income had no effect on rates of apostasy.
Adult household context hypotheses (4.10-4.12) received mixed support. Marriage did reduce apostasy, but childbearing did not. This is consistent with the argument of Stolzenberg et al. (1995), who found that childbearing at non-normative ages did not have a protective effect. Persons bearing children out of wedlock or at very young ages are unlikely to receive the support from churches that those who are married or older do. They may even be compelled to avoid church members in order to avoid their criticism. Hypothesis 4.12 stated that young adults who live away from their parents will have a higher rate of apostasy. It was expected that, with marriage and childbearing controlled, those young adults still under the direct influence of their parents would be less likely to drop out. It was found, however, that they were actually more likely to become behavioral apostates than those living away from parents. This suggests that parents are unable to compel church attendance from their adult children, whether the children live with them or not. The finding also suggests an age limit to religious socialization.

Rational choice theory predicts a group of hypotheses labeled 4.13 through 4.16. All of these hypotheses received at least marginal support. Geographically mobile respondents did have higher rates of apostasy, although the effect was subsumed in the full model. Mobility disconnects individuals from their church communities and renders their religious capital less valuable. Persons who report that they liked to take risks were more likely to become apostates in bivariate analyses, but when entered alongside drug use -- a risky behavior -- the effect was subsumed. Non-white persons were much less likely to drop out of religion, and this finding was explained not by their denominational preference but rather by their overall higher levels of adolescent and parental religiosity. Minorities gain an advantage.
in retention through their strong religious socialization. Finally, supporting hypothesis 4.16, it was found in bivariate analysis that Catholics, Jews, and conservative Protestants were less likely to drop out of religion. However, these differences were not significant in regression models with demographic characteristics controlled. The finding could be interpreted as suggesting that retention is affected by the types of persons who cluster in the denominations more than by the character of the denominations themselves. Hypothesis 4.18 specified that Catholics and Jews would be more likely to become behavioral than identity apostates owing to the strong ethnic ties that bind them to religious communities. Bivariate results demonstrated that this is true, although the differences in rates of behavioral vs. identity apostasy was not large.

In all, results give support to perspectives on apostasy that focus on socialization (social learning theory) and on household context (rational choice theory). They give virtually no support to rebellion or cultural broadening approaches to apostasy, and by extension, to secularization theories. Most of the research on falling from the faith is dated or relies on data collected from a cohort of persons coming of age during the 1960s and 1970s. It would appear that the causes of apostasy are somewhat different in Generation X. The counterculture movement associated with college education for the Boomers has now moved underground and is associated with lower social status and drug use rather than with liberal social attitudes cultivated alongside enhanced education. It is clear that apostasy is a process whose causes differ across generations of individuals. For this reason, it will be important for scholars of religion to continue to study the topic as new cohorts of young people make decisions regarding religion.
This study has added to previous research not only by evaluating the explanatory paradigms from earlier studies but also by examining effects on the separate components of apostasy: identity and behavior. Results show that many effects operate differently on these two components. Parental education, for example, protects against attendance cessation but not against losing a religious identity. Having children increases behavioral apostasy -- consistent with the avoidance theory of young parents proposed by Stolzenberg et al. (1995) -- but it has no significant effect on identity apostasy. Living with parents increases behavioral but not identity apostasy. Identity and behavioral apostasy appear to involve two different processes, and future research should continue to separate these components analytically.

Finally, this study has contributed to our knowledge of apostasy by uncovering how the process differs by religious tradition. One surprise is that parental education is beneficial only for liberal Protestants and that it is harmful for Catholics. Catholics with highly educated parents are much more likely to eschew their identities as Catholics, a finding which would not have emerged in models of the full sample. Catholics also benefitted more consistently from being in college. This effect did not hold consistently for Protestants. These findings are paradoxical in that parental education increased apostasy among Catholics but young adult education reduced it. The present study cannot determine the mechanisms generating these opposing effects.
Conclusions

Contrary to the expectations of Miller and Miller (2000), this study has documented very similar rates of apostasy among young adults in Generation X as were found among the young Boomers in studies published during the 1960s and 1970s. Undoubtedly some members of Gen X have pursued individualized and eclectic forms of religion, but the vast majority of them have been retained in traditional, institutionalized religion. One cannot help but see the parallels between the lamentations of religious decline among Boomers published in the 1970s and those published more recently about Generation X. A “golden age syndrome” appears to be in effect among some religious researchers, who see surface-level generational differences as evidence that “things aren’t what they used to be.” In reality, things have not changed very much, at least in terms of the propensity of this younger generation to eschew traditional religion. This study has uncovered generational differences related to the effect of higher education. Among today’s youth, in contrast to the younger years of Boomers, education appears to be supportive of the religious institution. This finding turns “golden age” predictions on their heads!

The results of this study provide clues for parents and religious leaders who desire to reduce apostasy among today’s young people. For parents, results show that leading by example is the most important thing that can be done to ensure that their children retain the faith they were taught. Demonstrating that religion is unimportant with inconsistent or low levels of church attendance leads to young adults who abandon their religious identity or cease attendance themselves. As well, cultivating warm and nurturing relationships with children is shown to have a protective effect. For religious leaders, results suggest that
programs which integrate the multiple generations in a congregation might be helpful. Bringing parents and children together in religious activities would help to reinforce their shared religion and their supportive ties, building on the strengths of parental influence. Religious leaders should also be aware of effects on apostasy that are specific to their denominations so that retention efforts can be tailored.

The study also points out fruitful directions future research on apostasy might take. We need confirmation or clarification of the denomination-specific effects documented here, and we need a better understanding of how the identity and behavioral components of apostasy differ. At a minimum, this research calls into question early theories of apostasy and strongly confirms that scholars must continue to track rates and causes of it as new generations of young people are born. The Add Health data currently available do not track these young people long enough to determine how many of them return to the church. Research indicates that apostasy is temporary for many people. Roozen (1980) found that nearly 80 percent of dropouts return to the church at some point in their lives, with returning becoming more likely the younger respondents were when they dropped out. Fortunately, another wave of Add Health data collection is being planned. This will allow scholars to track the religious progress of Wave III apostates from Generation X and will undoubtedly further our understanding of this important process.
Chapter 5.
Conclusion: Studying the Religiosity of Generation X

This dissertation has documented the extent and predictors of religious transmission from Baby Boomers to adolescent Generation Xers as well as the extent of staying power institutionalized religion had for members of this generation as they aged into young adulthood. A number of theoretical paradigms, most developed in the 1970s or earlier, were used to formulate hypotheses regarding these phenomena. Alternative perspectives for understanding the unique nature of transmission and apostasy in Generation X are simply unavailable, except speculation about the failure of Boomers to transmit religion to Gen X and the rise of eclectic, individualized religion in this “dissatisfied” generation of young adults. Results call into question this speculation about the unique nature of religious processes in Gen X. The older theoretical paradigms still have much to offer in the way of explaining transmission and apostasy among today’s young adults. Yet it would be erroneous to conclude that Gen X is coming to religion -- and leaving it -- through precisely the same mechanisms Boomers did.

In this chapter, I synthesize the results from analyses of religious transmission and apostasy in Generation X. I evaluate the theoretical perspectives used to understand these processes and suggest an alternative focus on interactions between institutionalized religion and family structure as a fruitful perspective from which to continue work on both of these topics. Finally, I address the limitations and strengths of this study and conclude by offering suggestions for future empirical work on religion in Generation X, including further research on religious transmission and apostasy.
5.1 Review and Discussion of Study Results

An overarching question this dissertation sought to address is whether there is anything different about religiosity, religious transmission, and apostasy in Generation X. Little is known about Gen X religion, but the few studies on the topic reviewed in this dissertation suggested there are marked differences between Gen Xers and Boomers in their evaluation of institutionalized religion. Miller and Miller (2000) and Beaudoin (1998) both argue that Gen Xers are skeptical about organized religion. They question the authority of religious leaders to a greater extent, prefer a personal interpretation of religious doctrines, and piece together religious beliefs and practices from multiple traditions in an effort to best match their preferences. Miller and Miller (2000) and Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1994) suggest that Boomers, because of their own experiences during the counterculture movement, were reluctant to push religiosity on their children, even though Boomers largely returned to religion after their experimentation with alternative forms of spirituality during the 1960s and 1970s.

The results of this dissertation conflict strongly with these suggestions. The character of Generation X religiosity does not appear to be much different than what would be expected based on the study of previous generations. Far from eschewing organized religion, the results of this study show that Gen Xers embrace institutionalized religion about as emphatically as their parents did, if not more so. Knowing that religiosity declines during the teenage years, it was expected that adolescents would be less religious than their parents. This was confirmed: only 6 percent of parents claimed their religious affiliation was “None,” compared with around 12 percent of adolescents, and adolescents scored about a point lower
than parents on a nine-point index of religiosity using items on attendance, prayer, and religious salience. But the extent of difference between parents and children is surprisingly small, particularly with regard to religiosity, given the age difference between parents and children and the well-documented, longstanding trends in religiosity over the life course.

If parents were reluctant to push religiosity on their Gen X children, the children picked it up nonetheless. Analysis of affiliation transmission showed that the vast majority of adolescents -- nearly 80 percent -- reported the same affiliation as their parents did, and the correlations between adolescent and parent religiosity were quite high at .50. Gen X attended college in greater numbers than previous generations, and as a result they had more opportunities to learn and embrace alternative and secular viewpoints as they aged into young adulthood. Yet the extent of apostasy in this generation -- measured during a period of life in which apostasy should be at its peak and during an era in which reporting no religion is less stigmatized -- is quite comparable to the rates reported for Boomers in earlier studies, many of which included middle-aged adults as well as young adults. Around 77 percent of Gen Xers who reported a religious affiliation in Wave I were retained in religion six years later -- a proportion almost identical to that reported by Nelson and Bromley (1988) using the GSS cumulative file through 1985. That file contained mostly Boomers, although a few “early” Xers were in it, as were some members of the World War II generation.

When we restrict the measurement of apostasy among Boomers to their college years, as did Wuthnow and Glock (1973), we are given a very bleak picture of Boomer retention in religion. Forty-seven percent of the college freshmen in their sample claimed to be agnostic, atheist, or have no religion. Although not directly comparable, since the apostasy component
of the present study only included those who reported affiliation in Wave I, only 18 percent of the Gen Xers in college during academic year 2001-2002 had abandoned religion, and many of these persons still claim a religious affiliation but have ceased attendance. It is difficult to argue from these results that Generation X did not learn religion from their parents or that they made a mass exodus from religion upon entering young adulthood. It could probably be more successfully argued that Gen X is more religious than the Baby Boomers, at least when we compare the two generations in young adulthood.

Also, many of the variables that strongly predicted transmission and apostasy among Boomers continue to be important for understanding transmission and apostasy among Gen Xers. The most important predictor of both religious transmission and apostasy is the strength of the religious example set by parents. When parents are actively involved in a religious group, when they practice private religious activities including prayer, and when they regard religion as very important in their lives, their children are more likely to embrace their affiliation, and they are more likely to maintain involvement in religion as they age into adulthood.

This latter finding deserves special discussion due to disagreement among scholars about the impact of childhood socialization on adult religious behavior. While some researchers have found that adult experiences most forcefully shape adult religiosity, the results of this dissertation strongly suggest that childhood experiences -- both parental and childhood participation in religion -- are the most important predictors of adult religious behavior. The prominence of early life experiences has one very clear implication for parents and religious leaders who wish to retain children in religion as they age: start early. There is
no reason to believe that the effect will hold less strongly for Generation Y, the “Nexters,” or any generations to come, as this has been found an important predictor of retention for both Boomers and Gen Xers.

Other components of the early childhood experience, including household structure and relationships with parents, are also quite important for acquiring and maintaining religion. Having warm and supportive relationships with parents, as opposed to relationships that are cold and distant, facilitates acquiring the religious affiliation and religiosity of parents. Perhaps interestingly, since young adulthood involves establishing new relationships with employers, spouses, and peers, the quality of their relationships with parents as adolescents is an important predictor of their retention in religion as young adults. Growing up in an intact household dramatically improved the ability of parents to transmit religious affiliation, and it also improved retention in religion in young adulthood, although this effect was rendered negligible in full statistical models of apostasy. In intact households, growing up in a religiously homogamous household -- one where both parents have the same affiliation -- strongly influenced whether an adolescent held the affiliation of either parent.

Clearly, adolescent experiences are important predictors of adult religiosity, but adult experiences also had an effect. Being married in young adulthood reduced the probability of apostasy, as did low rates of geographic mobility. However, the effects of adult context were not nearly as consistent as those of childhood. Having children during young adulthood, for example, lead to increases in behavioral apostasy, as did living with parents during young adulthood. It is possible that both of these things -- having children and living with parents -- are non-normative life experiences for persons in this age group. These young adults may be
old enough that they are expected to move out of their parents’ households, yet they may be considered too young to have children of their own. Stolzenberg et al. (1995) argued that the apostasy-reducing effects of adult household context may be dependent on these contexts being present at normative times in the life course. This sample of Gen Xers was still quite young in 2001-2002, so it is difficult to gauge the impacts of adult household context at this time in their lives.

The literature suggested that the denominational traditions in which adolescents are raised shapes their probability of being recruited and retained in the tradition. Older studies indicated that Boomers from conservative Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish households outpaced their peers in mainline Protestant households in both recruitment and retention. This study generally found the same pattern for members of Generation X. The “popular” view of Gen Xers as skeptical of organized religion most certainly does not accord with the finding that more conservative denominations better retain members of this generation. It was suggested that conservative denominations fare better because they either offer a more compelling religious product or more compelling secular products including youth groups and other activities for young persons. This study could not determine the cause of denominational patterns in retention, but at the least, the findings rule out interpretations of generational change that place emphasis on the different character of Generation X. These longstanding patterns -- applicable to Boomers -- continue to hold.

The above arguments for generational similarity should not be taken to mean that there are no differences between Boomers and Xers in religious transmission and apostasy. Indeed, one surprise was a change in the impact of higher education on retention in religion.
Previous research had shown that college education liberalized and relativized the Boomers, contributing significantly to their fall from the faith during the 1960s and 1970s. We know now, of course, that many of these highly educated Boomers returned to the church. But even recent research (e.g., Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994) has suggested that some lasting effects of this liberalizing are evident in the numbers of Boomers who are reluctant to push religion on their Gen X children. On the basis of this research, I hypothesized that young adult Xers with highly educated parents and those who attend college themselves would more likely be apostates as young adults.

The findings indicated that the opposite conclusion is more appropriate: young adults in college, and those with highly educated parents, were more likely to be retained in religion. I suggested that this finding pointed to changes in the contexts of higher education, changes in the ability of young people to withstand the pressures of training in cultural relativity, and changes in the association of college with counterculture activities including religious experimentation and drug use. Today’s colleges and universities offer more opportunities for young people to express religious sentiments; they are friendlier towards university groups -- including the well-known Campus Crusade for Christ -- that focus on religion. It seems that the push toward political correctness, which initially drove emphasis on any one religion out of the universities, has come full-circle. Political correctness today means respecting all religious traditions and facilitating the expression of religion. At the same time, university curricula have become more specialized such that students with many majors largely have the ability to avoid liberal arts courses that challenge their world views.
An alternate possibility is that the characteristics of college students have changed. Today’s young people are exposed to the idea of cultural relativity at a very early age -- often in junior high and high school, and often at the same time that parents are attempting to socialize children into religion. College students may be more adept at holding to their world views while learning about others’ world views largely because they have so much experience doing this. Today’s colleges are also not the Meccas of revolution that they once were. Young college students today are largely avoiding the political, religious, and substance experimentation that were common on college campuses in the 1970s.

This discussion of results leads to one qualified conclusion: the more things change, the more they stay the same. The above account of changing college effects demonstrates the necessity of monitoring trends in the religiosity of new generations as they mature, but it by no means leads to the conclusion that Gen Xers are in any serious culture clash with their Boomer parents. If anything, the findings regarding the effects of higher education reinforce the earlier conclusion that Gen Xers may be more religious than the young Boomers were in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

5.2 Evaluation of Theories of Religious Change

Chapter Two reviewed several theories of religious change: three aggregate-level, societal theories of change and four micro-level theories of religious transmission and change over the life course. The results of this study do not definitively rule any of the theories out, but they do provide more or less support for each one. The individual-level theories included social learning theory, cultural broadening theory, the developmental model, and rational
choice theory. The discussion in Chapter Two pointed out that all of these perspectives save
cultural broadening theory are consistent with a societal-level prediction of overall stability.
The results of this study generally support that prediction, and some support is found for all
three of the individual-level perspectives associated with a prediction of stability.

Social learning theory stresses the long-term importance of early childhood
socialization. It regards parents practicing religion as models for children, who acquire
religion through imitation and reward for successful response. It also downplays the impact
of adult experiences, stressing the prominence of early childhood for adult behavior. This
theory is strongly supported by this study’s results. The example set by parents was the
strongest predictor of children’s recruitment into the parents’ religious tradition. That
parental example and the level of involvement in religion respondents had in adolescence
were strong predictors of retention in religion in adulthood.

The developmental model, in contrast, stresses change -- not stability -- over the life
course. It predicts that adolescents disengage from religion as they age into young adulthood
due to the desire to distinguish themselves from parents and interest in other activities. It also
predicts a renewed interest in religion as these young adults form families of their own
connected with a desire to socialize children in a religious tradition. Results indicated a small
effect of age on transmission such that older adolescents were less likely to report their
parents’ religious affiliation as their own. This supports the developmental model. Results for
apostasy were mixed: marriage had a beneficial effect on retention in religion, but
childbearing did not. As discussed above, however, the sample used in this study may be too
young for a fair evaluation of the developmental model.
Rational choice theory, as applied to religion, explains the impact of parental socialization and aging in terms of the benefits and costs that religion provides individuals in different contexts. The religious capital approach of Iannaccone (1990) theorizes that individuals produce the knowledge and skills necessary to gain satisfaction from religion in a household context. Consequently, individuals whose parents agree about religion and demonstrate strong religious examples are likely to mature in “capital-rich” environments that make continued participation in religion more meaningful and satisfying. Yet the costs and benefits of religion do change as individuals move through the life course. Changing addresses -- especially if the distance of the move is large -- getting married, and having children all change the costs and benefits of religion. Therefore, they also change the religious choices made by individuals. These are observations that support, rather than conflict with, social learning theory and the developmental model.

Rational choice theory also explains that high-cost denominations are likely to better retain members because they offer religious commodities that are more valuable, net of costs, compared with those offered by less strict denominations. While the present research cannot confirm the explanation given by rational choice theory, it does confirm that the more conservative denominations better retain members. Demand-side rational choice models also emphasize that quasi-ethnic religions, including Catholicism and Judaism, better retain members because they offer secular benefits. Social ties with like persons would be severed if members of these groups disaffected. Again, this research cannot evaluate the rationale, but it does support the prediction of rational choice theory that Catholicism and Judaism better retain members in terms of affiliation status.
Only the cultural broadening approach is disconfirmed by these results, and strongly so. The impact of the “broadening experience” of college education is shown to have a positive impact on retention in religion, as is being raised by well-educated parents. College education -- for both young adults and their parents -- serves as a useful proxy for the cultural broadening that may or may not occur as a result of exposure to new ideas. Another potential component to the broadening experience, however, is a broadening of social ties. When individuals develop friendships with others holding different views and group affiliations, their positive feelings toward these individuals may be mapped onto these different views and affiliations. This is to say that new ideas may be made more palatable through the establishment of new social ties. In effect, a component of the cultural broadening and secularization process may be “social broadening,” or the establishment of new social ties with others who are culturally different. This study could not measure the extent to which social broadening occurs, although the results suggest that college attendance does not contribute to the process. This may mean that today’s college students tend to surround themselves with similar persons. More research is needed to determine the utility of a social broadening approach for studies of religious transmission and apostasy, including research on the relationship between social and cultural broadening.

Because the cultural broadening approach is closely linked with the aggregate-level prediction of secularization, the results of this dissertation seemingly cast doubt on the conclusion that religion is losing its hold on society as individuals become more educated and modernized. Indeed, the positive association of education with religiosity suggests just the opposite. Before disregarding secularization theory entirely, however, it is useful to
revisit the multiple levels at which secularization is theorized to occur and consider whether any of the study results speak to more aggregate levels of religious change.

This dissertation has primarily considered the phenomenon of secularization at the individual and family levels: the failure to transmit, and the failure to retain individuals in religion as they age. As Chapter Two notes, the earliest theorists of secularization considered it a societal-level phenomenon. Durkheim argued that secularization occurred when society became more specialized and the religious subsystem was torn apart from subsystems of education, medicine, and law. Religion lost its hold over the operation of these subsystems, and Durkheim regarded this as a loss of power over society more generally. The introduction to this dissertation noted the continuing strong ties between religion and the institution (subsystem) of the family; both are symbolic institutions in which meanings are made. Relative to education, medicine, and law, the family appears to be the last institution still subject to strong religious influence.

On the other hand, some religiously-motivated family decisions have obviously changed. Where divorce was once generally prohibited by religious groups, most denominations and religions now accept divorce as a fact of life. Undoubtedly, religious groups faced the prospect of losing members if they did not capitulate to rising divorce rates with a relaxation of the stigma once attached to divorce. Equally likely, some individuals made the decision to divorce because it no longer threatened their status in the church or the afterlife. Either way, religious proscriptions against divorce today seem to make little difference; the divorce rate rose steadily throughout the 1970s, and it remains fairly high today. Another decision once under control of the church is the religious affiliation of one’s
spouse. Congregations and denominations once served as efficient dating venues for young people, and marrying within denominational tradition was the norm. Today, however, religious intermarriage has skyrocketed, and many intermarried individuals either attend different churches or do not attend at all. Of course, one spouse switching religious affiliation is also quite common. These trends elicit questions about the continuing mutually supportive relationships between religion and family.

The results of this study point to household structure as a very important determinant of religious transmission to children. This was expected based on previous research, but the sheer magnitude of difference in rates of transmission found in this study was surprising. In intact households, 85 percent of children were retained in the religious tradition of their parents. In disrupted households, only 70 percent of children were retained. In intact households, where parents shared religious affiliation 87 percent of children were retained. If they did not share religious affiliation, only 78 percent were retained. Logistic regression models indicated that the probability of retention increases by 55 percent when households are religiously homogamous, with all else in the model held constant. Among the members of this sample, a comparatively small portion of intact households were religiously heterogenous, about 21 percent. But nearly 40 percent of the households were single-parent households. Miller and Miller (2000) emphasize that the character of Generation X has been greatly affected by the rise of single-parenting during their maturation. This certainly meshes with the results found here, and it suggests that the study of Gen X religion does require a slightly different focus.
I propose that an alternative perspective from which to view transmission and apostasy in Generation X is one that privileges household structure and, at the aggregate level, the changing relationship between the institutions of religion and family. Development of this perspective at the individual level would first involve an assessment of religious influence on individuals’ decisions regarding divorce and intermarriage. It would then require an in-depth analysis of the effect of divorce and intermarriage on the religious beliefs and behaviors of parents. We do not currently possess an adequate understanding of why single and intermarried parents are less effective at transmitting religion. Is it because they are, or become, less religious; it is because they spend less time on religious socialization of children; or is it because children view that socialization as less convincing? At the aggregate level, we need a better grasp of the general hold of religion on the institution of the family. Is religion losing its influence on family decisions, and if so, what other changes in family structure can we expect to see as a result of it?

This “alternative” perspective focusing on family structure and relationships between the institutions of religion and family would not denigrate the ability of social learning theory or rational choice theory to explain the continued success of religion in Generation X, but it would focus our efforts in a direction that seems particularly relevant for understanding differences in the “success rate” among members of Gen X. It is unknown what the future holds in terms of religious intermarriage, divorce, or the changing nature of church-family relationships, but this study has demonstrated that these trends are important to monitor, and there is no reason to believe that these evolving trends will not be equally important for the religious imprinting of generations to come.
5.3 Limitations and Strengths of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

As rich as the Add Health data are, the biggest limitation of its use for the study of religious transmission and apostasy is the lack of detailed measures of religion. The Add Health data in Wave I offer measures of affiliation, prayer, and salience for both parents and children. These are admirable offerings for a study focusing on adolescent health. In previous work, however, I have called these measures “generic” and highlighted the need for more detailed measures including religious social support and religious coping (Nooney and Woodrum 2002). For this study, the desired measures would include items about the frequency and content of parent-child interaction regarding religion -- in essence, measures of religious socialization styles. This study has assumed that socialization efforts vary by the religiosity of parents, and religious socialization is reduced to a modeling process. While consistent with social learning theory, this likely understates the complexity of religious socialization, which involves talking about religion and answering children’s questions. As well, the potential influence of peers on the religiosity of adolescents is completely ignored in this study because measures of peer religiosity were not available. This similarly works to reduce religious transmission to a modeling process where adolescents only mimic parents. For the study of apostasy, measuring attitudes towards the church or self-reported reasons would have been helpful.

Add Health also contained some unfortunate skip patterns in its Wave I survey instrument. Respondents who did not report a religious affiliation at Wave I did not complete the remaining items on attendance, prayer, and salience. This assumes that individuals who do not affiliate with a religious group do not pray and do not regard religion as important;
this is a patently false assumption. This is especially unfortunate for the study of Gen X religion, if indeed many of these young persons are assembling their religions in piecemeal fashion. The school-based sample drawn for the Add Health study may restrict the generalizability of these results to individuals who have attended either public or private schools. Home schooled youth may more likely come from highly religious homes, and their more frequent contact with parents may mean that their religiosity is more similar to parents’ religiosity. As well, their knowledge of religious alternatives is diminished through lack of contact with children holding different affiliations and beliefs.

The short time frame between the first and last waves of the Add Health study -- six years -- limits what can be known about the extent and causes of apostasy in Generation X. In this study, the rate of apostasy compared favorably to that in other generations, but it is unknown how many more sample members have dropped out of religion in the four years since 2001-2002. Likewise, it is unknown how many of the young apostates have already returned to religion; previous research indicates that the majority of them will return at some point in their adult lives. The young age of the sample members at Wave III limits conclusions regarding the impact of adult household structure on apostasy. Most respondents have not yet married and do not yet have children, two transitions that tend to bring individuals back to organized religion, if they left it, or to keep them in organized religion if not.

In spite of these drawbacks, Add Health has offered unique opportunities to study transmission and apostasy in Generation X. The most important strength offered is the ability to study transmission and apostasy in the same sample of respondents. At Wave I, data were
collected from both parents and children, allowing evaluation of transmission. The same adolescents were interviewed as young adults, allowing evaluation of apostasy. I know of no other data set that is both multigenerational and longitudinal. The Add Health study produced a wealth of information on respondents; the ninety-minute interviews resulted in hundreds of data points from which to select independent variables for this analysis. The analyses presented here were able to incorporate variables on family structure of the adolescent and young adult household, relationships between parents and children, level of control parents had over children, drug use of adolescents, and many other variables that likely would have been unavailable had the study focused exclusively on religiosity and therefore suffered the dearth of funding that accompanies such studies. The results presented here are rich with respect to independent variables, if also poor with respect to measures of religiosity.

Another strength of this research is the conceptualization and modeling of transmission and apostasy as multidimensional. In both of the analyses, group affiliation was considered separately from the other components of religiosity: attendance at services, prayer, and salience. Results demonstrated that this was a wise choice, particularly for the study of apostasy. Identity apostasy -- the loss of identity as a member of a religious group -- was shown to be a different process than was the cessation of attendance at services without the loss of identity. In a similar vein, this research sought to uncover differences in the processes of transmission and apostasy based on the denominational tradition of respondents. Again, results showed important differences that are relevant for the recruitment and retention efforts of religious leaders and lay persons in specific religious traditions.
I suggest that further research on the topics of transmission and apostasy continue to evaluate these denominational differences. In particular, we need an understanding of why some denominations are more successful than others in recruiting and retaining young people. We also need confirmation of the results presented here regarding differences between the transmission of group affiliation and religiosity, and between the identity and behavioral components of apostasy. This is the first research that has separated the two components of apostasy, so the results must be considered preliminary, and replication is desirable.

Although the main message of this dissertation has been that Generation X is more like the Baby Boomers than different, in terms of religiosity, the study results do demonstrate that the possibility of generational differences must be taken seriously. In particular, changes in the effects of education warrant continued observation in the generations to come. As well, this study has uncovered striking differences in the transmission of religiosity based on family structure. I suggested that the study of religiosity in Generation X, as well as future generations, might benefit from a special focus on the effects of household structure. At the aggregate level, our retooling of theories of religious change in America would benefit from a special focus on the changing relationships between the institutions of religion and family.
Afterword

Undertaking this study was an exciting prospect for me. I am a member of Generation X, born more or less in the middle of the generation, and in many ways I fit the popular profile of members of this generation. My nose is pierced, I have tattoos, and I am generally dissatisfied and skeptical of government. I am quite savvy with modern technology, and I value play as much as I value work. The ideas of Miller and Miller (2000) resonated with me largely because my own experience with religion fit their description. I was christened and confirmed into the United Methodist Church and was raised by two parents who valued religion greatly and demonstrated its importance through attendance and religious discussion at home. My parents, however, were well-educated Baby Boomers who were indeed reluctant to force religion on me. They did not exactly facilitate my exploration of alternative religions, but they did not impede it, either. They simply wanted me to think independently.

My first “relativizing” experience with regard to Christianity came in my tenth grade literature class. The curriculum included a number of religious texts that were studied as literature and not scripture. These included the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* and the Bible. The most important piece for me, however, was the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, an ancient Sumarian piece written at least 2000 years before the birth of Christ that details a great flood and reorganization of society afterward. I was stunned at the parallels between this story and the story of Noah and the flood recorded in Genesis. I felt a sense of betrayal; was the Bible a work of plagiarism? From that point on, I regarded the Bible suspiciously and inspected it carefully for inconsistencies. And I found many. My identity as a Christian, and as a
Methodist, slipped away over the next few years, largely because of an increasing sense of cultural relativity that was reinforced during my undergraduate sociology courses. I formed a new identity as an agnostic.

My personal spiritual quest continued during graduate school and lead me to focus on the sociology of religion. I slowly erected a peace with organized religion as I learned more about its benefits for individuals and societies. I began to construct a moral and pseudo-religious platform for myself that drew from the seemingly universal truths that all the great religions espoused. I began communication with what I conceptualized as God, and this communication was and still is always prefaced by acknowledgment that I do not know the nature, character, or will of God. I know only that two simple rules guide my decisions: 1) take care of the planet and everything on it as best as you can, and 2) be kind to other humans and treat them as you would want to be treated. I believe that God approves of these rules, as they ensure the continued safety of Earth as much as that can be ensured by humans. I believe as well that they are sufficient to please God, and no other beliefs in the divinity of various historical characters are necessary. I have, quite in line with the observations of Miller and Miller (2000) and many theorists of secularization including Berger (1967) and Luckmann (1967), created a personalized religion.

I have never been persuaded that my experience is common, so the results of this dissertation also came as no surprise to me. I learned that I constituted a sample size of one in my first sociology course. My experience with other young people during high school and college reinforced my belief that most people in my generation were pursuing traditional religion. As a sociology instructor years later, I was not at all surprised to discover that most
of my students were traditionally religious. Many of them seemed far too capable of holding fast to these beliefs and considering seriously the material I presented in class on the primacy of social influence over individuals and the inherent worth of all cultural traditions. I have come to the conclusion that individuals with this capability are superior to me in some way. They sense a complexity to human life, perhaps subconsciously, that I was unable to grasp as a young person. This ability, it seems to me, will be the thing that allows organized religion to survive as humans continue to master our physical environment through scientific means. That, and of course, the inability of science to make human life meaningful. I am rooting for organized religion, with all of its inconsistencies, occasional narrow-mindedness, and judgmental character. Socially structured religion is part and parcel of being human.
References


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Chantala, K., and J. Tabor. 1999. “Strategies to Perform a Design-Based Analysis Using the Add Health Data” Carolina Population Center publication.


Figure 2.1 Relationships Among Theories of Religious Change
Table 3.1. List of Hypotheses From Chapter 3

H₃.₁: Transmission of religious affiliation and overall religiosity (hereafter, “transmission of religion”) will be most effective where parental participation in religion is high.

H₃.₂: Transmission of religion will be most effective when parents share the same religious affiliation.

H₃.₃: Transmission of religion will be most effective when the level of marital fighting is low.

H₃.₄: Transmission of religion will be most effective when the adolescent’s household is intact, with both parents present.

H₃.₅: Transmission of religion will be most effective when parent-child relationships are good.

H₃.₆: Transmission of religion may either be facilitated or impeded by high levels of parental control, but some effect is expected.

H₃.₇: Transmission of religion will be most effective in Catholic and conservative Protestant households.

H₃.₈: Transmission of religion will be less effective when adolescents are more cognitively sophisticated, as indicated by a measure of intelligence.

H₃.₉: Transmission of religion will be most effective for female adolescents.

H₃.₁₀: Transmission of religion will be more apparent for younger adolescents.

H₃.₁₁: Transmission of religion will be more effective in nonwhite households.

H₃.₁₂: Transmission of religion will be most effective where parental income is lower.
### Table 3.2. Descriptive Statistics for Intact and Disrupted Households

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<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Sample size for religiosity measures excludes those not reporting a religious affiliation and those not responding to attendance, prayer, or salience items among both parents and children. For intact households, N = 6,246. For disrupted households, N = 3,661.
Table 3.3 Parent-Child Affiliation Transmission and Religiosity Correlation in Intact and Disrupted Households, by Covariates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% same affiliation (intact HHs)</th>
<th>% same affiliation (disrupted HHs)</th>
<th>Subpopulation Correlation (intact HHs)†</th>
<th>Subpopulation Correlation (disrupted HHs)†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entire Sample</td>
<td>85.24</td>
<td>70.45</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental Rel. Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- low attender</td>
<td>76.37</td>
<td>63.68</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- high attender</td>
<td>90.57***</td>
<td>76.82***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Homogamy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- homogamous</td>
<td>87.32</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- heterogeneous</td>
<td>77.60***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- low conflict</td>
<td>85.59</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- high conflict</td>
<td>84.43</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Child Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- below average</td>
<td>83.65</td>
<td>67.02</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- above average</td>
<td>86.81**</td>
<td>74.10***</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- low control</td>
<td>83.92</td>
<td>68.06</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- high control</td>
<td>86.50*</td>
<td>73.04***</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Rel. Tradition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- None</td>
<td>77.07</td>
<td>61.04</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conservative Prot.</td>
<td>87.11</td>
<td>74.20</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Moderate Prot.</td>
<td>84.44</td>
<td>65.32</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Liberal Prot.</td>
<td>79.44</td>
<td>58.42</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Catholic</td>
<td>92.04</td>
<td>82.79</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Jewish</td>
<td>89.74</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other</td>
<td>66.82***</td>
<td>43.92***</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 100 and under</td>
<td>85.25</td>
<td>70.69</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- over 100</td>
<td>85.22</td>
<td>70.11</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- female</td>
<td>86.59</td>
<td>71.75</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- male</td>
<td>83.88*</td>
<td>68.98</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 3.3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% same affiliation (intact HHs)</th>
<th>% same affiliation (disrupted HHs)</th>
<th>Subpopulation Correlation (intact HHs)†</th>
<th>Subpopulation Correlation (disrupted HHs)†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-15 and younger</td>
<td>86.98</td>
<td>73.23</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-16 and older</td>
<td>84.16*</td>
<td>68.73*</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-White</td>
<td>84.40</td>
<td>67.87</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Nonwhite</td>
<td>86.68*</td>
<td>72.40***</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HH Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-$50K and under</td>
<td>84.42</td>
<td>70.91</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-$over 50K</td>
<td>86.06</td>
<td>66.86</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>7105</td>
<td>4558</td>
<td>6246</td>
<td>3661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*chi-square statistically significant at alpha <.01  
**chi-square statistically significant at alpha <.001  
***chi-square statistically significant at alpha <.0001  
†Values present are Pearson correlations. All are statistically significant at alpha <.0001
### Table 3.4. Intergenerational Religious Mobility in All Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Affiliation</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>65.16%</th>
<th>Conservative Protestant</th>
<th>8.37%</th>
<th>Moderate Protestant</th>
<th>9.05%</th>
<th>Liberal Protestant</th>
<th>11.26%</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>5.97%</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>6.60%</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>16.37%</th>
<th>Total N</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1432</td>
<td>12.28%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Protestant</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3314</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3787</td>
<td>32.47%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Protestant</td>
<td>10.97%</td>
<td>84.28%</td>
<td>5.16%</td>
<td>10.03%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>9.94%</td>
<td>32.47%</td>
<td>32.47%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Protestant</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>73.89%</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
<td>0.54%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
<td>6.64%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>9.73%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3.84%</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
<td>5.37%</td>
<td>5.48%</td>
<td>87.44%</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
<td>6.04%</td>
<td>29.48%</td>
<td>29.48%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Protestant</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3090</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3438</td>
<td>29.48%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>10.29%</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
<td>82.08%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
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<td>137</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>8.58%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
<td>4.63%</td>
<td>3.32%</td>
<td>2.24%</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
<td>62.09%</td>
<td>11663</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>3932</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1386</td>
<td>3534</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1026</td>
<td>11663</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>33.71%</td>
<td>8.15%</td>
<td>11.88%</td>
<td>30.30%</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

chi-square = 37,685.68, p < .0001
Table 3.5. Logistic Regressions of Affiliation Transmission on Covariates, Intact Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates</th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th>Conservative Protestant</th>
<th>Moderate Protestant</th>
<th>Liberal Protestant</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Religious Attendance</td>
<td>3.22***</td>
<td>3.19***</td>
<td>3.01***</td>
<td>3.88***</td>
<td>3.04***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogamy</td>
<td>1.55***</td>
<td>1.91***</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital fighting</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Relationship Quality</td>
<td>1.04**</td>
<td>1.07**</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental control</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Religious Tradition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reference category = liberal Protestant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-conservative Protestant</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-moderate Protestant</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Catholic</td>
<td>2.62***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture Vocabulary Test</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.34*</td>
<td>1.55*</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.94*</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.79*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>Nonwhite</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>15.77***</td>
<td>8.00***</td>
<td>2.39***</td>
<td>5.06***</td>
<td>4.57***</td>
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<td>2,048</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>2,436</td>
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</table>

Notes: Persons reporting None, Jewish, or Other religious affiliations have been excluded. Coefficients presented are odds ratios. Probability modeled is that of successful affiliation transmission.

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
Table 3.6. Logistic Regressions of Affiliation Transmission on Covariates, Disrupted Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates</th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th>Conservative Protestant</th>
<th>Moderate Protestant</th>
<th>Liberal Protestant</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Religious Attendance</td>
<td>2.02***</td>
<td>1.68**</td>
<td>1.95*</td>
<td>2.91***</td>
<td>2.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Relationship Quality</td>
<td>1.08**</td>
<td>1.08**</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>1.18*</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental control</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Religious Tradition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reference category = liberal Protestants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-conservative Protestant</td>
<td>1.80**</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-moderate Protestant</td>
<td>1.52</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Catholic</td>
<td>3.49***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture Vocabulary Test</td>
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<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.24*</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.81*</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwhite</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.55*</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>9.38***</td>
<td>3.10**</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>4.63***</td>
<td>2.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3,785</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>1,098</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Persons reporting None, Jewish, or Other religious affiliations have been excluded. Coefficients presented are odds ratios. Probability modeled is that of successful affiliation transmission.

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001
Table 3.7. OLS Regressions of Intergenerational Religiosity Distance in Intact and Disrupted Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intact Households</th>
<th>Disrupted Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Religious Attendance</td>
<td>.98***</td>
<td>1.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Homogamy</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital fighting</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Relationship Quality</td>
<td>-.08***</td>
<td>-.08***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental control</td>
<td>-.07**</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Tradition (reference = liberal Protestant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conservative Protestant</td>
<td>-.23*</td>
<td>-.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- moderate Protestant</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Catholic</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Test</td>
<td>-.01**</td>
<td>-.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.53***</td>
<td>-.51***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.07**</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>R-squared</td>
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<td>.13***</td>
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</table>

Notes: Persons reporting None, Jewish, or Other religious affiliations have been excluded. Coefficients presented are unstandardized betas.

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .001
Table 4.1. List of Hypotheses From Chapter 4

H₄.1: High levels of religious participation by parents will reduce the likelihood of apostasy in their young adult children.

H₄.2: High levels of religious participation by adolescents will reduce the likelihood of apostasy as these adolescents age into young adulthood.

H₄.3: Children of intact households will have a reduced likelihood of apostasy as they age into young adulthood.

H₄.4: Good relationships with parents during adolescence will reduce the likelihood of apostasy in adulthood.

H₄.5: High levels of parental control may either increase (rebellion) or decrease (rational choice theory) rates of apostasy in young adulthood.

H₄.6: Young adults who are currently in college will manifest higher rates of apostasy.

H₄.7: Young adults who use drugs will have higher rates of apostasy.

H₄.8: Parents with higher levels of education will produce children with higher rates of apostasy.

H₄.9: There will be no impact of parental income on adult rates of apostasy.

H₄.10: Married individuals will have a lower rate of apostasy.

H₄.11: Young adults with children will have a lower rate of apostasy than childless adults.

H₄.12: Young adults who live away from their parents will have a higher rate of apostasy.

H₄.13: Geographically mobile individuals will have higher rates of apostasy.

H₄.14: Persons with a high propensity for risk will have higher rates of apostasy.

H₄.15: Non-white persons will have lower rates of apostasy.
Table 4.1 (continued)

H₄.₁₆: Conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Jews will have lower rates of apostasy than mainline and liberal Protestants.

H₄.₁₇: Women will have lower rates of apostasy than men.

H₄.₁₈: Catholics and Jews, as members of quasi-ethnic religious groups, are more likely to become behavioral apostates than identity apostates in order to preserve extra-religious community ties.
### Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics (N=8424)

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<th>Mean/Median</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<td>--</td>
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<td>- Stalwart</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Parental Religiosity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.4 / 12.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4 - 13</td>
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<td>10.9 / 11.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4 - 13</td>
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<td>- Disrupted</td>
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<td>1.9 / 2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not in college</td>
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<td>0 - 6</td>
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<td>- Child in household</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Not living w/ parents</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>0 - 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>Mean/Median</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Range</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Propensity for Risk</td>
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<td>3.4 / 4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Liberal Prot.</td>
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<td>21.8 / 22.0</td>
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Table 4.3. Predictors of Apostasy Type at the Bivariate Level (N = 8,424)

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<th>% Behavioral Apostate</th>
<th>% Stalwart</th>
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<td>Parental Religiosity***</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Intact</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disrupted</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>72.5</td>
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<td>Parental Relations Quality***</td>
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<td>78.7</td>
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<td>79.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>75.8</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Drug use in 1995***</td>
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<td>72.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>- High school or less</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>74.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>- More than HS</td>
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<td>9.0</td>
<td>78.7</td>
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<td>Marital Status***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>75.7</td>
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* chi-square test significant at p<.05
**chi-square test significant at p<.01
***chi-square test significant at p<.001
Table 4.3 (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Religious Status in 2001</th>
<th>% ID Apostate</th>
<th>% Behavioral Apostate</th>
<th>% Stalwart</th>
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<td>11.7</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Residence***</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Living with parents</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>76.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residential Mobility (1995)*</td>
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<td>76.7</td>
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<td>77.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Propensity for Risk***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11.4</td>
<td>75.4</td>
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<td>9.4</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Moderate Prot.</td>
<td>15.2</td>
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<td>75.5</td>
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<td>- Catholic</td>
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<td>- Jewish</td>
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<td>Gender***</td>
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<td>11.7</td>
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* chi-square test significant at p<.05
**chi-square test significant at p<.01
***chi-square test significant at p<.001
Table 4.4. Correlation Matrix of Apostasy and Predictors (N = 8,424)

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<tr>
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<td>.06*</td>
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<td>.09*</td>
<td>.05*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.08*</td>
<td>.09*</td>
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*significant at p<.01

Note: values presented are Pearson’s correlation coefficients.
Table 4.5. Multinomial Logistic Regressions of Apostate Status on Covariates (N = 7,614)

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Notes: Persons reporting Jewish or Other religious affiliations have been excluded. Coefficients presented are relative risk ratios. Probability modeled is that of membership in ID Apostate vs. Stalwart (ID) and Behavioral Apostate vs. Stalwart (Beh) categories.

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

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Table 4.6. Multinomial Logistic Regressions of Apostate Status on Covariates, by Religious Tradition

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Notes: Persons reporting Jewish or Other religious affiliations have been excluded. Coefficients presented are relative risk ratios. Probability modeled is that of membership in ID Apostate vs. Stalwart (ID) and Behavioral Apostate vs. Stalwart (Beh) categories.

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001