

# “To Whom Much Has Been Given...”: Religious Capital and Community Voluntarism Among Churchgoing Protestants

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*Research on volunteering behavior has consistently found a positive relationship between religion and volunteering. Using a sample of churchgoing Protestants (N=1,738) from the Religious Identity and Influence Survey we examine the specific influences of religiosity, religious identity, religious socialization, and religious social networks on local volunteer activity in church programs and non-church organizations, as well as general volunteering tendencies. These influences are presented within the theoretical framework of religious capital. Logistic regression techniques were applied to determine the strength of the contribution of these influences while accounting for basic background factors. Findings suggest that churchgoing Protestants are influenced by all measures to some degree, but religiosity (specifically participation in church activities) remains the strongest influence. Significant religious influences overall are most pronounced within the context of church-related volunteering which suggests that churchgoing Protestants exhibit a strong sense of community identity through their local churches. A discussion of these results and their implications for volunteering follows.*

Recently much concern has been raised over the seeming decline in civic participation in America (Putnam 1995). Types of civic participation vary widely, including political activity, labor union involvement, and membership in local community organizations to name only a few. Religiously-oriented participation in public life through local churches is also one of these. This specific type of association, and its impact on local communities, raises important questions about the future of American social life.

Research has shown that religion plays an important role in influencing Americans to volunteer in their local communities (e.g. Greeley 1997; Wilson and Janoski 1995; Wilson and Musick 1997; Wuthnow 1991). Church attendance in particular, has been shown to have a consistent positive influence on formal volunteering behavior (e.g. participating with a local chapter of Habitat for Humanity) as opposed to informal expressions of caring (e.g. helping a neighbor) (Hodgkinson et al. 1990; Wilson and Musick 1997; Wuthnow 1991). For the purposes of this paper we will focus exclusively on formal voluntarism.

Theoretically, the positive causal relationship between attendance and formal volunteering can be described as reflecting the influence of religious capital (Iannacone 1990) or alternatively, cultural capital (Wilson and Musick 1997) on the production of valued commodities like community voluntarism. Ammerman (1997) and Warner (1993) for instance, note that church attendance in the American context is unique in its voluntary nature. Proactive participation in this organization may beget other forms of social participation much in the way that human capital can produce social capital. Additionally, service to the needy remains an integral part of Christian teaching. Thus, we might also expect that greater investments in one's religion will lead to the production of valued social commodities like community volunteering (Iannaccone 1990).

So, in this article we ask the question: Given that church attendance promotes community voluntarism, are there additional ways in which religion acts in the form of religious or cultural

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capital to promote volunteering behavior? While previous studies have contributed to our understanding of the link between religion and volunteering, improved measures now exist that allow for a more comprehensive approach to understanding religion's role in the behavior of individuals. We present four potential sources of religious capital which promote in individuals, particularly religious adherents, action in their communities through volunteering. These influences include religiosity (i.e. one's behaviors and attitudes toward religion), religious socialization (i.e. the exposure to religious values and behaviors during one's formative years), religious identity (i.e. the sense of belonging to a particular religious tradition or movement), and religious social networks (i.e. the degree of access to other religious adherents). Clearly there are other ways in which religion may promote voluntary behavior, but we limit our discussion to these items only. Also, we will focus on these three forms of formal volunteering:

- 1) volunteering through a church program that serves the local community;
- 2) volunteering for a local community organization not related to a church; and
- 3) volunteering in general (a sum total of the two preceding types of voluntarism).<sup>1</sup>

Following Hodgkinson et al. (1990) and Hoge et al. (1998) we expect that religious influences will have a greater effect on religiously-oriented volunteering than non-religiously-oriented volunteering. General volunteering, we argue, will also be more strongly influenced by religious factors, given that our target population is notably religious.

In this paper, we limit our analysis to churchgoing Protestants. That is, our sample respondents all share the characteristic of *having attended church services at least two to three times a month*. We stress this fact because much of the prior research on volunteering and religion using nationally representative samples looked at the positive effect of church attendance on volunteering across the general population (e.g. Hodgkinson, et al. 1990; Wilson and Janoski 1995; Wilson and Musick 1997). In our study we will assume this attendance factor and instead concentrate on the *additional effects* of religion on volunteering beyond this minimal level of church attendance among a nationally representative sample of Protestants. While this restriction limits our generalizability, we benefit from the specific measures made available for testing this population, which may prove enlightening to other similar groups in American society.

## HYPOTHESES

### **Religiosity and Volunteering**

Religiosity acts as a form of cultural capital when one obtains religious attitudes and behaviors through religious practice or observation (Iannaccone 1990). Indeed the concept of stewardship, the giving of one's time and human resources, has received greater or renewed emphasis in some churches today. In the previous research on volunteering and religious influences, religiosity has received perhaps the most attention; however its operationalization has varied considerably. Often church attendance has been used as the main indicator for this concept, with the inclusion of a variety of other religious measures such as church membership (Hodgkinson et al. 1990), prayer (Wilson and Musick 1997), the relative importance of faith, and religious attitudes concerning giving one's time and money (Wuthnow 1991). As might be expected, findings vary across these different combinations of measures (see, for example, Cnaan et al. 1993; Hoge et al. 1998; Wilson and Musick 1997; Wuthnow 1991). In general however, we contend that religiosity should positively influence volunteering in one's local community because participation in the religious sphere brings with it the development of skills and attitudes reflective of helping others.

The religiosity measures included in this study consist of the relative importance of faith reported by churchgoing Protestant respondents, their levels of "high" church attendance, and participation in church activities. Research on religious attitudes and volunteering show mixed results. Some kinds of beliefs, such as the perception of receiving love from God, are related to

volunteering, while other beliefs, such as feminine or androgynous views of God, are inconsequential (Wuthnow 1991: 128-129). Cnaan et al. (1993) found no significant differences between volunteers and nonvolunteers in their intrinsic religious motivation as a correlate to volunteering behavior. Given this inconsistency in the literature, we hypothesize that:

*H1: Greater importance of faith will positively influence churchgoing Protestant formal volunteering behavior.*

Church attendance has been discussed as having a positive effect on formal volunteering. We believe that a measure of very high church attendance (i.e. attendance of more than two to three times a month) can allow us to test whether high levels of this form of religious participation produces continuing positive effects on volunteering, or whether any specific “threshold” exists. We hypothesize:

*H2: Higher levels of church attendance will positively influence churchgoing Protestant formal volunteering behavior.*

Researchers have argued that church activity participation is a useful means of learning skills that can be transferred into other contexts like community volunteering (Ammerman 1997; Hodgkinson et al. 1990).<sup>2</sup> Thus we might expect a positive relationship with this religiosity measure and formal volunteering as well.

*H3: Greater participation in church activities will positively influence churchgoing Protestant formal volunteering behavior.*

## **Religious Identity and Volunteering**

Identification with personal religious labels acts as a sign of belonging to religious movements or traditions. Identification with these identities can act as religious capital in the form of a perceived sense of a shared religious heritage known for certain behaviors like volunteering. This in turn produces a greater willingness to volunteer. A clear relationship has been demonstrated that certain religious traditions do influence social participation and volunteering (Wilson and Janoski 1995; Regnerus and Smith 1998). The liberal Protestant movement and the mainline Protestant tradition have been involved in social activism from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward given their postmillennial theological heritage which anticipated social progress. Fundamentalists and evangelicals have also taken part in social activism in earlier generations, but at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these Protestants retreated from such activity as a reaction to the growing theological tensions between themselves and their more liberal counterparts. This “Great Reversal,” however, seems to have recently experienced an about-face within the evangelical tradition. This religious tradition’s reaction to the cultural revolution of the 1960s has resulted in more social engagement than in previous generations due in part to their adaptive theology (Regnerus and Smith 1998).

*H4: Identification with liberal, mainline, and evangelical labels will positively influence churchgoing Protestant formal volunteering behavior, but identification with the fundamentalist label will negatively influence formal volunteering.*

Self-identification as a “charismatic” should also produce a positive effect. The charismatic movement is understood as an interdenominational religious renewal movement entailing a transformative experience with the Holy Spirit (Poloma 1989). Wuthnow found in his study of small group participation that those who reported having a “profound religious experience” or a “spiritual awakening” were more likely to volunteer in their local communities (1994: 329). The religious experience produces in the individual a re-evaluation of the meaning of life which leads to greater degrees of community voluntarism. If we arguably claim that identification with the

charismatic movement includes similar types of experiences we might also expect that such an identity will positively influence churchgoing Protestants to volunteer.

*H5: Identification with the charismatic movement will positively influence formal volunteering.*

### **Religious Socialization and Volunteering**

The socialization of individuals provides a powerful source of social capital, as Coleman argued (1988). We contend that religious socialization, or how one is raised in terms of a religious background, has an impact on one's propensity to volunteer. Adopting a religious tradition from one's parents may include the practice of service to one's community. Many churches and other religious institutions, such as schools, provide opportunities for youth to volunteer in local neighborhoods aimed at urban renewal and aid to the homeless. These experiences can then act as a template for future volunteer work when these youth reach adulthood. Previous research has shown that early volunteering experiences with religious institutions act as a significant force in promoting volunteering behavior when people reach adulthood (e.g. Hodgkinson 1995; Wuthnow 1995; Wilson and Janoski 1995).

Our first measure of religious socialization is the influence of one's parents' religious identity. Just as we argued earlier that labels may carry along beliefs and practices that are perceived to be connected with certain religious traditions, the traditions with which one's parents identified may also carry a set of beliefs and practices. These then may be transmitted to the next generation in the socializing process as a means of perpetuating a particular faith tradition. This may include then the transmission of different religious traditions' orientations toward community voluntarism.

*H6: Churchgoing Protestants who were raised with parents from Catholic, liberal Protestant, and mainline Protestant parents should exhibit a positive influence toward formal volunteering than those raised by fundamentalist Protestant parents.*

*H7: Churchgoing Protestants who were raised with parents of evangelical and fundamentalist traditions should be less likely to volunteer than those who were raised in other Christian religious traditions due to these traditions' earlier separatistic tendencies.*

*H8: Because of religion's positive role on volunteering, we hypothesize that churchgoing Protestants whose parents claimed no affiliation should have a negative effect on volunteering.*

*H9: Greater importance of religion in one's family of origin should be a positive influence in promoting volunteering behavior among churchgoing Protestants.*

A second measure of religious socialization includes attendance at religious schools. Wilson and Janoski found that high school extra-curricular activity participation among Catholics and conservative Protestants was significant in encouraging volunteering later in life (1995: 149). However this claim came with two qualifications. First, it was assumed that the Catholics in their sample who were socialized in the 1960s were educated in parochial schools; a direct measure for the religious affiliation of the high schools was not available. Secondly, it was argued that conservative Protestants' exposure to secular schooling, particularly high school extra-curricular activity, promoted voluntarism later in life. Without direct measures of the affiliation of the schools in which Catholics and Conservative Protestants were socialized, we argue that such claims and assumptions are questionable. Nevertheless, we agree with their contention that religious educational institutions should provide environments in which teachings, such as serving the poor, are reinforced. The present study will include a direct measure of the type of school (religious or non-religious) attended in order to test the influential strength of such associations on present-day volunteering behavior.

*H10: We expect that prior attendance at a Christian school should promote voluntarism among churchgoing Protestants presently.*

As Marsden has argued, American Protestants have historically been particularly invested in the educational enterprise (1994). Colleges, like other institutions of learning, can provide an environment for socializing values, such as service to the community, which might shape and inform students' future decisions. But the literature is somewhat sparse with regard to the contribution of a religious college experience for Protestants. Astin (1990), for example, found that volunteers in college were most likely Catholic or Jewish, but it is not clear if these differences occur due to attendance at a religious or non-religious college. Weigert and Miller also find that Catholic students showed significantly higher rates of volunteering than non-Catholics in these religious schools, but their findings were limited to students attending a Catholic college (1996: 43). We hope to connect these findings by arguing that churchgoing Protestants also retain an identity that significantly affects their volunteering capacity after attending a Christian college. We hypothesize:

*H11: Previous attendance at a religious institution of higher learning will have an added positive effect on churchgoing Protestants' tendency to volunteer after matriculation.*

### **Religious Social Networks and Volunteering**

Religious social networks refer to the relationships and connections between similar or like-minded religious individuals. Religious capital can also develop through these relations as these friendships can become links and opportunities for volunteer activities. As Hodgkinson (1995) found, one of the main influential factors that lead people to volunteer is simply being asked to do so. Also, and more specifically, we refer to those relationships that are not necessarily created by connections through a church congregation.

*H12: Churchgoing Protestants who have more relationships with others of the same religious faith tradition will have access to more volunteering activities and opportunities which will increase their likelihood of volunteering.*

Previous research has noted the importance of social environments like schools that influence individuals to care (Hodgkinson 1995; Staub 1995). Most recently, Smith and Sikkink (1999) found that families whose children attend Catholic, Christian, and other non-public schools were more inclined towards civic participation than families from public schools. By virtue of these connections parents may find outlets to volunteer through programs run through the school itself or through the connections with other parents who know of volunteer opportunities.

*H13: Churchgoing Protestants parents who send their children to religious, parochial, or home-based schools will more likely volunteer because of the opportunities available through the school itself or through relationships with other parents.*

## **DATA AND MEASURES**

### **The Religious Identity and Influence Survey**

Data used in this study comes from the Pew-funded 1996 Religious Identity and Influence Survey, a cross-sectional, nationally representative telephone survey probing the religious beliefs, identities, and behaviors of Americans over the age of seventeen (Smith et al. 1998). A random sample was produced with an oversample of Protestants. Among the 2,087 interviews, we selected only those Protestants who reported their church attendance as either "two to three times a month" or more. Weighting procedures were applied to correct for the number of adults in a given household

due to differences in the number of adults present in any given household with telephone availability. Our final sample then consisted of 1,738 churchgoing Protestant respondents.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables used in this study are derived from two survey questions asked in the study described above. Both questions were stated: “For each one, please tell me whether you have done the activity within the last two years A Lot, Some, or None:

Volunteered for a church program that serves the local community?

Volunteered for a local community organization not related to a church?”

Responses to both of these questions are coded on three-point scales (0 = “none,” 1 = “some,” 2 = “a lot”) which were then recoded into dichotomous variables (0 = “none,” 1 = “some or a lot”). A third measure, “general volunteering,” consists of the sum responses to both of the survey questions. This last dependent measure was also converted into a dichotomous variable (0 = “none” 1 = “any volunteering whether church-related or non-church-related”).

### **Independent Variables**

#### *Religiosity*

With regard to coding procedures, Religiosity measures include “Importance of Faith” a four-point scale variable (1 = “not important,” 2 = “somewhat important,” 3 = “very important,” 4 = “extremely important”). Church activity participation (“Church Activities”) is coded in a 7-point variable (1 = “never,” 2 = “a few times a year,” 3 = “once a month,” 4 = “two to three times a month,” 5 = “once a week,” 6 = “twice a week,” 7 = “three times a week”). High levels of church attendance (“High Church Attendance”) is coded on a three-point scale (1 = “two to three times a month,” 2 = “once a week,” 3 = “more than once a week”).

#### *Religious Identity*

Religious identities used in this study were obtained in the following manner: Survey respondents were asked in separate yes-no questions whether they did or did not identify themselves as fundamentalist Protestant, evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, or theologically liberal Protestant. Those respondents who identified with more than one of these traditions were then asked which of those they chose they most identified with. By this method, survey respondents sorted themselves into the mutually-exclusive religious self-identity categories we use in this analysis (see Smith et al. 1998: 234-36). Those respondents who used some other Protestant label were placed together under the identity label “Other Protestant.” The reference category used in this study is the label “fundamentalist” given our hypothesis that adherents to this movement will exhibit the least amount of volunteering. Additionally the “charismatic” label is included as a dichotomous measure (1 = “charismatic,” 0 = “non-charismatic”). Note that this measure is independent of the previous mutually-exclusive categorical labels.

#### *Religious Socialization*

Among the religious socialization variables, “parents’ religious identity” consists of a series of mutually exclusive categories for our sample of churchgoing Protestants including: “theologically-liberal Christian,” “fundamentalist,” “evangelical,” “mainline,” “Catholic,” “nonreligious,” and “other.” This last category captures all respondents who did not classify their parents in any of the major aforementioned traditions. The excluded category for this measure is the label “fundamentalist.” Note that churchgoing Protestants may not necessarily originate from a Protestant or any religious background. “Family’s importance of faith” is coded on a four-point scale (1 = “not important,” 2 = “somewhat important,” 3 = “very important,” 4 = “extremely important”). Attendance at a religious school, (“attended Christian school”) is coded dichotomously

(1 = “Yes, attended a Christian grade school or high school” or “attended a Catholic school,” 0 = “No”), as is Christian college attendance (“attended Christian college”), where 1 = attendance at a Christian college, Catholic or otherwise, and 0 = attendance at another type of institution.

### *Religious Social Networks*

Religious social networks are measured by two variables: enrollment of the churchgoing Protestant’s child or children in a religious school, and the number of close friends and family whom the churchgoing Protestant considers to be Christian. The former variable (“child in Christian school”) is measured dichotomously: 1 = child is enrolled in a religious school (i.e. affirmative responses to any of these categories: “home-school,” “private Christian (Protestant or independent),” and “Catholic”), and 0 = child is enrolled in a public or private non-religious school. The latter variable, “Christian family, friends” is a four-point scaled measure (1 = “none,” 2 = “some,” 3 = “most,” 4 = “almost all”).

### **Control Variables<sup>3</sup>**

We include background demographic factors that act as a baseline by which to measure the contributions of the aforementioned religious influences.<sup>4</sup> Research findings are somewhat inconsistent with regard to the effect of gender, race, age, marital status, or “residential stability,” (i.e. the tendency to remain in the same area since adolescence) (Carson 1990; Cnaan et al. 1993; Gallagher 1995; Hodgkinson et al. 1990; Hodgkinson et al. 1994; Pyle 1993; Smith 1994; Weigert and Miller 1996; Wilson and Musick 1997). We expect to find some marginal effects of these demographic characteristics on volunteering for members of our churchgoing Protestant sample. Fairly consistent and positive results appear with some demographics like education, income, the number of children in one’s household, and county population size (Caputo 1997; Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1994; Hodgkinson, et al. 1990; Smith 1994; Wilson and Musick 1997). We hypothesize that these factors should produce the same positive relationship with volunteering. Finally, we expect some demographic factors such as Southern residence, and full-time work status to have a negative effect on volunteering (Bradley 1995; Cnaan et al. 1993).

Control variables are either dichotomous or ordinal in scale. Dichotomous variables include: gender (“female” = 1); marital status (“married” = 1); race (“non-white” = 1); work status (“full time work” = 1); and region (South = 1). Ordinal scale control variables include: education (“none” = 0, “6<sup>th</sup> grade or less” = 1, “some junior high school or high school” = 2, “high school graduate” = 3, “vocational or technical school” = 4, “some college” = 5, “college graduate” = 6, “some graduate school” = 7, “Master of arts” = 8, “post Master of arts” = 9); income (“\$10,000 or less” = 10, “\$10-20K” = 11, “\$20-30K” = 12, “\$30-40K” = 13, “\$40-50K” = 14, “\$50-60K” = 15, “\$60-70K” = 16, “\$70-80K” = 17, “\$80-90K” = 18, “\$90-100K” = 19, “over \$100,000” = 20); age (continuous ranging from 17 to 96 years); the number of children (continuous ranging from “none” = 0 to “ten or more” = 10); and “county population” (“1,000 to 10,000,” = 2, “10,000-50,000” = 3, “50,000-100,000” = 4, “100,000-500,000” = 5, “over 500,000” = 6). “Residential stability” is measured on a categorical scale based on comparative residence from age 16 and the present. The scale runs from least to most residentially stable to most (1 = “live in another state,” 3 = “live farther away,” 5 = “live in a nearby town,” 7 = “live in the same town since I was 16 years old”). The relevant percentages, means, and standard deviations for these independent and dependent measures are presented in Table 1.

## **RESULTS**

Across tables 2 through 4, models 1 through 5 look at the contribution of each of the four main influences (religiosity, identity [both religious traditions as well charismatic affiliation], socialization, and social networks) independently on the volunteer measures. Model 6 combines

**TABLE 1**  
**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF CHURCHGOING PROTESTANTS (N = 1,738)**

| Characteristic                         | %     | Mean  | S. D. | Characteristic                    | %     | Mean  | S. D. |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| <u>Volunteered in the last 2 years</u> |       |       |       |                                   |       |       |       |
| Church-related (% Yes)                 | 75.7  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Non-church-related (%Yes)              | 55.9  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| General (either or both) (% Yes)       | 82.8  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| <u>Religiosity</u>                     |       |       |       | <u>Background Characteristics</u> |       |       |       |
| Importance of Faith                    | ----- | 3.56  | 0.58  | Female                            | 65.4  | ----- | ----- |
| Church Activities                      | ----- | 4.21  | 1.79  | Black                             | 17.7  | ----- | ----- |
| High Church Attendance                 | ----- | 2.10  | 0.76  | Education                         | ----- | 4.77  | 1.79  |
|  |       |       |       | Age                               | ----- | 47.59 | 16.54 |
|  |       |       |       | Income                            | ----- | 13.84 | 2.58  |
| <u>Religious Identity</u>              |       |       |       | Married (%Yes)                    | 70.5  | ----- | ----- |
| Fundamentalist Protestant              | 19.7  | ----- | ----- | Full Time Work (% Yes)            | 52.1  | ----- | ----- |
| Evangelical Protestant                 | 22.6  | ----- | ----- | Number of Children                | ----- | 2.18  | 1.63  |
| Mainline Protestant                    | 27.4  | ----- | ----- | Southern (% Yes)                  | 47.1  | ----- | ----- |
| Liberal Protestant                     | 18.1  | ----- | ----- | County Population                 | ----- | 4.56  | 1.16  |
| Other Protestant                       | 12.2  | ----- | ----- | Residential Stability             | ----- | 4.19  | 2.46  |
| Charismatic                            | 15.6  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| <u>Religious Socialization</u>         |       |       |       |                                   |       |       |       |
| Family's Importance of Faith           | ----- | 4.70  | 1.93  |                                   |       |       |       |
| Attend Christian school (% Yes)        | 14.3  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Attend Christian college (% Yes)       | 12.7  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| <u>Parents' Religious Identity</u>     |       |       |       |                                   |       |       |       |
| Fundamentalist Protestant              | 13.2  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Evangelical Protestant                 | 10.9  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Mainline Protestant                    | 37.0  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Liberal Protestant                     | 10.0  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Catholic                               | 6.3   | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Nonreligious                           | 8.4   | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Other                                  | 14.0  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| <u>Religious Social Networks</u>       |       |       |       |                                   |       |       |       |
| Child in Christian School (% Yes)      | 13.0  | ----- | ----- |                                   |       |       |       |
| Christian Family, Friends              | ----- | 3.04  | 0.85  |                                   |       |       |       |

all four influences together with background characteristics for their overall significance on the volunteering measures. Logistic regression techniques are used in all analyses.

### **Volunteering Through a Church Program**

Table 2 presents the findings of influences on church-related volunteering. We find that the most consistent and strong predictor in increasing the likelihood of church-related volunteering for churchgoing Protestants is church activity participation (Models 1 and 6). Among the religious identity measures, the “evangelical” and “other Protestant” (i.e. those who do not identify with the main Protestant traditions) labels show a significant influence. However, the former increases the likelihood of volunteering while the latter decreases it (Model 2). The “charismatic” identity appears to increase the likelihood of volunteering but this loses significance (as do all identity labels) in the full model (Models 3 and 6). Among the religious socialization variables the only significant predictor for church-related volunteering among churchgoing Protestants is the transmission of parents’ religious identity, specifically the “mainline” identity. It is interesting to note also that churchgoing Protestants whose parents’ religious identification is not of the major Protestant or Catholic religious traditions are the only ones who are less likely to volunteer relative to fundamentalists (Models 4 and 6). Interestingly, though not statistically significant, the



**TABLE 2**  
**ESTIMATED ODDS RATIOS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING CHURCHGOING PROTESTANTS'**  
**COMMUNITY VOLUNTARISM THROUGH A CHURCH PROGRAM**

| <b>Independent Variables</b>      | <b>Model 1</b> | <b>Model 2</b> | <b>Model 3</b> | <b>Model 4</b> | <b>Model 5</b> | <b>Model 6</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <u>Religiosity</u>                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| Importance of Faith               | 1.082          |                |                |                |                | 1.053          |
| Church Activities                 | 1.580***       |                |                |                |                | 1.571***       |
| High Church Attendance            | .909           |                |                |                |                | .925           |
| <u>Religious Identity</u>         |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| Liberal                           |                | .994           |                |                |                | 1.091          |
| Evangelical                       |                | 1.418*         |                |                |                | .991           |
| Mainline                          |                | 1.042          |                |                |                | .940           |
| Other Protestant                  |                | .655**         |                |                |                | .760           |
| Charismatic                       |                |                | 1.756**        |                |                | 1.441          |
| <u>Religious Socialization</u>    |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| Parents' Religious Identity       |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| Liberal                           |                |                |                | 1.466          |                | 1.652          |
| Evangelical                       |                |                |                | 1.323          |                | 1.080          |
| Mainline                          |                |                |                | 1.503*         |                | 1.612*         |
| Catholic                          |                |                |                | 1.214          |                | 1.214          |
| Nonreligious                      |                |                |                | 1.396          |                | 1.464          |
| Other                             |                |                |                | .817           |                | .880           |
| Family's Importance of Faith      |                |                |                | 1.062          |                | 1.048          |
| Attended Christian School         |                |                |                | 1.200          |                | 1.156          |
| Attended Christian College        |                |                |                | 1.464          |                | 1.233          |
| <u>Religious Social Networks</u>  |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| Child in Christian School         |                |                |                |                | .988           | .819           |
| Christian Family, Friends         |                |                |                |                | 1.214**        | 1.203*         |
| <u>Background Characteristics</u> |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| Female                            | 1.158          | 1.161          | 1.137          | 1.175          | 1.087          | 1.137          |
| Non-White                         | 1.139          | 1.257          | 1.185          | 1.290          | 1.225          | 1.215          |
| Education                         | 1.193***       | 1.199***       | 1.220***       | 1.166***       | 1.194***       | 1.132**        |
| Age                               | .997           | .997           | .998           | .997           | .996           | .996           |
| Income                            | 1.113***       | 1.086**        | 1.090**        | 1.077*         | 1.080**        | 1.107***       |
| Married                           | 1.193          | 1.218          | 1.227          | 1.288          | 1.259          | 1.284          |
| Full Time Work                    | 1.085          | 1.045          | 1.034          | 1.051          | 1.068          | 1.133          |
| Number of Children                | 1.034          | 1.071          | 1.070          | 1.068          | 1.078          | 1.043          |
| South                             | .943           | 1.033          | 1.000          | .978           | .990           | .941           |
| County Population                 | .872*          | .900*          | .904           | .896           | .910           | .872*          |
| Residential Stability             | 1.049          | 1.067**        | 1.067**        | 1.070**        | 1.057*         | 1.044          |
| Intercept                         | -2.248***      | -.277          | -.029          | 1.425          | -.741          | -.966          |
| -2 Log L                          | 1625.02***     | 1799.26***     | 1803.13***     | 1781.04***     | 1784.40***     | 1572.31***     |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>             | .487           | .511           | .512           | .510           | .512           | .482           |
| N                                 | 1709           | 1720           | 1720           | 1713           | 1704           | 1687           |

NOTE: \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001.

transmission of this identity decreases the likelihood of church-related volunteering. Lastly, among the measures for religious social networks only the number of Christian family and friends reported by the individual significantly increased the odds of church-related volunteering (Models 5 and 6).

Among background characteristics, education and income consistently increase the likelihood of church-related volunteering for churchgoing Protestants. Residential stability also increases the likelihood of volunteering but interestingly, it loses significance in the models which include church activity participation (Models 1 and 6). And contrary to previous research, larger county population size decreases the likelihood of church-related volunteering for churchgoing Protestants;

**TABLE 3**  
**ESTIMATED ODDS RATIOS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING CHURCHGOING PROTESTANTS'**  
**COMMUNITY VOLUNTARISM THROUGH A NON-CHURCH ORGANIZATION**

| Independent Variables             | Model 1    | Model 2    | Model 3    | Model 4    | Model 5    | Model 6    |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <u>Religiosity</u>                |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Importance of Faith               | .853       |            |            |            |            | .829       |
| Church Activities                 | 1.211***   |            |            |            |            | 1.204***   |
| High Church Attendance            | .682***    |            |            |            |            | .685***    |
| <u>Religious Identity</u>         |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Liberal                           |            | 1.269      |            |            |            | 1.077      |
| Evangelical                       |            | 1.241      |            |            |            | 1.340      |
| Mainline                          |            | 1.160      |            |            |            | .939       |
| Other Protestant                  |            | .848       |            |            |            | .823       |
| Charismatic                       |            |            | .887       |            |            | .890       |
| <u>Religious Socialization</u>    |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Parents' Religious Identity       |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Liberal                           |            |            |            | 1.439      |            | 1.372      |
| Evangelical                       |            |            |            | .923       |            | .741       |
| Mainline                          |            |            |            | 1.266      |            | 1.251      |
| Catholic                          |            |            |            | 1.088      |            | 1.032      |
| Nonreligious                      |            |            |            | 1.354      |            | 1.419      |
| Other                             |            |            |            | .850       |            | .851       |
| Family's Importance of Faith      |            |            |            | 1.058      |            | 1.074*     |
| Attended Christian School         |            |            |            | .926       |            | .941       |
| Attended Christian College        |            |            |            | 1.092      |            | 1.072      |
| <u>Religious Social Networks</u>  |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Child in Christian School         |            |            |            |            | .853       | .905       |
| Christian Family, Friends         |            |            |            |            | 1.069      | 1.053      |
| <u>Background Characteristics</u> |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Female                            | 1.197      | 1.128      | 1.128      | 1.135      | 1.104      | 1.201      |
| Non-White                         | 1.018      | 1.051      | 1.052      | 1.057      | 1.060      | 1.036      |
| Education                         | 1.241***   | 1.249***   | 1.260***   | 1.244***   | 1.261***   | 1.218***   |
| Age                               | .998       | .997       | .997       | .997       | .997       | .997       |
| Income                            | 1.122***   | 1.120***   | 1.120***   | 1.114***   | 1.119***   | 1.117***   |
| Married                           | .960       | .912       | .909       | .946       | .908       | .991       |
| Full Time Work                    | .831       | .787*      | .785*      | .772*      | .806       | .846       |
| Number of Children                | 1.043      | 1.047      | 1.051      | 1.042      | 1.057      | 1.037      |
| South                             | .975       | .970       | .949       | .932       | .961       | .988       |
| County Population                 | .861**     | .875**     | .877**     | .874**     | .880**     | .860**     |
| Residential Stability             | 1.033      | 1.036      | 1.037      | 1.035      | 1.037      | 1.034      |
| Intercept                         | -1.246*    | -1.611**   | -2.118***  | -1.461     | -2.341***  | -1.112     |
| -2 Log L                          | 2183.17*** | 2233.94*** | 2239.92*** | 2218.93*** | 2214.12*** | 2131.85*** |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>             | .561       | .565       | .566       | .564       | .565       | .558       |
| N                                 | 1710       | 1721       | 1721       | 1714       | 1705       | 1688       |

NOTE: \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001.

however it is only significant with the inclusion of religiosity measures and/or religious identity measures (Models 1, 2, and 6).

### Volunteering Through a Non-Church Program

Table 3 presents the influences on non-church-related volunteering, and here we find some striking differences. Beginning with religiosity, church activity participation is both the most consistent and the strongest religious predictor of the increased likelihood of non-church-related

**TABLE 4**  
**ESTIMATED ODDS RATIOS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING CHURCHGOING PROTESTANTS'**  
**GENERAL COMMUNITY VOLUNTARISM**

| Independent Variables             | Model 1    | Model 2     | Model 3    | Model 4    | Model 5    | Model 6    |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <u>Religiosity</u>                |            |             |            |            |            |            |
| Importance of Faith               | .861       |             |            |            |            | .819       |
| Church Activities                 | 1.486***   |             |            |            |            | 1.483***   |
| High Church Attendance            | .859       |             |            |            |            | .849       |
| <u>Religious Identity</u>         |            |             |            |            |            |            |
| Liberal                           |            | 1.132       |            |            |            | 1.038      |
| Evangelical                       |            | 1.622*      |            |            |            | 1.436      |
| Mainline                          |            | 1.165       |            |            |            | .917       |
| Other Protestant                  |            | .790        |            |            |            | 1.039      |
| Charismatic                       |            |             | 1.891**    |            |            | 1.668*     |
| <u>Religious Socialization</u>    |            |             |            |            |            |            |
| Parents' Religious Identity       |            |             |            |            |            |            |
| Liberal                           |            |             |            | 1.898*     |            | 2.038*     |
| Evangelical                       |            |             |            | 1.062      |            | .692       |
| Mainline                          |            |             |            | 1.406      |            | 1.437      |
| Catholic                          |            |             |            | 1.051      |            | .946       |
| Nonreligious                      |            |             |            | .997       |            | 1.018      |
| Other                             |            |             |            | .663       |            | .594       |
| Family's Importance of Faith      |            |             |            | 1.045      |            | 1.049      |
| Attended Christian School         |            |             |            | 1.171      |            | 1.124      |
| Attended Christian College        |            |             |            | 1.378      |            | 1.223      |
| <u>Religious Social Networks</u>  |            |             |            |            |            |            |
| Child in Christian School         |            |             |            |            | .918       | .815       |
| Christian Family, Friends         |            |             |            |            | 1.269**    | 1.284**    |
| <u>Background Characteristics</u> |            |             |            |            |            |            |
| Female                            | 1.023      | .980        | .967       | 1.019      | .927       | 1.004      |
| Non-White                         | 1.164      | 1.245       | 1.180      | 1.309      | 1.229      | 1.285      |
| Education                         | 1.257***   | 1.255***    | 1.280***   | 1.223***   | 1.246***   | 1.177**    |
| Age                               | .998       | .997        | .999       | .997       | .996       | .996       |
| Income                            | 1.129***   | 1.109**     | 1.113**    | 1.095**    | 1.103**    | 1.126***   |
| Married                           | 1.240      | 1.201       | 1.203      | 1.347      | 1.230      | 1.352      |
| Full Time Work                    | 1.064      | 1.009       | .996       | .987       | 1.055      | 1.103      |
| Number of Children                | 1.079      | 1.107*      | 1.108*     | 1.098*     | 1.120*     | 1.084      |
| South                             | .941       | .983        | .946       | .922       | .935       | .947       |
| County Population                 | .877*      | .901        | .904       | .893       | .910       | .880       |
| Residential Stability             | 1.054      | 1.071*      | 1.070*     | 1.071*     | 1.063*     | 1.052      |
| Intercept                         | -1.238     | -.074       | -.219      | .699       | -1.152     | -.536      |
| -2 Log L                          | 1376.17*** | 1475.488*** | 1476.22*** | 1451.82*** | 1459.55*** | 1313.00*** |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>             | .446       | .461        | .461       | .458       | .461       | .437       |
| N                                 | 1712       | 1723        | 1723       | 1716       | 1707       | 1690       |

NOTE: \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001.

volunteering for churchgoing Protestants. Conversely, high levels of church attendance actually reduces the odds of this form of civic participation (Models 1 and 6). Identification with major religious labels appears to increase the odds of non-church-related volunteering (relative to fundamentalists) while those who adhere to a non-major Protestant tradition are less likely to volunteer. The "charismatic" label interestingly decreases the likelihood of non-church-related volunteering, but this too is non-significant (Models 3 and 6). Among religious socialization measures, only the "family's importance of faith" was significant in increasing the odds of non-church-related volunteering for churchgoing Protestants. This appears, however, only in the full

model (Model 6). Finally, religious social networks do not appear to contribute to this form of civic participation for churchgoing Protestants (Models 5 and 6).

With regard to background factors, education and income continue to have a positive effect on the likelihood of volunteering. However, full time work status significantly decreases the odds of non-church-related volunteering when religious identity and religious socialization measures are introduced. County population also lowers the likelihood of volunteering and this finding is consistent across all models. Residential stability, while a significant positive influence for church-related volunteering continues to follow in the predicted direction, but is no longer statistically significant. Lastly, the higher values in the Pseudo  $R^2$  suggest that these measures explain this form of civic participation for churchgoing Protestants relatively better than church-related volunteering.

### **General Volunteering**

Table 4 presents the influences on overall volunteering behavior whether church-related or non-church-related. Among the religiosity measures, only church activity participation produces a significant and positive effect on the odds likelihood of churchgoing Protestant volunteering (Models 1 and 6). Religious identity measures suggest that the “evangelical” label is the only significant identity which increases the likelihood of volunteering, relative to those identify with the “fundamentalist” label. This distinction, however, disappears in the final model (Models 3 and 6). Identification with the “charismatic” label also increases the likelihood of volunteering and this remains consistent in the full model (Models 3 and 6). The religious socialization measures now reveal some surprising results. Churchgoing Protestants whose parents adopted the label “theologically-liberal” were significantly more likely to volunteer in general relative to those whose parents were identified as fundamentalists. And though not significant statistically, churchgoing Protestants whose parents did not claim any of the main traditions available (i.e. those in the “other” category) or who were nonreligious were less likely to volunteer overall (again relative to fundamentalists). But the same was also true of those whose parents were of “evangelical” and “mainline” traditions in the full model (Models 4 and 6). Finally, with religious social network measures, as with church-related volunteering, the number of Christian family and friends reported by the churchgoing Protestant increases the likelihood of volunteering.

Among the background factors, education and income continue their role as measures which increase the odds of volunteering for churchgoing Protestants. Full time work status fails to be a significant measure unlike its effects on non-church-related volunteering. However, the number of children in the respondent’s household, and residential stability both have a significant effect in increasing the likelihood of volunteering except when religiosity measures are included (Models 1 and 6). County population significantly decreases the likelihood of general volunteering only with the sole addition of religiosity measures (Model 2). Lastly the measures used in this analysis appear to account for less of the Pseudo  $R^2$  values than in the previous tests.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

A few themes in these findings merit discussion. One theme is community insularity. It appears that a committed and religiously active group of churchgoing Protestants under discussion are either unaffected or in some cases discouraged from volunteering by their existing religious capital. Thus, we find no support for Hypothesis 1 and contrary evidence for Hypothesis 2. Taken from another angle we can see insularity where some religious and social capital measures (i.e. high church attendance, county population size, and full time work status) more often inhibits the likelihood of non-church-related volunteering as opposed to church-related volunteering. Conversely, another theme appears as well: the empowering nature of religious community life. Nothing bears this out better than church activity participation. Churchgoing Protestants who

participate in church activities very frequently are more likely to volunteer in their local communities. Again differences appear between church and non-church-related volunteering, but the positive role that church activities plays in both forms of volunteering supports the idea that religious community matters a great deal and yet empowers churchgoers to help out in their neighborhoods. The same case can be made (although to a lesser degree) for the influence of having many Christian family and friends. As a form of religious capital, it increases the likelihood of volunteering both generally and in church-related programs, but bears no significance on non-church-related volunteering. Additionally residential stability appears to act as an empowering form of social capital particularly in the absence of church activity participation, but this too is not relevant with regard to non-church-related volunteering. To a lesser extent the same holds true for the number of children in the household of the churchgoing Protestant; only in the case of church-related volunteering does the presence of children have a significant and positive effect in the absence of church activity participation.

The lack of findings regarding the religious identity labels may not necessarily point to an insignificant effect of these traditions on civic participation. Rather, within an active group of churchgoing Protestants, these broad religious traditions may not have as great an impact on local volunteering practices, even in comparison to the fundamentalist tradition which is least known for its civic engagement. The increased likelihood of church-related and general volunteering through identification with the evangelical label may add further support to the distinctive and empowering nature of the evangelical subculture compared to fundamentalists. In partially supporting our hypothesis, the "charismatic" label does appear to have an empowering effect similar to the frequency of Christian family and friends, where both are nonsignificant factors only in non-church-related volunteering. The mixed results for religious socialization deserve some comment. Contrary to our expectations those churchgoing Protestants who were raised in various religious traditions did not vary all that considerably compared to those from fundamentalist homes. However, it seems that those with theologically-liberal backgrounds seem to employ a fairly even amount of church and non-church related public service such that they are distinctive only in general levels of volunteering. The significance of the mainline family religious background may be due more to the large proportion of churchgoing Protestants from that background than anything else. And much like religious identity, those who were raised in homes that are not of any major religious tradition are at least less likely to volunteer than the most separatist religious tradition. Finally, while there is a lack of statistical significance in the role of faith in one's family of origin (except in one model) as well as religious education these factors do at least follow the predicted positive direction (also with minor exception). Taken as a whole, deeper involvement in religious circles<sup>6</sup> and greater levels of affluence and knowledge beget more, yet specifically religious, charitable behavior toward others. This may be indicative of a greater sense of civic responsibility in this religious subculture.

Clearly this study is only one part of a larger puzzle in unraveling the sources of religious influence on volunteering, and more research will be needed to gauge the efficacy of these measures. Multiple religious target populations (e.g. Catholics, nominal believers of various religious traditions, and new ethnic immigrant churches) should be examined using some of the aforementioned variables and constructs. Additional measures such as participation in parachurch organizations or small group participation could also be included for an improved comprehensive look at the role of religion in volunteering (Wuthnow 1988, 1994). If indeed there is a decline in social capital (Putnam 1995) or an increase in individualism occurring in American culture (Bellah et al. 1985), it would be vital to understand how much group association remains and whether they influence one's voluntary behavior and attitude. We hope that this study of churchgoing Protestant volunteering behavior provides more evidence for the importance of religious community as a useful social resource.

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### NOTES

1. Political activism and charitable giving, though closely related to volunteering, as other forms of civic participation will be bracketed from our analysis to avoid misinterpretation and inappropriate generalization.
2. By church activities we refer to intrachurch participation as understood in the survey question: "How often do you go to church activities other than your Sunday morning worship service, such as potlucks, Bible studies, choir practice, small groups, etc." We recognize the strong possibility that church-related voluntarism may overlap with church activity participation, but we argue that these two items will tap different experiences in the minds of the respondents by virtue of the phrasing of the question. The church activities question as seen above is more internal in orientation, whereas the church-related volunteering question is more external: "...Volunteered for a church program that serves the local community." While it is possible for one to interpret "local community" as one's "church community" (thus both questions essentially ask for the same behavior), we argue that this may be a more rare exception. Therefore, we contend that the church activity participation will be causally related to church-related volunteering in the way of religious capital that produces the valued commodity of voluntarism.
3. Examination of the correlation matrix among all independent variables (both religious and non-religious) revealed no strong relationships that may suggest collinearity in the analysis. The strongest correlation value was .444 between the variables income and education level. Most independent variables also showed weak and nonsignificant relationships with correlation values usually less than .010.
4. Though our study refers to the volunteering behavior of churchgoing Protestants, several citations in the literature will be oriented towards the volunteering behavior of Catholics for much research pertaining to religion and volunteering has been focused on this religious population. Volunteering among Catholics may provide some analogy for research pertaining to Protestants given their shared basic Christian theology.
5. The income variable used for this analysis was noted to have about 10 percent missing values. To preserve the responses, the missing values were handled in the following manner: missing values on income are estimated by first regressing income on age, sex, education, marital status, racial categories, work status of the respondent and spouse, subjective assessment of change in financial health, county population, and occupational categories (Adjusted R-square: .47). We used the resulting coefficient estimates to predict the income of respondents who did not report their income.
6. The strong predictive power of church activity participation on volunteering found in this study resembles very closely Wuthnow's finding that small group participation was the strongest predictor of community voluntarism (1994). Not surprisingly, small group participation is probably one of the many elements that churchgoing Protestants include in their conceptualization of church activity.

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