Contemporary Issues in Criminological Theory and Research

The Role of Social Institutions

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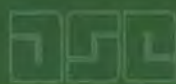

Richard Rosenfeld
Kenna Quinet
Crystal Garcia

CRIME AND RELIGION: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE FAITH FACTOR

BYRON R. JOHNSON
SUNG JOON JANG

ABSTRACT

The paper traces the role of religion in contemporary criminology as well as reviewing the development of scholarly interest in religion within the field of criminology. We begin with a systematic review of 270 published studies to better understand the state of the literature examining the relationship between religion and crime. Our systematic review provides support for the notion that religious involvement is a relevant protective and prosocial factor. We then discuss how various dimensions of religiousness may explain crime and delinquency (directly and indirectly) and contribute to criminological theories and research. Additionally, we offer several potentially fruitful avenues for research examining the efficacy of the "faith factor" in both reducing crime and promoting prosocial behavior. We conclude with methodological and theoretical recommendations designed to assist scholars interested in research on the role of religion within criminology as well as prosocial studies more generally.

Over the last five decades there has been growing interest in the nature of the relationship between religion and crime. In general, researchers have sought to determine if being more or less religious has anything to do with why people do or do not break the law. Scholars from diverse disciplines, including criminologists, interested in this line of inquiry have sought to test hypotheses, and cumulated research provides empirical insights to this important question.

Criminologists should be interested in religion not only because it may be useful in explaining why people do or do not commit crime, but because religion may be helpful in understanding why people engage in prosocial activities – something criminologists have generally tended to ignore. We argue it is important to understand how religiousness keeps individuals from engaging in criminal behavior, but also significant is isolating the effects, if any, of faith-motivated individuals, groups and organizations in fostering prosocial activities because prosocial behaviors decrease the probability of antisocial behaviors including crime.

As one considers the possible linkages between religion and prosocial activities as well as crime, many important questions in need of serious research come to mind: How might spiritual interventions or

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transformative experiences play a pivotal role as "turning points" in helping offenders reverse a history of antisocial behaviors to one characterized by prosocial actions? Based on evaluation research, what do we know about the effectiveness of faith-based prison programs in reducing recidivism of ex-prisoners? What are the similarities and differences between processes and outcomes associated with offender rehabilitation on the one hand, and spiritual transformation on the other? To what extent do religious congregations and faith-based organizations have the capacity to become serious allies in confronting problems like prisoner reentry and aftercare? Providing answers to these questions may prove meaningful not only for advancing criminological theory, but in practical ways for the field of criminal justice and crime-related policies.

A BRIEF HISTORY: RELIGION WITHIN CRIMINOLOGY

Contemporary research on the religion-crime relationship is often traced to Travis Hirschi and Rodney Starks's (1969) important study entitled *Hellfire and Delinquency*. Their primary finding was that religious commitment among youth was not related to measures of delinquency. To their surprise, the study created quite a stir in the academic community, and became the subject of considerable debate and speculation.[1] The "hellfire" study, as it was referred to by some, became the catalyst for new research on religion and crime, and a number of scholars sought to quickly replicate the study. Those replications both supported and refuted the original finding (Albrecht, Chadwick, & Alcorn, 1977; Burkett & White, 1974; Higgins & Albrecht, 1977; Jensen & Erickson, 1979). After a series of studies over a decade or so, the question of whether religion helped reduce delinquency among youth was still very much in question

Later, Stark and his colleagues returned to the issue and suggested that the contradictory findings were likely the result of the "moral" makeup of the community being studied. That is to say, areas with high church membership and attendance rates represented "moral communities," while areas with low church membership typified more "secularized communities" (Stark, Kent, & Doyle, 1982). Stark's hypothesis predicted religion would successfully deter delinquency in moral communities only. Conversely, little or no effect of religiosity would be expected for individuals residing in largely secularized communities. This moral communities thesis provided an important theoretical framework for understanding why some studies of delinquency yielded an inverse relationship between religious commitment and delinquency, and other studies failed to generate such inverse relationship (Stark, 1996; Stark et al., 1982). Though the moral communities thesis remains a perspective of interest, scholars have approached the religion-crime nexus from a number of different methodological as well as theoretical perspectives and by doing so have helped to clarify the role of religion.

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One of the first studies to shed new light on the religion-crime relationship was conducted by an economist. Richard Freeman's (1986) study was particularly helpful in placing attention on one of the factors that helped at-risk teens become "resilient youth" – kids who stay out of trouble in spite of residing in disadvantaged environments. Analyzing data on black, male youth living in poverty tracts in Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago, Freeman found church-attending youth were significantly less likely to engage in a series of illegal behaviors than youth who did not attend church. Additionally, Freeman found that frequent church attendance was also associated with improved academic performance as well as positive employment indicators.

More than a decade later, focusing on crime, we replicated Freeman's study and found evidence consistent with Freeman's original conclusions (Johnson, Larson, Li, & Jang, 2000). That is, we found the frequency of attending religious services to be inversely related to the likelihood that disadvantaged youth would commit illegal activities, use drugs, and be involved in drug selling. Specifically, the probability of committing a non-drug crime was 39 percent smaller for youth who attended church more than once a week compared to youth who did not attend, and the difference for drug use was found to be 46 percent. Finally, the probability of youth selling drugs was 57 percent smaller among regular church-attendees than non-attendees (Johnson & Siegel, 2002).

In a subsequent study, we analyzed the fifth wave of the National Youth Survey (NYS) data, focusing on black youths given the historical as well as contemporary significance of the African-American church for black Americans. An individual's religious involvement was found not only to mediate but also buffer the effects of neighborhood disorder on crime and, in particular, serious crime (Johnson, Jang, Li, & Larson, 2000). We extended this line of research to estimate a multilevel model of illicit drug use, using the NYS' first five waves of data (Jang & Johnson, 2001). First, we found that religiosity has a significant effect on illicit drug use, controlling for social bonding and social learning variables that partly mediate the effects. Second, cross-level interactions were found to be significant, indicating religiosity buffering the effects of neighborhood disorder on illicit drug use. Stated differently, religious teenagers from low-income families are less likely to use illicit drugs than otherwise comparable teenagers living in the same high-poverty neighborhoods. Finally, the age-varying effect of religiosity on illicit drug use was found to become stronger throughout adolescence. While most previous studies, including ours, have focused on samples of juveniles, research on adult samples also shows the same general pattern – religion is associated with reductions in criminal activity (e.g., Evans, Cullen, Dunaway, & Burton, 1995)

Finally, in a systematic review of 40 studies that focus on the relationship between religion and delinquency, Johnson, Li, Larson, and McCullough (2000) found that most of these studies reported an inverse relationship between measures of religiosity and delinquency. Several studies found no relationship or were inconclusive and only one found a

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positive link between religiosity and delinquency. Interestingly, the more sophisticated research design and methodology, the more likely it was they reported an inverse relationship between the two. In a meta-analysis, Baier and Wright (2001) reviewed 60 studies within the religiosity-delinquency literature and reached much the same conclusion as Johnson, Li, et al. (2000). That is, they found studies using larger and more representative datasets to be more likely to report expected inverse effects than studies that utilized smaller, regional, or non-probability samples. These initial reviews were helpful in demonstrating that the contemporary religion-crime literature was not nearly as ambiguous or unsettled as previous researchers had often suggested.

Religion and Crime: An Updated State of the Field

In this paper we report the most comprehensive assessment of the religion-crime literature to date by reviewing 270 studies published between 1944 and 2010. In our systematic review, as can been seen in Appendix A, we examined the type of study (e.g., cross-sectional, prospective cohort, retrospective, experimental, case control, or descriptive), the sampling method (e.g., random or population-based, systematic sampling, or convenience/purposive sample), the number of subjects in the sample population (e.g., children, adolescents, high school students, college students, or adults), location, religious variables included in the analysis (e.g., religious attendance, scripture study, subjective religiosity, religious commitment, religious belief, or religious experience), controls, and findings (e.g., no association, mixed evidence, beneficial association, or harmful association).

The results of this current review confirm that the vast majority of the studies report prosocial effects of religion and religious involvement on various measures of crime and delinquency. Approximately 90 percent of the studies (244 of 270) find an inverse or beneficial relationship between religion and some measure of crime or delinquency. Only 9 percent of the studies (24 of 270) found no association or reported mixed findings, whereas only two studies found that religion was positively associated with a harmful outcome.[2]

Researchers over the last several decades have made steady contributions to this emerging religiosity-crime literature, and yet, until recently, there was a lack of consensus about the nature of this relationship between religion and crime. Stated differently, in studies utilizing vastly different methods, samples, and research designs, increasing religiosity is consistently linked with decreases in various measures of crime or delinquency. These findings are particularly pronounced among the more methodologically and statistically sophisticated studies that rely upon nationally representative samples. We find religion to be a robust variable that tends to be associated with the lowered likelihood of crime or delinquency. Also, the vast majority of studies document the importance of

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religious influences in protecting youth from harmful outcomes as well as promoting beneficial and prosocial outcomes. The weight of this evidence is especially important in light of the fact that religion has been the "forgotten factor" among many researchers and research initiatives.

However, our updated review of the extant literature identifies major deficit in two research areas. One concerns a lack of a developmental approach to study the religion-crime relationship. Despite the increasing significance of the life-course perspective in criminology, previous research on religion and crime continues to be mostly non-developmental. For example, we know little about a long-term influence of childhood involvement in religion on adolescent and adult criminality as well as religiosity and few studies have examined reciprocal relationships between religion and crime over time (but see Jang, Bader, & Johnson, 2008). Also, we need to learn more about the relevance of religion to desistance research, like potential "turning point" effects stemming from religious conversions or spiritual transformations among offenders, for which we have preliminary evidence (but see Clear & Sumter, 2002; Kerley, Allison, & Graham, 2006; Kerley & Copes, 2009; Giordano, Longmore, Schroeder, & Seffrin, 2008; Johnson, 2003, 2004).

A second area that requires more research is the subject of resiliency given that the potential linkages between resilient and prosocial behavior are clearly understudied. For example, we know that youth living in disorganized communities, are at particular risk for a number of problem behaviors including crime and drug use. However, we also know that youth from disorganized communities who participate in religious activities are less likely to be involved in deviant activities. These findings suggest religiously committed youth are "resilient" to the negative consequences of living in communities typified by disadvantage, but we do not have sufficient research to answer why this might be the case. Perhaps religious involvement may provide networks of support that help adolescents internalize values that encourage behavior that emphasizes concern for others' welfare. Such processes may contribute to the acquisition of positive attributes that give adolescents a greater sense of empathy toward others, which in turn makes them less likely to commit acts that harm others. Similarly, as indicated above, once individuals become involved in deviant behavior, it is possible that participation in specific kinds of religious activity can help steer them back to a course of less deviant behavior and, more important, away from potential career criminal paths.

MICRO-CRIMINOLOGY OF RELIGION

Our systematic review focused on micro- or individual-level research because theoretical explanations of the influence of religion on crime have been predominantly social psychological. This orientation may be partly due to the intellectual climate within criminology at the time research interest in religion was ignited by Hirschi and Stark's (1969) hellfire study.

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Religion had been primarily viewed as a social psychological phenomenon since the opening days of the classical school of criminology. For example, Bentham (1970 [1789]) recognized the constraining influence of religion on human behavior, and Beccaria (2008 [1764]) discussed potential limitations of religious influence due not only to the perceived delay of divine punishment but also deceitful intent on the part of the "wicked" who abuse religion to rationalize their deviance. While their discussions of religion were limited, "it was common in the classical tradition to note that ... religious sanctions are a potentially powerful influence on behavior" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 7).

On the other hand, the positivist school of criminology "eschewed religious influence on behavior" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 7). For example, Lombroso (2006 [1876]), who rarely mentioned religion throughout the entire five editions of his book, *Criminal Man*, suggested no relationship between religion and crime. If there were one, he implied it would be a positive association, though likely to be spurious due to higher levels of education among atheists than religionists in Europe at that time. However, based on the contributions of early social theorists, and especially Durkheim (1981 [1912]; 1984 [1893]) the concept of religion as something eminently "social" and a source of group solidarity resonated with scholars. As a result of these influences, modern criminology applied various micro-criminological theories to explain potential intervening mechanisms between an individual's religiosity and crime (Baier & Wright, 2001). For example, many of the contemporary criminological theories being studied are based primarily on concepts of deterrence/rational choice, social bonding, differential association/social learning, and, more recently, self-control and strain (Agnew, 2006; Akers, 1998; Cornish & Clarke, 1986; Gibbs, 1986; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969; Sutherland & Cressey, 1970 [1924]).

While none of these theories focus on religion as a key cause or correlate of crime, they all offer explanations of the religion-crime relationship by identifying processes, by which religiosity is expected to decrease the probability of crime. Specifically, religious individuals are less likely to commit crime than their less religious counterparts (Nye, 1958) because they are more likely to: (1) *fear* supernatural sanctions[3] as well as this temporal criminal punishment and feel *shame* and *embarrassment* associated with deviance; (2) be bonded to conventional society in terms of *attachment, commitment, involvement,* and *beliefs*; (3) exercise high *self-control* attributable to effective child-rearing by their parents likely to be also religious; (4) have frequent and intimate *associations* with peers who *reinforce* conventional *definitions* and behaviors and become a model for *imitation* relative to those who do not; and (5) cope with life's *strains* or stressors and their resultant *negative emotions* in a legitimate, non-deviant manner. Thus, individual religiosity is expected to be negatively associated with crime.

Empirical research tends to show these intervening variables help explain the religion-crime relationship, and more often than not the

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estimated effect of religion remains significant after controlling for explanatory variables (e.g., Johnson, Jang, Larson, & Li, 2001). This unexplained, "direct" effect of religion should be further explained by novel concepts and new measures. In fact, such conceptual and operational improvement should be made for religion and crime as well as their explanatory variables given that the explanation's validity and reliability depend on the substantive and measurement quality not only of the mediators but also the independent and dependent variables. For example, the multidimensional concept of religiosity requires a use of multiple indicators tapping different aspects of religious involvement for content validity (e.g., Levin, Taylor, & Chatters, 1995), and given the abstract nature of religion, whenever possible, latent-variable modeling needs to be applied to study the religion-crime relationship (e.g., Jang & Johnson, 2005; Johnson et al., 2001).

In addition, criminologists need to broaden the scope of their explanatory models by taking into account intrinsically religious explanations as well as those criminologists have been using. For example, various types of *religious coping*, such as spiritual coping and religious reframing, are likely to offer a new explanation of why strained but religious individuals are less likely to turn to crime in response to life's adversity than their equally strained but non- or less religious peers (Pargament, 1997). In fact, religious coping might be harmful as well as helpful and thus be useful explaining possible linkages between religion and increases in crime or deviance. Another example is the concept of *forgiveness*, a concept highly encouraged by most world religions (McCullough, Pargament, & Thorensen, 2000). Like religious coping, the forgiveness concept can easily be incorporated into Agnew's (2006) general strain theory framework to explain how an individual's religiosity decreases the likelihood of his or her engaging in a vengeful act in reaction to some of most criminogenic types of strains, like racial discrimination and violent victimization (Agnew, 2006).

On the other hand, some researchers looking for explanations of the empirical association between religion and crime are interested in variables that help explain *away* the observed relationship. A good example is Ellis' (1987) arousal theory, which posits delinquents are neurologically predisposed to criminality in that their under-aroused nervous system causes them to be unusually prone to seek intense stimulation from their environment through various activities, including delinquency. In addition, those with suboptimal arousal tendencies (a general tendency to get bored) are less likely to be voluntarily religious because they would find religious activities (e.g., church service) boring and failing to satisfy their arousal need. Thus, Ellis hypothesizes the religion-crime relationship is "coincidental (spurious), not causal" (p. 225). Ellis' own test and another study found support for the hypothesis (Cochran, Wood, & Arnelklev, 1994; Ellis & Thompson, 1989), but their findings tend to be plagued by measurement issues. Specifically, their measures of the neurological concept (i.e., arousal) are non-neurological proxies, and have less face-

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validity than claimed.[4] Regardless, research on spurious explanations of the crime-religion relationship is important as well to avoid model misspecification in criminological research on religion.

Religion in Macro-Criminology

The number of micro-criminological studies on religion far exceeds that of their aggregate-level counterparts, but contributions made by macro-criminology to the study of religion and crime are substantively no less significant. First, although the original social disorganization theory paid little attention to the role of local religious institutions (Shaw & McKay, 1942), its revised systemic theory recognizes religion as a potential source of community control. According to Bursik and Grasmick (1993), local religious congregations represent a community organization that provides, in Hunter's (1985) term, the "parochial" level of social control (grounded in the local interpersonal networks and institutions, such as stores, schools, churches, and voluntary organizations) operating between the "private" (based on the intimate primary groups) and "public" (a community's ability to secure public goods and services available outside the community) levels of control. Similarly, Sampson and Wilson (1995, p. 51) implied the black church may not only play a role as an agency of informal social control but also provide an opportunity to have "contact or sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society." However, social disorganization researchers have generally failed to put these propositions to an empirical test (Johnson, Larson, et al., 2000, p. 480).

Another macro-level explanation of the religious influence on crime is the "moral communities" thesis, which Stark (1996) offered as a way to make sense of his own micro-level, null finding regarding the religion-crime relationship (Hirschi & Stark, 1969). Based on an alternative assumption that religion as context is a social structure (or a group property) rather than an individual trait (e.g., beliefs and practices), Stark (1996, p. 164) posits the negative association between religion and crime depends on aggregate-level religiosity, such as "the *proportion* of persons in a given ecological setting who are actively religious." Stark proposed a paradigm shift from a micro to macro perspective and thus a new research question on religion. His thesis, however, was not intended to replace or even reject a micro-criminology of religion. For Stark, individual religiosity is still a necessary, though not sufficient, condition: "... what counts is ... whether [individual] religiousness is or is not ratified by the social environment" (Stark & Bainbridge, 1996, p. 72). Consistent with this interpretation, the moral communities thesis has been tested not only at the macro-level, but also the multi-level context. An example of the latter is a study conducted by a sociologist of religion, Mark Regnerus (2003).

Using school- and county-level as well as individual-level variables drawn from the Add Health data, Regnerus operationalized the concept of religion as context by employing not only Stark's suggested approach, but

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also by measuring "religious homogeneity" (i.e., the extent to which community residents adhere to a single religion or to a small number of faiths) to expand the original thesis. Specifically, Regnerus hypothesized religiously homogeneous places are more likely to be moral communities than those with a generic religiosity or religious adherence.[5] Interestingly, the notion of religious homogeneity parallels social disorganization theory, which postulates community crime rates are partly a function of community heterogeneity. In fact, Regnerus (2003, p. 524) correctly points out "social disorganization's ambivalence about religion as a key socializing and social control institution and its reticence in identifying religion as an important type of cultural influence" on crime.

A group of macro-criminologists have made a similar observation, pointing out a gap in the social disorganization literature: that is, a lack of interest in religion as a local social institution (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004; Lee, 2006, 2008; Lee & Thomas, 2010). While examining Stark's moral communities thesis in their models of violent crime in rural areas, Lee and his associates focus on their civic community concept based on the "civic engagement" thesis (Putnam, 2000; Tolbert, Lyson, & Irwin, 1998). According to the civic community/engagement thesis, local civic institutions are essential to community social control, a key concept of social disorganization theory, because they facilitate civic engagement: that is, participation in locally based social and civic activities, such as voting, organizing church-based charity events, participating in neighborhood associations, and joining hobby or recreational clubs. Active civic engagement, in turn, generates social capital by fostering social ties and network multiplexity and density (Krohn, 1986), promoting mutual trust and civility, and developing shared community norms and values. These factors, of course, are important for community stability as well as well-being and tend to be related to reductions in community crime rates (e.g., Rosenfeld, Messner, & Baumer, 2001).

From the civic community perspective, religious institutions are fundamental to civic engagement in America because of their ubiquity and widespread religiosity among Americans (Lee, 2008; Lee & Thomas, 2010). For example, Baylor Religion Surveys conducted by the Gallup organization in 2005 (n = 1,721) and 2007 (n = 1,648) reveal: (1) about 85 percent of contemporary American adults identified themselves with a particular religion, Judeo-Christian religion 95 times out of 100; (2) 75 to 81 percent surveyed said they believed in God with "no doubts" (63 to 67 percent) or "a higher power or cosmic force" (12 to 14 percent); and (3) about a third (36 to 38 percent) reported they attended religious services "about weekly" or more often.[6] Thus, "the civic community perspective places much more emphasis on religious institutions and religious aspects of community organization" (Lee & Thomas, 2010, p. 125) than the systemic social disorganization perspective. More importantly, the civic community perspective's emphasis on religious institutions generates an interesting new research question.

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Specifically, applying Putnam's notion of "bonding" and "bridging capital" to two distinct religious denominations, Lee (2008) developed a hypothesis that civically engaged denominations are more likely to be negatively associated with violent crime rates than their conservative counterparts because the former enhance bridging capital that contributes to community organization via active civic engagement, whereas the latter tend to build in-group ties and unity, promoting bonding capital that does not directly help strengthen community integration and community control. The hypothesis received preliminary support, although the evidence was found only for rural communities. That is, as expected, the county-level proportion adhering to civically engaged denominations, primarily Catholics and mainline Protestants, was negatively related to a violent crime index (i.e., homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault) and juvenile homicide rates (Lee, 2006, 2008; Lee & Bartkowski, 2004), whereas the proportion adhering to conservative Protestant denominations was either not significant or was positively related to community crime rates.

If this positive association reflects a possible link between conservative Protestant religious culture and violence in the South (Ellison, Burr, & McCall, 2003), it might suggest the potential for a conservative Protestant religion to have the opposite effect on crime at two different levels of analysis: positive at the macro-level (Lee, 2006), but negative at the micro-level (e.g., Regnerus, 2003). Further, a recent ecological study indicates this macro-level religious effect is more attributable to Fundamentalist and Pentecostal denominations and their "otherworldliness" that tends to promote bonding capital. On the other hand, Evangelical denominations may be more similar to those civically engaged denominations because of their "engaged orthodoxy" (Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, & Sikkink, 1998) that develop bridging capital (Blanchard, Bartkowski, Matthews, & Kerley, 2008).

Finally, another important macro-level perspective relevant to the religion-crime relationship is Messner and Rosenfeld's (2001) institutional anomie theory. Expanding Merton's (1938) anomie theory, Messner and Rosenfeld argue the American Dream is a part of the American crime problem because it contributes to criminogenic pressures in the cultural state of anomie, where the cultural goal (i.e., material success) is overemphasized compared to the cultural means to achieve the goal. Such an anomic environment leads to an institutional imbalance of power, in which the economy exerts an unusually dominant influence on three noneconomic institutions: the polity, the family, and education.

While the number of social institutions might have been restrained by the theory's basic need for parsimony, religion seems to be an important omission in light of the deteriorating prosocial and protective function of the family and education in America, especially among the disadvantaged (Sampson & Wilson, 1995). Though religion is not exempt from the pressures of a market-oriented culture (e.g., Sargeant, 2000), religious institutions are likely to be more resilient than their noneconomic counterparts given their allegiance to the sacred and transcendent matters

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which fall beyond the strictly material. To the extent that religion counterbalances the economy and tempers the pressures associated with the American Dream, institutional anomie theory may exaggerate the criminogenic influence of the economy in America.

CONCLUSION: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Based on our review of the micro- and macro-criminological literatures on religion, any effort to explain away the religion-crime relationship as entirely spurious is likely to be as futile as claiming crime can be completely explained by a lack of religion. Indeed, some studies show an initially observed religion-crime association can be fully explained by "third" and "secular" variables (e.g., Cochran et al., 1994). Scholars need to take into account methodological limitations (e.g., modeling and measurement quality) and relevant contingency factors, such as social contexts and the ascetic nature of crime (e.g., Tittle & Welch, 1983) when interpreting such findings. Thus, the effect of religion on crime "explained" by non-religious variables might be partly religious, though not detected because of model misspecification. This is a reminder that causation is both an empirical and theoretical issue.

For example, suppose that a significant effect of adolescent religiosity on drug use in reaction to strain (e.g., death of a close friend) became non-significant when attachment to parents was introduced as an intervening variable to the relationship (i.e., adolescent religiosity → attachment to parents → drug use). This result is typically interpreted as the effect of religion being explained in non-religious terms. However, whether the indirect effect is religious in nature or not is a separate issue. The actual explanatory mechanism may have involved a religious process, attributable to an omitted variable, say, religious coping, encouraged by religious parents, to whom the adolescent was strongly attached (i.e., adolescent religiosity → attachment to [religious] parents → religious coping → drug use). If this were the case, the effect of religiosity on drug use may be religious after all. Unfortunately, we cannot test this hypothesis with currently available delinquency data.

According to the 1998 General Social Survey (Davis, Smith, & Marsden, 2006), almost two-thirds (64.1 percent) of American adults ($n = 1{,}416$) engage in religious coping by "[looking] to God for strength, support, guidance" when trying to understand and deal with major problems in their lives. While the percentage might be smaller among adolescents due to their relative lack of religious maturity, criminologists may be missing an interesting research opportunity. The failure to collect even the most basic data on religion in surveys is well known, and is largely responsible for hindering research explicitly examining religion within criminology. This oversight would seem to be the result of a general lack of interest or worse, an outright bias against religion within criminology.[7] As a remedy, we offer

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two future directions for research in criminology, one at the micro-level and the other at the macro-level.

First, we propose criminologists look beyond biological, psychological, and social dimensions and seriously consider the religious or spiritual dimension.[8] According to a prominent sociologist of religion, Christian Smith (2003, p. 54), "all human persons ... are, at bottom, *believers*. We are all necessarily trusting, believing animals, creatures who must and do place our faith in beliefs that *cannot themselves be verified except by means established by the presumed beliefs themselves*." Also, he argues, we are "moral" agents in that we are motivated to act out and sustain moral order that helps constitute, directs, and makes human life significant, clarifying "what is right and wrong, good and bad, worthy and unworthy, just and unjust" (p. 8). For Smith, religion plays a crucial role for the moral order by affirming the reality of "superempirical" orders as real and consequential.

To the extent that we humans are *homo credens*, contemporary criminology is unlikely to be successful in providing a holistic and balanced explanation of criminal behavior. On the other hand, criminologists with a renewed interest in the religious and spiritual dimension of human behavior are likely to discover research questions rarely asked before. For example, while previous studies show religious individuals are less likely to commit crime than their non-religious counterparts, we know little about criminality of "religious seekers" or those who claim to be "spiritual but not religious" (Fuller, 2001), which make up as much as 10 percent of American adults (Dougherty & Jang, 2008).[9]

In his book, *Moral, Believing Animals*, Smith (2003) also points out a longstanding false dichotomy in sociological theory between culture and social structure, drawing our attention to the intimate connection between the two, a society's moral order (culture) and social institutions (structure). This leads to our second suggestion for criminology's future direction at the macro-level. While such a false dichotomy or a tension between culturalists and structuralists has existed in criminology (e.g., Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Kornhauser, 1978), anomie theorists tend to be more conscious of including both culture and structure in a coherent theoretical framework than others (e.g., Merton, 1938). An excellent case in point is the institutional anomie theory that emphasizes the interrelationships between culture and institutional structure in understanding crime in America. For Messner and Rosenfeld (2001, p. 62), the American Dream "embodies the basic value commitments of the culture: its achievement orientation, individualism, universalism, and peculiar form of materialism ... described as the 'fetishism of money.'" This powerful cultural force is responsible for the economy dominating its noneconomic institutions by devaluating their functions and roles, forcing them to accommodate economic rules of engagement, and penetrating economic norms into those institutions. Thus, the American Dream puts criminogenic pressures on society, resulting in higher crime rates than other industrial nations.

Messner and Rosenfeld emphasize the invasive power of the economy in transforming noneconomic institutions into semi-economic ones. As a

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result, an unrealistic burden is placed on government, family, and education in promoting allegiance to normative rules as their prosocial cultural messages get overwhelmed by the anomic tendencies of the American Dream. Unfortunately, little attention is given to the religion – the noneconomic institution we believe may best be suited to push back against this cultural force. We suggest religion is a major source of "living narratives" for Americans to live by and that it produces a collective consciousness that provides the basis of social integration (Durkheim, 1984 [1893]; Smith, 2003). However, the potential contribution of religion to criminology, as a perspective as well as social institution, goes well beyond this particular theory as it has been illustrated by a religion-inspired theory of crime and practice in criminal justice (Braithwaite, 1989; Cullen, Sundt, & Wozniak, 2001).

Specifically, religious perspectives on human nature[10] and criminal behavior, whether chosen or determined (e.g., Agnew, 1995), can contribute to a new criminological perspective that focuses on human personhood (i.e., moral, believing animal), motivation, and action, which has often been neglected by modern criminology under the influence of the naturalistic, utilitarian, and non-cultural tradition of Western social theory (Smith, 2003). Just as cultural sociology has been resurgent in the last three decades to provide rich cultural accounts of human social life and action, criminology should complement the disproportionately deterministic and structural explanations of crime at both the micro- and macro-level.[11]

In conclusion, we know from decades of survey research that the influence of religion is broad and not relegated to any one segment of the population. Consequently, future research on crime and delinquency should include multiple measures of religious practices and beliefs. Churches, synagogues, mosques, inner-city storefront ministries, and other houses of worship represent one of the key institutions remaining within close proximity of most adolescents, their families, and their peers. New research will allow us to more fully understand the ways in which religion may directly and indirectly impact crime, delinquency, or faith-based approaches to criminal justice problems (offender treatment, alternative sentencing, mentoring of at-risk youth, prisoner reentry and aftercare). Finally, our updated systematic review suggests the beneficial relationship between religion and crime is not simply a function of religion's constraining function or what it discourages – opposing drug use, violence, or delinquent behavior – but also through what it encourages – promoting prosocial behaviors. Failure to consider religion variables will cause researchers to be needlessly shortsighted in estimating models designed to explain its direct and indirect influences on antisocial as well as prosocial behavior.

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Endnotes

[1] In a relatively recent interview, both Hirschi and Stark remarked they were surprised at the reaction generated by the publication (personal communication, April 15, 2009).

[2] We acknowledge that the current systematic review does not carry the same weight as a meta-analysis, where effect sizes for individual studies are considered in the overall assessment of research literature under consideration. While meta-analysis is a more rigorous and transparent (i.e., standardized) method than traditional narrative synthesis or systematic reviews, its utility for summarizing past research is limited for non-experimental, correlational studies which make up a majority of the criminological research (Cooper, 2010). We are, however, currently conducting a separate meta-analysis of this same research literature.

[3] While irreligionists might not be interested in the validity of such religious sanctions, they might not be completely immune from "supernatural" sanctions cognitively. Survey research confirms non-religious people tend to be more superstitious than religious people.

[4] For example, Cochran et al. (1994) operationalized the arousal construct by using the scales of self-reported thrill seeking, impulsivity, and physicality, which might have measured instead Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) low self-concept, which is a sociological rather than a neurological concept.

[5] Specifically, Regnerus constructed not only measures of generic religiosity at the county (the proportion of residents who are religious adherents) and

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school levels (the percentage of students in the school that attend church weekly and the percentage of students who consider themselves "born again" Christians), but also a county-level measure of religious homogeneity (the proportion of adherents who belong to conservative Protestant churches).

[6] While there are differences in wording, the 2006 General Social Survey (Davis et al., 2006) documents similar findings: (1) 83 percent of respondents (n = 4,510) indicated having a religion or religious denomination preference – 95 percent responded "Protestant," "Catholic," or "Jewish;" (2) 73 percent said they "know God exists" without a doubt (63 percent) or believe in "some high power" (10 percent); and (3) 31 percent reported they attended religious service "nearly every week" or more often. For a detailed description of methods and findings from the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey, see a special section in the 2007 December issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (Bader, Mencken, & Froese, 2007).

[7] Bias against religion has been documented in the social and behavioral sciences. For example, until recently, religiosity was linked to mental illness rather than mental health (Pargament, Maton, & Hess, 1992), and the DSM-III-R contained considerable negative bias against religion, contributing to unfair stereotypes of religious persons (Post, 1992). This bias against religion was corrected in the DSM-IV.

[8] Viktor Frankl (1984 [1946]), a Nazi concentration camp survivor who later became the leader of the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy, made a similar appeal to psychiatrists not to exclude the spiritual dimension *a priori* based on their naturalistic presupposition about human behavior. Other behavioral (e.g., psychology) and medical sciences generally appear to be more open to the spiritual dimension of human personhood than ever before.

[9] The percentage among American teenagers varies, depending on whether we count only those who say it is "very true" that they are "spiritual but not religious" (8 percent) or those who say it is "somewhat true" as well (46 percent), while the estimate is said to be generally unreliable because a majority of teenagers tend to have no clue what it means to be "spiritual but not religious" (Smith & Denton, 2005).

[10] For example, Judeo-Christian religion offers an alternative, non-dualistic view on human nature, combining the underlying assumptions of "original sin" and "original virtue" in criminological theories (Kornhauser, 1978, p. 35). These "incompatible" assumptions have been an issue for debate on theoretical integration (Liska, Krohn, & Messner, 1989).

[11] We avoid the "cultural criminology" label because it has already been used to refer to a perspective within criminology and criminal justice; drawn from cultural studies, postmodern theory, critical theory, and interactionist sociology, and on ethnographic methodologies as well as media/textual analysis (Ferrell, 1999).

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APPENDIX A. A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE RELIGION AND CRIME LITERATURE

No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
1	Adamcyzk (2008)	PC	R	1,449	Ad	National US	SR, ORA, RE	MC	B
2	Adelekan (1993)	CS	S/R	636	CS	Nigeria	SR, D	N	B
3	Adlaf (1985)	CS	R	2,066	Ad	Ontario	D, ORA, SR	N	B
4	Albrecht (1977)	CS	C	244	Mormon teens	Utah, Idaho, LA	SR, ORA	MC	B
5	Albrecht (1996)	PC	R	12,168	HS	National US	ORA	MC	B
6	Alford (1991)	PC	C	157	Ad, PP	Nebraska	Misc.	N	B
7	Allen (1967)	CS	S	179	HS (16-18)	Youth fac.	D, ORA, SR	MC	B
8	Amoateng (1986)	CS	R	17,000	HS	National US	SR, ORA	MC	B
9	Amey (1996)	CS	R	11,728	HS	National US	OR, SR, D	MC	B
10	Bahr (1993)	CR	C/P	322	Ad	3 west counties US	SR	MC	M
11	Bahr (1998)	CS	R	13,250	HS	Utah	ORA, SR	MC	B
12	Bahr (2008)	PC	R	18,517	Ad	National US	A, S. R	MC	B
13	Barnes (1994)	PC	R	658	Ad	Buffalo, NY	ORA	MC	B
14	Barrett (1988)	CT	S	326	Ad	Texas	ORA	MC	B
15	Bell (1997)	CS	R	17,952	CS	National US	SR	MC	B
16	Benda (1994)	CS	R	1,093	HS	OK, MD, AR	ORA, SR	MC	B
17	Benda (1995)	CS	S	1,093	HS	Arkansas & MD	ORA, SR	MC	B
18	Benda (1997)	CS	S	724	HS	Arkansas & OK	ORA, SR	MC	B

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
19	Benda (1997b)	CS	R	1,093	HS	5 US cities	ORA, SR	MC	B
20	Benda (1999)	CS	R	1,093	Ad	OK, MD, AR	Misc.	MC	B
21	Benda (2000)	CS	R	1,057	HS	OK, MD, AR	Misc.	MC	B
22	Benda (2001)	CS	R	837	HS	South-east	Misc.	MC	M
23	Benda (2002)	CS	C	326	M (15-24)	Arkansas	SR	SC	B
24	Benda (2006)	CS	R	3,551	Ad	Southern State	SR	MC	B
25	Benson (1989)	CS	R	> 12,000	HS	National US	SR	MC	B
26	Bjarnason (2005)	CS	R	3,524	HS	Iceland	SR	MC	B
27	Bliss (1994)	CS	C	143	CS	Ohio	ORA, SR	N	M
28	Bowker (1974)	CS	R	948	CS	College	ORA, D	N	B
29	Brizer (1993)	CC	C	65	PP	New York	ORA, NORA	N	B
30	Brook (1984)	CS	C/P	403	CS	College in NJ	ORA	MC	B
31	Brown T L (2001)	CS	R	899	Ad	OH, KY	ORA, IR, Misc.	N	B
32	Brown T N (2001)	CS	R	188,000	HS	National US	RCM	MC	B
33	Brownfield (1991)	CS	C/P	800+	HS	Seattle	SR, ORA, D	MC	B
34	Burkett (1974)	CS	C	855	HS	Pacific NW	ORA	SC	B
35	Burkett (1977)	CS	S	837	HS	Pacific NW	ORA, RB	SC	B
36	Burkett (1980)	CS	S	323	HS	Pacific NE	ORA, SR, RB	N	B
37	Burkett (1987)	PC	C	240	HS	Pacific NW	ORA, SR, RB	MC	B
38	Burkett (1993)	PC	R	612 & 428	HS	Pacific NW	RB, SR, ORA	MC	B
39	Cancellaro (1982)	CC	C	74	Drug Addicts	Kentucky	NORA, RE	N	B

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
40	Caputo (2004)	PC	R	1,911	Ad	National US	Misc.	MC	B
41	Caputo (2005)	PC	R	1,911	Ad	National US	Misc.	MC	B
42	Carlucci (1993)	CS	R	331	CS	Eastern US	D	N	B
43	Carr-Saunders (1944)	CC	C	276-551	Delin-quents	London, UK	ORA	N	B
44	Cecero (2005)	CS	C/P	237	CS	NE Universit y	Misc.	MC	B
45	Chadwick (1993)	CS	R	2,143	Ad (Mor-mons)	Eastern US	ORA, RB	MC	B
46	Chandy (1996)	PC	R	1,959	Ad	National US	SR	MC	B
47	Chawla (2007)	CS	R	1,442	CS	West Coast	SR	MC	B
48	Chen (2004)	CS	R	12,797	HS	Panama & DR	D, ORA,	MC	B
49	Christo (1995)	PC	C	101	Poly-drug abuse	London	RB	N	B
50	Chu (2007)	PC	R	1,725	Ad	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
51	Cisin (1968)	CS	R	2,746	CDA	National US	ORA, RC, RB	MC	B
52	Clark (1992)	CS	R	2,036	Medical students	Great Britain	D	N	B
53	Clear (2002)	PC	S	769	Pri-soners	DE, TX, IN, MS	SR, D	MC	B
54	Cochran (1989)	CS	R	3,065	Ad	Midwest US	ORA, SR, D	MC	B
55	Cochran (1991)	CS	R	3,065	Ad	Midwest US	ORA, SR, D	MC	B
56	Cochran (1993)	CS	R	3,065	Ad	Midwest	Misc.	MC	B
57	Cochran (1994)	CS	C	1,600	HS	Oklahom a	ORA, SR	MC	B
58	Cohen (1987)	PC	S	976	Mother/ caretaker	New York	ORA	MC	B
59	Coleman (1986)	CC	S	50	Opiate addicts	Philadelp hia	ORA, SR	MC	M

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
60	Cook (1997)	CS	R	7,666	Youth (12-30)	United Kingdom	RCM	N	B
61	Coombs (1985)	PC	C	197	Ad	Los Angeles	RB, ORA	N	B
62	Crano (2008)	PC	R	2,111	Ad, HS	National US	RA	MC	B
63	Cretacci (2003)	CS	R	6,500	Ad, youth	National US	SR, ORA, RCM, D	MC	B
64	Cronin (1995)	CS	C	216	CS	Marylan d	D, SR	N	B
65	Dennis (2005)	Q	D	1,725	(15-21)	National US	SR	SC	B
66	Desmond (1981)	PC	C	248	PP addicts	San Antonio	Misc.	N	B
67	Desmond (2009)	PC	R	1,725	Ad	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
68	Dudley (1987)	CS	R	801	SDA Youth	National US	ORA, NORA, CM	SC	B
69	Dunn (2005)	CS	R	6,029	HS	National US	SR	MC	B
70	Elifson (1983)	CS	R	600	Ad, HS	Atlanta, GA	RB, SR, NORA	SC	NA
71	Ellis (1989)	CS	C	354	CS	North Dakota	RB, Misc.	SC	B
72	Ellis (2002)	P	C	11,000	CS, R	US & Canada	D	SC	B
73	Ellison (1999)	CS	R	13,017	CDA	National US	ORA, D, Misc.	MC	B
74	Ellison (2001)	CS	R	13,017	CDA	National US	ORA	MC	B
75	Ellison (2007)	CS	P	3,666	CDA	National US	ORA	MC	B
76	Engs (1980)	CS	S	1,691	CS	Australia	D, SR	N	B
77	Engs (1996)	CS	C	12,081	CS	National	SR, D	N	B
78	Engs (1999)	CS	C	4,150	CS	Scotland	D, SR	N	B
79	Evans (1995)	CS	S	477	CDA	Midwest US	OR, SR, RB, D	MC	B
80	Evans (1996)	CS	R	263	HS	Midwest City	ORA, SR, RC	MC	B

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
81	Fernquist (1995)	CS	—	180	CS	—	ORA, NORA	N	B
82	Forliti (1986)	CS	C	10,467	Ad/ parents	United States	RB, ORA, SR	NS	B
83	Forthun (1999)	CS	R	526	CS	South-western	ORA	N	B
84	Foshee (1996)	PC	R	1,553	Ad	Southeas t US	ORA, RB, SR, D	MC	B
85	Francis (1993)	CS	S	4,753	HS	England	ORA, RB	N	B
86	Francis (1997)	CS	S	16,734	Ad	England & Wales	A, D	N	B
87	Fraser (1967)	CS	R	282	Ad	New Zealand	Misc.	MC	B
88	Free (1992)	CS	C/P	916	CS	SW & Midwest	ORA, SR	N	B
89	Free (1993)	CS	C/P	916	CS	SW & Midwest	ORA, SR	N	B
90	Free (1994)	CS	C/P	916	CS	SW & Midwest	ORA, SR	N	B
91	Freeman (1986)	CS	R/R	4,961	Ad	Boston, Chi, Phil	ORA	MC	B
92	Galen (2004)	CS	C/P	265	CS	--	D, MD	MC	B
93	Gannon (1967)	CS	C/P	150	Ad	Chicago, IL	Misc.	N	M
94	Gardner (2007)	CC	C/P	202	Ad	Jamaica	Misc.	MC	B
95	Garis (1998)	PC	R	25,000	Ad	National US	ORA	MC	B
96	Grasmick (1991)	CS	R	304	CDA	Oklahom a City	D, ORA, SR	SC	M
97	Grasmick (1991)	CS	R	285	Adults	Oklahom a City	D, SR	MC	B
98	Grunbaum (2000)	CS	R	441	HS	Texas	ORA	MC	B
99	Guinn (1975)	CS	S/R	1,789	HS	Texas	ORA	N	B
100	Hadaway (1984)	CS	R	600	Ad, HS	Atlanta	ORA, SR, NORA	SC	B

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
101	Hamil-Lucker (2004)	CS	PC	2,509	14-22	--	Misc.	N	B
102	Hammer-meister (2001)	CS	C/P	462	CS	Pacific North-west		N	B
103	Hansell (1990)	PC	R	908	Ad	NJ	ORA	MC	B
104	Hanson (1987)	PC	R	6,115	CS	US	D	N	B
105	Hardert (1994)	CS	C	1,234	HS, CS	Arizona	ORA, SR	MC	NA
106	Hardesty (1995)	CS	C	475	HS, CS (16-19)	Midwest US	Fam-ily religi-osity	SC	B
107	Harris (2003)	CS	R	1,393	Ad, LDS	7 US states	ORA, SWB, RE	MC	B
108	Hater (1984)	CS	S	1,174	PP	National	ORA, SR	MC	NA
109	Hawks (1994)	CS	R	293	Ad and Parents	3 Utah counties	D	MC	NA
110	Hays (1986)	CS	R	1,121	Ad (13-18)	National	Religi-osity scale	MC	B
111	Hays (1990)	CS	--	415	HS	--	D	MC	B
112	Heath (1999)	PC	R	1,687	twins only	Missouri	Misc.	MC	B
113	Hercik (2004)	PC	C	413	Prisoner s	Florida	Reli-gious Pro-gram	MC	B
114	Herronkohl (2005)	CS	R	680	HS	Pacific NW	Misc.	MC	B
115	Higgins (1977)	CS	R	1,410	HS (10th)	Atlanta, GA	ORA	SC	B
116	Hill (1999)	PC	R	808	HS (1985-1993)	Seattle	ORA	N	M
117	Hillman (2000)	CS	C/P	292	HS	Midwest	D, SR	N	B
118	Hirschi (1969)	CS	R	4,077	HS	Northern CA	ORA	N	NA

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
119	Hodge (2001)	CS	R	414	HS	New Mexico	ORA, RB	MC	B
120	Humphrey (1989)	CS	R	1,097	CS	South-eastern US	ORA	MC	B
121	Hundleby (1982)	CS	C	231	HS	Ontario	ORA, NORA	N	NA
122	Hundleby (1987)	CS	C	2,048	HS	Ontario	ORA	MC	B
123	Isralowitz (1990)	CS	R	7,671	CS	Singapore	RB	N	NA
124	Jang (2001)	PC	R	1,087	Youth (13-22)	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
125	Jang (2003)	CS	R	2,107	CDA	National US	ORA, NORA SR	MC	B
126	Jang (2004)	CS	R	659	CDA	National US	ORA, NORA SR	MC	B
127	Jang (2005)	CS	R	659	CDA	National US	ORA, NORA SR	MC	B
128	Jang (2007)	PC	R	1,250	CDA	National US	ORA, NORA SR	MC	B
129	Jang (2008)	PC	R	1,044	Ad	National US	D, ORA, SR	MC	B
130	Jang (2010)	PC	R	1,033	Ad	National US	ORA, SR, D	MC	B
131	Jessor (1973)	PC	R	605-248	HS, CS	Colorado	ORA	N	B
132	Jessor (1977)	PC	R	432-205	HS, CS	Colorado	ORA, NORA SR	N	B
133	Jessor (1980)	CS	R	13,122	Ad	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
134	Jeynes (2006)	PC	R	18,726	Ad, HS	U.S.	R	MC	B
135	Johnson (1987)	RS	S	782	Former pri-soners	Florida	ORA, SR	MC	NA

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
136	Johnson (1997)	CC	S	201-201	Former pri-soners	New York	ORA, NORA	MC	B
137	Johnson (2000a)	CS	R/R	2,358	Youth	Boston, Chicago, Phil	ORA	MC	B
138	Johnson (2000b)	PC	R	207	Ad	National US	ORA	MC	B
139	Johnson (2001a)	PC	R	1,087	Ad	National US	SR	MC	B
140	Johnson (2001b)	PC	R	1,305	Youth	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
141	Johnson (2002)	CC	S	148-247	Former pri-soners	Brazil	Reli-gious pro-gram	SC	B
142	Johnson (2003)	PC	C	177-177	Former pri-soners	Texas	Reli-gious pro-gram	MC	B
143	Johnson (2004)	CC	S	201-201	Former pri-soners	New York	ORA, NORA	MC	B
144	Jones (2004)	CS	R	3,395	HS	Midwest-ern State	Misc.	MC	B
145	Junger (1993)	CS	R	788	Ad	Nether-lands	ORA	MC	B
146	Kandel (1976)	PC	R	1,112	Ad	New York	ORA	MC	B
147	Kandel (1982)	CS	R	1,947	Ad	New York	D	MC	B
148	Kandel (1986)	PC	R	1,004	Ad/ young adults	New York	ORA	MC	NA
149	Kerley (2005)	RS	R	386	Pri-soners	Mississip-pi	ORA, SR, RB	MC	B
150	Kerley (2005b)	RS	R	386	Pri-soners	Mississip-pi	ORA	MC	B
151	Kerley (2006)	RS	R	386	Pri-soners	Mississip-pi	ORA	MC	B
152	Kerley (2009)	RS	C/P	63	Pri-soners	Mississip-pi	ORA, SR, RB	MC	B
153	Kvaraceus (1944)	CS	S	700+	Ad	New Jersey	ORA, D	N	NA

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
154	Lee J (1997)	CS	R	7,658	Ad/ Parents	US & Canada	ORA, Misc.	MC	B
155	Lee M (2004)	CC	R	1,889	homicide	National	D	MC	B
156	Leigh (2005)	CS	R	196	CS	Intro Psych Class	Misc.	MC	B
157	Linville (2005)	CS	R	235	Teens	Virginia	ORA	MC	B
158	Litchfield (1997)	PC	R	>1,500	Ad	--	ORA, RB, RCM	MC	B
159	Lo (1993)	CS	R	160	CS	Deep south	D	MC	B
160	Long (1993)	PC	R	625	HS	Montana	CM, ORA, SR	MC	B
161	Longest (2008)	PC	R	1,680	Ad	National US	ORA, SR, NORA	MC	B
162	Longshore (2004)	PC	R	1,036	Drug offenders	5 US Cities	RB, SR, D	MC	B
163	Lorch (1985)	CS	S/R	13,878	HS	Colorado Springs	CM, ORA, SR	MC	B
164	MacDonald (2005)	CS	R	5,414	HS	South Carolina	ORA	MC	M
165	Mainous (2001)	--	P/C	191	Ad, HS	Kentucky	A,R	MC	B
166	Marcos (1986)	CS	R	2,626	HS	Southwe st US	ORA, RCM	MC	B
167	Mason (2001)	PC	R	840	Ad	New York	S, A, D	MC	B
168	Mason (2002)	PC	L	6,504	Ad	National US	Misc.	MC	B
169	Mauss (1959)	CS	S	459	HS	Califor-nia	D	N	B
170	McIntosh (1981)	CS	R	1,358	HS	Texas	D, ORA, SR	MC	B
171	McLuckie (1975)	CS	R	27,175	HS	Pennsyl-vania	D, RA	MC	B
172	Merrill (2001)	CS	R	1,036	CS	US	RCM	MC	B

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
173	Merrill (2005)	CS	C	1,333	CS	Utah	D, A, R	MC	B
174	Middleton (1962)	CS	—	554	CS	California, FL	RB, ORA, SR	N	B
175	Miller (2000)	CS	R	676	Ad	National US	ORA, NORA RE	MC	B
176	Miller (2001)	CS	C	279	C	New York	ORA, RCM, D	MC	B
177	Mitchell (1990)	CS	R	694	CS	2 universities	ORA	MC	B
178	Montgomery (1996)	CS	—	392	HS	Great Britain	NORA	SC	B
179	Moon (2000)	PC	R	788	mother/ child	National US	ORA	MC	M
180	Moore (1995)	CS	C	2,366	Ad	Israel	D, SR	N	B
181	Morris (1981)	CS	C	134	CS	Tennessee	IR, ER	N	B
182	Mullen (2001)	CS	R	1,534	HS	Netherlands	D, ORA, RB	N	B
183	Muller (2001)	PC	P	--	HS	US	ORA	MC	B
184	Nelsen (1982)	CS	R	4,531	HS	NE US	ORA, D	N	B
186	Newcomb (1986)	PC	R	994	Ad	Los Angeles	SR	N	B
187	Newman (2006)	CC	C/P	827	HS	Thailand	D	N	B
188	Nonnemaker (2003)	PC	R	16,306	Ad	National US	IR, ER	MC	B
189	O'Connor (2002)	CS	C/P	1,597	Prisoners	South Carolina	ORA, NORA	SC	B
190	Oetting (1987)	CS	S	415	HS	Western US	SR, ORA	MC	B
191	Oleckno (1991)	CS	C	1,077	CS	Northern IL	ORA, SR	N	B
192	Onofrio (1999)	CS	C	1,127	C, Ad, HS	US-Mid Atlantic	D, R	MC	B
193	Parfrey (1976)	CS	R	444	CS	Ireland	ORA, RB	N	B

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
194	Park (1998)	CS	R	1,081	HS	National US	RB	MC	B
195	Park H (2002)	PC	R	7,692	HS	National US	D	MC	B
196	Parsai (2008)	CS	C/P	1,087	Ad	Southwest	ORA, D	MC	B
197	Patock-Peckham (1998)	CS	C/P	364	CS	Arizona	D, IR, ER	MC	M
198	Pearce L (2003)	PC	R	1,703	6th & 8th grade	North-eastern US	ORA, NORA SR	MC	B
199	Pearce M (2004)	PC	R	10,444	Ad & mothers	US	SR, D	MC	B
200	Peek (1985)	PC	R	817	HS	National US	RCM	MC	M
201	Perkins (1985)	CS	S	1,514	CS 17-23	New York	D, S	MC	B
202	Perkins (1987)	CS	S	860	CS	New York	SR, D, Misc.	MC	B
203	Pettersson (1991)	CS	R	118	Police districts	Sweden	ORA	SC	B
204	Petts (2007)	PC	R	1,259	National survey	US	Misc.	MC	B
205	Piko (2004)	CS	R	1,240	Ad	Szeged, Hungary	ORA, prayer	MC	B
206	Piquero (2000)	CC	C/P	150	Ad	Deten-tion facility	Misc.	MC	B
207	Pirkle (2006)	PC	R	929	Ad	National US	SR	MC	B
208	Powell (1997)	CS	S	521	HS high risk	Birming-ham, AL	ORA, SR	MC	B
209	Preston (1969)	CS	R	516	HS	Southern US state	ORA, RCM, RB	MC	B
210	Pullen (1999)	CS	R	217	Ad	South-east US	ORA	MC	B
211	Regnerus (2003)	PC	R	9,667	HS	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
212	Regnerus (2003b)	PC	R	9,234	HS	National US	ORA, IR	MC	B
213	Regnerus (2003c)	PC	R	9,200	HS	National US	ORA, IR	MC	B

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No	Investigators	Type	Method	N	Population	Location	Religious Variable	Control	Findings
214	Regnerus (2003d)	PC	R	11,890	Ad, Parents	National US	ORA, RC, D	MC	B
215	Resnick (1997)	CS	R	12,118	Ad	National US	SR	MC	NA
216	Ritt-Olson (2004)	CC	C/P	382	HS	California	ORA, RB, SR	MC	B
217	Rhodes (1970)	CS	R	21,720	HS	Tennessee	ORA, D, Misc.	MC	B
218	Rohrbaugh (1975)	CS	C	475-221	HS/CS	Colorado	ORA, RB, RE	N	B
219	Ross (1994)	CS	R	271	CS	Seton Hall	Misc.	MC	M
220	Schiff (2006)	CS	R	600	HS	Jerusalem	ORA	MC	B
221	Schlegel (1979)	CS	R	842	HS	Ontario, Canada	ORA, D	N	B
222	Schulenberg (1994)	PC	R	3,399	HS	National US	ORA, RC	MC	B
223	Scholl (1964)	CC	C/P	52-28	Ad delinquents	Illinois	RB, RE	N	H
224	Simmons (2004)	CS	R	451-867	families/children	Iowa	Misc.	MC	B
225	Singh (1979)	CS	C	54/59	CA/HS	Ottawa, Can	SR	N	B
226	Sinha (2007)	CS	R	2,004	Ad	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
227	Sloane (1986)	CS	R	1,121	HS	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
228	Sorenson (1995)	CS	R	1,118	HS	Seattle	ORA, D	MC	B
229	Stark (1982)	CS	R	1,799	Ad M	National US	RB, SR, ORA	N	B
230	Stark (1996)	CS	R	11,955	Ad	National US	D, ORA	SC	B
231	Steinman (2004)	CS	C	705	HS	Midwest City	ORA	N	B
232	Steinman (2008)	CS	R	33,007	Ad	Columbus, OH	ORA	MC	B
233	Stewart (2001)	--	C/P	337	CS	Southern US	SR, RB	N	B
234	Stewart (2002)	CS	R	2,317	Ad	National	ORA, SR, NORA	N	B

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235	Stylianou (2004)	CS	R	275	CS	Pacific NW	RCM	MC	B
236	Sussman (2005)	CS	R	501	Ad	Southern CA	Misc.	MC	M
237	Sussman (2006)	CS	R	501	Ad	Southern CA	Misc.	MC	B
238	Taub (1990)	CS	R	3,500	HS	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
239	Tenent-Clark (1989)	CC	C	25-25	Ad	Colorado	SR	N	B
240	Tepmlin (1999)	CS	C/P	277	CS	Catholic College	RC	MC	B
241	Tibbetts (2002)	CS	C/P	598	CS	Into courses	SR	MC	B
242	Tittle (1983)	CS	R	1,993	15 and older	IA, NJ, OR	ORA, SR	MC	B
243	Travers (1961)	--	C/P	223	10-17	NE urban area	RCM	MC	B
244	Trawick (2006)	--	R	120	counties	Kentucky	Misc.	N	B
245	Turner C (1979)	CS	R	379	CS	Private school, NJ	Misc.	N	B
246	Turner N (1994)	CS	R	247	HS	Austin, TX	D, ORA	MC	B
247	Valliant (1982)	PC	R	456	Ad	Boston	ORA	N	B
248	Vakalahi (2002)	CS	R	4,983	Ad	Utah	D	MC	B
249	Van Den Bree (2004)	CS	PC	14,133	Ad, CS	National US	ORA, SR, Misc	MC	B
250	Veach (1992)	CS	C	148	CS	Nevada	RE, Misc.	N	H
251	Vener (1977)	CS	C	4,220	Ad, CS	3 midwest cities	RB	N	B
252	Wallace (1991)	CS	R	--	Ad	National US	ORA, SR	N	B
253	Wallace (1998)	CS	R	5,000	HS	National US	D, ORA, SR	MC	B
254	Wallace (2003)	CS	R	47,738	HS	UW	SR, ORA, D	MC	B

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255	Wallace (2007)	CS	R	16,595	HS	National US	ORA, SR, Misc.	MC	B
256	Walsh (1995)	CS	R	480	CS	Boise State	ORA, SR	MC	B
257	Wattenburg (1950)	CS	S	2,137	Ad	Detroit, MI	ORA	N	B
258	Weschler (1979)	CS	R	7,170	CS	New England	D, ORA	N	B
259	Wechsler (1995)	CS	R	17,592	CS	National	SR	MC	B
260	Weill (1994)	PC	R	437	HS	France	ORA	N	B
261	White (2008)	PC	R	825	CS/Ad	Washington	ORA	MC	B
262	Wickstrom (1983)	CS	C/P	130	CS	4 states	IR, ER	MC	B
263	Willis (2003)		R	7,123	HS	New York	Misc.	MC	B
264	Wills (2003)	PC	R	1,182	Ad	New York	RB, SR, Misc.	MC	B
265	Windle (2005)	PC	R	760	Ad	New York	ORA, SR	MC	B
266	Wright (1971)	CS	C	3,850/ 1,574	CS	England	RB, ORA, Misc.	N	B
267	Yarnold (1995)	CS	R	1,694	Ad	Dade County, FL	SR	MC	B
268	Youniss (1997)	CS	R	3,119	HS	National US	ORA, SR	MC	B
269	Zhang (1994)	CS	C	1,026	CS	China, Taiwan, US	SR, NORA ORA	MC	B
270	Zimmerman (1992)	--	C/P	218	Ad	Inner city Balti-more	Misc.	MC	B

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Toward a Criminology of Religion: Comment on Johnson and Jang

Francis T. Cullen

Johnson and Jang make a persuasive case that religion is an empirically established predictor of antisocial conduct, is implicated in direct and complex ways in criminal involvement, can be integrated profitably into existing criminological theories, and is a potentially useful target for change in interventions with offenders. They have discovered, much to my astonishment, 270 studies examining the association between religion and crime. I express astonishment for two reasons: first, because I had no idea this body of evidence existed, and second, because it is paradoxical that, despite these empirical works, religion remains largely ignored as a cause of crime in most major investigations of crime and in most textbooks on criminological theory. I start by commenting on possible reasons for this criminological omission. As part of a call for a "criminology of religion and crime," I then map out three lines of inquiry that scholars might fruitfully explore.

Criminologists' Neglect of Religion

In a non-scientific, yet illuminating attempt to test the thesis that religion is neglected in criminological theory, I reached to my bookshelf, pulled off 16 conveniently located titles, and turned to the books' indices. Religion was not mentioned in the indices of three classic theoretical works (Akers, 1998; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Sampson & Laub, 1993), of five theory textbooks (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Cao, 2004; Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2007; Mutchnick, Martin, & Austin, 2009; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002), and of six books on the development of offending (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Benson, 2002; Farrington, 2005; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Thornberry & Krohn, 2003; Wright, Tibbetts, & Daigle, 2008). "Religiosity" was noted in the index of one book that nicely summarizes research on criminological theory, but the topic received only a cursory, one-paragraph treatment (Kubrin, Stucky, & Krohn, 2009, p. 177). Only Robert Agnew (2001), in his *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*, focused on the issue in a clear way. His textbook included a heading, "Does Religion Reduce Delinquency?", and a two-page discussion. Agnew (2001, p. 188) concluded that "religion appears to have a small effect on delinquency, especially victimless crimes. The effect of religion is overshadowed by that of other groups, such as the family, peer group, and school."

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Why do criminologists have a blind spot with regard to religion? Perhaps the most manifest reason is what might be called the "secular humanist (or heathen) effect." Similar to other social sciences, criminology is a secular humanist profession in which faith is marginalized, if not implicitly discouraged. There is no controversy over public displays of faith at our ASC meetings, because they would be virtually unthinkable. Imagine a Society president opening a session with a prayer or an award-winner thanking Jesus for his or her success! Although exceptions exist, life-histories of prominent theorists rarely mention religion or do so only to note that the reformist impulses of these secularized scholars might be traced to their now-rejected early religious upbringing (Cullen, Jonson, Myer, & Adler, 2010). This is not to say that there is not a silent majority—or at least a silent minority—of faithful criminologists. But the point is that this religious commitment remains silent.

Beyond secular humanism, I would suspect that two other considerations have limited criminologists' interest in making religion a more central part of the discipline. I will refer to these as the "Hirschi effect" and the "blame-the-culture effect."

First, in the same year that he published *Causes of Delinquency* (1969), Hirschi joined with Rodney Stark to author his classic study *Hellfire and Delinquency*. As Johnson and Jang note, Hirschi and Stark (1969) failed to detect a religious influence on youthful misconduct. To be sure, this finding did not stop research on religion and offending and, if anything, may have inspired a number of empirical studies. But the key point is that given the lack of a significant effect in his Hellfire article, Hirschi felt no compulsion to incorporate religion systematically into his social bond theory. He did not assert that scholars must explore the impact on delinquency of attachment to ministers and church, commitment to or a stake in religion, belief in or a respect for the Ten Commandments, and involvement in church activities. Moreover, if Hirschi had detected a religion effect, he might well have used this result to further debilitate strain theory (which, as an economic-goal theory, ignored religion) and as a point of contention with social learning theory (claiming that religion reduces crime through social bonds and not as a conduit for prosocial learning). But in the absence of a strong finding, religion was largely pushed aside as a concern central to determining which theory—whether social bond or a competing perspective—should rule criminology.

Over four decades later, it is perhaps difficult for younger scholars to appreciate how much—indeed, how masterfully—Hirschi shaped the criminological enterprise, especially through *Causes of Delinquency* (1969). For example, his measure of strain—the gap between aspirations and expectations—was subsequently used repeatedly in empirical tests, even though its validity was highly questionable (Burton & Cullen, 1992). His dismissal of racial discrimination as a cause of crime also arguably redirected scholars' attention away from this topic (Unnever, Cullen, Mathers, McClure, & Allison, 2009). The point is that had Hirschi and Stark argued that religion was a *theoretically central correlate of delinquency*—an

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empirical fact that all theories must explain—the history of the study of religion and crime might well have been different. Tests of criminological theories would have been seen as incomplete if religion were omitted from the analysis. But this did not happen. The "Hirschi effect" was in the opposite direction, rendering moot any requirement to include religion as a standard measure within criminological investigations.

Second, criminologists dislike any theory that blames culture for crime unless the culture itself is explained by structural disadvantage. Thus, Elijah Anderson's (1999) *Code of the Street*, which traces inner-city moral codes to joblessness and destitution, is okay, but Walter Miller's (1958) lower-class culture theory, which is seen as saying that people are poor and criminal due to their cultural values (or "focal concerns"), is not okay. In this context, scholars thus are wary of religious explanations because they are easily (though not necessarily) portrayed as a rejection of structural theories that link crime to concentrated disadvantage. Put another way, religion attributes crime to bad morals, not to bad social conditions. Thus, the blame-the-culture effect is that criminologists are inclined to reject a religious theory of crime as a reductionist cultural argument that acquits inequitable social arrangements from any complicity in crime.

The exemplar of this mode of thinking is found in *Body Count*, the provocative work of William Bennett, John DiIulio, and James Walters. Bennett et al. (1996, p. 56) argue that the root cause of "predatory street crime" is not poverty or "material want" but rather "moral poverty." Moral poverty is not somehow linked to economic deprivation but rather is the lack of loving parents who, through example and instruction, fail to inculcate a firm sense of right and wrong. For Bennett et al., religion is the "most important dimension" of moral poverty (p. 207). With Original Sin implicitly informing their view, they claim that we have forgotten something that was once widely assumed: "the *good requires constant reinforcement and the bad needs only permission*" (p. 208, emphasis in the original). In this task, "religion is the best and most reliable means we have to reinforce the good" (p. 208).

Setting aside the accuracy of these claims, the key insight is that *Body Count* consciously juxtaposes a moral, religious explanation of crime against a (rejected) structural, economic explanation—claiming, in essence, that only one can be true. After all, not all poor people break the law. Faced with daily disadvantage, resilience to crime is nonetheless a moral choice: Those with a strong religious fiber can resist criminal temptation. Of course, this kind of logic ignores the notion of poverty as a criminogenic risk factor (alas, resilience is not needed in affluent neighborhoods) and the persistent reality that so-called "super-predators" are concentrated in impoverished areas. Regardless, my sense is that to the extent that religion is portrayed—or understood—as a conservative culture war that attacks structural root-cause thinking about crime, it is inconsistent with the professional ideology of criminologists and thus will inspire little interest (see also Wilson, 1975).

The genius of Johnson and Jang's essay, however, is that they ask fellow criminologists to set aside any preexisting predilections and to consider

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religion in a very secular scientific way: What do the data tell us about the impact of religion on crime? With 270 studies reviewed, they have done the heavy lifting to convince us that religion is likely a modest predictor of crime that rivals the effects of other variables typically included in empirical studies and tests of theories of crime. With this foundation laid, the issue is what next steps should be taken in the study of religion and crime. One obvious task, which they are undertaking, is a sophisticated meta-analysis of the extant empirical literature that can provide a more precise estimate of the overall effect size for the impact of religion on crime and a more complete specification of how various substantive and methodological factors condition this effect size. Beyond this important work, I will briefly suggest three potentially fruitful lines of inquiry to pursue: belief in a loving God, an age-graded religious theory of antisocial conduct, and—with some caution—the role of faith-based interventions in the lives of offenders.

A Loving God

As I was growing up in Boston, it was common to be asked what *parish*, rather than what neighborhood, I was from. In my case, it was St. Gregory's parish. Even in the land of the liberalism and the Kennedy's, church was a central point of our lives. Every Sunday morning, all children would attend a special mass at 8:30. To this day, I recall a sermon by Father Sweeney. We typically rejoiced when Father Sweeney entered the altar. He was a microwave priest, saying mass in about 38 minutes (the norm was over 50 minutes). On this one day, however, Father Sweeney was swift but scary. He warned us to be careful not to sin, for Hell was, he reminded us, hotter than a Westinghouse oven!

In this context, it is perhaps understandable that the first major work in my generation on religion and crime—by Hirschi and Stark—would carry the title of *Hellfire and Delinquency*. Religion had long been seen as exerting a controlling function. In studying youths, it thus was easy to examine religion as potentially the ultimate form of direct control. Since God is omnipresent and knows everything, all bad acts will be punished. Celerity might be lacking (unless guilt was immediately felt after a delinquent act), but both certainty (detection was inescapable) and severity (Hellfire loomed) were present. In any event, Hirschi and Stark's work was salient because it framed thinking about the effect of religion. It led scholars to debate whether "supernatural sanctions," as they were called by Hirschi and Stark, reduced or were redundant with more secular controls (see, e.g., Evans, Cullen, Dunaway, & Burton, 1995).

My sense is that the Hellfire approach got the research agenda on religion and crime off on the wrong foot—or at least off on only one foot. My own work has expressed the view that, in general, criminology is too focused on "control." I have felt that although social control matters, there is a whole other side to life—one that I suggested might be captured by the

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construct of social support (Cullen, 1994). Thus, in the socialization process, parents not only detect and punish bad conduct but also hug, help, and love their kids. In a similar vein, religion cannot be reduced to fear of damnation—to the Hellfire effect. In Christianity, for example, there is an invitation to have a personal relationship with a God (Jesus in particular) who forgives, guides, and loves. In no way intending any sacrilege, Jesus is, in criminological terms, the ultimate provider of powerful social support. This is received through individual belief and, when writ large, through membership in a community that is mandated to help those inside and outside the congregation.

Notably, Andrew Greeley (1995) has observed that people's Godly image can vary on a continuum from loving, intimate, and nurturing at one end to distant, harsh, and judgmental at the other end. (He measured this variation through his "gracious image of God" scale.) In fact, research suggests people embrace different images of God and that notions of a loving versus a Hellfire deity arise in childhood (Dickie et al., 1997; Unnever, Cullen, & Bartkowski, 2006; Unnever, Bartkowski, & Cullen, in press). The criminological point is whether Godly images shape involvement in crime.

Building on my work with James Unnever and John Bartkowski, I suggest that that such an image might exert a meaningful influence. I am particularly interested in the side of God neglected by criminologists: the extent to which He is seen as loving. Our research reveals that belief in a close personal relationship with a loving God reduces punitive sentiments, such as support for the death penalty (see also Applegate, Cullen, Fisher, & Vander Ven, 2000). Taking the logic of this finding one step farther, I would submit that the embrace of a loving God is incompatible with conduct that inflicts pain on others. The Biblical prescription, of course, is to live by the Golden Rule, to turn the other cheek, and to forgive others' trespasses. In more secular terms, modeling a loving God may well create both the capacity and the mandate to feel empathy towards others—not because of fear of damnation but because this is "what Jesus would do." Notably, although still in its beginning stages of development, a growing literature exists suggesting that empathy is negatively related to criminal offending (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004, 2007). The unique effect of religiously-inspired empathy, however, remains to be investigated.

In short, despite what many criminologists might have experienced in their childhood, religion is not strictly about a retributive God who seeks to evoke guilt when His commandments are violated and who threatens Hellfire for transgressions. Religion also is about God's love and about the invitation to spread the good word and to be good. Exploring the impact of faith in a loving God thus appears worthy of further exploration.

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An Age-Graded Theory of Religion and Crime

In *Hellfire and Delinquency*, Hirschi and Stark (1969) included a measure not only of Hellfire (belief in the afterlife and in the devil) but also of church membership. As Johnson and Jang's research survey shows, subsequent studies have sought to extend this early work by using diverse measures to capture what being religious entails (e.g., denomination, church membership, church attendance, church activities, reading the Bible, religious beliefs). Their subsequent meta-analysis will, I suspect, give us a more precise reading of the effect size of each of religion's multi-faceted dimensions. My concern is slightly different and is suggested by Johnson and Jang. To wit: To develop a clearer demarcation of the religion and crime nexus, we need to explore how the various dimensions of religion have potentially varying impacts across the life course. That is, we need to develop an age-graded theory of religion and crime.

It is beyond my expertise to map out such a theory, but a few obvious insights can be supplied. Thus, we might start by examining the nature of religious socialization in childhood and how it might affect the expression of conduct disorders, especially among high-risk children. As youngsters move into adolescence, how does religious belief change and how is it challenged? Does participation in church-related youth groups insulate against wayward conduct? What will we discover if we measure not only how many delinquent peers a youth has but also how many friends with a personal relationship to their deity? As individuals make the transition to adulthood, the role of religion in desistance (as Johnson and Jang note) is of intriguing importance, especially as it might relate to the kinds of cognitive transformations that ending crime appears to involve (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Maruna, 2001). But I would suggest one other fruitful line of inquiry: What is the impact of religious belief on participation in white-collar crime? Scholars from Sutherland (1940) onward note the respectable breastplate worn by upperworld offenders—going to church on Sunday and price-fixing and polluting on Monday. It remains to be seen, however, whether religious belief is compartmentalized and easily neutralized or whether it distinguished those who resist from those who succumb to the lure of profitable white-collar schemes.

Faith-Based Intervention: Opportunity and Two Words of Caution

Although a personal observation, I have little doubt that religious volunteers—from Quakers to evangelicals—spend more time visiting prison inmates than criminologists. We scholars thus should be wary of dismissing the humanizing influences that religious people—of all faiths—have inside the correctional system. Religious faith is a shared experience that traverses ideological boundaries and can nourish the view, across the political spectrum, that offenders are capable of being saved. Survey

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research also shows that, in general, the American public supports faith-based correctional initiatives (Cullen et al., 2007).

Another reason for considering faith-based interventions, as Johnson and Jang point out, is science. To the extent that religion is established empirically as a predictor of crime, it becomes a legitimate target for intervention. Increasing faith and involving offenders in a community that will reinforce such prosocial beliefs can potentially reduce recidivism. Further, it also is a legitimate treatment target because unlike other recidivism predictors—say, gender or a past criminal history—it is capable of being changed. Andrews and Bonta (2006) call predictors that have the potential to change "dynamic risk factors."

Still, I offer two words of caution. First, religion is only one predictor of reoffending, and it remains to be seen if it rivals the effect of other, major dynamic predictors of recidivism (e.g., antisocial attitudes) (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Even if so, designing a program that only focuses on one predictor—while ignoring other relevant known criminogenic risks—is questionable.

This leads to the second word of caution. Faith-based interventions have been implemented in the absence of a sound criminological foundation. In this sense—but only in this sense—they are similar to boot camps. Faith-based and boot camp programs draw their legitimacy not from science but from powerful common-sense beliefs about crime. After all, if we use the boot camp to break down wayward youth and then build them back up, won't we save them from a life in crime? If we transform sinners into believers, is not redemption assured? Of course, the answer to this might well be "no." For programs to be effective, they must address stubborn criminological realities. If they do not target for change the known predictors of recidivism with programming capable of altering offender thinking and behavior, they will not be effective (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

To be sure, as Johnson and Jang note, evidence exists that faith-based interventions can be effective (see Johnson, 2004). But this is not enough. There are opportunity costs to subjecting offenders to untried or modestly effective faith-based programs when they might be treated with programs based on the principles of effective intervention—an approach to offender correction rooted in sound social psychological theory and in decades of evaluation research (Cullen & Smith, in press). In the least, faith-based approaches cannot remain purely sacred; they must embrace and learn lessons from scientific criminology so as to more effectively deliver treatments to offenders. For example, it is now well-established that cognitive-behavioral programs are among the most effective intervention strategies (MacKenzie, 2006). In this context, I can imagine a faith-based intervention that uses the principles and techniques of cognitive-behavior psychology but infuses them with religious content. Regardless, the more general point is that religion should not be juxtaposed as an opponent of scientific criminology. Rather, advocates of religion-informed interventions should use science as a powerful tool in an effort to save offenders through faith from a life in crime.

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A CRIMINOLOGY OF RELIGION AND CRIME

As a sociologist, I took it for granted during my graduate training that religion was an inextricable part of grand theory (Marx, Durkheim, and Weber all had something to say about religion's influences!), and that the "sociology of religion" was an important subfield in the discipline. By contrast, as a criminologist, I have long wondered why religion has remained so much on the periphery of our theory, research, and understanding of correctional policy. I think that the broader significance of Johnson and Jang's essay is that it focuses our attention on the salience of religion in American life and in the lives of those who do and do not choose to offend. Indeed, their work might best be seen as making a persuasive case for developing a systematic *criminology of religion*.

Such an undertaking, which should involve (as it does in sociology) criminologists both with and without religious faith, is long overdue. Indeed, rich lines of inquiry remain to be mined—many of them identified nicely by Johnson and Jang. Religion is a multi-faceted experience that potentially affects the onset, persistence, and desistance of crime across the life course. Our prisons, founded as "penitentiaries," are still places where religious influences exist, not just through faith-based programs but through chaplains and religious good works (Sundt & Cullen, 1998). Correctional policies, from support of capital punishment to a belief that the criminally wayward can be saved, have been shown to have a religious foundation (Applegate et al., 2000; Unnever & Cullen, 2006). We also might wish to explore how faith affects decision-making by police and court officials. These comments only outline in a beginning way what the contours of a criminology of religion might entail. But I trust that they are sufficient to convey my chief message: The study of religion should be an integral part of the criminological enterprise and a vibrant subfield within our discipline.

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Religion as a Unique Cultural Influence on Crime and Delinquency: Expanding on Jang and Johnson's Agenda

Jeffery T. Ulmer

In recent years, high-profile critics of religion such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens have asserted that religion causes more harm than good, and that religion fosters as much antisocial as prosocial behavior. Dawkins and Hitchens make their cases primarily with the strength of rhetoric. However, the question of how religion influences prosocial and/or antisocial behavior is best answered with evidence, rather than polemics. Jang and Johnson's systematic review of the research on religion and crime/delinquency calls for religion to assume a central place in the study of crime and delinquency, as well as prosocial behavior.

Sociologists since Durkheim have recognized that religion is a core element of culture, and that it therefore is a powerful potential motivator of and control on behavior (Smith, 2003; see also Vaisey, 2009). Foundational theorists in the social sciences such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, G.H. Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, and Talcott Parsons all speak explicitly (though in different ways) about the important role of religion in society and culture. The study of religion seems to be enjoying a renewed vitality in sociology, and new thinking in psychology (e.g., Pargament, 2008; Geyer & Baumeister, 2005), but criminology has yet to locate religion centrally in the field. Yet religion has powerful but insufficiently understood effects on behavior (Pargament, Magyar-Russell, & Murray-Swank, 2005; Pargament, 2008).

Jang and Johnson's review of the crime and religion literature shows us where we have been and how far we still need to go. They also lay out a rich research agenda, noting many important and under-researched directions of inquiry at the micro and macro levels. These directions fall under two major deficits they identify: a) a lack of a developmental/life course focus approach to the question of how religion influences criminality, and b) a lack of attention to the theme of "resiliency," that is, the degree to which religion acts as a protective factor against strain, structural disadvantage, and social disorganization and other community-level criminogenic factors.

Jang and Johnson correctly note the limitations of quantitative meta-analysis, and opt for a systematic review approach. Given the nature of the literature, this is probably a beneficial choice, because they can include a wider variety of studies. My interest was piqued for a finer grained analysis of the 270 studies reviewed. For example, I would find useful a more explicit teasing out of what we know now, beyond the reviews of Baier and Wright (2001), or Johnson, Li, Larson, and McCullough (2000). What are some particular ways that studies since the late 1990s/early 2000s have

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improved our understanding of the religion-crime/delinquency relationship? Of the 9 percent of studies that found no, or mixed, religiosity effects, what features of these studies might account for this discrepancy with the rest of the literature. What might account for null findings? What of the two studies that found harmful effects—what accounts for their discrepant findings? Jang and Johnson will likely provide a more granular analysis in the future.

I will spend the rest of my commentary elaborating on two themes embedded in their calls for future research. By doing so, I hope to locate and contextualize their review and its recommendations in terms of two key general theories of crime and delinquency. First, I discuss the role of religion as a key cultural phenomenon that is intertwined with social learning theory and its causal mechanisms. Second, I discuss possibilities for how religion provides a cultural framework that augments self control, which in turn decreases crime and delinquency. In doing so, I make some suggestions about religion as a path toward alternative ways to think about self control as compared to the Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) approach (and to a lesser extent, Hirschi's 2004 statements). Then, I raise some questions about what it means to characterize religion as a unique influence on crime/delinquency. Finally, I discuss religion as a fundamental aspect of culture, whose potential causal power goes beyond and encompasses more proximal variables (such as peers, social bonds, self control, strain, opportunity) that we in criminology tend to focus on.

RELIGION AND SOCIAL LEARNING OF CRIME, DELINQUENCY, AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Jang and Johnson note that research on religion's influence has been predominantly social psychological. Part of that social psychological focus includes attention to how religion influences the likelihood of associating with deviant or conforming peers, and identification with/imitation of deviant or conventional role models. I would argue that specifying the mechanisms by which religion can be deeply intertwined in social learning processes is a research agenda that deserves further attention. As Jang and Johnson note, religiosity and spirituality likely fosters social learning processes that are favorable to prosocial behavior and unfavorable to delinquency, and there is support for this in the literature.

Edwin Sutherland (1947) and Ronald Akers (1998) emphasize the learning of definitions or messages favorable or unfavorable to delinquency and crime as a major cause of these behaviors. Religion, in turn, is a source of definitions and moral messages that discourage interpersonal violence, stealing, dishonesty, illicit substance use, etc. Religion thus likely involves differential association processes entailing exposure to and internalization of *definitions*—values, attitudes, and beliefs that reject crime and delinquency.

Peer influences are among the strongest predictors of delinquency

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(Akers, 1998). As Jang and Johnson note, previous research focuses on the idea that religious and non-religious youth differ in their rates of delinquency because they are differentially exposed to delinquent friends (see, for example, Simons, Simons, & Conger, 2004; Johnson, Jang, Larson, & Li, 2001). Alternatively, however, religious and nonreligious adolescents may differ in their rates of delinquency because they are differentially *affected* by exposure to the *same* influences. In other words, religious and non-religious youth may both be exposed to delinquent friends, but religiosity may serve as a protective factor that reduces the effect of exposure. Thus a key research question is, when religious youth are friends with delinquent peers, does their religiosity serve as a protective factor that reduces the effect of criminal or delinquent peer influences? Theoretically, religiosity could reduce the impact of exposure to peer influences for many reasons (see Glanville, Sikkink, Hernandez, 2008). For example, religiosity should strengthen moral beliefs about the wrongfulness of delinquent behaviors. When religious adolescents are encouraged to engage in delinquent behaviors by peers, their religious beliefs could help them to resist peer influences.

Further, religiosity and spirituality likely foster prosocial imitation, role modeling, and self definitions, and discourage delinquent imitation, role modeling, and self definition. Religiosity and spirituality may foster identification with role models who represent prosocial behavior rather than delinquency (Geyer & Baumeister, 2005). Religiosity and spirituality would involve exposure to prosocial spiritual role models. Indeed, much of the teaching in most religious traditions involves defining one's identity and behavior around those of exemplary religious figures and principles. Church attendance and participation in spiritual activities and rituals also involves identification of oneself as a member of a religious group or spiritual tradition, and interacting with co-believers on the basis of these religious or spiritual identities. Religiosity and spirituality likely also foster definitions of self that revolve around prosocial characteristics and behaviors rather than deviant or criminal ones.

In addition, for those individuals already involved in delinquency, religious or spiritual change might be associated with desistence from delinquency and crime (Giordano, Longmore, Schroeder, & Seffrin, 2008; Giordano, Schroeder, & Cernkovich, 2007; Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002). That is, the development of a religious identity and definition of self may encourage desistence from delinquency and may foster prosocial life course outcomes, including involvement in prosocial family or work oriented emotions and behavior (Giordano et al., 2008; Chu, 2007; Schroeder & Frana, 2009).

Finally, religiosity and spirituality likely affect the differential reinforcement of delinquency and prosocial behavior. Participation in religious activities such as church attendance and church activities, would increase the degree to which youth are under conventional adult supervision, and increase the degree to which they could be informally sanctioned for deviance. We expect that religiosity and spirituality would

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increase the degree to which individuals are enmeshed in networks of people who disapprove of delinquent or criminal behavior, and who would provide emotional and social rewards for prosocial behavior. As mentioned below, Geyer and Baumeister (2005) argue that religion in particular should increase the degree to which people experience guilt if they engage in delinquent or antisocial behavior, or behavior that violates their personal norms (see also Akers, 1998). On the other hand, religiosity and spirituality may foster emotional rewards for prosocial behavior.

RELIGION AND SELF CONTROL

Jang and Johnson note that religious individuals may exercise greater self control, and this may be a mediating factor in the religion-crime/delinquency relationship. I agree that self control may be a potentially important intervening mechanism in the religion-crime/delinquency connection that has received little empirical attention. Previous research suggests that religious individuals indeed often exhibit greater levels of self control (Aziz & Rehman, 1996). Geyer and Baumeister (2005) theorize that religiosity should strengthen and improve self control, and thereby increase "morally virtuous" behavior, through a variety of psychological mechanisms. However, Hay and Forrest (2006, p. 740) note that "little is known about the process by which [self control] develops over time."

In Gottfredson and Hirschi's terms (1990; see also Hirschi, 2004), any effect of religiosity on delinquency should be mediated by self control (except for perhaps any effects religion might have on opportunities for deviance), though this theory would accept the possibility that certain religious beliefs might foster parenting practices that increase self control (see Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). However, Akers (1998, p. 162) argues that: "Self control is itself a product of social learning, and therefore any variation that it accounts for ultimately depends on social learning." Religious socialization and participation would seem to be a potentially important social learning process by which self control could be developed and increased. Indeed, self control could be pervious to religious influence, even after the late childhood/early adolescence period posited by Gottfredson and Hirschi to be the point at which one's relative self control stabilizes. In fact, some scholars have moved away the notion of self control as a stable individual trait and towards treating it as a dynamic capacity, conditioned by factors, such as prior self control depletion, moral beliefs and choice, or community characteristics (Muraven, Pogarsky, & Shmueli, 2006; Piquero & Buffard, 2007; Tittle, Ward, & Grasmick, 2004; Wikstrom & Treiber, 2007).

Furthermore, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) say that *between-individual differences* in self control stabilize after late childhood (see the discussion of this point by Hay & Forrest, 2006). However, this leaves open the possibility that religion might increase an individual's *absolute* levels of

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self control, even if it might not equalize stable differences between individuals. For example, imagine two religious adolescents: one with higher self control and one with lower self control. Religion might augment the absolute self control of both individuals, such that both develop greater self control than they would have without religion's influence, but the relative difference between them would remain the same.

A major development in conceptualizing self control is the "muscle" or "strength" model (Baumeister, Bratlafsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000; Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998). This model depicts self control as a cognitive resource that is temporarily depleted whenever it is exercised, just as a muscle is temporarily fatigued when it is used (Baumeister & Exline, 1999, 2000; Geyer & Baumeister, 2005). Importantly, this model also implies that self control should grow stronger with regular "exercise." That is, repeated efforts at self control should make one's self control stronger over time (Muraven et al., 1998). Geyer and Baumeister (2005) argue that religion should decrease a variety of deviant behaviors by augmenting self control, it should do so at any age, and implicitly, that it should do so regardless of individuals' relative base levels of self control. In other words, religion may fortify this psychological muscle of self control by encouraging its repeated use in everyday life.

Religion likely augments the three main elements in the operation of self control: 1) it fosters internalization of *behavioral standards*, 2) it fosters *self monitoring*, and 3) it exorts individuals to *control or alter their own behavior*. Geyer and Baumeister (2005, p. 430) argue:

> "Religion may promote self control by upholding specific moral standards, by motivating people to want to be good, by exploiting the prosocial power of guilt, by linking the religious individual to a stable network of relationships with other believers and with God, by promoting character strength through regular exercise of moral muscle, by fostering self criticism, and by making people feel that their good and bad deeds are being observed and recorded."

What Does It Mean to Say that Religion has Unique Influences?

Jang and Johnson's review and agenda also calls for research on how religiosity may exert *unique* influences that are not mediated by specific non-religious predictors. This echoes Pargament et al.'s (2005; Pargament, 1997) notion that religion is a unique phenomenon, with unique influences on behavior.

What does it mean to say that religion has unique affects on crime and delinquency? According to Pargament (2008, p. 32), "...the sacred is more than a source of solutions and problems, it is a distinctive source of significance." "Religion may be a unique aspect of human functioning, one

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that cannot simply be reduced to or explained away by presumably more basic psychological, social, or physical processes" (Pargament et al., 2005, p. 680). In addition, Jang and Johnson call attention to Christian Smith's (2003) work, which argues that religion provides individuals with distinctive moral narratives and cultural meanings that guide behavior (on the importance of narrative and biography, see also Maines, 1993). Thus, religion likely entails complex processes of socialization, identity formation, and personal narrative, and their effects on behavior may not be reducible to the effects of peer influence, opportunity, social bonds, self control, or shaping how individuals experience strain. Indeed, Jang and Johnson's review finds that often the effects of religiosity on delinquency and crime are not fully mediated by peers, social bonds, self control, or strain.

Jang and Johnson state, "...any effort to explain away the religion-crime relationship as entirely spurious is likely to be as futile as claiming crime can be completely explained by a lack of religion." However, this raises the question: by what mechanisms does religion affect crime and delinquency (and perhaps behavior in general)?

Throughout their conclusion, Jang and Johnson return to the notion of religion and culture. In my view, herein lies the answer to the question of what it means to say that religion's influence is unique. Perhaps religion is a fundamental and ubiquitous dimension of culture, and should be treated as such. If so, religion would fundamentally shape selfhood and socialization, morality and motivation (Smith, 2003; Vaisey, 2009). It would even structure cognition (see Pargament, 2008; Geyer & Baumeister, 2005). In fact, Emile Durkheim argued that religion fundamentally shaped the construction of social reality (Rawls, 1996).

The take-away point for criminology would be that religion might not be merely a significant predictor in regression models that retains some unmediated effects on crime or delinquency measures once the usual predictors derived from the core criminological theories are accounted for. In the larger picture, religion is likely a truly exogenous factor in our theoretical models, the way other dimensions of culture are (such as language, meaning, legal culture, etc.). That is, religion is likely a fundamental and nearly ubiquitous cultural institution that, when present in individual or group life, can shape and conditions socialization, identity, learning and opportunity structures, relationships and social bonds, social capital, and coping mechanisms in the face of strains. Thus, one reason research is likely to find that religion's effects on behavior are not fully mediated by any particular non-religious variable or set of variables is that religion's influence is likely holistic, simultaneously affecting the whole social person. I think this is what lies behind Jang and Johnson's skepticism about the literature's frequent preoccupation with identifying proximal variables (peers, self control, bonds, etc.) that would mediate or "explain away" the effects of religious measures. This constitutes what could be called an unhelpful *proximal variable bias*, to coin a phrase, in the approach to understanding religion's likely multifaceted and complex but pervasive effects on crime and delinquency. It is not that our standard theoretical

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explanations of crime and delinquency are incorrect, but rather that their causal factors can all be profoundly shaped by, and interact with, religion. Ultimately, this is broadest implication of Jang and Johnson's discussion, one that locates religion, and ultimately culture, solidly in the heart of criminological inquiry.

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