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RELIGION AND SEX: A LOOK AT SEXUAL FREQUENCY
AS IT RELATES TO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION,
RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE, AND
SUBJECTIVE RELIGIOSITY

by
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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2009

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Sociology
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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the relationship between sexual activity and religion. In particular, the analysis focuses on the impact of religious affiliation, religious public participation and subjective religiosity on the frequency of sexual activity. Religious categories are operationalized as conservative Protestants, moderate Protestants, liberal Protestants, black Protestants, Catholics, Jews, non-affiliates, no religious preference, and other Protestants. The results of the analysis indicate that conservative Protestants and black Protestants are more sexually active than other religious categories. Attendance at religious services has a negative effect on the frequency of sex activity. Subjective religiosity is not related to sexual frequency. Conclusions and directions for future research are discussed.

I dedicate this research to my father for his persistence in the study of religion as a lay person. He has inspired me to investigate religion through the lens of academic study and to seek an understanding of the intricacies of social religious involvement, while supporting my objective viewpoint on religion. I also dedicate this research to my mother for a lifetime of unwavering love and support. I would like to dedicate this research to my closest friend, Amy for a lifetime of support and encouragement to never settle for less than absolute satisfaction. Finally, I would also like to dedicate this research to my husband Joel, for renewing my sense of happiness and contentment with the world and supporting all of my academic and life endeavors.

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He has helped to make this time a most rewarding time indeed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Recent research has addressed the sexual habits and practices of people in modern society (Bodenmann and Atkins, 2010; Byno, Mullis and Mullis, 2009; Gay, Ellison and Powers, 1996; Jonason and Fisher 2009). As society's norms and values change, aspects such as sexual behavior and sexual activity experience changes as well. Sex has a history of being a taboo issue for some and for others it has been an issue that deals with freedom of expression. However one looks at it, moralists and scientists alike have explored the sexual habits of humans. Attitudes toward sexual activity varies, from modern society's "traditional" view of sex as an act between man and woman, more specifically husband and wife, to the more liberal contemporary viewpoint that sex should be without restriction based upon gender, marital status, age difference, number and type of partners, type of sexual acts performed, and frequency of sexual activity (Wuthnow 2007:138-139). These attitudes could be influenced by a number of factors that underlie systems of beliefs and morals, such as family upbringing, and current familial and friend influences. This research focuses on religion as a major influence on views of sexuality. Religion and sex have a long history. For thousands of years religion has played a major role in defining morality. Some religions put forward agendas that would seek to have all adherents abstain from any sex other than that between husband and wife. Other religions are not as strict, but one would be hard pressed to find any religion that does not have some position concerning the issue.

Researchers have shown an interest in exploring the sexual habits of individuals within society and a fair amount of research has focused on the frequency with which individuals have sex (Garos and Stock, 1998; Rinehart and McCabe, 1998; VanVliet, Van der Ploeg, Kidula,

Malonza, Tyndall and Nagelkerke 1998). Some of this research deals with married couples (Trudel 2002) and some deals with non-married individuals (Burdette, Ellison, Hill, and Glenn 2009; Simmons, Burt and Peterson 2009; Stupiansky, Reece, Middlestadt, Finn, and Sherwood-Laughlin 2009). Some research examines what society's norms consider deviant sexual relationships; such as gay and lesbian relationships (Halkitis, Mattis, Sahadath, Massie, Ladyzhenskaya, Pitrelli, Bonacci and Cowie 2009; Sherkat 2002), relationships involving a partner or partners who have sexual disorders (Garos and Stock 1998; McCarthy 2002), and relationships in which partners are shared or traded (Trudel 2002). Little sociological research examines sexual activity as it correlates with religion and/or spirituality that includes religion more than just as a control variable (Laumann, Michael, and Kolata, 1994). Building on prior research on sexual activity and religion, the purpose of this research is to investigate the association between religiosity and sexual frequency. Specifically, my research addresses a major question. Does religiosity affect the frequency of sexual activity? In exploring this line of research, the following will be addressed, religious affiliation, religious attendance, and subjective religiosity. These aspects of religiosity will be looked at in order to gain an understanding of how they may affect sexual frequency.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Religiosity is a term that represents different aspects of being religious and is multi-faceted (Stark and Glock, 1968). One way to address the multidimensional aspect is to address three general components. The first dimension of religiosity is religious affiliation. Religious affiliation refers to group identification. The second dimension is religious involvement. This is frequently operationalized as how often one attends services. The third dimension addressed in this research is subjective religiousness. This involves a subjective assessment of the importance of religion in one's life or how religious one considers him or herself to be. For the purpose of this research I examine the relationship between each of the three aspects of religiosity and sexuality.

Sexuality as used in this research is characterized by sexual behaviors and activities. It is not to be confused with one's sexual persuasion or preference of gender in sex partners. This research reviews the extant literature addressing issues concerning religiosity and sexual behaviors.

Religious affiliation

A common value across religious doctrines of all denominations is keeping oneself within the acceptable guidelines of sexual activity. Just what those acceptable guidelines are, vary across different religious traditions. While none of them are particularly known for having restrictions on the specific number of times their adherents are allowed to have sex, most are known for certain limitations concerning the types of sexual activity. For instance, Catholics and some Protestants are taught that sex is an act for achieving procreation and that it is not intended

for recreation. It can be assumed then that they would not be having sex numerous times outside of periods of intentional procreation.

There are over a thousand “religions” in the United States and classifying them into groups is a complex task. However, there are general classifications that are accepted by most social scientists to be representative of American mainline religious categories. This research addresses mainline American religions including, liberal Protestants, moderate Protestants, conservative Protestants, black Protestants, Catholics, Jewish, other, and no affiliation. It should be noted however, that researchers have variations on this scheme (Roof and McKinney, 1987; Steensland, Park, Regnerus, Robinson, Bradford Wilcox, and Woodberry, 2000).

Sexuality in general, involves many different issues. To elaborate, whether people engage in premarital sex, extramarital sex, bisexual sex, homosexual sex, heterosexual sex, as well as attitudes toward these behaviors are all topics of interest. However, for the purpose of this study, frequency that people have sex is the activity to be examined. One aspect of the relationship between religion and sexual activity is the extent to which affiliation affects sexual behavior. Protestant denominations and sects make up a large percentage of religious adherents in the United States. Some Protestants have become more liberal over time in their attitudes towards sexual activity, specifically pre-marital sex (Bohrendahl and Brooks, 2005). Research shows that Protestants have more unfavorable attitudes about extra-marital sex than other types of non-marital sex. This is likely because of the explicit Christian doctrine that views adultery as a sin. Premarital sex is also viewed negatively but is less frowned upon when it is with a partner one intends to marry (Alston, 1974; Roof and McKinney, 1987). By definition of the typology, Roof and McKinney (1987) report that conservative Protestants tend to lean toward a more traditional

outlook on many issues and liberal Protestants are more liberal on their views of many social issues. It follows then, that one would expect conservative Protestants to also have more stringent views on sex and sexual activity. Nonetheless, it could be misleading to make the assumption that because liberal Protestants happen to be more liberal on a number of secular issues, they would differ from moderate Protestants or conservative Protestants in their opinions on sex and thus the frequency with which they engage in sexual activity. However, it is certainly possible that more conservative stances might support the position that sex is for procreation rather than recreation.

Roof and McKinney (1987) have completed a vast amount of research on the topic of religion and are seen as an authority on the subject. Included in their works are descriptions of the mainline religions addressed in this research, as well as classifications of the different American denominations within the mainline. They address the moral values and doctrine associated with each part of the religious typology outlined here. According to Roof and McKinney conservative Protestants consist of Southern Baptists, Churches of Christ, Evangelicals/Fundamentalists, Nazarenes, Pentecostals/Holiness, Assemblies of God, Churches of God, and Adventists. These groups do have certain views on sex (Bohzendahl and Brooks, 2005; Roof and McKinney, 1987). As Roof and McKinney (1987) point out, conservative Protestants allege that the moral values and behavior related to sexual practices have been experiencing erosion and that this is a major point of concern for them. Some of the issues that conservative Protestants are concerned with include extramarital sex, premarital sex, and homosexuality. The trends related to these issues that they found in their research exemplify the very traditional nature of conservative Protestants when it comes to sexual mores. For example,

none of conservative Protestant groups exceeded 22% when being asked if extramarital sex was not always wrong, and 25% when asked if premarital sex was not always wrong. None of the groups had more than 13% agree that homosexuality was not always wrong. Now, approximately 25% of the group may seem like a high number, but when compared to Jews who had over 50% agree and those of no religious preference who had 60% agree, the perspective is clear, conservative Protestants put heavy judgment on these elements that are associated with sexuality. They do not address sexual frequency, which is the focus of this research.

Herzog (2008) presents a rather detailed analysis of these conservative Protestants, which she addresses as being the Religious Right, and their views on sex. The Religious right is terminology that we use in modern society to describe conservative religious groups whose beliefs about most doctrinal and secular issues are very traditional. Masturbation is seen by conservative Protestants as wrong. Non-marital sex (sex before marriage or outside of one's marriage) is also considered taboo. Both are viewed as being a cause for the destruction of marriages, something that would harm one's soul, while holding one back from growing emotionally. Conservative Protestants also have a staunch viewpoint on abstinence for all unmarried adherents, preaching that seeking sex outside of marriage is attention-seeking behavior and indicative of low self esteem. Conservative Protestants have negative opinions of contraceptives like birth control pills and prophylactics. They believe that the use of such things is dangerous. Conservative Protestants consider gay or homosexual individuals to be a threat to *family values*. In addition, they feel that they have a problem that needs to be remedied. Any relationship other than that between a man and a woman is unacceptable. Basically, conservative Protestants or the Religious Right, are very traditional and reserved in their sexual views not just

their religious doctrine. Accordingly, conservatives do not endorse any sexual behavior other than that between a husband and a wife. There is no mention of how conservatives view the frequency of sexual activity or how sexual frequency fits into their scheme of morality (Herzog 2008).

Perhaps it can be assumed that conservative Protestants would favor sex in modest amounts. However, Laumann et. al (1994) performed an expansive survey about sex in America and part of that research looked at sexual frequency. Their religious typology was distinctly different than what is used here in this research, mainly because it is not as inclusive. Conservative Protestants was one of the categories they used. When they inquired how often the respondents had sex within the last year, the results showed that 68% of the conservative Protestant men and 62% of the conservative Protestant women reported having sex between a few times per month and two or three times per week. This does not seem like such a modest amount. Only 7% of conservative Protestant men and 9% of conservative Protestant women reported having sex more than 4 times per week. Another interesting result, 11% of conservative Protestant men and 15% of conservative Protestant women reported having no sex at all in the last year. The other religious groups surveyed were mainline Protestants, Catholics, and none or no religious affiliation. The results showed that generally these other religious groups also had similar results regarding the few times per month and two or three times a week responses (Laumann et. al., 1994).

Moderate Protestants have a less restrictive view on sexuality. Moderate denominations consist of Methodists, Lutherans, Christians (Disciples of Christ), Northern Baptists, and Reformed Protestants. While these Protestants still view sex as an act that is shared between

husband and wife, there are some variations on how they view non-marital sex, contraception, and homosexuality. With regard to homosexuality, there are many gay parishioners and clergy that are not openly gay who report being religious. This suggests that that people who are gay affiliate with religions that are more tolerant of sexual diversity. Roof and McKinney (1987) found that moderate Protestants were somewhat more likely, proportionally, than conservative Protestants to tolerate extra-marital sex, premarital sex, and homosexuality. Opposed to the 11-20% average range of conservatives who tolerate such behaviors, moderate Protestants fall in the average range of 23% who tolerate homosexuality and extramarital sex, and 29% who tolerate premarital sex. There is an exception here as Reformed Protestants show a strong decline in the percentage of those who would tolerate extramarital sex (Roof and McKinney, 1987). Moderate Protestants are so because even though they are not as strict with tradition when it comes to their morals and doctrines, they tend to like to keep a close tie to the conservative nature of Protestantism.

The final group among the Protestant continuum is liberal Protestants which consist of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and the United Church of Christ. Here is where we see the most deviation from the traditional views of the conservative Protestants. The liberal Protestants are more open to the idea of homosexuality and are more tolerant about extra and premarital sexual behavior. Roof and McKinney report that on average 35% of liberal Protestants tolerate homosexuality and non-marital sexual activity. Lauman et. al. (1994) found that what they termed mainline Protestants, which are a combination of both moderate and liberal Protestants, were similar to conservative Protestants because 65% of the men and 65% of the women responded that they had sex between a few times per month and two or three times a week. Like

the conservative Protestants, a relative few reported having sex more than 4 times per week, 8% of the men and 5% of the women. Also, 8% of the men and 13% of the women reported having no sex at all in the last year (Laumann et. al., 1994).

Contraception is a different sexual issue that requires some consideration. The ability to bear children is seen as a gift from God. Therefore, religious beliefs about contraception have been traditionally conservative in nature. Yet, as society changes and continues to grow, certain groups may look at the phenomena of birth control slightly differently. Non-conservative Protestants are more lenient concerning their views on contraception than conservative or moderate Protestants. Black Protestants may have a more conservative view on contraception because they have the concern that contraception would be the majority group's way of exercising population control over them (Goodson, 1997).

Another religious group in the typology being used here is black Protestants. The denominations that make up the Black Protestant typology include Methodists, Northern Baptists, and Southern Baptists. Within this typology, the most conservative of the denominations are the Methodists, followed by Southern Baptists, and then Northern Baptists. Two-thirds of African Americans identify their religious preference as being either Baptist or Methodist. This group of adherents is unique for multiple reasons. Black Protestants religious behaviors are influenced by the loss of African culture that black people experienced as a result of being torn from their home and forced into slavery. They had huge investments in the pursuit of equality as they struggled to gain civil rights and justice for previous transgressions against them. The struggles of African Americans to obtain equality within society along with the desire they have to retain their culture, impact their ideologies and belief systems. While not all black

Protestants in the United States have the heritage of enslavement, almost all do have a history of being segregated and discriminated against, regardless if they are African Americans or dark skinned people from other locales. These elements combined make black Protestants different from other Protestant groups. They have used religion to interpret their experience with white America and to provide shelter from the hostilities of the world around them. For example, their level of attendance is very high like that of conservative Protestants and their faithfulness to their denomination remains very high which leaves them more immune to the phenomena of individualist religiosity (Roof and McKinney, 1987)

The characteristics of conservative Protestantism do not necessarily represent black Protestantism. When it comes to tolerance of homosexuality, 21% of black Protestants do not feel it is wrong compared with 23% of moderate Protestants who do not feel that it is wrong (Roof and McKinney, 1987). To date, research has not focused on black Protestant's sexual frequency. However, research has found that among the different religions black Protestants have the most liberal attitudes toward pre-marital sex (Bohrendahl and Brooks, 2005), with as many as 50% agreeing that it is okay (Roof and McKinney, 1987), but they are more likely to think that it is wrong now than they were over 30 years ago (Wuthnow, 2007). Concerning non marital sex black Protestants are like liberal Protestants with 31% indicating they would tolerate extramarital sex (Roof and McKinney, 1987). Taking into consideration that black Protestants are affiliated with denominations that fall under the typology of conservative Protestants, it raises the question of whether the frequency with which they have sex would be similar or not because obviously their views on other sexual activities are different from those of the conservative Protestants.

Literature on the different typologies of Protestant religions is plentiful. As seen in this review, the literature is mostly on the morals related to sexual behaviors and corresponding beliefs. Knowing the ways in which conservative Protestants, moderate Protestants, liberal Protestants, and Black Protestants view the other sexual behaviors lays an important framework with which to analyze why they may view sexual frequency one way or another or why they may actively have sex with some degree of frequency.

Literature concerning Catholics and sexuality includes topics such as the controversy over sexual misconduct in the Catholic church, sexual abuse and scandal, sexual misconduct by clergy, abortion issues, and anti-gay sentiments of the church rather than sexual behavior in general. Among Roof and McKinney's (1987) typology of mainline religions in America, Catholics fall somewhere in the middle with regards to traditionalism or conservative beliefs. There are a higher number of young adults who identify as Catholics than the number of young adults who identify as Protestants (Wuthnow, 2007). The doctrine of the Catholic religion states that non-marital sex is not allowed, but it has been pointed out that over time the lay attitudes of Catholics towards non-marital sex have become less restrictive and thus less analogous with the doctrine (Jenks and Christiansen, 2002). Wuthnow (2007) also points out that Catholics are less likely than other conservative religious groups to say that premarital sex is wrong. Interestingly, Jenks and Christiansen (2002) found that Catholics who had been divorced were more likely to view premarital sex in a favorable manner than did Catholics who were married. Actually, 36% of Catholics agree that premarital sex is not wrong in all cases (Roof and McKinney, 1987). Bohzendahl and Brooks (2005) also looked at Catholic attitudes towards pre-marital sex and found a similar trend they have become more liberal in their attitudes over time. However,

Catholics whether divorced or married were still much more likely to disagree with extra-marital sex. Roof and McKinney (1987) report that only 30% of Catholics tolerate extramarital sex, which is comparable to Black Protestants (31%) and liberal Protestants (28%). Laumann et. al. (1994) reported that 68% of Catholic men and 65% of Catholic men had sex between a few times per month and two or three times per week. Interestingly, they also reported 8% of Catholic men and 5% of Catholic women had sex more than 4 times per week, and 8% of Catholic men and 14% of Catholic women had no sex in the last year. Laumann et. al. (1994) paint a picture with their research that religious affiliation plays little part in how often people have sex because most people regardless of religion are having sex between a few times per month and two or three times per week. Admittedly, their data is almost 20 years old and does not include such factors like attendance and subjective religiosity as they were not specifically studying these aspects. This research will provide a look into current trends of sexual frequency as they relate directly to religiosity.

The final religious group is Judaism. Although Jews make up a fairly small proportion of all religious adherents the fact that their religion and culture are more closely tied together than any other of the religions among the categorical typology always attracts the interest of researchers. Most existing research deals with either sexual abuse or other topics unrelated to sexuality as defined by this research. Bohzendahl and Brooks (2005) found that among the mainline religions in Roof and McKinney's (1987) typology, Jews are the second most liberal in their views on sexuality following black Protestants. Wuthnow's (2007) analysis of Jews in relation to their attitudes towards pre-marital sex found that 95% of unmarried Jews said they had sex within the last year, coinciding with the analysis that 56% of Jews think that premarital

sex is not always wrong, it is clear that of the religious groups there is a much more liberal attitude toward sex and sexuality among Jews. They are much more tolerant of homosexuality (64%) and less constrictive when concerning extramarital sex with 51% agreeing that it is not always wrong (Roof and McKinney, 1987). Little research to date has focused on the frequency with which Jews have sex, but knowing how liberal they are with other forms of expressing sexuality will make for an interesting comparison with the results from the research on sexual frequency.

Within the typology of religions is a category entitled 'other' and this category includes religions that do not fit with the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish paradigm. Addressed in this category are Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and Unitarians. The conservative nature of the attitudes toward sexuality among these religions varies, with Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses being the most conservative comparing to conservative Protestants and with Christian Scientists comparing to Jews. Unitarians are perhaps the most liberal of all religions and in some cases are even more liberal than non-affiliates.

The final category consists of those with no religious preference and as Roof and McKinney (1987) provide evidence for them, they are extremely liberal when it comes to sexuality. Tolerance of homosexuality is at 60% for those of no preference, 66% would tolerate premarital sex, and 59% would tolerate extra-marital sex. Once again, since limited research has focused on sexual frequency with relation to religious affiliation, it will be fascinating to see how the results for the different groups within this typology fall, including these seemingly super liberal groups of "other" and "no preference" and whether or not this has any effect whatsoever on how often a person has sex. Laumann et. al. (1994) reported that of the no preference group

the men ranged fairly equally across all four responses ranging from not at all to more than 4 times per week. The women in that group compare to the women in their mainline Protestant group with 63% responding between a few times per month and two or three times per week, 10% responding not at all in the last year and 9% responding more than four times per week.

Public Religious Participation

Attendance at religious services is a variable often used in social science research to gauge how active respondents are within their respective religions. This is because just identifying with a specific religious group is not necessarily indicative of how strongly one practices their religious faith. There are cases where people identify but do not participate, cases in which people participate heavily, and everywhere in between. Looking at how religious attendance affects a subject matter is taking it one step beyond affiliation. For this reason attendance at religious services is included in this research. Based on simple deduction, one could make a case that higher attendance at religious services results in closer adherence to religious morals. This would suggest that the more one attends religious services, the more likely that person would be to participate in religious activities and thus more likely to refrain from engaging in the sexual behaviors mentioned previously such as premarital sex and extramarital sex. They would be more closely tied to their religious community and feel more accountable for their actions or perhaps feel as if they should be setting an example for their fellows.

This research does not discriminate between different forms of sexual behavior when asking about sexual frequency, the inquiry here merely wants to know how often one engages in sex of any kind. So the question at hand is, does a person's level of attendance at religious services affect the frequency with which people have sex? Research has found that religious attendance

lends support to sexual activity that is marriage-centered and involves low promiscuity, heterosexuality, and high reproductive rates (Weeden, Cohen and Kenrick, 2008). In ranking the different mainline religions the following are from most likely to attend to least likely to attend religious services: conservative Protestants, black Protestants, Catholics, moderate Protestants, liberal Protestants, Jews, and no preference (Roof and McKinney, 1987).

Subjective Religiosity

How religious a person considers him or herself to be is another element that may determine religion's true impact on sexual activity. Splika, Hood, and Gorsuch (1985) draw the conclusion that the frequency with which married couples have sex is the same for religious people as it is for non-religious people. However, they point out that religious people are half as likely to participate as non religious people in premarital or extramarital sex. It would seem a logical deduction to assert that the more religious one considers oneself to be, the more one would adhere to the beliefs and morals of one's religion. Using the previous categories of religious affiliation and religious attendance as a guide, one might infer that the more religious one considers oneself to be, the more likely one would be to refrain from non-marital sexual behaviors. Subjective religiosity does not necessarily correspond with belonging to a specific religion, nor does it necessarily correspond with high levels of attendance.

Because of the subjective nature of the variable, subjective religiosity serves to represent religious beliefs independent of the actual level of involvement. Roof and McKinney (1987) point out there is a scale to be considered for the percentages of those who affiliate with certain religions of how important religion is in their own lives. Seventy-two percent of Southern Baptists (conservative Protestants), 56% of Methodists and 55% of Lutherans (moderate

Protestants), 56% of Catholics, 55% of Presbyterians and 37% of Episcopalians (liberal Protestants) and 25 % of Jews say that religions is very important in their own lives (Roof and McKinney, 1987).

So how does this relate to sexual frequency? While no sociological research to date has focused specifically on the relationship between sexual frequency and subjective religiosity, a person who has a high level of subjective religiousness would suggest that person has deeply internalized the religious norms they believe in. In this case, it could be expected that those who are unmarried may have less sexual frequency. This research will test the relationship to see if and where the differences occur.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This study uses data from the 2008 and 2010 General Social Surveys (GSS). The GSS is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) every two years. The GSS is a cross-sectional survey that includes non-institutionalized, English-speaking individuals eighteen years and older. The data contain a wide array of questions that are appropriate to examine the relationship between religiosity and sexual activity. In addition, the surveys include a number of sociodemographic variables that will be used as control variables. The two survey years are combined so that an adequate number of certain religious categories (e.g., Jewish respondents) are represented. The sample size for the analysis is 2,743.

Dependent Variable: Frequency of Sex During Last Year

Sexual frequency is measured by responses to the question on the GSS: “How often have you had sex in the last year?” The possible responses and value codes were (0) “not at all,” (1) “once or twice,” (2) “once a month,” (3) “2-3 times a month,” (4) “weekly,” (5) “2-3 times per week,” (6) “three or more times per week,” (8) “don’t know,” and (9) “N/A.” For the purpose of this study, the “don’t know” and “N/A” responses are treated as missing.

Independent Variables: Religiosity

Religious Affiliation

The measurement of the religious affiliation is based on two questions in the GSS. The first question was: “What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?” The possible responses to this question were (1) Protestant, (2) Catholic, (3) Jewish, (4) none, (5) other (specify), (6) Buddhism, (7) Hinduism, (8) other

Eastern, (9) Moslem/Islam, (10) Orthodox-Christian, (11) Christian, (12) Native American, (13) inter-denominational, (0) not applicable, (98) don't know, and (99) no answer.

An additional question was asked if the response to the first question was Protestant. The question was: "What specific denomination is that, if any?" The responses were coded as (10) American Baptist Association, (11) American Baptist Church in the U.S.A., (12) National Baptist Convention of America, (13) National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., (14) Southern Baptist Convention, (15) other Baptist Churches, (18) Baptist, don't know which, (20) African Methodist Episcopal, (21) African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, (22) United Methodist, (23) other Methodist Churches, (28) Methodist, don't know which, (30) American Lutheran Church, (31) Lutheran Church in America, (32) Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, (33) Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church, (34) other Lutheran Church, (35) Evangelical Lutheran, (40) Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., (41) United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., (42) other Presbyterian Churches, (43) Presbyterian, merged, (48) Presbyterian, don't know which, (50) Episcopal Church, (60) other (specify), (70) no denomination given or non-denominational church, (0) not applicable, (98) don't know, and (99) no answer.

These two questions are used to recode religious affiliation according to the Roof and McKinney religious categorical scheme. The resulting religious families identified by Roof and McKinney (1987) are liberal Protestants (Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Church of Christ), moderate Protestants (Methodists, Lutherans, reformed churches, Northern Baptists), black Protestants (Methodist and Baptist backgrounds), conservative Protestants (Evangelicals, Southern Baptists, Pentecostals), Catholics, Jews, no preference, and other Protestants.

The other Protestant category includes: Evangelical Congregational, Assembly of God, Brethren Church, Brethren, Plymouth, United Brethren, United Brethren in Christ, Christian Disciples, Christ in Christian Union, Christ Church Unity, Christ Adelprians Church of Christ (Evangelical), Church of Christ, Churches of God, Church of God in Christ, Church of God in Christ Holiness, Church of Holiness, Pilgrim Holiness, Nazarene, Pentecostal Assembly of God, Pentecostal, Church of God, Pentecostal Holiness, Sanctified, Sanctification, United Holiness, and assorted smaller evangelical and fundamentalist groups.

Public Religious Participation

Religious Attendance is determined by asking the respondents: “How often do you attend religious services?” The possible answers the respondents could choose from and the way in which they are coded are as follows: Never (0), Less than once a year (1), Once a year (2), Several times a year (3), Once a month (4), 2-3x a month (5), nearly every week (6), every week (7), more than once a week (8), don’t know or N/A (9). Don’t know and N/A responses will be omitted from the analysis

Subjective Religiosity

Subjective Religiosity is determined in the GSS by asking respondents: “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Are you...?” The possible responses were “very religious” (1), “moderately religious” (2), “slightly religious” (3), “not religious at all” (4), “don’t know” (8), and N/A (9). Again, don’t know and N/A responses will be omitted from the analysis.

Control Variables

The literature shows that a number of additional sociodemographic factors affect sexual activity. As a result, several variables will be included in the analysis to control for these effects.

The first demographic variable to be considered is age. Age is coded in actual years and ranges from 18 to 89 and older. Another variable is gender, and gender will be incorporated by constructing a dummy variable for females.

The impact of a respondent's educational attainment on sexual activity will also be included. The educational attainment of a respondent is assessed using the highest year of school completed at the time of the survey. The coding for educational attainment in the GSS is in actual years of school completed and ranges from 0 to 20. The assumption is that the number of years beyond high school reflects the appropriate years in college and graduate school to earn corresponding vocational and academic degrees.

The study will also control for the effect of family income on attitudes toward homosexuality. The respondents are asked to indicate their household earnings from all sources for either 2005 or 2007, depending on whether the sample is from the 2006 or 2008 GSS. Family income is coded as (1) under \$1,000, (2) \$1,000 to 2,999, (3) \$3,000 to 3,999, (4) \$4,000 to 4,999, (5) \$5,000 to 5,999, (6) \$6,000 to 6,999, (7) \$7,000 to 7,999, (8) \$8,000 to 9,999, (9) \$10,000 to 12,499, (10) \$12,500 to 14,999, (11) \$15,000 to 17,499, (12) \$17,500 to 19,999, (13) \$20,000 to 22,499, (14) \$22,500 to 24,999, (15) \$25,000 to 29,999, (16) \$30,000 to 34,999, (17) \$35,000 to 39,999, (18) \$40,000 to 49,999, (19) \$50,000 to 59,999, (20) \$60,000 to 74,999, (21) \$75,000 to 89,999, (22) \$90,000 to 109,999, (23) \$110,000 to 129,999, (24) \$130,000 to 149,999, (25) \$150,000, (26) refused to answer, (98) don't know, and (99) no answer. Mean substitution will be used for respondents who refused to answer.

Marital status is the next control variable to be included in the analysis. The question in the GSS asks the respondents if they are currently- married, widowed, divorced, separated, or

have ever been married? The possible answers were (1) married (2) widowed (3) divorced (4) separated (5) never married, or (6) no answer. Marital status is recoded to represent three statuses. Dummy variables are created to represent respondents who are married, divorced or separated, and single. Married respondents serve as the reference category. For this analysis, widowed respondents are omitted.

The next control variable represents regional residence. Many studies include a dummy variable for the South or southern residence. Since the South is often referred to as the Bible Belt, it is possible that self-reported sexual activity varies by region of residence in the U.S. While this conclusion or assumption may be changing, a dummy variable for southern residence will be included in the analyses. The item in the GSS indicates respondent's area of residence. The coding follows the U.S. census coding for region. The resulting codes in the GSS are (1) New England, (2) Middle Atlantic, (3) East North Central, (4) West North Central, (5) South Atlantic, (6) East South Central, (7) West South Central, (8) Mountain, and (9) Pacific. A dummy variable is created for southern residence using the South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central codes to represent the South (South = 1, all others = 0).

The final control variable represents number of children living in the household. The measurement of this variable is the actual number of children living in the household and ranges from zero to eight. All values refer to the actual number of children except the value (8). The value (8) refers to eight or more children living in the household. The reason is that a very low percentage of households have more than eight children living at home.

Analytic Strategy

In order to address my research questions, the analytic strategy proceeds in two stages. The first analysis presents the descriptive statistics for the dependent, independent, and control variables. The second aspect of the analysis examines the impact of religious and control variables on sexual activity using OLS multiple regression. Four models are used. The first model includes only the religious variables of affiliation to examine the gross effect of affiliation on sexual activity. The second model expands to include the religious attendance variable. The third model expands further to include the subjective religiosity variable, and the fourth model includes all variables and control variables in order to see if the relationships between religiosity and sexual activity remain in the full model.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Table One displays the descriptive statistics and includes the means and standard deviations for the dependent, independent and control variables. In Table One the mean score for the sexual frequency variable is 2.61, with a standard deviation of 1.995.

About 5.6% of the sample consists of Liberal Protestants with a standard deviation of .231. Conservative Protestants represent about 14% of the sample with a standard deviation of .346. Catholics represent about 23.5% of the sample with a standard deviation of .424. Jews represent about 2% of the sample with a standard deviation of .146. Those with no religious affiliation represent about 17.5% of the sample with a standard deviation of .379. Non-denominational respondents represent about 10% of the sample with a standard deviation of .302. Black Protestants represent about 9% of the sample with a standard deviation of .278. Other Protestant respondents represent about 4% of the sample with a standard deviation of .193. Moderate Protestants represent about 15% of the sample and serve as the reference category in the subsequent multiple regression analysis.

Religious Attendance has a mean of 3.46 with a standard deviation of 2.740. The scale used to measure this variable ranges from 0 to 8 with 0 representing *never attends* to 8 representing *more than once a week*. This means that on average respondents attended religious services between several times a year (3) and once a month (4). The final religious variable outlined in Table One is subjective religiosity. This variable measures how religious the respondent considers him or herself to be on a scale of 1-4 where 1 represents *Not Religious* and 4 represents *Very Religious*. This variable has a mean of 2.573 with a standard deviation of .956,

which means that the average religiosity of the respondents is slightly (2) to moderately (3) religious.

Table One also displays the descriptive statistics for the sociodemographic and control variables. The mean age of the respondent is 48.14 with a standard deviation of 17.25. Females have a mean of .5486 with a standard deviation of .497, which means that a little over half of the respondents are female. The education variable has a mean of 13.66 with a standard deviation of 2.933. This variable is measured in terms of years of school completed, so that means that on average respondents had completed at least 1 year of college (13). The total family income variable has a mean of 17 with a standard deviation of 5.43. This variable is measured using a scale that ranges from 1 to 25 and the number 17 on this scale represents the increment of *\$35000 to \$39999* meaning that is the average income of the respondents.

Marital Status is also represented in Table One. The dummy variable constructed to represent divorced and separated respondents has a mean of .1920 with a standard deviation of .394. Single has a mean of .251 with a standard deviation of .434. This means that the sample consists of 19% divorced or separated people, 25% never married people and 56% married people. Southern residence is another control variable and has a mean of .381 with a standard deviation of .485. This means that about 38% of the respondents live in the south. Finally, Table One shows the number of children living in the household that the respondents have. The mean is 1.84 with a standard deviation of 1.634, which means that on average the respondents have between 1 and 2 children.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sexual Frequency in last year	2.61	1.995
Moderate Protestant	.147	.354
Liberal Protestant	.056	.231
Conservative Protestant	.139	.346
Catholic	.235	.424
Jewish	.022	.146
None	.174	.379
Non-Denominational	.101	.302
Black Protestant	.084	.278
Other Protestant	.038	.193
Attendance at religious services	3.46	2.740
Subjective Religiosity	2.573	.956
Age	48.14	17.250
Female	.548	.497
Highest level of Education	13.66	2.933
Total Family Income	17.00	5.432
Divorced	.192	.393
Single	.251	.433
Lives in the South	.380	.485
Number of Children in House	1.84	1.63
N=	2734	

Table Two displays the results of the multiple regression analysis. Four models are displayed. Model One represents the effects of religious affiliation on my dependent variable sexual frequency. Model Two represents the effects of religious affiliation, and religious attendance, on sexual frequency. Model Three represents the effects of religious affiliation, religious attendance, and subjective religiosity on sexual frequency. Model four includes the control variables and it represents the effects of religious affiliation, religious attendance, subjective religiosity, age, gender, education, income, marital status, region, and number of children on sexual frequency. Moderate Protestants represent the reference group for all four models.

Model One in Table Two shows the results of my regression analysis for religious affiliation and explains 14 percent of the variance in sexual frequency. Model One illustrates that religious affiliation has a significant positive effect on sexual frequency. Specifically, conservative Protestants, Catholics, no preference respondents, non-denominational respondents, and black Protestants have a significant positive effect of sexual frequency. Thus, conservative Protestants, Catholics, no preference respondents, non-denominational respondents, and black Protestants have sex more frequently than do moderate Protestants.

Model Two in Table Two includes religious attendance and explains 15 percent of the variance in sexual frequency. Model Two also demonstrates that religious attendance has a significant impact on sexual frequency. The difference here is that it is a negative impact. Model Two demonstrates that a one-unit increment in religious attendance leads to a -.050 decrement in sexual frequency. The standardized regression coefficient indicates that a one standard deviation

Table 2 Multiple Regression Results: The Effects of Religion and Sociodemographic Variables on Sexual Frequency

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Liberal Protestant	.193/.022 (.099)	.194/.023 (.187)	.168/.020 (.186)	.189/.022 (.158)
Conservative Protestant	.689/.120* (.141)	.716/.124* (.141)	.753/.131* (.141)	.281/.049* (.125)
Catholic	.505/.107* (.126)	.503/.107* (.126)	.477/.101* (.125)	.188/.040 (.107)
Jewish	.328/.024 (.274)	.294/.022 (.274)	.161/.274 (.012)	.108/.008 (.232)
None	.785/.149* (.134)	.630/.120* (.142)	.417/.079* (.150)	.121/.023 (.127)
Non-Denominational	.737/.112* (.154)	.731/.111* (.154)	.714/.108* (.154)	.230/.035 (.131)
Black Protestant	.824/.115* (.163)	.866/.121* (.164)	.906/.126* (.163)	.570/.079* (.144)
Other Protestant	.560/.054* (.216)	.613/.059* (.216)	.622/.060* (.216)	.324/.031 (.182)
Attendance at religious svcs.	--	-.050/-.069* (.016)	-.018/-.024 (.017)	-.030/-.041* (.015)
Subjective Religiosity	--	--	-.230/-.110* (.054)	-.071/-.034 (.046)
Age	--	--	--	-.068/-.587* (.002)
Female	--	--	--	-.360/-.090* (.065)
Highest level of Education	--	--	--	-.012/-.018 (.012)
Total Family Income	--	--	--	.037/.101* (.007)
Divorced	--	--	--	-.645/-.127* (.088)
Single	--	--	--	-1.054/-.229* (.098)
Lives in the South	--	--	--	.177/.043* (.071)
Number of Children in House	--	--	--	.126/.103* (.024)
Intercept	2.072	2.265	2.786	5.783
N=	2734	2734	2734	2734
R Square	.138	.151	.171	.560

Note: Cell entries are given as unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parenthesis. *p<.05. The reference group for affiliation is Moderate Protestants. The Reference group for marital status is married.

increment in religious affiliation leads to a $-.69$ standard deviation decrement in sexual frequency. Thus, as religious attendance increases, sexual frequency decreases. In Model Two the effects of religious affiliation variables remain the same once attendance is added to the regression model.

Model Three in Table Two includes subjective religiosity and explains 17 percent of the variation in sexual frequency. Model Three also demonstrates that subjective religiosity has a significant, negative impact on sexual frequency. Model Three demonstrates that a one-unit increment in subjective religiosity leads to a $-.230$ decrement in sexual frequency. The standardized regression coefficient indicates that a one standard deviation increment in subjective religiosity leads to a $-.110$ standard deviation decrement in sexual frequency. Thus, as subjective religiosity increases, sexual frequency decreases. The effects of religious affiliation remain constant, but attendance at religious services is no longer significant once subjective religiosity is entered into the model.

Model Four in Table Two adds the sociodemographic and control variables and explains 56 percent of the variation in sexual frequency. Model Four also illustrates how certain Control Variables have a significant impact on sexual frequency. Model Four illustrates that education does not have a significant impact on sexual frequency. However, Model Four illustrates that age has a significant negative impact on sexual frequency. Model Four demonstrates that a one-unit increment in age leads to a $-.68$ decrement in sexual frequency. The standardized regression coefficient indicates that a one standard deviation increment in age leads to a $-.587$ standard deviation decrement in sexual frequency. Thus, as age increases, sexual frequency decreases.

Model Four illustrates that being female has a significant negative impact on sexual frequency. Thus, females have sex less frequently than males. In addition, Model Four illustrates that total family income has a significant positive impact on sexual frequency. Model Four demonstrates that a one-unit increment in total family income leads to a .03 increment in sexual frequency. The standardized regression coefficient indicates that a one standard deviation increment in total family Income leads to a .101 standard deviation decrement in sexual frequency. Thus, as total income goes up, so does sexual frequency.

Model Four illustrates that being divorced or separated has a significant negative impact on sexual frequency. Thus, divorcees have sex less frequently than married people. Likewise, being single has a significant negative impact on sexual frequency. Thus, single people also have less sexual frequency than do married people. Model Four illustrates that region has a significant positive impact on sexual frequency. Thus, those who live in the South have more sexual frequency than do those who live in non-southern regions.

Model Four illustrates that number of children has a significant positive impact on sexual frequency. Model Four demonstrates that a one-unit increment in children leads to a .126 increment in sexual frequency. The standardized regression coefficient indicates that a one standard deviation increment in children leads to a .103 standard deviation increment in sexual frequency. Thus, having children living at home indicates a higher sexual frequency.

In sum, when reviewing Table Two it is evident that when controlling for variables such as age, gender, education, income, marital status, region, and number of children, there is a significant positive relationship. Conservative Protestants and black Protestants have more sexual frequency than Moderate Protestants. Another relationship of interest when controlling for

all variables is the significant, negative relationship between attendance and sexual frequency. The more that respondents attend religious services, the less sex they have. When the sociodemographic and control variables are entered into Model Four, a number of changes in the effects of religious affiliation are evident. That is, only conservative Protestants and black Protestants show significant effects once controls are added. In addition, attendance significantly decreases sexual frequency while subjective religiosity no longer has an impact.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Sex is a topic of varied interest in modern society. It ranges from being a taboo issue that some find difficulty in distinguishing acceptable practices from those practices that are not so acceptable, to being an issue of individual freedoms and rights. Religion and religious organizations have a long and at times tumultuous relationship with matters concerning sex and sexuality. They have shaped our contemporary views on sex and feed society information on what is acceptable or unacceptable about sex. This research examined one aspect of the current relationship between religion and sex by looking at different aspects of religiosity: affiliation, attendance, and subjective religiosity, and asked, how do these aspects impact frequency of sexual activity? The research also examined sociodemographic variables to see if certain non-religious factors impacted the relationship between religiosity and sexual frequency.

Examining the regression models I noticed several interesting results. The first model looks at religious affiliation where moderate Protestants were used as the comparison group as they are the middle of the line, so to speak, when it comes to the religious groups examined. While, like conservative Protestants, still viewing sex as something to be shared by husband and wife only, they are more tolerant of non-marital sex, and homosexuality (Roof and McKinney, 1987). Model One is the start of an interesting trend in this data and it shows that certain religious groups actually have more sex than moderate Protestants. Specifically, conservative Protestants, black Protestants, Catholics, no-preference respondents, and non-denominational respondents all have more sex than the moderate Protestants. Exactly why these groups rated higher on the sexual frequency scale is unknown, but as the rest of the analyses unfolds some fascinating conclusions develop.

Model Two has the inclusion of a second independent variable, religious attendance. The analysis changes slightly with the introduction of this variable. It still shows the same religious groups that are in model one as having more sex, but the relationship is an inverse one. The more one attends religious services, the less sex one has. This is a somewhat expected relationship as Weeden, Cohen and Kenrick (2008) pointed out about the relationship between religious attendance and matters of sexual activity, it supports heterosexuality, high reproductive rates, low promiscuity and being marriage-centered. While these things are not themselves necessarily indicative of less sex, they could be considered responsible altogether for contributing to an environment where opportunities for sex are lessened. Roof and McKinney (1987) also made an interesting point that relates to this analysis when they named in order the groups whose adherents were most likely to attend to least likely to attend. Among those most likely to attend were conservative Protestants and black Protestants, these two groups are part of a trend in this data that we see develop across all the models and that will be realized and explained in the discussion of Model Four.

Model Three goes one step further and incorporates the independent variable subjective religiosity into the analysis. It is the third degree of the religiosity variables and it details how religious one considers oneself to be using a 4 point scale that ranges from “very religious” to “not religious at all.” The regression analysis shows that the same religious groups as before remain more sexually active than the comparison group. However, interestingly the significance of religious attendance goes away. So it does not matter how often these people go to church, what matters really, is how religious they think themselves to be. There are certain groups that Roof and McKinney (1987) pointed out had a higher level of subjective religiosity. Conservative

Protestant groups and a group associated with black Protestants are at the top of their scale on subjective religiosity. Again I mention this because of the trend to be explained in the discussion of Model Four. The analysis shows another inverse relationship, the more religious one considers oneself to be, the less sex one has.

Finally, the fourth regression analysis shows the most impactful and fascinating results of them all. Model Four is important because it includes all of the control variables. Age, gender, education, income, marital status, region of residence, and number of children are all included here to see what factors, if any impact the analyses. Interestingly, all of those aside from education have significance here. Some surprising conclusions are made based on the results of this regression. In relation to attendance and subjective religiosity the previous relationship goes away and it reverts back to attendance being the significant variable. Subjective religiosity has no significant impact any longer.

The big, fascinating result or trend that I have referred to in these results shows something that was not predicted in the review of the literature. In controlling for attendance, subjective religiosity and all of the sociodemographic variables the only religious groups left who had results that were significant are the conservative protestants and the black protestants. These groups, if you recall, are the groups that are more likely to have higher attendance rates and have a higher level of subjective religiosity. What this means is that not only do these groups have more sex, but they do so even when controlling for important variables like marriage and even though they are by description of their characteristics, more religious. Perhaps this can be explained by the literature even though the relationship was not expected because it was too evident. The expectation was that because of their highly restrained viewpoints on matters of sex,

they would not actually be having a whole lot of it. But upon revisiting what Roof and McKinney reported, that conservative Protestants have alleged that moral values related to sex have been eroding, and that they are mainly concerned about issues dealing with extramarital sex, premarital sex, and homosexuality, taken together with the data on sexual frequency, it becomes clear that they have no qualms with sex itself. As a matter of fact, perhaps it is that these conservative Protestants, within the confines of their sacred marriage have no problems with their sexuality and sexual activity and feel free to have as much sex as they want for recreation and for procreation. Black Protestants, even though they have some differences do customarily adhere to religions that fall into the conservative Protestant typology. There was a question about them and whether or not they would have similar outcomes based on that fact even though they were more liberal in some of their beliefs such as premarital and extramarital sex.

The analysis in Model Four also shows that age has an inverse effect on sexual frequency as the older one gets, the less sex one has. The impact that gender has is interesting, females reported having less sex than males. Income is another factor and the more money one makes, the more sex they have. Perhaps one would have expected that to be opposite the case since making more money is thought to require more work and less free time. Maybe it is the opposite however, and more money is indicative of better positions and a happier lifestyle with more room for extracurricular activities like sex. Of course, this is speculation. Perhaps further research could address such an issue to find out the reasons why those who make more money have more sex.

In relation to marital status, the regression in Model Four shows that those who are divorced or separated have less sex than those who are married and those who are single also have less sex than those who are married. This is an interesting finding because society has stereotypically demanded that married people have less sex than everyone else. People even joke about how getting married means the loss of all sexual activity. In this case it is just not true. Southern residency as a variable was added to this to see how region affects the analysis, since the south is where the well known “Bible belt” resides. Yet, the results show that people in the south do report having more sex than people who do not live in the south. The final control variable used was number of children. This result shows that people who have more children report having more sex. One may say that seems to go without saying. However, this result is interesting because it is not only a measure of how many children, but how many children living in the household.

Even though the end model could not show significant results for every religious group in the analysis, the results proved to be unexpected and surprising nonetheless. Having outcomes that directly oppose the original expectations are exciting and indicate that perhaps more research in the area needs to be performed. Some ideas for future research could include a look into the reasons why conservative Protestants have more sex. Research on what makes the conservative Protestants and the black Protestants so paralleled in this area despite the differences in opinion about other sex related aspects, like non marital sex, would prove fascinating as well. Another study that would be worth performing is what elements play a role in making the married group more sexually active than the groups of other marital statuses, since the myths portray them as sexually deprived.

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