

**Distrust of Atheists:
The Impact of Religion and the Social Environment**

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ABSTRACT

Who is like me? Who is different? What makes someone similar or different? These are questions that humans ask themselves on a daily basis, albeit usually unconsciously. We use symbols like race, religion, ethnicity, social class, education, and political issues to draw boundaries between others and ourselves. At a time when tolerance of religious minorities is on the rise in America, the current intolerance of atheists sticks out as an anomaly and points to a symbolic distinction between the religious and the nonreligious. In this project I seek to examine the effects of the social environment and religion on how these symbolic boundaries are drawn. Using data from a nationally representative telephone survey (N=2081), I test for correlations between a diverse social environment and the perceived trustworthiness of and shared sense of identity with atheists, who have been identified as an untrustworthy group in America's diverse religious landscape. My results indicate that the social environment has a greater impact on the whether or not someone shares a sense of cultural membership with atheists than whether someone considers atheists trustworthy on a private level. Additionally, I found that religious beliefs and practices influence both perceived private trustworthiness and a sense of shared identity, but that they have a far greater impact on trustworthiness.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The presence and influence of religion in American society is palpable, despite the absence of a state church. America is one of the most religiously active nations on earth, with over 83% of the population affiliating with a religion (Pew Research Center, 2012). Nearly 60% of Americans say that they pray daily, and 39% say that they attend religious services weekly (Pew Research Center, 2008). Over half of Americans say that their religion is very important to their lives (Pew Research Center, 2008).

At the same time, Americans also tend to be very religiously tolerant. Over half of Americans believe that good people of other faiths can go to heaven, and the vast majority say that there are basic truths in many religions, not just their own (Pew Research Center 2008). The religious tolerance among Americans is such that some scholars have noted that there seems to exist a “common creed” amongst religious adherents, and a sense that religious people, regardless of their faith, are essentially similar (Caplow, Bahr, Chadwick, & Hoover 1983; Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartmann 2006).

However, this tolerance does not appear to extend to atheists. A Pew report on religion and politics from 2003 said that 52% of Americans expressed reservations about voting for an atheist candidate for president (Pew Research Center, 2003). In 2012, polls showed that 67% of Americans wanted a president with strong religious beliefs (Pew Research Center, 2012). Additionally, findings from the American

Mosaic Project have shown that nearly 40% of Americans do not believe that atheists share their view of American society, and that 47.6% would disapprove of an atheist as a potential marriage partner for their child (Hartmann, Gerteis, & Edgell, 2003). These two results from the American Mosaic Project are the dependent variables that I investigate later in this paper.

The divergence between tolerance of people of other religions and intolerance of atheists points to a perceived essential difference between the religious and the nonreligious. The source of this perceived difference is related to the role that religion currently plays in America's national discourse. The importance of religion can be seen in political debates, in national symbols, and especially in the debates about those symbols. God is invoked in the pledge to the flag and on currency. American exceptionalism is reinforced by the declaration, "God bless America," which sanctifies America's position in the world as one ordained by God. In the realm of politics, disagreement about the appropriate role of religion in society influences debates over current social issues such as abortion, gay marriage, the teaching of evolution in public schools, and prayer during political events or meetings.

In this paper, I seek to connect America's complicated relationship with religious pluralism to the data collected by the American Mosaic Project, and to develop a picture of the sort of social and religious characteristics that are related to distrust of atheists. I begin by examining America's history with religion, including the role that churches and other religious organizations have played in important social and political movements. Religious groups have been key players and have shaped national discourse around a variety of topics by providing resources, leaders, and audiences. They have used their religious identities and teachings to shape social

boundaries, to create in-groups and out-groups. Sociologists have long seen religion as an inclusive force that fosters community building around shared values, but we have recently turned our attention to the divisive power of religion in society and the ways in which it can be used to keep certain people out of those communities. To conclude my theory section, I review important concepts such as symbolic boundaries, in-groups and out-groups, social contamination, and social trust, all of which relate to my argument that religion and the social environment can explain much of the distrust of atheists in American society.

In the data section I provide information about the American Mosaic Project that my data is drawn from, and I describe my variables and the significance of the regressions that I performed. My results are divided into two chapters, one that covers the entire sample, which is representative of the American population, and a second that focuses specifically on the Hispanic population. When I performed the initial bivariate analysis, the Hispanic population showed a surprisingly high tolerance for atheists, which prompted further investigation and a separate analysis of Hispanics in Chapter 5. The results for the full sample (Chapter 4) cover the bivariate analysis of the data and the logistic regressions that grew out of it. The bivariate analysis is broken down into four main subsections, one to address each combination of independent (social environment and religious) and dependent (view of American society and intermarriage) variables. The multivariate analysis is broken into two main sections, one for each dependent variable.

The chapter on the Hispanic population is a separate bivariate and multivariate analysis of the data that considers variables that are more relevant to the Hispanic population, such as language and citizenship status. The survey was offered in both

English and Spanish, and post-survey examination of the survey questions has revealed a difference in wording between the Spanish and English versions that explains a lot of the difference that is seen in the results between Spanish and English speakers. This chapter also examines the nature of religion in Hispanic communities and how religion can explain the greater private trust that Hispanics show toward atheists than non-Hispanics.

I conclude my paper by reviewing the findings of the tests, which indicate that atheists are a distrusted group in American society, not because most Americans know atheists and have some personal grudge against them, but rather because the word atheist has a particular negative connotation for many Americans. My findings show that atheists are an out-group in American society, and that other Americans use ideas from their religious lives and social environments to draw the boundaries between themselves and atheists.

Chapter 2

THEORY

AMERICA'S HISTORY WITH RELIGION

Religion has played a prominent role in American public life even before the first colonizers arrived. The indigenous peoples of the Americas had a variety of very well developed religious systems which were ironically suffocated by the arrival of Europeans who sought freedom from religious persecution by the established Church of England. Colonial Americans may have wanted to escape an established state church, but they were by no means interested in religion retreating to private life (Bellah et al., 1996). Churches remained the focal point of community life and a major unifying force in society. It was this force that George Washington was referring to when he stated in his Farewell Address that “religion and morality” are the “indispensible supports [of] political prosperity,” (Bellah et al., 1996).

By the 19th century, American denominationalism was well underway and new religious sects and movements were growing at an astonishing rate. While some historians view this period as one of religious decline, when one pays attention to what denominations they are referring to, one realizes that they are lamenting the falling numbers of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, while ignoring the fast-growing Methodists and Baptists of the early 19th century (Finke & Stark, 2005). Various European scholars who visited America in the 19th century declared that the free religious marketplace created by the absence of a state church was the main

reason that religious life flourished here (Finke & Stark, 2005). Among them was famed French social philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, who viewed America's vibrant religious life as the force that checked what would otherwise be a nation of rampant, self-centered individualists. Religion was, according to Tocqueville, the stabilizing "moral field" where everything was "certain and fixed" that provided a firm background for the fluxes American economic and political life (Finke & Stark, 2005).

Now, whether or not one agrees with Tocqueville's take on how religion functioned in American society, it is impossible to deny its active presence when one considers all of the different social movements that have been propelled forward, in part, by religiously-based support. Beginning with the parish clergy support for the Republican cause during the American Revolution, and extending forward to the abolitionist movement, the Catholic workers movement, and the Civil Rights movement, religious clergy and laity have served as a motor for social change in America throughout its history (Bellah et al., 1996). Some social movements that enjoyed support from various religious communities were later deemed harmful or wrong by most Americans. Pro-slavery advocates that frequently cited biblical support for their cause and the Temperance movement that led to a national prohibition on alcohol are both examples of moral crusades gone awry. These and all of the other social changes that benefited from the support of religious groups also faced opposition from other religious groups. America's religious community is diverse in its beliefs and practices, and has never come to unanimous agreement on any given issue (Bellah et al., 1996). This diversity continues to characterize the current religious landscape in America.

AMERICA'S CURRENT RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

Although America has a strong Protestant heritage and just over half (51.3%) of the American population identifies as Protestant, the religious composition of America spreads beyond Protestant or even Christian bounds (Pew Research Center, 2008). Nearly a quarter of Americans identify as Catholic, and 4.7% identify with a non-Christian religion, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism (Pew Research Center, 2008).

A growing segment of the population (19.6%) does not identify with a religion at all (Lipka, 2013). This group is often referred to as unaffiliated or the “religious nones” and is comprised of those who are atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular.” There is much speculation as to why the number of unaffiliated Americans is growing, and reasons vary. Some cite changes in the religious life cycle as a reason for growing non-affiliation. They suggest that the normal pattern of straying away from the religion of one’s youth in one’s young adulthood and returning when one has children has been disrupted, and that new parents are not returning to raise their children in religious communities (Hout & Fischer, 2002). Others point to the growing tendency of society towards secularism, but there are many problems with this theory, such as the high birth rates of many religious groups compared to lower birth rates among secular groups (Skirbekk, Kaufmann, & Goujon, 2010). Children are the number one contributing factor to most religious growth, and lower birth rates among those who do not identify with a religion counteract any secularizing tendencies that may be developing. A third potential reason for the growth in the religiously unaffiliated is

the increasingly close connection between conservative religious groups and right-wing politics. Many who do not want to be associated with a conservative political agenda are distancing themselves from religion altogether (Hout & Fischer, 2002).

While 19.6% is a sizable portion of the population, it is important to note that only a small segment of those who are unaffiliated consider themselves atheist (Lipka, 2013). This is a quickly growing portion of the population, but at 2.4%, there are still very few atheists in America compared to people who do identify with a religion. To add to this already complicated picture of American religiosity, not all atheists profess a disbelief in God. Out of the 2.4% of Americans who identify as atheist, 14% say that they do believe in God or a Universal Spirit (Lipka, 2013). In addition to being relatively few, atheists are unlike many other minorities in that they have no visible markers. One cannot look at another person and know that he or she is an atheist from how he or she looks.

This poses the question: if there are relatively few atheists, and atheists are not visually identifiable, why are they so distrusted by so many Americans? Why do Americans want a president with strong religious values (Pew Research Center, 2012)? Why do they disapprove of intermarriage between their children and an atheist (Hartmann, Gerteis, & Edgell, 2003)? What is it that the term atheist means to Americans? These are a few of the questions that this paper seeks to answer, and one of the key pieces to answering these questions is the concept of group boundaries.

BOUNDARIES, GROUP DYNAMICS, AND SOCIAL CONTAMINATION

The widespread understanding of America as a historically Christian and currently religious nation means that atheists are symbolically an out-group in

American society. An out-group is composed of people with whom an individual interacts infrequently, and who differ from an individual in a variety of ways (Tranby & Zulkowski, 2012). An in-group, on the other hand, is a group of people with whom an individual interacts frequently and who share similar characteristics with the individual. The power of religion to establish in-groups and out-groups is one of the main reasons that a group of the independent variables used in this project are related to the respondent's religious life (see Chapter 3: Data and Methods).

One of the key ways that group boundaries are formed is through conflict around controversial issues (Tranby & Zulkowski, 2012). With the diversity of voices in America's religious community today, there are a multitude of boundaries being constructed, deconstructed, and maintained all the time. In addition to individual churches and denominations, America is now home to a whole host of other religious organizations that use their platforms to influence their followers concerning the issues they deem important. In terms of political issues, these organizations are currently concerning themselves with action around abortion rights and civil rights for gays and lesbians. On these issues, the most vocal of the religious groups involved tend to come down against abortion rights and against civil liberties for gay and lesbian couples. Much of the discourse on these topics tends to center around a moral opposition to them and a fear that if they are allowed, they will somehow harm society.

With regard to gay marriage, it has been argued that one of the primary motivating factors behind religious opposition is a fear of social contamination (Burdette, Ellison, & Hill, 2005). The idea of social contamination rests on the presupposition that morality is not a private issue, but one that affects all of society. If

morality is considered a public issue instead of a private one, allowing gays and lesbians to marry is threatening to the moral fabric of American society. This threat to society is a symbolic or perceived threat. It is not something that could do physical harm to the members of society, but it threatens what those members believe about themselves and their world. Symbolic threats are issues or forces that pose a threat to our core beliefs, ideas, traditions, and values. In the minds of many people with more orthodox religious beliefs, gay marriage poses a symbolic threat to heterosexual marriages, and by extension to society in general, since orthodox believers often consider the nuclear family to be the central institution in society (Burdette, Ellison, & Hill, 2005). These religious people do not have to necessarily be Christian either, although since America is a majority Christian nation, they often are. However, any religion has its more orthodox adherents and for religious people who view morality as a public concern, it is likely that gay marriage presents a symbolic threat that has the potential to contaminate the morality of the whole society.

A similar line of reasoning can be used to explain some of the distrust of atheists by religious people. If religious people view morality as a public issue and see anyone acting in an immoral manner as a threat to the moral fabric of society, then perhaps religious people view atheists as a threat as well. Atheists are perceived as a defined group who reject the ideas and norms that many religious people see as key to the maintenance of a moral social order. Recent research suggests that this is not the case, and that many atheists do in fact have a very well developed moral code (Smith, 2011). Regardless, perception is what matters, and in a society where a religious affiliation identifies someone as a moral person and therefore trustworthy, a rejection

of that affiliation is perceived as a rejection of all the things that are commonly associated with it.

Edgell, Gerteis and Hartmann (2006) have shown that atheists are a moral out-group in American society because they are constructed as a symbol of those who “reject the basis for moral solidarity and cultural membership.” Cultural membership is the informal membership derived from perceived similarities and differences, as well as the obligations and responsibilities that proceed from these perceived relationships (Edgell & Tranby, 2010). In relation to atheists, these perceived differences can have both a religious and an economic/ political nature. Atheists were frequently identified with communists during the Cold War, and the cognitive connection between the two may be part of the reason that atheists are denied cultural membership (Lippy & Tranby, 2013). If atheists are related to communists, who stand for a cause that is in opposition to America’s economic and political system, they are rejected on multiple levels- economic, political, and religious. With regard to the religious level, those who identify with a religion tend to see themselves as more similar to each other and different from atheists, who do not identify with a religion. They build their in-group identity with a greater focus on the differences between themselves and those in the out-group than the similarities within the in-group. This relates to the notion of a “common creed” put forth by Hout and Fischer in 2001, which indicates that religious people tend to see other religious people as similar to themselves, even if they belong to another religion. They see their religiosity as a basis for a common identity, and based on this identity they establish social trust within their in-group.

SOCIAL TRUST

Social trust in general is the amount of trust that people have in one another. It can be thought of, “as an expectation that people will behave with goodwill, that they intend to honor their commitments, and that they will avoid harming others” (Freitag & Bauer, 2013). The concept of social trust has been receiving more and more attention within the social sciences, and the literature on social trust helped to identify the variables used in this research project to describe the social environment of the respondent (see Chapter 3: Variables). Out of the literature on social trust, three different types of trust have emerged. The first division is between particularized and generalized trust. Particularized trust is trust in known individuals such as family members, friends, and coworkers (Freitag & Bauer, 2013; Delhey, Newton, & Welzel, 2011). Generalized trust is toward unknown individuals, such as strangers that one meets on the street. Within generalized trust, however, is another type of trust, known as identity based trust (Freitag & Bauer, 2013). This trust is based on some limited knowledge about a person that helps the individual classify them into a known group. The main idea here is that people tend to be more trusting of other people who are like them, so if they can put a stranger into a group or category that they know something about, this knowledge influences their trust of the stranger.

In relation to this research project, I expect people who are religious to be more trusting of other religious people than of non-religious people, because they share an identifying factor with the religious people. I use the terms public and private trust to discuss the acceptance and trust of atheists in this paper because my dependent variables ask broadly about both public and private issues. One asks if the respondent thinks that atheists share their view of American society, a question that is oriented

toward the respondent's understanding of the public sphere, his place in it, and his relationship to other citizens. The other question asks if the respondent would approve of an atheist as a potential marriage partner for her child. This is a much more personal, private question that requires the respondent to discuss who they see as acceptable individuals for the formation of close personal relationships. Both of these types of trust are based on identity and in this project the identity of atheist is the most significant, followed by the religious identities of the respondent.

Another aspect of identity-based trust is personal experience. People who have a good experience with someone who belongs to a certain category may be more willing to trust all people who belong to that category, whereas people who have no experience with people of that category may be relying on stereotypes and preconceived notions of what people in that category are like. This also works in the opposite direction, meaning that if someone has a bad experience with a person of a particular category, they may attribute that negative experience to their understanding of the category in general. This experience-based trust is explained within the sociological theory called Contact Hypothesis, which says that positive interactions with people from out-groups will help to unmake prejudice and negative interactions can establish or reinforce prejudice (Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson, 2013; DeYoung, Kim, Emerson, and Yancy, 2004). Since contact with people in other groups is an aspect of a person's social environment, many of my independent variables are measures of that social environment. A person's social environment is a combination of culture, other people, and institutions with which a person interacts. This social environment, also referred to as a social context, shapes and molds the cultural tool kit that an individual has to organize their lives. A cultural tool kit is the

collection of ideas, symbols and metaphors that an individual has at her disposal to describe her life, as well as the people that she is comfortable with, who are often people like her.

In relation to this research on atheism, I know that many of the respondents cannot be basing their answers about atheists on personal experience, because the number of self-identifying atheists in the United States is very small (2.4%), and it is very unlikely that all of the people who were questioned for this survey personally know an atheist. In fact, it is very likely that *many* of them do not know an atheist. Therefore, I can assume that they are basing their trust of atheists on perceptions about that group and engaging in identity-based trust behavior, attributing the characteristic of being untrustworthy to atheists in general.

The two questions from the American Mosaic Project (AMP) that this paper examines relate to trust of atheists. The results from the AMP data indicate that atheists are the most distrusted of all of the groups asked about in the survey. If social trust is indeed influenced by contact between groups and by one's religious life, then examining independent variables that describe a person's religious life and social environment will be useful in determining what kinds of people are distrusting of atheists. In the following chapter, I will outline the variables used to describe the religious life and social environment of the respondents, and explain the relationship between those variables and distrust of atheists.

Chapter 3

DATA AND METHODS

The pervasiveness of religion in American public life and the diversity of religious traditions in American society have spurred many studies that investigate the religious lives of Americans from all angles. Data for this project came from the American Mosaic Project, which measured Americans' attitudes about religion, race, ethnicity, and social issues. This multi-year, multi-method project was directed by Dr. Penny Edgell, Dr. Joseph Gerteis, and Dr. Douglas Hartmann of the University of Minnesota and was funded by the David Edelstein Family Foundation. Data were collected via a nationally representative, random digit dial telephone survey (N=2081) in 2003, with oversamples of African Americans and Hispanics included to allow for comparisons across racial/ ethnic identities. The response rate for the survey was 36%, which compares favorably with other similar surveys conducted around the same time. In-depth interviews and fieldwork were also conducted by a team of graduate students in Los Angeles, Minneapolis- St. Paul, Atlanta, and Boston.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

This paper is mainly concerned with two questions asked in the survey relating to public and private trust (see Table 1). The first asks respondents if they think that atheists share their "vision of American society." This was asked in a series of identically worded questions about various different racial, religious, and ethnic

groups¹. The groups were listed in a random order so that there should be no bias resulting from the ordering of the groups. The possible responses to this question were, “almost completely agree,” “mostly agree,” “somewhat agree,” and “not at all.” Those who share one’s vision of American society share one’s understanding of what America stands for and what it means to be an American. Those who do not share one’s vision are being symbolically separated from those who do, and this separation indicates a degree of distrust (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartmann, 2006).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables

Variable	Percent
How much do atheists agree with your view of American society?	
Almost completely agree	7.59
Mostly agree	12.96
Somewhat agree	37.8
Not at all	41.65
Suppose your son or daughter wanted to marry an atheist. Would you approve of this choice, disapprove, or wouldn't it make any difference at all, on way or the other?	
Approve	10.69
Disapprove	49.44
No difference	39.87

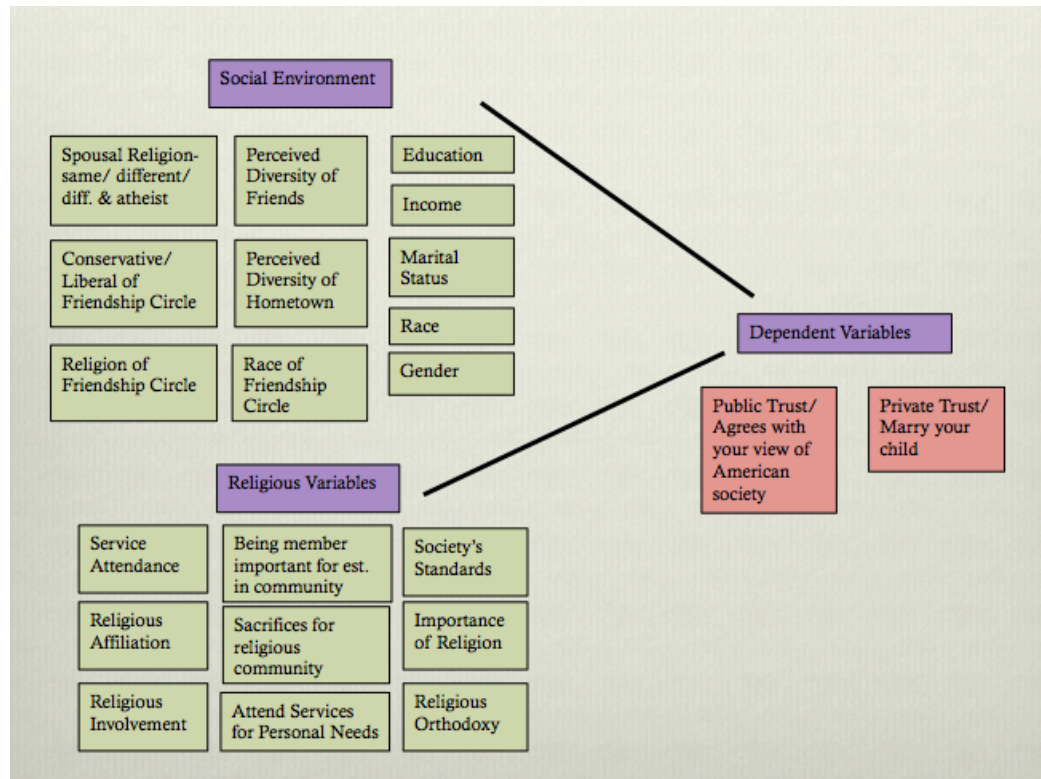
¹ The groups listed included: African Americans, Hispanics/ Latinos, Asian-Americans, Recent Immigrants, White Americans, Jews, Muslims, Conservative Christians, Atheists, and Homosexuals.

The second question asked respondents how they would feel if their child wanted to marry an atheist. Again, this question was asked as part of a series of questions about various different groups in a random order. The possible answers for this question were “approve,” “disapprove,” or “it makes no difference” (see Table 1 above). In this case, approval or indifference would indicate that the respondent sees members of this group as acceptable potential family members, and as people who are generally trustworthy (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartmann, 2006). Disapproval would denote distrust and again indicates the drawing of a symbolic boundary between the respondent and members of the specified group.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Previous analysis of this data has already determined that atheists are an out-group, the most distrusted out of all of the groups listed (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartmann, 2006). This paper seeks to further the analysis of the data by examining the relationship of social context and religion with the two measures of trust. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the two measures of trust and the social environment and religion variables that were used for the analysis.

Figure 1 Relationship between Independent Variables and Dependent Variables



All people live and act within a social environment that shapes and molds their cultural tool kit. It determines the metaphors, ideas, and symbols that they use to describe their lives, as well as the people that they feel comfortable with, the people who are like them. A person's social environment is a combination of culture, other people, and institutions with which a person interacts. From the data collected in the survey, a group of variables that describe a respondent's social context was selected (see Table 2). These variables include the religion of a respondent's spouse and the race, religion, and ideology of the five people closest to the respondent, or the respondent's friendship circle. The religion of the respondents spouse was chosen

with the idea that if the respondent was married to someone for a different religion, they might be more open to trusting people who are different from them, and they might be particularly more open to this if their spouse is an atheist. The friendship circle variables also make sense when considering social trust because a more diverse friendship circle should make one more open to trusting people who are different. Demographic variables such as the race, religion, education level, and income of the respondent were also included. Taken together, these variables comprise the social context in which the respondent operates. For each of these variables, the goal was to assess the relationship with whether the respondent would approve of his or her child marrying an atheist, and whether atheists share the respondent's view of American society.

A group of religious variables was also selected to investigate the relationship of the respondent's religious life with his or her attitude toward atheists (see Table 2). As atheism is related to religion in that it can be defined as disbelief in God, it is logical to predict that perhaps those who are most distrustful of atheists are those who believe very strongly in God and who are involved in various social activities based on this belief. The variables that were used to paint a picture of the respondents' religious life included things such as denominational affiliation, a belief that one should make sacrifices for one's religious community, and a belief that societal standards of right and wrong should be based on God's law, and several others. Two of the variables, religious involvement and religious orthodoxy, are scales composed of a variety of questions from the American Mosaic Project survey.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

Variable	Description of Variable	Mean or %	SD
Female	Female dummy variable (1 = female)	52.38%	-
Black	Respondent is African American (1 = African American)	20.37%	-
Hispanic	Respondent is Hispanic (1 = Hispanic)	19.17%	-
Education	Highest level of education completed by the respondent (1 = some high school or less to 6 = post graduate)	3.755	1.589
Income	Family income in 2002 before taxes (1 = less than \$10,000 to 8 = over \$100,000)	5.078	1.964
Married	Is the respondent married (1 = married)	47.19%	-
Spouse different religion	Respondent's spouse has a different religion (1 = different)	35.68%	-
Racial heterogeneity	Respondent has a racially heterogeneous friendship circle	0.153	0.237
Religious Heterogeneity	Respondent has a religiously heterogeneous friendship circle	0.357	0.331
Ideological Heterogeneity	Respondent has an ideologically heterogeneous friendship circle	0.340	0.274
Diversity in community	There is a lot of diversity in the respondent's town (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree)	1.661	0.925
Diversity among friends	There is a lot of diversity among respondent's friends (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree)	2.026	0.996
Jewish	Respondent claims Jewish as religious preference (1 = Jewish)	2.17%	-
Catholic	Respondent claims Catholic as religious preference (1 = Catholic)	26.82%	-
Liberal Protestant	Respondent claims liberal Protestant as religious preference (1 = liberal protestant)	9.76%	-

Moderate Protestant	Respondent claims moderate Protestant as religious preference (1 = moderate protestant)	7.79%	-
Conservative Protestant	Respondent claims Conservative Protestant as religious preference (1 = conservative protestant)	29.98%	-
Other religion	Respondent claims another religion as religious preference (1 = other)	15.14%	-
No Religion	Respondent claims no religion as religious preference (1 = no religion)	8.33%	-
Religious saliency	How important religion is to the respondent (1 = very important)	60.98%	-
Service Attendance	Frequency of religious service attendance (1 = never to 7 = more than once a week)	3.170	2.137
Religious Involvement	Religious involvement scale (0 = least involved to 13 = most involved)	6.897	3.797
Orthodoxy	Religious orthodoxy scale (0 = least orthodox to 8 = most orthodox)	4.863	1.657
Religious community	"Being member of a church is important for becoming established in a community" (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree)	1.918	0.923
Sacrifice for religious community	"It is important to make sacrifices for one's religious community." (1= strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree)	2.002	0.947
Attend church if help	"You should only attend church if it meets your personal needs" (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree)	2.342	1.202
Society's standards	Society's Standards of right and wrong should be based on divine law (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree)	1.918	0.923

METHODS

The first step of analysis was bivariate analysis to make sure that the variables that were selected for social environment and religious life actually had a relationship with the dependent variables. In this analysis I used chi-square tests, independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA with a Bonferroni adjustment, and pairwise correlations.

In the multivariate analysis, I used a nested model for my logistic regression, starting with just the social environment variables, then just the religious ones, before combining the two. This allowed me to see if a variable dropped out of significance when the sets of variables were combined, giving me a better view of which variables have more explanatory power.

The goodness of fit measures indicated that the models have a generally good fit, with the most difficulty appearing in the prediction of the public mistrust of atheists.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

To summarize, the results presented below indicate that overall, religion is a greater predictor of both public and private distrust of atheists than the social environment. In the bivariate analysis, every religious variable showed a significant relationship with both of the dependent variables, although the relationships were stronger between religion and private trust than religion and public trust. The social environment, while not as strongly related to distrust of atheists, still showed some significant relationships with the dependent variables at the bivariate level of analysis. There were more of these relationships with public trust than with private.

When moving on to the multivariate level of analysis, the social environment shows significant relationships in the first regression, but when combined with the religious variables in the third regression, all but one of the variables falls out of significance. Many of the religious variables are correlated to public and private trust in the multivariate analysis, both when tested alone in the second regression and when combined with the social environment variables in the third regression. Together, all of this tells us that Americans use a variety of tools from their religious lives and social environments to form opinions about atheists, but that their religious lives have more influence over these opinions.

Now I will go into further detail about both the bivariate and multivariate results, before combining them in the discussion.

BIVARIATE RESULTS

The bivariate analysis indicates that the social environment is very important for predicting attitudes of public trust of atheists. Nearly all of the demographic variables are significantly correlated to public trust of atheists, with women, non-whites, less educated, and less wealthy people being most likely to say that atheists disagree with their view of American society (see Table 3). Marital status is not significantly related to the public trust of atheists.

The friendship circle variables showed mixed results. People with a more religiously heterogeneous friendship circle are less likely to say that atheists agree with their view of American society. This was surprising since Social Contact theory states that positive contact with people from other groups tends to increase tolerance and trust of people in those groups. One would think that having religiously diverse people within the friendship circle would make the respondent more likely to say that atheists agree with their view of American society, but when I examined the number of people who said that they actually had atheists in their friendship circle, the number was very small. This indicates that most of those with a religiously heterogeneous friendship circle only have other religious people in their circle, and not atheists specifically. Since this is the case, the decrease in public trust of atheists along with an increase in religious heterogeneity can be interpreted as being supportive of the “common cred” idea- that religious people tend to see other religious people as more like them than non-religious people, regardless of the religions in question. Moving back to the other friendship circle variables, racial heterogeneity is also weakly correlated with public distrust of atheists and political heterogeneity showed no relationship. Those who believe that they live in a diverse town and have a diverse

circle of friends are more likely to say that atheists agree with their view of American society, as are those whose spouse has a different religion from them.

Social environment showed a much weaker relationship with private trust in the bivariate analysis. Income, marital status, racial and political heterogeneity of friends, and perceived diversity of town all showed no relationship to whether a person would approve, disapprove, or not care if his or her child married an atheist. Education, gender, and race, however, still showed a correlation to private trust. Those with higher levels of education are more likely to say that it makes no difference to them if their child marries an atheist. Women, African Americans, and whites are all more likely to say that they would disapprove of their child marrying an atheist (see Table 3). Hispanics were more likely than whites or African Americans to approve of their child marrying an atheist, and were just as likely as whites to say that it made no difference. This seemed odd, given that many Hispanics are Roman Catholic and the conservative nature of Catholic orthodoxy would have led me to predict that Hispanics might be less approving than whites. To further investigate this peculiarity, I analyzed the Hispanic data separately and it is reported in Chapter 5.

People with religiously diverse friends and who perceive diversity among their friends are also more likely to approve of their child marrying an atheist, or to say that it makes no difference to them. A person whose spouse has a different religion from them is more likely to say that they would approve or not care if their child wanted to marry an atheist, however less than half of all people surveyed said that they would approve or not care.

Table 3 Bivariate Results: Means, Correlation Coefficients, and Percentages for Selected Variables

	How much do atheists agree with your view of American society?		Would you approve, disapprove, or would it not make any difference if your child wanted to marry an atheist?		
	Mean (1 = almost completely to 4 = not at all)	Correlation Coefficient	Approve	Disapprove	No difference
Social Variables					
Male	3.065	-	11.95%	43.35%	44.70%
Female	3.200	-	9.52%	55.12%	35.37%
White		-	11.58%	46.17%	42.25%
Black	3.396	-	4.00%	66.67%	29.33%
Hispanic		-	14.29%	43.81%	41.90%
Other		-	14.81%	35.19%	50.00%
Married		-			
Non-married		-			
Spouse Same Religion	3.253	-	9.97%	56.70%	33.33%
Souse Different Religion	2.984	-	13.07%	44.32%	42.61%
Education	-	-0.107	3.678	3.741	3.979
Income	-	-0.091			
Racial heterogeneity	-	-0.076			
Religious heterogeneity	-	-0.131	0.422	0.288	0.407
Ideological heterogeneity	-				
Perceived diversity of community	-	0.050			
Perceived diversity of friends	-	0.110	1.833	2.146	1.906
Religious Variables**					
Conservative Protestant	3.389	-	5.57%	67.80%	26.63%
Moderate Protestant	3.161	-	12.64%	48.28%	39.08%
Liberal Protestant	3.034	-	8.79%	52.75%	38.46%
Catholic	3.126	-	12.07%	41.72%	46.21%
Jewish	2.475	-	21.43%	28.57%	50.00%
Other	3.082	-	9.03%	45.14%	45.83%

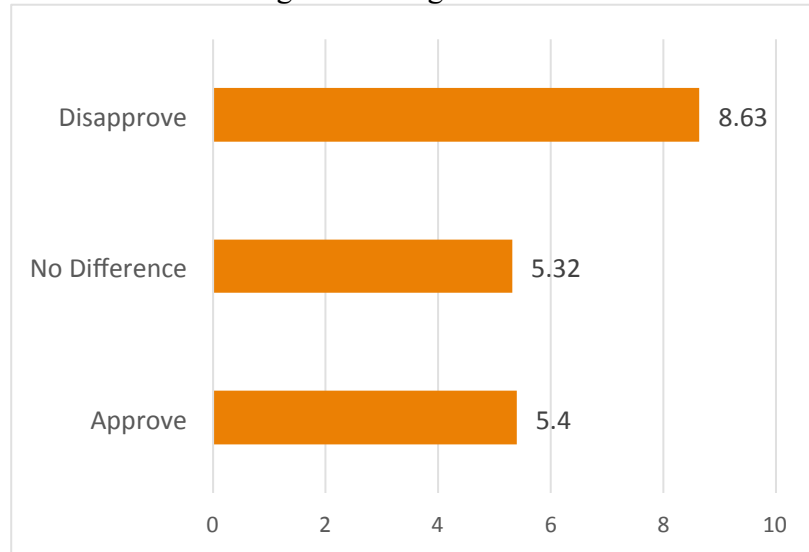
None	2.627	-	25.00%	15.48%	59.52%
Religion Very important	3.341	-	7.24%	66.10%	26.66%
Religion Less than very important	2.816	-	15.93%	24.12%	59.95%
Service attendance	-	0.274	2.409	4.132	2.322
Right & wrong based on divine law	-	-0.330	2.330	1.592	2.478
Being member of church important for community	-	-0.147	2.088	1.702	2.111
Sacrifice for religious community	-	-0.186	2.214	1.789	2.252
Attend church only if it helps you	-	0.179	1.948	2.589	2.101
Religious Involvement	-	0.287	5.404	8.637	5.325
Orthodoxy	-	0.312	4.346	5.409	4.203
*All significant results are reported. All insignificant results are omitted. Dashes indicate that no statistic of this type was calculated for this variable.					
**All religious affiliations are significant, but not all are significantly different from each other for the American society question. Catholics do not differ significantly from liberal or moderate Protestants, or from Jews. Jews do not differ significantly from religious nones. Liberal Protestants do not differ significantly from moderate Protestants or Others. Moderate Protestants do not differ significantly from Others. All other combinations are significantly different from each other.					

The religious characteristics of the sample showed a significant relationship with both public and private measures of trust, with every single variable evidencing some type of relationship (see Table 3). Those who attend religious services frequently, who say that their religion is important to them, who believe that societal measures of right and wrong should be based on divine law, and who are very involved in their religious community are all more likely to say that atheists do not agree with their view of American society. There is also a correlation between denominational family and public trust, with Jews and religious nones being the most likely to say that atheist agree with their view of American society, and conservative Protestants being most likely to say that they disagree. Those who say that you should go to church only if it helps you are more likely to say that atheists share their view of American society.

On the private trust side there is an even more significant relationship to religion. Those who attend religious services frequently are much, much more likely to disapprove of their child marrying an atheist and there is a huge difference between the approval ratings of people who are very involved in their religious community and those who are less involved (see Figure 3). Higher degrees of orthodoxy also predict disapproval, as does a belief that one should make sacrifices for one's religious community, and a belief that being a member of a church is an important way to become established in a community. Those who say that religion is important to them are much more likely to disapprove, as are those who say that societal standards of right and wrong should be based on divine law. Denominational affiliation also plays a big role in predicting approval with 68% of Conservative Protestants saying that they would disapprove, followed by 53% of liberal Protestants, and 48% of moderates.

Jews and religious nones are the most likely to say that it makes no difference or to approve.

Figure 2 Private Trust and Degree of Religious Involvement



MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

The multivariate analysis is split into six different regressions. The first three concern the public trust of atheists and the second three concern private trust. Within each group of three, one regression looks at the social environment variables alone, a second looks at the religion variables alone, and the third regression combines the two sets of variables together.

Table 4 Nested Logistic Regression of Worldview of Atheists

Variables:	Social Environment Variables			Religion Variables			Social Environment and Religion Variables		
	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.
Female	1.201		0.129				1.099		0.134
Black	2.127	***	0.262				1.211		0.173
Hispanic	0.955		0.131				1.091		0.172
Education	0.885	**	0.033				0.922		0.039
Income	0.981		0.032				1.019		0.036
Married	1.602	***	0.202				1.072		0.149
Spouse different religion	0.659	**	0.106				0.850		0.157
Racial heterogeneity	0.772		0.188				0.917		0.250
Religious Heterogeneity	0.511	***	0.090				0.689		0.137
Ideological Heterogeneity	1.179		0.245				1.008		0.232
No diversity in community	1.023		0.061				1.013		0.068
No diversity among friends	1.166	**	0.065				1.188	**	0.074
Catholic				1.075		0.166	1.009		0.183
Conservative Protestant				1.644	**	0.242	1.601	**	0.269
Other religion				1.358		0.249	1.278		0.266
No Religion				1.330		0.362	1.171		0.369
Religious Involvement				1.090	***	0.019	1.074	**	0.022
Orthodoxy				1.281	***	0.049	1.287	***	0.056
No religious community				0.964		0.059	0.979		0.066
No sacrifice for religious community				0.875	*	0.055	0.852	*	0.061
No attend church if no help				1.127	**	0.049	1.130	*	0.056
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05									

In the first regression I looked at the likelihood of not at all agreeing with the worldview of atheists (having a very low public trust for atheists) in relation with the social environment variables. In this regression all of the social context variables were analyzed together, controlling for each other. So, for example, someone who says that they have no social and cultural diversity among their friends is 1.166 times more likely to not at all agree with the worldview of atheists than someone who says they have some diversity in their friendship circle. This number comes from Table 4

above, where the OR for “no diversity among friends” is 1.166. Since the question about diversity among friends is a 4-point scale, for each point below strongly agree that a person falls, they are 1.166 times more likely to not at all agree with the worldview of atheists. This is controlling for all other social context variables (i.e.- race, gender, education, income, marital status, etc.).

In order to address the marital status question and intermarriage question, the respondents were separated to compare those who are married with those who are unmarried, and of those who are married, those who are married to someone of a different religion with those who are married to someone of the same religion. Both marital status and intermarriage were significant in the social context/ worldview analysis. Those who are married are 1.602 times more likely to not at all agree with the worldview of atheists than those who are unmarried (see Table 4). Those who are married to someone of a different religion are 0.659 times less likely to not at all agree with the worldview of atheists than those who are married to someone of the same religion.

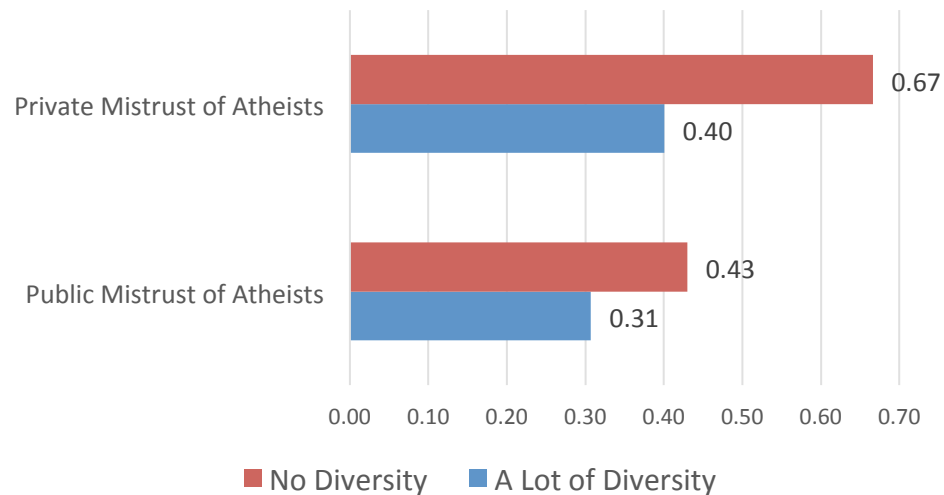
The second regression is of the religious variables with the worldview of atheists, controlling for all of the other religious variables. Those who have a high degree of religious involvement are much more likely to disagree with the worldview of atheists (see Table 4). For each point higher on the religious involvement scale that a person falls, they are 1.090 times more likely to disagree completely with the worldview of atheists (13-point scale).

Those who strongly disagree with the statement that one should not make sacrifices for one’s religious community, i.e.- one should make sacrifices, are 0.875 times less likely to disagree with the worldview of atheists than those who only

somewhat disagree with the statement (see Table 4). Those who disagree completely with the statement that you should attend church only if it helps you are 1.127 times more likely to disagree with the worldview of atheists than those who only somewhat disagree with the statement.

The third regression puts the social context and the religious variables together and tests them for a relationship with public trust (right column of Table 4). When looking at any given religious variable, all of the social context variables and all of the other religious variables are controlled for. In this analysis, the only social context variable that remains significant is the perceived diversity of friends (see Figure 3 below). Those who say that there is no diversity among their friends are 1.188 times more likely to say that they disagree with the worldview of atheists than those who only somewhat disagree with there being a lot of diversity among their friends. It is interesting that the perceived diversity of the group of friends remained significant while the actual diversity lost significance. This supports our idea that perceived differences are more important than actual differences in the construction of symbolic boundaries for group formation.

Figure 3 Estimated Proportion of Mistrust of Atheists by Self-Reported Diversity of Friendship Circle*



*Results from Full Models. All other variables held at the mean value.

Many of the religious variables remained significant in the third regression. For example, for every increase in one point on the orthodoxy scale, the likelihood of not at all agreeing with the worldview of atheists increases 1.287 times (see Table 4). For every point of increase on the religious involvement scale, the likelihood of not at all agreeing increases 1.074 times. Conservative Protestants are 1.601 times more likely than others groups to disagree with the worldview of atheists, and attitudes toward church attendance and making sacrifices for one's religious community also remained significant.

Table 5 Nested Logistic Regression of Intermarriage with Atheists

Variables:	Social Environment Variables			Religion Variables			Social Environment and Religion Variables		
	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.
Female	1.478	**	0.218				1.283		0.231
Black	2.467	***	0.422				1.148		0.242
Hispanic	0.754		0.137				0.903		0.204
Education	0.972		0.051				1.044		0.067
Income	0.980		0.045				1.048		0.056
Married	1.965	***	0.347				1.135		0.239
Spouse different religion	0.601	*	0.133				0.757		0.203
Racial heterogeneity	0.994		0.326				0.968		0.381
Religious Heterogeneity	0.396	***	0.095				0.746		0.215
Ideological Heterogeneity	1.089		0.309				0.752		0.255
No diversity in community	0.924		0.076				0.953		0.094
No diversity among friends	1.336	***	0.107				1.444	***	0.141
Catholic				0.897		0.193	1.018		0.261
Conservative Protestant				1.698	*	0.365	1.770	*	0.440
Other religion				1.292		0.344	1.854	*	0.566
No Religion				1.027		0.408	1.643		0.732
Religious Involvement				1.200	***	0.032	1.209	***	0.037
Orthodoxy				1.276	***	0.067	1.300	***	0.078
No religious community				0.820	*	0.072	0.864		0.084
No sacrifice for religious community				0.899		0.080	0.830		0.083
No attend church if no help				1.247	**	0.080	1.261	**	0.092

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

The fourth logistic regression looks at the likelihood of disapproving of an atheist as a potential marriage partner for one's child in relationship to the social environment variables. For example, someone who is married is 1.965 times more likely to disapprove of an atheist as a potential marriage partner for their child than someone who is unmarried (see Table 5). Women are 1.478 more likely to disapprove than men, and people who report having no diversity among their friends are 1.336 times more likely to disapprove.

In the fifth regression, I look at how religion impacts the likelihood of disapproving of an atheist as a potential marriage partner for one's child. Several of the religious variables show a significant relationship with this measure of private trust, including an affiliation with conservative Protestantism. Those who identify as conservative Protestant are 1.698 times more likely to disapprove of an atheist as a potential marriage partner than those of any other religious affiliation (see Table 5). Religious involvement and orthodoxy also show significant relationships with private trust of atheists.

This sixth regression is similar to the third in that it combined both the social environment and the religion variables (see right column of Table 5). The difference is that it compares them with the private trust of atheists instead of the public trust. The perceived diversity of friends is once again the only social context variable that remains significant in the combined regression. In the group of religious variables, conservative Protestant affiliation, religious involvement, orthodoxy, and not attending church if it doesn't help you remain significant, and are also significant in the public trust analysis. Those who affiliate with another religion that was not listed are 1.84 times more likely than those of any other religious affiliation to disapprove of their

child marrying an atheist. The “other” as a religious affiliation is not significant in the combined regression of the public trust question. Attitudes toward sacrificing for one’s religious community are not significant for private trust, but were for public trust.

These tests indicate that perception and religion are key contributors to how Americans form their ideas about atheists. The significance of perceived diversity of friends shows just how much more important perception is than an objective measure of diversity, and the continued significance of the religious life variables reinforces the influence of religion in American’s social lives.

Chapter 5

HISPANIC ATTITUDES TOWARD ATHEISTS

As I noted in Chapter 4, the initial bivariate results of the project surprised me because I did not expect that Hispanics would be more trusting of atheists than white Americans. Given the conservative nature of Roman Catholicism, and the close-knit, in-group dynamics of most immigrant communities, it did not seem likely that Hispanics would be more open than white Americans to an outsider like an atheist, who is more likely to be white, male, and highly educated (Kurien 2004; Pew Research Center 2013). This unanticipated result prompted me to delve further into the Hispanic population of the sample and has produced this separate section devoted to America's fastest growing minority group.

HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES

The Hispanic population is the largest minority in the United States. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanics made up 12.5% of the U.S. population in 2000 and that number grew to 16.7% in 2011 (Pew Research Center, 2013). The combination of a youthful population with high fertility rates and continued, albeit slowed, immigration means that the Hispanic population will continue to grow rapidly and become an ever more visible presence in American society (Roof & Manning, 1994).

Hispanics are not a monolithic group, but a diverse population hailing from Mexico, Central and South America, Puerto Rico, Spain, Cuba and other Caribbean Islands. The term Hispanic is generally used to denote someone of Spanish speaking origins, regardless of race, social class, education, culture, or religion. Hispanic immigrants have a mixed racial background, including European, Indigenous, Asian, and African roots. They come from all social classes and have educations ranging from a few years of formal schooling to doctorate degrees.

Hispanics also exhibit some religious diversity, with approximately 70% identifying as Catholic, 20% as Protestant or other Christian, and 8% who do not identify with a religion (Perl, Greely, & Gray, 2006). This is very different from the American population as a whole, which identifies as 23.9% Catholic, 54.5% Protestant or other Christian, and 16.1% unaffiliated (Pew Research Center, 2008). Compared to the Hispanic population, the American population as a whole has twice as many people who are unaffiliated. Hispanics, as a whole, are a very religious group. How do those who are religious respond to atheists? How do they perceive them? Does the degree of trust or distrust change according to primary language of the respondent? To answer these questions, let us first address the factors of religion and language in the Hispanic community.

HISPANIC IMMIGRANT RELIGION: CATHOLICISM AND PROTESTANTISM

Hispanic religiosity is much more personal than institutional (Roof & Manning, 1994). For Hispanic Catholics, there is a large emphasis on the wearing of medals, reading scripture, praying to different saints, saying grace, and keeping alters at home. There is less emphasis placed on attendance at mass, an important measure of religiosity for non-Hispanic Catholics. Hispanic religiosity is also more communal than individual, which is a marked contrast to the model of religiosity in U.S. where the individual believer is the basic unit.

A large majority of Hispanic immigrants are Catholic and a growing minority is Protestant. The conversion of some Hispanics from Catholicism to Protestantism has been interpreted in many ways. Greenly suggested that Hispanic Protestants may have a higher secular social status than Hispanic Catholics and that conversion to Protestantism may be a path toward greater assimilation and upward mobility for Hispanics who are coming from a Catholic country to a nation where Protestant denominationalism has historically dominated (Hunt 1998, 2001). Hunt, on the other hand, argues that there is little difference in secular status between Hispanic Catholics and Protestants and that the small differences that do exist are only true for those who convert to Mainline Protestantism. Most Hispanics who convert, however, tend to move to more conservative Protestant groups and do not exhibit any signs of increased social status related to this conversion.

Another possible reason for this conversion is dissatisfaction on the part of Hispanic Catholics with the American Catholic Church. Some Hispanic Catholics have noted an unwelcoming attitude on the part of the American Catholic church, which is severely lacking in Hispanic priests and which some Hispanics say only

wants their involvement on its own terms (Christiano, 1993). The American Catholic church has not shown acceptance of the folk piety and popular religious practices that are key components of Hispanic religiosity (Roof & Manning, 1994). It is very common for Catholicism among Hispanics to be melded with any number of indigenous or African beliefs, leading to belief systems such as Santería, espiritismo, curanderismo, Vodou, and Candomblé (Bermúdez & Bermúdez, 2002; Rey & Richman, 2010). These belief systems all share a cultural heritage of Catholicism in some form or another, but are not well received by the American Catholic church.

Different styles of worship services are another point of conflict between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Some Hispanic Catholics find the worship services of the American Catholic church to be unfulfilling or not affective and seek a warmer, more personal environment in the smaller congregations of charismatic churches including Pentecostals, Southern Baptists, and Seventh-Day Adventists (Marin & Gamba, 1993; Roof & Manning, 1994). They also find that these Protestant denominations offer a stronger sense of community and allow for a greater development of Hispanic identity than the American Catholic church does.

LANGUAGE

Language use in surveys is a very sensitive issue, and survey writers are very conscious of the words that they chose for questions. They are aware that words have more than one meaning, both in the sense that they can be used to signify different things and in the sense that beyond their official definitions, there are a variety of connotations that different people may attach to a particular word. Survey writing can be very difficult for this reason, and getting the wording of questions just right, so that

what is being asked is exactly what the researcher wants to know, is a challenge. This challenge is made all the more difficult when surveys are translated, because in addition to all to the nuanced meanings that a word may have in English, the researcher must now take into account the connotations of a word in Spanish. Because this study is especially concerned with meaning, namely what the word atheist means to Hispanics and how they relate to those to whom that label applies, it is very important to consider the different ways that the respondent may understand the question when interpreting the results.

To further explore this issue of how a Hispanic respondent may understand a question, let us now turn to a discussion of the language composition of Hispanics in the United States. Sixty-three percent of the Hispanics who took the this survey in Spanish are first generation immigrants to the US, and 94% of those who took it in English are likely second or third generation immigrants. Since the 1950s, English abilities of immigrants have shown a slight decline, which has been attributed to the shift in the sending countries of immigrants, from primarily European countries to primarily countries in the Western Hemisphere (Carliner, 2000). One consequence of this shift is that immigrants do not have to migrate as far, meaning that their migration is often not as expensive and that people with less wealth are more able to migrate. Correlated to a lesser amount of wealth is a lower degree of education, and education is positively correlated to English abilities. Another consequence of increased immigration from the Western Hemisphere is that many immigrants are not looking to immigrate permanently (Carliner, 2000). They are planning to come, work for a few years, and then return to their home countries. Immigrants who are not looking to

immigrate permanently put less effort into learning English than those who are making a permanent move.

Another factor that influences the English abilities of immigrants is gender (Carliner, 2000). Men who immigrate from countries in the Western Hemisphere are more likely to increase their English abilities than women, because they are more likely to work outside the home and come into contact with other English speakers. Women who migrate are more likely than men to stay at home and care for children, decreasing their interactions with English speakers and hindering any efforts to learn English.

DATA

This data came from the same American Mosaic Project as the data for the rest of this paper, but for this section I am singling out the Hispanic population for further study. For this section of the project, I compare three groups: non-Hispanic respondents who took the survey in English, Hispanic respondents who took the survey in English, and Hispanic respondents who took the survey in Spanish.

The same two questions were used to assess trust in atheists as in the previous section. The question used to assess public trust was: *How much do atheists agree with your view of American society?* In Spanish: *(¿Hasta qué punto están las personas que pertenecen a este grupo de acuerdo con su visión de la sociedad estadounidense? "Los ateos")*. The possible answers ranged from “almost completely agree” to “not at all,” on a 1 to 4 scale. Private trust was assessed using the question: *Suppose your son or daughter wanted to marry an Atheist. Would you approve of this choice, disapprove of it or wouldn't it make any difference at all one way or the other?*

In Spanish: (*Las personas pueden tener opiniones distintas sobre el hecho de que sus hijos se casen con personas de diversos orígenes. Suponga que su hijo o hija se quisiera casar con una persona atea o no creyente. Aprobaría usted esa decisión, la desaprobaría o no tendría ninguna importancia en ningún sentido?*). In the Spanish version of the private trust question, the respondent was asked about his/ her child marrying an atheist *or* a non-believer. The Spanish version also has a preamble to the question that is not included in the English version. This difference in wording may have a significant impact on the results of the survey.

FINDINGS

As shown in Table 6, the Hispanic population does not vary greatly from the rest of the American population on the issue of public trust. When the possible responses are collapsed into two categories, one category expressing some degree of agreement (almost completely, mostly, or somewhat) and the other expressing complete disagreement, Hispanics who took the survey in English emerge as the group most likely to say that atheists agree with their view of American society, although the margin is not large. In this same scenario of collapsed responses, Hispanics who took the survey in Spanish emerge as those most likely to say that atheists do not at all agree with their view of American society, although again, the difference is small.

Turning to private trust, the differences are again small, but they run in an identifiable direction. Hispanics are overall less opposed to their child marrying an atheist than non-Hispanics. Hispanics who took the survey in Spanish show the highest approval of the three groups, with 57% saying that they would approve or not care if their child married an atheist (see Table 6). Non-Hispanics show the highest

disapproval rate of 50%, and Hispanics who took the survey in English have the highest rate of indifference, 46%.

Hispanics are more accepting of an atheist as a potential marriage partner for their child than non-Hispanics. This indicates a greater degree of private trust in atheists than what is shown by non-Hispanics, the opposite of what seems logical if trust is based on religious identity. It *seems* like a more religious person would be less likely to be trusting of atheists than a less religious person, but this depends on how one understands religion.

Table 6 Views of Atheists by Race and Language

Variable	Non-Hispanic, English Survey	Hispanic, English Survey	Hispanic, Spanish Survey
Somewhat Agree (or More) with Worldview of Atheists	62.9%	65.4%	57.7%
Do Not All Agree with Worldview of Atheists	37.1%	34.6%	42.3%
Would Approve (or make no difference) if Child Married an Atheist	49.3%	55.6%	57.1%
Would Disapprove if Child Married an Atheist	50.8%	44.4%	42.9%

Delving deeper into these questions, I move on to multivariate analysis using a reduced logistic regression, narrowing our focus to five demographic and religious variables that I believe could potentially explain these differences. These variables are gender, education, citizenship status, orthodoxy, and affiliation, specifically either Catholic or Conservative Protestant. Gender is known to interact with religion such that women are generally more religious than men, and also more conservative. It is possible that women are more likely to be distrusting of atheists on either a public or private level. As noted in the section on language, Hispanic women are also more

likely to have poorer English skills than men, further supporting the use of gender as a variable in this analysis. Higher degrees of education tend to correlate with increased tolerance. Education is measured on a 6-point scale. Citizenship indicates whether the respondents are a mostly immigrant or second generation. People from the two groups tend to respond differently to questions relating to social issues given their different degrees of integration. More orthodox beliefs are generally correlated with lower degrees of tolerance or trust of others. Orthodoxy is measured using an 8-point scale. Seventy percent of Hispanics in the United States are Catholic, making that affiliation a logical reference category for Conservative Protestant, the affiliation of many Catholics who switch to Protestantism.

In Table 7, multivariate analysis of public trust shows that education, orthodoxy, and Conservative Protestant affiliation are significant explanatory factors for the non-Hispanic population. As education increases, agreement with the statement that atheists share one's view of American society also increases. Conversely, as orthodoxy increases, disagreement with atheists on a shared view of American society increases. Conservative Protestants are more likely than Catholics to say that atheists do not share their view of American society. For Hispanics who took the survey in English, only the Conservative Protestant affiliation shows any significant explanatory value, however both this affiliation and religious orthodoxy are explanatory factors for Hispanics who took the survey in Spanish.

Table 7 Logistic Regression of Worldview of Atheists on Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, and Spanish Speaking Populations

Variables:	Non-Hispanic, English Survey			Hispanic, English Survey			Hispanic, Spanish Survey		
	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.
Female (Reference: Male)	1.086		(0.125)	1.114		(0.289)	1.049		(0.543)
Education	0.911	*	(0.034)	1.041		(0.088)	1.123		(0.301)
Non-Citizen (Reference: Citizen)	0.737		(0.295)	0.595		(0.359)	1.158		(0.665)
Religious Orthodoxy	1.461	***	(0.060)	1.119		(0.092)	1.475	*	(0.288)
Conservative Protestant (Reference: Catholic)	1.558	**	(0.246)	1.865	*	(0.597)	4.646	*	(3.558)
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05									

As seen in Table 8, orthodoxy and Conservative Protestant affiliation play a similar role in the responses of non-Hispanics to the question about intermarriage. Greater degrees of orthodoxy are correlated with greater degrees of disapproval of atheists as a potential marriage partner for children. Conservative Protestants are more likely than Catholics to disapprove of atheists as a potential marriage partner for children. Turning to Hispanics who took the survey in English, only gender showed significant explanatory power, with women being more likely than men to disapprove of intermarriage with an atheist. None of the five variables explained the higher approval ratings of Hispanics who took the survey in Spanish.

Table 8 Logistic Regression of Intermarriage with Atheists on Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, and Spanish Speaking Populations

Variables:	Non-Hispanic, English Survey			Hispanic, English Survey			Hispanic, Spanish Survey		
	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.	OR		S.E.
Female (Reference: Male)	1.127		(0.184)	2.567	**	(0.933)	0.715		(0.526)
Education	0.997		(0.054)	1.038		(0.128)	0.908		(0.312)
Non-Citizen (Reference: Citizen)	0.367		(0.229)	1.065		(0.735)	0.573		(0.468)
Religious Orthodoxy	1.601	***	(0.090)	1.161		(0.136)	1.058		(0.248)
Conservative Protestant (Reference: Catholic)	2.146	**	(0.484)	1.533		(0.708)	4.778		(4.300)
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05									

DISCUSSION

Based on these results it appears that Hispanics in the United States do not vary greatly from other Americans on the issue of public trust of atheists, but they do exhibit more private trust than other Americans. Whether they took the survey in Spanish or English, Hispanics are more comfortable with the idea of their child marrying an atheist than non-Hispanics are. This finding is unexpected given that Hispanics tend to be more religious than non-Hispanics and previous studies have demonstrated that higher degrees of religiosity correlate to higher distrust of atheists (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartmann 2006). In order to provide some possible explanations for this unexpected finding, I will return to the nature of religion in Hispanic communities and the wording of the questions in the survey described above.

First, as indicated in the previous section on Hispanic religion, religiosity in the Hispanic community works differently from religiosity among other Americans.

Hispanics Catholics tend to focus more on the communal aspects of religion and how religion is used to create a welcoming and affirming community more than they focus on issues of orthodoxy, which may explain their greater tolerance of those who are unorthodox, in this case atheists. This could explain why orthodoxy was not significant for either group of Hispanics in the reduced logistic regression of the private trust question. Orthodoxy does have some explanatory power on the issue of public trust for Hispanics who took the survey in Spanish, as does an affiliation with Conservative Protestantism when compared to Catholicism. For Hispanics who took the survey in Spanish, those with a Conservative Protestant affiliation are 4.646 times more likely than Catholics to say that atheists do not agree with their view of American society. Since Protestantism tends to be more focused on orthodoxy, it is logical that orthodoxy and Conservative Protestantism would both be explanatory factors for public trust.

Secondly, the language of the survey was different for the Spanish version of the intermarriage question. The first difference is that the Spanish version included a preamble that is absent in the English version. This preamble is fairly leading (People can have different opinions about the fact that their children marry people of different origins. Suppose your child wanted to marry an atheist. Would you Approve of this decision, disapprove, or would it not matter?) The first sentence of this question already alerts the listener that the question is asking about diversity and intermarriage, and could influence the respondent to answer in a more tolerant way than if this preamble were omitted.

Post-survey discussion with native Spanish speakers has also revealed that the difference in wording between “atheist” in the English version and “atheist and non-

believer” in the Spanish version may have led some of the Spanish-speaking respondents to answer in such a way that indicates a greater trust of atheists. The inclusion of non-believers not only makes this a broader category than the one posed to the English speakers, but discussion with native Spanish speakers in a University of Delaware Spanish class also indicates that the words *no creyente* can imply the inclusion of practitioners of such religious systems as Santería, espiritismo, curandismo, Vodou, and Candomblé. The word “non-believer” in Spanish may simply mean that the person is not a believer in an orthodox belief system such as Catholicism or some form of Protestantism, but that the person may practice Santería or Vodou or any number of other fusions of indigenous and African religions with Catholicism. Other Spanish speakers have told me that the word term “*no creyente*” could simply mean non-Christian, which makes sense even in an English context, since many English-speaking Christians use this term in the same way. Since Spanish-speakers expressed the greatest degree of trust of atheists in the private trust question, and since this extra term was not included in the public trust question, this could be the main reason why Spanish speakers appear to be more trusting of atheists than English-Speaking Hispanics and non-Hispanics. This also fits with the idea that religious people are more trusting of other religious people than of the non-religious, since the question could actually be interpreted to be asking about both, with the religious people simply being non-Christian.

CONCLUSION

The limitations of this survey include the difference in wording between the Spanish and English questions and the small sample size of Hispanics included. The

wording difference obscures the actual difference between the Spanish speaking and English speaking populations for private trust. Clearer wording in the future will elucidate this issue. And although the number of Hispanics included in this survey is nationally representative, it is not large enough to make substantial claims about the attitudes of Hispanics toward atheists. A survey with a larger sample size would be required for that level of certainty.

This section of deeper analysis into the Hispanic population has indicated some interesting new directions for further research on Hispanic attitudes toward atheists. It has shown that orthodoxy and religious affiliation are significantly related to trust of atheists. Hispanics have not shown significant variation from the rest of the American population on the issue of public trust of atheists, but on the issue of private trust, they appear to be more willing to trust atheists.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DISCUSSION

This research has shown that Americans use a variety of tools from their social environment and religious lives to make decisions about who is trustworthy and who is not. The majority of the tools used come from the religious background and beliefs of the respondents. Other parts of the social environment also contribute to judgments of trustworthiness, although when combined with the religious tools it is clear that the religious tools have greater power. Let us first address the few social environment tools that contribute to judgments to trustworthiness before turning to the religious ones.

In the multivariate analysis of both public trust and private trust, the only social context variable that remained significant in the combined regression is the perceived diversity of the respondent's friends. This tells us a lot about how important perception is used in making decisions about inclusion and exclusion. If a respondent believes that she has a diverse group of friends, then she must consider diversity to be a good thing, or at least a neutral thing. Assuming that a diverse group of friends is good, the respondent must have a positive attitude toward diversity in general and perhaps that is why she is more likely to trust atheists. Again, this is based on the perceived diversity of the respondent's group of friends and not the actual diversity, measured along lines of racial, religious, and political heterogeneity. All of those

measures fell out of significance in the full regression for both public and private trust, meaning either that perceived diversity is more important than actual diversity, or that these measures of diversity are not what the respondent has in mind when answering the perceived diversity question about her friends. Either way, the continued significance of the perceived diversity of the respondent's friends reiterates the importance of perception in the formation of symbolic boundaries.

While the perceived diversity of the respondent's friend is the only variable that remained significant through all of the regressions, it is useful to note that some of the other social environment variables were significant in the first regression, before the addition of the religious variables. Two of those variables, the religion of the respondent's spouse and the religious heterogeneity of the respondent's friends, stand out as important explanatory factors of distrust of atheists. Although both are related to religion and could perhaps be categorized with the religious variables, they say more about the social contact that the respondent has with people of diverse backgrounds or belief systems than they do about the respondent's religious beliefs or practices. A respondent who is married to someone of a different faith is obviously more open and trusting of people of different faiths, which falls in line with Hout and Fischer's argument there is a growing feeling that people of other faiths share a "common creed," regardless of what those faiths are (Hout & Fischer, 2001). However, the fact that this variable, and the religious heterogeneity of the respondent's friends, drops out of significance in the full regression shows that the religious beliefs and practices of the respondent are still more powerful in determining boundaries than exposure to diverse religious beliefs in the respondents close social network.

Turning to the religious belief and practice variables, four variables remain significant in both the public and private trust full regressions: conservative Protestant affiliation, orthodoxy, religious involvement, and a belief that you should attend church only if it meets your personal needs. The conservative Protestant affiliation is not surprising, as it is an established part of this group's worldview that morality is a public issue that is based in religion. Atheists and those who believe morality to be a relative and private issue would be an out-group to conservative Protestants. Similarly, more orthodox religious beliefs correlate with distrust of atheists, as does being more involved in a religious community. A higher mean on both of these variables is indicative of someone who probably orients a large part of his social life around his religion (see Tables 4 & 5 for means). He holds very orthodox beliefs as dictated by his faith, and he spends a significant portion of his social time participating in activities surrounding it. A person who fits this profile defines his in-group largely based on religious principles, so anyone who does not share those principles is part of an out-group to this individual.

Finally, a belief that you should attend church only if it meets your personal needs correlates to a greater likelihood of trusting atheists. This attitude toward church, as a non-obligatory activity oriented around meeting the individual's personal needs, is very much in line with a more flexible view of religion and belief. This more flexible view aligns with more flexible boundaries that are inclusive of people who do not feel that church meets their personal needs and who do not attend. The inverse of this relationship is that a respondent does not agree that you should attend church only if it meets your personal needs, that is, you should attend church regardless because it is an obligatory activity that fulfills some greater purpose than

the fulfillment of your personal needs. A respondent who feels this way is less likely to trust an atheist, someone who is much less likely, though not entirely unlikely, to attend church at all.

Two other religious variables are significant in the final analysis, but not for both levels of trust. Other religion, as an affiliation, was significant for the private trust of atheists. In explaining this relationship, it is important to note that the other religion category includes those who do not identify as any variety of Christian or Jew, meaning that it includes groups like Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, etc. These were all grouped together because of the small numbers of people who make up these categories. It is also important that the private trust question was a question about intermarriage and for many religious minorities who derive large parts of their identity from their strong ties to their faith communities, intermarriage is not a favorable option as it would weaken those ties by diluting the community.

The only other religious variable that is significant is a belief that one should make sacrifices for one's religious community. It is very telling that those who believe that one should make sacrifices for one's religious community are distrusting of atheists on a public level. This attitude, that sacrifices for a religious community is important, values the well being of the community over that of the individual. It is an attitude that is very much in line with a view that puts the public good at the highest level of importance. If an individual is not willing to contribute to that public good, in this case by making sacrifices for the religious community, then the individual falls outside the boundary of that community. For people who believe that the religious community is connected to the broader public good, not being willing to make a sacrifice for a religious community is directly connected to questions of public trust.

Therefore, those who are willing to make sacrifices for their religious communities are more likely to be distrusting on a public level of those who are not willing to do so, i.e. atheists.

CONCLUSION

Atheists are a highly distrusted group in American society and possible explanations for that mistrust are related to how Americans use tools from their social environment and religious lives to draw boundaries between themselves and others. That atheists were the most distrusted group in the American Mosaic Project survey is notable, given that other controversial groups such as Muslims and homosexuals were also listed. This survey was conducted in 2003, not long after 9/11, when feelings of outrage and hatred toward Muslims were still very apparent in public and private discourse. The issue of gay marriage is also very polemical, as many conservative Christians feel that it is a threat to the biblical model of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. I await the results of the second wave of this survey with great anticipation to see if atheists remain the most distrusted group, or if another group has taken its place. Given all of the recent activity around gay marriage being legalized in several states, and as many or more states proposing laws to ban gay marriage or in other ways discriminate against gay people, it would be surprising if atheists remained at the top of the list.

It is important to remember here that we are talking about atheists as a group and how Americans feel about that group label. We are not discussing the beliefs, practices, or actions of atheists themselves. The data from this project does not address those issues. Rather it tells us how Americans react to the atheists as a

category. As I stated previously, it is highly unlikely, given the relatively small number of atheists in the United States, that all or even most of the respondents are basing their answers on their personal experiences with an atheist of their acquaintance. With only 2.4% of the population identifying as atheist, and not even all of those identifying openly as atheist (Swann, 2014), it is not likely that all of these respondents actually know an atheist. More likely is that they are basing their responses on their ideas about who atheists are, what they are like, and how they are not like the respondent. It is possible that some respondents may be connecting the label “atheist” to the label “communist” as the two were frequently related in discourse during the cold war, i.e.- “godless communists,” (Lippy & Tranby, 2013). This negative discourse could still be coloring many American’s perceptions of atheists as a group that opposes America’s capitalist economic system. This means that the respondent considers atheists an out-group, and draws a symbolic boundary between himself and them.

If this is the case, that the majority of the respondents are reacting to atheists as a symbolic other and not as individuals that they know and interact with, then this study reveals much about how Americans use religion as a marker for personal and public morality. It means that America’s history with religion, most relevantly the use of religion in the construction and maintenance of ideas about citizenship, is still alive and well. Americans are still drawing heavily on their religious toolkit to help them navigate an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. Religious pluralism, while increasing the tolerance for other religious groups, has not expanded to include atheists.

Still, the increased diversity of America is not limited to religion. America is experiencing an increase of diversity along many lines, one of which is ethnicity. As can be seen in Chapter 5, Hispanics are a rapidly growing group in American society and their social views and attitudes differ somewhat from other Americans. Those who responded in Spanish were more likely to disagree with an atheist's view of American society, but they were the most likely to let their child marry an atheist. As I explained in Chapter 5, some of this difference can be explained by different terms in the Spanish survey, but some of it is also related to the nature of religion in Hispanic communities. Regardless, this increased attention paid to the Hispanic population in Chapter 5 has provided more information about how Hispanics use religion to shape symbolic boundaries.

Overall, this paper has been concerned with boundaries and in-group and out-group dynamics in American society, in an age when polarization between groups seems to increase daily. Any quick perusal of a national newspaper or glance at the news on a major network will confirm that groups are becoming less and less willing to work together and more focused on drawing pictures of difference and separation from other groups. This leads us to ask how we will all live together in the future? How will we all interact? It is understandable that there will be boundaries and differences between groups. Boundaries are a necessary component of group formation, and without them there is no group solidarity. But where does the construction of *such rigid* boundaries lead? That is not a question that I am prepared to answer in this paper, but I can say that Americans still draw heavily on their religious beliefs to shape boundaries between themselves and others, so if there is to be any restructuring of the way boundaries are drawn, perhaps it will have to come from

religious institutions. Perhaps they will have to be the first to tear down some of the boundaries around atheists. And perhaps some clergy leadership is already on its way to doing just that. After all, in May of 2013, Pope Francis shocked people around the world with his declaration that even atheists can be redeemed and his appeal to all people to do good, because, “We must meet one another by doing good,” (Poggioli, 2013). This inclusive rhetoric may be the first tiny step toward restructuring boundaries. But then again, the backlash that he received from other Vatican officials suggests otherwise. So we will have to wait and see how Americans draw boundaries around diverse groups in the future. In any case, the picture is becoming ever more complicated, never less, and there will be many opportunities to continue this research and further investigate how Americans their social environments and religious lives as instruments for the boundary building that shapes their lives.

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