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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7q309322>

### Journal

Social Problems, 53(1)

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### Publication Date

2006

Peer reviewed

# From Pews to Participation: The Effect of Congregation Activity and Context on Bridging Civic Engagement

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*This article identifies two important conditions under which participation in religious congregations influences active involvement in civic organizations that provide charitable services to and establish other types of linkages with residents in the wider community. We find that while the frequently employed measure of religious service attendance has minimal effects on participation in bridging types of civic organizations, congregation activity beyond religious service attendance has a substantial positive effect on participation in charitable and linking types of civic organizations. In addition, our findings demonstrate that religious tradition significantly moderates the extent to which congregation activity channels bridging civic engagement. While active involvement in black Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Catholic congregations predicts participation in substantially more bridging civic organizations, active involvement in evangelical Protestant congregations has little effect on this participation.*

American citizens spend more time in religious congregations than any other type of voluntary organization (Putnam 2000:65–79). With good reason. The social benefits of congregation participation are well known. The more people are involved in congregations, the more likely they are to develop friendships, to feel a sense of belonging, and to have a surplus of social support at their disposal (see, e.g., Ellison and George 1994). In this sense, involvement in congregations is a rich source of social capital in the United States. But does congregation involvement also provide benefits to nonmembers in need and establish other positive linkages to the broader community? Whether involvement in congregations mobilizes services for and cultivates connections to people external to the group has important implications for discussions about the capacity of civic organizations to help generate and sustain robust and thriving communities.

There is a growing consensus among scholars of civil society that the social capital groups cultivate is not necessarily advantageous for communities as a whole (Fiorina 1999; Paxton 1999, 2002; Putnam 2000). While groups consisting mainly of strong internal ties and few external ties benefit group members substantially—by cultivating solidarity for instance—the presence of such groups may also constrict the size of the overall network structure of the community, and thus, impair the community’s ability to act collectively when problems arise (Paxton 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). The recognition that social capital can have deleterious effects on the larger community has led scholars to distinguish between at

Order of authorship is alphabetical to denote equal contribution. For helpful comments on previous versions of this article, the authors wish to thank Christian Smith, James Holstein, previous editor of *Social Problems*, and anonymous reviewers. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2003 annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Norfolk, VA. Direct correspondence to: Kraig Beyerlein or John R. Hipp, Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Hamilton Hall, CB #3210, Chapel Hill, NC 27599. E-mail: kkbeyerl@email.unc.edu; johnhipp@email.unc.edu.

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*Social Problems*, Vol. 53, Issue 1, pp. 97–117, ISSN 0037-7791, electronic ISSN 1533-8533.

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least two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Social capital that fosters strong ties primarily among members of relatively homogenous groups in communities is generally defined as bonding, while social capital that crosscuts various groups and builds linkages among different groups in communities is generally defined as bridging (Putnam 2000).

Civic organizations can play an important role in creating bridging social capital in communities. They do so mainly by providing organizational settings that facilitate the forging of links among various community residents and by providing a range of services to community members, especially those who are in need. But a shortage of volunteer labor would severely diminish civic organizations' ability to generate bridging social capital, and thus, assist communities effectively. Given the large number of Americans who gather in religious congregations every week, congregations have the unique potential to mobilize the critical mass necessary to support the civic organizations that build "bridges" within communities. The realization of this potential, however, has been the subject of much scholarly debate (see Putnam 2000:65–79 for a recent summary).

While past research has generally found that participation in congregations increases involvement in other types of civic organizations, we develop a more precise model to explain this relationship. Specifically, we hypothesize that two main factors shape the relationship between congregation participation and involvement in bridging civic organizations.<sup>1</sup> (1) the *type* of congregation activity in which members participate; and (2) the congregational *context* in which this activity occurs. Most researchers have focused exclusively on attendance at religious services as their measure of congregation activity, but this may not be the most appropriate measure if the mechanisms through which congregations mobilize participation in bridging civic organizations do not largely take place during the hour or so spent attending religious services. In contrast to previous studies, we assess the importance of a measure of the amount of time spent in congregation activity outside of religious services, as this activity is likely to be more important for channeling involvement in bridging civic organizations.

In addition to the type of activity in which people are involved in congregations, the context in which this activity occurs should substantially affect participation in bridging civic engagement. Ideally, we would use congregation-level measures to capture these contextual effects. Instead, because the congregational characteristics most relevant for civic mobilization are not available in the data on individuals, we employ measures of religious traditions as proxies for these characteristics. A large body of literature in the sociology of religion has demonstrated that congregations affiliated with the four major American religious traditions—black Protestantism, mainline/liberal Protestantism, evangelical/conservative Protestantism, and Catholicism—differ significantly in the extent to which they mobilize members for civic action in communities (Ammerman 2002, 2005; Chaves 2004; Chaves, Giesel, and Tsitsos 2002; Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Greenberg 2000; Wuthnow 2002).<sup>2</sup> Given the variation in congregation-based civic mobilization efforts among religious traditions, the specific religious tradition in which congregation activity takes place should considerably moderate the extent to which this activity is a conduit for bridging civic engagement.

This implies the need to model the interaction between religious tradition affiliation and congregation activity when analyzing the effect of these two religious constructs on participa-

1. Unless otherwise noted, we use the terms "bridging social capital," "bridging civic engagement," and "bridging civic organizations" interchangeably to refer to participation in organizations that provide resources to those who are in need and establish other positive linkages with those in the wider community.

2. For brevity, we drop the "/liberal" label and simply refer to mainline/liberal Protestants as mainline Protestants, and we drop the "/conservative" label and simply refer to evangelical/conservative Protestants as evangelical Protestants in the remainder of this article. For a historical discussion of the development of these traditions, see, for example, Marsden (1980). Although black Protestantism, mainline Protestantism, and evangelical Protestantism are aggregations of different individual Christian denominations and Catholicism is a Christian denomination in itself, we followed recent scholarship on religious classification schemes and refer broadly to these categories as religious traditions (Steenland et al. 2000; see also Kellstedt et al. 1996; Roof and McKinney 1987).

tion in bridging civic organizations. Yet prior research has either not modeled this interaction or not modeled it appropriately. By employing statistical techniques that directly test and model the interaction between religious tradition and congregation activity, our study contributes important information lacking in other investigations of the relationship between religion and civic engagement.

This information has important implications for current debates about “faith-based” initiatives. These initiatives, pursued largely by evangelical Protestant leaders, call for religious organizations to be included in the pool of nonprofit organizations eligible to receive government funding for social service programs. Although studies have shown that the religious tradition with which congregations are affiliated influences whether they receive or desire to receive government funding for social service activities (Chaves 1999), very little is known about whether the community benefits of this funding differ depending on the religious tradition of the congregations receiving it. Ostensibly, the intent of providing government funds to religious organizations is to improve the well-being of communities as a whole. If this is the case, it is important to identify religious traditions that are more likely to foster participation in civic organizations that provide assistance to people in need and establish other positive connections with the larger community.

### **Congregation Activity and Bridging Civic Engagement**

Congregations can mobilize their members for civic involvement in the broader community in a number of ways. First, congregations formally encourage civic action in communities when clergy and other religious leaders of congregations stress the importance of reaching out to those who are in need during sermons, homilies, teachings, or prayers (Brewer, Kersh, and Petersen 2003; Wuthnow 2002, 2004). Importantly, James C. Cavendish (2001) showed how such messages from religious leaders boost feelings of efficacy and raise consciousness among members, which, in turn, increase civic engagement. Second, congregations also informally encourage civic involvement through supplying personal friendship networks that provide social incentives to be active (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Third, congregations expose people to important information about civic engagement in communities by hosting speakers from social service and community agencies and by including announcements about civic activities in religious service programs (Brewer et al. 2003; Chaves 2004; Chaves et al. 2002). Fourth, congregations cultivate skills that are transferable to civic efforts outside of congregations since they offer opportunities for members to participate in a range of leadership activities that involve writing letters, planning meetings, giving presentations, and attending meetings where decisions are made (Cavendish 2000; Verba et al. 1995). Participation in leadership activities, especially when externally focused, may also help foster a sense of connection with the larger community and thus motivate civic engagement beyond the tangible skills acquired from participation in these activities (Becker 1999:126–48). Finally, congregations provide numerous opportunities for involvement in external civic activities, both directly—through supporting or organizing various social service, community, or neighborhood projects—and indirectly—through partnerships with organizations involved in providing services to those in need in the larger community (Ammerman 2002, 2005; Chaves 2004; Chaves et al. 2002; Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Cnaan 2002; Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1993; Wuthnow 2002, 2004).

When scholars have analyzed the effect of congregation participation on civic engagement, they have tended to focus on attendance at religious services (Becker and Dhingra 2001; Musick, Wilson, and Bynum 2000; Wilson and Janoski 1995; Wilson and Musick 1997; Wuthnow 1999, 2004). Our observations suggest that, with the exception of occasional sermons or announcements about civic engagement, the mechanisms through which congregations mobilize civic engagement are most often associated with congregation activities outside

religious service attendance. For example, people largely develop skills relevant to external civic engagement by participating in the activities of congregations, not by sitting in pews during religious services.

Because the majority of surveys on religion and civic engagement have not collected information on congregation activity beyond religious service attendance, only a few studies could analyze its effect on civic engagement in communities. Their evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between these activities and civic engagement and that introducing outside activity attenuates the effect of religious service attendance (Jackson et al. 1995; Park and Smith 2002). However, sampling restrictions, methodological shortcomings, and poor measurements of bridging civic engagement limit these studies' conclusions. Moreover, neither study tested the crucially important question of whether religious tradition moderates the effects of religious participation beyond service attendance on external civic engagement.

### **Religious Traditions, Congregation Activity, and Bridging Civic Engagement**

When individuals participate in congregations in the United States, they generally do so within the context of one of the four major religious traditions: black Protestantism, mainline Protestantism, evangelical Protestantism, or Catholicism. Since differences in the theological orientation of these religious traditions largely motivates their congregations to adopt contrasting strategies for interacting with the outside world, this context should moderate considerably the extent to which congregation activity mobilizes involvement in bridging civic organizations. Although somewhat less so than in the early and middle twentieth century, the evangelical Protestant tradition generally favors withdrawing from the wider community to focus on otherworldly concerns, most importantly, personal salvation (Greenberg 2000; Wilson and Janoski 1995). When evangelical Protestants do engage with the wider community, they generally focus on developing personal relationships, with the ultimate goal of proselytizing, rather than collective action to benefit the broader community (Emerson and Smith 2000). In contrast, the other three traditions emphasize active involvement in and service to the wider community. Each of the other traditions draws on specific historical and theological resources to motivate engagement in the larger community. Catholicism draws mainly on its rich tradition of social teachings that focus on caring for the less fortunate and addressing inequalities. Mainline Protestantism draws mainly on the social gospel of the early twentieth century that stresses reforming society to reflect such core principles of the gospel as love, peace, and justice. And black Protestantism's emphasis stems from its historical dedication to ideals such as liberation and deliverance from oppression (see, e.g., Greenberg 2000; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Wood 2002).

Because of these contrasting theological positions on community engagement, members of these traditions tend to be exposed at different rates to civic mobilization efforts in congregations.<sup>3</sup> Compared to the congregations of the other religious traditions, the formal resources and networks of evangelical Protestant congregations are substantially less likely to provide their members with opportunities and encouragements to enter into civic action that serves individuals in the larger community (Ammerman 2002; Brewer et al. 2003; Chaves 2004; Chaves et al. 2002; Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Wuthnow 2002, 2004). In addition, the

3. We acknowledge that other congregation-level factors may also help account for these religious tradition differences. However, Chaves and associates (Chaves 2004; Chaves et al. 2002) find that religious tradition differences in congregation-based mobilization efforts are robust to the inclusion of various other relevant congregation-level factors, such as size, urban location, or education of head clergy. Their conclusion supports our argument that theological orientation is an important factor for explaining religious tradition variation in congregation-based mobilization efforts.

personal networks established in evangelical Protestant congregations should be less likely to facilitate involvement in bridging civic organizations. In fact, a rational choice perspective adopts the stronger position that since evangelical Protestant congregations demand high levels of commitment from their members (Iannaccone 1994), the personal networks developed in them should negatively sanction external commitments given that they would take time, energy, and other valuable resources away from individual congregations and their members.

Finally, evangelical Protestant congregations are less likely to provide members with opportunities to develop the most relevant skills for promoting participation in civic organizations that serve and establish linkages with the broader community. Robert Wuthnow (1999) showed that the activities from which evangelical Protestants derive skills, such as teaching Sunday school, singing in choirs, or serving as ushers during religious services, are mainly focused on preserving their own congregations. Participation in bridging civic organizations requires transferable skills that are unlikely to be cultivated from engaging in such pursuits. Instead, people are more likely to acquire skills that are useful for bridging civic organizations by participating in activities focusing on the larger community, such as planning, organizing, and participating in events about homelessness or other social problems. Because black Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Catholic congregations engage in these types of activities more often than evangelical Protestant congregations, their members have more opportunities to develop skills that transfer to bridging civic activity.

Given these religious tradition differences in congregation-based civic mobilization efforts, religious tradition affiliation should substantially moderate the extent to which congregation activity facilitates involvement in civic organizations that serve and establish linkages with those in the larger community. Despite the important methodological implication of this observation, prior studies on religion and civic engagement have either not modeled the interaction between religious traditions and congregation activity or have not employed appropriate modeling strategies when doing so. For instance, studies constructing bivariate tables showing the relationship between religious service attendance and civic engagement for each religious tradition fail to control for demographic variables that likely confound this relationship. They also often use crude categorization schemes, such as dichotomization, to measure religious service attendance and may lose valuable information as a result (Wuthnow 2004). Other studies that regress civic engagement on congregation participation (usually only religious service attendance) for each religious tradition separately only compare the slopes of the lines (Hoge et al. 1998; Wilson and Janoski 1995; Wuthnow 1999). For instance, Wuthnow's (1999) study showing that the slope of one interaction is steeper than the rest simply tells us that religious service attendance has a stronger effect on civic engagement for members of a particular tradition. Since such studies do not inform us where the lines are located, the conclusion that religious service attendance results in greater civic participation for members of a particular tradition is not justified because attendance may simply allow members of one tradition to "catch up" to the members of the other traditions. Moreover, such studies do not tell us whether the effects of the slopes are statistically different, or at what level of congregation activity the various religious traditions produce statistically significant differences. Our methodological strategy overcomes these important limitations.

## **Data, Variables, and Methods**

### *Data*

We used data from the American Citizen Participation Study (CPS) survey (for details, see Verba et al. 1995). This is a clustered and stratified probability sample of adults 18 and older in the United States, conducted from March to July of 1990. The final sample contained

2,517 respondents. Because there was very little missing data for the variables used in our analyses, it was more straightforward to use listwise deletion than other methods designed for handling missing data (Allison 2002). Listwise deletion of missing data yielded a final sample of 2,429 respondents.

### *Dependent Variables*

We constructed two measures of involvement in bridging organizations: active participation in charitable organizations and active participation in linking organizations. For each organization-type in which individuals indicated membership, the CPS asked whether they participated actively in the organization and whether the organization provided charitable services to non-member individuals.<sup>4</sup> Our first measure was a count of the number of organization-types providing charitable services to nonmembers in which an individual indicated active participation.<sup>5</sup>

Our second measure was a count of the number of organization-types that provide greater interlinkages for active participants. Building on the work of Pamela Paxton (2002), we created a measure of organization-types that are likely to bring individuals into contact with individuals from different organization-types (see also Cornwell and Harrison 2004). Creating this variable involved two stages. First, we created a measure of a "linking organization." This took place in three steps: (1) For each organization-type, we determined the average number of other organization-types in which each member participated. For example, for each respondent who reported belonging to a social service organization, we calculated the number of other organizations in which they participated. Summing these values and dividing by the number of social service organization participants gave us the average number of organizations for a social service organization participant; (2) For each organization-type, we determined the average number of organizations providing charitable services in which each organization member participated. For instance, for all respondents reporting participation in a social service organization, we computed the number of other organizations in which they participated that were described as providing charitable services. We then computed the mean over these social service organization participants. (3) And for each charitable organization, we determined the average number of other organization-types in which each member participated. Thus, for each respondent reporting that the social service organization in which they participated provided charitable services, we computed the number of other organizations they participated in, then the mean over these social service organization participants. We then averaged these three measures to create a variable that ranged from 2.17 to 4.09, with high scores indicating organization-types that provided more linkages.<sup>6</sup> Organization-types

4. The American Citizen Participation Study provided respondents with a list of twenty types of organizations and asked them to indicate whether they belonged to each type of organization. While this is a common strategy in surveys, an unfortunate result is that we do not necessarily know the overall number of organizations to which an individual belongs. That is, if a respondent reports belonging to a hobby group type of organization, we do not know how many hobby groups to which they belong. In this sample, the mean number of organization-types to which respondents belong is 1.44. The list of organization-types included: 1) cultural, 2) liberal or conservative political causes; 3) women's issues; 4) nonpartisan or civic; 5) literary or art; 6) ethnic or racial; 7) general political causes; 8) social service; 9) organization supporting a candidate; 10) service club or fraternal; 11) senior citizen; 12) youth group; 13) religious; 14) neighborhood association; 15) educational; 16) veterans; 17) hobby or sports; 18) business or professional; 19) labor union; 20) other organization.

5. While 54 percent of the organizations listed by respondents were characterized as providing charitable services to nonmembers, there may be a concern that respondents reporting participation in a large number of charitable organizations may be inaccurate (21 respondents reported participating in between 6 and 10 charitable organizations). We assessed this concern in auxiliary analysis by truncating this variable at four charitable organizations (since 98 percent of the sample reported this many or fewer such organizations), and estimating an ordered logit regression model (since the truncation of the variable makes a Poisson distribution inappropriate). The results from this model were substantively identical to those presented.

6. Since each of these three measures is highly correlated, it is not feasible to break them apart into separate components. Thus, we view this as a single summed measure of the degree of interlinkage among these organization-types.

with linkage scores above 3.48 were coded as “linking organizations,” since there was a clear break in the values of this continuous measure at this value.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, if a respondent reports belonging to one of the organizations we classify as linking—for instance, a cultural organization—this is considered participation in one linking organization. If the respondent also reports that this cultural organization engages in charitable activity, then this is also considered participation in a charitable organization.

In the second stage, we determined the number of linking organizations in which an individual actively participates. For instance, if a person in our sample actively participates in a single non-linking organization, such as a hobby group, the other members of the hobby group will generally only participate in this particular group. As a result, active participation in hobby groups will tend to provide contacts only to members of these groups, and not linkages to those in the broader community. On the other hand, if a respondent actively participates in a “linking” organization, such as a cultural organization, they will not only gain contacts to the other members of this organization, but will also gain linkages to active participants of other organizations since the typical active cultural organization participant is actively involved in several different organizations. So, active membership in such linking organizations provides contacts to others throughout the community, which can affect the overall network structure of communities, as Benjamin Cornwell and Jill Ann Harrison (2004) suggest.

### *Independent Variables*

Our first key explanatory variable was religious tradition. We constructed a dichotomous measure for each of the four major U.S. religious traditions: black Protestantism, mainline Protestantism, evangelical Protestantism, and Catholicism. We employed a common classification scheme for denominational affiliations to make the above distinctions among Protestant traditions (Steenland et al. 2000; see also Kellstedt et al. 1996; Roof and McKinney 1987).<sup>8</sup> Those individuals who were not classified into one of the four major traditions were included in a catch-all “other” category that included such religious affiliations as Judaism and Islam, as well as those with no religious affiliation. The heterogeneity of this measure rendered it substantively meaningless. However, including it allowed a direct comparison of the effects of the four major U.S. religious traditions. In auxiliary analyses, we tested models including dummy variables for these separate groups, but because of the small number of cases for each group, we did not identify any significant effects. Importantly, the main results of our models were unchanged in these auxiliary analyses.

Our second set of key explanatory variables measured the *type* of congregation activities in which individuals engaged. First, we measured the frequency of religious service attendance. This question was originally asked in an ordinal scale, ranging from “never attend religious services” to “attend religious services more than weekly.” However, we translated this measure to an interval-level scale by recoding the initial responses to approximate the number of days attending religious services per year, and then log-transformed it, since increasing

7. These include organizations of the following kinds: cultural, such as those supporting museums and public radio; general political causes; promoting the rights and welfare of women; non-partisan or civic groups interested in the political life of communities or the nation; literary or art discussion and study groups; and ethnic or racial groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

8. Complete descriptions of the denominations that comprise the Protestant traditions are available upon request from the authors. The largest groups in the black Protestantism category were African American Baptist denominations (including black Southern Baptists), the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Church of God in Christ; the largest groups in the evangelical Protestantism category were white Southern Baptists, Pentecostal denominations, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; and the largest groups in the mainline Protestantism category were the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Episcopal Church.



involvement should have diminishing effects on external civic participation.<sup>9</sup> Our second measure was the number of hours each week that respondents spent in congregation activities, outside of attending religious services.<sup>10</sup> The exact wording of his question was: “If you average across the last twelve months, about how many hours per week did you give to church or synagogue work—aside from attending services?”<sup>11</sup> We also log transformed this variable for the reason just mentioned. To capture how these measures differ over traditions, we constructed interaction terms between our religious tradition dichotomous variables and the two measures of congregation activity.<sup>12</sup>

We included several demographic controls that past studies have found to be important predictors of civic activity. To capture life course effects on biographical availability, we included measures of both age and age squared to account for possible nonlinear life-course effects, a dummy variable for respondents who are currently married, a count of the number of children currently living at home, and a dummy variable indicating whether any of the children living at home were under five years old. We included a dichotomous measure of gender and a continuous measure of years of education.<sup>13</sup> We took into account possible racial/ethnic effects by including dichotomous variables for Latinos and other races. Because of the high correlation (.82) between being African American and affiliation with black Protestant denominations, we did not include a separate racial measure of African American in the models. Thus, whites and African Americans serve as the reference category. We also included a log-transformed measure of the length of time respondents had lived in their current home.

Finally, to minimize the possibility of spurious findings because of an underlying disposition toward involvement that might explain why people get involved in both congregational activities and in bridging organizations, we included two measures designed to reflect this disposition. The first was a subjective measure of the respondent’s personal efficacy, achieved by calculating the mean value of eight dichotomous items.<sup>14</sup> And second, to capture the possibility that the respondent had always been more civically active, we included a measure of how active the respondent was in social groups and government in high school.<sup>15</sup> Thus, by

9. The exact values to which we translated the original ordinal response categories were: (1) never (0 days per year); (2) less than once a year (1 day per year); (3) once or twice a year (2 days per year); (4) several times a year (6 days a year); (5) once a month (12 days a year); (6) 2-3 times a month (28 days a year); (7) nearly weekly (45 days a year); (8) weekly (52 days a year); and (9) more than once a week (70 days a year). While these values are approximations, experimenting with alternative values did not substantively change the results. After logging the variable for frequency of religious service attendance per days in a year, it had a correlation of .988 with the original ordinal variable.

10. There may be concern that including these two measures of congregation activity in the same model introduces collinearity, but tests using variance inflation factors (VIF’s) showed that there were no problems with any of the variables in any of our models. The VIF’s were generally below 5, even in the models including interactions.

11. The probe for this question was “for example, participating in educational, charitable, or social activities or in other church affairs.”

12. Participation in congregation activity may have a crowding out effect where at the highest levels there is no additional time left in an individual’s schedule to engage in bridging civic organizations. Therefore, we also tested for a quadratic effect of congregation activity and religious service attendance. These models showed that the inflection point at which the curve turned back downwards was outside the range of the sample values for the predictor variables. This result suggests that the log-transformed measure is more directly capturing the actual relationship. Indeed, the model including the quadratic terms fit no better than the one with the log-transformed measure.

13. There is also a measure of household income in the survey. We do not include that here because: (1) including it in models did not change any of the substantive results; and (2) there are considerable missing values for this variable, which would necessitate an approach to take into account this missingness.

14. The questions ask which of the following apply: (1) I usually count on being successful at everything I do; (2) I like to assume responsibility; (3) I like to take the lead when a group does things together; (4) I enjoy convincing others of my opinions; (5) I often notice that I serve as a model for others; (6) I am good at getting what I want; (7) I am often a step ahead of others; and (8) I often give others advice and suggestions.

15. This was calculated as the mean of two 4-point Likert scale questions. These two questions ask if, in high school, the respondent was not at all active, not very active, somewhat active, or very active in (1) social groups and (2) school government.

**Table 1 • Summary Statistics**

|  | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Min</i> | <i>Max</i> |
|--|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Dependent variables                                    |             |           |            |            |
| Active in linking organizations                        | 0.26        | 0.60      | 0          | 5          |
| Active in charitable organizations                     | 0.78        | 1.24      | 0          | 10         |
| Independent variables                                  |             |           |            |            |
| Religious service attendance (logged days per year)    | 2.62        | 1.49      | 0          | 4.263      |
| Congregation activity beyond attendance (logged hours) | 0.43        | 0.74      | 0          | 5.13       |
| Evangelical Protestant                                 | 0.22        | 0.42      | 0          | 1          |
| Mainline Protestant                                    | 0.19        | 0.39      | 0          | 1          |
| Catholic   | 0.27        | 0.44      | 0          | 1          |
| Black Protestant                                       | 0.14        | 0.34      | 0          | 1          |
| Other religion/nonreligious                            | 0.18        | 0.39      | 0          | 1          |
| Latino   | 0.12        | 0.32      | 0          | 1          |
| Other race   | 0.03        | 0.18      | 0          | 1          |
| White  | 0.66        | 0.47      | 0          | 1          |
| Female   | 0.53        | 0.50      | 0          | 1          |
| Number of children present                             | 0.99        | 1.22      | 0          | 5          |
| Presence of children less than 5 years old             | 0.18        | 0.39      | 0          | 1          |
| Married  | 0.57        | 0.50      | 0          | 1          |
| Education level  | 13.28       | 2.87      | 0          | 17         |
| Age  | 42.65       | 0.16      | 18         | 92         |
| Length of residence (log transformed)                  | 4.21        | 1.32      | 0          | 6.763      |
| Personal efficacy                                      | 0.69        | 0.26      | 0          | 1          |
| Active in high school clubs and government             | 1.21        | 0.97      | 0          | 3          |
| Means by religious tradition                           |             |           |            |            |
|  | <u>ML</u>   | <u>RC</u> | <u>BP</u>  | <u>EV</u>  |
| Active in linking organizations                        | 0.33        | 0.22      | 0.27       | 0.16       |
| Active in charitable organizations                     | 1.11        | 0.61      | 0.87       | 0.73       |
| Religious service attendance (logged days per year)    | 3.02        | 2.83      | 2.54       | 3.05       |
| Congregation activity beyond attendance (logged hours) | 0.43        | 0.26      | 0.58       | 0.62       |

Note:  $N = 2,429$ . ML = Mainline Protestants; RC = Roman Catholics; BP = Black Protestants; EV = Evangelical Protestants.

capturing personal efficacy and a general activist tendency, we controlled for the possibility that an underlying disposition toward involvement explained the relationship between congregation activity and bridging civic engagement. Because there is still the possibility that active involvement in bridging organizations could increase congregation activity in our cross-sectional analysis, we refrained from using language that implied causality when interpreting our findings.

We display the summary statistics for the variables used in our analyses in Table 1. Note at the bottom of this table that, in a bivariate context, evangelical Protestants are involved in fewer charitable organizations than black and mainline Protestants, and in far fewer linking organizations than members of all of the other traditions. At the same time, however, evangelical Protestants attend religious services and participate in other congregation activity more frequently than do members of the other traditions. Taken together, these findings suggest that the bridging civic engagement payoff for additional congregation activity may be less for evangelical Protestants than for adherents of the other traditions. Our analyses explicitly explore this hypothesis.

### *Methodology*

Because our outcome measures are counts of the number of organization-types, a Poisson distribution is appropriate for modeling them. Given the considerable degree of overdispersion in each of our outcome measures, we employ negative binomial regression models to account for this distributional violation. Since the negative binomial model simply adds an additional term to the Poisson distribution to account for this additional variance, our expected values are:

$$E(y_i|x_i) = \exp(x_i\beta + \varepsilon_i)$$

where  $y_i$  is the outcome measure,  $x_i$  is the vector of predictor variables,  $\beta$  is the effect of these predictors on the expected count of  $y$ ,  $\varepsilon_i$  is the added disturbance term which is allowed to have a gamma distribution, and taking the exponentiation of this forces  $y$  to take on positive values.<sup>16</sup>

Our first models test the main effects of congregation activity and religious tradition affiliation on involvement in bridging civic organizations. We first estimate models using frequency of religious service attendance as the sole measure of congregation activity. Then we include the measure of congregation activity beyond religious service attendance to permit a direct comparison of the effect of these two measures of congregation activity. Following that, the key focus of our combined analyses tests the interactions of our two measures of congregation activity with those of religious traditions to determine whether religious traditions moderate the relationship between congregation activity and bridging civic engagement. Our approach to modeling this relationship improves on past research in the following four significant ways: (1) we explicitly estimate interaction effects between religious traditions and congregation activity; (2) as is appropriate when using interaction terms, we plot the relationship between our predictors and the outcome measures to show the precise relationship of the effect of congregation activity on bridging civic engagement within the various religious traditions (Aiken and West 1991)<sup>17</sup>; (3) we are also able to test the statistical significance of the slopes to determine whether increasing congregation activity within particular traditions increases participation in bridging civic organizations; and (4) we are able to test the statistical significance *among various traditions at particular points of congregation activity*. Thus, we not only estimate and illustrate the substantive differences in participation in bridging organizations among the four religious traditions, but we also provided statistical tests of these differences.

## **Results**

### *Main Effects of Congregation Activity on Bridging Civic Organizations*

While past research suggested that congregation activity would increase participation in voluntary organizations, we began by testing whether it also increases activity in organizations that bridge into the community. When we include only religious service attendance as the measure of congregation activity, it has virtually no relationship with participating in linking organizations, as seen in model 1 in Table 2. However, in our second model it is clear that while religious service attendance remains unrelated to participation in linking organizations, congregation activity beyond religious service attendance has a positive association. A

16. Upon the suggestion of a reviewer, we also estimated our dependent variables of count data using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, and we dichotomized them and estimated a logit regression model. These results were substantively similar to those presented (results available upon request).

17. Since we have the additional complexity of including two simultaneous interactions, we adopted the strategy of plotting one of the interaction variables while holding the other at its mean value.

**Table 2 • Negative Binomial Regression Models Predicting Active Involvement in Bridging Civic Organizations**

|  | Number of Active Involvements in Bridging Civic Organization Types |                              |                                 |                                 |
|--|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | (1)<br>Linking Organizations                                       | (2)<br>Linking Organizations | (3)<br>Charitable Organizations | (4)<br>Charitable Organizations |
| Types of congregation activity                         |  |                              |                                 |                                 |
| Religious service attendance (logged days per year)    | 0.023 (0.66)   | -0.064 (-1.62)               | 0.124** (5.47)                  | 0.044† (1.68)                   |
| Congregation activity beyond attendance (logged hours) | —  | 0.263** (4.32)               | —                               | 0.239** (5.77)                  |
| Religious traditions (n)                               |  |                              |                                 |                                 |
| Mainline Protestant                                    | 0.305* (2.09)  | 0.334* (2.28)                | 0.208* (2.39)                   | 0.229** (2.65)                  |
| Catholic   | 0.299* (2.03)  | 0.420** (2.81)               | -0.060 (-0.69)                  | 0.039 (0.44)                    |
| Black Protestant                                       | 0.468** (2.84)   | 0.498** (3.04)               | 0.160 (1.62)                    | 0.174† (1.77)                   |
| Other religion/nonreligious                            | 0.506** (3.27)   | 0.491** (3.20)               | -0.054 (-0.54)                  | -0.082 (-0.83)                  |
| Controls   |  |                              |                                 |                                 |
| Latino   | -0.394† (-1.86)  | -0.410† (-1.95)              | -0.455** (-3.48)                | -0.456** (-3.50)                |
| Other race   | -0.075 (-0.26)   | -0.095 (-0.32)               | 0.126 (0.72)                    | 0.136 (0.78)                    |
| Female   | 0.291** (3.22)   | 0.284** (3.18)               | -0.022 (-0.37)                  | -0.025 (-0.42)                  |
| Number of children present                             | 0.032 (0.70)   | 0.029 (0.64)                 | 0.092** (3.22)                  | 0.091** (3.21)                  |
| Presence of children less than 5 years old             | -0.309* (-2.04)  | -0.277† (-1.84)              | -0.209* (-2.24)                 | -0.191* (-2.05)                 |
| Married  | -0.045 (-0.44)   | -0.049 (-0.48)               | 0.090 (1.33)                    | 0.089 (1.31)                    |
| Education level  | 0.268** (11.54)  | 0.268** (11.58)              | 0.151** (11.18)                 | 0.150** (11.20)                 |
| Age/100 (grand mean centered)                          | 0.375 (0.86)   | 0.433 (1.00)                 | 1.186** (4.10)                  | 1.257** (4.38)                  |
| Age squared  | 0.637 (0.35)   | 0.699 (0.39)                 | -1.552 (-1.28)                  | -1.588 (-1.32)                  |
| Length of residence (log transformed)                  | 0.060 (1.50)   | 0.056 (1.42)                 | 0.081** (3.11)                  | 0.078* (3.02)                   |
| Personal efficacy                                      | 0.723** (3.62)   | 0.709** (3.58)               | 0.741** (5.86)                  | 0.724** (5.76)                  |
| Active in high school clubs and government             | 0.301** (6.07)   | 0.287** (5.84)               | 0.293** (9.12)                  | 0.282** (8.80)                  |
| Intercept  | -2.945** (-14.50)  | -2.982** (-14.69)            | -1.391** (-11.48)               | -1.405** (-11.63)               |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>                                  | 0.127  | 0.133                        | 0.108                           | 0.114                           |
| Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)                     | 2744.0   | 2728.3                       | 5319.9                          | 5290.9                          |

Note: T-values in parentheses.  
 \* p < .05    \*\* p < .01    † p < .1 (two-tailed tests). (n): Reference category is evangelical Protestants.

one standard deviation increase in logged congregation hours beyond religious service attendance is associated with a 21 percent increase in participation in linking organizations.<sup>18</sup>

The same general pattern is evident in the models for participation in organizations that provide charitable services to the larger community. The third column in Table 2 is a model that includes only religious service attendance as a measure of congregation activity. This shows a positive association with participation in charitable organizations, but this effect nearly disappears when we include our measure of congregation activity beyond religious service attendance in the final model of Table 2. The magnitude of the coefficient for religious service attendance falls by 65 percent and is only marginally significant. In contrast, participation in congregation activity outside religious services is strongly associated with participation in charitable organizations, net of religious service attendance, demographic variables, and variables reflecting an underlying disposition toward involvement. A one standard deviation increase in the logged number of hours spent engaging in congregation activity other than attending religious services is associated with participation in 20 percent more charitable organizations.

### *Main Effects of Religious Traditions on Bridging Civic Organizations*

In these same models, we consider whether affiliation with the four main religious traditions has a differential effect on involvement in bridging civic organizations. We see clear evidence that, controlling for congregational activity, demographic measures, and an underlying disposition toward involvement, evangelical Protestants are *less* likely to participate in both types of bridging civic organizations than members of the other religious traditions. For instance, mainline Protestants are 40 percent more likely to participate in linking organizations and 26 percent more likely to participate in charitable organizations than evangelical Protestants (the reference category in these models). Similarly, black Protestants are 65 percent more likely to be active in linking organizations and 19 percent more active in charitable organizations than their evangelical Protestant counterparts. And while there is essentially no Catholic-evangelical Protestant difference in participation in charitable organizations, Catholics are involved in 52 percent more linking organizations than evangelical Protestants. We next examine whether the religious tradition context moderates the effect of congregation activity on involvement in bridging civic engagement.<sup>19</sup>

### *Interaction Effects: Linking Organizations*

As hypothesized, the interaction models show that religious tradition considerably moderates the extent to which congregation activity beyond attending religious services is related to participation in linking organizations. Except for evangelical Protestants, an increase in hours spent participating in congregational activities outside religious services is significantly associated with greater active involvement in linking organizations, as seen in the first column of Table 3. A one standard deviation increase in hours spent engaging in congregation activity beyond religious services is coupled with participation in 23 percent more linking organizations for mainline Protestants and over 40 percent more for Catholics and black Protestants. In contrast, participating in activity beyond religious services in evangelical Protestant congre-

18. Since the standard deviation of logged congregation activity hours is .74, this is calculated as  $\exp(.268 \cdot .74) = 1.219$ . We used the same method for calculating the remaining values reported in the text.

19. We tested for the appropriateness of including these interactions by performing nested likelihood ratio tests. For each of our outcome variables we first estimated a model with all of our main effect variables (religious service attendance, congregation activity beyond religious service attendance, control variables, and religious traditions), but including no interactions with religious traditions. When estimating a model for charitable organizations including interactions of all variables with the religious traditions showed a significant improvement in fit. The linking organizations model, a model containing only the theoretically important interactions for various types of congregation activity, showed an improvement in model fit ( $\chi^2 = 20.5$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We therefore concluded there is evidence for the appropriateness of modeling the moderating effect of religious traditions on our predictor variables.

**Table 3 • Negative Binomial Regression Models for the Moderating Effect of Congregation Context on Active Involvement in Bridging Civic Organization Types**

|  | Number of Active Involvements<br>in Bridging Civic Organization Types |                             |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
|  | Linking<br>Organizations  | Charitable<br>Organizations |
| Congregation activity (logged hours) by tradition              |   |                             |
| Congregation activity beyond attendance                        | 0.071 (0.55)  | 0.157* (2.07)               |
| Activity × Mainline Protestants                                | 0.214 <sup>b</sup> (1.20)   | 0.064 <sup>b</sup> (0.53)   |
| Activity × Catholics   | 0.386* <sup>b</sup> (2.11)  | 0.067 <sup>b</sup> (0.54)   |
| Activity × Black Protestants                                   | 0.399* <sup>b</sup> (2.04)  | 0.269* <sup>b</sup> (2.17)  |
| Congregation attendance (logged days per year)<br>by tradition |   |                             |
| Religious service attendance                                   | 0.210 <sup>tb</sup> (1.88)  | 0.135* <sup>b</sup> (2.31)  |
| Activity × Mainline Protestants                                | -0.279* (-2.02)   | -0.166* (-2.09)             |
| Activity × Catholics   | -0.319* (-2.34)   | -0.066 (-0.84)              |
| Activity × Black Protestants                                   | -0.296 <sup>t</sup> (-1.79)   | -0.137 (-1.43)              |
| Religious traditions <sup>a</sup>                              |   |                             |
| Mainline Protestant  | 0.421* (2.53)   | 0.267** (2.86)              |
| Catholic   | 0.533** (3.15)  | 0.052 (0.53)                |
| Black Protestant   | 0.523** (2.63)  | 0.162 (1.42)                |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>  | 0.138   | 0.116                       |
| Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)                             | 2726.3  | 5307.0                      |

Note: All models include other religious/nonreligious, and control for Latino, other race, female, presence of children, married, education, length of residence (logged), age, age squared, personal efficacy, and activity in high school clubs and government. T-values are in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup> Reference category is evangelical Protestants with mean values of congregation attendance and activity.

<sup>b</sup> Slope is significantly positive ( $p < .05$ ).

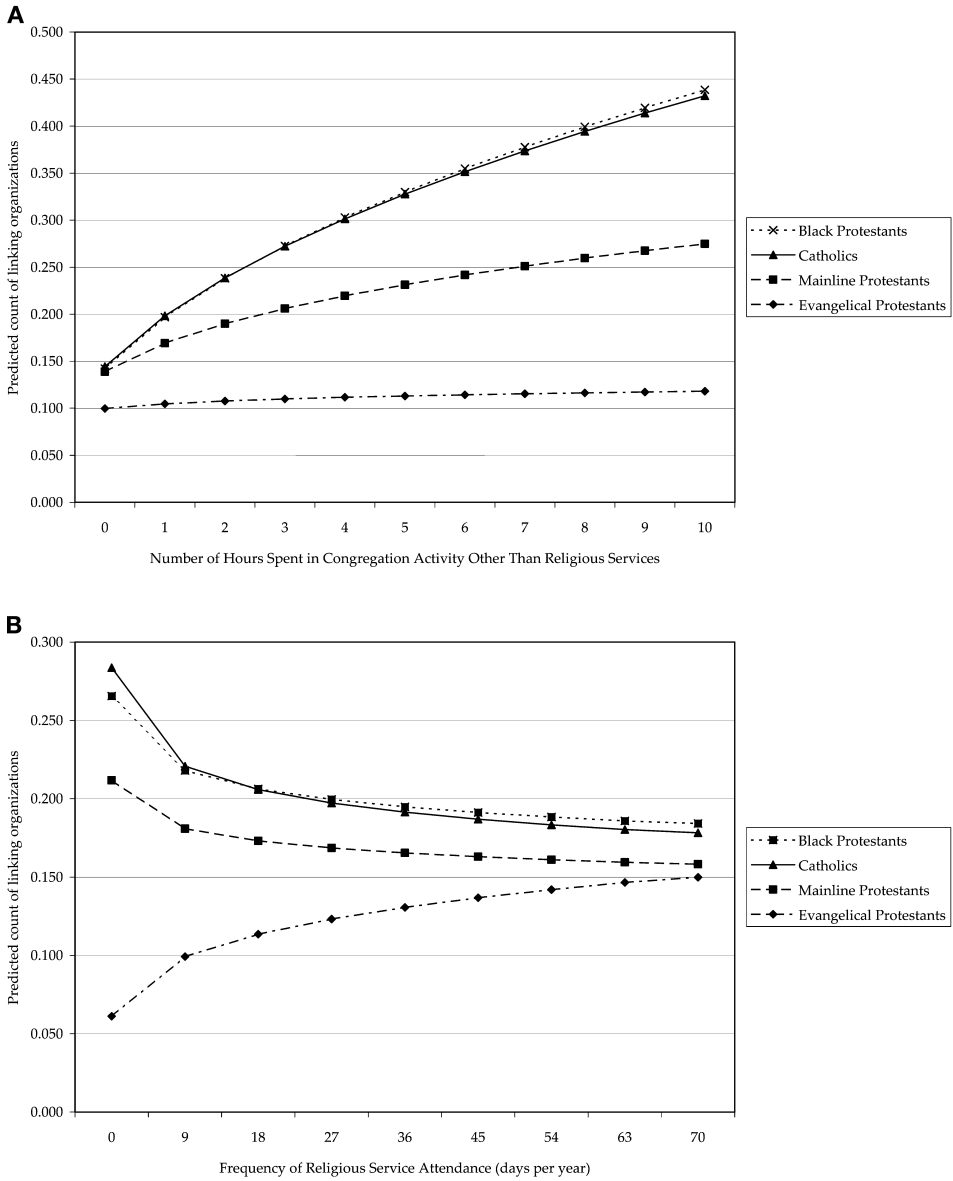
\*  $p < .05$     \*\*  $p < .01$     <sup>t</sup> $p < .1$  (two-tailed tests).

gations is not significantly tied to an increase in linking organization participation.<sup>20</sup> While these interaction effects are consistent with what Wuthnow (2004) found, we extend his approach by probing these interactions graphically and testing for significant differences.

The graphs for the effects of congregation activity outside religious services on participation in linking organizations illustrate sharp differences among the various religious traditions. For individuals who attend religious services an average amount but never engage in additional congregation activity, there are no significant differences among religious traditions for participation in linking organizations, as seen at the left side of Figure 1A.<sup>21</sup> While increasing congregation activity has virtually no effect on the likelihood of participating in linking organizations for evangelical Protestants, it has strong effects for members of the other three religious traditions. As a result, among individuals with average levels of religious service attendance, spending additional hours participating in congregation activity outside of religious service attendance

20. Evangelical Protestants are the reference group in these models; hence, the main effects for activity in congregation hours beyond religious service attendance represent the effects for this group.

21. There are various ways to calculate the point at which an interaction term between a continuous variable and a dichotomous variable leads to significant differences between the two groups (for a more complete discussion of this issue, see Aiken and West 1991; Curran, Bauer, and Willoughby 2004). Since the main effects of the dichotomous variables are always showing the difference in the two groups when the other variables in the model have values of zero, an easy shorthand way to test for significant differences at particular points is to center the continuous variables at particular values. In this way, we can interpret the main effect of the dichotomous variables as the difference between the two groups at those centered values for the continuous measures. We adopted this strategy throughout the text.



**Figure 1 • (A) Effect of Religious Tradition Interaction with Congregation Activity on Linking Organizations, Holding Religious Service Attendance at its Mean Value. (B) Effect of Religious Tradition Interaction with Religious Service Attendance on Linking Organizations, Holding Congregation Activity at its Mean Value.**

is associated with involvement in a significantly lower number of linking organizations for evangelical Protestants relative to black Protestants, mainline Protestants, and Catholics.

This same model in the first column of Table 3 also shows that increased religious service attendance is associated with greater participation in linking organizations only for evangelical Protestants. But when we graph the effects of this second model, for those at the mean values of the other variables, we see that attending religious services more frequently only closes the gap between evangelical Protestants and the other religious traditions. Among individuals who never attend services, evangelical Protestants are involved in significantly fewer linking organizations than the other traditions, as seen at the left hand side of Figure 1B. But on the right hand side of this figure, it is clear that for those who attend services regularly, there is essentially no difference in linking organization participation among the four traditions. Additionally, we note that there is no support for the stronger hypothesis of rational choice perspective that increasing activity in evangelical Protestant congregations is associated with a reduction in participation in linking organizations: the slope for evangelical Protestants is not significantly negative for either increasing religious service attendance or congregation activity beyond religious service attendance.

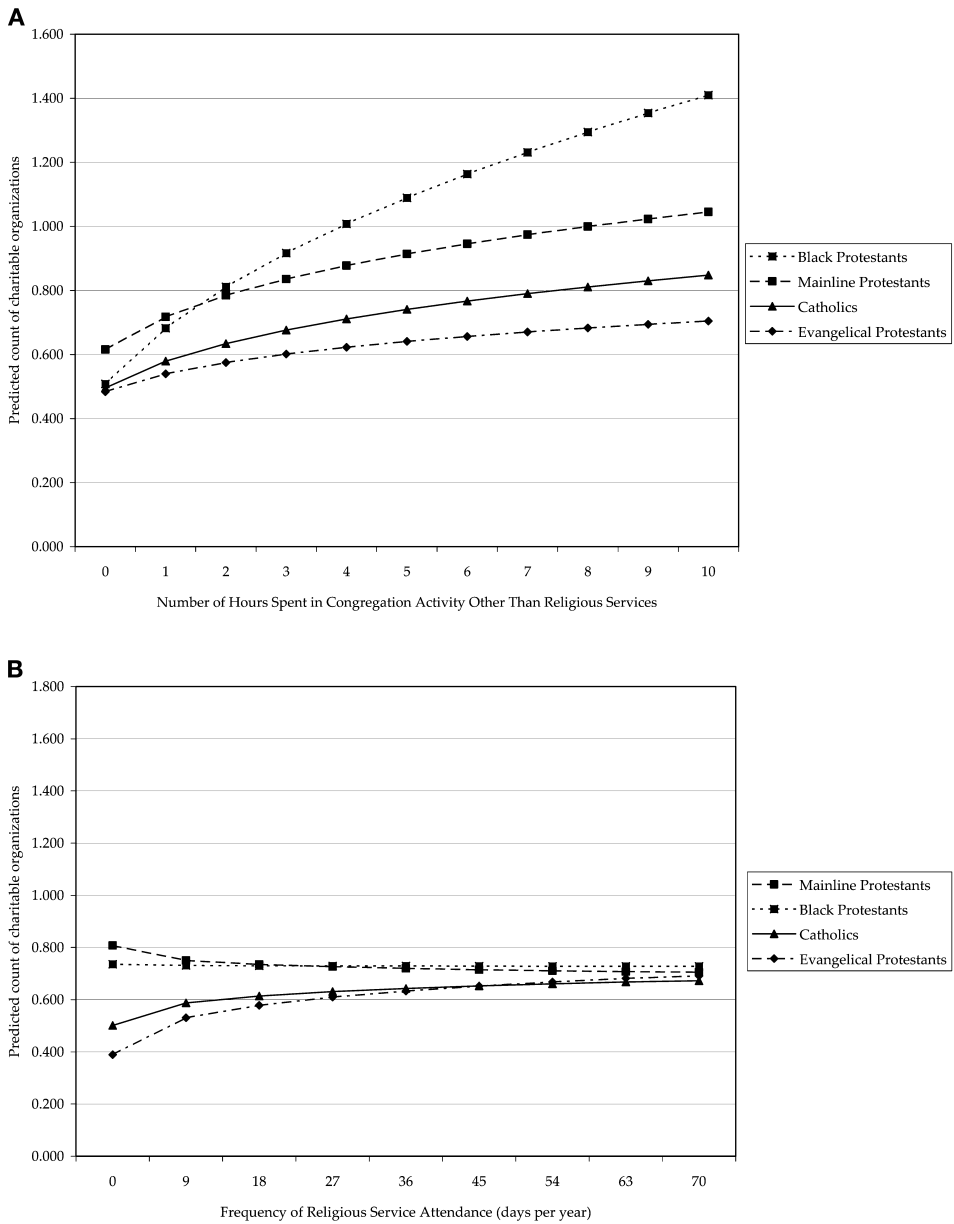
### *Interaction Effects: Charitable Organizations*

A similar pattern emerges when we view the results of our other outcome for bridging civic engagement: participation in charitable organizations. The last column of results in Table 3 shows that, for all four traditions, more hours spent in congregation activity is positively related to higher levels of participation in charitable organizations. Consistent with our hypotheses, this effect was somewhat weaker for evangelical Protestants than for the other traditions. Viewing these effects graphically, we see that while there is no difference among the traditions for individuals who attend services an average amount but spend no added time in congregation activity, as seen in the left side of Figure 2A, this changes as soon as individuals start spending added time in congregation activity beyond religious service attendance. For those individuals who attend services an average amount, additional congregation activity is significantly associated with participation in more charitable organizations for both black and mainline Protestants compared to evangelical Protestants. Interestingly, for individuals attending religious services an average amount and spending five or more hours per week in congregation activity, black and mainline Protestants participate in significantly more charitable organizations than Catholics.

In the last column of Table 3, this same model shows that only for evangelical Protestants is increased religious service attendance related to greater participation in charitable organizations. Graphs of the results for individuals at the mean values on other variables in Figure 2B again show that more time spent attending religious services only closes the gap between evangelical Protestants and members of the other traditions. Again, there is no support here for the stronger hypothesis of a rational choice perspective that increasing activity in evangelical Protestant congregations would reduce participation. The slope for evangelical Protestants is not significantly negative for either increasing religious service attendance or for additional congregation activity.

Given the complexity of the model in which religious tradition simultaneously moderates the effects of two different types of congregation activity on bridging civic engagement, we briefly consider the joint nature of these effects. To accomplish this we calculated predicted probabilities of involvement in linking and charitable civic organizations for individuals at three different levels of religious service attendance (never attend, attend one to three times a month, and attend weekly), and at two different levels of congregation activity beyond religious service attendance (no activity and five hours of activity per week). We set all of the other variables in the model to their mean values. The results in Table 4 reveal that among individuals who attend religious services weekly but never engage in additional





**Figure 2 • (A) Effect of Religious Tradition Interaction with Congregation Activity on Charitable Organizations, Holding Religious Service Attendance at its Mean Value. (B) Effect of Religious Tradition Interaction with Religious Service Attendance on Charitable Organizations, Holding Congregation Activity at its Mean Value.**

**Table 4 • Predicted Counts for Linking and Charitable Organization Participation by Religious Tradition for Differing Levels of Types of Congregation Activity**

| Participation           | No Additional Hours per Week |                     |          | Five Additional Hours per Week |                        |                     |          |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------|------------------|
|                         | Evangelical Protestant       | Mainline Protestant | Catholic | Black Protestant               | Evangelical Protestant | Mainline Protestant | Catholic | Black Protestant |
| Linking organization    |                              |                     |          |                                |                        |                     |          |                  |
| Never attend services   | 0.06                         | 0.17                | 0.19     | 0.18                           | 0.07                   | 0.28                | 0.44     | 0.41             |
| Attend services monthly | 0.10                         | 0.14                | 0.14     | 0.14                           | 0.11                   | 0.23                | 0.33     | 0.33             |
| Attend services weekly  | 0.13                         | 0.13                | 0.12     | 0.13                           | 0.15                   | 0.21                | 0.28     | 0.29             |
| Charitable organization |                              |                     |          |                                |                        |                     |          |                  |
| Never attend services   | 0.34                         | 0.67                | 0.41     | 0.51                           | 0.45                   | 0.99                | 0.62     | 1.10             |
| Attend services monthly | 0.48                         | 0.62                | 0.50     | 0.51                           | 0.64                   | 0.91                | 0.74     | 1.09             |
| Attend services weekly  | 0.58                         | 0.59                | 0.54     | 0.51                           | 0.77                   | 0.88                | 0.81     | 1.09             |

Note: Predicted probabilities with all other variables held to mean values.

congregation activity, there is essentially no difference among religious traditions in participation in linking organizations, as the expected value for participation is about .13 for the four traditions. Additional congregation activity, however, resulted in substantial religious tradition differences: the expected count for an evangelical Protestant who attends weekly and participates in five hours of additional activity is .15, while the expected count for an analogous mainline Protestant, Catholic, or black Protestant is between .21 and .29.

The effects for participation in charitable organizations are similar. Among individuals who attend religious services weekly and engage in five hours per week of additional congregation activity, black Protestants (1.1) and mainline Protestants (.88) have the highest expected levels of participation in charitable organizations. Expected rates of participation in charitable organizations were significantly lower for analogous Catholics (.81) and evangelical Protestants (.77).

### Summary and Conclusion

One of the most significant developments to emerge from the civil society literature is the recognition that groups cultivate social capital that may not necessarily benefit the broader community (Fiorina 1999; Paxton 1999, 2002; Putnam 2000). Groups with strong internal ties and few external ties provide benefits to group members through social support and feelings of belonging, yet they may jeopardize the welfare of the wider community. Their intragroup bonding truncates the size of the overall network structure, making it more difficult for the community as a whole to organize collective responses when threats arise. On the other hand, since bridging groups create ties across groups, they expand the size of the overall network, and thus, likely benefit the wider community by facilitating the mobilization of collective resources when necessary (Beyerlein and Hipp 2005). Importantly, because of the large number of people who gather in congregations every week, religious institutions constitute an important resource—perhaps an unparalleled one among U.S. civic organizations—with the potential to supply the volunteer labor needed to support the bridging networks that help keep communities intact and functioning effectively.

For instance, since active mainline Protestants (defined as those who attend services at least once a month or participate in additional congregational activity) constitute 11 percent of a typical county population based on our sample, and since 29 percent are active in at least

one linking organization and 59 percent are active in at least one charitable organization, this means that in a U.S. county with a population of 80,000 (the average) mainline Protestants will send about 2,500 volunteers to linking organizations and 5,200 volunteers to charitable organizations. This evidence suggests that identifying the conditions under which congregation participation is associated with bridging social capital has important implications for the overall cohesion and well-being of American communities.

The first condition that influences whether involvement in congregations is related to participation in bridging civic organizations is the *type* of congregation activity in which people are involved. Although attending religious services is the most common feature of congregation life, we demonstrated that, after taking into account other types of congregation activity, religious service attendance was not associated with active participation in bridging civic organizations.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, after adjusting for the net effect of religious service attendance, demographic factors, and variables tapping an underlying disposition toward involvement, our empirical models show that congregation activity outside of religious service attendance is significantly associated with involvement in bridging civic organizations. This finding is consistent with our expectation that the majority of mechanisms through which congregations mobilize bridging civic engagement are encompassed in congregation activities other than religious services. This suggests that future research would benefit from parsing out the specific types of congregational activities in which people engage beyond religious service attendance and identifying how these different types of activities affect bridging civic engagement.

The second condition that influences whether congregational activity is associated with participation in bridging-types of civic organizations is the religious tradition in which this activity occurs. Consistent with our hypotheses, we find that in black Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Catholic congregations, involvement in congregation activities beyond attending religious services has substantially stronger effects on bridging civic engagement than similar involvement in evangelical Protestant congregations. We suggested that variation in congregation-based civic mobilization efforts for the different religious traditions largely explained these different effects (Ammerman 2002; Chaves 2004; Chaves et al. 2002; Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Wuthnow 2004). In this way, we conceived of religious traditions as proxies for congregational features that affect member participation in civic activities connecting to and serving the wider community. We also advocate, as a fruitful direction for future research, identifying the exact mechanisms through which congregations mobilize members to involve themselves in bridging civic action. For example, researchers might employ ethnographic methods that document these mechanisms as they unfold within congregations, or they might collect and analyze multilevel data that directly connect information on congregation-level mechanisms to the civic behaviors of individuals nested within congregations. We suspect that such studies could pinpoint information on specific congregational contexts that would reflect even sharper moderating effects than those we observed for religious traditions.

Prior studies on religion and civic engagement, especially those considering the intersection of religious tradition and congregation activity, have tended to neglect the contributions of black Protestants, focusing instead on the differences among evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants, and Catholics (Wuthnow 1999). Our findings demonstrate both the enduring legacy of the black church and its ability—at least since the Civil Rights movement—to mobilize African Americans to participate in social activism (McAdam 1999; Morris 1984; Oberschall 1973). Our results identified that active black Protestants were more likely to engage in both types of bridging civic organizations than active evangelical Protestants and that they were even more likely to participate in charitable civic organizations than active Catholics. In light of this empirical evidence, future research should continue to focus on black Protestants' distinctive contributions to American civic life. It is likely that its special

22. It is possible that analysis of longitudinal data would show that attendance has an indirect effect on bridging civic engagement through increasing participation in congregation activity beyond religious service attendance. Future research should explore this possibility.

role reflects empowering cultural rituals practiced within the black church, such as the cultivation of solidarity from collective emotional practices and experiences (Pattillo-McCoy 1998).

Contrary to our expectation, we found that religious service attendance was moderately associated with greater involvement in bridging civic organizations for evangelical Protestants. This was unexpected for two reasons: First, our empirical results generally showed that congregation activities other than religious service attendance had a much stronger effect on participation in bridging civic organizations than religious service attendance. Second, evangelical Protestant congregations are *not* more likely than congregations of other religious traditions to supply the two main pathways through which religious service attendance should mobilize bridging civic engagement: sermons on civic engagement or listing opportunities for civic engagement in religious service programs (Brewer et al. 2003; Wuthnow 2002). One plausible explanation for this anomaly is that relative to the congregations of the other religious traditions, evangelical Protestant congregations offer more opportunities during religious services for members to participate directly in activities that may promote civic participation. For instance, as evangelical Protestants engage in collective prayer and testimonials during religious services, this may increase confidence in their ability to make a difference in external civic affairs, as they perceive that God will assist them. Future research will have to confirm and explain the potential resource advantage of religious services for evangelical Protestants.

Finally, our findings have important implications for the overall health of American communities. In recent decades, sociologists of religion have consistently documented the substantial growth of evangelical Protestantism compared to the other three religious traditions (see, e.g., Finke and Stark 1992). Our results illustrated that, regardless of frequency of religious service attendance, additional congregation activity translated into less bridging civic engagement for evangelical Protestants than for members of the other three religious traditions. This is significant because evangelical Protestants spend more time participating in congregations beyond attending religious services than members of the other three traditions. Although this high level of congregation activity does not deter evangelical Protestants from participating in bridging civic groups, as a rational choice perspective might predict, neither does it direct them toward these activities. Thus, the growing presence of evangelical Protestants is unlikely to translate into benefits for communities as a whole.

To conclude, scholars writing from a Tocquevillean perspective continue to emphasize that religious institutions are among the most important organizational producers of social capital in the United States (Putnam 2000:65–79; Verba et al. 1995). But for religious institutions to contribute broadly to American civic life, as Tocqueville thought they could, religious institutions must mobilize resources and benefits, not only for members but also for non-members. Our results indicate that while participation in black Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Catholic congregations facilitates involvement in organizations that serve the needs of those in the larger community and establish other positive connections with the community, participation in evangelical Protestant congregations generally does not. In light of this evidence, although evangelical Protestant leaders are the staunchest advocates of “faith-based” initiatives, it appears that government funding to religious organizations would produce the greatest overall benefits for communities if congregations of the other three major religious traditions received the majority of this funding. As far as broader community resources are concerned, it is fortunate that, contrary to political rhetoric, these are the congregations most willing to take advantage of government funding (Chaves 1999).

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