JOURNAL FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

Distinctiveness Reconsidered: Religiosity, Structural Location, and Understandings of Racial Inequality

JACQUI FROST
Department of Sociology
University of Minnesota

PENNY EDGELL
Department of Sociology
University of Minnesota

Are conservative Protestants distinct in their support for individualistic explanations of racial inequality in America? Past research has generated contradictory findings on this question, along with debates about the best measure of evangelicalism and the factors that moderate religious influences on racial attitudes. Using data from the nationally representative Boundaries in the American Mosaic Project (2014), we examine how structural location interacts with religious commitment to influence understandings of and preferred solutions to African-American disadvantage. We show that religious beliefs, involvement, and centrality influence adherents differently, depending on their age, gender, education, income, and race. We find that measures do matter, and that denominational affiliation is less predictive than the orthodoxy and centrality of religious belief. We also find that straightforward talk about distinctiveness can mask the strong and pervasive effects of structural location on racial attitudes. We call for more research that makes the interaction between religiosity and structural location a central focus of analysis.

Keywords: *racial attitudes, religion, conservative Protestants.*

INTRODUCTION

As part of a broader concern with understanding how religious beliefs shape individual attitudes toward social and political issues, a growing conversation among sociologists of religion has focused on examining the mechanisms by which conservative religious beliefs translate into conservative political and economic beliefs about race and inequality in the United States. Emerson and Smith (2000) argue that the core beliefs of free-will individualism, relationalism, and anti-structuralism found within evangelical subculture can be understood as nonracial beliefs that are transposed onto understandings of racial and economic inequality (see also Emerson, Smith, and Sikkink 1999). They argue that these beliefs undermine a structural understanding of racial inequality, as well as any support for structural solutions such as affirmative action and government assistance, among white evangelical Americans.

Building on these findings, more recent research has consistently found that evangelical Protestantism is significantly related to individualistic beliefs regarding the explanations for and solutions to racial inequality—especially among white Americans (Bean 2014; Brimeyer 2008; Brown 2009; Brown, Kaiser, and Jackson 2014; Cobb 2014; Edgell and Tranby 2007; Eitle and Steffens 2009; Hinojosa and Park 2004; Hunt 2007; Mather 2011; Taylor and Merino 2011a; Tranby and Hartmann 2008). However, these studies, though extensive, are not definitive. Contradictory findings, along with ongoing theoretical and methodological debates, make it

Acknowledgments: The authors appreciate the generous support for data collection and research assistance given by the National Science Foundation (grant numbers 1258926 and 1258933) and the Edelstein Family Foundation. The data used for this article will be publicly available through the ICPSR database.

Correspondence should be addressed to Jacqui Frost, Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, 909 Social Science Building 267, 19th Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55455. E-mail: frost166@umn.edu

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (2017) 56(2):277–301

difficult to draw firm conclusions about the distinctiveness of white evangelicals and the influence of religious *beliefs* relative to religious *commitments* and *behaviors* on understandings of racial inequality.

We update and expand prior research on the effects of religious commitments on understandings of racial inequality, focusing on three main contributions. First, using recent data from the 2014 Boundaries in the American Mosaic (BAM) Project, we examine the ways in which structural location influences the effects of conservative Protestant religiosity on understandings of African-American disadvantage. While previous research has expanded beyond white evangelicals to examine how *race* interacts with conservative theology (Brown 2009; Edgell and Tranby 2007; Hinojosa and Park 2004; Hunt 2007; Taylor and Merino 2011b), few have explored other important structural locations that might influence the way one interprets and enacts religious beliefs in relation to understandings of racial inequality, such as age, gender, education, and income (cf. Edgell and Tranby 2007; Mather 2011). Most studies only include these structural location variables as controls, eliding important *interactions* between structural location and religiosity. We argue that accounting for structural location is important for both theoretical and methodological reasons; ignoring structural location, we argue, has led to overly broad generalizations about the causality of evangelical Protestant beliefs and behaviors.

Second, we include multiple measures of religious belief, belonging, and behavior. Prior research in this area typically measures evangelical Protestantism by denominational affiliation only; however, scholars are becoming increasingly aware that individual religiosity is multifaceted and impossible to measure with only one indicator (e.g., Lewis and De Bernardo 2010; Olson and Warber 2008; Woodberry et al. 2012). Thus, we include not only denominational affiliation, but also composite scales of religious orthodoxy, involvement, and centrality to construct more nuanced models.

Third, we broaden our focus beyond evangelical Protestants to examine the ways in which Catholicism interacts with structural location. Catholics have been found to hold distinct beliefs about racial inequalities and public policy (e.g., Cavendish 2000; Edgell and Tranby 2007) and previous studies have found differences between white, black, and Hispanic Catholics regarding understandings of racial inequality (e.g., Hinjosa and Park 2004). As Catholics represent 25 percent of the American population (Smith et al. 2012), their inclusion in our analysis adds much needed breadth and complexity to previous comparisons of Protestants and Catholics.

The purpose of this study goes beyond simply making a methodological point. We agree with Tranby and Hartmann's assertion that "[w]hat is at stake in all of this is not just a better understanding of white evangelical Christian racial attitudes and identities, nor even those of whites taken as a whole, but of the American race problem most broadly conceived" (2008:354). Racial inequality raises questions about the ability of major institutions in American society to achieve basic justice and fairness and points to ways in which democratic mechanisms of inclusion fall short of their promises. Attempts to redress inequality—especially black-white inequality—have led to repeated waves of social movement activity in America and are a major subject of political debate and policymaking. The persistence of racial inequality in American society is in part caused by the deeply held values of individualism, color blindness, and anti-structuralism found among both white and nonwhite Americans (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Hunt 2007; Lipsitz 2011; Tranby and Hartmann 2008). Gaining a more thorough, social scientific understanding of the role religiosity plays in shaping these attitudes is an important step to more effectively addressing the problem of racial inequality.

A Growing Conversation: Conservative Religiosity as a Tool for Understanding Racial Inequality

Taking Emerson and Smith (2000) as a starting point, numerous recent studies explore the relationship between conservative theologies and their influence on understandings of racial

inequality. Like Emerson and Smith (2000), most of these studies utilize Swidler's toolkit approach, positing individualism and anti-structuralism as prominent "cultural tools" that evangelical Americans draw on to navigate and explain their social worlds (Swidler 1986). While there are contradictory findings as to whether white evangelical Protestants call on these cultural tools more than others, the general consensus is that the values of individualism and anti-structuralism can be found across racial and religious groups in American society (Hunt 2007). And while there have been important critiques of Emerson and Smith's (2000) conception of these tools as nonracial (e.g., Tranby and Hartmann 2008), the metaphor's analytic capabilities remain useful—conservative religions contain values and beliefs, or tools, that adherents draw on to explain nonreligious aspects of social life such as racial inequality.

However, this theoretical perspective focuses largely on *beliefs*. Indeed, an important aspect of religion *is* belief, and religions offer schemas and ideologies that shape approaches to private and social issues. But critiques of this belief-centered approach have urged scholars to also conceptualize religiosity as a set of practices that are contextually embedded in institutions and relations of power, intersecting with other aspects of identity in contingent ways that shape the relevance and impact of religious beliefs for individuals (Chaves 2010; Edgell 2012; Riesebrodt 2010). As Sewell (1992) argues, structural location shapes *which* beliefs people find the most salient, and influences how people use beliefs and other cultural tools to justify access to and control over material resources. This theoretical approach predicts that people in different structural locations will be differentially influenced by specific religious beliefs and will link them to explanations for inequality, and preferred solutions to inequality, in different ways. This theoretical approach underpins newer work that emphasizes that religious beliefs are used to create and defend the symbolic boundaries through which individuals define social statuses and identities and imbue them with differential moral worth (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2003; Edgell and Tranby 2010; cf. Edgell 2012).

This theoretical perspective anchors our argument that an adequate understanding of religion's influence on social attitudes more generally—especially attitudes toward racial inequality—must account not only for specific religious beliefs or cultural tools, but for how socially located individuals find specific tools relevant and use them to draw the boundaries that define identities and justify access to resources. In the case of attitudes toward black-white inequality, differences in social location can correspond to (1) differences in experience that might increase or decrease sympathy for black Americans, (2) differences in exposure to or salience of moral and political discourses that frame inequality in general, and (3) different political and economic interests. The latter are especially relevant, as solutions to inequality may cost money and compete with other public spending that might benefit people in various social locations in different ways. Theoretically, a focus on social location refocuses our attention away from religious belief as a generic influence on social attitudes and toward a resource that is differently available to people in different social locations, and that may be used by people to make sense of their world in ways fundamentally shaped by social location.

Explanations for Racial Inequality

Tranby and Hartmann (2008) argue that ostensibly race-neutral religious beliefs can bolster white privilege in unanticipated ways, which may be why previous studies have found that race and religiosity intersect to explain attitudes toward racial inequality. Using data from the 1996 General Social Survey, Hinojosa and Park (2004) find that white mainline Protestants[1] and white Catholics reject structural explanations for African-American inequality (e.g., discrimination and a lack of

[1]This and subsequent studies in this review of literature utilize Steensland et al.'s (2000) denominational affiliation schema.

educational opportunities) and evangelical Protestants support individualistic explanations (e.g., lack of motivation and hard work). They find that black Americans, both Protestant and Catholic, are significantly more likely to support structural explanations, but only black Catholics reject individualistic explanations. Similarly, Eitle and Steffens (2009) examine white attitudes toward black-white inequality and compare them to attitudes toward Native-American inequality. They find that "person-centered," or individualistic, explanations are used to explain both forms of inequality, but they find no difference between mainline and evangelical Protestants.

Taylor and Merino assert there is "no persuasive evidence that white conservative Protestants are uniquely conservative in their stratification beliefs, once background characteristics are controlled" (2011b:60). In a separate study, they find that white mainline and evangelical Protestants, as well as white Catholics, hold similar views regarding black-white inequality, after controlling for region and education (Taylor and Merino 2011a). Instead, the important distinction in their findings is between Christians and non-Christians. Conversely, Cobb (2014) rejects Taylor and Merino's (2011a) conclusion that there is a broader American Christian toolkit as opposed to a white evangelical one. In his analysis of General Social Survey (GSS) data spanning from 1977 to 2010, Cobb (2014) finds that white evangelicals are persistent and distinct in their individualistic, anti-structural explanations for racial inequality. Further, Cobb concludes that "contrary to recent research . . . social location does not eliminate the effect of white evangelical affiliation on racial inequality attitudes" (2014:136). However, like other research in this area, Cobb (2014) does not undertake an analysis of the *interaction* between structural location and religious identification, but rather includes structural location variables only as controls.

Solutions to Racial Inequality

Using GSS data from 1996 to 2006, Taylor and Merino (2011b) compare white respondents to black respondents, finding that whites are generally more racially conservative than blacks, though that gap was not present on questions of individualism (cf. Edgell and Tranby 2007; Hinojosa and Park 2004). Their study also moves beyond an examination of *explanations* for African-American disadvantage to look at proposed *solutions* to inequality (e.g., affirmative action, government spending). While evangelical Protestants in Taylor and Merino's (2011b) work have a somewhat stronger propensity to support individualistic explanations, they are not significantly different from other white Christians when it comes to support for structural solutions. Finally, Taylor and Merino (2011b) find no significant difference between black Protestants and other black Christians in terms of support for structural solutions. Again, they argue the Christian/non-Christian divide is more prominent than internal religious divisions. Finally, using data from the 2004 National Politics Study, Brown (2009) analyzes white, black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans in separate models. He finds that, while white evangelicals are distinct from mainline Protestants, non-Christians, and the religiously unaffiliated, there is no significant difference between white evangelicals and white Catholics.

The Importance of Structural Location

Prior research has identified several dimensions of structural location that may influence the saliency of religious cultural tools and the relationship between religiosity and a range of social attitudes (Chaves 2010; Edgell 2012; cf. Sewell 1992), including race, education, income, age, and gender. We focus on these aspects of structural location in our statistical models, investigating whether they interact with religious belief and identification to shape approaches to racial inequality.

While it has been typically taken for granted that increased *education* decreases religiosity and orthodoxy, this relationship has been changing over time (Schmalzbauer 2013; Schwadel 2014). Schmalzbauer concludes that college is no longer "especially damning" to religious commitment, arguing that college campuses have become a "spiritual marketplace" and that,

"[f]ar from destructive to evangelical faith, colleges and universities may actually strengthen it" (2013:117). Schwadel (2014) also finds that a college education no longer erodes religiosity; he finds that among evangelicals, a bachelor's degree is associated with a 35 percent *reduction* in the odds of disaffiliation for younger cohorts. Over time, as more and more individuals have access to higher education, what it means to be college-educated in America and the ways that education influences religiosity has changed.

Likewise, the way in which *income* affects religious participation has changed over time in the United States. By the 1970s, sociologists drawing on data based on the Protestant experience argued that the social class effects on religious participation had disappeared (Mueller and Johnson 1975). However, recent research argues that this is because Protestant denominations are, themselves, sorted by social class; for Catholics and others for whom the main institution itself is less class-differentiated, income still affects religious involvement (Schwadel, McCarthy, and Nelsen 2009). If religious institutions vary in social class composition, they may vary in the way that religious doctrines are interpreted regarding social issues that touch on inequality, and it is worth investigating how income and religious involvement interact to shape understandings of social policy.

Another structural location that has been found to influence the way religiosity is interpreted and enacted is *age.* Pearce and Denton (2011) and Schwadel (2011, 2013) find that, among younger cohorts, religious affiliation and involvement are "more loosely connected" with religious centrality and religious importance than they once were. Further, regular service attendance and biblical literalism have declined among younger cohorts who see religious institutions as less relevant to their daily lives (Wuthnow 2010), while religious beliefs and the importance of religion in younger adults' lives have remained stable (Schwadel 2011). Not only does young adulthood result in a different approach to religiosity than for adults (Pearce and Denton 2011), changes over time have resulted in younger cohorts interpreting and enacting religiosity differently than previous cohorts (Schwadel 2011, 2013).

Gender, too, influences levels of subjective religiosity and institutional involvement (Sullins 2006), how core religious doctrines are interpreted and understood (Peek, Lowe, and Williams 1991), and experiences of religious community (Aune 2015; Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo 2015). While men's religious involvement is associated strongly with family status and employment, women's involvement is more dependent upon the personal salience of religion and an assessment that religious institutions are a good fit with their value commitments (Becker and Hofmeister 2001). Edgell and Tranby (2007) find that gender interacts with religiosity to shape views of African-American disadvantage and numerous studies have found that women are more likely to support structural explanations and solutions than are men (e.g., Hinojosa and Park 2004; Hunt 2007). In general, it cannot be assumed that religious involvement means the same thing to men and women, or that they interpret religious teachings and apply them to their daily lives in the same way.

Few studies have explored structural locations beyond race in their analyses of religiosity's influence on understandings of racial inequality, but those that do add important nuance to studies that focus on evangelical identification alone. Edgell and Tranby (2007) insist that essentializing white evangelicals as a group elides important variations within this religious subgroup. A more nuanced interpretation of the cultural approaches of Swidler (1986) and Sewell (1992) reveals a "variability in how cultural schemas are transposed, or how they are used outside of their originating context to frame, analyze, or explain other aspects of social life" (Edgell and Tranby 2007:265). Their analysis reveals that, among whites, orthodox women, the highly educated orthodox, and the religiously involved are more likely to reject structural explanations and solutions for African-American inequality and support individualistic ones. Mather (2011) focuses his analysis on age, finding that younger evangelicals, although they are not unlike the rest of their cohort in terms of increased tolerance for and valuing of diversity, maintain anti-structural understandings of African-American inequality.

Overall, the literature is a long way from reaching a consensus on the relationship between conservative religious beliefs and understandings of racial inequality. The distinctiveness of white evangelicals has been called into question, and groups ranging from white Catholics to black Protestants have been found to hold individualistic understandings of racial inequality. Further, structural locations such as age, gender, and education have all been found to influence the way individuals interpret and enact conservative theologies. This research has shown that essentializing religious subgroups in statistical models leads to incomplete conclusions, and the mechanisms by which conservative theology works to produce individualistic understandings of racial inequality remain unclear.

Religion and Racial Inequality: A New Approach

Aside from the occasional inclusion of self-reported church attendance, prior studies have relied on denominational affiliation (Steensland et al. 2000) as the main indicator of religious commitment for research on religious influences on racial attitudes. Edgell and Tranby (2007) are distinct in their inclusion of composite scales measuring religious orthodoxy and religious involvement, finding these scales to be far more explanatory than denominational affiliation alone. Thus, it is increasingly important that research in this area move beyond a reliance on denomination; increasing divisions within and between religious traditions regarding beliefs, practices, and centrality necessitate more nuanced measures of religious belonging (e.g., Woodberry et al. 2012). For example, Lewis and De Bernardo find individuals with evangelical beliefs among numerous nonevangelical denominations, arguing that "evangelicals are becoming more mobile, increasingly moving across denominational traditions" (2010:124). Further, Schwadel (2013) finds that the association between church attendance and the strength of religious affiliation is "more loosely connected" in younger cohorts, revealing the increasing importance of using multiple measures of religiosity in statistical models. In short, identifying with a religious denomination has become less indicative of one's religious beliefs or the centrality of religion in one's life. Thus, we expand on previous examinations of religiosity and understandings of racial inequality by including multiple measures of religiosity in our models.

Likewise, we take a new approach to examining how structural location interacts with religious commitments to shape racial attitudes. Previous literature provides support for a limited set of hypotheses: (1) women will be more likely to support structural explanations for inequality, (2) nonwhites will be more likely to support structural explanations for inequality, (3) increasing education will increase support for individualistic explanations among the religiously orthodox, (4) orthodoxy and centrality will be more predictive of younger cohorts' beliefs about racial inequality than involvement or belonging, and (5) income will be a stronger predictor of differences in beliefs about racial inequality among Catholics than it will be for Protestants. However, findings regarding the effects of gender, age, race, income, and education have been inconsistent across studies, and the ways these and other factors might interact with religious commitment to shape racial attitudes have barely been addressed at all. In the face of a body of work that is far from conclusive, and often contradictory, we adopt an inductive, exploratory analytical approach. Instead of focusing on specific structural locations and testing hypotheses about their interactions with different aspects of religiosity, we set up our analysis to be an open-ended examination of all possible interactions within the limits of our data. With this approach, our goal is to open conversations as opposed to shutting them down, offering potential avenues for further investigation in an area of study that began with a particular question about the distinctiveness of evangelicals, but that has the potential to generate a broader conversation about the variety of ways in which religious commitments and social location interact to shape understandings of racial inequality and willingness to embrace particular kinds of solutions.

Data and Method

Data

Data for this article comes from the 2014 BAM survey. Using data recruited through the GfK Group's KnowledgePanel, the BAM survey obtained a sample of 2,521 respondents, resulting in a completion rate of 57.9 percent.[2] GfK's KnowledgePanel is a probability-based online panel whose 50,000 adult members, obtained via address-based sampling methods, represent close to 97 percent of American households. Panelists are compensated for their time with a cash incentive and are provided a computer if they lack Internet access. Recruited from the KnowledgePanel sample, the BAM sample is a nationally representative sample of noninstitutionalized adults in America, oversampled for African Americans and Hispanics. The sample was drawn from panel members using a probability proportional to size (PPS) weighted sampling approach. KnowledgePanel members received an email link to the web survey from GfK to participate in the BAM survey, followed by email and phone reminders after three days of nonresponse. Data collection took place between February and March 2014. Combined with base and poststratification weights,[3] the BAM survey is weighted to account for survey nonresponse and oversampling of African Americans and Hispanics.

Dependent Variables

We include two sets of dependent variables in our models. First, we test a series of questions designed to measure beliefs about *explanations* for African-American disadvantage. Then, we run models measuring support for proposed *solutions* to African-American disadvantage. Both sets of questions were derived from standard GSS variables, and they are much like the dependent variables used in other research in this area.

The explanation models include five separate dependent variables. The respondents were asked: "On average, African Americans have worse jobs, income, and housing than white Americans. Here is a list of factors that may or may not explain this situation. How important is each of the following factors in explaining this situation?" The three *structural* explanation options given were (1) prejudice and discrimination, (2) laws and institutions working against blacks, and (3) lack of access to good schools and social connections. The two *individualistic* explanation options given were (1) a lack of effort and hard work and (2) differences in family upbringing. All five questions were asked separately (as opposed to forced choice) and respondents chose from a four-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The solution models include three separate dependent variables designed to measure beliefs about appropriate solutions to help curb African-American disadvantage. These variables are based on questions that asked respondents if they think African Americans should receive special consideration in job hiring and school admission, whether African Americans should receive economic assistance from the government, and whether charities and nonprofits should do more to help African Americans. All three questions were asked separately and respondents chose from a four-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

[2]Neither nonresponse bias (Heeren et al. 2008) nor self-selection bias (Camerona and DeShazob 2013) has been found among KnowledgePanel samples.

[3]Data in the BAM survey are weighted using base and stratification weights from the KnowledgePanel sample combined with survey-specific weights for the BAM sample. The base weight corrects for undersampling of telephone numbers unmatched to mailing addresses, oversampling of certain geographic areas, oversampling of African-American and Hispanic households, and ABS oversampling stratification within the KnowledgePanel. Additionally, KnowledgePanel uses a panel demographic poststratification weight to adjust for sample design and for survey nonresponse. These further adjust for Spanish-speaking populations in the United States. Poststratification adjustments are based on March 2013 data from the Current Population Survey.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for independent variables

		Mean/ Percent[a]
Structural Location		
Age	Age of respondent in years (1 = 18–24, 7 = 75+)	4.1
Female	Respondent is female (1 = female)	50%
Married	Respondent is married (1 = married)	57%
Income	Family income in 2014 (1 = less than $10,000, 8 = $100,000+)	5.6
Education	Highest level of education completed (1 = some HS, 6 = postgrad)	2.9
South	Respondent lives in South (1 = South)	37%
Black	Respondent identifies as black (1= black)	16%
Hispanic	Respondent identifies as Hispanic (1= Hispanic)	17%
Religious and Political Identification		
Conservative Protestant	Attends church at a conservative Protestant denomination (=1)	24%
Catholic	Self-identifies as Catholic (= 1)	24%
Politically conservative	Self-identifies as politically conservative (1 = slightly to extremely)	35%
Republican	Self-identifies as Republican (1 = leans R, Republican, or strong R)	39%
Religious Commitment Scales		
Religious orthodoxy	Belief in god(s) + Biblical literacy + Society's laws as God's laws (0 = least orthodox to 6 = most orthodox)	3.5
Religious involvement	Church attendance + Religious volunteering past year + Imp. of religion (0 = least involved to 10 = most involved)	4.8
Religious centrality	When faced with a tough decision, my religious beliefs are more important than [science + laws + friends/family] (0 = least central to 9 = most central)	7.2

[a]Descriptive statistics are for the unweighted full sample.

Independent Variables

Descriptive statistics for our independent variables are shown in Table 1. We include age, gender, marital status, household income, educational attainment, race, and an indicator for living in the southern United States as structural location variables. Following findings from Hinojosa and Park (2004), we also include two measures for political identification—self-identified Republican and politically conservative. Self-identifying as Republican should be collinear with being politically conservative, but collinearity analyses reveal that this is not the case. While 35 percent of the sample identifies as politically conservative and 39 percent as Republican, only 26 percent identify as *both* Republican and politically conservative. Further, multicollinearity statistics show that these terms never correlate at higher than .19. As is the case for religious identification, a single measure of political affiliation is insufficient to measure political beliefs and values.

We also include multiple measures of religiosity in these models. Following previous literature, and utilizing Steensland et al.'s (2000) religious denomination schema, we include variables

for self-identified Catholic and conservative Protestant. However, as we detailed earlier, research indicates that these denominational affiliation variables are insufficient measures of religiosity; thus we also constructed three composite religious commitment scales.[4] The first, religious *orthodoxy*, is based on three variables measuring the respondent's belief in god(s), their belief in biblical literacy, and their belief that "society's laws should be God's laws." This six-point composite scale draws on aspects of similar scales used in previous analyses (Davis and Robinson 1996; Edgell and Tranby 2007) and an alpha reliability coefficient of .74 indicates significant homogeneity among these variables.

The second religious commitment scale is religious *involvement*. Religious conservatives are often more involved in their churches and report higher religious saliency than others, thus this scale gets at a distinct aspect of conservative religiosity. Numerous studies described above include self-reported church attendance, but this measure has been shown to have little explanatory power in and of itself (e.g., Schwadel 2013). To strengthen this measure, we combine questions measuring self-reported church attendance, personal importance of religion, and self-reported religious volunteering in the past year. We follow the lead of Edgell and Tranby (2007) and use an involvement scale that comprises both behaviors (attending church, volunteering for church) and a subjective measure (the classic, standard "saliency" item of religious importance). They assert that the inclusion of the subjective measure along with the behavioral measures results in a measure that is less biased to the frequent overreporting of church attendance. Further, they explain that this scale is not as sensitive to gender differences in subjective religiosity and orientation toward religious institutions (Edgell and Tranby 2007:271; cf. Edgell 2005; Sullins 2006). This scale ranges from 0 to 10 and obtains an alpha reliability coefficient of .77.

Finally, we include a scale for religious *centrality*. Research indicates that the strength of religious affiliation is waning among younger cohorts (Schwadel 2013) and religious commitment has been found to be causally distinct from religious belief and affiliation (Olson and Warber 2008). The centrality scale is a new measure that we developed to be responsive to new work in the field (e.g., Pearce and Denton 2011) that is designed to assess the *relative importance* of religious beliefs versus other sources of cultural authority when people are faced with decisions. Conceptually, this scale is distinct from religious importance and the religious involvement scale; a person could say that religion is "very important" to her and go to church regularly and volunteer through church, but still defer to legal authorities or scientific authorities when they conflict with her religious beliefs. Thus, we include a measure of religious centrality to capture respondents whose beliefs are central to their identity. This scale, which ranges from 0 to 9, is based on three questions that ask respondents whether their religious beliefs, when faced with a tough decision, are more important than scientific evidence, America's laws, or the opinions of their friends and family. This scale has an alpha reliability coefficient of .91. We ran multicollinearity statistics for relationships between each of these scales, as well as the conservative Protestant, Catholic, and political identification variables. Results indicate that these various measures are distinct enough to merit all their inclusion in our models.[5]

Method

Most of the quantitative research in this area relies on binary logistic regressions, measuring the likelihood of agreeing or disagreeing with the proposed explanations for and solutions to racial inequality. The survey questions used in previous studies, most of which are obtained

[4]We standardized these scales before including them in the regression models.

[5]The VIF statistics are as follows: conservative Protestant = 1.46, Catholic = 1.24, politically conservative = 1.06, Republican = 1.15, religious orthodoxy = 2.52, religious involvement = 2.07, religious centrality = 2.54. The general threshold for VIF statistics is >10 (Dormann et al. 2013); these variables are sufficiently under that threshold and can thus all be included in the models.

from the General Social Survey, typically allow for "yes" or "no" responses to the explanations and solutions in question. We undertake a more nuanced analysis by running ordered logistic regressions for each dependent variable. The BAM survey asks respondents to report their opinions on a four-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, which allows for an analysis of not only the direction of the respondent's opinion, but also its intensity (see Revilla, Saris, and Krosnick 2014); those who strongly agree with a statement are likely to hold their opinions with more fervor than those who only somewhat agree.[6]

We construct models first with only the white subsample and then expand the models to include black and Hispanic respondents. This split-sample approach allows us to examine whites' views, which have been a significant focus of previous literature, while at the same time exploring racial differences and interactions in the larger sample. We included poststratification weights in the full sample models to correct for the oversampling of black and Hispanic respondents in the survey.

As stated above, we undertook an open-ended approach to our analysis. We constructed interaction terms in three sets: first, each structural location variable was interacted with each religious commitment scale. Next, each religious and political identification variable was interacted with each religious commitment scale, and finally, each structural location variable was interacted with the two religious identification variables, conservative Protestant and Catholic.[7] To test their significance in our models, we first tested each interaction term separately to assess its independent relationship with each of our models. After determining which interactions were significant independently for each model, we then added all significant interactions in a stepwise fashion for each model, determining which interactions maintained their significance. In the few instances where multiple combinations of interaction terms were significant, we chose the model with the most robust fit statistics.

Results

Explanations for African-American Disadvantage

Table 2 reports ordered logistic regression results predicting the explanations that those in the white subsample support for explaining African-American disadvantage. In the first structural explanation model, prejudice and discrimination, support is found among older respondents, females, and the religiously involved. Identifying as Republican is negatively related to this explanation, as is the interaction between education and religious orthodoxy. Similar patterns occur in the laws and institutions model, with females significantly supporting this explanation while identifying as Republican and the interaction between education and orthodoxy result in a significant rejection of this explanation. In the third structural explanation model, lack of social capital, females continue to show support, while the highly educated religiously orthodox and Republicans show significant opposition. However, in this model, the interaction between gender and religious orthodoxy is significant, indicating a gap between the beliefs of white orthodox men and white orthodox women regarding this structural explanation. This indicates that orthodox females show significant support for a lack of social capital explanation over orthodox males.

[6]There has yet to be a consensus regarding the optimal number of responses allowed for in attitudinal scales. While some research suggests that fewer responses are best, finding that two- to five-point Likert scales better eliminate respondent confusion as well as both extreme response style and midpoint response style biases (Kieruj and Moors 2010; Revilla, Saris, and Krosnick 2014), others find that more response options result in higher validity, and suggest seven- to nine-point Likert scales for attitudinal questions (Weng 2004). The BAM survey does not allow for a "neutral" response, which some argue offers an easy out for respondents who do not want to choose sides (see Kieruj and Moors (2010) for a review of this literature). The BAM survey thus forces respondents to pick a side, but allows them to choose a more or less intense stance on the side they choose.

[7]We did not interact structural location with political identification, as this was beyond the focus of our analysis.

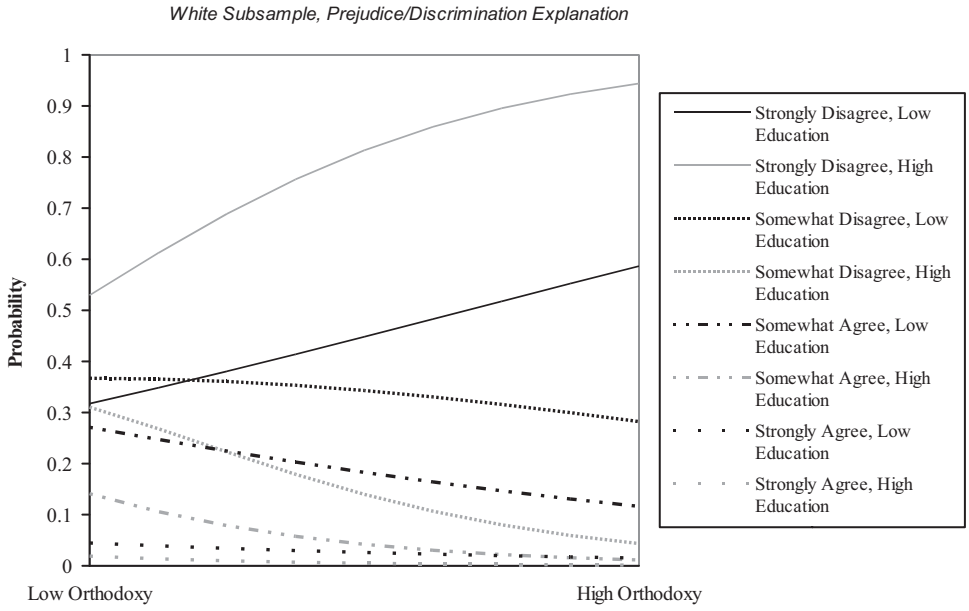
Table 2: Explanations *whites* consider important for explaining African-American disadvantage: ordered logistic regressions (reporting odds ratios)

	Prejudice/ Discrimination	Laws/ Institutions	Lack of Social Capital	Lack of Effort	Family Upbringing
Structural Location					
Age	1.15**	1.07	1.01	.99	1.08
	(.05)	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)
Female	1.55**	1.90***	1.59***	.79	1.20
	(.23)	(.27)	(.23)	(.11)	(.17)
Married	.92	.81	1.04	1.14	.82
	(.15)	(.13)	(.17)	(.18)	(.13)
Income	1.06	.99	.98	1.05	1.27***
	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.06)
Education	1.01	.90	1.18**	.81***	.94
	(.06)	(.06)	(.08)	(.05)	(.06)
Lives in southern U.S.	1.22	.99	1.02	1.22	1.47**
	(.18)	(.14)	(.15)	(.18)	(.22)
Religious and Political Identification					
Conservative Protestant	1.27	.78	1.04	.89	1.03
	(.24)	(.15)	(.20)	(.17)	(.20)
Catholic	.95	.72	1.33	.94	11.65***
	(.18)	(.14)	(.25)	(.17)	(8.18)
Politically conservative	.92	.85	.93	.99	.98
	(.09)	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)	(.08)
Republican	.34***	.38***	.42***	1.40*	1.29
	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)	(.22)	(.21)
Religious Commitment Scales[a]					
Religious orthodoxy	.96	1.20	.90	1.53***	1.19
	(.24)	(.29)	(.24)	(.20)	(.16)
Religious involvement	1.31*	1.22	1.26*	1.06	1.48**
	(.16)	(.14)	(.15)	(.13)	(.18)
Religious centrality	1.01	1.02	1.01	.94	.81
	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.10)
Interaction Terms					
Education × Orthodoxy	.83**	.86**	.85**		
	(.05)	(.05)	(.06)		
Female × Orthodoxy			1.39*		
			(.23)		
Income × Catholic					.73**
					(.08)
Chi^2	159.65***	130.04***	120.62***	87.08***	78.08***
N	756	759	757	760	759

Note: Models based on unweighted white subsample. Standard errors in parentheses.
Source: Boundaries in the American Mosaic Survey 2014.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.
[a]All scales have been standardized.

In the first model indicating an individualistic understanding of African-American disadvantage, lack of effort and hard work, there is a substantial increase in support from the religiously orthodox and Republicans and a significant rejection with increased education. Finally, the interaction between income and being Catholic becomes significant in the second individualist explanation model, differences in family upbringing. In this model, the interaction between increased

Figure 1
The effects of education on religious orthodoxy



income and being Catholic is negatively associated with this explanation; however, the large odds ratio for being Catholic indicates a strong support for this explanation among poor Catholics.

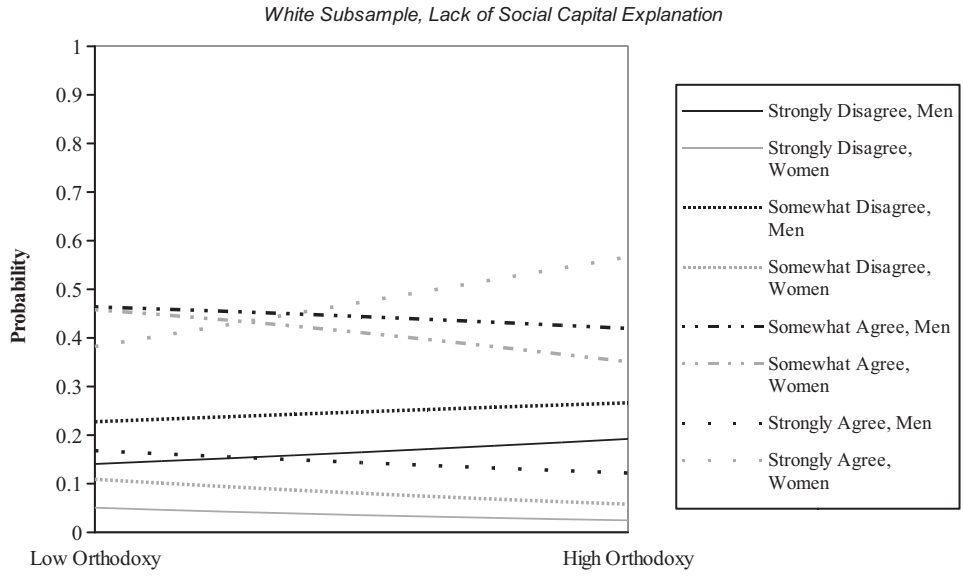
Throughout our discussion of results, we plot a variety of interactions to make the interpretation of interaction terms easier to understand and to illustrate the importance of structural location. To start, it is important to keep in mind that the inclusion of an interaction term affects the interpretation of the main effects of each variable.[8] For example, the interaction between income and Catholic in Table 2 indicates that support for the family upbringing explanation decreases for Catholic respondents as income increases. However, this means that the main effect coefficient of Catholic represents logged odds of Catholics who fall in the lowest income bracket. Thus, poor Catholics are significantly more likely to support a family upbringing explanation. The main effect coefficient of income then represents log odds of increasing income affecting the dependent variable when Catholic is 0 (for non-Catholics).

In Figure 1, we plot the interaction between education and religious orthodoxy based on the coefficients from the prejudice and discrimination model in Table 2.[9] The importance of parsing out the differences between "somewhat" and "strongly" disagree becomes apparent in this figure. For whites who are highly educated, increased religious orthodoxy substantially increases their likelihood to "strongly disagree" with a prejudice and discrimination explanation. However, increased religious orthodoxy *decreases* the likelihood of "somewhat disagreeing" with this statement for whites who are highly educated. This shows that religious orthodoxy is driving more intense disagreement with this structural explanation. The effects of religious orthodoxy on whites who strongly agree, regardless of education, appear to be minor. In short, religious orthodoxy decreases support for a prejudice and discrimination explanation among both the least and most educated whites; however, it has a much stronger effect on the highly educated.

[8]See Jaccard (2001) for more detailed explanations of interpreting interactions in logistic regressions.

[9]This and subsequent plotted interactions are based on Dawson's (2014) method for plotting ordered logistic regressions.

Figure 2
The effects of gender on religious orthodoxy



In Figure 2, we plot the interaction between gender and religious orthodoxy based on the coefficients from the lack of social capital explanation in Table 2. This figure shows that increased religious orthodoxy significantly increases the likelihood of white women strongly agreeing with a lack of social capital explanation, while it slightly decreases the likelihood that white men will strongly agree with this statement. While increased religious orthodoxy decreases the probability of white women strongly and somewhat disagreeing with this explanation, it increases the probability of white men strongly and somewhat disagreeing with this explanation. Increased religiously orthodoxy, however, slightly decreases the likelihood that both men and women somewhat agree with this explanation; this could mean that increased religious orthodoxy pushes women to report extreme agreement and decreases their likelihood to report less intense agreement.

Table 3 reports ordered logistic regression results for the *full* sample, predicting support for different explanations of African-American disadvantage. In these models, we include black and Hispanic respondents as well as poststratification weights to correct for the oversampling of these two groups. As in the white subsample model, being Republican and the interaction of education and religious orthodoxy are negatively associated with the prejudice and discrimination explanation; however, black respondents show strong support for this explanation with an odds ratio of 3.88. There are similar patterns in the laws and institutions explanation model; however, Hispanics show significant support for the explanation as well as blacks. In the lack of social capital explanation, identifying as black and increased education predict increased support, whereas being Republican and the interaction between education and orthodoxy decreases support. In this model, the interaction between gender and being Catholic is also significant; Catholic females reject this explanation while non-Catholic females and Catholic males show support for this explanation.

The first individualistic explanation, lack of effort and hard work, indicates similarities with previous studies that find conflicting explanations within the black community (Edgell and Tranby 2007; Hinojosa and Park 2004; Hunt 2007). In this model, religiously orthodox black respondents are in significant support of this explanation, as well as nonblack religiously orthodox respondents, while nonorthodox black respondents reject it. Here, the interaction between conservative Protestant and income is negatively associated, with poor conservative Protestants showing

Table 3: Explanations the *full sample* considers important for explaining African-American disadvantage: ordered logistic regressions (reporting odds ratios)

	Prejudice/ Discrimination	Laws/ Institutions	Lack of Social Capital	Lack of Effort	Family. Upbringing
Structural Location					
Age	1.09*	1.02	1.00	1.01	1.02
	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)
Female	1.21	1.14	1.57**	.80	.99
	(.17)	(.16)	(.26)	(.11)	(.14)
Married	.94	.83	.96	1.04	.83
	(.14)	(.12)	(.15)	(.16)	(.13)
Income	1.07	.99	1.06	1.12*	1.25***
	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)	(.06)
Education	1.07	.95	1.15*	.82***	.93
	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)	(.05)	(.06)
Lives in southern U.S.	1.18	1.02	1.06	1.09	1.27
	(.18)	(.15)	(.16)	(.05)	(.19)
Black	3.88***	4.62***	2.92***	.68	.78
	(1.01)	(1.12)	(.78)	(.20)	(.21)
Hispanic	1.48	1.74**	1.18	1.10	.60*
	(.35)	(.40)	(.28)	(.23)	(.13)
Religious and Political Identification					
Conservative Protestant	1.11	.77	1.01	2.71*	1.01
	(.21)	(.14)	(.19)	(1.16)	(.19)
Catholic	.97	.69*	1.65*	1.01	4.53**
	(.18)	(.13)	(.38)	(.19)	(2.52)
Politically conservative	.97	.88	.99	.87	1.02
	(.08)	(.08)	(.07)	(.08)	(.09)
Republican	.38***	.40***	.49***	1.34	1.05
	(.06)	(.06)	(.08)	(.23)	(.17)
Religious Commitment Scales[a]					
Religious orthodoxy	1.21	1.29	1.15	1.34*	1.17
	(.34)	(.33)	(.30)	(.17)	(.16)
Religious involvement	1.21	1.22	1.19	1.05	1.53***
	(.14)	(.15)	(.14)	(.13)	(.19)
Religious centrality	.97	1.00	.95	1.17	.80
	(.12)	(.13)	(.12)	(.13)	(.10)
Interaction Terms					
Education × Orthodoxy	.85**	.88*	.86*		
	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)		
Female × Catholic			.52*		
			(.16)		
Black × Orthodoxy				2.35*	2.15*
				(.88)	(.82).
Income × Catholic					.81**
					(.07)
Income × Conservative Protestant				.84*	
				(.06)	

(*Continued*)

Table 3 (*Continued*)

	Prejudice/ Discrimination	Laws/ Institutions	Lack of Social Capital	Lack of Effort	Family. Upbringing
Chi^2	145.30^{***}	164.85^{***}	117.45^{***}	87.16^{***}	63.73^{***}
N	1,214	1,218	1,215	1,219	1,218

Note: Models include poststratification weights to correct for oversampling among black and Hispanic respondents. Standard errors in parentheses.
Source: Boundaries in the American Mosaic Survey 2014.
$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.
[a]All scales have been standardized.

significant support for this explanation. In the final model, differences in family upbringing, the interaction between income and being Catholic is again significant. In this model, the interaction between identifying as black and religious orthodoxy is also significant, with religiously orthodox blacks showing support for this explanation. Finally, religious involvement is significant in this model, predicting support for this individualistic explanation.

Figure 3 reports two related plots that detail the interaction between income and religious identification. At the top, we plot the interaction between being Catholic and income based on the coefficients from the family upbringing explanation in Table 3. Being Catholic significantly increases the probability for those with lower incomes to support this individualistic explanation, while being Catholic has almost no effect on the strong agreement of those with higher incomes. A similar effect happens with the "strongly" and "somewhat" disagree" options; while being Catholic has no effect on those with higher incomes, it decreases the likelihood of lower-income Catholics to strongly and somewhat disagree with this statement.

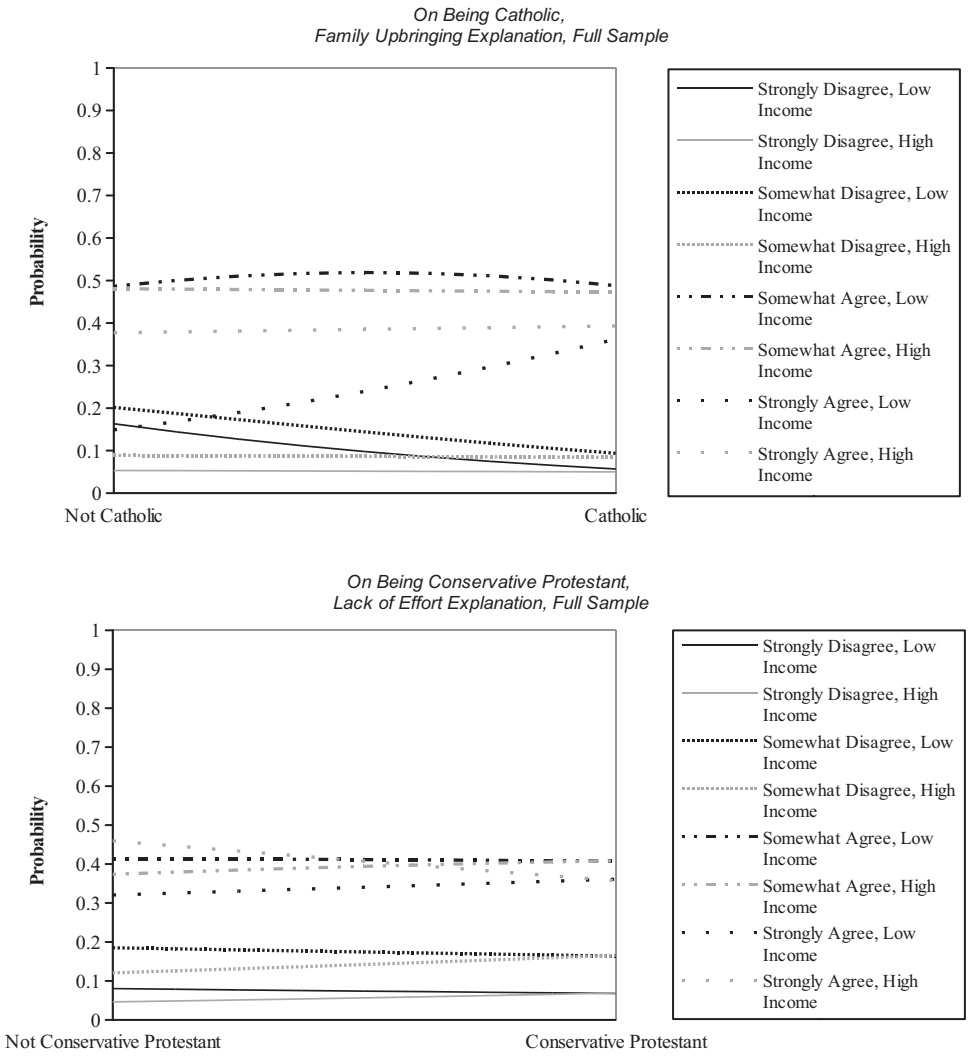
The effects of income on being a conservative Protestant are less pronounced, as shown in the bottom plot; however, they are similar in direction as the effects of income on being Catholic. While conservative Protestants with lower incomes are more likely to strongly agree with the lack of effort explanation than nonconservative Protestants with similar incomes, conservative Protestants with higher incomes are less likely to strongly agree than nonconservative Protestants with similar incomes. Interestingly, this plot shows how being a conservative Protestant has the effect of leveling the differences in opinion among the different income brackets among nonconservative Protestants. While those with lower incomes are less likely to support this explanation among nonconservative Protestants and those with higher incomes are more likely to support this explanation among nonconservative Protestants, the probabilities become the same for each response category for both lower and higher income groups among conservative Protestants.

Solutions to African-American Inequality

In addition to models predicting support for structural and individualistic *explanations* for African-American inequality, we include models predicting support for three proposed *solutions* to African-American inequality. As we did with the explanation models, we first run these models with the white subsample, and then include black and Hispanic respondents in the full sample models. It is important to note here that the sample sizes for the explanations models and the sample sizes for the solutions models are different. In the BAM survey, only half of the respondents, selected at random, were asked the explanation questions;[10] however, all of the respondents were asked the solutions questions. Thus, while we do make some measured comparisons between the

[10]The other half of the respondents in the sample were asked reverse questions about white privilege.

Figure 3
The effects of income on religious identification



explanations and solutions models, we do so being aware of the differences between the samples. Table 4 reports the ordered logistic regression results predicting the white subsample's support for proposed solutions to African-American inequality.

In the white subsample, affirmative action is rejected by Republicans, the politically conservative, and the religiously orthodox. The interaction between age and increased religious centrality also predicts rejection of this solution. However, the main coefficient effect of religious centrality indicates that those in the youngest cohort with high religious centrality support this solution. Being religiously involved and increased education also predict support for this solution. The second solution, economic assistance from the government, mirrors the affirmative action model in many ways, though the main coefficient for age becomes significantly negatively associated with this explanation, being politically conservative loses its significance, and increased income predicts a rejection of this solution. In the third solution model, help from nonprofits and charities, the religiously orthodox reject this solution, as do younger Catholics, while the

Table 4: Solutions *white* respondents support to lessen African-American disadvantage: ordered logistic regressions (reporting odds ratios)

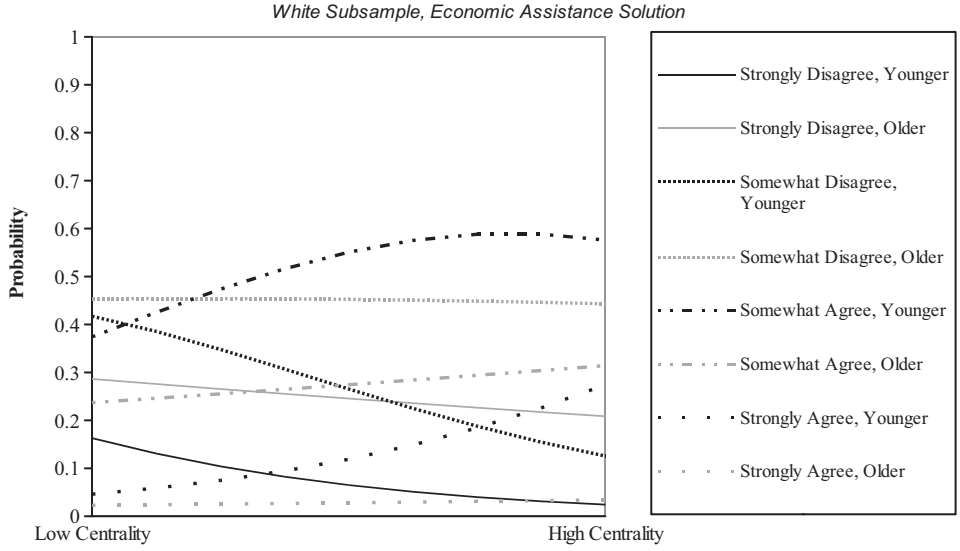
	Affirmative Action	Government Assistance	Nonprofit Help
Structural Location			
Age	.94	.93*	.94
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Female	1.07	1.10	.84
	(.11)	(.11)	(.08)
Married	.87	.87	.88
	(.11)	(.10)	(.10)
Income	.96	.94*	.98
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Education	1.19***	1.16***	1.32***
	(.06)	(.05)	(.06)
Lives in southern U.S.	.88	.86	.87
	(.10)	(.09)	(.09)
Religious and Political Identification			
Conservative Protestant	.98	1.16	.97
	(.14)	(.16)	(.13)
Catholic	.98	.95	.37**
	(.14)	(.13)	(.13)
Politically conservative	.80**	.87	.94
	(.07)	(.06)	(.06)
Republican	.42***	.42***	.60***
	(.05)	(.05)	(.07)
Religious Commitment Scales[a]			
Religious orthodoxy	.62***	.64***	.75**
	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)
Religious involvement	1.22*	1.22*	1.27**
	(.11)	(.10)	(.11)
Religious centrality	1.79***	1.69***	1.45*
	(.31)	(.28)	(.23)
Interaction Terms			
Age × Centrality	.93*	.92**	.93*
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Age × Catholic			1.21**
			(.09)
Chi^2	182.92***	178.70***	139.27***
N	1,486	1,484	1,481

Note: Models based on unweighted white subsample. Standard errors in parentheses.
Source: Boundaries in the American Mosaic Survey 2014.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.
[a]All scales have been standardized.

interaction between age and Catholic indicates that older white Catholics support this explanation. The interaction between age and centrality maintains its significance in this model as well.

In Figure 4, we plot the interactions between age and religious centrality. While increased religious centrality has almost no effect on the probability that older respondents will strongly or somewhat agree with this solution, it significantly increases the likelihood that younger

Figure 4
The effects of age on religious centrality



respondents will strongly and somewhat agree with this solution. While increased religious centrality has almost no effect on the probability that older respondents will somewhat or strongly disagree with this explanation, it significantly decreases the likelihood that younger respondents will somewhat and strongly disagree.

Table 5 reports the ordered logistic regression results predicting the full sample's support for proposed solutions to African-American disadvantage. The inclusion of black and Hispanic respondents did little to affect the interaction between age and centrality, though this interaction does lose its significance in the nonprofit help model. Republicans and the religiously orthodox continue to reject all three solutions, while increased education and religious involvement predicts support for all three explanations. However, race plays an important role in these models, with black, religiously orthodox black, and Hispanic respondents showing significant support for all three solutions. Further, religiously orthodox Hispanics also show significant support for the nonprofit help solution.

For our final figure, we plot two interactions that show the effects identifying as black has on religious orthodoxy (Figure 5). At the top, we plot the interaction between being black and increased religious orthodoxy based on the coefficients from the lack of effort explanation in Table 3. While increased religious orthodoxy increases the likelihood that all respondents will strongly agree with this individualistic explanation, it does so at a much higher rate for blacks than for nonblacks. Again, the results for somewhat agree are reversed, indicating that increased religious orthodoxy results in adherents reporting more intense opinions. The differences in effects between blacks and nonblacks in reporting somewhat and strongly agree are small, though increased religious orthodoxy slightly decreases disagreement for both groups.

However, the interaction between being black and religious orthodoxy based on the coefficients for the affirmative action solution from Table 5 show the opposite results. Increased religious orthodoxy significantly increases the likelihood that nonblacks will strongly and somewhat disagree with this solution, while it slightly decreases the likelihood for black respondents to disagree. While increased religious orthodoxy results in black respondents being more likely to strongly and somewhat agree with this solution, it decreases the likelihood that nonblacks will agree.

Table 5: Solutions full sample supports to lessen African-American disadvantage: ordered logistic regressions (reporting odds ratios)

	Affirmative Action	Government Assistance	Nonprofit Help
Structural Location			
Age	.96	.92**	.99
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Female	1.15	1.13	.95
	(.12)	(.11)	(.09)
Married	.94	.92	.93
	(.11)	(.10)	(.10)
Income	.93**	.91***	.98
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Education	1.14**	1.11*	1.19***
	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Lives in southern U.S.	.78*	.86	.81*
	(.08)	(.09)	(.09)
Black	3.78***	2.17***	1.89***
	(.70)	(.37)	(.37)
Hispanic	1.84***	1.42*	1.45*
	(.30)	(.25)	(.24)
Religious and Political Identification			
Conservative Protestant	.90	.99	.95
	(.12)	(.13)	(.12)
Catholic	1.00	1.02	.94
	(.14)	(.13)	(.12)
Politically conservative	.80**	.84**	.92
	(.06)	(.06)	(.05)
Republican	.50***	.47***	.58***
	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)
Religious Commitment Scales[a]			
Religious orthodoxy	.76**	.74**	.74**
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)
Religious involvement	1.08	1.20*	1.14
	(.09)	(.11)	(.10)
Religious centrality	1.69***	1.67**	1.23*
	(.27)	(.27)	(.11)
Interaction Terms			
Age × Centrality	.94*	.93**	
	(.03)	(.03)	
Black × Orthodoxy	2.08**	2.13**	2.29**
	(.54)	(.53)	(.63)
Hispanic × Orthodoxy			1.59*
			(.34)
Chi^2	282.32***	258.90***	155.54***
N	2,373	2,368	2,363

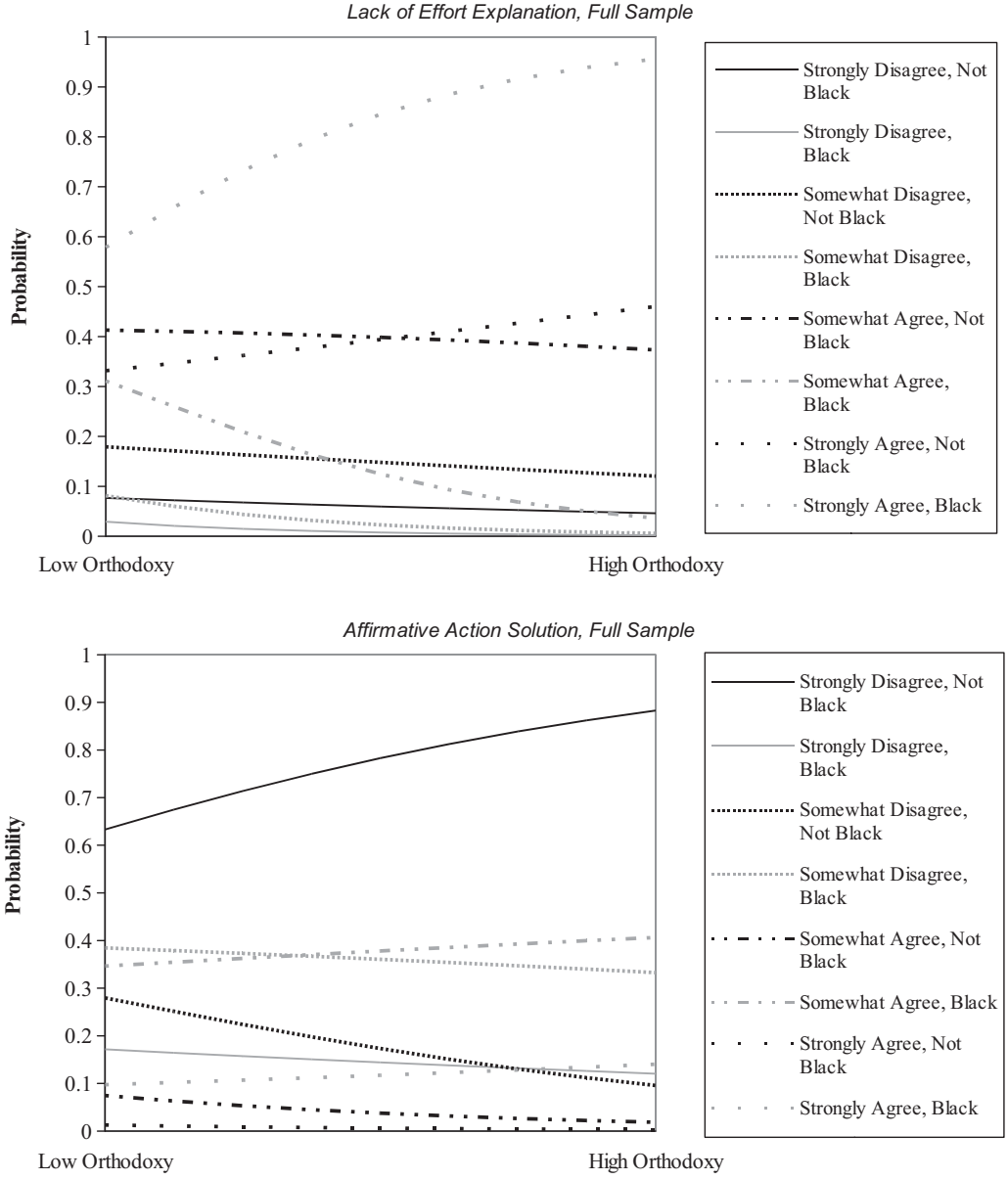
Note: Models include poststratification weights to correct for oversampling among black and Hispanic respondents. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Boundaries in the American Mosaic Survey 2014.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

[a]All scales have been standardized.

Figure 5
The effects of being black on religious orthodoxy



Discussion

How does religion shape understandings of African-American disadvantage? A growing body of research has generated significant insight into this question, but has also led to inconsistencies in findings across studies. We set out to contribute to understandings of the effects of religiosity on both explanations of and preferred solutions to African-American disadvantage by drawing on data with multiple indicators of religious commitment and by focusing on how religious commitment and structural location interact. Our findings strongly support the idea that structural location has a key effect on how people use religious cultural tools to frame and understand

racial inequality. Education, age, race, gender, and income all affect whether and how a person's religious identity, religious beliefs, religious centrality, and involvement in religious institutions influence understandings of African-American disadvantage.

To start, our findings highlight the necessity of separating distinct aspects of religiosity when analyzing its effects on racial attitudes. In our models, it is religious orthodoxy, not identification as a conservative Protestant, that drives individualistic and anti-structural attitudes toward racial inequality; simply identifying as a conservative Protestant was never significant in and of itself. Conversely, religious involvement in many ways has the opposite effect among whites, with whites who are religiously involved showing significant support for prejudice and discrimination and lack of social capital as explanations of, as well as all three solutions to, African-American disadvantage.

Our measure of religious centrality plays a role as well. Religious centrality's interaction with age significantly predicts attitudes toward proposed solutions to racial inequality, indicating a generational difference in the way religious centrality influences racial attitudes. Like others, we find religious centrality to work differently for younger cohorts than for older cohorts (e.g., Pearce and Denton 2011; Schwadel 2011, 2013). While religious centrality has previously been more strongly connected to religious orthodoxy and religious involvement, among younger cohorts it is, like Schwadel (2013) explains, more loosely connected and thus works to bolster support for structural solutions to racial inequality in a way that has historically not been the case.

We also offer a nuanced analysis of how religiosity *interacts* with structural location to predict racial attitudes. While religious orthodoxy alone predicts support for individualist explanations and a rejection of structural solutions to African-American disadvantage, its interaction with education in many ways bolsters these attitudes. The finding that the highly educated religiously orthodox reject all structural explanations to African-American disadvantage corroborates previous research that education no longer has a "secularizing effect" on evangelicals (Edgell and Tranby 2007; Schmalzbauer 2013; Schwadel 2014), confirming a hypothesis generated by prior research. With numerous conservative, evangelical enclaves available to students, higher education, both secular and religious, can have the effect of strengthening religious beliefs and giving religious individuals intellectual tools for defending them.

We also find that orthodoxy works differently for nonwhites, with both orthodox blacks and Hispanics showing significant support for structural solutions. While religious orthodoxy promotes stronger support for structural solutions among black and Hispanics, it works to significantly dampen support among whites. However, like Hinojosa and Park (2004) and Edgell and Tranby (2007), we find religiously orthodox blacks to hold both structural and individualistic attitudes. While religious orthodoxy increases support for structural solutions among blacks, it also increases their support for individualistic explanations for African-American disadvantage.

Gender is another important moderator of religiosity in our findings. White, religiously orthodox females support the lack of social capital explanation, while Catholic females reject the lack of social capital explanation. In previous studies, females have been found to be more structural in their understandings of racial inequality, and indeed we have similar findings for females in general (Brown 2009; Hinojosa and Park 2004; Taylor and Merino 2011a, 2011b), confirming one hypothesis generated from prior research. However, by investigating the extent to which gender interacts with religiosity, we show how religiosity can work to reverse those attitudes or make them stronger.

Income also interacts with religiosity and we find it influences the ways that both Catholics and conservative Protestants understand racial inequality. Catholicism has a significant influence on the individualistic attitudes of people in lower income brackets, causing a significant increase in support for the differences in family upbringing explanation among poor Catholics. Conversely, Catholicism showed little to no effect on those in the highest income brackets. We find a similar relationship among poor conservative Protestants, with a significant jump in support for the lack of effort and hard work explanation among those in the lower income brackets and a significant

rejection among conservative Protestants in the higher income brackets. Taken together, these findings reveal how religious affiliation can work to increase individualism among the poor, fostering beliefs that may ultimately work to keep them in poverty (cf. Keister and Sherkat 2014).

Our research affirms the importance of exploring the effects of Catholic belief and identity on understandings of racial inequality. Our findings indicate that Catholics do hold some individualistic beliefs; however, these beliefs are moderated by age, income, and gender, revealing a previously unexplored heterogeneity within the Catholic subculture. Being Catholic in and of itself, like being conservative Protestant, is not a significant predictor of racial attitudes; it is religious beliefs and behaviors, as well as social locations within these religious subgroups, that are the strongest predictors.

Finally, we show the *relative* importance of religious involvement and belief compared to other factors that affect understandings of inequality. Gender, income, race, political affiliation, and educational status predict racial attitudes *on their own*, even when accounting for religiosity. Females and the highly educated are more likely to support structural explanations and solutions, and the highly educated are also more likely to reject individualistic explanations. Black and Hispanic respondents also show strong support for structural solutions and explanations. While being politically conservative had little effect on racial attitudes, identifying as Republican is a strong predictor of rejecting structural explanations and solutions. This seems to be working in the opposite way that religiosity is working, as it is party identification, more than conservative political beliefs, that drives anti-structural attitudes in our analyses.

When looking at the explanations models in comparison to the solutions models, we can make some measured comparisons.[11] This comparison is a useful one because the explanations models more accurately measure beliefs about racial inequality *in general*, whereas the solutions models measure real-world *action* that respondents would support to remedy that inequality. Comparing the former with the latter reveals important contradictions between professed beliefs and support for action. While females show strong support for structural explanations, they show little to no support for any of the proposed solutions. And while the interaction between age and religious centrality is a key predictor of support or rejection of the proposed solutions, it had no effect on predicting support or rejection of any explanations. Republicans and the religiously orthodox were the only consistent groups, favoring individualistic explanations and rejecting all three structural solutions. Thus, our findings illustrate the importance of considering both beliefs and actions when it comes to understanding racial attitudes, as understanding one does not necessarily lead to an accurate understanding of the other.

Conclusion

Are white conservative Protestants distinctive in the way they understand the causes of racial inequality or in the solutions they prefer? Our analysis leads us to propose that this may be the wrong question to ask. Religious identification does not signal a static identity that individuals take on wholesale. Instead, religiosity is incorporated into the lives of individuals whose identities are already raced, classed, and gendered; it is intersectional, and as a result, religiosity has a variety of interpretations and uses in everyday life. If we are to take Swidler's toolkit approach seriously, we must be sensitive to the matrix of social positions that individuals occupy, as those positions influence how they see and interpret the world (Sewell 1992). Analyses seeking to determine the distinctiveness of conservative Protestants vis-à-vis mainline Protestants and Catholics rest on the assumption that these labels indicate homogeneous groups (cf. Chaves 2010). Our findings call that assumption into question, and our results show not only

[11] Recall, the sample sizes for these models are different. See the "Methods" section for more details.

that religious identification is moderated by structural location in numerous ways, but that its predictive abilities are overshadowed by the influence of religious orthodoxy, involvement, and centrality.

While we were able to do extensive analyses of this kind for our white subsample, future research needs to follow Brown's (2009) lead and pay closer attention to nonwhite samples on their own terms. We, like others, investigate the extent to which religiosity is influenced by race, but do not have large enough sample sizes to test how religiosity is influenced by structural location *among* nonwhite subsamples. We also want to emphasize the importance of investigating religious subcultures beyond Protestants and Catholics. Putting efforts into the construction of surveys meant to fill the gap in data on other religious subgroups would be a major step toward a deeper understanding of how religiosity is used as a tool for understanding racial inequality. For example, the recent increase in Americans who claim no religious affiliation has resulted in a variety of secular ideologies and identities (e.g., Cimino and Smith 2014; Hout and Fischer 2014). Future research should investigate the ways these secular ideologies work to influence racial attitudes and relations.

How does religion shape political and social attitudes, especially understandings of racial inequality? We have argued that the answer to this question depends on how religiosity is measured, and that regardless of the measure, we must assume that the answer is influenced by how religion intersects with other aspects of an individual's identity. To say this is not, we believe, to throw up our hands and declare the subject too complicated for analysis. Quite the contrary, it gives us a clear path to move forward. Religious effects on explanations for African-American disadvantage are heavily influenced by education, income, gender, and race. Gender and race are the two most important ascriptive bases for inequality in the United States, and education and income shape one's position in the social class hierarchy. Clearly, one's position on classic dimensions of stratification influences how religious messages are interpreted and applied to claims about disadvantage for marginalized groups, and the mechanisms through which class, race, and gender interact with religious beliefs to shape attitudes toward inequality, broadly conceived, is a fruitful area for future research. Likewise, the importance of age in shaping religious effects on preferences for solutions to African-American disadvantage merits further investigation.

Research on religious subcultures has often focused on the cultural production of elites and on official discourse, which leads to a relative emphasis on coherence and boundedness. We agree that it is important to understand the discourses that members of a subculture treat as authentic and authoritative, and to investigate how they shape the cultural tools available to members for understanding and addressing social problems. But it is important to remember that cultural coherence is always partial and boundaries are difficult to maintain (DiMaggio 1997); for individuals, religious identities are always fluid, intersect with other identities, and vary in depth and centrality (Edgell 2012). With others (e.g., Chaves 2010), we call for future research on the effects of religiosity on racial attitudes to take an intersectional approach.

References

Aune, Kristin. 2015. Feminist spirituality as lived religion: How UK feminists forge religio-spiritual lives. *Gender and Society* 29(1):122–45.

Avishai, Orit, Afshan Jafar, and Rachel Rinaldo. 2015. A gender lens on religion. *Gender and Society* 29(1):5–25.

Bean, Lydia. 2014. Compassionate conservatives? Evangelicals, economic conservatism, and national identity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53(1):164–86.

Becker, Penny Edgell, and Heather Hofmeister. 2001. Work, family, and religious involvement for men and women. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40(4):707–22.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2006. *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*, 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Brimeyer, Ted. 2008. Religious affiliation and poverty explanations: Individual, structural, and divine causes. *Sociological Focus* 41(3):226–37.

Brown, R. Khari. 2009. Denominational differences in support for race-based policies among white, black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48(3):604–15.

Brown, R. Khari, Angela Kaiser, and James Jackson. 2014. Worship discourse and white race-based policy attitudes. *Review of Religious Research* 56(2):291–312.

Camerona, Trudy A., and J. R. DeShazob. 2013. Demand for health risk reductions. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 65(1):87–109.

Cavendish, James. 2000. Church-based community activism: A comparison of black and white Catholic congregations. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39(3):371–84.

Chaves, Mark. 2010. Rain dances in the dry season: Overcoming the religious congruence fallacy. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49(1):1–14.

Cimino, Richard, and Christopher Smith. 2014. *Atheist awakening: Secular activism and community in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cobb, Ryan J. 2014. Still divided by faith? Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America, 1977–2010. In *Christians and the color line: Race and religion after* Divided by faith, edited by J. Russel Hawkins and Philip Luke Sinitiere, pp. 128–40. New York: Oxford University Press.

Davis, Nancy, and Robert Robinson. 1996. Religious orthodoxy in American society: The myth of a monolithic camp. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35(3):229–45.

Dawson, Jeremy. 2014. Moderation in management research: What, why, when, and how. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 29(1):1–19.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1997. Culture and cognition. *Annual Review of Sociology* 23(1):263–87.

Dormann, Carsten, Jane Elith, Sven Bacher, Carsten Buchmann, Gudrun Carl, Gabriel Carré, Jaime García Marquéz, Bernd Gruber, Bruno Lafourcade, Pedro Leitão, Tamara Münkemüller, Colin Mcclean, Patrick Osborne, Björn Reineking, Boris Schröder, Andrew Skidmore, Damaris Zurell, and Sven Lautenbach. 2013. Collinearity: A review of methods to deal with it and a simulation study evaluating their performance. *Ecography* 36(1): 27–46.

Edgell, Penny. 2005. *Religion and family in a changing society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 2012. A cultural sociology of religion: New directions. *Annual Review of Sociology* 38(1):247–65.

Edgell, Penny, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Hartmann. 2003. *AMP (American Mosaic Project)*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Survey Center.

Edgell, Penny and Eric Tranby. 2007. Religious influences on understandings of racial inequality in the United States. *Social Problems* 54(2):263–88.

———. 2010. Shared visions? Diversity and cultural membership in American life. *Social Problems* 57(2):175–204.

Eitle, Tamela McNulty and Matthew Steffens. 2009. Religious affiliation and beliefs about racial inequality: White college students' attiudes about black-white and Native American-white inequality. *Social Science Journal* 46(3):506–20.

Emerson, Michael and David Sikkink. 1999. Equal in Christ, but not in the world: White conservative Protestants and explanations of black-white inequality. *Social Problems* 46(3):398–417.

Emerson, Michael and Christian Smith. 2000. *Divided by faith: Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Heeren, Timothy, Erika M. Edwards, J. Michael Dennis, Sergei Rodkin, Ralph W. Hingson, and David L. Rosenbloom. 2008. A comparison of results from an alcohol survey of a prerecruited Internet panel and the national epidemiologic survey on alcohol and related conditions. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 32(2):222–9.

Hinojosa, Victor and Jerry Park. 2004. Religion and the paradox of racial inequality attitudes. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43(2):229–38.

Hout, Michael and Claude Fischer. 2014. Explaining why more Americans have no religious preference: Political backlash and generational succession, 1987–2012. *Sociological Science* 1(9):423–47.

Hunt, Matthew. 2007. African American, Hispanic, and white beliefs about black/white inequality, 1977–2004. *American Sociological Review* 72(3):390–415.

Jaccard, James. 2001. *Interaction effects in logistic regression*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Keister, Lisa and Darren Sherkat. 2014. *Religion and inequality in America: Research and theory on religion's role in stratification*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kieruj, Natalia D. and Guy Moors. 2010. Variations in response style behavior by response scale format in attitude research. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 22(3):320–42.

Lewis, Andrew and Dana De Bernardo. 2010. Belonging without belonging: Utilizing evangelical self-identification to analyze political attitudes and preferences. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49(1):112–26.

Lipsitz, George. 2011. *How racism takes place*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Mather, Darin. 2011. Divided by age? Generational shifts in white evangelical Christians' attitudes toward racial diversity. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7(3):1–23.

Mueller, Charles W. and Weldon T. Johnson. 1975. Socioeconomic status and religious participation. *American Sociological Review* 40(6):785–800.

Olson, Laura R. and Adam Warber. 2008. Belonging, behaving, and believing: Assessing the role of religion on presidential approval. *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2):192–204.

Pearce, Lisa and Melissa Denton. 2011. *A faith of their own: Stability and change in the religiosity of America's adolescents*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Peek, Charles, George Lowe, and L. Susan Williams. 1991. Gender and God's word: Another look at religious fundamentalism and sexism. *Social Forces* 69(4):1205–21.

Revilla, Melanie, Willem Saris, and Jon Krosnick. 2014. Choosing the number of categories in agree-disagree scales. *Sociological Methods and Research* 43(1):73–97.

Riesebrodt, Martin. 2010. *The promise of salvation: A theory of religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schmalzbauer, John. 2013. Campus religious life in America: Revitalization and renewal. *Society* 50(2):115–31.

Schwadel, Philip. 2011. Age, period, and cohort effects on religious activities and beliefs. *Social Science Research* 40(1):181–92.

———. 2013. Changes in Americans' strength of religious affiliation, 1974–2010. *Sociology of Religion* 74(1):107–28.

———. 2014. Birth cohort changes in the association between college education and religious non-affiliation. *Social Forces*. 93(2):719–46.

Schwadel, Philip, John McCarthy, and Hart Nelsen. 2009. The continuing relevance of family income for religious participation. *Social Forces* 87(4):1997–2030.

Sewell, William. 1992. A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology* 98(1):1–29.

Smith, Tom W., Peter Marsden, Michael Hout, and Jibum Kim. 2012. *General Social Surveys, 1972–2012: Cumulative Codebook*. Available at <http://gss.norc.org/documents/codebook/GSS_Codebook.pdf>.

Steensland, Brian, Lynn Robinson, Bradford Wilcox, Jerry Park, Mark Regnerus, and Robert Woodberry. 2000. The measure of American religion: Toward improving the state of the art. *Social Forces* 79(1):291–318.

Sullins, D. Paul. 2006. Gender and religion: Deconstructing universality, constructing complexity. *American Journal of Sociology* 112(3):838–80.

Swidler, Ann. 1986. Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review* 51(2):27–86.

Taylor, Marylee and Stephen Merino. 2011a. Assessing the racial views of white conservative Protestants: Who do we compare with whom? *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75(4):761–78.

———. 2011b. Race, religion, and beliefs about racial inequality. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634(1):60–77.

Tranby, Eric and Douglas Hartmann. 2008. Critical whiteness theories and the evangelical "race problem": Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by faith*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47(3):341–59.

Weng, Li-Jen. 2004. Impact of the number of response categories and anchor labels on coefficient alpha and test-retest reliability. *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 64(6):956–72.

Woodberry, Robert, Jerry Park, Lyman Kellstedt, Mark Regnerus, and Brian Steensland. 2012. The measure of American religion traditions: Theoretical and measurement considerations. *Social Forces* 91(1):65–73.

Wuthnow, Robert. 2010. *After the baby boomers: How twenty- and thirty-somethings are shaping the future of American religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.