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RELIGION, RELIGIOSITY, AND FERTILITY DESIRES:  
EVIDENCE FROM A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF  
AMERICAN COLLEGE GRADUATES

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Background

It is well established that among major American religious groups Catholics, have, expect to have, and want to have the largest families. They are followed in turn by Protestants who in turn exceed Jews. Westoff, Potter and Sagi (1964) report that "religious preference, that is, preference for the Protestant, Catholic or Jewish faith, is the strongest of all major social influences on fertility." In this paper we shall address two problems. First, we shall attempt to account for differences in desired family size by religion. Second, we shall examine the routes to group mean desired family size. The first of these problems has been the subject of a large body of research which we shall review in this paper. The second issue is, in a sense, derivative from the first, yet distinct. Groups may well want the same family size (i.e., group mean fertility) but arrive at their result through different routes. Thus, we shall be examining: (a) religious group differences in family size desires, and (b) religious group differences in determinants of family size desires.

Religious group differences in family size desires have been attributed by one or more authors to social characteristics, to ideology, to minority group status, and to religion itself. The characteristics hypothesis shifts the problem focus from inter-religious fertility differentials to differences which flow from the social characteristics which are associated with the three major religious groups. In doing so it does effectively eliminate Protestant-Jewish differences on outcomes in almost all elements in the fertility complex (Freedman, Whelpton & Smit, 1961). However, matching on social characteristics, while useful, creates a new set of problems and does not adequately resolve the initiating problems. First, matching on social characteristics increases the Catholic/non-Catholic differences. For example, fertility desire is negatively correlated with education for Protestants while it is positively correlated with education for Catholics. Jews show a somewhat ambiguous relationship between education and family size

desire. (1) Second, even though Protestant-Jewish differentials in outcomes are largely eliminated, possible differences in process or routes are not dealt with. As we shall show further on, group similarities in outcomes are unrelated to similarities in process.

Goldscheider (1967) offers a second explanation for interreligious fertility differentials. (In all fairness, we note the explanation is confined to understanding low Jewish fertility; however, if valid, the explanation should be reconciled with Catholic/non-Catholic differentials as well.) Goldscheider writes:

The long history of low Jewish fertility in many countries may be explained by the minority position of Jews and cross-culturally-shared Jewish values. . . . The aspirations of Jews for social mobility, their desire for acceptance in American society, and the insecurity of their minority status tended to encourage small family size. (1967, p.207).

When confronted with a variety of empirical findings, this argument appears to be ad hoc and unconvincing. First, with respect to American Jews alone, if insecurity resulting from minority status and low social status results in lower fertility, then one would expect Jewish fertility to have climbed steadily over the last few decades (which it did not) as several historical trends emerged: overt anti-Semitism declined during this period (Stember, 1966); American Jews eventually attained upper-middle-class status in large numbers; and proportionately fewer Jews manifest a salient Jewish identification which is probably a precondition for feeling minority group insecurity.

A second objection to the minority status theory is offered by Sklare:

If it were correct, Jews in Israel who are the sociological opposite-numbers of American Jews should have a considerably higher birth rate. But in spite of living in a country where Jews are the majority and thus need have no fear of suffering discrimination, the birth rate of such Israelis is not very different from that of their American cousins. (2) (1971, p.81)

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- (1) Goldscheider (1965; 1967) reports on somewhat inconsistent findings of other researchers concerning the relationship between social status and fertility among the Jews. His own results, drawn from a survey of Providence, Rhode Island Jewry, indicate an inverse relationship among first generation (immigrant) Jews and direct relationships between social status and fertility among second and third or later generation Jews.
- (2) See Gabriel (1960) and Schmelz (1966) for analysis of Israeli fertility patterns.

A third objection to the theory is that it fails to apply to Catholics, either here in the United States or internationally. Thus, if individuals lower their fertility in response to minority group insecurity, then one would expect Catholics to do so whenever they are accorded group low prestige in a society.<sup>(3)</sup> In fact, as we have noted, American Catholics display higher fertility complexes than non-Catholics. More significant is Day's comparison of Catholic birthrates in nineteen countries (1968). Contrary to the minority status theory, he finds Catholic fertility is higher in countries where Catholics are in the minority and lower in nations where they are in the majority.

Finally, in support of the minority status theory, Goldscheider cites evidence of lower fertility among college-educated non-whites (1967, p.20). But this phenomenon may be peculiar to Blacks and not characterize American minority groups generally. We have evidence that Mexican-Americans (in a fashion unlike the Blacks but similar to other Catholic groups) fail to substantially reduce their fertility when they attain middle-class rank (Grebler, et al., 1970). If one would wish to maintain the minority status argument, the findings cited above would demand such extensive revision, modification, and qualification of the theory as to render it useless by virtue of its sheer complexity and multiple exceptions.

Much of the literature reports that religious Catholics (however religiosity is defined and measured) want and have more children than their more secular counterparts. One explanation for these findings could be that the Roman Catholic Church effectively teaches its parishioners to have large families. However, official Church doctrine *per se* does not explicitly encourage large families; rather, it forbids the use of mechanical and chemical means of contraception.<sup>(4)</sup> Second, a survey of Catholic women finds that such respondents, in the main, do not believe the Church wants them to have large families (Westoff,

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(3) Laumann (1973, p.182) derives an ethnoreligious status scale from data on the friendship choices of Detroit area men. He finds all seven Protestant groups rank higher than all seven Catholic groups with the Jews ranking fifteenth and last (non-whites and Spanish-surnamed groups were not included). Results parallel those of Hodge and Siegel (forthcoming) reported in Laumann (1973, p.46). Hodge and Siegel's results are drawn from a national survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center in which 445 respondents were "asked to sort thirty eight groups into ten categories, ranging from low to high social standing" (Laumann, 1973, p.70). While the thirty-eight groups were solely nationality groups, the lower social standing of Catholics may be inferred from the lower social standing of Southern and Eastern European nationality groups, that is, of countries from which most of the Catholic immigration to the United States originated. Northern and Western European groups almost uniformly exceed all other groups on the Hodge and Siegel social standing measure.

(4) For a discussion of official Church attitudes toward birth control and fertility, see Westoff and Ryder (1969).

Potter and Sagi 1964, p.133). Finally, even when couples defy the Church's ban on "artificial" contraception (and thereby flout the Church's principal explicit teachings regarding fertility and reproductive behavior), they nevertheless maintain higher levels of fertility and fertility desires than their non-Catholic counterparts. The explanation for the Catholic-non-Catholic fertility differential does not lie in the elite religion of the Catholic Church, that is, in its doctrine as conveyed by the Church as *magister*. Rather, we propose, it lies in American Catholic folk religion, that is, the folk fertility norms of American Catholics.(5)

In America, as in other societies, there are norms concerning appropriate family size. In a recent review of the pertinent literature, Hass offers this summary statement:

In the U.S. the two-child family is currently the favorite family size, although tolerance also exists for larger families (up to four children). A variety of informal negative sanctions apply to deviant couples who remain childless or have only one child, and negative sanctions are secondarily applied to those who greatly exceed the appropriate family size. (1974a, p.4)

Couples are *relatively* free to violate these norms when: (a) they are strongly committed to another set of norms, and (b) their significant others accept the sub-groups' norms and reinforce the actors' commitment to sub-group norms. We propose that for traditionally religious Catholics and Jews, both these conditions exist while they do not exist for traditionally religious Protestants.

Catholics, Protestants and Jews all have a high fertility past. For Catholics and Jews religiosity serves to connect them to their past and to remove them from the current American cultural consensus, a consensus which is predicated largely on secular values and assumptions. For Protestants, by contrast, religiosity does not remove them from the American consensus. In a sense, to be Protestant in America is to be quintessentially American. Religious Catholics and Jews live in two civilizations. Their religious civilization connects them with their high fertility past. Their "American-ness" on the other hand tends to bring their fertility norms closer to those of the American (= Protestant) consensus.

Second, for both Catholics and Jews, religiosity implies integration into a subcommunity with a set of relatively autonomous institutions paralleling those created and sustained by most of America, including, in the main, Protestant America. These institutions include schools, networks of kin and friendship, philanthropic bodies and the like which can totally dominate the non-work time of traditional Catholics and Jews.

Thus, for both religious Catholics and Jews, religiosity functions in two mutually reinforcing ways. It keeps the individual in touch with

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(5) For further discussion of the distinction between elite and folk religion see Liebman (1973, p.45-49).

the values of his or her ancestral past. Second, it reinforces those values by surrounding him or her with individuals and institutions ("influentials") which are also tied to that past. Freedman, Whelpton and Smit (1961, p.613) suggest, too, ". . . that distinctive Catholic fertility behavior tends to disappear when the barriers between the religious subcommunities are reduced." They recognize, as do we, that self-selection likely plays a role in the individual's choice to remain within the religious subcommunity. However, we propose that the individual's religiosity and his/her participation in the subcommunity of the religiously traditional are mutually reinforcing and reciprocally causal.

Religiosity is an individual experience for the Protestant and a communitarian experience for the pious Catholic or Jew. Protestants have largely viewed religion as a matter of individual conscience and faith, one which is decidedly private in nature. For Jews and Catholics, though, traditional religious commitment entails involvement with a religious community and is associated with a responsibility to a religious society. Jewish and Catholic religiosity, moreover, requires performance of several visible and public rituals, acts of faith which bind the individual to the historically framed People or Church (respectively). Halpern's discussion of the three religious communities helps explain the characteristics of these communities basic to our thesis:

It is in Protestantism and its typical attitudes and patterns of social organization, even including the social framework of the private realm of religion, that we have the most authentic prototype of the American Way of Life. . . . According to the dominant Protestant and American conception, religion really resides in the individual, and in his direct confrontation of God and of God's word. The church or the congregation is, at bottom, more of a social convenience, an instrument to help the individual realize religion than the actuality of religion. . . . Catholics regard religion as inhering essentially in the whole believing community, not the individual communicant, and . . . Jews . . . believe their religion to occur in the historic community, not to the isolated individual. (Halpern, 1956, p.38-40).

If Halpern's characterizations are correct, Catholic and Jewish (though not Protestant) religious commitment implies immersion in a more traditionally oriented subcommunity and, as a consequence, the greater likelihood of adopting its norms regarding a wide range of behaviors, even such private decisions as family size. Significantly, a few Protestant groups in the United States are extremely fertile. These are primarily rural sectarian communities such as the Hutterites. Their high fertility reflects in large measure their total traditionalism and withdrawal from the secular world. A more useful comparison might be found among Mormons, or Latter Day Saints. Westoff and Potvin (1967, p.131) found that Mormon college women wanted an average 4.7 children, as compared with 3.5 for Protestants. While socially, the Mormons are thought of as Protestants, they think of themselves as a

distinct religious community unrelated to (unredeemed) Protestant America. To be a believing, practicing Mormon is to withdraw in part from the American cultural consensus even while participating fully in the American polity and economy. This, we argue, is true as well of pious Catholics and Jews and much less so for pious Protestants, whether main-line or evangelical.

In sum, then, for those for whom religiosity implies participation in a distinct subculture reinforced by contact with fellow believers, older norms persist and continue to influence fertility desires. For main-line Protestants, religiosity implies neither a living past nor a separate community to anywhere near the degree that it does for Catholics and Jews.

While some of the reported research in the field has implied some of the elements in our theory the theory itself has not been appropriately tested. Some studies fail to use a measure of religiosity common to all three groups making it difficult to precisely compare the impact of religiosity from group to group. Second, even when a common measure of the independent variable was employed, researchers have tended to report correlations rather than unstandardized regression coefficients, the latter being the more appropriate statistic for across-group comparison of impact. Third, the small number of Jews in the American population results in a small Jewish sample size even in some of the larger studies. As a result, interreligious comparisons of mean fertility scores involving Jews are somewhat unstable as are any intra-Jewish comparisons. Fourth and finally, we have reason to believe that some of the effects of "folk religion" have been distorted and/or masked by confounding interactive effects of educational attainment, age, marital duration and generation in the United States. The sample we are exploiting (see below) is considerably more homogeneous on these variables thus in effect "controlling out" many of the possible complex interactions.

Nevertheless, the scant research findings previously reported offer suggestive, though clearly inconclusive, evidence in support of our hypothesis. Among Catholics, repeated studies report a direct association between religiosity and fertility. Thus, Westoff and Bumpass (1973) found that frequency of taking communion predicts number of children born. Westoff and Potvin (1966) found that attending Catholic high schools and colleges is a strong predictor of number of children desired. They later reported (1967, p.14-21) that selectivity (i.e., the selection of children with religious upbringing) is more important than college experience in determining the family belief system of Catholic women in denominational and non-sectarian colleges. Freedman and Whelpton (1950) found a direct association between Catholic church attendance and expected total births. In a later study, Freedman, Goldberg and Bumpass (1965) show that regularity of church attendance predicts both number of children born and expected number of children. (Interestingly, and oddly enough, they do not present an analysis of their non-Catholic sample with respect to the effects of religiosity, if any.) Bumpass and Westoff (1969) find that "active" Catholics want more children.

While the impact of religiosity upon fertility is clear among the Catholics, a much weaker (or no) relationship generally obtains in studies of Protestants. Freedman, Whelpton and Campbell (1959) find no relationship between Protestant church attendance and fertility. Freedman and Whelpton (1950) report little relationship between religious interest and Protestant fertility in Indianapolis. Bumpass and Westoff (1969) report very small differences in the number of children desired and completed parity between "active" and "other" Protestants in their national sample.

For reasons noted above, comparable data on the Jews is virtually lacking. In their study of the Jews of Providence, Goldstein and Goldscheider (1968) report mean fertility by "denomination" (i.e., Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform). They find that among first generation Jews, those who identify themselves as Orthodox have the largest families, followed by Conservative and Reform Jews in that order. In the second generation the Orthodox have the smallest families, with Conservative and Reform equal. In the "older" third generation (i.e., couples with largely completed fertility) the Conservative have the smallest families with Orthodox and Reform of equal size. The second and third generation differences are small (0.2 of a child).

As Goldstein and Goldscheider note, denominational affiliation is confounded by other social characteristics (e.g., social class) which tend to obscure and confuse the relationship. With respect to other measures of Jewish religio-communal involvement, they find no relationship with fertility. More significantly, their use of "denominational" affiliation or identification does not measure religiosity *per se*. Many Jews who call themselves Orthodox are in fact "non-observant Orthodox". Thus, insofar as they might attend synagogue services they attend an Orthodox synagogue but in fact they attend infrequently and generally do not live up to the demands of Orthodox (or traditional) Judaism. Their self-designated Orthodoxy is an expression of sentiment or organizational loyalty, not religious commitment.

Westoff, Potter, Sagi and Mishler (1961, p.195) report weak *negative* correlation between attendance at services and number of children desired by Jewish wives ( $r = -.13$ ) and an even weaker *positive* correlation for Jewish husbands ( $r = .04$ ). However, they report positive correlations for Jewish husbands and wives between "informal religious orientation" and fertility desires. None of the correlations reported for Jews is significantly different from zero.

Pursuant to our hypothesis and deriving in part from the previous research in religiosity and fertility, we would anticipate a moderate impact (measured by the unstandardized regression coefficient) of religiosity upon the fertility desires of Catholics and Jews, but not of Protestants. In the analysis below we test that hypothesis. Moreover, we consider whether the effect of religiosity, as an indicator of integration into a subcommunity with traditional, high fertility norms, might not be confounded with other possible causes of high fertility. Notably, one could suggest that religious traditionalism might also be accompanied

by a traditional orientation to the family; alternatively, religiosity may be serving as a proxy for the intergenerational transmission of large family norms. These alternative explanations are examined in the analysis below to which we now turn.

### Data and Measures

The research is based upon a secondary analysis of data collected by the National Opinion Research Center in its study of approximately 35,000 spring, 1961 graduates of American colleges and universities. Respondents filled out mail-back questionnaires in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1968. In the fifth and final wave, only a subsample of the respondents was sampled and as a result there are 4,868 respondents with data over each of the five waves. For further sampling details, see Davis (1964). Of these, 3739 respondents were married by 1968 and they constituted the group upon which the analysis was performed. Since Jews have a higher rate of college attendance than non-Jews while Catholics are somewhat less represented in the college population than in the general population, the proportions of the sample from each religious group differ from those found in the general American population. Specifically, and to the advantage of this study, there are a relatively large number of Jews available for analysis. The analysis focuses upon the number of children desired at the two times in which that information was ascertained: 1964 and 1968.<sup>(6)</sup>

It would be useful to consider the merits and limitations of this variable. The most obvious objection is that fertility desires is a poor predictor of actual fertility and therefore analyses employing the fertility desires variable may bear little relationship to the processes affecting actual fertility. This objection may be answered in a variety of ways. First, although fertility desires are indeed a weak predictor of eventual completed parity on the individual level, there is strong evidence that fertility desires is an excellent predictor of fertility outcomes for aggregates. That is, we know that fertility plans are subject to change and to measurement error. They are also subject to the vagaries of nature, i.e., unplanned pregnancies ("accidents") and organic and/or functional infertility. Thus individuals' desires and their outcomes are often discrepant. However, it has been shown that the errors made by individuals tend to distribute randomly around a group mean. The desires tend to predict group outcomes with remarkable precision. (See Westoff, Mishler and Kelly, 1957; Westoff, Sagi and Kelly, 1958; Goldberg, Sharp and Freedman, 1959; Whelpton, Campbell and Patterson, 1966; Bumpass and Westoff, 1970; Hass, 1974b). Second, as Hass (1974b) notes, the criticism of the fertility desires measure is most potent in

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- (6) In 1964, respondents were asked, "How many children would you like to have?" and instructed to circle one answer ranging from 0 to 8+. In 1968, they were asked to "Please write in the number of children: (A) *you* would like to have . . . A. I would like to have \_\_\_\_\_ children."

the analysis of developing countries or societies undergoing rapid social change where fertility-related as well as other norms may be expected to be most unstable. In short, if our chief interest in the fertility desires variable is as a proxy for future completed fertility, we would maintain that, in general, the variable does well in predicting actual fertility for aggregates. Finally, we note that we are not interested in fertility desires solely as a predictor of completed fertility. The variable has been analysed in a wide variety of major fertility studies, and is a constituent part of the "fertility complex." Moreover, with respect to variables such as religious preference and social status, the variable behaves very similarly to more direct measures of fertility.

Researchers have devised a number of ways for defining and measuring religiosity (for example, see Lenski's (1961) four dimensional scheme). However, for our purposes, attendance at religious services-- the most straightforward and simplest indicator of religiosity-- is also the most suitable. We have already argued that adherence to religious doctrine does not seem to be the critical aspect of religiosity for fertility behavior. Rather, participation in the traditional activities of the religious sub-society, as measured by service attendance, is probably the most suitable aspect of religiosity for our purposes. This contention is supported, in part, by a study of fertility orientation among Catholics. Potvin and Burch (1968) investigated the effects of attendance along with other measures (i.e., theology, subjective religious experience) and concluded that

differences in religious practice (i.e., mass attendance, confession, communion) reveal significant differences in family size preference and actual fertility. For the other religious factors either no differences or reduced differences appear. (1968, p.32-33).

Westoff et al. (1961, p.194), on the other hand, raise a serious question about the use of attendance at services as a measure of religiosity. They write:

. . . frequency of church attendance is relevant for Catholics, and measures, as a minimum, their adherence to the formal requirements of the Catholic church. For non-Catholics, however, church attendance may have quite a different meaning.

Westoff et al. note the much lower rate of attendance for Protestants, and lower yet for Jews, and conclude *not* that Protestants and Jews are less religious than are Catholics but . . . "institutional requirements of the three religions are different." (1961 p. 194).

We cannot agree. Regular attendance at service (or at least thrice daily formal worship plus prayers on rising, retiring, before and after meals and other occasions) is a requirement of traditional Judaism to the present day. Such prayer obligations are recognized as normative and binding even by America's "Modern" Orthodox and Conservative Jewry.

Rather than viewing the very low rates of service attendance by Jews (reported below for our sample as well) as a reflection of changing institutional requirements, we interpret such findings as evidence of an overwhelming secularity or religious indifference of Jews.

To facilitate the analysis, the religious service attendance item was transformed from an ordinal to interval level variable by substituting estimated mean annual rates of service attendance for the verbal, categoric responses. (7) Although we treat service attendance as a linear variable in the analysis, we note that departure from the linearity assumption results in small, statistically significant (though not substantively interesting) increments in explained variance in the dependent variables. (8) In order to retain easily interpretable comparability across the religious groups, we decided to retain the linearity assumption fully aware that doing so tends to depress the explained variance by a small amount.

As we noted above, religiosity might be considered a proxy for a generalized notion of traditionalism. We therefore attempted to locate other measures of traditional social and political orientations which would have an impact on fertility desires and early outcomes. With one exception, the several indicators of traditional orientation we examined failed to predict the dependent variables. That exception is what we term traditional sex-role orientation. Respondents were asked to express their views (recorded on a five-point agree-disagree scale) with sixteen statements regarding the family and sex-roles. Since our principal concern was to devise the most potent control variable, we decided to maximize predictive validity by selecting from these items the cluster of

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(7) Estimated mean annual service attendance rates replaced the verbal responses according to the following schema (replacement values are in parentheses): "Weekly, almost without exception" (52); "Several times a month" (30); "Once a month" (12); "Two or three times a year" (3); "Once a year" (1); and "Never" (0).

(8) Comparison of the multiple  $R^2$  with the correlation ratio squared (or eta squared) reveal the extent to which prediction of 1968 fertility desires is improved when the linearity assumption is relaxed. The figures, respectively, are given as follows: Protestants (.009; .018); Catholics (.097; .112); and Jews (.054; .079). With 1964 fertility desires as the dependent variable, the analogous figures are comparable: Protestants (.006; .013); Catholics (.069; .074); and Jews (.060; .068). Using the F-test for statistical significance (see, for example, Cohen, 1968), departure from linearity is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) for all groups using the 1968 variable and for Protestants and Catholics using the 1964 measure of fertility desires.

items which would best predict 1964 fertility desires. Using step-wise regression, we located five items which, after summing, comprise the sex-role scale. (9)

The introduction of sex-role orientation as a control variable is also suggested by the literature. Thus, in their discussion of inter-religious variations in fertility desires and outcomes, Westoff et al. (1961, p.168) suggest that those differences may well reflect degrees of assimilation to American cultural norms generally and fertility norms specifically. More specifically, they speculate about the sex-role and family patterns characteristic to the major religious groups:

One avenue of investigation to be pursued in attempting to shed further light on the reasons for family-size differences by religion deriving from these considerations is the pattern of authority relationships within the family. Does the Catholic family system conform to the image of the traditional patriarchal structure presumably characteristic of some other minority group (including the rural farm family which can now be regarded at least statistically, if not sociologically, as a minority)?

Sklare (1971, p.83-85) suggests low Jewish fertility is a function of the Jewish women's abandonment of her traditional sex role which sees a woman

. . . as a maternal figure whose status derived from her role as mother and homemaker.

Developing the thesis further, Sklare argues that:

. . . a new orientation to the role of motherhood was developed--to be the mother of a large family was to be a beast of burden, an animal yoked to the treadmill, a primitive. (1971, p.83)

The propositions suggested by Westoff et al. (1961) and Sklare (1971) are essentially mirror images of one another, one attempting to explain a high fertility group, the other a low fertility group. Explaining one group implies an explanation of the other group. Both theses suggest a difference in sex-role orientation between the "experimental group" (Catholics and Jews respectively) and the others.

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- (9) The five items, with the direction of agreement contributing positive scores to the scale in parentheses, are: "A wife should respond to her husband's sexual overtures even when she is not interested" (Agree); "Even if a woman has the ability and interest, she should not choose a career field that will be difficult to combine with child-rearing" (Agree); "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work" (Disagree); "Women should stop expecting special privileges because of their sex" (Disagree); and "It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself" (Agree).

Last, we also introduce size of family orientation-- measured by summing responses to questions asking for the number of older and younger siblings-- as a control variable. Duncan et al. (1965, p.515) noted:

. . . the small minority of large families in the current generation will be produced disproportionately by those who came from large families themselves.

They cite a United Nations study which suggests that "family size has a tendency to run in families" (Duncan et al. (1965, p.509)).

Some of the effect of family size of orientation on family size desires is likely to come about as a consequence of the continuity of the social facts which influence fertility from generation to generation. Thus, religion, education and other significant determinants of fertility outcomes "run in families" and might underlie the "inheritance" of family size. On a worldwide level the "inheritance of fertility" might well be a function of large differences in fertility norms and contraceptive usage among couples in different countries. Yet the Duncan paper does show consistent, albeit small, effect of family size within the United States. These effects range from 0.061 to 0.111 children (depending upon sample used) without controls and are reduced to 0.021 to 0.070 controlling for duration of marriage and wife's education. The sample which we are employing is essentially homogeneous with respect to education with few respondents having a farm background.

### Findings

The mean family size desires in 1964 and 1968 are given in Table 1. At both points in time, Protestants and Jewish means are equal and Catholics exceed both. All groups decline somewhat from 1964 to 1968 with the greatest decline shown by Catholics. The general decline is, probably, in large part attributable to a "maturation effect" paralleling previous work hypothesizing a decline in fertility desires during the pre-marital and early marital years (Rainwater, 1960, p.24-25). The somewhat larger Catholic decline is, probably, in part due to the decline in the level of characteristics favoring high fertility desires (particularly religiosity) and in part to other causes discussed elsewhere (Cohen and Ritterband, 1976).

The equality of Jewish with Protestant mean fertility desires is also consistent with previous research (cited above, but particularly Freedman, Whelpton and Smit (1961)). As noted, Jews and Protestants display the same mean fertility complex when controlling for social status. Since our sample consists exclusively of college graduates of the class of 1961, we have effectively controlled for a critical social status characteristic, perhaps more critical than at later times in life when occupational and income variations are likely to grow. We should note that we examined the influence of some parental status characteristics--i.e., father's and mother's educational attainment and father's occupational prestige--and failed to account for explained variance in the dependent variables (for all three religious groups) appreciably different from zero.

Table 1. Number of Children Desired, by Religion, 1964 and 1968

Year and number of children	Protestants	Catholics	Jews
<i>1964</i>			
Total	100	100	100
0-1	4	2	3
2-3	71	37	73
4+	25	62	25
Mean	2.88	3.93	2.92
N	2,453	842	379
<i>1968</i>			
Total	100	100	100
0-1	5	2	3
2-3	75	49	79
4+	19	49	17
Mean	2.68	3.53	2.75
N	2,386	819	367

The differences in mean family size desires by religion (i.e., Catholics as against Protestants and Jews) is a function of the significantly high proportion of Catholics at the upper end of the distribution. An approximately equally small proportion of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews want either no children or one child. About three-fourths of the Protestants and Jews want two or three children, while two or three is the desired family size for less than half of the Catholic respondents. The higher Catholic mean is a result of Catholics wanting larger families (4 or more) and *not* a desire for small families (0-1 children) among Protestants and Jews (see Table 1).

Table 2 presents information on some of the other characteristics of the three religious groups in the sample. Again, these findings conform to what one would expect on the basis of the pertinent literature and previously noted characteristics of this sample. Thus, Catholic religious service attendance far exceeds that of the Protestants who in turn greatly surpass that of the Jews. This rank order is true for both points in time. Interestingly, there is a slight drop in Catholic service attendance from 1962 to 1968 while Jewish and Protestant means remain stable. Well-informed speculation concerning the reasons for the Catholic decline is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper.

Earlier in this paper we reported on the work of Westoff et al. (1961) and Sklare (1971) who suggested that interreligious differences in fertility behavior may be due in part to differences among the religious groups in their views of the family and traditional sex-roles. If those speculations are correct, then we should find differences in sex-role orientations in which the Catholics would be most traditional and the Jews least traditional. As Table 2 reports such is the case, with the Protestants at the mean for this standardized summary score, the Catholics almost a whole standard deviation above the mean and the Jewish average is slightly over half a standard deviation unit below the mean. Moreover, in computations not presented, we disaggregated the religious groups by sex and (a) found men to be slightly more patriarchal than women (by about a half a standard deviation unit); (b) found the male-female difference constant across the three religious groups; and (c) within sex groups, found Catholics again most traditional and Jews most egalitarian.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Selected Characteristics, by Religion, 1964 and 1968(a)

Year and characteristics	Protestants		Catholics		Jews	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
<i>1964</i>						
Religious service attendance in 1962	24.1	20.6 (2465)	44.7	16.5 (846)	5.2	10.0 (378)
<i>1968</i>						
Religious service attendance	23.9	21.6 (2461)	39.3	20.7 (846)	5.3	11.9 (377)
Traditional sex-role orientation	0.00	2.69 (2503)	0.86	2.64 (854)	-0.57	2.90 (382)
Siblings	1.68	1.21 (2501)	2.03	1.29 (852)	1.34	0.90 (382)
Age	30.64	4.39 (2503)	30.45	3.42 (854)	29.73	3.65 (382)
Number years married	5.54	2.15 (2503)	4.95	2.18 (854)	4.97	2.23 (382)

(a) Number of cases reported in parenthesis.

The number of siblings for the three religious groups show Catholics coming from the largest families and Jews from the smallest, with Protestants approximately midway in between. The rank order and size of family orientation by religion is the same as that found for actual fertility outcomes in prior studies.

Table 3. Correlations Among Selected Characteristics, by Religion

Variable	Number of children desired		Number of years married	Age	Religious service attendance		Traditional sex-role orientations	Number of siblings
	1964	1968	1968	1968	1962	1968	1964	1964
	D64	D68	M	A	R62	R68	T	S
Protestants								
D64	...	.59	-.08	-.08	.08	.08	.11	.12
D68		...	.02	-.03	.09	.10	.09	.12
M			...	.31	.04	.15	.00	.09
A				...	.03	.02	.00	.15
R62					...	.56	.11	.07
R68						...	.13	.07
T							...	.03
Catholics								
D64	...	.59	-.04	-.09	.26	.29	.27	.14
D68		...	.04	-.01	.23	.31	.22	.13
M			...	.36	-.10	-.06	-.01	.00
A				...	-.12	-.01	-.03	.10
R62					...	.58	.18	.09
R68						...	.23	.09
T							...	.03
Jews								
D64	...	.40	.03	.06	.24	.23	.17	.16
D68		...	.00	.01	.17	.23	.17	.09
M			...	.34	.07	.10	-.08	.06
A				...	.10	.13	.09	.25
R62					...	.65	.01	.24
R68						...	.17	.23
T							...	.03

As might be expected of this sample, there are only slight variations in age. Number of years married is reported for those who were married by 1968. (10) While there is little variation across religious groups, the data are consistent with previous reports of later marriage of Catholics relative to Protestants (Bumpass and Westoff, 1969, p.450)

Table 4. Unstandardized Regression Equations Predicting Number of Children Desired by Religion, 1964 and 1968

Year and variable (a)	Protestants			Catholics				Jews				
<i>1964</i>												
R62	.004	(b)	(b)	.003	.023	(b)	(b)	.018	.023	(b)	(b)	.021
T	(b)	.049	(b)	.040	(b)	.146	(b)	.124	(b)	.055	(b)	.053
S	(b)	(b)	.105	.098	(b)	(b)	.151	.123	(b)	(b)	.173	.112
a	2.79	2.89	2.71	2.65	2.92	3.80	3.62	2.75	2.79	2.95	2.68	2.69
$\bar{R}^2$	.006	.013	.014	.029	.069	.074	.019	.132	.060	.028	.027	.093
<i>1968</i>												
R68	.005	(b)	(b)	.004	.022	(b)	(b)	.018	.018	(b)	(b)	.016
T	(b)	.033	(b)	.028	(b)	.119	(b)	.084	(b)	.051	(b)	.045
S	(b)	(b)	.102	.095	(b)	(b)	.141	.108	(b)	(b)	.091	.039
a	2.57	2.68	2.51	2.43	2.69	3.44	3.25	2.52	2.66	2.79	2.64	2.64
$\bar{R}^2$	.009	.007	.014	.026	.097	.048	.016	.128	.054	.028	.008	.071

(a) See Table 3 for variable names  
 (b) Variable not entered into equation

The correlations among independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 3. While much can be said about Table 3, we limit our observations to the relationships among the three independent variables: religious service attendance (measured in 1962 and 1968), sex-role orientation, and number of siblings. Since all three variables can be construed as very crude measures of traditionalism, one might expect the three measures to be related. While among all groups correlations are all in the expected direction, their magnitudes are hardly substantial. Correlations between siblings and sex-role orientation barely exceed .03 in all three groups while correlations between religiosity and siblings are all under .1. We would suggest that part of the reason for the association between religiosity and siblings is that religiosity is "inherited" via the socialization process (Greeley and Rossi, 1966; Lazerwitz, 1973; Cohen, 1974; Dashefsky and Shapiro, 1974). We have hypothesized that religiosity and fertility are related. If such a relationship is operative in the parents' generation, then we will have accounted for, at least in theory, part of the association between religiosity and size of family or orientation in the current generation.

The associations between religiosity and sex-role of orientation are somewhat more substantial, especially among Catholics and Jews. These findings imply that, particularly for Catholics and Jews, religious traditionalism reinforces (and possibly is reinforced by--the causal direction is unclear) familial traditionalism, or that, as was earlier suggested, both forms of traditionalism derive from some underlying, unifying characteristic or world view. Whatever the case may be, correlations between religiosity and traditional sex-role orientation are just barely high enough to suggest some causal link between the two variables, but low enough to suggest that we are measuring two different characteristics.

Table 4 presents the results of bivariate and multivariate regression equations for fertility desires in 1964 and in 1968. Since we are principally concerned with comparisons across populations, we have presented unstandardized regression coefficients as is appropriate for such comparisons.

- (10) The number of years married as of 1968 was estimated using the following procedure. In each of the five questionnaires, respondents were asked to report their marital status. Respondents who were married in 1961 were assigned the value 8 since these respondents were married 7 or more years in 1968. Respondents who first indicated they were married in 1962, 1963 and 1964 were assigned the values 6, 5, and 4 respectively. Respondents who first reported having been married in 1968 range in length of marriage from 0 - 4 years. As a result, we assigned the value 2 to this group fully appreciative of the extent of measurement error this entails for the most recently married group.

Religious service attendance is critical only for the Catholics and Jews but not for the Protestants. Both in 1964 and in 1968, and both for Catholics and for Jews, and both without and with controls, for each unit of weekly service attendance (equivalent to appearing one week more at religious services per year) there is an increase of approximately 0.02 of a child in the number of children desired. Put differently, the difference in fertility desires between a weekly attender of services (provided that person is Catholic or Jewish) and the person who rarely attends religious services is about one child ( $52 \times 0.02 = 1.04$ ). This relationship holds up under controls for sex-role orientation and size of family of orientation. The bivariate equations where religiosity is the independent variable make a similar point. The Catholic, Jewish and Protestant intercepts are roughly equal (2.9, 2.8, and 2.8 in 1964, respectively) implying that when comparing nonattenders we would predict similar fertility desires among the three religious groups. However, while the Jewish and Catholic groups display an increase in family size desires with increasing religiosity, the Protestant slope is essentially "flat."

We are aware of possible objections to our findings and thesis from several directions. First, we have not presented separate analyses by sex for each religious group. Second, there are other possibly significant controls which we have not introduced. Third, we have treated Protestants as an undifferentiated group. The first two problems are dealt with in Table 5 and the third in Table 6.

In Table 5 we have presented the regression coefficients for the six religion-sex groups (unadjusted) and then have presented these same coefficients adjusted for number of siblings and sex-role orientation, and then have added controls for age, parity and duration of marriage. The first two columns are replications of findings presented in Table 4 now disaggregated by sex. The third column adds the new control variables. The basic story to emerge in Table 5 is that there is no story. While there are slight differences shown by sex, the effect of religiosity remains essentially the same as it did in Table 4. For Protestants, the effect of religiosity is negligible while for Catholics and Jews it remains substantial. The lack of statistical significance (at the .05 level) for Jewish females is likely to be a function of the small sample size.

In Table 6 we have presented the effect of religiosity on family size desires for seven denominational groups of Protestants. The groups are presented in rank order from those which show the greatest positive effect to those which show the greatest negative effect. Sample size is a problem for the Congregationalists alone. Previous research has found little variation in family size desire by denomination among Protestants (Westoff, Potter, Sagi, and Mishler, 1961, p.182). However, DeJong (1965) reports that religious fundamentalism among Southern Appalachian Protestants is significantly positively related to favoring birth control. These relationships hold up when appropriate controls (= Socio Economic Status and age) are introduced. Our data show some differences among Protestant denominations but the coefficients are all very small as are the *differences* among coefficients.

Table 5. Unadjusted and Net Effects<sup>(a)</sup> of Religiosity on Fertility Desires (1968), Disaggregating by Religion and Sex

Religion	Sex	Unadjusted	Net <sup>(b)</sup>	Net <sup>(c)</sup>	N
Protestant	Males	.004*	.003*	.001	1484
	Females	.006**	.005**	.003	1019
Catholic	Males	.022**	.019**	.015**	627
	Females	.021**	.018**	.013*	227
Jewish	Males	.017**	.015**	.013*	239
	Females	.021*	.020*	.015	143

(a) Unstandardized regression coefficients.

(b) Net of number of siblings and sex-role orientation.

(c) Net of number of siblings, and sex-role orientation, age, parity and duration of marriage.

\*\* Significant at .01 level.

\* Significant at .05 level.

Table 6. Unadjusted and Net Effects<sup>(a)</sup> of Religiosity on Fertility Desires (1968) Among Protestants Disaggregated by Denomination

Denomination	Unadjusted	Net <sup>(b)</sup>	N
Lutheran	.006	.005	262
Episcopalian	.006*	.006*	257
Presbyterian	.005*	.004	381
Other Protestant	.004	.003	223
Baptist	-.001	-.001	207
Congregationalist	-.002	-.002	98
Methodist	-.003	-.003	515

(a) Unstandardized regression coefficients.

(b) Net of number of siblings and sex-role orientation.

\* Significant at .05 level

The more liturgically oriented denominations show slight positive relationships while the non-liturgical denominations show slight negative relationships. The Lutherans particularly and, to some extent, the Episcopalians conduct their own religiously oriented primary and secondary schools and perhaps they, too, constitute sub-cultures somewhat analogous to those of traditional Catholics and Jews. For Lutherans, further analysis would require additional information on the particular branch of Lutheranism to which the individual is committed (e.g., the conservative Missouri Synod, the New Lutheran Church, The American Lutheran Church). For Episcopalians, it would be of interest to know whether the respondent identifies with the Anglo-Catholic (high church) tradition which is richly liturgical and close to Rome in many of its sentiments and beliefs, or to the low-church tradition which is not far removed from Methodism. Lacking such additional information, we conclude that denominational variation within the broadly construed group known as Protestantism is minimal and without substantive significance. A possible contrary finding requires additional data which we do not have.

The data presented in Table 1 show that Protestants and Jews are similar to one another in group mean family size desire. The data presented in Table 4 suggest that Protestants and Jews arrive at their common mean through different routes. The determinants of family size desires among Jews resemble those of Catholics while their outcomes resemble those of Protestants. The critical difference between Jews and Catholics seems to lie in their vastly different degrees of religiosity.

In Table 7 we present some findings and calculations implied by the inter-group differences in results and process. We begin with the equality

$$\bar{y} = a + b_1 \bar{x}_1 + b_2 \bar{x}_2 + b_3 \bar{x}_3$$

where  $a$  = intercept

$\bar{y}$  = mean number of children desired

$b_1$  = slope of religious attendance

$\bar{x}_1$  = mean religious attendance

$b_2$  = slope of siblings

$\bar{x}_2$  = mean number of siblings

$b_3$  = slope of sex-role orientation

$\bar{x}_3$  = mean of sex-role orientation

Table 7. Actual and Hypothetical (Using Catholic Means) Fertility Desires, 1964 and 1968

Year and variable	Protestants		Catholics	Jews	
	Actual	Hypothetical	Actual	Actual	Hypothetical
<i>1964</i>					
Intercept	2.65	2.65	2.75	2.69	2.69
Religious Service Attendance in 1962	.07	.13	.01	.10	.90
Traditional Sex-Role Orientation	.00	.03	.10	-.03	.05
Siblings	.17	.20	.25	.14	.23
Total	2.89	3.01	3.91	2.90	3.87
<i>1968</i>					
Intercept	2.43	2.43	2.52	2.64	2.64
Religious Service Attendance	.10	.16	.71	.08	.63
Traditional Sex-Role Orientation	.00	.02	.07	-.03	.04
Siblings	.10	.20	.22	.02	.08
Total (a)	2.69	2.81	3.52	2.76	3.39

(a) Subject to minor rounding errors

The mean fertility score for each religious group is equal to the sum of the respective slopes (=  $b$ ) and means of independent variables (=  $\bar{x}$ ), plus the intercept (=  $a$ ). In Table 7 we present the contribution of each element in the regression equation to the mean fertility value for each religious group.

The top row of each part of the Table reports the intercept. The next three rows report the increments attributable to each predictor of fertility desires. Again, an increment is simply the product of the unstandardized regression coefficient and the appropriate mean. By adding the three elements to the intercepts, we can compute the actual and hypothetical (using Catholic means) fertility desires means.

The intercepts (=  $a$ ) for the three religious groups are remarkably similar *within* time periods. Thus if each of the groups were equally

secular, equally committed to egalitarian sex-role norms and came from families of equal size their mean family size desires would be the same. At first this might sound a bit simplistic but in fact it is not. Protestants, Catholics and Jews might remain vastly different on other issues (some of them relevant to the theories examined and discarded above) yet similar on the issues captured by the variables in Table 7 and yet their family size desires would not differ.

The second finding of note is that for Protestants and Jews their group mean scores are very close to the intercepts for the two groups. The three variables in the equation do not add appreciably to their group means. However, though the end point for Protestants and Jews is similar their routes to that end point are vastly different. Taking the two elements in the religious attendance effect we find, as noted above, that the small increment of Protestants is a function of the low value of the slope ( $= b_2$ ) while for Jews it is a function of the low value of mean attendance of religious services ( $= \bar{x}_2$ ). Again for Protestants, attendance at religious services has little impact on family size desires thus actual mean family size desires is not much greater than the intercept. For Jews by contrast, religious service attendance has a considerable impact but few Jews attend services frequently thus the actual Jewish mean family size desire is not much greater than *its* intercept.

What would fertility desires look like if Protestants and Jews were to equal the Catholic rate of attendance at religious services (and by implication the proportion of Catholics who remain within the traditional Catholic subculture) as well as Catholic sex-role orientation and size of family of origin? Duncan (1968) suggests an empirical procedure for the thought experiment. In the equations for Protestants and Jews for 1964 and 1968 we substitute the Catholic means for the three independent variables for the respective Protestant and Jewish means. Thus Protestants and Jews maintain their own process ( $=b$ ) but are given the Catholic means for all variables ( $= \bar{x}$ ). The hypothetical mean fertility desires assuming Catholic mean scores for independent variables are presented in the columns labeled hypothetical in Table 7. The 1964 Catholic-Jewish differential is reduced by 90% and the 1968 differential by 70%. The hypothetical Protestant mean family size desired is the same as the actual mean. Of the three independent variables attendance at religious services alone has an appreciable impact on Catholic-Jewish differences. Size of family of origin and sex role orientation have little or no effect.

### Summary and Conclusions

In the foregoing analysis, we have shown that religious service attendance is an important predictor of Catholic and Jewish fertility desires. We suggested the following explanation for these findings:

- (1) There is in America, as in other societies, a normative consensus regarding the size of families.
- (2) Insofar as Americans participate in that consensus, they adopt the American normative family size.
- (3) For Catholics and Jews, participation in their traditional religious culture removes them somewhat from the American consensus and opens them to the influence of their own high-fertility cultural past.

Finally, we note that our research has been limited in several ways which serve to restrict the generalizability of our findings. First, and most critically, our sample consists of college graduates of the class of 1961, and there is a possibility of course, that other groups in the population would fail to manifest the same pattern of findings. However, we would suggest that, if anything, the ability of religiosity to differentiate individuals should be less in an elite population--such as college graduates--than in the general population.

Second, we were unable to investigate the full range of measures of religiosity. On the basis of preliminary analysis of alternate religiosity measures and their impact on fertility desires and outcomes, we are willing to suggest that no measures of Catholic and Jewish religiosity will evidence influence upon fertility behavior except insofar as such measures tap the extent of involvement with the traditional religious culture or sub-society. Involvement with more modern aspects of the religious groups--such as membership in religiously based fraternal groups--we believe would have much more limited impact upon Catholic or Jewish fertility.

As a summary statement of our findings we offer the following: Jews and Protestants resemble one another when comparing mean fertility levels. Jews and Catholics manifest similar processes giving rise to their fertility behaviors. Namely, Jews and Catholics display a direct relationship between religiosity and fertility behavior while the Protestants fail to manifest such a relationship. Thus, low Jewish fertility (roughly equal to that of the Protestants among college graduates) arises from their high level of secularism and their loss of traditional religious subculture. Similarly, high Catholic fertility arises from their high level of religiosity and maintenance of traditional religious subculture.

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