

BEYOND CULTURE WARS: THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOSITY IN THE
PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL SAFETY NET POLICIES IN CONTEMPORARY
AMERICA

By Emmanuel Alvarado

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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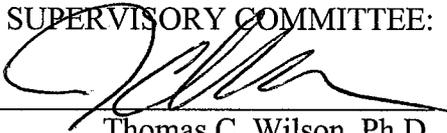
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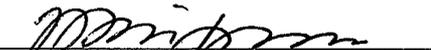
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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Thomas C. Wilson, Department of Sociology, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

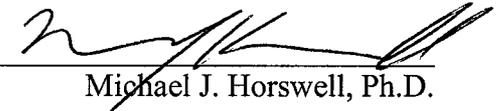
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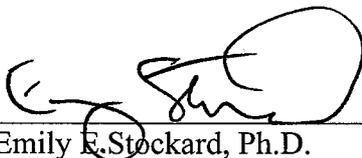
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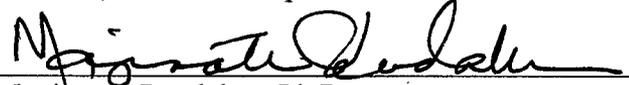

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the impact of Christian religiosity on attitudes toward social safety-net policies over the past three decades in the US. The study used data from the General Social Survey on social safety-net policy preferences and levels of Christian religiosity. Simple cross tabulations, correlations and multiple regression analysis were used to assess the data. Contrary to previous related research, the results of this study indicate that Christian religiosity has a very weak association with opposition to social safety-net policies. At the national level, the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social protection policies was largely mediated by other factors such as race, gender, education, family income, and political ideology. These results indicate that Christian religiosity per se does not independently influence social spending

preferences. Instead, these results suggest that social divisions in socioeconomic standing and in political ideology, which in turn are closely related to differences in support for social protection policies, permeate American Christianity. The study also examined the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection policy preferences among Hispanic and Black Americans separately. Although Hispanics and Blacks are generally more supportive of social spending in comparison to White Americans, Christian religiosity was not found to have a strong independent effect on support for social safety-net policies among these two groups. The study did find, however, a markedly different level of support for social safety-net policies among identifiable Christian groups at the national level and in the Hispanic-American population. Those who self-identified as “evangelical” or “fundamentalist” Christians were much less supportive of social safety-net policies in comparison to “mainline” or “liberal” Christians. Among Hispanics, Catholics were more supportive of social safety-net policies in comparison to Evangelical Protestants. Moreover, the results of this study indicate that religious American Christians have had a tendency to give precedence to moral issues over concerns about social safety-net policies thus facilitating an issue-bundling effect in recent electoral competition. Lastly, the present work proposes a broad framework through which to interpret the aforementioned findings grounded on the existence and interaction of two counterpoised cultural narratives on social protection found within American Christianity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

The present dissertation examines the relationship between Christian religiosity and support for social protection policies in contemporary American society. In doing so, the current research study addresses important knowledge gaps in the ongoing debate over the role which Christian religious involvement may have on the support for social safety net policies and on the overall political dynamics surrounding the issue of social protection in the U.S.

It is well acknowledged that there are large differences among economically developed countries in the level of social inequality and in the provision of social welfare. It has also been widely noted that the United States has one of the lowest levels of social spending as a proportion of its Gross Domestic Product among industrialized countries (IMF 2005). In light of these differences, many social science researchers have attempted to explain the political dynamics, values and coalition-formation which lead to greater or lesser support for social spending either within a particular nation or as part of

a cross-national, comparative approach (Baldwin 1990; Esping-Anderson 1990; Gilens 1995; Huber, Ragin and Stephens 1993). For those involved in such research, one of the most puzzling questions in the study of public attitudes toward social policies in the United States is what makes some Americans more supportive of social safety-net policies than others. That is, what social characteristics help explain people's support for, or opposition to, a more considerable role of the government in the provision of social protection in America? Recently, increasing attention has been given to the role which religiosity or religious involvement may play in shaping attitudes towards social protection policies.

In the past few decades, some media outlets, religious advocates and social scientists in America have argued that the sharpest distinctions in worldview and life schema can be found along a religious dividing line between those who practice religious orthodoxy and those who are secularists (Hunter 1991; Green 1996; Wilcox and Larson 2006). In relation to this, prominent sociologists James Davison Hunter coined the term "culture war" in his book with the same title published in 1991. Hunter (1991) argued that the major cultural conflicts in America are rooted in diverging views on the source of moral authority between the religiously orthodox and secular Americans. In light of this perceived social cleavage, recent scholarship has suggested that individual religiosity is negatively related to support for social protection policies (Scheve and Stasavage 2006; Chen and Lind 2007; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; McCleary 2007; Lee 2006). The conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of such perspectives are described as follows.

Conceptual underpinnings for the study

Under the scope of Modernization Theory, one line of research has highlighted that as nations modernize and become wealthier, they tend to have more generous welfare states, and they also tend to become more secular societies where the centrality of religious institutions and doctrine fades away (Lechner 1991; Barro and Mitchell 2004). More specifically, Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) have argued that secularization in contemporary society may be influenced by the size of the welfare state, that is, the proportional amount of resources which a given country allocates to social spending. These authors tested their argument by using a sample of 16 to 33 predominantly Christian nations from Europe, Latin America, North America and Asia as well as indicators on religious attendance in the selected countries. Gill and Lundsgaarde found a statistically significant negative relationship between the per capita welfare expenditure of the country and its reported religious service attendance even after taking into account other variables closely linked to modernization, such as levels of urbanization, literacy and television penetration. These authors concluded that:

People living in countries with high social welfare spending per capita even have less of a tendency to take comfort in religion, perhaps knowing that the state is there to help them in times of crisis [...] there is likely a substitution effect for some individuals between state-provided services and religious services. Religion will still be there to serve the spiritual needs of people seeking answers to the philosophic mysteries of life, but those who value those spiritual goods less than the tangible welfare benefits churches provide will be less likely to participate in religious services once secular substitutes become available (2004: 425).

Another line of research has focused on the psychic benefits of religion while undergoing social adversity. The most influential arguments in this line of research are

found in the works of Scheve and Stasavage (2006; 2008). In two different contributions, one in 2006 and the other in 2008, Scheve and Stasavage have concluded that support for some social protection policies such as social security and health care were negatively and significantly related to religious involvement measured primarily by religious attendance. In trying to explain why such a negative relationship existed, these authors drew from research on the psychic effects of religious involvement (Park, Cohen and Herb 1990; Paragament 1997). Such research has suggested that religiosity has profound psychic effects in coping with and overcoming stressful life events. Scheve and Stasavage (2008) argued that some religious individuals may actually see such adverse life events primarily as opportunities for spiritual growth and not necessarily as a challenge to their self-esteem, their overall beliefs or life goals. Thus, as a result of the promise of a better afterlife attained through the fulfillment of the doctrinal teachings, religious individuals may see adverse life events as bumps on the road leading to an improvement of circumstances in the afterlife—heaven in the case of Christianity. As a result, Scheve and Stasavage suggested that religious individuals in America may not be supportive of social protection policies because they feel that they are privately insured through their faith—through its inherent promise of a better life after death—against the distress of conditions which would require social assistance from the government like poor health, poverty, unemployment, etc. Admittedly, although classical theorists like Marx and Freud were mostly critical of the way in which religion functioned as an illusory form of happiness which undermined rationality and functioned to overlook people's social and material conditions, they too shared the aforementioned view that religion could serve as a psychological buffer against the negative effects of unfavorable,

external social forces. Essentially, Scheve and Stasavage (2006; 2008) have argued that if one accepts that religion and social programs have related effects in aiding people faced with adverse social circumstances, and that they both have costs (taxes for welfare programs and time invested for the religiously involved), then to the extent that individuals privately insure themselves via religion, they should logically prefer a lower level of insurance and assistance by the state.

A third line of research has focused on the way in which religion may be involved in an *issue-bundling effect* in political competition (Roemer 1998). This may be of particular importance in the U.S. where one may observe a political coalition which incorporates socially conservative Christian groups as well as free-market and small government advocacy groups under the auspices of the Republican Party. Thus, this opens up the possibility that a negative relation between religiosity and support for the public provision of social protection may exist due to issue-bundling in electoral competition. That is, it may be the case that religious individuals who are favorable to social protection support political candidates who are less favorable or unfavorable to it but who, nonetheless, share similar views with regard to a different concern considered to be a core issue of greater importance. The core issue could involve questions which are of interest to religious individuals, like whether abortion should be legal, whether homosexual marriage should be legalized, the teaching of the theory of evolution in public schools or an issue involving the relation between the church and the state. Roemer (1998) as well as Lee and Roemer (2008) have developed an abstract model which suggests that election and policy outcomes involving income redistribution may be affected by an individual's religion or moral concerns as a core issue dimension in

political competition. Arguments about issue bundling suggest that religiosity may be correlated with support for socially conservative candidates who are also unfavorable to social protection policies as part of their political platform, and hence religiosity may appear to be correlated with low support for social spending. This line of argumentation would suggest that perhaps religious individuals are not inherently less favorable or unfavorable to social safety net policies, but they simply appear to be so in America because of an *issue-bundling effect* which is inherent to the dynamics of a political system based on two major political parties.

Statement of the problem and proposed research

While the research presented in the previous subsection has highlighted the role which religiosity may play in influencing social behavior and policy preferences, little or no research has been done on the degree to which individual religious involvement in Christianity, specifically, influences individual preferences for various social protection policies in contemporary American society. As a result, the present research seeks to fine tune previous scholarship (Scheve and Stasavage 2006; Roemer 1998; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Lee and Roemer 2008) and to contribute to existing knowledge in the field in the ways described below.

First, as observed in the previous subsection, many scholars have treated religiosity as a variable which should influence or relate to society uniformly in spite of the vast historical and doctrinal differences among the multiple world religions.¹ The researcher strongly believes that examining the possible influence of religiosity per se in

¹ For example, see the treatment of “religiosity” as a variable in the work of Scheve and Stasavage (2006), Chen and Lind (2007), Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004), and Park (2005).

social or political preferences and outcomes involves making the flawed assumption that involvement in any religion should influence an individual's social policy preferences in the same way. Thus, in an effort to fine tune the research on the relationship between religious involvement and preferences for state-provided social protection, the present analysis will center on the religiosity levels of American Christians only. Although Christianity is not the only religion of notoriety in American society, it is arguably the largest and the one which has historically most influenced the nation's core cultural values and political outcomes (Gill 2001; Hunter 1983; Hedges 2007; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). In a related methodological matter, Scheve and Stasavage (2006) as well as Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) used a very limited definition of religiosity. For these authors, religiosity is measured only through attendance to religious services. In an effort to measure religiosity in a more encompassing way and expand such a limited definition of the term, the present study measures religiosity through religious attendance, the strength of affiliation to doctrinal beliefs, and the self-reported or self-perceived level of religiosity.

Second, while much research and theorizing has been done on the effect which given levels of religiosity have on the formation of political coalitions and policy outcomes for entire countries and specific regions within countries (Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004), little research has been done on the degree to which religiosity influences individual support for social safety net policies. The scholarship of Scheve and Stasavage (2008) constitutes one of the few attempts to analyze individual level data on the relationship between religiosity and social policy preferences. However, at the individual level, their contribution only analyzes the influence of religiosity specifically and

exclusively on individual support for health care and social security. Their analysis thus excludes attitudes toward other important social protection policies. As a result, the present research expands on their contribution by analyzing the possible influence of Christian religiosity on individual support for various social protection policies such as welfare, unemployment benefits and income redistribution in addition to health care and social security.² It is the understanding of the researcher that at the time in which the present dissertation was done there were no other publicly available contributions which explored the influence of Christian religious involvement on individual support for all of the aforementioned social protection policies in contemporary America.

Third, another important short-coming of the analysis carried out by Scheve and Stasavage (2008) is that it examines individual-level data collected only as far as 2002. In other words, their analysis did not capture the sharpening in socio-economic inequality in recent years evidenced by rising income inequality, a decline in the quality and affordability of health care and a large increase in the number of housing foreclosures (Gudrais 2008), all of which have intensified since 2002. It is quite plausible that these events have increased the need for social spending in American society at large and that, as a result, our knowledge and assumptions about the role of religiosity in social insurance preferences may be considerably different from what previous research would suggest. In an effort to incorporate the effects of recent trends and to close knowledge gaps, the proposed research will cover data from 1972 up until available data for 2008.

² Details on the source of the data and the way in which these variables were measured are included in Chapter 4.

Fourth, while the scholarship presented in the previous sub-section has been useful in designing research to better conceptualize the relationship between religiosity and support for social policy in America, little has been done to assess whether this relationship holds to be the same among America's various ethnic groups. The works of Scheve and Stasavage (2008) and Chen and Lind (2007) conceptualize religion and social safety net policies as two alternative mechanisms to deal with harsh circumstances. However, given that Scheve and Stasavage tested their hypothesis by considering the U.S. population at large, they failed to consider the possible nuances found within strongly religious, yet relatively more impoverished, ethnic groups in the US, such as Hispanics and African-Americans. There are important reasons to believe that the relationship between Christian religiosity and social safety net support does not work the same way for African-Americans and Hispanics as it does for whites in the U.S. In particular, Christian institutions have had a key role in struggles for social justice and reform among the African American and Hispanic communities. As a result, support for social safety net policies among the religious Black and Hispanic Americans is likely to be strong in contemporary America. Therefore, contrary to the results found in national samples, we do not expect religiosity to have a negative impact on support for social protection among Black and Hispanic Americans. Consequently, it is argued that while Scheve and Stasavage (2008) have suggested that religion and social protection constitute two *alternative* and *competing* mechanisms to cope with adverse life events, the historical role of the ethnic church in overcoming social inequality and as a political agent for social reform within the Hispanic and African-American community has allowed

Christian religious involvement and social protection among these groups to function as two *complementary* and *intertwined* means to deal with harsh social circumstances.

Fifth, although the contributions of Roemer (1998), Lee and Roemer (2008), as well as Chen and Lind (2007) suggest that issue bundling in American political competition within a two party system gives way to a coalition of both fiscally and socially conservative voters, their work does not address two fundamental matters which the present research will attempt to shed light on. On the one hand, these contributions do not give any empirical evidence that bundling of moral value issues with opposition to social protection policies has indeed occurred in recent electoral competitions in the US, they simply suggest that such bundling may exist. On the other hand, these contributions have not explained how or whether Christian religious involvement facilitates the occurrence of bundling between moral value issues and opposition to public social spending in American electoral competitions.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the present study is to analyze the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social protection policies in contemporary America. In pursuing such an objective, the study analyzes this relationship at the national level, but also among Hispanic and Black Americans independently. Furthermore, the current study also analyzes the role which Christian religiosity plays in the bundling of moral issues with opposition to social protection policies in recent American political competition.

Research questions

The following research questions take into account the aforementioned purpose of the study and serve as a guide to follow in the completion of the research.

1. Are more religious Christian individuals less likely to support all or most social protection policies such as welfare, health care, social security, unemployment benefits, and income redistribution mechanisms?
2. Is the level of support for social protection policies consistent across identifiable Christian groups in the United States (for example, Evangelical Christians, Mainline Christians, Liberal Christians, etc.)? What factors help explain the consistency of support, or lack thereof, for social protection policies across these identifiable Christian groups?
3. Does the relationship between Christian religiosity and support for social protection work markedly differently for members of racial/ethnic minorities, like African Americans or Hispanic-Americans? In essence, are members of these minority groups just as likely to support social protection regardless of whether they are religious Christians or not?
3. What role do economic standing, partisanship and political ideology play in the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social protection policies? In other words, is the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social safety net policies somewhat independent of economic standing, partisanship and political ideology as Scheve and Stasavage's (2008) suggest, or do these factors mediate and explain the bulk of this relationship?

4. Is there evidence that moral issues are bundled with opposition to social protection policies in recent, high-profile electoral competitions in the United States? If so, what role does Christian religiosity play in facilitating such an issue bundling effect?

Hypotheses

Chapter 4 presents a more detailed description of all hypotheses used in the current study. The hypotheses mentioned here represent the broad expectations of the researcher based, in part, on the findings of previous research (Scheve and Stasavage 2006; Chen and Lind 2007; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; McCleary 2007; Lee 2006; Sandoval 2006).

1. American individuals who are more religiously involved in the Christian faith are likely to be less supportive of social protection policies than those who are not religiously involved.
2. Black and Hispanic American individuals who are more religiously involved in the Christian faith are likely to be as supportive of social protection policies as those who are not religiously involved.
3. American individuals who self-identify as “mainline” and “liberal” Christians are likely to be more supportive of social protection policies in comparison to Christians who self-identify as “evangelical” or “fundamentalist.”
4. American individuals who are more religiously involved in the Christian faith are more likely to bundle moral issues with opposition to social protection in recent electoral competitions.

Definitions of key terms

For the purposes of the present dissertation research, the following key terms are defined as indicated here. Given that these terms are used throughout the text, it is vital that each of these terms be understood as follows in order to facilitate the interpretation of the purpose, findings and conclusions presented in this work.

Secularization - the process by which religious institutions, symbols, beliefs, consciousness, and actions lose their social significance and centrality (Berger 1973; Wilson 1982).

Issue bundling effect - This effect occurs in political competition when individuals support a given politician or political party because their platform represents their view on a core issue, one which is judged to be of paramount importance, in spite of the fact that such a politician or political party does not reflect their views on other issues. The other, secondary issues are said to be *bundled* with the core or primary issue (Lee and Roemer 2008).

Religion - “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 1915: 47).

Social protection and social safety net - these terms refer to the network of policies, as well as to the institutions, laws and programs which embody such policies, by which a government can provide help to its citizens, be it conditioned-based (such as unemployment or retirement benefits), income-based (such as Medicaid or Welfare),

short-term or long-term (Jurado 2001). For the purposes of this text, the terms social safety net and social protection shall be used interchangeably to refer to this complex network of social help which includes social insurance and social welfare and it is this all-inclusive concept which constitutes the central object of study in the present dissertation research. A more detailed discussion on the difference between social protection and related terms like social insurance, social assistance, and welfare is provided under the “Definitions” section in Chapter 3.

Christian religiosity or Christian religious involvement - these terms refer to the level of attachment which an individual holds to the Christian faith, regardless of the specific denomination. In the present study Christian religiosity or Christian religious involvement is measured in three different ways. 1.) It is measured through the number of times an individual attends church services out of the whole year. 2.) It is also measured through the self-reported strength of affiliation to the Christian denomination currently practiced by the individual. 3.) It is also measured by the individual, self-perceived level of religiosity. The specific way in which each of these items was measured is described under the “independent variables” section in Chapter 4.

Cultural narratives - a cultural narrative constitutes a broad schema which explains, interprets and orders knowledge and experience about social and cultural phenomena (Lakoff 2008). Lakoff further argues that “[cultural narratives] create a conceptual framework, a language, imagery and an appropriate emotional tone” by which we approach political issues, understand political differences and, ultimately, form political positions (2008: 42). Various cultural narratives exist and coexist within key social

institutions and organizations such as the family, education, peer groups, as well as religion.

Christian Right or ***Religious Right*** - Wilcox and Larson (2006) have identified the Christian right as a political agglomeration of Christian leaders, congregants and organizations characterized by strong support for conservative political and social values. Although this agglomeration includes both denominational and non-denominational Christians, it is primarily led by “born again” evangelical Christians. Wilcox and Larson have also argued that although this bloc has existed since the 1960s, their impact on American politics has become more salient since the mid-1990s.

Organization and description of chapters

Chapter 2 provides the reader with a better understanding of the sociological theories on religion which have informed more recent scholarship on the relationship between religious involvement and social protection policies. This chapter offers a panoramic view of the various theoretical frameworks on the social aspect of religion which have paved the way for a deeper understanding of the way in which religion, and religious involvement, may influence the support or opposition to social protection policies. Specifically, this chapter surveys the social aspect of religion as discussed in the works of Marx, Freud, Durkheim, Weber and secularization theorists.

Chapter 3 draws from some of the main sociological perspectives outlined in Chapter 2 to present contemporary research on the nexus between religiosity and public attitudes toward social protection. This chapter defines the meaning of social safety net/social protection policies and surveys various bodies of literature which attempt to

explain individual support (or lack thereof) for social protection policies in America. Moreover, this chapter includes a literature review on the relationship between religion and attitudes toward social safety net policies. The chapter also discusses the socio-historical role of religious involvement in struggles for social justice among the Hispanic and African-American communities in America. Overall, Chapter 3 provides the reader with a review of relevant literature on the way in which religiosity may influence attitudes toward social protection policies and serves as the conceptual background for the present study.

Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology used in the present study to assess the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection preferences. In particular, this chapter restates the research questions of the study, describes and justifies the appropriateness of the data and the sample source(s), the statistical methods used, the definition and measurement of variables and the research procedures used in carrying out the present analysis. Lastly, this chapter also discusses the limitations found in the data collection and research procedures used in the current study and the way in which such limitations impact the generalizability of the results and conclusions found in the present dissertation.

Chapter 5 presents the major research findings of the study. The research results were those found by following the methodology described in Chapter 4 in an effort to respond to the research questions described in this chapter. Chapter 5 also includes a set of descriptive indicators with regard to the level of support for specific social spending areas within the social protection system and to changes in the level of religiosity in

contemporary American society. This chapter also presents the findings on the relationship between measures of religiosity and of support for social protection obtained through an analysis of a representative sample of the American population collected between the mid 1970s and 2008. Lastly, the chapter also presents an analysis of the relationship between measures of religiosity and measures of support for social protection done individually and separately for the Black and Hispanic American samples.

Chapter 6 contextualizes the findings on the relationship between Christian religious involvement and support for social protection policies in contemporary America and presents the main conclusions attained from the present study. The chapter begins by contextualizing recent trends on religious involvement and on support for social protection policies. This chapter proposes a broad framework through which to interpret the findings of the present work grounded on the existence of two counterpoised cultural narratives on social protection found within American Christianity. These two narratives are identified as the social gospel narrative and the conservative doctrine narrative. This chapter contextualizes the results of the present study by considering the influence of these two narratives in shaping social protection policy preferences in the national sample as well as in the Black and Hispanic American samples. The chapter also examines the role which Christian religious involvement may play in the bundling of moral issues with opposition to social protection policies in American political competition. Lastly, this chapter also includes suggestions for future research to expand on the findings and conclusions outlined in the present work.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION

Introduction

In his influential piece on religion entitled *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: The Totemic System in Australia*, Emile Durkheim defined religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 1915: 47). While Durkheim’s definition may not be exhaustive, definite or historically comprehensive, it does highlight three central elements to the sociological study of religion: the beliefs, the practices, and, most importantly, the communal/social character of religion. As explored in this chapter, there are many ways in which religious beliefs and practices are notably intertwined with society. The fundamental concern of the sociology of religion is to further comprehend the role of religion in society, to analyze its significance and impact upon human history, and to better grasp the social forces and influences that shape it (Hamilton 2001). In an effort to explore the way in which religion may be linked to social attitudes and behavior and, in particular, to the support of social safety-net policies, it is necessary to review the way in which the relationship between religion and society has been approached in sociological

theory. In such an effort, this chapter provides the reader with a better understanding of the theories which have informed more recent scholarship on the relationship between religious involvement and social protection policies. What follows is a survey of the main theoretical perspectives and critiques on the social role of religion which have influenced the scope and orientation of contemporary research on the study of religion and its impact on social attitudes and behavior.

Religion and class conflict

Karl Marx treated religion as part of his general theory of alienation in class divided societies. Marx saw religion as a product of alienation and class interests. Under this scope, religion is seen as a tool for the manipulation and oppression of the subordinate classes in society, as an expression of protest against oppression, and as a form of resignation and consolation in the face of oppression (Hamilton 2001: 91). Marx's conceptualization of religion as an alienating force, one which falsely presents itself as external form, one independent from and imposing on human beings, drew from the work of nineteenth century philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach. According to Feuerbach, the characteristics of gods amount to no more than the characteristics of man projected beyond man into a illusory or fantastic sphere and, through an exaggerated form, are thought to lead an independent existence and actually control men through their will and commandments. "Man—this is the mystery of religion—projects his being and then again makes himself an object to the objectivized image of himself thus converted into a subject..." (Feuerbach cited in Pines 1993: 97).

Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, one of the central concerns of Marx was the paradox found in the human conquest of natural forces, or at least the human ability to largely moderate nature's impact on human life. Marx argued that man's control of nature should have been able to put an end to hunger and oppression, yet instead, these plights seemed to have intensified thereafter. Historically, the sources of wealth, which differed from era to era, had been monopolized and used by elites at the expense of the lower and working classes. However, according to Marx, the rise of industrialization and capitalist accumulation of wealth allowed the process of exploitation to become even more severe than in previous economic eras (Adams and Sydie 2001). Thus, once subordinate to the forces of nature, human beings came to find themselves subordinate to the economic and political elites and unemployment and poverty replaced natural hardship as the affliction of human existence (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007).

In this context, Marx suggested that religion would be most appealing to those who form part of the oppressed classes since they would need and seek an explanation for their material (socioeconomic) conditions. Under this scope, the growth of Christianity was encouraged by dominant groups in society because it would teach and induce slaves, serfs and the proletariat to accept their condition and position in society as God's will and to look to the afterlife for a sense of comfort and an aspiration for greater justice which would be granted then for their faithful obedience and sufferings in terrestrial life (Cipriani 2000).

However, Marx's treatment of religion went beyond characterizing it as a manipulative ideological tool used by kings, priests and political leaders. Marx also saw

religion as a real expression of people's oppression and a displacement of a desire for a better life onto a world beyond. It is precisely because religion amounted to a manifestation of people's suffering and longing for improved material conditions that it served as a form of social addiction: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx cited in Callinicos 1999: 83).

Although religion represents the sigh of the oppressed and the desire for better material conditions, it would not, by itself, amount to significant social change. According to Marx, by projecting any real hope of improving people's material conditions onto an afterlife or imaginary world, religion could not amount to become a challenge to the *status quo*, and in fact, would tend to inhibit any real solution by making suffering and oppression more bearable and thus perpetuating them (Cipriani 2000: 24). In this fashion, religion would tend to encourage resignation rather than the pursuit of real solutions to change social relations of production or the distress found in a class divided society. Consequently, Marx's work underscores the necessity to shift attention away from an illusory state of affairs while foregrounding the need to change social relations based on exploitation: "the demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions" (Marx cited in Callinicos 1999:83).

Marx, like Freud, Tylor and others, believed that religion had no long term prospects. In particular, as history transpired, Marx suggested that society based on

exploitation under capitalism could not endure because the oppressed majority would eventually recognize the inequity of prevailing economic arrangements and their source in doctrines which did not benefit society as a whole but only economic elites. These events would lead to the establishment of a new social order built upon a more just and humane social order in which alienation would be overcome and one in which humankind would reinstate its role as the creator of its own destiny (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). In the context of this social transformation, the need for religion and other doctrines from the previous economic system, which perpetuated man's alienation, class divisions and exploitation, would be done away with.

While Marx's account of religion is certainly not without its critics, it is important to note that religion was never the central aspect of Marx's writings and that Marx dealt with religion as it related to his own theory of alienation, class interests and ideology. That is, Marx never attempted to produce a systematic and comprehensive analysis of religion (Hamilton 2001). Having said that, one of the most important criticisms of Marx's account of religion centers on his attachment of religion solely to alienation and class interests. The issue remains as to whether religion can be considered to be essentially an ideological and manipulative construct or whether it can simply be used that way in specific socio-historical circumstances. Hamilton (2001) argued that Marx's account of religion as an opiate-like compensatory fantasy in response to class division and exploitation tended to oversimplify a complex phenomenon. Hamilton added that Marx's narrow approach to religion ignores the possibility that religion may be an attempt to struggle with universal questions, inherent in the human condition, concerning the meaning of suffering, life and death. Notwithstanding such criticism, Marx's view of

religion simultaneously as an expression of protest against social hardship and as a doctrine which provides comfort to oppression by relegating hopes of social justice to a world beyond has been influential, as we shall see in succeeding chapters, in shaping research on the relationship between religiosity and political attitudes.

Religion as an illusion

Similarly to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud also conceptualized religion as an illusory form of happiness which would eventually be discarded as humankind employed more rational means of explaining its existence and relationship to its natural and social environment. However, unlike Marx, Freud did not see religion as a product of alienation and class conflict. While Freud did acknowledge some of the socially functional uses of religion, such as its role in maintaining social and moral order, he argued that the root source of religion lies not in class conflict but in individual needs, in the psychology and motives of individuals (Hamilton 2001).

Religion, Freud suggested, represented a form by which humankind responded to the threats and limits of nature, be it the threats to human life brought about by natural forces or mankind's limited knowledge of the origins and functioning of nature and the universe. In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud argued that the human situation in relation to nature was one characterized by a sense of powerlessness, defenselessness and helplessness. "[...] man's seriously menaced self-esteem craves for consolation, life and the universe must be rid of their terrors, and incidentally man's curiosity, reinforced, it is true by the strongest practical motives, demands an answer" (Freud 1957: 54). Thus religion comes into existence out of the need to make tolerable the helplessness of man

by humanizing nature, by treating it as if it had human characteristics. If nature is seen as having a will, desires, purposes and intentions, then it can be appeased, adjured, bribed or even persuaded (Hamilton 2001: 67). For Freud, this behavior has many parallels with a childish past, with an earlier stage of maturity:

For there is nothing new in this situation. It has an infantile prototype, and is really only the continuation of this. For once before one has been in such a state of helplessness: as a little child in one's relationship to one's parents. For one had reason to fear them, especially the father, though at the same time one was sure of his protection against the dangers then known to one. And so it was natural to assimilate and combine the two situations. Here too, as in dream-life, the wish came into its own (Freud cited in O'Dea 1966: 33).

Thus in religion, man not only humanizes nature but also attaches to the forces of nature father-like traits and makes them gods characterized by the ambivalent relationship a child has with the father, a relationship dominated by fear and, at the same time, a feeling of protection (O'Dea 1966). In time, Freud argued, the religious gods become increasingly independent from nature, having their own fate and destiny; at this point, the gods also assume a compensatory function in which they provide a compensation for the restraints and limits of culture on instinctual desires. Thus religion becomes intertwined with morality (Hamilton 2001).

It now became the task of the gods to even out the defects and evils of civilization, to attend to the sufferings which men inflict on one another in their life together and to watch over the fulfillment of the precepts of civilization [...] Those precepts themselves were credited with a divine origin; they were elevated beyond human society and were extended to nature and the universe (Freud cited in Hamilton 2001: 68).

However, while Freud acknowledges the important role of religion as a safeguard of morality and social order, he also equates it to a childish response, a response which is typical of a certain level of immaturity. While religious ideas provide mankind a sense of

consolation and comfort in response to its limited knowledge of the universe, Freud asserted that such ideas themselves are largely unfounded and have weak claims to being true. That is, as mankind “matures” so too then it should abandon illusory responses to its lack of knowledge by giving way to a more rational comprehension of nature and the universe.

Our knowledge of the historical worth of certain religious doctrines increases our respect for them, but does not invalidate our proposal that they should cease to be put forward as the reasons for the precepts of civilization. On the contrary! Those historical residues have helped us to view religious teachings, as it were, as neurotic relics, and we may now argue that the time has probably come, as it does in an analytic treatment, for replacing the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation of the intellect (Freud cited in Gay 1989: 713-714).

In addition to conceptualizing religion as a response to man’s awe of nature, Freud also linked the early origins of religion to the totemic religion which surfaced in response to man’s original criminal deed.³ In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud’s theory of totemism traces the origins of religion to the very origins of civilization and culture. In particular, Freud related the origins of totem religion and civilization to the mythical account of the murdered primeval father drawing on Charles Darwin’s speculation that precivilized men and women had lived in groups or hordes under the control of one strong male (Adams and Sydie 2001). Freud essentially suggested that in Darwin’s primitive hordes a strong man, the primal father, monopolized all the women in the group and drove away the other men, which in turn, were his own sons. Eventually the sons killed and devoured their father and thus made an end to the patriarchal horde. The

³ The “totem” is the bird or animal with whose characteristics a society identifies closely (Adams and Sydie (2001:333).

brothers and half brothers went on to eat their dead father; according to Freud they did so in belief that by eating him they would be able to absorb his strength and power. This cannibalism represented the first totemic meal (Adams and Sydie 2001: 333) and the “repetition and...commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed [marked] the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion” (Freud 1950: 142). The act of cannibalism was the forerunner of the totemic feast in which the totem animal, normally taboo, is ritually slaughtered and eaten.

The sons’ relationship to their primal father was marked by ambivalence. Although the sons felt hatred toward their dominant father, a hatred which had capitulated in the murder and devouring of the father, they also admired and loved him. While the feelings of hatred and resentment toward the father had prevailed when he was alive, the admiration and love surfaced after the father’s murder, thus leading to a deep sense of guilt. In an effort to atone and overcome their deed, the sons instituted two prohibitions: Firstly, they found a symbolic substitute for the father in an animal species and then placed a taboo in killing or eating the totem animal. Secondly, they also renounced their claim to the women who had now been set free. Thus the two major taboos of totem religion and the Oedipus complex⁴ had been established, namely murder and incest (Hamilton 2001).

⁴ According to Freud the Oedipus complex is something which male children develop in the phallic stage. Male children wish to emulate the hero of the Greek tragedy by killing their father, whom they see as a rival for their mother’s affection. The Oedipus complex is overcome by the castration complex, when the boy comes to fear his father out of the fear that the father could potentially castrate him. The male children then go on to abandon their Oedipal desire in the expectation that one day they too will be the father and possess the mother (Callinicos 1999: 190).

Freud went on to argue that all religions could, in some form or another, be traced back to the totemic religion and thus to the guilt of the original criminal deed and that there are traces of it in legend, myth and religious practice in general. “All later religions prove to be attempts to solve the same problem, varying only in accordance with the stage of culture in which they are attempted [...] they are all, however, reactions aiming at the same great event with which culture began and which ever since has not let mankind come to rest” (Freud cited in Hamilton 2001: 70).

Just like many other accounts of religion in social theory, Freud’s account is not without criticism. For someone who was brought up in a predominantly Christian society, many elements of Freud’s theory of religion are exemplified by Christian doctrine and practice. For instance, Christians view their relationship to God as his “children” while God remains a loving yet strict and powerful “Father.” However, this view of religion as an extension of the complex relationship between a son and a father has minimal parallels in religions where there are female deities or in cultures where males do not hold a strong disciplinary role as they do in Western society. For instance, in the case of Malinowski’s (1974) Trobriand Islanders, the mother holds the authoritarian, disciplinary role while the father’s role in situations which require the exercise of power and authority is relatively unimportant. In such cultures it is hard to make the case that the emotional ambivalence toward the father is as strong as it is in Western culture. Because of this, Freud’s views on religion are said to be heavily grounded on ethnocentric cultural precepts.

Other criticisms of Freud’s account have centered on the emphasis he gives to parental imagery in explaining religion and on his account of totemic religions. For

instance, even if religious beliefs and practices incorporate parental images, this does not mean that the source root of religion is necessarily the complex relationships found between children and parents. That is, such parental imagery could have been incorporated into religion, as it has been included in many other cultural discourses, without it being the source of it (Hamilton 2001). With regard to the origins of religion in totemic religions, Levi-Strauss (1962) has pointed out that those elements of totemism which Freud uses in his theory, such as clan exogamy, the totemic feast, the tabooing of the totemic animal, belief in common ancestry from the totem animal, all appear in different societies at different times, but hardly ever all together.

While questions remain regarding the accuracy and strength behind Freud's explanation of religion, there are elements of his theory which are useful in explaining the modern role of religion in society. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, authors like Scheve and Stasavage (2006), Park (2005) and Paragament (1997) have highlighted some of the psychic benefits of religion. For instance, Scheve and Stasavage (2006) have argued that although Freud characterized religion in a mostly negative light as an immature and almost illusory way to respond to events out of human control, he also admitted that it could also serve as a buffer against the negative effects of (perceived) uncontrollable natural and social forces. In a similar vein, Park highlighted Freud's depiction of religion as a coping mechanism in response to the unknown and the unbearable by asserting that: "for many people, religion is an important philosophical orientation that affects their understanding of the world, and that makes reality and suffering understandable and bearable" (Park 2005: 711). In sum, while Freud's account of religion remains highly controversial, certain aspects of it continue to inform

contemporary research on the socio-psychological impact of religion on modern social behavior and opinion formation.

Religion and Social Solidarity

One of the most prominent theories on the nexus between religion and society can be found in the work of Emile Durkheim. Writing at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, Durkheim set out to challenge the prevalent depiction of religion as false and illusory in social theory. Durkheim wanted to identify and analyze the most elementary forms of religious life and thought that the best way to do so would be to study religion in the most primitive societies known to him at the time in which one could find the simplest cases of religion. He argued that in more modern societies it would be hard to disentangle what is essential to religion from those unessential elements of secondary elaboration (Hamilton 2001). As a result, Durkheim studied the aboriginal tribes of Australia, and in particular, the Arunta tribe.

In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim's work centered on two basic questions in the study of religion: the first referred to what religion was, and the second was what role religion played in human society. Durkheim related religion to the fundamental division of all human experience and affairs into two heterogeneous spheres which he called the "sacred" and the "profane" (O'Dea 1966: 12). The profane referred to the experience of everyday life such as the work day; that is, the profane refers to the secular aspects of human life. Conversely, the sacred lies outside of the sphere of the

profane and includes those things which evoke a sense of awe or reverence and are set apart in ritualized ways⁵ (Durkheim 1915: 55).

Through his study of the aboriginal tribes of Australia, Durkheim came to disregard the notion that religion was largely illusory and false, as Marx and Freud claimed. Instead, Durkheim argued that religion was not an illusion or an inexplicable hallucination, but that it represented a truth, an eternal truth. “Religion is the eternal truth that outside of us there exists something greater than us, with which we enter into communion [...] Religion is a system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations they have with it” (Durkheim 1915: 225). Durkheim then saw the object of religion, behind a different set of symbols, rituals and vehicles which give it a unique and concrete expression to its believers, to be the group or society itself; thus religion represents an indirect worship of community and group life, in essence, of society (O’Dea 1966). Durkheim suggests that even if the members of a given religion believe and partake in the principles, teachings and rituals of their religion, they are ultimately, disguisedly and invisibly worshipping their society itself.

While for Freud religious gods are the humanization of the forces of nature and the representation of the complex relationship with the father, for Durkheim, God (or the gods of a given religion) is the hypostatization of society, that is, the group made into a

⁵ This does not mean that something or someone profane cannot pass on to become sacred. Durkheim states that in order for this to be possible, the profane must pass through rituals or initiation to be “accepted” into the sacred sphere. Durkheim exemplifies this point by describing the way in which young boys in many religions must be initiated in a long series of rites to introduce them into religious life. It is through the successful completion of these rites that the boys may leave the profane world, where they passed their childhood, and enter into the circle of sacred things (Durkheim 1915: 36-37)

personalized living entity (O’Dea 1966). Under this view, the various components typically thought to be part of religious belief—the gods, spirits, rites, the belief system—are the sacralization of those moral codes and values which exemplify the proper behavior expected from a member of the group. In particular, Durkheim gave much importance to the role of rituals in religious activity. It was through the participation in the rites and ceremonies that the collective moral power of society could be most clearly felt and where moral and social sentiments were generated, strengthened and renewed; moreover, it was in these rites that the individual developed a sense of dependence upon an external spiritual and moral power which is, in fact, society (Hamilton 2001). “So everything leads us back to the same idea: before all, rites are the means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically” (Durkheim cited in Yinger 1957).

Although the individual was not the prominent aspect of Durkheim’s work, he, like Freud and Marx, did admit that religion provided the individual with a sense of strength and comfort, although this sense of strength and comfort actually came from society. “The believer who has communicated with his god ... is a man who is stronger. He feels within him more force, either to endure the trials of existence, or to conquer them” (Durkheim cited in O’Dea 1966).

However, for Durkheim the primary function of religion is not an individual one. Religious beliefs provide a sanctification and justification for social norms of conduct while the rites and ceremonial practices elicit a sense of periodically renewed commitment and respect for them. Thus, for Durkheim, the ritualistic nature of religion generates and sustains a social solidarity and cohesion. Through its embodiment of the

moral authority found in society, religion encourages sacrifice and privation while it also submits the individual will and inclination to the supremacy of society (Hamilton 2001). “Thus religion provides, through its sanctification and renewal of basic norms, a strategic basis for social control in the face of deviant tendencies and the expression of impulses dangerous to the stability of the society” (O’Dea 1966:13). Here the comparison between Durkheim and Marx is striking. Both theorists mention that religion can serve as a basis of social cohesion and control, however, Marx qualifies this statement by adding that it does so under the auspices of an unjust social order, one which is inherently endowed with class conflict and likely to tend toward its own unsustainability.

While both Marx and Freud predicted that the need for religion would subside due to either a better use of reason in response to the unknown or due to the establishment of a new social order which would not require justifications for economic oppression and transfer the hope for a better life to a world beyond, Durkheim saw something eternal in religion. “There is something eternal in religion that is destined to outlive the succession of particular symbols in which religious thought has clothed itself. There can be no society which does not experience the need at regular intervals to maintain and strengthen the collective feelings and ideas that provide its coherence and its distinct individuality” (Durkheim cited in Cipriani 2000: 74). However, Durkheim argues that the function which religion plays is more likely to transform itself rather than disappear. In this vein, Durkheim argued that while religion had served as the primary source of social solidarity in more primitive societies, in modern society there are secular recreations of the format and elements of religion. Reminiscent of Louis Althusser’s argument in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Durkheim sees education as replacing religion as the

critical institution for recreating solidarity and moral equilibrium⁶ (Adams and Sydie 2001).

Many critics have pointed out the shortcomings of Durkheim's account of religion; some of the critiques have centered on methodological aspects of his work while others refer more concretely to his central arguments. With regard to the methodology used by Durkheim, Pritchard (1965) has challenged the assumption that the simplest form of religion could be found in those societies which are the least advanced in economic, technological and political terms; even in Australia, where Durkheim conducted his research, some clans with more complex political systems and wealth have less elaborate religious forms in comparison to those with less wealth and a simpler political organization (Hamilton 2001). The other problematic element with Durkheim's work lies in the fact that he generalizes his results based on data collected from a few aboriginal tribes in Australia to all religious forms in the world. With such a limited sample, it is hard to assert that Durkheim's findings and arguments are necessarily true for all contemporary forms of religious activity or for those which have been practiced in the past.

While Durkheim was among the first to point out the social character of religion and its intimate relations with social life, his theory of religion tends to overemphasize the social role of religion by claiming that it is nothing more than the symbolic representation of society. In other words, to say that there are societal values and

⁶ The analysis of Louis Althusser in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* goes beyond simply noting the transition from the church to education as the main institution of social cohesion and control. Althusser argues that it is through education in modern societies that the ideology of the ruling class is not only inculcated but, more importantly, reproduced.

structures which are reflected in religion and to say that religious rituals help to strengthen commitment to such values and structures does not necessarily mean that society is the ultimate and only source of religion nor does it mean that religion is the only source of moral legitimacy in society. Another source of criticism with regard to Durkheim's theory is its strong emphasis on the socially integrative function of religion. That is, the role which religion plays in building social cohesion and solidarity. As history has shown, religion has been a divisive force as often as it has been an integrating one (Hamilton 2001). For instance, Durkheim's theory of religion, with its emphasis on the role of religion as a source of social unity and cohesion, would have a difficult time in explaining religious sectarian movements, violence among religious groups, and the frequent branching out of religious faiths.

Durkheim's work, however, was influential in establishing the functionalist school of sociology. Functionalism became the dominant paradigm in American and British sociology during the nineteen forties, fifties and part of the sixties. Functionalism viewed society as an organism with inter-related structures and tried to explain social institutions in terms of the contribution each made to social survival, integration and solidarity (Adams and Sydie 2001). Under the scope of functionalism, some sociologists and anthropologists like A.R. Redcliff-Brown, Kingsley Davis, Milton Yinger, and Thomas O'Dea, among others, have tried to enrich Durkheim's account of religion by adding some qualifications to it. The work of O'Dea (1966) and Yinger (1957) is of particular importance because they admit that religion is certainly not the only —nor, in many cases, the most important — source of social morality and cohesion as there are many secular sources which may also perform this function. Additionally, both authors

pointed out that religion may also cause social disintegration and conflict. Religion may cause social disintegration and conflict when two historically competing religious systems coexist in the same society, when religion stresses adherence to traditional beliefs and modes of organization in a way in which it prohibits protest against social injustice or the advancement of knowledge, additionally, religious discourse may also uphold hostility towards unfavored or unfortunate members of society, among other examples (O’Dea 1966; Yinger 1957).

Religion and the rise of Western capitalism

The work of Marx and Freud on religion has been criticized to a large extent for being overly deterministic. That is, religion and its social role are seen by these theorists as determined by class conflict and oppression or by the sexual desires and complexity inherent in parental relations. Durkheim’s work overcomes some of that determinism by admitting that religion may not simply be an illusory form of happiness in response to other social or psychological factors, but rather, a real need to partake in social life and to periodically reaffirm group values which, in turn, may enhance group cohesion and solidarity. In the same vein, the work of Max Weber, and in particular *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, has also been fundamental in indentifying the way in which the ideas propagated within religious discourse may have an influential role in social forces and social change. In other words, for Weber, while religion may be influenced by events which take place in society, religious outlook can also, simultaneously, have a crucial part in shaping social life and economic behavior.

Weber explains his account on the origins of religion in his chapter entitled 'The social psychology of the world religions' included in Weber (1958). According to Weber, the root of religion constitutes a deep psychological and emotional need to attempt to make sense out of the difficulties and injustices found in life. Whatever fortune comes to a given individual needs to be explained and justified, it cannot be accepted as simply a matter of arbitrary luck. Those who are fortunate and unfortunate both need to make sense of their social standings. Those who are fortunate are in need of a justification to explain the differences between them and the others while those who are less fortunate have an overwhelming need to account for their sufferings as part of a meaningful and just order, whether this involves the acceptance of guilt or just punishment, or the hope for some ultimate compensation for their suffering (Hamilton 2001). According to Weber, it is through the doctrines of religion that the tensions provoked by the injustices of this world seem orderly and meaningful.

While Weber's overall treatment of religion is extensive and complex, Weber's account on the origins of religion has not drawn nearly as much attention or controversy as the claims found in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, arguably his most distinguished work within the sociology of religion. Both Adam Smith and Karl Marx had suggested that the rise of Western capitalism amounted to a natural evolution from previous economic systems; the transition to capitalism was facilitated by improved technology, knowledge, the expropriation of peasant land for large-scale production, the division of labor, and increased productivity, all which in turn produced a change in economic attitudes and structures (Bruce 1996). While Weber did indeed acknowledge the role which these forces played in the rise of capitalism, he also argued that a very

particular religious outlook stemming from the Protestant Reformation was crucial in shaping what he termed the “spirit of capitalism.”

We have no intention whatever of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the spirit of capitalism could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation [...] On the contrary, we only wish to ascertain whether and to what extent religious forces have taken part in the qualitative formation and quantitative expansion of that spirit over the world (Weber cited in Hamilton 2001: 165).

Weber’s overarching argument is that ascetic Protestantism formed an outlook which was quite compatible with modern Western capitalism and with the practices and beliefs which it required. Thus, the true “ethos” of capitalism can be found in practices which include the efficient use of resources, diligence, and the self-deprivation of wasteful consumption which allows for accumulation of resources to take place. All of these practices were, according to Weber, facilitated and encouraged by Calvinist teaching and a feature of Calvinistic Protestantism.

Weber argued that the “ethos” of capitalism did not necessarily come naturally to human beings and that the most significant impediment to the advent of the spirit of capitalism was a particular life-outlook which he termed traditionalism. In Weber’s view, traditionalism is prevalent among pre-industrial societies and was the dominating social schema prior to the rise of capitalism. Traditionalism is characterized by a reluctance to work beyond what is necessary to meet the prevalent or customary standard of living (Hamilton 2001). Even those who did seek wealth in pre-industrial times did so in an almost reckless fashion with far more similarity to gambling than to the calculated and systematic use of resources in order to accumulate wealth which is so prevalent in modern capitalism. Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* effectively exemplifies this last

point; merchants and other investors would put all of their wealth into purchasing a ship and cargo in the *hope* that the ship would return full of goods which could be sold for huge profits, and either the ship *came* or it *didn't* (Bruce 1996). As a result, Weber found the differences in economic behavior and attitudes towards the accumulation of wealth between pre-industrial societies and capitalist ones to be striking.

[Pre-industrial societies] were bound by custom, tradition and a reluctance to work, and a fatalistic and opportunistic attitude to getting rich. In contrast, the early capitalists worked hard, reinvested their profits, abandoned customary practices and innovated [...] they governed their lives with attention to discipline, to avoiding the dangers of sloth, intemperance and overindulgence of the senses, and they tried very hard to impose such disciplines upon their employees (Weber paraphrased in Bruce 1996: 13).

Weber's quest in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was to identify what elements could help explain such a dramatic change in the economic attitudes between pre-industrial societies and the modern capitalist ones. In his own historical assessment, Weber found that capitalist development was more pronounced in those areas most influenced by the Calvinist teachings of the Reformation, like Germany, Holland, and England, than in regions most influenced by Catholicism, like Spain, Italy and Portugal.

According to Weber, an influential element in shaping these distinctive economic attitudes prevalent in capitalism was the religiously-grounded notion of *the calling*. For Weber, the notion of *the calling* was essentially a product of the Protestant Reformation, and more specifically, of the Calvinist interpretation of it (Hamilton 2001). Under this scope the calling was "the valuation of the fulfillment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume" (Weber 1976: 80).

This particular interpretation of religious calling broke away with the notion that in order to answer God's spiritual calling one must renounce worldly activity and dedicate one's life to Him in a monastery, apart from the world. Thus the potential conflict between religious enthusiasm and social and economic needs was bridged; mundane roles and occupations were now promoted as expressions of piety, as being pleasing to God, provided that they were performed diligently and honestly, and so long as the occupation in question did not morally challenge God's word, or at least the established interpretation of it (Bruce 1996: 14-15). Weber related the hard work ethic found in early capitalists to the idea that an individual could respond to his or her spiritual calling by proficiently and diligently carrying out his or her vocation to the glory of God.

Coupled with the notion of the calling, the doctrine of predestination also impacted the lives of those Protestant branches most influenced by the teachings of John Calvin. The doctrine of predestination considers God to be not only almighty, but also all-knowledgeable. Under this view, God had predestined those who would be saved, and thus He knew which would be damned in hell and which would join Him in heaven. The question then remained, how would people know who was among the 'elect' and who was not? While there was no way to know with absolute certainty, Calvinistic preachers claimed that the devout could seek signs of being among the 'elect': those signs included worldly, material success in their calling coupled with a strict avoidance of wasteful spending and the temptations of the flesh (Hamilton 2001). These principles form what Weber terms 'worldly asceticism.' The Puritans and other Protestant sects influenced by Calvinism would practice asceticism by not overindulging in the riches they had accumulated, and instead reinvested them, thus accumulating more material wealth in

such a way in which their material success could provide them with a signal that they were among the ‘elect.’⁷ However, this asceticism was also ‘worldly’ in the sense that religious persons no longer retreated from the world to the monastery but instead behaved righteously in the process of gaining material wealth (Bruce 1996:17).

Weber reasoned that some ideas brought about by the Reformation, such as an emphasis on worldly success, vocation, diligence, and self-deprivation, permitted the concentration and reinvestment of wealth and were thus in line with the needs of early capitalism and contributed to its rapid expansion among those Protestant communities where these attitudes became engrained in their cultural and social fabric. It was these very same attitudes which comprised what Weber termed the ‘Protestant ethic’ and, simultaneously, an integral part of the spirit of capitalism.

Understandably, Weber’s thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has drawn much debate and criticism. Some of the criticism, however, has been due to a misinterpretation of Weber’s argument. For instance, the cases of Scotland and Japan have frequently been cited as counter examples to Weber’s thesis.

Protestantism quickly spread to the Scottish Lowlands and the Scottish Protestants were more influenced by the teachings of Calvin than were their English counterparts (Bruce 1996). Through an analysis of historical evidence, Marshall (1980) found that in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scotland Calvinist pastoral teaching and the way in which business was conducted went very much in line with Weber’s overall argument. Yet

⁷ The Puritans and other Calvinist Protestants were clear that works could not earn them salvation since it was a free gift from God, but they could, nonetheless, serve as a symbol that they were among those who were saved (Bruce 1996).

Scotland's economic development was slow, while capitalism developed much faster in England. Conversely, Japan was able to establish a very successful capitalist economy without much relation to Calvinist teachings, Protestantism, or Christianity as a whole. However, implicit in these arguments is a gross misinterpretation of Weber's assertions. As noted earlier, Weber never argued that Calvinist-oriented Protestantism was solely and necessarily the source of capitalism. Other necessary conditions for the advancement of capitalism, like a developed financial system, good communications and transport networks, as well as law and order, retarded Scotland's economic development (Bruce 1996). Likewise with the case of Japan, Weber never claimed that attitudes and practices which could enhance the rise of capitalism, such as diligence, self-deprivation and an interest in the accumulation of wealth, forcefully needed to come from Protestant Christianity and that such principles could not be adopted or secularized at some point in the future (Schwentker 2005).

In spite of possible misunderstandings about Weber's work, two important criticisms have been pointed out. The first deals with Weber's somewhat selective use of Calvinist teachings through which he emphasized the importance of worldly success and the accumulation of profit in Calvinist Protestantism. Lessnoff (1994) and MacKinnon (1993) have noticed that what tends to predominate in Calvinist teachings is the notion of stewardship in using God's gifts; that is, to use them with wisdom and to His glory. While admittedly this 'stewardship' does indeed allow for the pursuit of wealth, which contrasts with the predominant medieval Christian teachings on the matter, it also does not quite amount to a full-blown profit-accumulation ethic or duty (Hamilton 2001). Furthermore, MacKinnon (1993) also notes that in many Calvinist teachings, the purpose

of acquiring wealth is to enable one to do good works through various forms of charity, which would constitute an emphasis on the distribution of wealth and not necessarily in its accumulation.

The second, and probably the most important, criticism of Weber's work has centered on the way in which Weber assumes that Calvinist teachings were received. Weber does not present much evidence for the widespread distribution of the *spirit of capitalism* in the sixteenth and seventeenth century congregations beyond stating that Puritan leaders had it and preached it (Bruce 1996). "One of the central problems in attempting to resolve the issue of the impact of Calvinist Protestantism upon modern capitalism is that the documents available to us tell us little about the way its doctrines and teachings were received, understood and interpreted by ordinary believers and how they were implemented in terms of practical conduct" (Greyerz paraphrased in Hamilton 2001). Notwithstanding the lack of evidence to conclusively accept the thrust of Weber's thesis, his work on the link between certain Protestant practices and beliefs, the ethos of capitalism, and the rise of capitalist forms of production has inspired much modern research on the question of how religious beliefs and practices are able to facilitate, inhibit or shape the development and transformation of social attitudes and behavior.

Secularization and modernity

Many of the nineteenth century and early twentieth social theorists forecasted the eventual decline or even disappearance of religion. For instance, Tylor, Comte, Freud and Weber foresaw the gradual decline of religion to give way to the rise of science, industrialization, and capitalism, as well as to the principles of rationality and efficiency

embedded in modern society. Similarly, Marx thought religion would no longer be necessary as a more humane and classless social order would overcome the alienation and oppression found in capitalism. Under a different scope, Durkheim argued for the persistence of the social role of religion to maintain and strengthen social cohesion, although he admitted that this social role could eventually be transformed into more secular forms.

Bearing in mind the writings on religion of these social theorists, more contemporary scholars like Peter Berger and Bryan Wilson have argued for what they see as a decline of religion in modern societies or, in essence, a process of secularization. Berger defines secularization as a process “by which sectors of society are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols” (1973: 13). Similarly, Wilson refers to secularization as “the process by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance” (1982: 149). It is notable that neither of these definitions implies a total disappearance of religion, but rather a decline in its social importance. Moreover, Dobbelaere (1999) has noted that processes of secularization may be observed in modern societies at three different levels of analysis: they may be observed in the decline of importance of religion in society as a whole, in religious institutions and in the individual.

One of the most difficult issues in assessing whether or not modern society is secularized, or undergoing a process of secularization, centers on exactly what is meant by “religion.” Wilson (1982) noted that those who use a more functional definition of religion stressing social aspects of it tend to reject the secularization hypothesis while

those who use a more restrictive or traditional definition tend to acknowledge processes of secularization in modern societies. In light of such inconsistencies in the use of definitions, Hamilton (2001) argued that the disinclination to use such wide definitions of religion, which would include New Age, existentialism and post-rationalist movements as religions, responds to two important aspects of the sociological study of religion. Firstly, using an almost all-encompassing definition of religion could lead to incorporate any social movement, cause or philosophical current as a religion or as having religious 'traits,' and secondly, the study of religion in the social sciences has a deeply rooted Western tendency to equate religion with traditional, mainline congregations.

Even while taking a more restrictive definition of religion, there has been an enormous amount of literature accounting for various processes and theories on why and how modern societies have become increasingly secularized; such arguments are found in the works of Berger (1973), Wilson (1982) and Martin (1978), among others. Through an extensive review of existing literature on secularization, Tschannen (1991) has identified the three core elements of the various accounts of secularization: differentiation, rationalization and worldliness.

Differentiation refers to the process by which religion has become increasingly differentiated from other social spheres in modern societies. For instance, while the church provided leading principles to political and economic life in medieval Europe, the separation of church and state in modern societies led to the increasingly differentiated and independent role of political and economic affairs from religious institutions.

Rationalization refers to the process by which these now differentiated and independent

spheres of social life become governed by principles of rationality inherent to their own social function or operation instead of religious doctrine. For example, in modern public schools or universities what is included in a given curricular program is the product of a debate on the academic or scientific relevance of particular topics and not on which would be more in line with religious principles. Finally, the notion of worldliness refers to the way in which the processes of differentiation and rationalization impact back on religion itself by making it less concerned with the sacred, the supernatural or the transcendental and thus more world-like in its outlook and interaction with modern society. Gill, Hadaway and Marler (1998) have identified patterns of secularization in Britain through their analysis of a large number of historical surveys on religiosity dating back to the 1920s. They noted that since the 1920s there has been a considerable decline in the belief in God, in life after death, and in the authority and unquestionable accuracy of the Bible.

One of the strong limitations of the secularization thesis, even while taking into account a restrictive definition of religion, is that it has been mostly helpful to explain patterns of secularization in Western Europe. Patterns of secularization for most of the rest of the world have not been uniform. Social scientists making the case for either secularization or the persistence of religious belief have used and analyzed a combination of surveys on attendance to religious services and on assent to religious beliefs and doctrines (Bruce 1996). Hamilton (2001) argued that, taken together, most of these indicators show a marked decline of religious affiliation and traditional belief in Europe with much less decline in the United States and much of the developing world. Precisely because of the wide-ranging disparities in the patterns of secularization among

contemporary societies it is difficult to conclusively assert that secularization is the inevitable and progressive outcome of modernity and economic development.

In spite of the shortcomings and criticisms of secularization theory, possibly the most compelling point made by secularization theorists has been to recognize that secular aspects of the modern world have indeed influenced the character and practice of traditional religious institutions, even in parts of the world typically renowned for their attachment to traditional religion. For instance, Wald and Calhoun-Brown argued that many contemporary religious congregations in America “have evolved from holy assemblies to community centers that provide good opportunities for networking and recreation” (2007: 15). Witten (1993) also noted that contemporary sermons in America emphasize God’s forgiving nature instead of His demand for repentance and punishment. In a similar vein, Bruce (1996) and Hunter (1983) have noted that, increasingly, American religious institutions market God as a therapist who has the secret to self-fulfillment and as a financial advisor who can lead them to prosperity. While secularization arguments do not forcefully imply or prove that all religious institutions have completely lost their sacredness, that religion is now doctrine-free and purely worldly in its outlook or that believers engage and practice their faith solely in secular terms, they do help us to acknowledge and better understand the ways in which religion has adapted itself to its existence and practice in modern society.

Chapter summary

This chapter has presented some of the most influential perspectives and theories on the sociology of religion as well as their contemporary critiques. In particular, the

chapter discusses the following key sociological perspectives on religion: the nexus between class conflict and religion found in the works of Marx, Freud's theory on the origin and psychological role of religion in human development, the vitality of religion as an integrating social force as argued by Durkheim, Weber's seminal work on the relationship between the Calvinistic Protestantism and the emergence of capitalism, as well as the work of secularization theorists which foresee a gradual decline of the relative importance and influence of religion in the modern world.

The present chapter offers the reader a panoramic view of the various theoretical frameworks which have paved the way for a deeper understanding of the way in which religion, and religious involvement, may influence social behavior and political attitudes. As observed more in detail in Chapter 3, the social theories on religion presented in this chapter, as well as their critiques, have influenced and informed current research on the relationship between religion and social attitudes and behavior.

CHAPTER 3

RELIGION AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL PROTECTION

Introduction

The previous chapter has outlined some of the main theoretical approaches on the social role of religion. These sociological perspectives on religion have been influential in informing current research on the way in which religion may influence social phenomena and, in particular, social attitudes. The present chapter draws from some of the main sociological perspectives outlined in Chapter 2 to present contemporary research on the nexus between religiosity and public attitudes toward social protection. The chapter is divided into three broad sections. The first section defines the conceptual meaning of social safety net/social protection policies and presents bodies of literature which attempt to explain individual support (or lack thereof) for social protection policies in America. The second section includes a literature review on the relationship between religion and attitudes toward social safety net policies. Lastly, the third section discusses the socio-historical role of religious involvement in struggles for social justice among the Hispanic and African-American communities in America.

Definitions

When analyzing public social spending, one of the issues which naturally arises is the difficulty encountered in defining and measuring it. This task has become even more difficult as various inter-related terms have flooded the academic literature and popular media. For instance, it is common to hear terms such as welfare, social insurance, social assistance, social safety net, and social protection used interchangeably in contemporary conversations and in media articles. As a result, it seems necessary to establish common ground in the usage and definitions of each of these terms.

The broadest difference in public social expenditure is explained by Feldstein (2005). According to this author, a distinction must be made between social welfare and social insurance. For Feldstein, welfare programs and benefits are means tested, that is, they are granted to those whose income and assets falls below a nationally determined level. For instance, in the United States, welfare programs include Medicare, food stamps, subsidized housing, school lunches, and public homeless shelters, among other programs.⁸ Conversely, social insurance programs are conditioned by specific events. “Benefits are paid when some event occurs in an individual’s life, regardless of the individual’s income or assets” (Feldstein 2005: 2). Examples of social insurance programs include unemployment and disability benefits, as well as pensions or retirement benefits. Paitoonpong, Abe and Puopongsakorn (2008) have also added that most social insurance programs are chiefly financed by a combination of the individual contributor, the employer and the state, whereas welfare programs are solely financed by the state.

⁸ For a more detailed description of welfare programs see Feldstein (2005) and Moffitt (2003).

Jurado (2001) has argued that the key difference between social insurance and welfare is that social insurance is not primarily designed to be an anti-poverty or income-redistribution policy. Instead, social insurance is designed to help those who suffer from a shock, crisis or life event that places them in an adverse social circumstance or loss. Moreover, social insurance in the form of unemployment benefits is designed to be temporary and not a long-term policy intended to combat chronic poverty and social inequality.

Similar in scope to the concept of social welfare, the term social assistance has also been used to describe poverty alleviation and income redistribution policies intended to help those at the bottom of the social pyramid. Based on the definition provided by the International Labor Organization (1989), Paitoonpong, Abe and Puopongsakorn have defined social assistance as follows:

Social assistance is the assistance provided by the government to the general public who are in need, particularly the elderly, the sick, invalids, survivors and the unemployed. Its main characteristics are: (1) a person does not have to join the program (by paying contribution) prior to receiving benefits; benefits are paid as a legal right in prescribed categories of need; (2) the entire cost of the program is met by the government; (3) eligibility is determined by a person's income and resources (2008: 471).

While social welfare and social assistance are generally treated as similar in meaning, the term social assistance encompasses not only government programs targeted towards the poor but also tax breaks and exemptions as well as other in-kind payments, subsidies and benefits which are granted to lower-income groups.

Another term closely related to various categories of social spending is the “social safety net.” The phrase “social safety net” became widely used in the 1970s and 1980s in connection to Breton Woods institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank amid a world economic recession, public deficit crises in many developing countries, and skyrocketing oil prices. In the 1970s, the term became particularly important in the context of structural adjustment policies which came attached to the loans which the IMF and the World Bank gave to developing countries in an effort to reduce large government deficits and high levels of public debt in these nations. Given that the structural adjustment policies involved large reductions in government spending and the elimination of some forms of social assistance, “developing countries introduced SSNs [social safety nets] to mitigate the social impact of structural adjustment measures on specific low-income groups. They were initially formulated to serve three objectives: poverty alleviation, to make adjustment programs more politically acceptable, and to facilitate institutional reform” (Paitoonpong et al 2008: 467). Metaphorically reminiscent to the net which prevents a wire walker from harming himself or herself in case of a fall, the social safety net initially meant a system of social insurance which would protect those who experienced short term economic distress from economic crises and from receding traditional forms of government assistance. It was, in essence, quite similar to the concept of social insurance described above. However, given the inter-related nature of social insurance and social welfare during times of economic hardship as joint mechanisms designed to maintain social stability, the World Bank decided to expand its limited definition of the social safety net in 2003.

Safety nets are basically income maintenance and assistance programs that protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes: a chronic incapacity to work and earn, and a decline in this capacity caused by imperfectly predictable lifecycle events (such as the sudden death of a bread winner), sharp shortfalls in aggregate demand or expenditure shocks (through economic recession or transition), or very bad harvests. Safety net programs serve two important roles: redistribution (such as transfers to disadvantaged groups) and insurance (such as drought relief) (Paitoonpong et al 2008: 470).

Clearly, the definition of social safety net provided above encompasses the broad network of public help including anti-poverty welfare programs as well as social insurance programs such as contributory pensions or unemployment insurance. Social protection is another term which has also come to encompass the various institutions, networks and programs by which a government can provide help to its citizens, be it conditioned-based (such as unemployment or retirement benefits), income-based (such as Medicare), short-term or long-term (Jurado 2001). For the purposes of this text, the terms social safety net and social protection shall be used to refer to this complex network of social help which includes social insurance and social welfare and it is this all-inclusive concept which constitutes the central object of study in the present dissertation research. Bearing in mind the differences among the various terms relating to public social spending presented in this section, the proceeding literature review outlines explanations for the varying levels of support for social protection—or key components of it—in contemporary America.

Support for Social Protection in America

It is well acknowledged that there are large differences among advanced industrial countries (and even the lesser advanced ones) in terms of levels of income redistribution and social protection. It has also been widely noted that the social spending of the United

States as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product tends to be lower than that allocated by most industrialized countries (see Table 1). In light of cross-national differences in social spending, one of the most puzzling questions in the study of public attitudes toward social safety net policies is what makes some American individuals more supportive of social spending than others. That is, what social characteristics help explain people's support or opposition to a more considerable role of the government in the provision of social protection in the US?

In the context of international studies and comparisons on individual support for social safety net policies, Rehm (2007) outlines three broad logics on why individuals may choose to support income redistribution and social insurance policies. The first logic involves an ideological belief in a more equitable society. In this case, the support for redistribution is grounded in beliefs and values, regardless of whether the individual would benefit directly from such policies (Peillon 1996). The second logic involves a self-interested position in which the individual sees himself or herself as socially disadvantaged and supports social safety net policies because of the already received benefits or the potential gain which could be received (Meltzer and Richard 1981). The third logic comes from a need for social insurance. That is, individuals may also support social safety net policies because it may help them to better cope with sudden unemployment or income shocks and to guarantee a certain level of income, even through potentially harsh times (Varian 1980). This last logic emphasizes the need for a safety net in light of potential or of future difficult economic circumstances, even while there may not be a present need for social benefits or a deep ideological commitment to social equality.

In connection with the three logics outlined above by Rehm, various bodies of literature have surfaced in an effort to explain why individuals in America would support

Table 1	
Public Social Expenditure (incl. Health Care) as a percentage of GDP, 2004	
Australia	15.52
Austria	27.93
Canada	19.73
Denmark	30.39
Finland	28.38
France	29.42
Germany	28.05
Greece	23.96
Ireland	16.21
Italy	24.5
Japan	19.06
Luxembourg	31.66
Netherlands	21.84
New Zealand	17.32
Norway	25.61
Portugal	21.69
Slovenia	24.18
Spain	18.51
Sweden	31.39
United Kingdom	23.3
United States	14.46
<i>Source: International Monetary Fund (2005)</i>	

or oppose social safety net policies. One body of literature on the matter suggests that core American beliefs and values, such as economic individualism, entrepreneurship, equality of opportunity, and opposition to big government, play a key role in explaining Americans' opposition to social protection policies (Feldman 1988; Lipset 1979; McClosky and Zaller 1984). Under this view, higher taxes associated with large welfare states, considerable government intervention, and policies which hinder an individual's ability to operate in free market mechanisms are seen as substantially contrasting with fundamental American ideals. This view is normally referred to as economic individualism and some of its theoretical underpinnings can be traced back to Weber's work

on the spirit of capitalism. As outlined in Chapter 2, Weber argues that the teachings found within Calvinist Protestantism facilitated the rise of capitalism in the Western Civilization because they laid the foundation for the "ethos" of capitalism. The "ethos" of capitalism can be witnessed in practices which include the efficient use of resources, diligence, and the self-deprivation of wasteful consumption which allows for

accumulation of resources to take place. In a similar vein, economic individualism then assumes that poverty is chiefly a result of individual deficiencies of the poor, such as laziness, a weak work ethic and a lack of entrepreneurship (Gilder 1980). As a result, economic individualism suggests that government intervention to help the poor fosters dependency and cycles of poverty, and thus, welfare policies should be limited to assist only the infirm poor (Verba and Orren 1985; Friedman and Friedman 1980; Gilder 1980).

Furthermore, a second body of literature on divergent support for social protection in America has focused on the role of race and racial attitudes. In particular, racial prejudice, race-targeted policy design (Bobo and Kluegel 1993), and the perception that both Blacks and other minority groups have a weak work ethic have been mentioned as reasons for why some White Americans oppose social policies (Fox 2004: 581-584). For instance, Gilens (1995) has argued that negative attitudes toward blacks have led many whites who favor more spending on education, healthcare and the elderly to oppose programs aimed at the poor. Moreover, in his analysis of the 2008 election, Krugman (2009) has argued that, in part, some of the hostility to big government is linked to the racial undertone of the GOP's "Southern strategy" dating back to the early 1980s. "In other words, [big] government is the problem because it takes your money and gives it to Those People [African Americans]" (Krugman 2009: A23). Furthermore, the role of the media has also been cited as contributing to the perception that colored individuals are undeserving of government assistance (Clawson and Trice 2000; Williams 1995). "The media has done its part to fan the flames, often portraying mothers on welfare as promiscuous, lazy, and—especially when the depiction is unfavorable—black" (Fox 2004: 581).

Based on social stratification research, which identifies skills (or human capital) as a basic determinant of one's chances and rewards in life, another body of literature has focused on the role of human capital in establishing social policy preferences (Lee 2006). For instance, Baldwin (1990) argued that support for social policies is not necessarily based on traditional working and middle class divisions. Instead, Baldwin suggested that there are categories of risk which may crosscut class divisions and lead individuals to support similar social policies across class lines. For instance, it would not be uncommon to hear that both a software developer and an industrial worker may face the possibility of their job being outsourced to a different country. Consequently, this situation may lead both of them to support similar social protection policies even though they belong to markedly different social classes. Drawing on Baldwin's argument, proponents of this view assume that the real supporters of welfare policies are not necessarily broad social classes but rather individuals with different categories and degrees of exposure to economic risk (Lee 2006). In the same vein, Fox (2004) has argued that those who are most socioeconomically vulnerable – such as women, individuals with low income, low education or those who are considered to be young and lacking in experience as well as those who are older and thus unattractive prospects to many employers – look to the welfare state as a possible cushion from major insecurities and inequalities. Additionally, some consideration has also been given to the role of skill portability in the support for social safety net policies. Under this scope, the portability of skills from one employer to another or from one industry to another combined with the relative easiness in finding work across different firms determines the degree of exposure to economic risk in the labor market. More concretely, workers with general skills are able to market themselves

broadly throughout many sectors in the economy, while those with specific skills can do so only within a specific sector or a given set of firms. Workers with specific skills are thus exposed to greater risk than those with broad general skills because it is more difficult for workers specializing in specific skills to transfer or convert those skills across firms (Iversen and Soskice 2001). So for instance, an industrial plant manager faces a higher level of economic risk if his or her employment were in jeopardy in comparison to a financial accountant who could, with relative easiness, transfer his or her skills across various firms in multiple industries. As a result, workers with specific, less portable skills are more likely to support social safety net systems since their position in the labor market makes them more susceptible to economic risk. Lee (2006) has furthered this argument by noting that in addition to skill portability, the diminishing demand in the U.S. for some skills and occupations, particularly in manufacturing and some service sectors due to deindustrialization, outsourcing and international trade, has made individuals in affected occupations more likely to support social safety net policies.

While the aforementioned bodies of literature have been helpful in guiding research efforts on the support for social safety net policies, a more recent line of research on attitudes toward social protection in America has underscored the relationship between religiosity and social policy preferences. In particular, a variety of scholarship stemming from public opinion research, the sociology of religion and political science has highlighted the relationship between the religiosity of American individuals and their support for social safety net policies. What follows is a depiction of the main theories and research which attempt to explain why religious individuals may support or oppose certain aspects about social protection.

Religiosity and support for social safety net policies

Religious beliefs and active religious practice may have an influence on individual views toward social safety net policies for a number of reasons. Explanations about religion and social protection may highlight a difference in the attitudes between individuals of different religious denominations (such as Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox). Conversely, explanations may also emphasize differences in attitudes between people who are religiously active and committed, regardless of their denomination, and those who hold weaker or no religious beliefs (Scheve and Stasavage 2006).

The approach which underscores denominational differences in views towards social safety net policies has been more prevalent in scholarship on the political economy. Such scholarship emphasizes differences between religious traditions or denominations and tends to underline the importance which these differences may have in political affiliation processes and policy support. That is, when a given denomination or religious tradition stresses the role of individual merit in economic achievement, then one could expect that believers would not support social safety net policies while the opposite would be the case when the denomination stresses the importance of redistribution or charity. Denominational differences in public views towards social protection have also been highlighted, in part, due to the prominence of Weber's arguments about Calvinist Protestantism and the rise of capitalism in Western societies, as well as due to observations about the links between Christian democratic parties and Catholic doctrine in Europe (Scheve and Stasavage 2008). As a result, most of the research on denominational differences and social policies has centered in the countries

and regions where Catholicism is more prominent in the political process. For instance, Esping-Anderson (1990) has suggested that in many European countries the particular welfare policies pursued by Christian democratic parties are influenced by the social teachings of the Catholic doctrine and that they differ somewhat from the types of welfare policies pursued by the more secular Social Democratic parties. In relation to this, Huber, Ragin and Stephens (1993) have argued that Christian democratic parties in Europe are likely to support social policies in tune with the general world-view of the Catholic Church; such a world-view prioritizes the family, the subsidiarity principle,⁹ private property and the market. In other words, while Catholic-influenced parties and regimes may support higher spending in social programs, they typically will do so under the umbrella of the aforementioned world-view. Overall, the degree to which denominational differences within Christianity lead to identifiably diverging individual or collective support for social policies remains questionable. Christian democratic parties and governments tend to support higher levels of social expenditure, but primarily for transfer payments¹⁰ with a mild redistributive impact (Wilensky 1981; Castles 1982; Stephens 1979; Van Kersbergen 1991). Additionally, the research of Scheve and Stasavage (2006) evidences that during the 1990's there was a positive, but weak,

⁹ “The subsidiarity principle holds that the state should not perform any functions that a lower-level entity, such as the family or the local community, can perform. This principle was emphasized in the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*; see, e.g., Van Kersbergen (1991, p. 110)” (Huber, Ragin and Stephens 1993: 717)

¹⁰ In *A Glossary of Political Economy Terms*, Dr. Paul Johnson from the Department of Political Science at Auburn University defined transfer payments as “a payment of money by the government to an individual that does not form part of an exchange but rather represents a gift without anything being received or required in return. Examples of transfer payments would include student scholarship grants, welfare checks, and social security benefits. Establishing programs providing for transfer payments from the budget to particular favored categories of the population represents one of the most direct ways in which a government may pursue policies of income redistribution.” Please see http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/transfer_payment for more information.

correlation between the percentage of Catholics in a country and levels of social spending. However, Scheve and Stasavage also show that this correlation was not statistically significant when considering other socio-economic and cultural factors in their analysis of individual-level data on 11 OECD countries from the International Social Survey.

Beyond matters of denominational differences, there are several other possible avenues through which religiosity, regardless of denomination, may influence both the demand and the support for social safety-net policies. One important possibility is based on the long tradition of altruism and charity found in many world religions. Taking into account Durkheim's conceptualization of religion as a source of social cohesion and solidarity described in Chapter 2 and the principles of benevolence towards the less fortunate within the teachings of the various branches of the Christian religion, one may argue that religious involvement in Christianity could encourage prosociality.¹¹

One notable theological effort to link biblical doctrine, church practice and a concern for the welfare of the less fortunate is found within the Catholic social teaching. The Catholic social teaching can be interpreted as a tradition which comprises a set of shared understandings about the human person, social goods, and their distributive arrangements inspired by constitutive narratives provided by the Bible (Johann Verstraete cited in Rougeau 2008). Rougeau (2008) further argued that the social teaching of the Catholic Church came into relevance as a denunciation of the appalling living conditions of the urbanized poor in mid-nineteenth century Europe as a result of industrialization; such a critique became evident in the writings of notable figures at the

¹¹ Prosociality refers to acts that benefit others at a personal cost (Norenzayan and Shariff 2008).

time, such as Wilhelm von Kettler, bishop of Mainz. Some of the core themes of the Catholic social teaching are: a profound respect for human dignity, community engagement, as well as a commitment to aid those in need through economic and distributive justice (Catholic Church 1986). Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007) have also added that the principles of social justice and concern for the poor and vulnerable is certainly not exclusive to Catholics and echoed in the social gospel tradition of countless Protestant congregations in America, including Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Congregationalist denominations.

The core themes of the Catholic social teaching and the social gospel of Protestant traditions are highly consistent with greater support for community efforts and public policies which reduce poverty, inequality and assist those who are in need. As a result, Norenzayan and Shariff (2008) have argued that greater religious involvement may prompt some individuals to become more altruistic, more concerned for the welfare of the poor and thus advocate greater attention and spending on disadvantaged groups. This last point is particularly noteworthy as most major world religions, although to varying degrees, incorporate and advocate compassion and helping those in need as core elements of their doctrine. While Christian religiosity may lead to greater altruism, and consequently greater advocacy of social protection mechanisms for some individuals and groups at certain times, some authors like Scheve and Stasavage (2006), Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004), as well as Chen and Lind (2007) have argued that religiosity certainly also has other effects that work in the opposite direction. What follows is a review of the existing arguments as to why there may be a negative relationship between religiosity and support for some social safety net policies in contemporary America.

Contrary to the thrust of the social gospel and the Catholic social teaching, another possible influence of religion on social policy preferences is that some religious teachings may lead individuals to draw certain inferences and conclusions about the way in which the economy functions, about the way in which material success is attained, and about the ways in which poverty can be avoided. For instance, through a comparative analysis of the world's main religions, McCleary (2007) has argued that doctrines of salvation and damnation of the major world religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—provide different incentives for performing economic activities and that, to varying degrees, each promotes the accumulation of wealth and hard work while discouraging idleness, debt, and poverty.¹² Moreover, expanding on Weber's well known arguments about the connection between religion and economic behavior and attitudes, recent scholarship has also found that individuals who express commitment to elements of the Protestant Work Ethic—based on the belief that individuals will benefit in the afterlife from their industriousness, efficient use of resources and diligence in this life—are strongly linked to a belief in a just world (Christopher, Zabel, Jones and Marek 2008; Benabou and Tirole 2006). Under this scope, it is possible that individuals who are religious may be more likely to believe that hard effort will be rewarded with greater material success, that the world is essentially just, and that external factors, like family background, do not represent considerable obstacles to economic success. As a result, they may favor lower levels of state-provided social assistance. Additionally, it is also noteworthy to mention that while a belief in a just world and in the importance of hard-

¹² For a more detailed discussion on the economic incentives found in various world religions, see McCleary (2007) and McCleary and Barro (2006).

work may be linked to an individual's religiosity, this does not necessarily mean that religious beliefs *cause* a commitment to hard work and belief in a just world. It could very well also be that individuals who believe that a strong work ethic is of greater importance in determining socio-economic outcomes than the role of other social variables—like family background, race or gender—seek to become committed to religious traditions which emphasize such socio-political views. Thus, either as a source or as a reinforcement of established views, some religious traditions may negatively influence attitudes toward social safety net policies through their emphasis on a strong work ethic as an important element of their doctrine and as the primary explanation for socio-economic differences while downplaying other sources of poverty such as racism, gender discrimination, access to privileged social networks, family history, etc.

One further possible way through which religion may impact the support of social safety net policies is through what Roemer (1998) termed an *issue-bundling effect*. This effect is of particular importance in the US where two major political parties tend to champion different sets of issues. Thus a negative relation between religiosity and the provision of social protection may exist due to issue-bundling in political competition. That is, it may be the case that religious individuals who are favorable to social protection policies support political candidates who are less favorable or unfavorable to it but who, nonetheless, share similar views with regard to another issue dimension. The other issue dimension could involve questions which are of interest to religious individuals, like whether abortion should be legal, whether homosexual marriage should be legalized, the teaching of the theory of evolution in public schools or an issue involving the relation between the church and the state. Through empirical studies and econometric analysis,

Roemer (1998) and Lee and Roemer (2008) have argued that policy outcomes involving income redistribution may be affected by an individual's religion or moral concerns as a core issue dimension in political competition. Arguments about issue bundling suggest that religiosity may be correlated with support for socially conservative candidates who are also unfavorable to social protection policies as part of their political platform, and hence religiosity may appear to be correlated to low support for social spending. This line of argumentation would suggest that perhaps religious individuals are not inherently less favorable or unfavorable to social safety net provision, but they simply appear to be so because of issue-bundling in political competition. There is also evidence that the bundling of political issues may also impact people on the opposite end of the political spectrum. Hout and Fischer (2002) have suggested that the rise—from 7 to 14 percent—in Americans who reported no religious preference from 1991 to 2000 is heavily linked to a backlash against the conservative social agenda of groups associated with organized religion on behalf of political moderates and liberals who had previously identified themselves with a particular religion.

While issue bundling may occur as part of political dynamics, it is questionable to what extent it fully explains the association between religiosity and social spending preferences. Specifically, the work of Scheve and Stasavage (2006) shows that at the individual level, the negative correlation between religiosity and attitudes toward social insurance in America remains significant even while including variables to control for political party affiliation. Furthermore, the same authors have also highlighted that the negative correlation between religiosity and social policy was also present during the 1970s even before Ronald Reagan's coalition of fiscal and social conservatives and Newt

Gingrich's "Contract with America." While issue-bundling may occur, such findings suggest that religiosity may also influence views on social safety net policies through other avenues.

Another line of scholarship has also suggested that the relationship between religiosity and state-sponsored social safety net policies may also be reflective of a direct substitution effect. According to this argument, individuals who are religious may not necessarily be less supportive of social safety net policies than people who are not religious. However, because members of religious congregations receive material benefits or other forms of assistance directly from their churches or other faith-based organizations, they express less demand and support for social assistance provided by the state. Recent scholarship, including Cnaan and Yancey (2000), Hungerman (2005), as well as Dehejia, DeLeire and Luttner (2007), have analyzed data from the U.S. to explore whether membership in religious congregation or institution could be interpreted to function as a form of a social safety net where funds are donated and members of congregations who must deal with adverse events, like unemployment or ill health, receive tangible benefits from their religious organization or church. The most direct form of this hidden safety net is manifested through charitable and altruistic spending by churches and similar religious organizations. For instance, by using data from the *National Household and Families Survey* and the *Consumer Expenditure Survey*, Dehejia et al. found that:

Religious participation partially insures consumption and happiness against income shocks. This finding has important implications for the public provision of social insurance. Social insurance is less valuable for those who are already partly insured through their religious organization, implying that the optimal level of social insurance is inversely related to the religious participation of the population (2007: 277).

While faith-based initiatives in the provision of social assistance were given prominence during the administration of George W. Bush with the creation of the *White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives*, it remains questionable to what extent they are a direct substitute for state-sponsored social safety net programs. The research thus far indicates that, at best, proponents of the substitution argument have been able to demonstrate that, in some instances and within specific denominations, religious monetary assistance is able to attenuate temporary income losses for some of its members, but certainly not fully substitute all components of social safety net programs provided by the state, like health care, wealth redistribution and retirement. One of the reasons as to why it may seem dubious that religious organizations could in effect create a safety net comparable to one provided by the state lies in their possible inability to collect and allocate sufficient funds for such a large-scale endeavor. For instance, even in a relatively more religious nation like the US, religious individuals on average give no more than 2% of their income to churches (Scheve and Stasavage 2006). However, a counter-argument to the belief that religious organizations have insufficient funds stemming from direct contributions from their members is the fact that religious organizations may also be able to get federal or state funding for their social services under section 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Chaves 2004).

Possibly the most forceful argument against the likelihood that religious-based social services could be considered as an alternative or substitute to state-sponsored ones is found in the extensive study of congregation-based social services in America done by

Chaves (2004). Chaves' study highlights the frequency with which congregations partner and collaborate with secular and government agencies in order to provide social services.

Collaboration with other organizations, including secular organizations and government agencies, is the norm when congregations provide social services. The quantity and depth of these collaborations indicate that congregation-based social services often are integrated into community social welfare systems. They are, in other words, part of the larger system, not an alternative to that larger system (Chaves 2004: 73).

Although religious social services may be extensively intertwined with state-provided services, this does not necessarily mean that some members of religious congregations may perceive them to be different and competing social safety net systems. In particular, religious individuals may oppose government-run social services because they believe that religious-based organizations who offer social services carry out the double function of helping those in need while ministering them at the same time. Thus faith-based social services would be preferred over government run services because faith-based efforts may be able to better sway those in need to become more religiously involved. Additionally, perhaps religious individuals may also perceive that religious-based social agencies also help to discourage their beneficiaries from engaging in activities and behaviors which they disapprove of, such as abortion, homosexual marriage/relationships, unmarried cohabitation or premarital sexual relations (Hedges 2006: 23-26). Furthermore, it is also plausible that some devout Christians may fear that if the state were to take over all key social causes, and particularly those involving social assistance, then Christianity may begin to lose its social relevance in modern American and among future generations as has already occurred in many industrialized countries (Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004).

Another possibility regarding the link between religion and social protection is that the nature of the relationship between both is influenced by a third variable, namely, a country's level of economic development. Under the scope of Modernization Theory, the secularization¹³ thesis implies that the rise of science, industrialization, capitalism, and the principles of rationality and efficiency embedded in modern society have given way to a relative decline in the centrality of religion (Lechner 1991). In relation to this, Barro and Mitchell have mentioned that:

The Modernization theory posits that as an economy develops and gets richer, certain societal institutions and features change in a regular way. The Secularization hypothesis applies this theory to religiosity: As economies develop and get richer, people supposedly become less religious. "Less religious" is measured either by participation in organized religion (e.g., church attendance) or by certain indicators of religious belief (2004:2).

Since it has also been noted that wealthier countries have, on average, larger welfare states than poorer ones (Scheve and Stasavage 2008), then it could be argued that religiosity and the provision of social protection are both linked to the level of economic development of a given society, and that the observed negative relationship between religiosity and social protection is truthfully a reflection of the relationship which both of these variables hold with the level of economic development of the society in question. Under this view, the relationship between economic development and the proportional funding for social protection would be a positive one, while the relationship between economic development and religiosity would be a negative one.

This particular view linking both religiosity and social protection to the level of economic development—or modernization—has been challenged mainly due to the

¹³ As discussed in Chapter 2, secularization involves a process by which religion loses its social significance in core sectors of society.

weaknesses found in the secularization thesis, which is a key component of the overall argument. While admittedly religion has lost its cultural and political centrality in many contemporary Western societies worldwide in relation to, for instance, medieval times, several events in the latter part of the twentieth century clearly contrasted with the gradual decline of religion which secularist theorists predicted. For example, in 1979 Islamic clerics were able to overthrow a perceived modernized Iranian regime with widespread popular support and, in the same year, Catholics, rallying around a new “liberation theology,”¹⁴ overthrew a Nicaraguan dictator from power (Gill 2001: 22). Additionally, in the 1980s, under the influence of liberation theology, revolutionary groups across Latin America courted progressive Catholics for their support in their social movements. In the same decade, conservative evangelicals in the United States founded the Moral Majority and played an important role in the presidential election of Ronald Reagan (Gill 2001), while they also had a key role in supporting Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America” in the early 1990s. Furthermore, after analyzing recent scholarship on the theoretical underpinnings of secularism and recent studies on religious commitment, Hamilton (2001) argues that the process of secularization is far from being uniform, continuous or irreversible, and moreover, that the pattern of secularization has not been even or homogeneous across different societies. The same author concludes that

¹⁴ The articulation of Liberation Theology came during and after the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in Medellin, Colombia in 1968. Liberation Theology was first presented in print within the work of Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutierrez (1971) entitled *Hacia una teología de la liberación*. Liberation theologians interpret the Bible, and in particular the life and message of Jesus, as a message which needs to be interpreted out of the context of the suffering, struggle and hope of the poor. By drawing from some Marxist concepts, liberation theologians tend to focus on the role and the importance of economic factors and ideology in oppression and class struggle, and argue that suffering is also the result of unjust social and political structures. For more on liberation theology, see Dussel (1981), Boff and Boff (1987), as well as Belli and Nash (1992).

“the process of secularization [or lack thereof] is greatly affected by the surrounding social context, or the religious history of the country” (2001:205). The wide ranging differences in the patterns of secularization, discussed here in Chapter 2, and the importance of religion in the aforementioned recent social and political developments across the globe cast a serious doubt on the degree to which modernity—even in the form of economic development—necessarily leads to the eventual decline of religion or religious influence in society and politics.

In an effort to sharpen the secularization argument and open new venues of future research, Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) argue that it is not necessarily modernization per se that is associated with secularization in contemporary society, but rather, the size of the welfare state, that is, the proportional amount of resources allocated to social spending. These authors tested their argument by using a sample of 16 to 33 predominantly Christian nations from Europe, Latin America, North America and Asia as well as indicators on religious attendance in the selected countries. Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) found a statistically significant negative relationship between the per capita welfare expenditure of the country and its reported religious service attendance even after taking into account other variables more closely linked to modernization, such as levels of urbanization, literacy and television penetration. These authors concluded that:

People living in countries with high social welfare spending per capita even have less of a tendency to take comfort in religion, perhaps knowing that the state is there to help them in times of crisis [...] there is likely a substitution effect for some individuals between state-provided services and religious services. Religion will still be there to serve the spiritual needs of people seeking answers to the philosophic mysteries of life, but those who value those spiritual goods less than the tangible welfare benefits churches provide will be less likely to participate in religious services once secular substitutes become available (2004: 425).

The conclusions found in Gill and Lundsgaarde's study are limited due to the small, and exclusively Christian, sample of countries used in the study as well as due to the short period of time included in their analysis (1995-2001). Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that the study carried out by Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) is not directly comparable to research included in this chapter or to the analysis presented in proceeding chapters of the present dissertation because their unit of analysis is entire countries while the bulk of the research presented here centers on individual respondents. Nonetheless, while bearing in mind the aforementioned limitations, Gill and Lundsgaarde's work is highly informative since the majority of research on the relationship between religion and social protection within the fields of political science, sociology and even psychology center on the way in which religion may influence political or social preferences and political behavior. However, the work of these authors has brought to the foreground the way in which government policy, in the form of social spending, may have unintended effects which may negatively impact religious participation, thus conceptualizing the nature of the relationship between religion and social safety-net policies as one characterized by fluid two way interactions.

As observed in this section, religion may impact views on social spending in different ways. However, recent attention within the sociological study of religion and social psychology has been granted to the proposition advanced by of Scheve and Stasavage (2008), Park (2005), as well as Paragament (1997). The scholarship of these authors has highlighted the role of religion in coping with adverse or stressful life events. In particular, Park argues that "Religion frequently serves as an individual's core schema, informing beliefs about the self, the world and their interaction, and providing

understanding of mundane and extraordinary circumstances” (2005: 711). The work of Scheve and Stasavage (2008) as well as Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) has characterized religion and social protection as two competing, alternative mechanisms used to deal with adverse life events. While government programs like unemployment insurance, health insurance, and pensions spending may shelter people against the effects of challenging life events, personal involvement in a religion may also diminish the extent to which people are affected by these events. In some cases, religious participation may bring communal material support. However, Scheve and Stasavage (2008), Park (2005), Paragament (1997), as well as Richards, Oman, Hedberg, Thoresen and Bowden (2006) argued that beyond any purely material benefits stemming from religious organizations, religious engagement can also provide important psychic benefits for individuals who suffer an unfavorable event.

In particular, Scheve and Stasavage (2008) have focused on the psychic costs, particularly those costs to individual self esteem, brought about by adverse life events like job loss and income uncertainty at an old age. So, on the one hand, if unemployment involves a loss of self-esteem, then religion may help safeguard individuals against this effect, because their self-esteem is linked heavily to their religious engagement. On the other hand, if facing other challenges like falling ill or suffering a shock to one’s retirement income produces stress, then religion could also serve as a buffer against the negative psychic effects of these experiences.

People who are religious may also derive psychic benefits from having a network of friends from their church, mosque, or synagogue. Such associations may provide comfort during times of difficulty in the same way as would close friends or family.

However, beyond being a support network, religion may also have more profound psychic benefits that make it exceptional in influencing the way individuals appraise and deal with adverse events like job loss or ill health (Pargament 1997; Smith, McCullough, and Poll 2003; Park, Cohen, and Herb 1990). Thus, for instance, religious individuals may judge adverse life events not as a threat to their personal self-esteem, to their life schema, or to their faith and worldview; instead, religious individuals may even interpret unfavorable life events as challenges which offer the opportunity for spiritual and personal growth (Scheve and Stasavage 2008). While classical theorists like Marx and Freud were mostly critical of the way in which religion functioned as an illusory form of happiness which undermined rationality and functioned to overlook people's social and material conditions, admittedly, they also shared the aforementioned view that religion could serve as a psychological buffer against the negative effects of adverse social forces.

Parting from the assumption that religion, as a practice and worldview, may offer psychic benefits which help individuals to cope with difficult events, Scheve and Stasavage (2008) have argued that a negative relationship exists between religiosity and support for social insurance. Essentially, these authors argue that if one accepts that religion and social programs have related effects in aiding people faced with adverse social circumstances, and that they both have costs (taxes for welfare programs and time invested for the religiously involved), then to the extent that individuals privately insure themselves via religion, they should logically prefer a lower level of insurance and assistance by the state. In order to test their argument, the authors analyzed data on religiosity and support for social protection in the United States included in the General Social Survey from 1972 to 2002. The authors established their indicator for religiosity

based on the individual frequency of attendance to religious services. The measure of support for social insurance was formulated based on respondent's support for additional spending on healthcare and social security. Scheve and Stasavage (2008) found that for the time covered, higher levels of religiosity were consistently and negatively related to support for social insurance. The negative relationship remained statistically significant even after taking into account the role of the respondent's denomination, income, party affiliation, race/ethnic background, place of residence in the country, education, and age.

Christianity, Social Protection and Ethnicity

While the scholarship presented in the previous sub-section has been useful in designing research to better conceptualize the relationship between religiosity and support for social protection policies in America, little has been done to assess whether this relationship holds to be the same among America's various ethnic groups. Recent contributions from Scheve and Stasavage (2006), Chen and Lind (2007), McCleary (2007), Lee (2006) have a marked tendency to conceptualize religion and social safety net policies as two alternative mechanisms to deal with harsh circumstances. However, given that these authors tested their hypothesis by considering the U.S. population at large or by comparing aggregate data for entire nations, they failed to consider the possible nuances found within strongly Christian, yet relatively more impoverished, ethnic groups in the US, like Hispanics and African-Americans. For instance, Scheve and Stasavage (2008) analyzed a representative sample of the entire US population but did not analyze Hispanics or Black Americans separately or independently. Given that the majority of the American population is white, Christian, and not impoverished, it is quite possible that their analysis would yield a statistically significant result for the American

population at large, but not for some ethnic/racial groups whose members face a higher risk of poverty and are thus more likely to demand social protection, irrespective of their level of religiosity.

There are important reasons to believe that the relationship between religiosity and social safety net support does not work the same way for African-American and Hispanics as it does for whites in the US. After all, Barack Obama was elected in 2008 on the promise to increase social spending in an effort to provide better health care to those lacking medical insurance. Obama was strongly supported by both religious and non-religious Blacks and Hispanics. Moreover, historically, many prominent African-American intellectuals have conceptualized the black church as a key proponent of social change. “Indeed, some of the most productive scholars – W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, and C. Eric Lincoln – have established that the black church is a profoundly social institution and often serves as an agent of social reform” (Billingsley 1999: 6). Rev. Martin Luther King accentuated the connection between the Black Church and social reform with his inclusion of issues relating to socio-economic inequality within the Civil Rights Movement and his “Poor People’s Campaign” in 1968, organized alongside with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Similarly, Hispanic ethnic churches—which are mostly Catholic while some Protestant ones are rapidly increasing in numbers—have been active supporters of social reform and of public causes directly linked to the improvement of social conditions among the Hispanic population in the US. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s ethnic Hispanic churches have offered services in Spanish, endorsed Cesar Chavez’s agricultural boycotts aimed at improving wages and working conditions of farm workers

through the Bishop's Committee on Farm Labor in 1973, generated support for organizations like PADRES (Priest's Associated for Religious, Educational and Social Rights), and actively sheltered and provided for illegal immigrants and their families. Moreover, since the 1970's Hispanic Catholic leaders like Bishop Patricio Flores, Bishop Juan Arzube and Bishop Roger Mahony have stood out as vocal advocates of social reform (Sandoval 2006).

In light of the socio-historical importance of religion in struggles for social justice and reform among African Americans and Hispanics, there is reason to suspect that the negative association between religiosity and support for social insurance found in the analysis of Scheve and Stasavage (2006) and Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) does not fully encapsulate the possible nuances found among these ethnic minority groups. That is, while Scheve and Stasavage (2006), Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004), among others, argue that religion and social protection constitute two *alternative* and *competing* mechanisms to cope with adverse life events, the argument proposed here is that for African Americans and Hispanics religion and social protection may indeed represent two *complementary* institutions which have helped these groups to deal with social and economic distress and disparities in the past as well as in the present. Thus, the findings of the dissertation research presented in the following chapters are to contribute to the existing research in the fields of public opinion research and the sociology of religion by taking a more nuanced approach to the relationship between religiosity and support for social insurance found at the intersection of race/ethnicity, social class and religion.

Chapter summary

The present chapter begins by establishing definitions for *social insurance*, *welfare*, *social safety net*, as well as *social protection* which often times have confusing or overlapping meanings. The chapter also presents arguments from previous research on diverging attitudes towards social safety net policies in the United States of America. Thereafter, the chapter summarizes previous literature on the nexus between religious involvement and support or opposition to social protection policies found within the fields of political science, public opinion research and social psychology. Lastly, the present chapter has also presented some scholarship on the ethnic church in its role in battle for social justice and equality in contemporary American society.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology used in the present study to assess the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection. In particular, this chapter outlines the research questions of the study, describes and justifies the appropriateness of the data sources, the sample(s), the statistical techniques, the variables and research procedures used in carrying out the present analysis on the nexus between an individual's level of Christian religiosity and attitudes toward the various dimensions of social protection. This chapter describes the two broad stages of the study. In the first stage, a national sample is analyzed and the hypotheses relating to it are listed. In the second stage, the Hispanic and Black American samples are analyzed individually and separately. The hypotheses relating to these two samples are also described in this chapter. Lastly, the present chapter also outlines the potential methodological limitations found in the present study.

Research questions

Taking into account the various contributions and knowledge gaps of existing scholarship described in Chapter 3, the present dissertation will attempt to respond to the following research questions:

1. Are more religious Christian individuals less likely to support all or most social protection policies such as welfare, health care, social security, unemployment benefits, and income redistribution mechanisms?
2. Is the level of support for social protection policies consistent across identifiable Christian groups in the United States (for example, Evangelical Christians, Mainline Christians, Liberal Christians, etc.)? What factors help explain the consistency of support, or lack thereof, for social protection policies across these identifiable groups?
3. Does the relationship between Christian religiosity and support for social protection work markedly differently for members of racial/ethnic minorities, like African Americans or Hispanic-Americans? In essence, are members of these minority groups just as likely to support social protection regardless of whether they are religious Christians or not?
3. What role do economic standing, partisanship and political ideology play in the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social protection policies? In other words, is the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social protection policies somewhat independent of economic standing, partisanship and

political ideology as Scheve and Stasavage's (2008) suggested, or do these factors largely mediate this relationship?

4. Is there evidence that moral issues are bundled with opposition to social protection policies in recent, high-profile electoral competitions in the United States? If so, what role does Christian religiosity play in facilitating such an issue bundling effect?

These questions have guided the research process and are of particular relevance to the way in which the research design and methodology were completed. The following subsections outline the sample, statistical methods, variables and research procedures used in the analysis in an effort to respond to the aforementioned research questions.

The General Social Survey and its sample

The data for the present study was obtained from the General Social Survey. The General Social Survey (GSS) is one of the largest surveys and longest projects administrated by the National Opinion Research Center, hosted at the University of Chicago. Additionally, the GSS is the largest project funded by the Sociology Program of the National Science Foundation. The GSS began its first wave in 1972 and completed its 27th round in the year 2008. During this time period, the GSS has been monitoring social change and public opinion found in American society. The survey asks respondents self-descriptive demographic and socio-economic questions, as well as questions relating to their viewpoints on a wide range of social, political and economic issues. Given that the GSS includes a time frame of over 30 years, a sizable amount of socio-demographic and public opinion data, as well as a statistically meaningful sample size, it has been a useful source to many social scientists interested in establishing and monitoring links amongst

various social variables. With the exception of the US Census, the GSS is the most frequently analyzed source of information in the social sciences with over 14,000 research uses in articles within academic journals, books, and PhD dissertations (General Social Survey 2006).

Every wave of the GSS survey uses a cluster sampling method to select a sample that represents the non-institutionalized persons 18 years of age or older, living in the US. Interviewers usually carry out the interview face-to-face with the individuals selected for the sample in the respondent's home, although more recently a few interviews have been done electronically or over the phone. The 2006 and 2008 survey included, for the first time, interviews in Spanish.

Researchers at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) select a new probability sample of US *households* for each wave of the GSS. Specifically, they use a cluster sampling method initially based on geographical units. Since their final sample only lists households, people living in institutions (including dormitories) cannot be in the sample, and thus they are not part of the population sampled. For instance, those who are imprisoned, living in college campuses, in mental institutions or in military facilities have no chance of being selected into the sample of the General Social Survey. Trained interviewers go to each selected household to ensure that it is not vacant and that it exists. If the dwelling unit exists and is not vacant, then researchers verify that its residents are eligible for the sample, i.e. that they are English-speaking adults living within the residence (or, in 2006 and 2008, Spanish-speakers as well).

If the household is eligible, the interviewer constructs a list of all English-speaking adults (or Spanish-speaking adults since 2006) living in the household. The interviewer then uses a probability method to select one of these eligible adults for the sample. If there is only one eligible adult, then that adult is selected. Thereafter, the interviewer schedules an interview with the selected respondent. The actual number of participants is typically a bit smaller than the selected sample. For instance, the selected 2004 GSS sample had over 3,000 respondents and only seventy-one percent of the selected units took part in the study, making the actual sample 2,812.

The GSS does include a set of core questions which are asked every time it is carried out, such questions include basic information like race, education, work status, gender, religion, income, etc. However, many of the other questions asked may be different from one wave of the GSS to another and some survey years have been almost exclusively dedicated to specific topics. Nonetheless, even during the same survey year some questions will be asked to only part of the selected sample. In an effort to keep each interview at a reasonable length, which is on average about an hour and a half, and still cover a wide range of topics, NORC researchers create three versions of each year's questionnaire. All forms include certain questions while other questions may vary by form or even topic. The particular questionnaire used in each interview is determined by a probability method. Use of multiple questionnaires mean that the number of respondents for a given question may be one third, two thirds or the entire selected sample for the survey year.

Sample descriptives

This subsection provides descriptive information about the sample used in the present study. The sample was obtained from the various General Social Survey waves from 1973 to 2008. Only those who self-reported to be Christians and those who reported not to be a part of any religion but who were also raised by one or two Christian parents were selected for the present study.¹⁵ Forty four percent of the sample was identified as male and fifty six as female. Eighty two percent of the respondents identified themselves as white while eighteen percent identified themselves as black or other. The average age of the survey participants was 45 while the average number of years of formal education was 13. Approximately thirty one percent of sample respondents resided in cities with over 50,000 inhabitants, while forty nine percent resided in suburbs or smaller cities of 10,000 to 49,000 inhabitants, and twenty percent resided in smaller towns and rural areas. In terms of religious preference, sixty two percent identified themselves as Protestant-Christians, from a wide variety of denominations, twenty five percent as Catholic-Christians, eleven percent said they did not practice any religion but were brought up by at least one Christian parent while the remaining part reported to be Orthodox or unspecified Christians.

As explained in the proceeding variable descriptions, not all variables were asked in every year of the GSS. As a result, each cross-tabulation between the various measures of religiosity and social protection has a different sample size. Sample sizes ranged from

¹⁵ For the purposes of the present study, it was important to ensure that even those who claimed to be non-religious atheists had at least some exposure and familiarity with the Christian faith. The researcher did that by selecting only those non-religious atheists who had been raised by at least one Christian parent.

29,571 to 586 respondents, depending on the selected variables in the analysis. In any event, each table in the results section in Chapter 5 includes the exact number of participants included in the analysis. The following subsection describes the statistical methods used in the present study.

Statistical Methods

The present study used correlation coefficients and regression analysis to assess the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection policy preferences. A correlation coefficient¹⁶ simply measures the degree to which two variables vary together and ranges from -1 to 1. If one of the variables increases while the other increases as well, the relationship is said to be a positive correlation; conversely if one variable decreases as the other one increases, the correlation is said to be negative. If the correlation coefficient is 0 or very close to 0, then the two variables are said not to be related in an identifiable pattern and a change in one of the variables is unrelated to a change in the other one. On the one hand, when the probability that the two variables are simply related by chance is less than 5 percent, then the correlation coefficient is considered to be statistically significant; on the other hand, if the probability that the two variables are related only by chance is greater than 5 percent then the correlation coefficient is said not to be statistically significant ((Norusis2006).

¹⁶ The Pearson and the Spearman correlation coefficients are both used in the present analysis. While the Pearson correlation coefficient is typically used for continuous metric variables like age or income, the Spearman correlation coefficient is normally used for cross-tabulated data. The interpretation of both the Pearson coefficient and the Spearman coefficient follows the same explanation provided here.

Unlike the correlation coefficient, regression analysis allows the researcher to analyze more than two variables. Regression analysis is one form of multivariate analysis¹⁷ which allows the researcher to analyze the effects of many variables upon another one at the same time (Stark and Roberts 1998). In the literature on social research methods, regression analysis is also identified as an example of a causal or elaboration model. For the purposes of the current study, regression analysis is helpful since the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection policy preferences does not occur in a vacuum and it may be affected by other variables such as income, gender, race, education, etc. Regression analysis allows the researcher to assess the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection policy preferences while also taking into account other relevant variables.

The regression analysis model is made up of a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The dependent variable is hypothesized to be the effect being caused, that is, the variable that depends on the variability of other variables (Stark and Roberts 1998). Conversely, the independent variable is thought to be the cause of the variation of the dependent variable. In the present research we assume that attitudes toward social protection policies are largely dependent on the level of religiosity of American individuals, among other factors. Thus, for the purposes of this study, individual attitudes toward social protection policies represent the dependent variable while the level of Christian religiosity constitutes the independent variable of interest.

¹⁷ Multivariate analysis can be defined as an analysis of multiple variables in a single relationship or set of relationships (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham 2006: 4).

Within the context of social science research, besides the independent variable of interest, other independent variables, often times called control variables, are included in the regression model as well. These control variables are included by social science researchers as a way to assess alternate factors which may influence or entirely explain the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. A control variable may influence the relationship between the dependent and independent variables by virtue of being an antecedent or intervening variable (Newman 2004). An antecedent variable precedes both the dependent and the independent variable in time and is the cause of both. An antecedent variable can be conceptualized as the cause of a spurious correlation between two other variables (Norusis 2006). For example, a researcher may find that the height of elementary students is correlated to their reading level. However, this would be a spurious correlation given that both the height and reading level of elementary students is a product of their age—which would be the antecedent variable in this example (Newman 2004). The intervening variable is one which provides a link or mediates the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. The intervening variable can be thought of as being part of a causal chain; the independent variable causes the intervening variable, which in turn, causes the variation in the dependent variable (Stark and Roberts 1998). For example, the relationship between educational level and yearly income could be thought of as being mediated by occupational type. In other words, higher levels of education allow individuals to access occupations which are better remunerated. A description of all control variables included in the regression models of the current study as well as the rationale for their inclusion, based on the researcher's

suspicion that they may operate as antecedent or intervening variables, is discussed within each variable description presented latter in this chapter.

Regression analysis attempts to predict the values of the dependent variable based on the variability or information provided by the independent variable of interest and the control variables included in the analysis (Norusis2006). The particular type of regression analysis used in the present study is Ordinal Least Squares Regression Analysis, also known as OLS regression. More specifically, OLS regression utilizes the variability of all variables included to minimize the overall squared difference between the actual value and the predicted for the dependent variable (Newman 2004). In doing so, OLS regression analysis provides the social science researcher the distinct advantage of assessing the strength of each independent or control variables in predicting the values of the dependent variable once the effects of all predictor variables are taken into account, or controlled for. Through OLS regression analysis, the researcher is able to determine if the association between two variables remains strong after taking into account, or controlling for, the effects of additional variables. Thus there are three possible outcomes of OLS regression when we add control variables to a statistically significant relationship between two variables (Stark and Roberts 1998). According to Stark and Roberts, the first possible outcome is that once one or more of the control variables are added, the relationship between the independent and the dependent is no longer statistically significant because the control variable serves as an antecedent or intervening variable in that relationship. The second outcome is that one or more of the control variables partially explain the relationship between the dependent and the independent. In this second case, the relationship between the dependent and independent

variable of interest may be mediated, or influenced by, one or more of the control variables, but the control variable(s) cannot fully explain or capture all of the effects which the independent variable may have on the dependent variable. Lastly, the third possible outcome is that the control variables are not useful in explaining the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable of interest.

In the OLS regression analysis presented in the current study, the relative strength of the association between the dependent variable and all other predictor variables (the independent variable of interest and all of the control variables included) is measured through the size and statistical significance of the Beta weights, also known as Beta coefficients (Norus'is2006). The Beta coefficient represents the standardized partial coefficient¹⁸ and basically indicates the relative strength of association between a particular predictor variable and the dependent variable. Beta coefficients range from 1 to -1; a positive Beta coefficient means the relationship between that predictor variable and the dependent variable is positive, while a negative Beta denotes a negative relationship. In a regression analysis model, the closer the Beta coefficient for a particular predictor variable is to 1 or -1, the stronger the association between that predictor and the dependent variable. Likewise, predictor variables closer to 0 hold a weaker association with the dependent variable in comparison to other predictors in the model whose Beta weight is closer to 1 or -1. The level of statistical significance of a given predictor variable is based upon the likelihood that such a variable holds no association whatsoever with the dependent variable. In other words, that the Beta weight for that variable is equal

¹⁸ A partial coefficient in regression analysis indicates the change in the dependent variable when the independent variable increases by one while holding all other predictor variables in the model constant.

to zero (Newman 2004). If there is a five percent chance or less that a given predictor variable holds no association with the dependent variable, such a predictor variable is considered to be statistically significant. Conversely, if the likelihood that the predictor holds no association with the dependent variable is above five percent, then the predictor variable is considered *not* to be statistically significant. Overall, the level of statistical significance of a given predictor variable will roughly correspond to the size of its Beta weight (Norusi 2006). Those variables with Beta weights closer to zero will not be statistically significant predictors while those farther removed from zero will be.

Through OLS regression analysis we are better able to capture the relationship between a dependent variable and the independent variable of interest taking into account the role which control variables may play. As Stark and Roberts (1998) point out, if the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable in OLS regression remains statistically significant once the control variables are added and if none of the control variables are statistically significant in the regression model, then the researcher may conclude that the selected control variables have no impact on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. If the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable of interest in OLS regression remains statistically significant—although to a lesser extent—while one or more control variables are also statistically significant, then we may conclude that the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable of interest is partially mediated by the effects of those control variables which are statistically significant. Lastly, if the relationship between the dependent and independent variable is no longer statistically significant once the control variables are added to the OLS regression, then the researcher may conclude

that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is fully accounted for by the effects of one or more of the control variables serving either as intervening or antecedent variables in such a relationship. The following subsections describe the dependent, independent and control variables used in the present study.

Dependent variables

Measuring Support for Social Protection

As noted in Chapter 2, there is a wide range of social programs and initiatives commonly grouped under the auspices of the term *social protection*. In particular, while discussing the objectives of various social protection programs, authors such as Feldstein (2005), Jurado (2001), as well as Paitoonpong, Abe and Puopongsakorn (2008) make a distinction between social welfare and social insurance. For these authors, welfare programs and benefits are means tested, that is, they are granted to those whose income and overall wealth falls below a nationally determined level and are an integral part of income redistribution efforts. In contrast, social insurance is designed to help those who suffer from a shock, crisis or life event that places them in an adverse social circumstance or loss. As also noted in Chapter 2, the term *social protection* encompasses the various institutions, networks and programs by which a government can provide help to its citizens, be it conditioned-based (such as unemployment or retirement benefits), income-based (such as Medicare), short-term or long-term (Jurado 2001). In an effort to capture the different purposes and categorizations of various social protection policies, five different variables which measure the support for diverse social protection objectives

were identified within the General Social Survey. These five variables are described as follows.

Support for Income Redistribution

In almost every survey year ranging from 1978 to 2008 the General Social Survey has asked participants a question regarding their view on the government's role in income redistribution. The question is introduced by the following text:

Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor (General Social Survey 2006).

Thereafter, respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 7 their view on income redistribution where 1 meant that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences and 7 meant that the government ought to reduce the income differences between rich and poor.¹⁹

Support for Welfare

General Social Survey interviewers also asked respondents about their support for welfare spending. This particular question appears on every GSS year ranging from 1973 to 2008. The question basically asks respondents to state whether they felt that the government is spending (1) "Too much," (2) "About right," or (3) "Too little" on welfare. Thus if a given respondent chose number one, then he or she would be less supportive of

¹⁹ The variables used in the present analysis to measure religiosity and social protection were recoded from their original form in the General Social Survey so that higher numerical values always meant higher levels of religiosity and social protection and, likewise, lower numerical values meant lower levels of religiosity and social protection. This was done simply to facilitate the presentation and interpretation of results.

welfare spending (or at the very least opposed to additional welfare spending), and vice versa, those who chose number three would be most supportive of additional welfare spending.

Support for Social Security

Quite similarly to the question on the support for welfare spending, the GSS also asks respondents about their support for social security spending. However, unlike the question on welfare spending, the GSS did not begin asking about respondents' attitudes toward social security until 1984. Thereafter, the GSS has consistently included the question on social security spending. The question basically asks respondents to state whether they feel that the government is spending (1) "Too much," (2) "About right," or (3) "Too little" on social security. Again, this particular variable was set equal to (1) for those who support social security the least and (3) for those who are most supportive of additional spending.

Support for Health Care

The GSS asked respondents about their views on health care spending from 1973 to 2008. The question is phrased in the following way:

We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount [...] improving and protecting the nation's health (GSS 2006).

Respondents then must select from one of the following: (1) "Too much," (2) "About right," or (3) "Too little." Again, just as with the other dependent variables, the higher

value—in this case 3—represents more support for health care spending while the lower value represents the least support for it.

Support for Unemployment Benefits

A particular question from the General Social Survey has been selected to capture the support for spending on unemployment benefits. This particular question on unemployment benefits was not asked as consistently as the previous questions on income redistribution, welfare, social security or health care; it was asked in the 1985, 1990, 1996 and 2006 waves of the GSS. The specific question is as follows: “Please indicate whether you would like to see more or less government spending in [unemployment benefits]. Remember that if you say ‘much more,’ it might require a tax increase to pay for it” (GSS 2006). The responses to this question are coded as follows: (1) Spend much less, (2) Spend less, (3) Spend about the same, (4) Spend more, and (5) Spend much more.

Independent variables

Measuring Christian Religiosity

There are a few questions included within the General Social Survey which attempt to measure the self-reported degree of religiosity of survey participants. Unfortunately, most of these questions about religiosity were only included within a few waves of the GSS, while only a handful of questions were included in several survey years. Unlike the previous research described in Chapter 3, the present study includes three different measures of religiosity. In this study, only those who self-identify as

Christians and those who report not to practice any religion, but were raised by at least one Christian parent, were selected in the sample; thus each variable measures the degree to which respondents are religious Christians or not. What follows is a description of the three variables used in this study to measure Christian religiosity at the individual level.

Religious attendance

Every wave of the General Social Survey up until now has asked participants to answer: *How often do you attend religious services?* Respondents are given the following options and must choose one of them: *never, at least once a year, once a year, several times a year, once a month, two to three times a month, almost every week, every week, and more than once a week* (GSS 2006). This particular question was the measure of religiosity in the study done by Scheve and Stasavage (2008) on religiosity and social insurance.

In their study, Scheve and Stasavage (2008) interpreted each of the possible responses to correspond to a particular level of religiosity and they assigned numbers from a range of 0 to 8 to each response on religious attendance where *never* would correspond to 0 and *more than once a week* would correspond to 8. This approach, however, seems somewhat inappropriate since the variables used in multivariate analysis must have equal intervals between them or at least close to equal intervals. Since each of the responses to the question on religious attendance (*never, at least once a year, once a year, several times a year, once a month, two to three times a month, almost every week, every week, and more than once a week*) relates to an estimated number of attendances per year, we cannot assume that there are equal intervals between each response.

In an effort to establish comprehensible intervals between each response, the GSS responses on religious attendance were transformed into an estimated frequency of religious attendance per year. *never* corresponds to an estimated 0 attendances per year, *at least once a year* and *once a year* correspond to 1 attendance to religious services per year, *several times a year* was computed as an estimated 6 attendances per year, *once a month* corresponds to 12 attendances per year, *two to three times a month* and *almost every week* were grouped as an estimated 30 religious attendances per year, *every week* corresponds to 48 attendances per year, and *more than once a week* was estimated to correspond to 72 attendances to religious services per year.²⁰ Thus this particular indicator of Christian religiosity ranges from an estimated number of 0 to 72 attendances to religious services per year. The inclusion of this variable in the analysis is very valuable since it was included in every General Social Survey done since 1973, thus providing the researcher with a large sample across nearly four decades.

Strength of Affiliation

Another variable linked to the level of religiosity at the individual level is based on the self-reported strength of affiliation to the individual's chosen religion/denomination. After individuals are asked if they have a religious preference, they are also asked about the strength of affiliation they feel towards their selected religion or denomination. Respondents are given four choices to indicate the strength of

²⁰ Purposely, religious attendance was slightly underestimated for those who said they attended religious services "every week" and also for those who claimed that they attended "more than once a week". Bruce (1996) argued that religious attendance is frequently overstated by respondents, particularly by those who claim to attend every week. Additionally, one must also consider that even those who claim high levels of attendance may not go all Sundays out of a year due to vacations or other commitments.

their affiliation to their particular religion. The options range from (1) *no religion* to (4) *strong*. This question was included in almost every year in which the GSS was done, thus also allowing the researcher the possibility of using a large sample of respondents from the early seventies up until the year 2008. Unlike previous research on religiosity and social spending, we include this variable as an additional measure of religiosity.

Religious Person

Perhaps the most direct way in which the General Social Survey has ever asked about the level of religiosity of respondents can be found in the following question: To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Respondents then choose one of the following: (4) *very religious* (3) *moderately religious* (2) *slightly religious* (1) *not religious*.²¹ Thus, the higher the number on the scale from 1 to 4 indicates a higher level of an individual participant's religiosity. Unfortunately, unlike the other two aforementioned indicators of religiosity, this one was only asked in three waves of the GSS. It was asked in the 1998, 2006 and 2008 General Social Survey years. Although this variable was asked to a relatively smaller sample, it is the most direct question about an individual's religiosity in the General Social Survey, and as a result, it was included in the present analysis.

Control variables

The variables mentioned in the following subsection serve as control variables. In other words, these control variables will help to determine whether or not the relationship

²¹ Respondents could also select "Don't know" or "No Answer" to this question.

between the various measurements of religiosity and social protection is best explained or mediated by the inclusion of other social variables in the analysis. We use control variables to ensure that the correlations between measures of religiosity (independent variables) and social protection (dependent variable) are still present or relevant even after we take into account the effects of other relevant variables (Norušis 2007). The control variables used in the present analysis are: *Family income decile, Age, Education years, Female, Non-white, Currently unemployed, Unemployed in the past 10 years, Catholic, Partisanship, Conservative Political Views, Urban, Rural* and *Survey Year*. These control variables are described below.

Family income decile

Family income decile ranges between 1 and 10 and groups the family income of respondents into family income deciles. Since individuals and families with higher income levels tend to be less vulnerable to economic shocks and are also less likely to seek social protection from the state because they are better able to insure themselves for such events, we suspect that they would be overall less favorable toward the various measures of social protection.

Age

Age is set equal to the respondent's age at the time of the survey. We suspect that older individuals would be more supportive of social spending due to the fact that many of them rely on state-provided health care and retirement benefits. Additionally, given that older individuals tend to be less employable than younger ones, their reliance on state social protection is far greater than the middle aged or younger segments of the

population. Nonetheless, the variable *age* may have counterpoised effects on attitudes toward social protection policies since young adults normally face higher levels of unemployment given that they are typically less experienced than middle-aged adults. Thus younger adults may also be more demanding of social protection from the state.

Education years

Education years is set equal to the highest year of education completed by the respondent and ranges from 0 for those without any formal schooling to 20 for those individuals with 8 or more years of higher education. More educated individuals are likely to have access to professions where employment is more stable and to occupations which provide a higher income and a benefits package that would make them much less reliant on state-provided social protection. Additionally, highly educated individuals may also be able to better adjust to trying economic times than those with little education and thus more likely not to support social safety net policies (Scheve and Stasavage 2008). Conversely, higher levels of education could, in some instances, lead to more support for social spending. For instance, Bruce-Briggs (1979) argued that college graduates who obtained degrees in the humanities and social sciences, or those individuals whose degree programs included a sizeable liberal arts curriculum, were likely to support liberal positions in American politics. While bearing in mind the contrasting effects of education, we expect that, for the most part, individuals with higher levels of education generally experience lower levels of economic risk and are thus less likely to be supportive of social safety net policies.

Female

Female is a dichotomous variable equal to 0 for male survey participants and 1 for female ones. The inclusion of the *Female* control variable responds to the fact that previous research has found gender differences in a wide range of policy preferences (Conway, Steuernagel and Ahern 2005; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Additionally, given that females, on average, tend to earn less than males, this control variable serves as an additional proxy for income insecurity. Thus we expect that females would be more supportive of social protection than males.

Non-white

Any respondent who identifies himself or herself as white is set equal to 0 and those who identified themselves as any other race are set equal to 1. The research of Bobo and Kluegel (1993) has indicated that racial minorities, and in particular African-Americans, are more supportive of social protection policies than whites, and that racist sentiment may be behind the staunch opposition to welfare among some whites. Additionally, given that most non-white racial minorities, on average, earn less than whites, this control variable also serves as an additional proxy for income insecurity. In this context, we suspect that non-whites are more supportive for social spending than whites.

Currently unemployed

Currently unemployed is a dichotomous variable which is set to 1 for those participants who are currently unemployed and 0 for everyone else who is not

unemployed. Given that many of the unemployed face economic hardship, or the possibility of it if they are unemployed for a prolonged period, the present analysis suggests that the unemployed should be more supportive of social protection, and in particular of unemployment benefits and welfare, than those who are currently employed or those who are not actively seeking employment.

Unemployed in the past 10 years

In various waves of the General Social Survey respondents were asked: “At any time during the last ten years, have you been unemployed and looking for work for as long as a month” (GSS 2006)? *Unemployed in the past 10 years* is set equal to 1 for those respondents who have been unemployed for a month or longer in the past 10 years and 0 for those who have not. Instead of simply accounting for those who were unemployed at the time of the survey, this control variable gives us an indication of the attitudes of those who have faced hardship due to unemployment in the past. Again, in this case we suspect that those who have been unemployed for a month or more in the past are likely to be more supportive of social safety net policies because they have been exposed to economic insecurity in the past.

Catholic

The variable *Catholic* is set to 1 if the respondent identifies himself or herself as Catholic and 0 otherwise. As discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, there are doctrinal and historical reasons which might lead individuals from different denominations to have different levels of support for social spending. Given that throughout much of the 1990s there has been a positive, but weak, correlation between the percentage of Catholics in a

country and levels of social spending (Scheve and Stasavage 2006) and given that, historically, the role of individual merit in economic achievement has been less pronounced in the Catholic doctrine in comparison to some Protestant branches, we suspect that Catholics should prefer higher levels of social protection.

Partisanship

Partisanship ranges from 0 to 6. Respondents who identify themselves as strong Democrats are set equal to 0 while those who identify themselves as strong Republicans are set equal to 6. As mentioned in Chapter 3, there may be an issue-bundling effect in American political competition where perhaps religious individuals are not inherently less favorable or unfavorable to social insurance provision, but they simply appear to be opposed to social spending because they tend to support conservative politicians as a result of their social/moral views. In essence, the inclusion of the *Partisanship* variable seeks to assess the extent to which the relationship between religiosity and the support for social protection is mediated by traditional party alignments in American politics. For *Partisanship*, we expect that the more Republican the individual, the less likely it is that he or she would support social spending.

Conservative Views

In a similar vein as *Partisanship*, the GSS also asked respondents to rate their political views ranging from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative). While there are many reasons as to why a given respondent could identify with or vote for the Republican or Democratic Party at a particular time or election, this may or may not necessarily be a reflection of his or her political views. This variable is a little more

specific as to the ideological persuasion of the respondents than the variable *partisanship*. Given that the notions of the welfare state and social justice have more solid grounding among individuals of liberal persuasion in American politics, we expect that more conservative respondents will have a preference for less social spending. The inclusion of *Conservative political views* in the present analysis serves to assess to what degree the relationship between religiosity and support for social protection is mediated by traditional ideological alignments in American politics.

Urban/Rural

Urban/rural is a dichotomous variable set equal to 1 if the respondent lives in a large or medium-sized city with fifty thousand or more residents and 0 otherwise. Similarly, *Rural* is a dichotomous variable set equal to 1 if the respondent's place of residence has ten thousand or less inhabitants and 0 otherwise. The reference category for both variables is made up by those individuals who reside in suburban areas. Since individuals who hold more liberal views tend to reside in larger urban areas and since many inner cities in America are inhabited by lower-income families who rely in various ways on state-funded social safety net programs, we suspect that individuals in urban areas should be more supportive of higher levels of social spending. Conversely, residents of many smaller towns and rural areas across America tend to hold more traditional values, to be more socially conservative and to align themselves with the Republican Party in political elections. As a result, we suspect them to be less supportive of social spending than urban residents.

Year

Year is a continuous variable which is set equal to the year in which each respondent participated in the survey. It is possible that growing social inequality since the 1970s coupled with substantial job losses partly due to deindustrialization in the past three decades have had an important impact on the way in which individuals view social protection. As a result, it is plausible that over the course of the past three decades individuals in America may have begun to give more importance to health care spending, welfare and unemployment benefits. The inclusion of this variable in the analysis is to ensure that the relationship between religiosity and the measures of social protection mentioned in this chapter is not simply a reflection of changing attitudes towards social protection over time.

Research procedures

As stated in Chapter 3 and in the research questions of the present chapter, the relationship between religiosity and support for social safety net policies may be different for white Americans than for African-Americans and Hispanics because of the historical role which religion and religious institutions have played in the struggle for social justice and civil rights among these minority groups. As a result, the present research was carried out in two different stages. In the first stage, the entire national sample was analyzed. In the second stage, only those respondents who identified themselves as black or Hispanic were considered into the analysis. The General Social Survey has collected information on respondents' race since its first waves in the 1970s. Nonetheless, the General Social Survey did not ask respondents whether or not they identified themselves as

Hispanic/Latino until the year 2000. Thus, the available sample for the Hispanic population is much smaller in comparison to the black sample. What follows is a description of the research procedures performed at each stage.

Stage 1: The analysis of the entire national sample

For this stage, the entirely available GSS sample was used to perform the analysis. OLS regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social protection.²² Unlike previous research, various measures of Christian religiosity were used as independent variables of interest in separate OLS regressions using each measure of support for social protection as a dependent variable. Different measures of religiosity were used based on the assumption that if there is something about Christian religiosity that induces or sways individuals in a given direction with regard to public support for social protection, then we should see this effect consistently across various indicators of religious attachment. While Scheve and Stasavage (2008) have explored individual level data on the relationship between religiosity and two components of social protection (health care and social security), the present research analyzes the relationship between an individual's level of Christian religiosity and his or her support for other components of social protection besides health care and social security. In addition to individual support for health care and social

²² Since the dependent variables in the analysis are ordinal and not interval or ratio, the most appropriate technique would be Ordinal Regression Analysis and not Ordinal Least Squares Regression Analysis. Ordinal Regression Analysis was performed and the results did not differ in any substantial way from those presented in Chapter 5. In light of this, OLS regression was used in the present study to facilitate the presentation and interpretation of results.

security spending, the present analysis also considers support for income redistribution, welfare, and unemployment benefits.

Firstly, the analysis begins with a simple bivariate model which takes into account the relationship between *Religious attendance* and each individual measure of support for social protection: *income redistribution, welfare, social security, health care* and *unemployment benefits*. Based on previous research indicating a negative relationship between individual or country level measures of religiosity and selected indicators of social spending (Scheve and Stasavage 2006; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Chen and Lind 2007), the following hypotheses represent the researcher's expectations prior to carrying out the analysis:

H₁: The more frequently an individual *attends Christian religious services*, the less supportive he or she is of *income redistribution* at a statistically significant level.

H₂: The more frequently an individual *attends Christian religious services*, the less supportive he or she is of public spending on *welfare* at a statistically significant level.

H₃: The more frequently an individual *attends Christian religious services*, the less supportive he or she is of public spending on *social security* at a statistically significant level.

H₄: The more frequently an individual *attends Christian religious services*, the less supportive he or she is of public spending on *health care* at a statistically significant level.

H₅: The more frequently an individual *attends Christian religious services*, the less supportive he or she is of public spending on *unemployment benefits* at a statistically significant level.

If any of the initial bivariate models were found to be statistically significant, then the control variables were added in OLS regression analysis. This was done in order to assess whether or not the relationship between *religious attendance* and social protection was accounted for or mostly due to the influence of one or more control variables. Thus the statistical significance of *religious attendance* was reassessed with all other control variables included in OLS regression model. If no significant correlation was found in the initial bivariate model, then that would indicate that no substantial or meaningful relationship can be found between *religious attendance* and that individual measure of social protection, and thus it is unnecessary to run a multivariate model.

The same procedures described above were also used with the other two indicators of religiosity: *strength of affiliation* and *religious person*. Again, drawing from previous research on the relationship between religiosity and social spending (Scheve and Stasavage 2006; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Chen and Lind 2007), the researcher expects the following hypotheses to be true.

H₆: Individuals with a greater *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice are less likely to be supportive of *income redistribution* at a statistically significant level.

H₇: Individuals with a greater *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice are less likely to be supportive of public spending on *welfare* at a statistically significant level.

H_8 : Individuals with a greater *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice are less likely to be supportive of public spending on *social security* at a statistically significant level.

H_9 : Individuals with a greater *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice are less likely to be supportive of public spending on *health care* at a statistically significant level.

H_{10} : Individuals with a greater *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice are less likely to be supportive of public spending on *unemployment benefits* at a statistically significant level.

H_{11} : The more an individual identifies himself or herself as a *religious person*, the less likely he or she is to be supportive of *income redistribution* at a statistically significant level.

H_{12} : The more an individual identifies himself or herself as a *religious person*, the less likely he or she is to be supportive of public spending on *welfare* at a statistically significant level.

H_{13} : The more an individual identifies himself or herself as a *religious person*, the less likely he or she is to be supportive of public spending on *social security* at a statistically significant level.

H_{14} : The more an individual identifies himself or herself as a *religious person*, the less likely he or she is to be supportive of public spending on *health care* at a statistically significant level.

It was not possible to assess the relationship between the variable *religious person* and *support for unemployment benefits* because both variables were never asked on the same wave of the General Social Survey. However, as reflected in hypotheses 11 through 14, the present analysis was able to assess the relationship between *religious person* and all other indicators of social protection.

If any of the initial bivariate models mentioned in H_6 to H_{14} were found to be statistically significant, then a multivariate Ordinal Least Squares (OLS) regression was performed to assess whether or not the relationship between religiosity and that particular indicator of social protection was accounted for or mostly explained by the influence of one or more control variables. The statistical significance of the religiosity indicator (*strength of affiliation* or *religious person*) was reassessed with all other control variables in the regression model to examine whether or not the initial relationship is partially or fully explained by the effects of one or more of the control variables.

Christian religiosity and issue bundling

Roemer (1998) as well as Lee and Roemer (2008) have argued that perhaps more religiously involved individuals are not inherently more or less supportive of social safety net policies than those who are less religiously involved. However, religious individuals may simply appear to be less supportive of social protection because some religious Christians may vote for politicians with a platform which either downplays or outright opposes social spending initiatives. Lee and Roemer (2008) have suggested that religiously involved individuals are likely support such socially conservative politicians *not* because of their platform against social protection per se but because of their stance

on certain social value issues such as abortion, the separation of church and state or homosexual marriage. In other words, for some religious individuals social values issues outweigh other political matters, including support for social protection. As a result, it is possible that an issue bundling effect occurs in American political competition.

Here, the possibility that an opposition or downplay of social protection is bundled with moral value issues among Christian voters in American political competition is assessed by analyzing voting patterns in the past five American presidential elections. Arguably, presidential elections are the most contested elections which draw the most attention, and, more importantly, the ones in which the largest proportion of the electorate participates. Presidential elections are also more likely to reveal and foreground ideological distinctions between the two major political parties in America in comparison to state or local level electoral competitions (Castles 1982; Ceaser and Busch 2001). Voting patterns found in the GSS for recent presidential elections are tabulated according to the presidential candidate which survey participants voted for and their self-reported level of religiosity. The study also incorporates exit polls for the 2000, 2004 and 2008 presidential election which describe the issues most important to voters in deciding which candidate to support (Pew Research Center 2004; MSNBC 2004; MSNBC 2008). These exit polls indicate the relative importance of various political issues, including social protection and moral value issues, among Democratic and Republican voters. No statistical analysis was performed using the exit poll data. However, using the GSS data, the Spearman rank partial correlation was done to assess the association between individual Christian religiosity and voting for a

Republican presidential candidate while controlling for the effects of family income, education, and gender.

Social protection and religious identity

In addition to issue bundling, another important aspect of the association between Christian religious involvement and social protection can be found in the differences in doctrinal interpretation with regard to social protection among various Christian groups. As mentioned in Chapter 3, denominational differences in attitudes toward social protection have traditionally been emphasized due to Weber's arguments about the association between Calvinist Protestantism and the rise of capitalism in Western societies as well as due to observations about the links between Christian democratic movements and the Catholic doctrine in Europe (Scheve and Stasavage 2008). The present study has already incorporated Catholicism as a control variable in multivariate analysis in an effort to assess whether or not denominational differences play a significant role in explaining attitudes toward social protection policy preferences. However, there may be other denominational distinctions which may be of greater importance than that between Protestants and Catholics. For example, Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007) have argued that within Protestant Christianity in America, some Protestant groups, such as Southern Baptists or Evangelicals, tend to be far more socially and politically conservative than many Episcopalian and Lutheran congregations.

While it is possible to assess differences in the support for social protection policies among the various denominations, this approach also poses important methodological problems. Even within a single Protestant denomination there may be

conflicting doctrinal and political orientations. Additionally, some individuals may identify with more than one denomination or may belong to a non-denominational congregation. This makes it difficult to group individuals into denominations and to claim that each denomination has a defined doctrinal and political tendency. For instance, there may be some Lutheran congregations with a distinct liberal inclination while others may be just as socially and politically conservative as many Southern Baptist or Evangelical congregations. Beyond specific denominational differences, a better way to assess the impact of doctrinal orientation among certain Christian groups on attitudes toward social protection was found through a different venue. In 1996 and in 1998, the General Social Survey asked respondents the following question: “When it comes to your religious identity, would you say you are a fundamentalist, evangelical, mainline, or liberal Christian or do none of these describe you? (GSS 2006)” The researcher believes that those who have a stricter and more dogmatic interpretation of doctrine are more likely to identify themselves as “fundamentalist” or even “evangelical.” In the present analysis this question is identified as **religious identity**. In an effort to identify the impact of doctrinal differences in individual social protection preferences, the present study cross tabulates **religious identity** with each one of the measures of support for social protection: **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution and unemployment benefits**. The significance level of the Spearman rank partial correlation was used to assess the statistical relationship between **religious identity** and the measures of support for social protection while controlling for income, gender and education.

Stage 2: The analysis of the African-American and Hispanic samples

Ever since its inception, the General Social Survey has collected information with regard to the respondent's race. Thus, it was possible to isolate the respondents who identified themselves as black from the overall GSS sample. Out of the selected GSS sample used here, 7,255 individuals identified themselves as black. As mentioned earlier, those who identified themselves as Hispanic in the overall sample were less numerous since the GSS did not begin collecting this information until the year 2000. In total 1,480 individuals identified themselves as Hispanic of either single (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.) or mixed origin. Both the black and Hispanic samples were identified and an analysis of each sample was carried out separately.

Previous research has found a negative relationship between religiosity and social insurance by making use of US opinion data in which white Americans dominate the probability samples (Scheve and Stasavage 2008). However, as argued in Chapter 3, the socio-historical importance which religion and religious institutions have had in struggles for social justice and reform among the African American and Hispanic communities is likely to stimulate strong support for social safety net policies even among those who are religiously involved. Moreover, support for social programs such as welfare has been found to be stronger among African-Americans than among whites (Bobo and Kluegel 1993). In light of the historical endorsement of social justice by ethnic Christian churches and of the greater demand and support for social protection from the state among racial minorities, the researcher does not expect religiosity to have a negative impact on support for social protection in the Hispanic and black samples. Instead, the researcher suspects

that both religious and non religious blacks and Hispanics tend to be moderately to highly supportive of social protection policies. As a result, Christian religiosity is not likely to be statistically correlated with attitudes toward social safety net policies. Thus the researcher suspects that the following null hypotheses are true for the black and Hispanic samples.

H_{15} : There is no statistically significant correlation between *attending Christian religious services* and *support for income redistribution* among individuals in the black and Hispanic samples.

H_{16} : There is no statistically significant correlation between *attending Christian religious services* and *support for welfare spending* among individuals in the black and Hispanic samples.

H_{17} : There is no statistically significant correlation between *attending Christian religious services* and *support for social security spending* among individuals in the black and Hispanic samples.

H_{18} : There is no statistically significant correlation between *attending Christian religious services* and *support for health care spending* among individuals in the black and Hispanic samples.

H_{19} : There is no statistically significant correlation between *attending Christian religious services* and *support for unemployment benefits spending* among individuals in the black and Hispanic samples.

H_{20} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice and his or her support for *income redistribution* among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{21} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice and his or her support for *welfare* spending among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{22} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice and his or her support for *social security* spending among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{23} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice and his or her support for *health care* spending among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{24} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's *strength of affiliation* to their denomination of choice and his or her support for *unemployment benefits* spending among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{25} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's self-perceived level of religiosity (*religious person*) and his or her support for *income redistribution* among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{26} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's self-perceived level of religiosity (*religious person*) and his or her support for *welfare* spending among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{27} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's self-perceived level of religiosity (*religious person*) and his or her support for *social security* spending among blacks and Hispanics.

H_{28} : There is no statistically significant correlation between an individual's self-perceived level of religiosity (*religious person*) and his or her support for *health care* spending among blacks and Hispanics.

Again, just as in the analysis of the entire GSS sample, if any of the initial bivariate models mentioned in H_{15} to H_{28} were found to be statistically significant, then a multivariate Ordinal Least Squares (OLS) regression was performed to assess whether or not the relationship between Christian religiosity and that particular indicator of social protection was mostly explained by the influence of the aforementioned control variables. The statistical significance of the religiosity indicator was reassessed in multivariate analysis with all other control variables in the model to examine whether or not the initial bivariate relationship between the religiosity indicator and the specific measure of social protection is partially or fully explained by the effects of one or more of the control variables.

Christian religiosity and issue bundling

Just as with the analysis of the national sample, the study also explored the possibility that an opposition or downplay of social protection is bundled with moral value issues among Hispanic and Black Christian voters in American political competition. This was assessed by analyzing voting patterns found in GSS data for the past five American presidential elections for each of these two minority groups. The

researcher used presidential elections because they are the most contested elections which draw the most attention, and, more importantly, the ones in which the largest proportion of the electorate participates, including a considerable amount of minority voters. Voting patterns for recent presidential elections are tabulated according to the presidential candidate which survey participants voted for and their self-reported level of religiosity. As with the analysis of the national sample, exit polls for the past two elections were consulted to assess the relative importance of social protection and moral issues among black and Hispanic voters (MSNBC 2004; MSNBC 2008). Furthermore, using GSS data, the Spearman rank partial correlation was done to assess the association between individual Christian religiosity and voting for a Republican presidential candidate while controlling for the effects of family income, education, and gender.

Social protection and religious identity

Just as in the case of the national sample, we also consider the impact of doctrinal differences and orientation on attitudes toward social protection among Black and Hispanic Americans. In order to assess whether Black and Hispanic members of particular Christian orientations have a marked tendency to support social protection more than a different one we use data from a General Social Survey question on the religious orientation of individual Christian respondents. Survey participants are asked if they identify their religious orientation as “fundamentalist,” “moderate,” or “liberal.”²³

²³ This question is a slight variation from the one used for the national sample where the categories are “fundamentalists,” “evangelical,” “mainline,” or “liberal.” The only reason why a different question was used for the analysis of the Hispanic and Black sample is because there were too few Black and Hispanic respondents in the General Social Survey who answered the original question. However, both questions yielded the same patterns and results when used in the national sample, thus leading the researcher to believe that using one or the other did not alter the interpretation of the findings.

We identify this question as **religious identity** for the analysis of the Black and Hispanic American samples. In an effort to identify the impact of doctrinal differences in individual social protection preferences among Hispanics and Blacks, the present study cross tabulated **religious identity** with each one of the measures of support for social protection: **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution and unemployment benefits**. The Spearman rank partial correlation was used to assess the statistical relationship between **religious identity** and the measures of support for social protection while controlling for income, education, and gender.

Limitations of the study

An important limitation to the present study relates to the possible misinterpretation of one of the variables used to measure religiosity. The variable *strength of affiliation*, described under the “independent variables” sub-heading in the present chapter, asks respondents about the strength of their affiliation to their religion or denomination. The question could easily be misinterpreted by some respondents to mean “how strongly do you identify yourself with your religion or denomination,” rather than “how involved are you in your respective religion or denomination?” For instance, a Catholic may state a strong affiliation to the Catholic Church because he or she identifies with Catholicism versus a Protestant denomination, but not necessarily because he or she is actively engaged in the practice or belief-system of the religion itself. Thus the strength of affiliation serves more as an indirect measure of religiosity in comparison to the other two measures used in the present study.

Another set of limitations of the present study relate to the way in which the sample was collected for each wave of the General Social Survey. As mentioned earlier,

the GSS collects data on a representative sample of the adult, non-institutionalized population of the United States of America. As a result, data is not collected on certain segments of the population, such as those who are imprisoned, those who reside in military facilities, or college students living in college dormitories. The sample-gathering method used by the GSS also excludes some religious populations of interest for the present study. For instance, Christian leaders and employees residing in institutional facilities, students residing in the dormitories of religious colleges and universities, as well as those who reside in institutional facilities due to their seminal studies are all excluded from the GSS sample. Nonetheless, although these relevant religious segments of the population are excluded, the GSS contains data on over forty thousand adult, non-institutionalized respondents over a period of nearly forty years. While the institutionalized religious segments of the population are of interest to the present analysis and their exclusion constitutes a limitation, the vastness of the GSS sample and the methodological soundness in the collection of GSS data prevents this limitation from invalidating the results and conclusions presented here.

Another important limitation relates to the Hispanic sample, particularly in the section of the present study when only this sample is analyzed. As mentioned earlier, the General Social Survey only began asking about the Hispanic origin of respondents in the year 2000. This causes three important limitations in comparison to the data collected on the white and black samples. Firstly, the sample collected for the Hispanic population is much smaller in comparison to national and black samples, as noted in the results section (Chapter 5) of the present work. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it is not quite possible to track changes in attitudes towards social protection over the previous decades

for the Hispanic sample as the GSS only began collecting data for Hispanics in the year 2000, whereas we are able to track changing attitudes across previous decades for the national and black samples. Thirdly, due to the relatively smaller sample size, it is also difficult to identify important differences among the various Hispanic groups.

Zimmerman (2009) has noted the inherent problems encountered in lumping all Hispanic groups into an all-inclusive “Latino/Hispanic” category because such agglomeration denies the varying political inclinations, socio-economic status and immigrating circumstances of the different Hispanic groups (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Colombian etc.). While the researcher has tried to overcome the use of “Hispanic” as an all-encompassing category by taking into account differences found between Hispanics of Cuban descent and all other Hispanic groups,²⁴ there are fewer than enough respondents from the various Hispanic countries to truly assess major differences among them. We suspect that Cuban-Americans may have considerably different views on the importance of social protection given that a large percentage of them tend to favor Republican candidates while they also hold higher levels of socio-economic status in the United States in comparison to any other Hispanic group (Garcia 1988; Boswell 1994). As future waves of the GSS collect more information on the various Hispanic groups, it will become easier to assess important differences among them with regard to social safety net policy preferences.

In a similar vein, just as it is problematic to lump together all Hispanic groups into a fixed, overarching category, it is also unfeasible to assume that all “blacks” in the

²⁴ The variable *Cuban* was included in the OLS regression analyses of the Hispanic sample only. The variable was set to 1 if the respondent was of Cuban origin and 0 for all other Hispanic groups.

United States can be thought of as sharing the same socio-economic status, cultural heritage and political ideology. For instance, those who identify themselves as black on the GSS survey may come from strikingly diverse backgrounds: Haitian-Americans, Jamaican-Americans, southern blacks, northern blacks, Baptist blacks, etc. However, there is reason to suspect that the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward social protection may be similar across several black groups. For instance, a survey report from the Pew Study for the People and the Press found that Black Christians—and not just African Americans—are much more likely to have heard about healthcare reform (62%) from their ministers than white Christians (19%) (1996). Thus, while acknowledging that all blacks cannot be lumped together for sociological research purposes, arguably, there are some indications that religious concern for social inequality exists among the various black communities across America.²⁵

Chapter summary

The preceding chapter has outlined the methodology and research design followed while carrying out the present analysis. In particular, this chapter has presented an overview of the General Social Survey, its sampling techniques, as well as the relevance and usefulness of GSS data for the current study. Moreover, this chapter also states the research questions guiding the analysis and presents descriptive data of the sample used.

²⁵ Given that slavery and segregation laws have been historically a more salient issue in the Southern States and given that many southern black churches were deeply involved in the struggle for economic equality and in the Civil Rights Movement spearheaded by the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the current study assessed whether or not the relationship between religiosity and views toward social protection differed between southern blacks and all other blacks. We found that the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward social protection was not substantially different for southern blacks in comparison to all other blacks.

In an effort to provide clarity for a wide range of readers, this chapter also includes a description of the indicators used to measure support for various forms of social protection policies and Christian religiosity, as well as the relevant control variables considered in the research. Additionally, this chapter also describes the statistical procedures followed to conduct the data analysis and outlines the hypotheses reflecting the expectations of the researcher based on previous research. Finally, this chapter also presents some important limitations regarding the collection of the sample used here which, in turn, also impact the generalizability of the results and conclusions found in the present dissertation.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The present chapter presents the major research findings of the current study. The research results were those found by following the methodology described in Chapter 4 in an effort to respond to the research questions presented in Chapters 1 and 4. The findings are presented as follows. First, this chapter outlines and discusses descriptive indicators regarding the various individual levels of support for specific social spending areas within the social protection system as well as individual levels of religiosity in contemporary American society. Second, the relationship between measures of religiosity and of support for social protection was assessed by using a sample of the American population collected between the mid 1970s and 2008. Thirdly, this chapter also presents an analysis of the relationship between measures of religiosity and measures of support for social protection done individually and separately for the Black and Hispanic American samples.

Descriptive results

Support for different forms of social protection

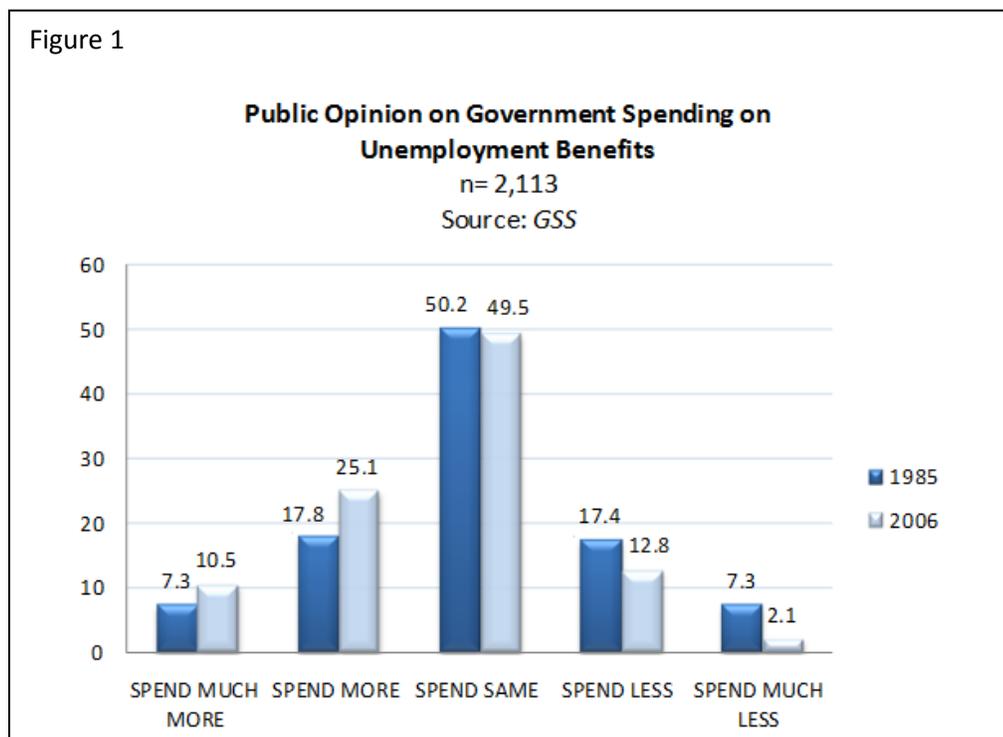
The levels of support for different areas of social protection vary drastically in contemporary America. General Social Survey interviewers asked respondents about their support for welfare and health care spending on every year in which the GSS was done from 1973 to 2008. The GSS also asked about individual support for Social Security spending in a similar format from 1984 to 2008. The GSS interviewer reads the following text to introduce the question: “We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount” (GSS 2006). Respondents stated whether they feel that the government is spending (1) “Too much,” (2) “About right,” or (3) “Too little” on items such as welfare, health care and social security.

	Public Opinion on Government Spending on:					
	<i>Welfare</i>		<i>Health Care</i>		<i>Social Security</i>	
	1973	2006-08	1973	2006-08	1973	2006-08
<i>Too Little</i>	20.90%	25.30%	63.40%	74%	53.40%	61.60%
<i>About Right</i>	25%	36.50%	31.80%	21%	36.50%	32.60%
<i>Too Much</i>	54.10%	38.20%	4.80%	5%	10.10%	5.80%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

General Social Survey n= 2,360

As observed in Table 2, public spending on welfare appears to be the most divisive of these three components of social protection. In the 2006 and 2008 waves of

the GSS the slight majority of the respondents thought that the government was spending “too much” on welfare, thirty six percent thought the spending on welfare was “about right” while about a quarter thought it was “too little.” Undoubtedly, out of these three social spending areas, the one which American respondents were most supportive of was health care. That was the case in 1973 and continued to be the case from 2006 to 2008. In the 2006-2008 waves of the GSS, nearly three quarters of all GSS respondents considered that the level of spending on health care was “too little.” The majority of respondents were also highly supportive of spending on social security, with over sixty percent stating that “too little” spending was allocated to it in the 2006-2008 waves. Overall, we see a slight to moderate increase in individual support for public spending in welfare, health care and social security when we compare responses from 1973 to those expressed by survey participants in 2006-2008.



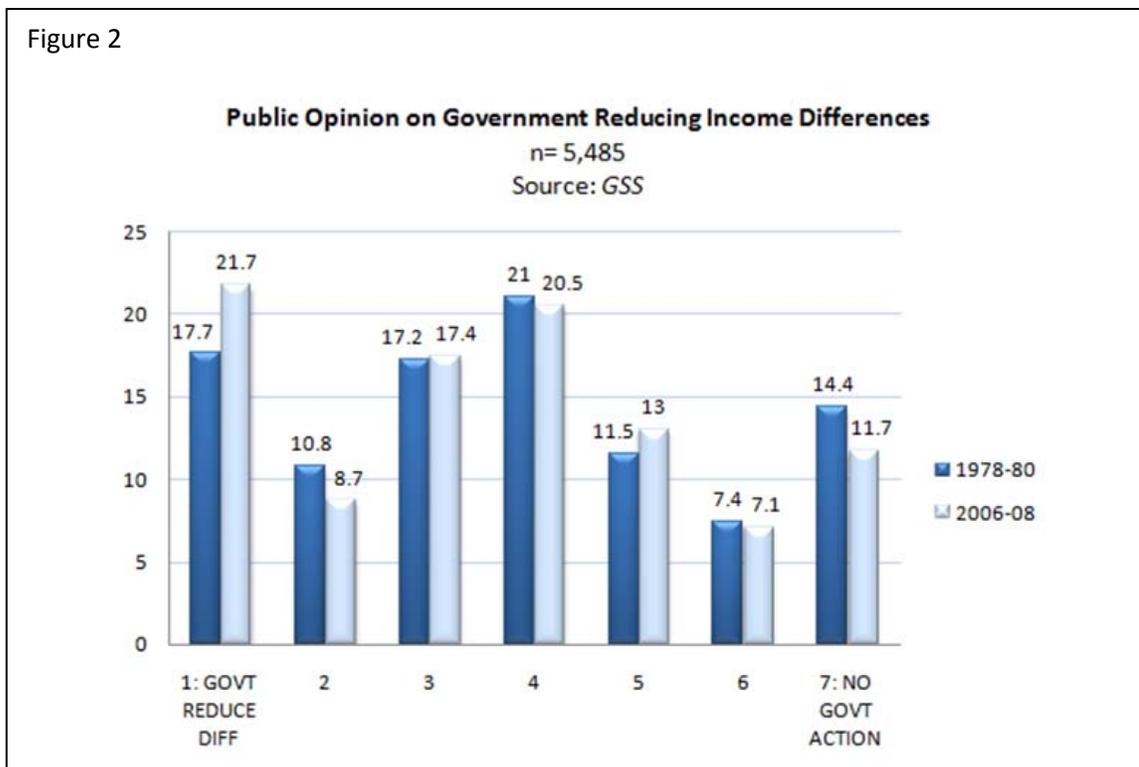
The GSS measured individual support for public spending on unemployment benefits in a slightly different way than that used to measure support for welfare, social security and health care. The question on unemployment benefits was introduced by the following text: “Please indicate whether you would like to see more or less government spending in unemployment benefits. Remember that if you say ‘much more,’ it might require a tax increase to pay for it” (GSS 2006). This variable was introduced into the GSS in 1985 and was last used in the 2006 survey. As observed in Figure 1, the responses varied from “spend much more” to “spend much less.” Overall, the majority of survey participants chose the middle category in 1985 and in 2006. However, we observe that in 1985 those who preferred “more spending” or “much more” were about the same in number as those who preferred “less” or “much less” spending. In 2006 we observe a notable change in public opinion on individual support for public spending on unemployment benefits. As depicted in Figure 1, in 2006 more survey participants thought that the government should spend “more” or “much more” rather than “less” or “much less.”

From 1978 to 2008 the General Social Survey has asked participants a question with regard to their opinion on the government’s role in income redistribution. The General Social Survey interviewers used the following text to introduce the question:

Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor (General Social Survey 2006).

Thereafter, respondents were asked to rank their opinion on a seven-point scale ranging from “no government action” to “government should reduce differences.” The

results for the 1978-80 period as well as for the 2006-2008 period are presented in Figure 2. Data from the two last surveys (2006-2008) indicate that over twenty one percent believes the government should reduce differences, while those who leaned toward the government reducing differences—the sum of responses 1 to 3 in Figure 2—amounted to 48 percent. In 2006-2008, around twenty percent chose the middle stance while thirty two percent—the sum of responses 5 to 7 in Figure 2—leaned toward no government action on income redistribution. The results from the 1978-1980 period were not considerably different, for the most part, from those in the 2006-2008 period. There was, however, an increase in the proportion of respondents who selected the first response—those most supportive of government efforts to reduce income inequality—between 1978-80 and 2006-08. This finding is also consistent with the aforementioned overall increase in support for the other social protection policies over roughly the same period of time.



security, health care, unemployment benefits and reduction of income inequality—across racial/ethnic groups. In relative terms, for each of the five measures of social protection, White Americans are the least supportive, Black Americans are the most supportive, while Hispanic Americans fall somewhere in between. Such differences are particularly noticeable in the divergent levels of support for welfare and public spending on unemployment benefits which can be observed in Table 3. Black Americans are far more likely to perceive government spending on welfare as “too little” in comparison to White Americans, while they are also the least likely to perceive the amount of spending on welfare as being “too much.” Similarly, Black and Hispanic Americans are also more likely to support “much more” spending on unemployment benefits than White Americans. Furthermore, Hispanics and Blacks are also less likely to believe that public spending on unemployment benefits should stay “the same” in comparison to White Americans.

Although Blacks and Hispanics have a fairly similar income stratification structure (i.e. the way in which income is distributed) and although both groups also have similar proportions of individuals below the national poverty level and in the lower income strata (Kerbo 2009: 21), it is striking to see that Hispanics are by and large not as supportive of social protection policies as Black Americans. Explanations for the divergent levels of support for social safety net policies between Black Americans and Hispanics have emphasized the fact that some Hispanics do not have formal access to many government social programs because of their illegal status (Immigration Policy Center 2008). Moreover, Daily (2007) has also noted that inferences about Hispanic support for social programs may be misleading because recent Hispanic immigrants may

face some difficulty in identifying the English name and purpose of various social programs in opinion surveys. Others, like Cafferty and Engstrom (2000), have stressed the role of family and community support networks as an alternative to welfare programs among some Hispanics. These aforementioned explanations do not explore the role which Christian religious involvement may play in the differing social safety net policy preferences between Hispanic and Black Americans. A more detailed description of the impact which Christian religiosity has on varying levels of support for social safety net policies among Hispanic and Black Americans will be re-emphasized later in this chapter when the samples for each group are analyzed independently.

Christian religious involvement in America (1972 to 2008)

Just as the support for social protection policies has changed over the last few decades, the level of religious involvement in America has also varied from 1972 to 2008. As explained in Chapter 4, the present study measures religiosity, or religious involvement, in three different ways corresponding to three different questions asked in the General Social Survey. This section presents the trends for each one of these indicators on religiosity from the first time in which they were asked up until the most recent wave of the GSS in which the question was included. Taken together, the trends found for these three measurements on religiosity give us an indication as to change in the level of Christian religious involvement in American society.

Table 4

Distribution of religious service attendance according to the estimated number of attendances per year (expressed in %)

<i>num. of attendances per year</i>	1972	1982	1991	2002	2008
0	9.38	13.05	12.73	18.70	21.20
1	19.69	21.39	22.65	21.11	21.00
6	14.13	13.97	12.00	13.01	11.57
12	6.75	7.15	7.91	6.85	6.95
30	15.00	16.24	15.48	15.97	13.01
48	28.75	19.65	23.06	16.59	17.92
72	6.31	8.55	6.17	7.77	8.34
<i>Col. Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: GSS

As stated under the “Independent variables” subsection of Chapter 4, the first indicator of Christian religiosity is based on the frequency of attendance to religious services. Respondents are asked the frequency with which they attend religious services. The number of attendances to religious services per year was estimated based on these responses.²⁶ The estimated number of attendances per year ranged from 0 to a maximum of 72. Table 4 shows the trends of Christian religious attendance for selected years from 1972 to 2008. For instance, in 1972, nine point eight percent of the population did not attend religious services at all for the entire year while twenty-eight point seventy-five attended religious services an estimated forty-eight times that same year. Based on the information presented in Table 4, we notice that over time the largest increase can be found among those who never attend church. The proportion of the population that does not attend religious services went up from 9.38 percent in 1972 to 21.20 percent in 2008.

²⁶ For a detailed description on the estimation of how the number of attendances per year was calculated based on individual responses, please see the *Religious attendance* subsection in Chapter 4.

We also notice a decline in those who attend religious services an estimated 48 times per year. The proportion of individuals attending church 48 times per year went from roughly 29 percent in 1972 to around 18 percent in 2008. Interestingly enough, the proportion of the population attending religious services an estimated 72 times per year held steady over the years, ranging from 6 percent to 8.5 percent. Overall, however, it is possible to note that there has been a general decline in the proportion of the American population which attends religious services over the past 36 years.

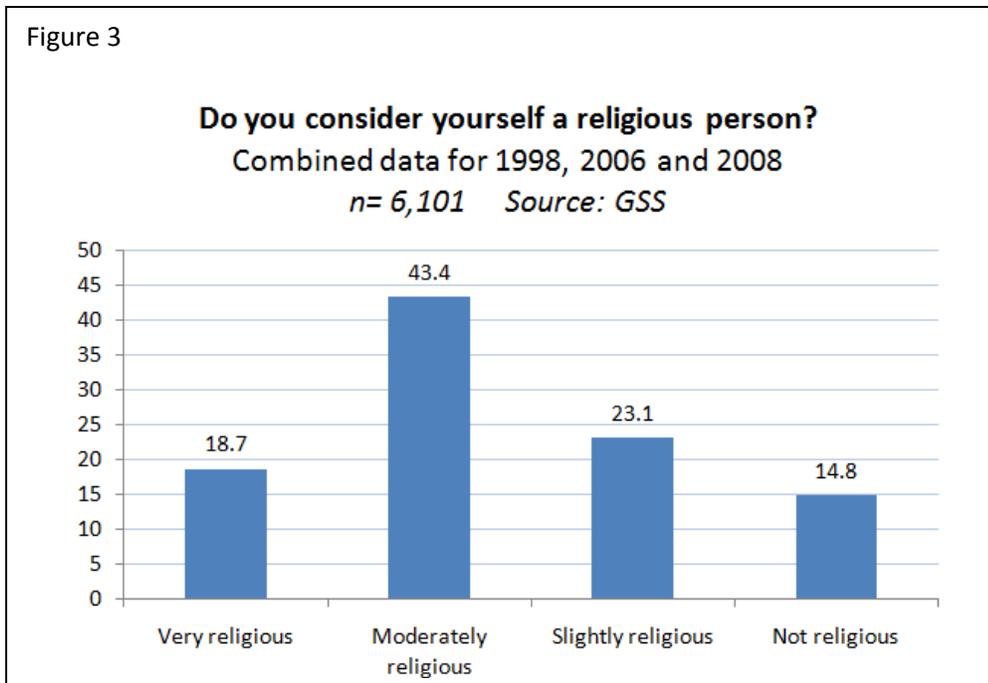
In addition to the number of attendances per year to religious services, the current study also measured religiosity through the self reported strength of affiliation. The General Social survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their affiliation to their religion of choice on every wave of the survey since 1974. Respondents were asked to rank the strength of their affiliation on a four point scale ranging from “very strong” to “not religious.” Unlike the question on religious attendance, the GSS interviewers only asked this question to those who expressed a religious preference.

Table 5

Strength of Affiliation to Religion of Choice					
	1974	1985	1994	2004	2008
Strong	40.7	41.4	38.4	38	35.1
Somewhat strong	7.9	9	10.3	9.7	7.5
Not very strong	44.1	42.2	41.4	37.3	38.9
Not religious	7.4	7.4	9.8	14.9	18.4
<i>Col. Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
	<i>n= 7,409</i>		<i>Source: GSS</i>		

Table 5 displays the trends with regard to the self-reported strength of affiliation to the religion of choice. In 1974, for instance, around forty percent of respondents identified the strength of affiliation to their religion of choice as “strong,” seven point nine percent as “somewhat strong,” forty four percent as “not very strong,” and seven point four percent as “not religious.” We observe that the largest change in the strength of affiliation to the religion of choice occurred among those who are “not religious.” While in 1974 only 7.4 percent identified themselves as “not religious,” around 18.4 percent identified themselves in the same category in the year 2008. At the same time, we notice a slight decrease in the population which holds a “strong” affiliation to their religion of choice between 1974 and 2008. These findings are consistent with the aforementioned trend toward lower levels of attendance to religious services observed within roughly the same time period.

The main weakness with regard to asking respondents about the strength of their affiliation is that it could easily be interpreted as “how strongly do you identify yourself with your religion or denomination” rather than “how involved are you in your respective religion or denomination?” For instance, a Baptist may state a strong affiliation to his or her denomination because of personal inclination to identify with the Baptist denomination versus other Protestant denominations, but not necessarily because he or she is actively engaged in the practice or belief-system of the religion itself. Thus the strength of affiliation serves more as an indirect measure of religiosity in comparison to the other two measures used in the present study.



The most direct question about individual religiosity found within the GSS asks respondents: “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?” Participants are asked to choose their response on a four point scale ranging from “very religious” to “not religious.” Unfortunately, this question was only asked in the 1998, 2006 and 2008 waves of the GSS and, as a result, no long term trends could be identified. The results were fairly similar in all three years when this question was included in the General Social Survey. The combined results are presented in Figure 3 and are presented as a percentage of the total valid sample. As observed, the majority of respondents, 43.4 percent, claimed to be “moderately religious,” 23.1 percent claimed to be “slightly religious,” while those who claimed to be “not religious” amount to be almost as many as those who claimed to be “very religious.” Overall, the self-reported degree of religiosity presented in Figure 3 closely mirrors the self-reported level of attendance to religious services in recent years presented in Table 4.

Taken together, the indicators of Christian religiosity used here indicate a decrease in the level of Christian religious involvement in America since the 1970s. Although the decrease is not as dramatic as the decline in religiosity found in much of Western Europe (Hamilton 2001; Wald and Colhoun-Brown 2007), it is certainly noticeable in the measures of religiosity presented here. The moderate decrease in Christian religiosity over the past three and a half decades was also independently confirmed by the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey (Kosmin and Keysar 2009) which was published around the same time when the present research was carried out. The 2008 American Religious Identification Survey indicates that a notable decline in religious involvement has occurred since the 1980s, even in traditionally religious areas of the country such as New England.

Differences in opinion remain as to the causes behind such a decline. For those who lean toward the explanation offered by secularization theorists, the decline reflects the gradual decline of religion giving way to the forces inherent in modernity: science, multiculturalism, capitalism, rationality, humanism, etc (Keysar and Kosmin 2008; Tschannen 1991; Turner 1985). Others, like Hout and Fischer (2002), have suggested that the recent decrease in the proportion of Americans who identify themselves as Christians is not necessarily or exclusively part of a broad process of secularization, but rather a reaction to the politics of the Religious Right among liberal Christians. Hout and Fischer have argued that the decline represents backlash against the conservative social agenda of groups associated with organized religion on behalf of political moderates and liberals who had previously identified themselves with a particular Christian religion. In spite of the moderate decline in levels of American Christian religiosity observed in recent years,

most scholars agree that Christianity remains the main religion in the United States and that it continues to play an important role in shaping and contributing to cultural and political American life (Rougeau 2008; Hamilton 2001; Gill 2001; Wald and Colhoun-Brown 2007; Scheve and Stasavage 2008). The following section analyzes the relationship between Christian religiosity and individual support for social protection in America using data collected over the past three and a half decades.

Christian Religiosity and Social Protection in America 1973-2008 (stage 1)

Results for the analysis of the entire Christian population are presented in this section. The presentation of the results follows the same sequence as the listing of hypotheses described in Chapter 4. Recent scholarship on the relationship between religiosity and social spending (Scheve and Stasavage 2008; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004), has highlighted a negative relationship between religious involvement and support for social spending. For example, in two separate contributions, one in 2006 and the other in 2008, Scheve and Stasavage emphasized the role of religion as a way to cope with stressful life events and argued that if one accepts that religion and social state programs have related effects in aiding people faced with adverse social circumstances, and that they both have costs (taxes for welfare programs and time invested for religious involvement), then to the extent that individuals privately insure themselves via religion, they should logically prefer a lower level of insurance by the state. Due to previous related research, the researcher expects Christian religious involvement to be negatively associated with support for social protection policies in contemporary American society.

Moreover, in conducting the analysis, the researcher wanted to ensure that any relationship found between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social safety net policies was not simply a reflection of the rise to prominence of the Religious Right in American politics since the 1990s (Wilcox and Larson 2006). This was done by carrying out a separate analysis which only considered data from 1990 to 2008. The results obtained by using data from 1990 to 2008 were not notably different from the findings presented here using data from the mid 1970s to 2008. Given that there was no considerable difference between the results found in the analysis of data from 1990 to 2008 in relation to those found from the 1970s to 2008, only the latter were included in the present chapter.

The present study begins by considering the relationship between **religious attendance** and the individual level of support for the various components of social protection,²⁷ followed by the relationship between the **strength of [religious] affiliation** and individual attitudes toward social protection and, lastly, the relationship between religiosity (identified as **religious person** in all tables and figures in this chapter) and individual support for social protection. As noted in Chapter 4, multivariate analysis was only done for those instances in which a statistically significant correlation was found in the initial bivariate model. If the initial correlation was not statistically significant, then it is safe to assume that no meaningful positive or negative relationship can be identified between the variables being considered, and thus, multivariate analysis is not necessary for further analysis. When multivariate analysis was done, the control variables listed in

²⁷ For a more detailed description of each one of the measures of support for social protection, see the **dependent variables** section in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 were added to the multiple regression model in an effort to identify their effect on the initial bivariate relationship between the independent and dependent variable.

Table 6

**Religious attendance and individual support for social protection
Pearson Correlation Coefficients (initial bivariate models)**

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Reducing Income Differences	Unemployment Benefits
Religious Attendance	-0.031**	-0.032**	-0.046**	-0.032**	-0.001
N (sample size)	28,310	31,548	28,581	24,364	4,225
Time period	1973-2008	1984-2008	1973-2008	1978-2008	1985-2006†

**Significant at the p<0.001 level
† Data only available for 1985, 1990, 1996 and 2006
Source: *General Social Survey*

Religious Attendance and Social Protection

Table 6 presents the results of each one of the initial bivariate models formed between **religious attendance** and the individual level of support for **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution, and unemployment benefits**. Pearson’s correlation coefficient is reported for each one of the bivariate models.²⁸ As presented in Table 6, the correlation coefficients for the relationship between **religious attendance** and individual support for public spending on **welfare, social security, health care, and income redistribution** is both negative and statistically significant at the p<0.001 level. However, the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for public spending

²⁸ Although the support for **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution, and unemployment benefits** were measured in a Likert scale format, and thus the Spearman correlation coefficient would be more appropriate for ordinal level data, there was no difference between the Spearman and Pearson coefficients for each of the bivariate models included in Table 6.

on **unemployment benefits** is close to zero and not statistically significant, thus indicating that there is no meaningful relation between the number of times a given individual attends Christian religious services and his or her support for government spending on unemployment benefits. In sum, the results presented in Table 6 render support for some of the hypotheses described in Chapter 4, namely H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , and H_4 , but not for H_5 . However, in spite of the fact that the correlation coefficients between **religious attendance** and **welfare, social security, health care, and income redistribution** are statistically significant, they are also not very robust as they are very close to zero. It is likely that these four coefficients are statistically significant as a result of the size of the samples considered since even weak correlations appear to be statistically significant when larger samples are used (Norussis 2006). Nonetheless, multivariate analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare, social security, health care**, as well as **income redistribution** while simultaneously considering the role of the control variables described in Chapter 4.

Table 7 displays the results of multivariate analysis for four different models with support for **welfare, social security, health care and income redistribution** as the dependent variables for each OLS regression. **Religious attendance** was included as the independent variable of interest along with the control variables described in Chapter 4.²⁹ The use of control variables in each of the models helps the researcher to assess whether

²⁹ The variable “South” was used to control for geographical and cultural distinctions between those who live in the South Atlantic states and those who do not. This variable was not statistically significant and it did not alter the results of any of the regression models presented in this chapter. As a result, the variable was omitted in all figures.

or not the relationship between each of the indicators of support for social protection and **religious attendance** is not best explained through or mediated by the effects of one or more of the control variables. The standardized coefficients³⁰ (beta weights) for each regression model are reported in Table 7.

	OLS Regressions, standardized (Beta) coefficients reported			
	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income Redistribution
Family Income decile	-0.128**	-0.016	-0.001	-0.086**
Age	-0.022*	-0.062**	-0.04**	-0.05**
Education years	-0.01	-0.147**	0.001	-0.13**
Female	0.013	0.098**	0.06**	0.064**
Non-white	0.14**	0.050**	0.025*	0.072**
Currently unemployed	-0.011	-0.012	-0.001	-0.006
Unemployed in past 10 yrs.	0.031**	0.04**	0.024*	0.046**
Catholic	-0.017*	0.02*	0.019*	0.001
Partisanship	-0.079**	-0.098**	-0.118**	-0.18**
Conservative Views	-0.12**	-0.051**	-0.115**	-0.14**
Urban	0.013	-0.022*	0.006	-0.01
Rural	-0.043**	0.003	0.003	0.016*
Year	0.052**	0.076**	0.1**	0.002
Religious Attendance	-0.002	-0.016	-0.022*	0.002
R ²	0.1**	0.08**	0.06**	0.142**
n (sample size)	17,170	17,140	17,294	20,907

*significant at the $p < 0.05$ level
**significant at the $p < .001$

³⁰ Beta weights or standardized coefficients range from 1 to -1 and broadly indicate the degree to which each variable in the OLS regression contributes unique information that helps to explain the variance in the dependent variable. Variables whose standardized coefficients are closer to 1 or -1 and statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level and are thought to be the most relevant in explaining the variation of the dependent variable among those considered in the model.

As observed in Table 7, the statistical significance of the association between **religious attendance** and individual support for **welfare** vanishes when other variables are considered. In other words, the effects which religious attendance may have on individual support for welfare disappears when we simultaneously take into account other variables like family income, race, as well as the political ideology of the individual. In the model with **welfare** as the dependent variable, these aforementioned variables have the most robust beta weights (which are statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level) while religiosity is no longer a statistically significant predictor. As expected, those with higher family incomes, those who identify themselves as Republicans or as conservatives, and those from rural areas are less likely to support public expenditure on welfare. Conversely, those who are non-white, those who have been unemployed at some point in the past ten years, and those who participated in the survey in a year closer to 2008 are more likely to support welfare spending. Surprisingly, those who are Catholic and those who are older are slightly less likely to be supportive of welfare spending.

In the next model in Table 7, support for **social security** is the dependent variable. Just as in the case of the model with **welfare** as the dependent variable, the statistical significance of the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **social security** vanishes when we consider the effects of the control variables. The variables which appear to be the most relevant in predicting the level of support for **social security** spending in the regression model, as judged by the beta weights, are age, the number of years in formal education, gender, race, whether or not the individual has been unemployed in the past ten years, political partisanship and views, as well as the year in which the survey was done. In particular, those who are older, more educated,

Republican and conservative in their political views are less likely to support **social security** spending. Conversely, females, non-whites, those who have been unemployed in the past ten years, Catholics, and those who participated in the survey in more recent years are more likely to favor more public spending on **social security**.

The following model in Table 7 takes support for public **health care** spending as the dependent variable. As observed, in contrast to the other models examined in the same table, religious attendance remains statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The original bivariate correlation between support for **health care** spending and **religious attendance** was significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, but once the control variables are included in the model, the relationship between the two drops down to a significance level of $p < 0.05$. This indicates that the control variables are partially, but not fully, able to mediate (or explain) the relationship between **religious attendance** and the support for **health care** spending. In other words, **religious attendance** is still contributing some unique information to explain the variance in support for **health care** spending even after considering the effects of the control variables. Nonetheless, judging by the significance level and size of the beta weights (standardized coefficients), **religious attendance** plays a relatively minor role in the model. The most important variables which help to explain the variability in the support for **health care** spending are the partisanship and political views of the respondents, as well as the year in which the survey was done. As anticipated, the more respondents identify with the Republican Party, and with politically conservative views, the less likely they are to support **health care** spending, while those who participated in the GSS survey in more recent years are far more likely to support it. A very surprising find is that those who are older tend to be less supportive of public

health care spending in comparison to those who are younger; a finding also revealed in the study done by Scheve and Stasavage (2008).

The last model included in Table 7 includes individual support for **income redistribution** as a dependent variable. Consistent with the findings for the models which included **welfare** and **social security** as dependent variables in Table 7, **religious attendance** loses its statistical significance, and thus its ability to explain support for public **income redistribution**, when the control variables are considered. The variables most relevant in explaining the variability of support for income redistribution are partisanship, political views, education, income, age, race, and whether or not the individual has been unemployed at some point during the past ten years. The more educated, those with higher incomes, those with more conservative political views, those who identify themselves more strongly as Republicans and the older segments of the population are less likely to support public income distribution, while those who are non-white, females and those who have been unemployed in the past ten years are more likely to support it.

In sum, the analysis of the relationship between religious attendance among Christian in America and the various components of social protection has yielded the following results. The initial correlation between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare, social security, health care, and income redistribution** was negative and statistically significant, giving support to hypotheses 1 through 4 (described in Chapter 4); the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **unemployment benefits** was found not to be statistically significant, leading us to discard hypothesis 5.

Multivariate analysis was carried out to test whether or not the initial negative correlation found between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare, social security, health care, and income redistribution** would continue to be statistically significant once the effects of control variables were assessed. Only the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **health care** spending remained statistically significant in multivariate analysis, indicating that the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare, social security, as well as income redistribution** could best be explained by the effects of the socio-economic, socio-political and demographic factors captured by the control variables used. In the case of individual support for **health care** public spending, the impact of **religious attendance** was only partially, but not fully, explained by the control variables, meaning that the level of religious attendance per year was still able to contribute unique information to explain support for **health care** public spending even after considering the role of socio-economic, demographic and socio-political factors.

Table 8

Yearly attendance to religious services and attitudes toward public health care spending

Estimated yearly religious attendance	Public spending on health care is:			Row total
	<i>Too little</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Too much</i>	
0	70%	24%	6%	100.00%
1	68%	27%	5%	100.00%
6	68%	27%	5%	100.00%
12	65%	29%	6%	100.00%
30	66%	29%	5%	100.00%
48	64%	30%	6%	100.00%
72	62%	31%	7%	100.00%

n (sample size) = 28, 581

Source: GSS

Although the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **health care** spending remained negative and statistically significant in multivariate analysis, it is also necessary to assess the magnitude as well as the practical and substantive importance of this relationship. The information included in Table 8 does this by breaking down the level of support for **health care** public spending according to the individual estimated number of yearly attendances to Christian religious services. In Table 8, for instance, we observe that of those who attended church thirty times per year, sixty-six percent thought health care spending was “too little,” twenty-nine percent thought it was “about right” and five percent thought it was “too much.” We also observe that the proportion of the sample which perceives spending on health care as being “too much” remains fairly constant at around six percent for all levels of religious attendance. In general, as observed in Table 8, as the number of attendances to religious services increases, the proportion who believe the government is spending “too little” on health care decreases, while the proportion who believe the spending level is “about right” increases. This general pattern is, in essence, the source of the negative correlation found between **religious attendance** and support for **health care** presented in Table 6. However, a closer look at the proportions allows us to see that the magnitude of the negative relationship is not exceedingly strong, particularly when we compare the individuals who attend religious services most frequently to those who attend them the least. On the one hand, when we look at the segment of the sample which attends religious services zero to one time per year, we notice that roughly sixty-nine percent of them feel that the government spends “too little” on health care, while around twenty-five point five percent believe the spending level is “about right.” On the other hand, around sixty three

percent those individuals who most frequently attend religious services—those who attend forty eight and seventy two times per year—feel that public spending on health care is “too little” and about thirty point five percent feel that it is “about right.” In comparing the support for health care between those who attend religious services the least to those who attend the most, we find the differences between the two to be relatively small. Those who attend Christian religious services the most differ from those who attend the least by a margin of around six percentage points in the “too little” response and about five percentage points for the “about right” response. It truly becomes hard to postulate that a difference of five to six percentage points in support for public health care spending between those who attend religious services the most and those who attend the least can amount to a difference of substantive importance or practical consequence. Although the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **health care** was found to be negative and statistically significant, even under multivariate analysis, it is the responsibility of the researcher to describe the substantive implication of a relationship and not just the statistical significance. Such a consideration was overlooked in the analysis of Scheve and Stasavage (2008) as they assumed that the negative correlation between individual religiosity and support for social insurance (social security and health care) was substantive simply because of its statistical significance.

Strength of Affiliation and Social Protection

The second measure of religiosity used in the present study refers to the self-reported strength of affiliation to the religion/denomination of choice. The variable,

strength of affiliation, was correlated to the five social protection variables used here: individual support for **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution** and **unemployment benefits**. The correlation coefficient³¹ for each of the initial bivariate relationships is shown in Table 9. As observed, the correlation coefficients for the relationship between **strength of affiliation** and support for **welfare, health care, and income redistribution** are negative and statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, thus granting initial support for hypotheses 6, 7 and 9 (H_6, H_7 and H_9 described in Chapter 4). The correlation coefficients for the relationships formed between **strength of affiliation** and support for **social security** and **unemployment benefits** were found not to be statistically significant, leading the researcher to reject hypotheses 8 and 10 (H_8 and H_{10}). Since only **welfare, health care, and income redistribution** were found to have a negative and statistically significant relation to **strength of affiliation**, these three relationships were the only ones which were further analyzed under multivariate analysis to assess whether or not these initial correlations could be mostly explained by the effects of other, external factors captured by the control variables.

Table 10 shows the results from the three different OLS regression with support for **welfare, health care, and income redistribution** as dependent variables. For the model with **welfare** as the dependent, we observe that the **strength of affiliation** is no longer statistically significant once we consider the effects of the control variables. In other words, the initial and statistically significant relationship found between support for **welfare** and the **strength of affiliation** (shown in Table 9) is explained by the control

³¹ The Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients were also identical for all the correlations coefficients shown in Table 9.

variables used and listed in Table 10. Judging by the robustness of the beta weights, the variables most able to explain changes in the support for **welfare** are family income, race, whether or not one has been unemployed in the past ten years, partisanship, political views, place of residence, and the year in which the survey was done. Generally speaking, the results of regression analysis with **welfare** as the dependent indicate that those with higher family incomes, those who tend to identify more closely with the Republican Party, those who tend to hold more conservative political views and those in rural areas tend to be less supportive of **welfare** government spending. To the contrary, those who are non-white, those who have been unemployed for more than a month in the past ten years, and those who participated in the survey in recent years tend to be more supportive of public spending on **welfare**.

Table 9

Strength of affiliation and individual support for social protection

Correlation Coefficients (initial bivariate models)

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution	Unemployment benefits
Strength of Affiliation	-0.023**	0.005	-0.034**	-0.021**	-0.006
n (sample size)	26,435	30,733	26,691	23,814	4,189
Time period	1974-2008	1984-2008	1974-2008	1978-2008	1985-2006†

† Data available for 1985, 1990, 1996 and 2006 only

** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level

Source: General Social Survey

In the second model, with support for public spending on **health care** as the dependent variable, we observe that **strength of affiliation** is no longer a significant predictor of support for **health care** once the impact of the control variables is taken into account. The most relevant predictors of support for **health care**, judged by the size of

the standardized coefficients (beta weights), are age, sex, unemployed in the past, partisanship, conservative views and the year when the survey was done. Surprisingly, those who are older are less likely to support public **health care** spending along with those who tend to identify with the Republican Party and those who hold conservative political views. Individuals that have been unemployed for a month or more in the past ten years, females and those who participated in the survey more recently are more likely to support public **health care** spending.

Table 10

Strength of Affiliation and support for social safety net policies—OLS regressions

OLS Regressions, standardized (Beta) coefficients reported

	Welfare	Health care	Income Redistribution
Family Income decile	-0.13**	0.00	-0.084**
Age	-0.02*	-0.042**	-0.05**
Education years	-0.01	-0.002	-0.13**
Female	0.01	0.06**	0.064**
Non-white	0.14**	0.024*	0.071**
Currently unemployed	-0.01	-0.001	-0.004
Unemployed in past 10 yrs.	0.03**	0.03**	0.05**
Catholic	-0.02*	0.02*	-0.001
Partisanship	-0.08**	-0.12**	-0.18**
Conservative Views	-0.12**	-0.13**	-0.14**
Urban	0.01	0.005	-0.01
Rural	-0.04**	0.003	0.01
Year	0.05**	0.1**	0.003
Strength of affiliation	0.001	-0.006	0.001
R ²	0.1**	0.06**	0.14**
n (sample size)	16,878	16,997	20,413

The third model in Table 10 includes support for public **income redistribution** as the dependent variable. Just as in the other two models, the self-reported **strength of**

affiliation to the religion/denomination of choice is not statistically significant in predicting support for government-led **income redistribution** once we take into account the effects of the control variables. The strongest predictors of support for public **income redistribution** were family income, age, education, gender, race, whether or not the respondent has been unemployed in the past ten years, partisanship and political views. While those with higher family income, those with more education years, those who are older, those who tend to identify themselves as Republicans, and those with conservative political views tend to be less supportive of government **income redistribution**, females, non-whites and those who had experienced unemployment for over a month in the past ten years were likely to be more supportive of it.

In sum, the self-reported **strength of affiliation** to the religion of choice seemingly has little or no bearing on individual attitudes towards public spending on social protection in the form of **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution** and **unemployment benefits**. The initial correlations between an individual's **strength of affiliation** to his or her denomination/religion and the five aforementioned components of social protection indicated that only the relationships between **strength of affiliation** and support for **welfare, health care, and income redistribution** were found to be both negative and statistically significant. This suggested initial support for hypotheses 6, 7 and 9 (H_6 , H_7 and H_9 described in Chapter 4). However, the statistical significance of the initial correlations vanished in multivariate analysis, indicating that such initial correlations were better explained by the effects of socio-economic, socio-political and demographic factors captured in the control variables used here and described in greater detail in Chapter 4. For instance, Table 10 indicates

that differences in the support for **welfare**, **health care**, and government-led **income redistribution** are mostly associated with individuals' family income, age, gender, race, partisanship and political views. Once these factors have been taken into account, the **strength of affiliation** to a particular religion or denomination is essentially non-informative of people's support for **welfare**, **health care**, or **income redistribution**.

Self-assessed Religiosity and Social Protection

In this section we consider the relationship between the self-assessed level of religiosity—identified here as the **religious person** variable—and social protection. As noted earlier, the most direct way in which the General Social Survey asks respondents about their religiosity is by having them rank their self-perceived level of religiosity on a scale ranging from “very religious” to “not religious at all.” In Chapter 4 this variable was identified as **religious person**. The only disadvantage about this particular variable is that it was only included in selected years of the General Social Survey: in 1998, 2006 and 2008. Nonetheless, it was asked to all respondents who participated in the GSS for those years thus making it possible to correlate this variable with the variables related to social protection also asked during those same years.

Table 11

Individual religiosity and support for social safety net policies—initial correlations

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution
Religious Person	-0.022	0.018	-0.014	0.006
n (sample size)	2,883	5,830	2,929	4,036
Time period†	1998-2008	1998-2008	1998-2008	1998-2008

†The variable only appeared in the 1998, 2006 and 2008 waves of the GSS

** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level

Table 11 shows the initial bivariate models which outline the correlation coefficients between **religious person** and individual support for **welfare, social security, health care, and income redistribution**. Contrary to the case of **religious attendance** or **strength of affiliation**, not one of the correlations between **religious person** and the measures of support for social protection turned out to be statistically significant. The relationship between **religious person** and support for **unemployment benefits** could not be assessed because the two were never asked to the set of respondents in any of the years in which the GSS was done. It also must be noted that the sample size for the correlations displayed in Table 11 is generally much smaller than those used in Tables 6 and 9 simply because the question on the self-reported level of religiosity was only asked in three recent waves of the GSS. The sample sizes presented in Table 11, however, are still relatively large—ranging from nearly three thousand to almost six thousand— and considered to be representative of the non-institutionalized portion of the U.S. population for each of the three years in which the survey was done.

Given that none of the correlations shown in Table 11 are statistically significant and given that the correlations between **religious person** and support for **social security** as well as **income redistribution** are not even negative, we reject hypotheses 11 through 14 ($H_{11} - H_{14}$ described in Chapter 4). It is important to note that, as shown in Table 11, the magnitude of the correlation between **religious person** and support for **welfare** is almost the same as that between **strength of affiliation** and support for **welfare** shown in Table 9, yet the correlation between **religious person** and support for **welfare** is not statistically significant while the other one is. The biggest difference between the two appears to be the sample size. The sample size of the correlation between **strength of**

affiliation and support for **welfare** is nearly ten times larger than that between **religious person** and support for **welfare**. This particular distinction between these two correlations exemplifies an issue of concern when using large samples in quantitative research. The issue relates to the way in which statistical significance is computed. The statistical significance of any correlation is based on a *t-test* which tests the null hypothesis that the correlation coefficient between two given variables is equal to zero (Norusi 2006). Nonetheless, if the sample size is relatively large, then we can say with more confidence that the correlation between two variables is not equal to zero, even if the correlation is small in magnitude. As a result, many weak correlations will appear to be statistically significant with larger samples while they do not truly represent substantive findings. Nevertheless, while the sample sizes for **religious person** shown in Table 11 are smaller than those used in the analysis of **religious attendance** and **strength of affiliation** shown in Tables 6 and 9 respectively, they are by no means small by most methodological standards. The sample size of the correlations between **religious person** and individual support for **welfare**, **social security**, **health care**, and **income redistribution** range between almost three thousand to nearly six thousand, sufficiently large to be representative of the American population and also large enough to capture markedly negative or positive patterns (correlations) if there were any to be found.

It is also interesting to note that the variable **religious person** represents perhaps the most direct way in which the General Social Survey measures religiosity. A strong negative correlation between **religious person** and the indicators of support for social safety net policies used here would have supported a stronger case for the proposition that

religiosity is negatively related to support for social protection policies. The results found in this subsection, however, put this notion entirely into question.

Summary of correlation results: Christian religiosity and social protection

The preceding analysis was based on a sample which included those who identified themselves as Christians or as non-religious/atheists raised by at least one Christian parent. The study considered three measures of Christian religiosity based on **religious attendance**, strength of affiliation to the religion of choice (**strength of affiliation**), and the self reported level of religiosity (**religious person**). These three variables were correlated to various indicators of support for public social protection programs: **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution**, and **unemployment benefits**. The objective of the analysis was to assess whether or not more religiously involved individuals were more or less likely to support social protection policies.

Overall, the results from the analysis indicated that the correlations between the three indicators of religiosity and the various indicators of support for social protection were for the most part negative, but very weak. The correlations formed between **religious attendance** and the individual level of support for **welfare, social security, health care**, as well as **income redistribution** were found to be weak but negative and statistically significant. However, once we considered the role of socio-economic, demographic and socio-political factors in multivariate analysis, these initial and statistically significant relationships vanished. The only relationship that still held statistical significance in multivariate analysis was that between **religious attendance**

and support for **health care**. However, as noted in the analysis of Table 8, the magnitude and substantive importance of this negative relationship is questionable. Similarly, the correlations formed between **strength of affiliation** and support for **welfare, health care**, as well as **income redistribution** were also found to be weak but negative and statistically significant. Nonetheless, the statistical significance of each one of these correlations disappeared in multivariate analysis when we considered the effects of economic, demographic and political factors on the relationship between **strength of affiliation** and support for **welfare, health care**, as well as **income redistribution**. Lastly, none of the correlations between the self-reported level of religiosity (**religious person**) and the various indicators of support for social protection efforts were found to be statistically significant.

In sum, the preceding analysis indicates that no consistent negative pattern could be identified between the individual level of Christian religiosity and support for government-led social protection efforts. Not one of the correlations formed by measures of support for social protection and Christian religious involvement was consistently negative and statistically significant across all three measures of individual religiosity used in the present study. Also, it must be noted that the only instances in which negative and statistically significant correlations were found was when very large samples were used. In other words, the statistical significance of the correlations was probably due more to the fact that large samples were used and not because the magnitude of the correlations was particularly strong. Moreover, in most instances when a negative and statistically significant correlation was found between a measure of religiosity and a

measure of support for social protection, the relationship could be explained, for the most part, by other external factors.

Christian religiosity and issue bundling

As noted in Chapter 3, Roemer (1998) as well as Lee and Roemer (2008) argued that perhaps more religiously involved individuals are not inherently more or less supportive of social safety-net policies than those who are less religiously involved. Nonetheless, religious individuals may appear to be less supportive of social protection because they tend to support politicians with a platform which either downplays or outright opposes social spending initiatives. Lee and Roemer (2008) have suggested that religiously involved individuals are likely support such politicians *not* because of their platform against social protection per se but because of their stance on certain socio-cultural issues such as abortion, the separation of church and state or homosexual marriage. In other words, for some religious individuals moral values issues outweigh their sentiments of support toward social protection. As a result, there is the possibility that there is an issue bundling effect which occurs in American political competition within the country's two party political dynamics. In the preceding analysis, we assessed the role of partisanship and political views in multivariate analysis while examining the relationship between the various religious indicators and the different measures of support for social protection. When partisanship and political views were included, the measures of religious involvement lost their significance in predicting support for social protection in the form of **welfare, health care, social security and income redistribution**. However, another more direct way to highlight the possible existence of

an issue bundling effect is to locate voting patterns according to the self-reported level of individual religiosity.

Table 12

Voting patterns for presidential elections in
2000 and 2004*(percentage distribution)

	2000 Election†			2004 Election†		
	Gore	Bush	Row total	Kerry	Bush	Row total
Not religious	57	43	100	67	33	100
Slightly religious	51	49	100	54	46	100
Moderately religious	44	56	100	45	55	100
Very religious	39	61	100	35	65	100

(n) sample size = 3,842

**Percentages only reflect those who voted for a Republican or Democratic candidate, data for candidates from smaller parties was omitted.*

†Data includes only those who self-identify as Christians or non-religious/atheists

Source: General Social Survey

Arguably, presidential elections are the most contested elections which draw the most attention, and, more importantly, the ones in which the largest proportion of the electorate participates. Although the results of the present study indicate that there is no strong evidence linking an individual’s level of religiosity to lower levels of support for social protection, the researcher did find evidence that in recent presidential elections more religiously involved individuals have tended to favor presidential candidates who emphasize Christian values and morality and not social spending as a central part of their political platform.³² For instance, during the 2000 presidential election, George W.

³² The same pattern can also be observed for presidential elections in 1992 and 1996 where more religious individuals were more likely to vote for the Republican candidate. This pattern seems to have arisen as “culture wars” became increasingly institutionalized along party lines since the 1990’s. Prior to the 1990’s this pattern was not as visible. For instance, in the 1984 and 1988 presidential election George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan, respectively, were more favored by both the religious and non-religious alike.

Bush's campaign constantly highlighted moral concerns and his intention to "restore honor and dignity to the White House" in an effort to link his opponent, Vice President Al Gore, to the political climate and sex scandals surrounding then-president Bill Clinton (Ceaser and Busch 2001). Again in the presidential election of 2004, the importance of moral values, opposition to abortion and the perception of George Bush as a decisive leader among many voters played a favorable and central role in the re-election of President Bush. According to the MSNBC exit poll, 96 percent of people who voted for Bush cited the issues of terrorism and moral values as the most important factors in their decision while 92 percent of Kerry voters cited the war in Iraq, the economy and jobs, as well as health care as factors behind their support for the Democratic candidate (MSNBC 2004).

Table 12 shows the voting patterns according to the self-reported level of religiosity for individuals who voted for Democratic or Republican presidential candidates in 2000 and 2004.³³ As seen, in 2000 and more markedly so in 2004, there is tendency for those who are more religious to vote for Republican presidential candidates.³⁴ Given that the analysis presented here indicates that religious Christian individuals are not considerably more or less likely to oppose social protection in

³³ The General Social Survey did not ask respondents about their presidential vote in 2008 because the survey was conducted before the election took place. However, the pattern observed in Figure 15 is replicated in the MSNBC 2008 presidential election exit poll. In this poll, those who attend religious services more frequently were more likely to vote for John McCain while those who never or almost never attended were more likely to vote for Barack Obama. The likelihood that an individual would have voted for John McCain was even greater among those who were Protestants and attended church regularly. For more information on this poll please visit: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5297138/>

³⁴ The Spearman correlation between the self-reported level of **religiosity** and the likelihood of voting for a Republican presidential candidate in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections remained statistically significant even after controlling for income, education and gender.

comparison to less religious individuals, there is a strong suggestion that issue bundling has occurred in recent American electoral competition. In recent presidential elections, more religious individuals tend to favor candidates with conservative moral value stances in spite of the fact that such politicians may not prioritize or support social protection programs within their political agenda.

Social protection and religious identity

In addition to issue bundling, another important element of the nexus between religiosity and social protection rests on denominational differences, and in particular differences in doctrinal interpretation with regard to social protection. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the importance of denominational differences in attitudes toward social protection has been emphasized due to the prominence of Weber's arguments about Calvinist Protestantism and the rise of capitalism in Western societies, as well as due to observations about the links between Christian Democracy and Catholic doctrine, particularly in Europe (Scheve and Stasavage 2008). The preceding multivariate analyses presented in this chapter have considered the possibility of diverging attitudes toward social protection between Protestants and Catholics by including *Catholic* as a control variable in multivariate analysis. The analysis of the American population presented in this section indicates that the distinction between Catholics and Protestants does not play a substantive role in mediating the relationship between any of the indicators of religiosity and the level of support for social protection policies. However, there may be other distinctions among Christian groups which may be of greater importance than that between Protestants and Catholics. For instance, Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007) have

argued that certain Protestant groups such as traditional Baptists and Evangelicals tend to be far more socially and politically conservative than many Episcopalian and Lutheran congregations. While the General Social Survey does ask respondents to identify their particular Protestant denomination, analyzing distinctions among several denominations poses another important problem. Even within some Protestant groups, such as the Methodist denomination, there is a wide spectrum of political orientation, thus making it difficult to claim that each denomination has defined political tendencies.

Table 13

Religious identity and support for welfare, health care, income redistribution (in percent)

	Income Redistribution			Row total
	No Gov Action	Some Gov Action	Gov Should Reduce Diff	
Fundamentalist	45	20	35	100
Evangelical	44	17	39	100
Mainline	37	24	38	100
Liberal	24	23	52	100

Sample size = 871

	Welfare				Health Care			
	Too Much	About Right	Too Little	Row total	Too Much	About Right	Too Little	Row total
Fundamentalist	66	23	11	100	11	34	55	100
Evangelical	59	31	10	100	12	23	65	100
Mainline	50	33	17	100	8	26	66	100
Liberal	47	30	23	100	6	21	73	100

Sample size = 621

Sample size = 619

A way to assess the impact of doctrinal orientation among certain Christian groups on attitudes toward social protection was found through a different venue. In 1996 and in 1998, the General Social Survey asked respondents the following question: “When it comes to your religious identity, would you say you are a fundamentalist, evangelical, mainline, or liberal Christian or do none of these describe you” (GSS 2006)? Table 13

shows the distribution of attitudes toward support for **welfare, health care, and income redistribution** among those Christians who identify themselves as fundamentalists, evangelicals, mainline or liberal.³⁵ The levels of support for **social security** and **unemployment benefits** were not included in Table 13 because the differences in support for these two items among fundamentalist, evangelical, mainline and liberal Christians were very mild. However, as observed in Table 13, those who identify themselves as liberal Christians are less likely to say that public spending on welfare and health care is “too much” in comparison to evangelical or fundamentalist Christians. Conversely, liberal Christians are more likely to say that public welfare or health care spending is “too little” in relation to evangelical or fundamentalist Christians. The same pattern is visible across support for **welfare, health care, and income redistribution** where evangelicals and fundamentalists are the least supportive toward these three items, mainline Christians tend to take the middle ground and liberal Christians are the most supportive.³⁶ This pattern underscores the fact that certain Christian orientations in America are closely associated with specific social protection policy preferences. In other words, in assessing the relationship between religiosity and social protection, it is not only important to consider the influence of individual religiosity in the level of support for social protection, but rather, the role which religious involvement in certain Christian orientations may have in the formation of social policy preferences.

³⁵ There was evidence that this categorization of Christian groups crosscut denominational identification. For instance some Baptists identified themselves as “fundamentalists,” other as “evangelical,” and yet even some Baptists identified themselves as “mainline” or “liberal.”

³⁶ The Spearman rank partial correlations of these cross tabulations remained statistically significant even after considering income, education and gender.

Religiosity and social protection among Hispanic and Black Americans (stage 2)

The following subsections present the results found among the Hispanic and Black American subsamples analyzed separately and individually. While data collected by several public opinion research centers including the General Social Survey, the World Values Survey and Gallup indicates that much of American society remains close to and actively participates in organized religion in comparison to other societies in the industrialized world, the same data also indicates that religious involvement in America varies somewhat by race/ethnicity. For instance, Table 14 displays data from the General Social Survey on the self-reported religious involvement of White, Black and Hispanic Americans. As observed, overall Hispanic Americans are not distinctively more or less religious in comparison to White Americans. Conversely, a larger proportion of Black Americans self-identify themselves as “very religious” and “moderately religious” categories in comparison to White and Hispanic Americans.

As noted in Chapter 3, Christianity has had particular historical nexus to the advancement of civil rights and social justice among Black and Hispanic Americans. In particular, religious leaders in the Black and Hispanic communities have played a significant role in spearheading efforts to curb socio-economic inequality in the struggle for civil and social justice in American history. Although much of the scholarship on religion and social protection has conceptualized a negative relationship between American religious involvement and support for social protection, a claim which data from the present study does *not* support, the researcher expects this relationship to work differently among Black and Hispanic Americans. The researcher expects that the

historical involvement of the Black and Hispanic Church in the quest for the socio-economic improvement of their respective communities should lead religiously involved Blacks and Hispanics *not to be less likely* but rather *just as likely* to support social protection in relation to Blacks and Hispanics who are not religiously involved.

Table 14

Self-reported religiosity by race/ethnicity (combined data for 1998, 2006 and 2008)

	White	Black	Hispanic [†]
Very religious	19	29.2	14
Moderately religious	43	47.1	46
Slightly religious	22.8	16	28.5
Not religious	15.2	7.7	11.5
Column total	100	100	100
Sample size (n)	6,100	864	615

[†]Data only available for 2006 and 2008

Source: General Social Survey

In the following subsections, we analyze the relationship between the measures of religiosity and support for social protection among Black and Hispanic Americans. Only those among Hispanics and Blacks who self-identified as Christians (of any or no denomination) or non-religious/atheists who were raised by at least one Christian parent were selected as part of the sample used in this stage. The presentation of the results follows the same sequence as the listing of hypotheses described in Chapter 4. As in the case of the analysis of the entire sample, we begin by considering the relationship between **religious attendance** and the individual level of support for the various components of social protection, followed by the relationship between the **strength of [religious] affiliation** and individual attitudes toward social protection and, lastly, the relationship between **religious person [religiosity]** and individual support for social

safety net policies. As noted in Chapter 4, multivariate analysis was only done for those cases in which a statistically significant correlation was found in the bivariate model. If the initial correlation was not statistically significant, we concluded that no meaningful positive or negative relationship could be identified between the variables being considered, and thus, multivariate analysis was not necessary for further analysis. When multivariate analysis was done, the control variables listed in Chapter 4 were included in the multiple regression models in an effort to identify their effect on the initial bivariate relationship between the specific measure of religious involvement used and the indicator of support for the safety net policy in question.

Religious attendance and social protection among Black Americans

Table 15 displays the initial correlations found between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution,** and **unemployment benefits** among Black Americans. With the exception of unemployment benefits, the data used ranged from 1973 to 2008. As observed, only two statistically significant correlations were found. The correlation between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare** among Black Americans was found to be negative and statistically significant, suggesting that those who attend church services more frequently may have a tendency to be somewhat less supportive of welfare. This finding contradicts the researcher's expectation expressed in hypothesis 16 in Chapter 4 (H_{16}). However, we also observe that the correlation between **religious attendance** and **social security** was found to be positive and statistically significant, suggesting that individuals who attend church more frequently are more supportive of social security. This finding also contradicts the

researcher's expectation as expressed in hypothesis 17 (H_{17}). The remaining correlations between **religious attendance** and support for **health care**, **income redistribution**, and **unemployment benefits** were all found to be not statistically significant in congruence with the expectations expressed in hypotheses 15, 18 and 19. In other words, Black Americans who attend religious services frequently are just as likely to support **health care**, **income redistribution** and **unemployment benefits** as much as those who do not attend religious services regularly.

Table 15

Religious attendance and support for social protection—black sample

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution	Unemployment benefits
Religious attendance	-0.042**	0.038*	-0.006	-0.021	0.051
n (sample size)	3,898	4,626	3,982	3,346	530
Time period	1973-2008	1973-2008	1973-2008	1973-2008	1973-2006 [†]

[†] Data available for 1985, 1990, 1996 and 2006 only

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level

Since only the correlations between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare** and **social security** were found to be statistically significant, the researcher proceeded to analyze only those two relationships under multivariate analysis to assess the impact of external factors. Table 16 shows the multivariate analysis for these two correlations with all control variables included in both models. As observed in the table, the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare** is no longer statistically significant when the control variables are taken into account. In particular, the relationship between the two variables appears to be mediated by family income, unemployment and political views. Those with higher incomes and those who identify

themselves as political conservatives are less likely to support welfare and those who are unemployed or have been unemployed at some point in the past ten years are more likely to support it.

Table 16

**Religious attendance and support for Welfare and Social Security
OLS regressions—Black American sample**

OLS Regressions, standardized (Beta) coefficients reported

	Welfare	Social Security
Family Income decile	-0.14**	0.05*
Age	0.04	0.03
Education years	-0.03	-0.04
Female	-0.009	0.06*
Currently unemployed	0.06*	0.004
Unemployed in past 10 yrs.	0.06*	0.01
Catholic	0.002	0.05*
Partisanship	0.009	-0.09**
Conservative Views	-0.1**	0.002
Urban	0.036	0.03
Rural	-0.04	0.005
Year	0.022	0.063*
Religious Attendance	-0.006	-0.02
R ²	0.05**	0.02**
n (sample size)	1,880	2,139

*significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

**significant at the $p < .001$

Table 16 also includes the multivariate model with support for **social security** as a dependent variable. As observed, the correlation between **religious attendance** and **social security** is also no longer statistically significant once the effects of the control variables are considered. The relationship seems to be mostly explained by differences in family income, gender, religious denomination (being Catholic or not), partisanship and the year in which the survey was done. Generally speaking, Black Americans with higher family income, females, those who are Catholic, and those who participated in the survey

in more recent years are more likely to support **social security** while those who identify themselves as Republicans are more likely to oppose it.

Overall we do not find evidence that religious attendance is linked to either a greater likelihood to support or oppose social protection among Black Americans. Only **welfare** and **social security** were correlated with **religious attendance** at a statistically significant level. However, these two relationships were found to be mediated by other socio-economic and socio-political factors in multivariate analysis.

Strength of affiliation and social protection among Black Americans

In this subsection the relationship between the **strength of affiliation** and support for social protection is explored among Black Americans. Table 17 outlines the correlations formed between the **strength of affiliation** among Black Americans and the support for various indicators of social protection including **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution** and **unemployment benefits**. As noted in Table 17, the correlation between **strength of affiliation** and support for **unemployment benefits** has a much smaller sample size in comparison to the other correlations in Table 17 because the **unemployment benefits** variable was not used in as many waves of the GSS as the other variables. In most GSS waves, both variables did not have a common or overlapping sample since **unemployment benefits** was only asked to a portion of the sample while **strength of affiliation** was asked to the other portion of the sample. It should be mentioned that a statistically significant correlation between **strength of affiliation** and support for **unemployment benefits** may actually exist, but the sample available to the researcher at this time is too small to capture it.

Table 17

Strength of affiliation and support for social safety net policies
Initial correlations—black sample

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution	Unemployment benefits
Strength of Affiliation	0.019	0.065**	0.017	-0.008	-0.053
n (sample size)	3,633	4,481	3,713	3,334	532
Time period	1974-2008	1974-2008	1974-2008	1974-2008	1985-2006†

† Data available for 1985, 1990, 1996 and 2006 only

** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level

Out of all of the correlations listed in Table 17, only the relationship between **strength of affiliation** and **social security** appears to be positive and statistically significant. In other words, Black American Christians with a stronger affiliation to their denomination are more likely to support **social security** than those who are not religiously affiliated. This finding contradicts the researcher's expectation expressed in hypothesis 22 (H_{22}) described in Chapter 4. Since the rest of the correlations are not statistically significant, the data used in this study indicates that Black Americans with a stronger affiliation to their Christian denomination of choice are not more or less likely to support **welfare**, **health care**, **income redistribution**, and **unemployment benefits** than Black Americans who do not report a strong religious affiliation. These findings thus support the researcher's expectations with regard to the Black American sample expressed in hypotheses 20, 21, 23, and 24 described in Chapter 4.

Table 18

Strength of affiliation and support for social security
OLS regressions—Black American sample
OLS Regressions, standardized (Beta) coefficients reported

	Social Security
Family Income decile	0.04
Age	0.03
Education years	-0.05*
Female	0.05*
Currently unemployed	0.003
Unemployed in past 10 yrs.	0.008
Catholic	0.05*
Partisanship	-0.09**
Conservative Views	0.005
Urban	0.03
Rural	0.001
Year	0.061*
Strength of Affiliation	0.03
R ²	0.03**
n (sample size)	2,072
<i>*significant at the p<0.05 level</i>	
<i>**significant at the p<.001</i>	

The relationship between the **strength of affiliation** and support for **social security** was analyzed under multivariate analysis to assess whether or not the relationship can be explained by the effect of one or more of the control variables. As observed in Table 18, the relationship between the **strength of affiliation** and the support for **social security** among Black Americans is no longer statistically significant when we take into account socio-economic and socio-political factors. The relationship appears to be mediated by education, gender, partisanship and the year in which the survey was done. Females and those who participated in the survey more recently are more supportive of **social security** while those who identify themselves as strong Republicans

and those who are more educated are less supportive of it. While the initial correlation between the **strength of affiliation** and support for **social security** appeared to be positive and statistically significant, the magnitude of this relationship loses importance when we consider the effects of gender, education, partisanship and survey year, thus leading us to believe that Black Americans who hold a stronger affiliation to their denomination of choice are not necessarily more intrinsically supportive of social security because of the strength of their religious affiliation per se.

Self-assessed religiosity and social protection among Black Americans

Table 19

**Religiosity and social protection policies
Initial correlations—Black American sample**

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution
Religious Person†	-0.026	-0.012	0.03	0.062
n (sample size)	413	844	419	576
Time period	1996-2008	1996-2008	1996-2008	1996-2008

†The variable only appeared in the 1998, 2006 and 2008 waves of the GSS
 ** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level

The current study also considers the relationship between self-assessed religiosity (**religious person**) and attitudes toward social protection policies. Table 19 displays the correlations between **religious person** and the various measures of support for social protection used here: **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution and unemployment benefits**. As observed in Table 19, none of the correlations presented in the table are statistically significant. In other words, it is very unlikely that the self-assessed level of religiosity is in any way related to more or less support for **welfare,**

social security, health care, income redistribution and unemployment benefits. This supports the researcher's expectation that religious and non religious Black Americans are just as likely to support social protection policies. This expectation was expressed in hypotheses 25 to 28 (H_{25} - H_{28}) described in Chapter 4.

Summary of correlation results: religiosity and social protection among Black Americans

Overall we do not find evidence that greater religious involvement leads to more or less support for social protection policies among Black Americans. Even in the cases in which the initial correlation was statistically significant—such as the correlation between **religious attendance** and **welfare**, **religious attendance** and **social security**, as well as **strength of affiliation** and **social security**—the present study found that differences in support for social protection among Black Americans were, for the most part, best explained by differences in political partisanship, political views, gender, education and family income and *not* by religiosity per se. The data presented in this subsection indicates that both religious and non-religious Blacks are just as likely to support social protection and that shifts in religious involvement are not accompanied with greater or lesser support for social safety net policies. In sum, Black Americans tend to be very supportive of social safety net policies and the level of religious involvement of Black individuals in America does not appear to have much of an independent effect on their attitudes toward social protection.

Religion and issue bundling among Black Americans

The present analysis also assessed whether an issue bundling effect occurred among Black Americans. This was done by identifying patterns between an individual's self-reported level of religiosity (**religious person**) and the candidates favored in recent presidential elections. The underlying argument behind the issue bundling perspective is that religious individuals in America only appear to be opposed to social protection because they tend to support political candidates who oppose or downplay social protection but who, nevertheless, take a strong stance against issues of concern among many religious Americans such as abortion, separation of church and state, the teaching of evolution in public schools, etc.

The researcher *did not* find evidence that issue bundling occurred along the lines of Christian religious involvement among Black Americans in the past five presidential elections. Overall, Black Americans are highly supportive of the Democratic candidate in presidential elections; according to General Social Survey data, eighty-eight percent or more of the Black American electorate has supported the Democratic candidate in each of the last five presidential elections. Black American support for the Democratic candidate was notable in the 2008 election as 95 percent of Black Americans voted for Barack Obama (Lopez 2008). Contrary to the findings for the national sample, religious and non-religious Black Americans are just as likely to strongly support the Democratic presidential candidate. In some presidential elections, such as the 1992 election, the “very religious” Black Americans were actually even more supportive of Bill Clinton in

comparison to the “moderately religious,” the “slightly religious,” and even the “not religious” Black Americans.

Nevertheless, there is also evidence suggesting that Black Americans in general, and religious Black Americans in particular, tend to be socially conservative. For instance, according to an Associated Press exit poll carried out on November 2 of 2008, seventy percent of African-American voters voted yes on Proposition 8 which banned same-sex marriage in California (Los Angeles Times 2008). Other exit polls and surveys have indicated that Black Americans are also highly supportive of social protection government policies such as welfare, health care reform, unemployment benefits, etc., and that such views also play an important role in their political behavior (MSNBC 2004; GSS 2006). The data presented in this subsection suggests that religious and non-religious Black Americans are likely to strongly support Democrats in presidential elections in part because of the traditional pro-social spending stance of Democratic presidential candidates even if they strongly agree with some of the socially conservative stances of Republican presidential candidates. Beyond a question of religiosity or policy orientation, some have argued that many African Americans still perceive the Republican party as a white Southern party which incorporated the Dixiecrats as they switched from the Democratic to the Republican party in the 1960’s (Ross 2004; Eason 2003) and are thus not likely to vote for Republican candidates. Be it because social protection issues are given a higher priority over moral concerns or because of animosity toward Republican candidates, the GSS data and exit polls presented here indicate that religious Black Americans are unlikely to support politicians whose political platform *bundles*

socially conservative positions with opposition to or disregard for social protection policies.

Table 20 **Social protection support and religious identity among Black Americans**

Income redistribution				
	No Gov Action	Some Gov Action	Gov Should Red Diff	Row total
Fundamentalist	16.58	19.66	63.77	100.00
Moderate	18.78	22.90	58.32	100.00
Liberal	17.96	25.10	56.94	100.00
<i>n (sample size)</i>	3,353			
Unemployment benefits				
	Spend Less	Spend Same	Spend More	Row Total
Fundamentalist	6.12	25.38	68.50	100.00
Moderate	4.96	36.36	58.68	100.00
Liberal	2.50	26.25	71.25	100.00
<i>n (sample size)</i>	528			
Health Care				
	Too Much	About Right	Too Little	Row Total
Fundamentalist	3.6	19.6	76.8	100.00
Moderate	3.2	16.8	80	100.00
Liberal	3.7	17.4	78.9	100.00
<i>n (sample size)</i>	3,881			
Social Security				
	Too Much	About Right	Too Little	Row Total
Fundamentalist	2.7	20	77.3	100.00
Moderate	3.9	23.7	72.4	100.00
Liberal	5.1	25.1	69.8	100.00
<i>n (sample size)</i>	4,496			
Welfare				
	Too Much	About Right	Too Little	Row Total
Fundamentalist	25	30	45	100
Moderate	26.7	29.8	43.5	100
Liberal	26.9	26.4	43.9	100
<i>n (sample size)</i>	3,794			

Social protection and religious identity among Black Americans

The present analysis of the Black American sample also considered whether or not distinctions in support for social protection policies vary according to the orientation

of the specific Christian denomination to which Black American individuals belong. This consideration responds to the notion that social protection may be very differently approached by certain Christian traditions in comparison to other ones.

In order to assess whether members of a particular Christian orientation have a distinct tendency to support social protection more than a different one, the researcher used data from a General Social Survey question on the religious orientation of individual Christian respondents. Survey participants are asked if they identify their religious orientation as “fundamentalist,” “moderate,” or “liberal.”³⁷ As shown in Table 20, Black Americans are generally highly supportive of each and every one of the social protection policies selected for the present study irrespective of their Christian religious identification. Contrary to the results found for the American population at large, in the Black American sample we find that individuals who identify themselves as “fundamentalist” Christians are actually slightly more likely to support **income redistribution** and **social security** in comparison to “liberal” Christians. Overall, however, the data presented in Table 20 does not suggest that differences in religious orientation—such as “fundamentalist,” “moderate,” or “liberal”— make a notable distinction in terms of social protection preferences among Black American Christians.

³⁷ This question is a slight variation from the one presented in Table 13 where the categories were “fundamentalists,” “evangelical,” “mainline,” or “liberal.” The patterns shown in Table 13 were also replicated when we used the different version presented in Table 20. The categorization presented in Table 20 was chosen because there was a much larger amount of Black Americans who responded this question in comparison to the other one.

Religious attendance and social protection among Hispanic Americans

The relationship between **religious attendance** and measures of support for social protection was also assessed separately for the Hispanic sample. Table 21 presents the correlations formed by the variable **religious attendance** and the various measures of support for social protection: **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution** and **unemployment benefits**. The correlations between **religious attendance** and support for **social security, health care, income redistribution** and **unemployment benefits** were not found to be statistically significant. This means that for the available Hispanic sample, the frequency with which an individual attends Christian religious services has little bearing on his or her level of support for these four measures of social protection. This findings support the researcher’s expectation expressed in hypotheses 15, 17, 18 and 19 described in Chapter 4. The only correlation found to be statistically significant was that between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare**. Furthermore, the correlation appears to be negative, meaning that the more often a Hispanic individual attends church services, the more likely it is that he or she would be less supportive of **welfare**. This finding contradicts the researcher’s expectation expressed in hypothesis 16.

Table 21

Religious attendance and social protection among Hispanic Americans (initial correlations)

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution	Unemployment benefits
Religious attendance	-0.083*	-0.011	0.005	-0.027	-0.081
n (sample size)	586	1,189	598	679	198
Time period	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2006†

† Data available for 2006 only
 * Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

Having identified the correlation between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare** as negative and statistically significant among Hispanic Americans, the researcher proceeded to examine this relationship under multivariate analysis. Table 22 shows the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare** while also controlling for socio-economic, demographic and socio-political factors. As observed, **religious attendance** loses statistical significance once external factors are considered, meaning that the original negative relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare** is, for the most part, explained through differences in other variables, such as gender, religious denomination, unemployment, and being of Cuban origin. As expected, Hispanic Americans who are unemployed and Catholic are more likely to support **welfare**.

Table 22

Religious attendance and social protection among Hispanic Americans (OLS regressions)

OLS Regressions, standardized (Beta) coefficients reported	
	Welfare
Family Income decile	-0.03
Age	0.07
Education years	-0.07
Female	-0.22**
Currently unemployed	0.12*
Unemployed in past 10 yrs.	-0.04
Catholic	0.2**
Partisanship	-0.06
Conservative Views	-0.01
Urban	0.03
Rural	-0.03
Cuban	-0.12*
Year	-0.03
Religious Attendance	-0.06
R ²	0.10**
n (sample size)	320
<i>*significant at the p<0.05 level</i>	
<i>**significant at the p<.001</i>	

Nonetheless, it is surprising to observe that Hispanic females are *less* likely to support **welfare** at a statistically significant level, as seen in Table 22. In virtually all of the previous multivariate regression presented in this chapter females were consistently found to be more supportive of not just welfare but all other measures of social protection. It is unclear if this odd finding among Hispanic females is due to the relatively small Hispanic sample available at this time. As more data is collected on Hispanic Americans through the General Social Survey, it will become clearer if this trend continues to be the case in larger samples. Lastly, as expected, Cuban Americans are slightly less supportive of **welfare** in comparison to all other Hispanic groups. It was suspected that Cuban Americans would have a lower level of support for **welfare** partly because previous scholarship has identified this group as having a more conservative political orientation and higher socio-economic status in comparison to other Hispanic groups (Garcia 1988; Boswell 1994).

Strength of affiliation and social protection among Hispanic Americans

The relationship between the **strength of affiliation** to one's religion or denomination of choice and measures of support for social protection among Hispanic Americans is assessed in this subsection. Table 23 displays the correlations formed by the **strength of affiliation** and support for **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution** as well as **unemployment benefits**. None of the correlations presented in Table 23 are statistically significant, suggesting that Hispanic Americans who hold a stronger affiliation to their Christian denomination are not more or less likely to support

social protection in relation to those who have a weak affiliation. The lack of a significant correlation between **strength of affiliation** and support for **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution** as well as **unemployment benefits** shown in Table 23 supports the expectations of the researcher expressed in hypotheses 20 through 24 as described in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, given the small sample size available for some of the correlations, particularly the correlation formed between **strength of affiliation** and support for **unemployment benefits**, the results presented here cannot be considered to be definitive. As more data is collected on the Hispanic population in future waves of the GSS, subsequent research will either confirm or refute the findings presented here.

Table 23

Strength of affiliation and social protection among Hispanic Americans—initial correlations

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution	Unemployment benefits
Strength of Affiliation	-0.05	0.024	-0.011	0.015	-0.071
n (sample size)	584	1,179	595	669	197
Time period	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2006 [†]

[†] Data available for 2006 only

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

Self-assessed Religiosity and Social Protection among Hispanic Americans

The present analysis also examined the relationship between the self-assessed level of religiosity (**religious person**) and measures of support for social protection among Hispanic Americans. The only measure of social protection which was not included in the analysis was support for **unemployment benefits**. There was no data available to correlate **religious person** and support for **unemployment benefits**. Table 24 shows the correlations formed by **religious person** and support for **welfare, social**

security, health care, and income redistribution. None of these correlations were statistically significant, suggesting that more religious Hispanic individuals are not more or less supportive of **welfare, social security, health care, and income redistribution** in any significant way in comparison to non-religious Hispanics. This finding supports the researcher’s expectation expressed in hypotheses 25 to 28 (H_{25} - H_{28}) described in Chapter 4.

Table 24

Religiosity and Social Protection among Hispanic Americans—initial correlations

	Welfare	Social Security	Health care	Income redistribution
Religious Person†	0.075	0.023	0.08	-0.062
n (sample size)	272	575	277	405
Time period	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2008	2000-2008

†The variable only appeared in the 1998, 2006 and 2008 waves of the GSS

** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level

Summary of correlation results: religiosity and social protection among Hispanic Americans

The preceding section has presented the correlations formed by three different measures of religious involvement and individual support for **welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution and unemployment benefits**. Out of all of these correlations, only the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare** was found to be negative and statistically significant. However, even in the case of the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **welfare**, the relationship vanished in multivariate analysis as the lower support for **welfare** displayed by

individuals with a greater frequency of attendance to religious services was mostly explained by differences in gender, employment status, religious denomination and Cuban origin. All other correlations were found not to be statistically significant, suggesting that, overall, more Christian religious involvement per se among Hispanic individuals in the US is not linked to a stronger or weaker support for social protection policies.

Religion and issue bundling among Hispanic Americans

The present analysis also considers the possibility of an issue bundling effect among religiously involved Hispanic American voters. While the majority of Hispanic voters have supported Democratic candidates in recent elections, their support for Democratic candidates is not as strong or as consistent as that found among Black Americans. For instance, in the 2000 presidential election, Al Gore won 65 percent of the Hispanic vote, in 2004 John Kerry won 55 percent, and in 2008 Barak Obama won 67 percent. There is some evidence that religious involvement does play a role, although a relatively minor one, in voting patterns among Hispanic Americans. Table 25 displays the combined voting patterns for presidential election in 2000 and 2004.³⁸ As observed, the support for the Democratic candidate is greater among those Hispanics who state that they are either “not religious” or “slightly religious in comparison to those who are “moderately religious” or “very religious.” The majority Hispanics who identify

³⁸ The General Social Survey only began identifying Hispanics in 2000. Thus, information on Hispanic voting patterns prior to the 2000 presidential election was not available.

themselves as “very religious” voted for the Republican presidential candidate.³⁹

However, more than differences in religious involvement, this trend reflects denominational differences among Hispanic Christians. Catholic Hispanics who self-identified as “very religious” still favored the Democratic candidate by a margin of 57 to 43 percent in 2004, while the Protestant Hispanics who self-identified as “very religious” favored the Republican candidate by a margin of 80 to 20 percent (GSS 2006).

Similarly to Black Americans, Hispanic Americans also tend to be conservative about moral value issues, but unlike Black Americans, such issues may sway many Hispanic American voters may toward the Republican presidential candidate. For instance, Morris (2004) has argued that George Bush’s stance on social value issues, and particularly his opposition to gay marriage, was crucial to gain support among Hispanics committed to traditional values as well as his support for bilingual education and for public schooling for the children of illegal immigrants. Conversely, those Hispanics who voted for Al Gore and John Kerry in 2000 and 2004 respectively mentioned that they trusted the Democratic candidates more on issues like the state economy, health care and social programs (MSNBC 2004). In sum, there is some evidence of issue bundling as the majority of more religiously involved Hispanic voters favored the Republican candidate in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections in part because of the candidate’s stances on moral value issues and immigration even though there was overall more trust in

³⁹ The partial Spearman correlation between religiosity and voting for a Republican presidential candidate in 2000 and 2004 remained positive and statistically significant even after controlling for income, gender and education.

Democratic candidates on issues related to social protection issues among Hispanic voters.

Table 25

Combined voting patterns for presidential elections in 2000 and 2004—Hispanic sample

	Democrat	Republican	Row total
Very religious	47.06	52.94	100
Moderately religious	58.27	41.73	100
Slightly religious	67.95	32.05	100
Not religious	63.89	36.11	100

Sample size (n) = 312
Source: General Social Survey

Social protection and religious identification among Hispanic Americans

There was little evidence suggesting that **social security, health care** and **unemployment benefits** vary considerably by religious identification (such as fundamentalist, mainline or liberal). This may have been the case due to the relatively small sample size available for cross-tabulation; for instance, there were only 104 valid cases in the cross tabulation between religious identification and support for **unemployment** benefits among Hispanic Americans. There were, however, some notable differences in the support for **income redistribution** and **welfare** according to religious identification. As observed in Table 26, those who identify their religious orientation as “liberal” are far more likely to support **income redistribution** and **welfare** in comparison to those who identify themselves as “fundamentalist.” While 66 percent of those who identify their religious orientation as “liberal” state that the government should reduce

income differences, only 51 percent of those who identify themselves as “fundamentalists” stated the same view. Moreover, those Hispanic Americans who identify themselves as “fundamentalist” Christians are also more likely to prefer “no government action” on income redistribution in comparison to those who identify themselves as “mainline” or “liberal” Christians. A very similar pattern is observed in the support for **welfare** as observed in Table 26. Furthermore, there is also evidence that denominational differences played a role in the support for **income redistribution** and **welfare**. Roughly ninety percent of those who identified themselves as “fundamentalist” Christians in Table 26 were Evangelical Protestants while 88 percent of those who identified themselves as “liberal” or “mainline” Christians were Catholics (GSS 2006).

Table 26

**Support for Income Redistribution and Welfare by Religious Orientation
(in percent)—Hispanic sample**

	No Gov Action	Some Gov Action	Gov Should Red Diff	<i>Row Total</i>
Fundamentalist	30	19	51	100
Mainline	18	23	59	100
Liberal	19	15	66	100

sample size (n) = 671

Support for Welfare by Religious Orientation (in percent)

	Too much	About right	Too little	<i>Row Total</i>
Fundamentalist	27	53	20	100
Mainline	26	48	26	100
Liberal	23	44	33	100

sample size (n) = 539

Chapter summary

This chapter was divided into three sections. The first section offered some descriptive statistics on trends regarding the support for social protection as well as Christian religious involvement for the past 35 years. The second section analyzed the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection in the entire national sample. The third section analyzed the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection for the Black and Hispanic samples separately.

The first section of this chapter outlined trends on social protection and Christian religious involvement in America from the mid 1970s to 2008. Overall within this time period we find that support for social protection policies has increased. Conversely, we find evidence that Christian religious involvement has slightly decreased. Lastly, we also find that Black Americans have been consistently more supportive of social protection policies followed by Hispanic Americans and non-Hispanic whites.

Initially in the second section, correlations were formed between three indicators of Christian religious involvement and five measures of support for social protection. Those correlations which were statistically significant were then further tested in multivariate analysis (OLS regression) to assess the relationship between the religious indicator and the measure of support for social protection while accounting for the effects of external socio-demographic, socio-economic and socio-political factors. Out of all correlations found to be statistically significant, only the relationship between **religious attendance** and support for **health care** remained negative and statistically significant after controlling for external factors. However, the practical importance of this

relationship was questionable as those who attend Christian religious services more often are only slightly less supportive of **health care public spending**. While there were no major differences in support for social protection policies according to the level of religious involvement of American individuals, the present analysis does indicate that there are some important variations in the support for some social protection policies across religious orientations. Those who identified themselves as Christian “fundamentalists” or “evangelicals” were notably less likely to support **welfare, health care and income redistribution** in comparison to those Christians who identified themselves as “liberals.” This section also presents evidence that religion is involved in an issue bundling dynamic within American political competition. This occurs as more religious voters have been more likely to support Republican candidates in recent presidential elections who champion moral value issues but whose central political platform does not strongly incorporate support for social protection policies. Even though, as shown in the present chapter, more religious individuals are not inherently more or less supportive of social protection policies in comparison to less religious ones, more religious individuals are more likely to support a presidential candidate who bundles conservative social issues along with a downplay for, or in some cases opposition to, social protection policy issues.

In the third section the relationship between Christian religiosity was analyzed for Black and Hispanic Americans separately. We found no evidence indicating that more religious Black Americans are more or less supportive of social protection. Furthermore, the analysis presented here found that contrary to the trend found in the national sample, Black American Christians who identify themselves as “fundamentalists” are actually

slightly more supportive of some social protection policies like **social security** and **income redistribution**. With regard to issue bundling, there was no evidence that Christian religiosity produces an issue bundling effect among Black Americans in recent presidential elections as this group has been consistently supportive of Democratic candidates with a perceived strong agenda on issues like the economy, jobs and social protection.

Lastly, the third section also assessed the relationship between Christian religiosity and social protection among Hispanic Americans. As in the other analyses, there was no evidence suggesting that more religious Hispanics were more or less supportive of social protection. There were, however, some differences in the support for **income redistribution** and **welfare** by religious orientation and denomination as those Hispanics who identified themselves as Catholic and “liberal” Christians were slightly more supportive of the government reducing income differences. There was some evidence of Christian religiosity playing a part in issue bundling among Hispanics as the majority of more religious and Evangelical Hispanics voted for George W. Bush in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. Although overall the majority of Hispanics voted for the Democratic presidential candidate in 2000 and 2004 and although most Hispanic voters expressed more trust in the Democratic candidate on issues like health care, poverty reduction, unemployment and the economy, many traditional and religious Hispanic voters were attracted to George W. Bush’s stance on social value issues like abortion and homosexual marriage.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Structure of chapter

This chapter contextualizes the findings on the relationship between Christian religious involvement and support for social protection policies in contemporary America and presents the main conclusions attained from the present study. The chapter begins by contextualizing recent trends on religious involvement and on support for social protection policies. Thereafter, the main findings outlined in Chapter 5 are related to existing arguments on the psychic effects of Christian religiosity and to the “culture war” metaphor. Given that the results of the current study call into question the strength of these two approaches, this chapter also proposes a broad framework through which to interpret the findings of the present work grounded on the existence of two counterpoised cultural narratives on social protection found within American Christianity. These two narratives are identified as the social gospel narrative and the conservative doctrine narrative. This chapter contextualizes the results of the present study by considering the influence of these two narratives in shaping social protection policy preferences in the national sample as well as in the Black and Hispanic American samples. The chapter also

examines the role which Christian religious involvement may play in the bundling of moral issues with opposition to social protection policies in American political competition. Lastly, the chapter also includes suggestions for future research which, in the view of the researcher, would not only help to fill existing knowledge gaps on the relationship between Christian religiosity and political attitudes toward social protection but also expand on the research findings outlined in the present work.

Discussion of descriptive findings on religious involvement and social protection in the US

The present study used General Social Survey data to track trends on Christian religious involvement and support for social protection policies from the 1970s to the year 2008. There was, overall, a slight to moderate increase in the measures of support for social protection while there was a slight to moderate decrease in the level of religious involvement during the same period.

The increase in support for social security spending, health care spending, and unemployment benefits during this period was evident while the increase in support for income redistribution and welfare spending was far more modest. This overall increase in support for social protection constitutes an expected response to some of the structural changes in the American economy and society occurring during the same time period. Kerbo (2008) has argued that since the mid 1970s the US has experienced a considerable shrinkage of middle earning occupations. One of the more recent efforts to evidence such a decline in middle earning occupations includes Wright and Dwyer's (2003) study on the recent trends in American job growth. Their study draws data from the Bureau of

Labor Statistics and ranks jobs according to their average pay into 5 quintiles. Wright and Dwyer (2003) compared the growth of jobs in each quintile during two periods: from 1963 to 1970 and from 1992 to 2000. Between 1963 and 1970 there was an increase of 3.7 million jobs found in the middle quintile. In contrast, between 1992 and 2000 there was only a slight increase of 750,000 jobs in the middle job quintile while the highest paid job quintile experienced an increase in 5.4 million jobs and the lowest paid one increased by 3 million jobs. Wright and Dwyer have highlighted the importance of increases in productivity and improvement in technology between the two periods—meaning that fewer workers would be needed to produce the same amount of goods and services—to explain the decrease in middle paying jobs. Nonetheless, Kerbo has argued that “there is now evidence that the reduced growth of middle-paying jobs is due to imports, factories moving overseas, and outsourcing, with a large dose of low paying jobs coming in service industries and places like Wal-Mart” (2008: 226). The increase in support for social protection policies since the 1970s constitutes, in part, a response to these structural changes and to the ensuing higher level of economic risk and vulnerability experienced by growing segments of the American population.

While there has been a slight to moderate increase since the 1970s in the support for social protection policies such as welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution, and unemployment benefits, the belief that poverty and unequal social outcomes occur as a result of individual will and choices is still prominent in the American psyche. For instance, a relatively large proportion of American individuals perceived social protection, inequality and the causes for poverty quite differently in

comparison to individuals in other advanced democracies. In relation to this Gudrais explained that:

Asked by the International Social Survey Programme whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that income differences in their home country are “too large,” 62 percent of Americans agreed; the median response for all 43 countries surveyed—some with a much *lower* degree of inequality—was 85 percent. Americans and Europeans also tend to disagree about the causes of poverty. In a different survey—the World Values Survey, including 40 countries—American respondents were much more likely than European respondents (71 percent versus 40 percent) to agree with the statement that the poor could escape poverty if they worked hard enough. Conversely, 54 percent of European respondents, but only 30 percent of American respondents, agreed with the statement that luck determines income (2008: 25).

The belief that an individual can improve his or her circumstances and escape poverty in spite of social and structural impediments remains deeply influential in contemporary American social culture. This helps explain why in America the increase in support for policies which target poverty alleviation and income redistribution has been more modest in relation to other areas of social protection during the past thirty five years.

With regard to religious involvement, the trends found in this study indicate a slight to moderate decrease in Christian religious involvement measured through attendance to religious services, the self-reported strength of affiliation to the religion/denomination of choice and the self-reported level of religiosity. Together, these three indicators suggest that overall American society has become somewhat less religious since the mid 1970s.

To some degree, the modest decline over nearly four decades in Christian religious participation in America is consistent with the expectations of many secularist theorists who have conceptualized it as a gradual decline of religion giving way to the forces inherent in modernization: science, multiculturalism, capitalism, rationality,

humanism, etc (Keysar and Kosmin 2008; Tschannen 1991; Turner 1985). Nevertheless, the decline in American Christian religiosity should also be contextualized in relation to trends in other industrialized countries. Although there has been a decline in Christian religious involvement in America during the past few decades, several studies also show that U.S. society remains far more religious in comparison to other industrialized countries (Bruce 1996; Hamilton 2001; Wald and Colhoun-Brown 2007). This indicates that religious disinvolvement has occurred far more gradually and with lesser strength in America in comparison to similarly affluent and modern nations. Moreover, and perhaps to the disappointment of the most fervent secularist theorists, Christian religious participation has coexisted and continues to coincide with “modern” life in present-day America. After all, even in the 2008 General Social Survey only a fifth of Americans claimed that they never attend religious services and only fifteen percent claimed that they are “not religious,” while twenty six percent claimed they attended religious services every week or more and eighteen percent said they were “very religious.” In sum, in spite of the moderate decline in levels of American Christian religiosity observed in recent years, most scholars still agree that Christianity continues to play an important role in shaping and contributing to American cultural and political life (Rougeau 2008; Hamilton 2001; Gill 2001; Wald and Colhoun-Brown 2007; Scheve and Stasavage 2008). As argued throughout this chapter, American Christianity remains relevant in the formation of cultural narratives which, in turn, influence political values, attitudes and behavior.

Psychic effects of religious involvement and opposition to social protection

In two seminal contributions, one in 2006 and the other in 2008, Scheve and Stasavage have examined a similar data set as the one used in the present study⁴⁰ and concluded that some of the items of social protection⁴¹ examined here—support social security and health care—were negatively and significantly related to religious involvement measured primarily by religious attendance. In trying to explain why such a negative relationship existed, the authors drew from research on the psychic effects of religious involvement (Park, Cohen and Herb 1990; Paragament 1997). Such research suggests that religiosity has profound psychic effects in dealing with stressful life events. Scheve and Stasavage (2008) argued that some religious individuals may actually see such adverse life events as opportunities for spiritual growth and not primarily as a challenge to their self-esteem, their overall beliefs or life goals. Thus, as a result of the promise of a better afterlife attained through the fulfillment of the doctrinal teachings of the main religious traditions in America,⁴² religious individuals may see adverse life events as bumps on the road leading to an improvement of circumstances in the afterlife—i.e. heaven in the case of Christianity. As a result, Scheve and Stasavage suggested that religious individuals in America may not be supportive of social protection

⁴⁰ In the 2006 contribution, Scheve and Stasavage used the International Social Survey Programme which draws its data on the U.S. from the General Social Survey. In their 2008 contribution, they used the General Social Survey.

⁴¹ Scheve and Stasavage prefer the term social insurance because they were primarily interested in those government policies which insure individuals against adverse circumstances and not necessarily those designed for wealth redistribution purposes.

⁴² This includes accepting Jesus Christ as one's savior and striving to follow His example and teachings in the case of Christianity.

policies because of they are privately insured through their faith—through its inherent promise of a better life after death—against the distress of conditions which would require social assistance from the government like poor health, poverty, unemployment, etc. Admittedly, as outlined in Chapter 1 of the present work, even prominent theorists like Marx and Freud acknowledged that religion could have such an alienating effect as religion could eclipse rational thought and subtract concern over people’s social and material conditions.

In spite of the appeal and theoretical plausibility of the argument presented by Scheve and Stasavage, the findings of the present dissertation refute the strength and validity of their conclusions with regard to Christian religious involvement and support for social safety net policies. The following paragraphs explain some of the ways in which the findings of the present work put into question two of the fundamental arguments advanced by Scheve and Stasavage: 1.) that religiosity is negatively related to support for social protection policies and 2.) that such a relationship responds to a form of disengagement and escapism embraced by many religious individuals resulting from the promise of a better afterlife within religious doctrine.

First, the researcher believes that Scheve and Stasavage were quite restrictive in their definitions and measures used in their study. While Scheve and Stasavage take religiosity to mean primarily religious attendance, the present study uses three indicators of religious involvement: one based on religious attendance, the second based on the strength of affiliation, and the third based on the self-reported level of religiosity among American Christians. Also, while Scheve and Stasavage chose only to analyze the

relationship between religiosity and two indicators of support for social protection (social security and health care), the present study incorporates two other indicators: support for income redistribution and support for unemployment benefits.

Second, the analysis of the national sample shown in Chapter 5 indicates that none of the correlations between any of the three indicators of Christian religiosity (religious attendance, strength of affiliation or self-reported religiosity) and the five measures of support for social protection policies (welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution and unemployment benefits) were particularly strong. While most of the correlations were negative, as Scheve and Stasavage (2008) suggested, not one of the correlations obtained in the analysis of the national sample was stronger than $r = -0.04$.⁴³ Scheve and Stasavage (2008) implied that those correlations are of importance simply because they are statistically significant. However, Norussis (2006) and Maxim (1999), among other experts in quantitative analysis, have indicated that even very weak correlations can be statistically significant when using large sample sizes simply because the assessment of statistical significance is based on the certainty that a correlation coefficient is different from 0, and a larger sample grants sufficient certainty that even correlation coefficients which are weak, and thus may be close to zero, are indeed not equal to 0. Thus while the correlation coefficients between indicators of Christian religious involvement and support for social protection policies may be negative and

⁴³ The Pearson or Spearman correlation coefficient “r” ranges from -1 (indicating a strong negative correlation) to 1 (indicating a strong positive correlation) between two variables. A correlation of or close to 0 indicates a weaker and less substantive correlation between two variables.

statistically significant, their small magnitude indicates that they are not substantive findings.

Third, in spite of the small magnitude of the correlations found between indicators of religiosity and support for social protection, those correlations which were statistically significant were further tested in multivariate analysis. This was done to assess whether or not the weak but negative relationship between the indicator of Christian religiosity and the measure of support for social protection could be explained by a third factor. All except for one of the statistically significant negative correlations between measures of Christian religiosity and support for social protection policies vanished when we considered differences in income, gender, education, political views and party affiliation, among other factors. The only notable exception was the relationship between Christian religious attendance and support for health care spending; this relationship remained statistically significant even after the aforementioned factors were considered. However, as discussed later in this chapter, it is likely that this relationship remained statistically significant in part because of the concern among many religious Christians that government funds could be used to finance optional abortions.

Fourth, the perspective advanced by Scheve and Stasavage (2008) extrapolates the psychic benefits which religiosity may provide an individual experiencing an adverse life event to a larger argument in which religiosity is equalized to a form of psychological escapism involving a zealous hope for the *next world* and a disregard for key political questions and activism *in this world*. The findings of the present work outlined in Chapter 5 do not support such an argument. To the contrary, the author found that religious

individuals are, for the most part, engaged in the political process and participative in presidential elections. Additionally, contrary to Scheve and Stasavage's argument the present research indicates that many religious Christians are actually very supportive of health care, social security and unemployment benefits. In essence, Scheve and Stasavage's argument largely ignores the divisions inherent in the "culture war" framework as well as the divisions in ideology, cultural narratives, race and class found within Christian America. The findings of the present dissertation bring new light into the dynamics of such divisions and are described and contextualized in the following subsections.

Social Protection and Culture War?

Some religious advocates and social scientists in America have argued that the sharpest distinctions in worldview and life schemas can be found along a religious dividing line between those who practice religious orthodoxy and those who are secularists (Hunter 1991; Green 1996). Prominent sociologists James Davison Hunter coined the term "culture war" in his book with the same title. Hunter (1991) argued that the major cultural conflicts in America are rooted in diverging views on the source of moral authority between orthodox and progressive Americans. Although Hunter acknowledges that many religious individuals fit into his progressive category, many Christian Right leaders and scholars have recast his argument as a battle between religious Christians and non-religious Americans (Wilcox and Larson 2006). Some figures on both sides of this cleavage have added to the fire with incendiary claims and

statements. For instance, on the one hand, speaking soon after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Jerry Falwell said:

I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen' (Falwell cited in Wilcox and Larson 2006).

On the other hand, there are also secularist advocates like HBO show host Bill Maher who once stated, "We are a nation that is unenlightened because of religion. I do believe that. I think religion stops people from thinking. I think it justifies craziness" (Maher cited in Media Reality Check 2005).

Yet the rigidity of the culture war metaphor is insufficient to capture the nuances and particularities in doctrinal interpretation and worldview found within various branches of Christianity in America. The culture war metaphor, interpreted as a cultural conflict between those American Christians who are religiously involved and those who are not, is also inadequate to explain distinctions in attitudes on key political issues such as support for social protection policies. While much recent scholarship has been dedicated to analyze, examine and theorize the nuances found in diverging views towards morality and social value issues among the various factions of American Christianity (Kosmin and Lachman 1993; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2008; Wilcox and Larson 2006), there has been a relative vacuum of research on the way in which social protection fits into the dynamics of the culture war. The research presented here makes a contribution toward filling this knowledge gap by examining the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social safety-net policies.

The results of the present work indicate that Christian religiosity per se does not inherently motivate individuals in the United States to support social protection policies in the form of welfare, social security, health care spending, income redistribution or unemployment benefits substantively more so or less so in comparison to non-religious/secular individuals. And the reason for this has much to do with ideological divisions within American Christianity itself. In other words, the reason why such weak correlations were found in the present study between measures of religiosity and opposition to social protection policies is because roughly for every Southern Baptist or Evangelical who may fervently oppose an expansion of welfare or government-provided health care there is also a pious Episcopalian or a Liberation Theology Catholic may actively champion the need for more government involvement in poverty relief and income redistribution. Although members of the Christian Right may dominate the media spotlight, there are various ideological persuasions which permeate American Christianity.

Likewise, one may also find an array of political positions on various issues within the atheist community in America. For some time, and in part because of the prominence of the “culture war” conceptualization of ideological and political divisions in America, media pundits and some social scientists have assumed that atheists in America embrace liberal politics and liberal positions across issues. This is a notorious falsehood. The research findings described in Chapter 5 of the present text indicate that more secular Americans, measured by religious attendance and the self-reported level of religiosity, are likely to take very similar positions on social protection policy preferences in relation to Christian Americans. In general, the difference between the most religious

Christian Americans and the non-religious ones on support for welfare, social security, healthcare, income distribution and unemployment benefits amounted only to a few percentage points, with secular Americans being only marginally more supportive of each one of these policies in comparison to religious American Christians.⁴⁴ In *Damned If I Do...Damned If I Don't. Reflections of a Conservative Atheist*, Frank Cress (2005) argues that in reality a sizeable amount of atheists take conservative political positions on social as well as on economic issues; this helps explain why the differences in social protection policy preferences in the present study between religious and secular Americans were so meager. In fact, the arguments expressed by atheist author Frank Cress (2005) against social programs could easily be confused with the arguments in support of the “2009 Legislative Agenda” of the *Christian Coalition of America*, a prominent Christian Right group. For instance, as Cress states,

Some Americans don't realize the abuse is happening. Others are willing to ignore the reality of the copious handouts given to those unwilling to do what is right for themselves [...] Well, I am here to tell you that the trouble today is that people do not want to compete. Competition is just too hard and often not worth the sacrifice. Why work to put a roof over your head if the government will put one over your head for you? Why work to put food on the table if the government will feed you? Why work for anything if you feel you are owed something? The answer is that the underclass has shown that they often won't. They won't contribute to society as long as they are convinced by the left that America makes it impossible for them to compete, or more precisely, that *you* make it impossible for them to compete (2005: 90).

The research findings described in Chapter 5 indicate that the distinction in views toward social protection does not vary as much between secular and religious Americans

⁴⁴ It is precisely because there is only a meager difference of just a few percentage points in the support for social protection policies between secular Americans and more religious Americans that the correlation coefficients between the measures of Christian religiosity and the measures of support for social protection were notably weak—very close to zero.

thus putting into question the validity of the “culture war” explanation for differences in political support for social protection merely based on an individual’s level of religiosity. Instead, more salient differences can be observed along the lines of religious identity between those who self-identify as a Christian fundamentalist, evangelical, mainline or liberal. These distinctions are particularly notable with regard to level of support for welfare, income redistribution and health care spending as observed in Figure 16 in Chapter 5. These findings suggest that there are differing guiding metaphors and cultural narratives embedded in the religious congregations representing each of these Christian identity groups which relate to social protection issues, as well as other political issues. What follows is a description of a cognitive framework to understand the emergence and preservation of cultural narratives within the context of American political competition as well as a depiction of the two broad cultural discourses on social protection found within American Christianity.

Cultural narratives, American Christianity and Social Protection

In an effort to identify meaning-making processes in politics, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) applied their theory of metaphor to explain the way in which individuals come to terms with propaganda and other forms of political communication. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor permeates our conceptual system because so many of the abstract concepts like emotions, ideas and theories are not easily grasped by our minds and thus we need to understand them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms. To exemplify this, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that we grasp the meaning of the concept “argument” through the metaphor “argument is war.”

We observe the underlying metaphor in expressions like “Your claims are indefensible,” “He shot my argument down,” or “He attacked every weak point in my argument.”⁴⁵

In a more recent contribution entitled *The Political Mind*, Lakoff (2008) refines his argument to enhance its application to American political competition. Here, Lakoff (2008) has argued that conceptual metaphors are the building blocks for broader and more complex cultural narratives. In essence, a cultural narrative constitutes a broad schema which explains, interprets and orders knowledge and experience about social and cultural phenomena (Lakoff 2008). Lakoff further argues that “[cultural narratives] create a conceptual framework, a language, imagery and an appropriate emotional tone” by which we approach political issues, understand political differences and, ultimately, form political positions (2008: 42). Various cultural narratives exist within social institutions and organizations such as the family, education, peer groups, as well as religion.

In *The Political Mind*, Lakoff (2008) has argued that most cultural narratives about political issues are, to some degree, shaped by the metaphor used by individuals in interpreting their relationship with the state. This argument draws from a previous contribution in which Lakoff (2002) argued that individuals view their relationship with the state metaphorically and that the nature of such relationship varies according to the metaphor which individuals hold. On the one hand, liberals and progressives in America normally follow the “Nurturing Parent” metaphor. Under this metaphor, morality is based on respecting, helping and understanding others and it is inculcated to individuals by exposing them to good examples (social justice, clean environment, etc.) and by keeping

⁴⁵ For a more detailed explanation of conceptual metaphors please see George Lakoff’s *Metaphors We Live By*.

them away from bad ones. Under this view, discipline may be required at times, but an excess of it could backfire. Under the “Nurturing Parent” metaphor, the world is not without justice, but it is very far from ideal justice. On the other hand, conservatives normally subscribe to the “Strict Father” metaphor. Under this metaphor, evil is all around us and thus the morality needed to overcome malevolent influences is dependent on self discipline and self reliance. Morality is inculcated via the presence of a “strict father” (the state) which enforces discipline through punishment and reward mechanisms. Under the “Strict Father” metaphor, the world is basically a just place and overall people get what they deserve. Lakoff argues that people generally have a blend of both metaphors in them and that one may be more pervasive than the other depending on the issue at hand.

The “Nurturing Parent” metaphor and the “Strict Father” metaphor enhance very divergent imagery and cultural narratives with regard to the role of social protection policies. The “Nurturing Parent” metaphor stresses the importance of social interdependence and the need to assist those who may have fallen to and are trapped in misfortune (Lakoff 2002). As a result, this metaphor promotes and is linked to cultural narratives which underscore the need for the state to “nurture” those members of society who are in need through social programs until those members are able to independently gain a socially acceptable standard of living and are thus no longer in need of “nurturing.” Conversely, under the “Strict Father” metaphor, success is a sign of being self-disciplined and hard-working. Under this metaphor, competition is a crucial ingredient because it is through competition that we come to discover who is self-disciplined and therefore deserves success (Lakoff 2002). This metaphor is tied to

cultural narratives in which the need and importance of social programs is downplayed because the state as a “strict father” must promote self-reliance and self-discipline to succeed in market competition and not dependency on the state.

Lakoff (2008) has further argued that these two metaphors permeate the cultural narratives found within American Christianity. As Lakoff states,

Progressive Christianity sees God as a nurturant parent, and imposes the nurturant moral view on the institution of the church and on what it means to be a good Christian: you have empathy for people who are poor, sick, hungry, or homeless, and you act politically to help them. A conservative fundamentalist Christian might well have the opposite views on all these issues, with God as a strict parent, threatening the punishment of eternal damnation for violating God’s commandments as interpreted by the clergy (2008: 108).

The results of the present research suggests that Christians who self-identify as Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals are predominantly more influenced by the “Strict Father” metaphor, while those who self-identify as Christian liberals are more likely to be influenced by the “Nurturing Parent “ metaphor, and those who self-identify as mainline Christians possess a blend of the two metaphors. These two metaphors outlined by Lakoff have broadly informed the two opposing narratives found in the history of American Christianity which, in the view of the researcher, explain the distinctions in social protection policy preferences among fundamentalist, evangelical, mainline and liberal Christians. The following subsection describes the diverging conceptualization of social protection under each of these two Christian narratives which the researcher has identified as the social gospel narrative and the conservative doctrine narrative.

The social gospel narrative

In America the social gospel tradition rose to prominence in the early twentieth century primarily, although not exclusively, among some mainline Protestant denominations including Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists and some Baptists. The distinctive feature of the social gospel tradition has been its sentiment for social and economic reform rooted in the belief that God's spirit pervades the world (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). Instead of seeing God as detached from human social patterns, the social gospel tradition recognizes the imminence of God in the multiple dimensions of human life. Consequently, it is not personal holiness but the love of one's neighbor and one's willingness to help the needy that ought to be the principal concern of Christianity (Gilkey 1968). Moreover, the social gospel narrative also insists that the will of God is linked to social reform, and as a result, it is the duty of Christians to bring about change in human social conditions by being active in one's local community and by politically advocating policies that alleviate poverty and diminish economic inequality (Evans 2001; Davis 2007).

The enthusiasm for the social gospel among the Protestant clergy has waxed and waned depending on national political circumstances (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007; Quinley 1974). While support for the social gospel was high in the period before World War I and during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, interest in social problems declined in many churches during the prosperous years of the post-World War II era in which the main concern for many congregations was to build new facilities for their suburban members (Allitt 2003). Enthusiasm for the social gospel came back during the 1960s and 1970s in which many Christian groups and members of the clergy organized pickets around city halls, served in community action organizations, supported civil

rights legislation, opposed the War in Vietnam, financed low-cost housing projects and helped welfare recipients to form unions to pressure government bureaucracies (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007; Hall 1990). Although public display for social reform has been much more subtle since those two decades, many Christian organizations have remained active in pushing for health care reform and running charitable organizations to alleviate poverty in collaboration with state agencies, particularly after the creation of the *White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives* in January of 2001 under an executive order from then-president George W. Bush.

Within the American Catholic Church a tradition with a similar thrust as that of the social gospel can be found in the Catholic social teaching. Some of the core themes of the Catholic social teaching are: a profound respect for human dignity, community engagement, as well as a commitment to aid those in need through economic and distributive justice (Catholic Church 1986). Although the social teaching of the Catholic Church came into relevance as a denunciation of the appalling living conditions of the urbanized poor in mid-nineteenth century Europe as a result of industrialization, Rogoueau (2008) has argued that the Catholic social teaching has risen to prominence in America since the 1960s in the sermons and organized activities of numerous parishes across the nation. In part, many Catholic priests in America embraced the need for social reform due to the influence of liberation theology stemming from Latin America (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). Liberation theologians interpret the Bible, and in particular the life and message of Jesus, as a message which needs to be interpreted in the context

of the suffering, struggle and hope of the poor while drawing attention to importance of economic factors and ideology in oppression and class struggle.⁴⁶

It is important to note that the core elements of the social gospel and the social teaching are not exclusive to a certain Christian denomination or tradition. Although in many public opinion surveys those who attend congregations with a heavy social gospel orientation are more likely to self-identify as Christian liberals, one may find strong social reform activism among many mainline churches, traditional Catholic parishes, and even some evangelical congregations. For instance, members of the Sojourners, a pro-life evangelical group, have repeatedly emphasized the moral obligation of evangelicals to help the poor, assisted those in despair as a result of the devastation in the Gulf Coast communities due to Hurricane Katrina, and politically opposed politicians who advocate budget cuts to welfare and other social programs (Wilcox and Larson 2006). More than a particular denomination, group or clergy, the social gospel represents a cultural narrative which promotes a socially engaged vision of Christianity and is present, to varying degrees, in Christian congregations across America.

The conservative doctrine narrative

The conservative doctrine is a narrative found within American Christianity which is diametrically juxtaposed to the ideals found in the social gospel. Conservative doctrinarian Christians place more emphasis on the teachings *about* Jesus (as expressed

⁴⁶ Liberation Theology was first presented in print within the work of Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutierrez (1971) entitled *Teología de la liberación*. For more on liberation theology, see Dussel (1981), Boff and Boff (1987), as well as Belli and Nash (1992).

in the letters of Paul and the Gospel and Revelation of John), while those who follow the social gospel tradition focus instead on specific teachings *of* Jesus (as found in the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in particular) and how to apply those teachings in their relationships with others (Barker and Carman 2000). Conservative doctrinarian Christians oppose the idea that Christianity should be equated with social reform. Instead, conservative doctrinarians place emphasis on the spiritual communion between God and individuals, interpret social problems as the result of individual moral failings and support conversion or spiritual rebirth, and not government social programs, as the primary solution to social challenges (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007; Barker and Carman 2000). It is because of this that conservative doctrinarians place much emphasis on the importance of traditional social values and also favor economic individualism by endorsing subminimum wages, the privatization of the welfare system, cuts in Medicaid and other social spending, a flat income tax, and the end of the estate tax which many political conservatives call the “death tax” (Wilcox and Larson 2006).

Some of the theological underpinnings of the narrative advanced by conservative doctrinarian Christians can be traced to their heritage from Calvinistic Protestantism. Because Calvinist Protestants believed that God had predestined salvation, they believed that social benevolence, while not necessarily unadvisable, was immaterial to salvation (Barker and Carman 2000). Instead, Calvinists believed that individuals should seek a personal relationship with God and that there were some indications or signs as to who was among the “elect” (chosen by God to be saved). Those signs included worldly, material success in their calling while avoiding wasteful spending and the temptations of the flesh (Hamilton 2001). Therefore, “an individual’s personal piety (including his or her

work ethic) came to be regarded as a reflection of his or her faith, transforming work from something to be endured to something to be revered—a “calling” through which to glorify God” (Barker and Carman 2000). Conversely, laziness and idleness leading to a lack of material success and accumulation came to be interpreted as a sign of moral and spiritual failure.

In addition to their beliefs stemming from their Calvinist heritage, conservative doctrinarians believe that salvation is primarily an individual endeavor. Conservative doctrinarians believe that although the church, the family and others may be important agents in proselytizing, the decision to accept the Atonement of Christ and to establish a personal relationship with God rests ultimately with the individual and no one else (Barker and Carman 2000). Some have argued that such theological individualism may also lead to indifference for social justice. As Rauschenbusch explained,

Because the individualistic conception of personal salvation has pushed out of sight the collective idea of a Kingdom of God on Earth, Christian Men (regrettably) seek for the salvation of individuals and are comparatively indifferent to the spread of the spirit of Christ in the political, industrial, social, scientific and artistic life of humanity. (Rauschenbusch as quoted in Bawer 1997: 94)

Furthermore, some Christian doctrinarians tend to express a notable distrust of government led social assistance efforts. Because many conservative Christians see humanistic and secular forces deeply entrenched in government institutions giving way to the legalization of abortion, tolerance for homosexual behavior, as well as the denial of public school prayer, they also see government social programs as an extension of such secularist initiatives seeking to advance the accomplishment of human endeavor without God (Hunter 1991; Wilcox and Larson 2006). In the same vein, for many conservative

doctrinarians, this moral degradation found in secular society, including its government, is also interpreted as a sign that the second coming of Jesus Christ may be near. Given that many conservative Christians view contemporary society as one dominated by moral chaos and as reminiscent of the state of the world described in the book of Revelation before the second coming of Christ, conservative doctrinarians place greater emphasis on evangelizing and on individual moral rectitude instead, and not on the need for government programs to alleviate poverty, as a preparation for the second coming of Christ (Barker and Carman 2000).

Christian narratives and support for social protection in the national sample

American Christians are exposed to elements of the social gospel and conservative doctrine narratives through the messages of their ministers, religious education (including Sunday school), local church groups and interaction with their religious peers. Both the social gospel and conservative doctrine narratives permeate American Christianity on an array of social issues, including views on social protection policies. For instance, we see elements of the conservative doctrine narrative in Christian Right groups like the *Family Research Council*, the *Christian Coalition of America*, and the *Moral Majority*, as well as in the sermons of Christian leaders such as James Dobson, Tony Perkins, Gary Bauer, and numerous pastors across America. For example, the *Family Research Council* has issued several papers opposing government involvement in the provision of health care and in the regulation of health insurance policies. The *Council* argues against such government intervention on the grounds that it will challenge the economic and moral self-sufficiency of families: Self-sufficient families are

responsible for making decisions about their well-being. [...] this “third-party” [public option] payer approach to insurance does not serve the family well. It functions to remove family members from self-sufficiency and decision-making about their health care” (Family Research Council 2007: 2). We also observe traces of the conservative doctrine in some of the sermons of Dr. Jonathan Burnham, former senior pastor of Boca Raton Community Church, one of the oldest evangelical churches in Boca Raton, Florida. On September 6, 2009, in one of his last sermons at Boca Raton Community Church, Dr. Burnham said,

There is a new brand of communism that is being taught and indoctrinated at university campuses across America. This new form of communism appeals to the sensitivities of many young and idealistic minds. It teaches that godless human effort and political action against market principles are able to overcome poverty, homelessness and misery; it also teaches that we should tolerate and embrace homosexuals and feminists who engage in worldly behavior. I tell you today, this brand of communism springing up across American colleges and universities constitutes one of the most pressing challenges facing our Christian worldview and the moral backbone of our country (Burnham cited in sermon transcripts of Boca Raton Community Church 2009).

Conversely, we also see elements of the social gospel narrative in sermons, Christian movements and the viewpoints of some Christian leaders in America. Possibly one of the most celebrated sermons on social reform in contemporary American history was “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King gave this sermon on the evening before he was killed in Memphis, Tennessee during his visit to support the sanitation workers’ strike in 1968. In the sermon Dr. King said, “Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, and say, ‘Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.’ Somehow, the preacher must say with Jesus, ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to deal with the problems of

the poor'" (King cited in Selby 2008: 65). A more contemporary example of the social gospel narrative can be found in an interview with Baptist Minister Tony Campolo for *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*:

How about medical care? And the fact that there are elderly people in this country who have to choose between medicine or buying food is an abomination. Those issues are biblical issues: to care for the sick, to feed the hungry, to stand up for the oppressed. I contend that if the evangelical community became more biblical, everything would change (Campolo cited in Severson 2004).

The existence and pervasiveness of the social gospel and conservative doctrine narratives in American Christianity help explain why the research results of the present study yielded such a weak correlation between Christian religiosity and opposition to social protection policies. Contrary to the general perception embedded in the *cultural war* metaphor, American Christianity is versatile and filled with a wide array of biblical interpretations and theological justifications for social problems. While some religious Christians in America may be more influenced by the conservative doctrine narrative, thus leading them to oppose social protection policies, there are also those who subscribe to the social gospel narrative and thus support social safety net policies. Moreover, it is likely that a large proportion of American Christians has a blend of both narratives. The emphasis on moral rectitude and personal responsibility found in the conservative doctrine may appeal to many Christians who, simultaneously, accept the importance of social benevolence found in the social gospel narrative. More than likely, these Christians with a blend of both narratives take middle ground positions on the need for additional social spending. The existence of these two counterpoised narratives in American Christianity towards social protection prevents a cohesive and uniform position on the

issue among American Christians. As a result, the correlation between Christian religiosity and the various measures of support for social protection policies used in the present study is very weak and unsubstantial.

Similarly, the existence of these two broad narratives among American Christians also contextualizes the varying levels of support for social protection across Christian groups found in the present study. Although there are notable exceptions, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, research findings suggest that those who self-identify as “fundamentalist” or “evangelical” Christians are more heavily influenced by the conservative doctrine narrative and are thus more likely to oppose public spending on welfare, income redistribution and health care. Moreover, research results presented in Chapter 5 also suggest that those Christians who self-identify as “liberal” are more influenced by the social gospel narrative and are thus far more supportive of these three policy items in comparison to “fundamentalist” or “evangelical” Christians. Those who identify themselves as “mainline” Christians have a blend of both narratives and are thus likely to take a middle ground on their support for social safety net policies. Consistent with this last statement, Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007) as well as Sandoval (2006) have argued that the conflicting sentiments among Mainline Protestants and American Catholics on political preferences on economic issues reflect the tension found between the message of the traditional religious hierarchy which sides with economic elites and supports current economic arrangements and the message of numerous members of the clergy who have periodically favored social reform.

The research findings of the present study also suggest that American Christians within particular social categories are more likely to lean towards the social gospel narrative more than others. The regression models shown in Tables 7 and 10 in Chapter 5 indicate that the influence which religiosity has on support for social protection policies is largely mediated by distinctions based on family income, age, education, political views, being a female or non-white, and having been unemployed in the past ten years. Such distinctions would suggest that the social gospel narrative is more salient among those social groups who are relatively more economically vulnerable and politically liberal. These groups would include those Christians with lower incomes, those who are younger, less educated, more politically liberal, female, non-white and those who have been unemployed for a month or longer at some point in the past ten years. Conversely, the conservative doctrine narrative is more prominent among relatively older Christians with more conservative views, higher incomes, more education, as well as those who are male and white.⁴⁷ Thus, to a certain degree, these findings give some empirical support to Wald and Calhoun-Brown's (2007) conceptualization of American Christianity as a segregationist force whose factions and congregations embody social divisions in class, race/ethnicity, power, and political ideology.

⁴⁷ While the preceding discussion has largely argued that exposure to either the social gospel or the conservative doctrine narrative may help shape policy preferences toward social protection, the reverse relation may also be plausible, although less frequently. In other words, it is also possible that some individuals may first develop social policy preferences and then choose a religious message which is more aligned with their political views. As is generally the case with many social phenomena, the relationship between Christian religious involvement and social protection preferences is interactive and not strictly characterized by a mechanical cause and effect dynamic.

In sum, contrary to popular “culture war” media representations which assume a cohesive cultural and political split between religious Christians and secularists in America, and contrary to recent scholarship stemming from the field of social psychology which contends that religiosity should be negatively related to support for social protection due to a high level of social escapism among religious Christians, the present research finds no substantive correlation between Christian religiosity and either support for or opposition to social protection policies. By contrast, the current study found evidence that internal divisions within American Christianity exist on the degree to which government ought to provide social protection. These divisions are contextualized here in light of two opposing Christian narratives on social protection policies which have been identified here as the social gospel and the conservative doctrine narratives. In relation to this, the results of this study suggest that there is a strong tendency for the social gospel narrative to be more prominent among those who identify themselves as “liberal” Christians, while the conservative doctrine narrative is more visible among those Christians who identify themselves as “fundamentalists” or “evangelical.” Moreover, the findings of the present work also suggest that both the social gospel narrative and the conservative doctrine are more prevalent among different social groups. As a result, those social groups with a greater ideological commitment to social justice and a greater level of economic vulnerability have an inclination to accept Christianity on the terms outlined in the social gospel narrative and thus tend to support social protection policies, while those who are politically more conservative and less economically vulnerable lean toward the conservative doctrine Christian narrative and thus tend to prefer lower spending on social protection policies.

Christian narratives and social protection among Black and Hispanic Americans

The comparison between the social gospel and the conservative doctrine narratives remains relevant even when analyzing the relationship between religiosity and support for social protection among Black and Hispanic Americans. The social gospel narrative has been and continues to be prominent in Black and Hispanic churches. As Billingsley explains, “Indeed, some of the most productive scholars – W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, and C. Eric Lincoln – have established that the black church is a profoundly social institution and often serves as an agent of social reform” (1999: 6). Dr. Martin Luther King’s inclusion of issues relating to socio-economic inequality within the Civil Rights Movement and his “Poor People’s Campaign” in 1968, organized alongside with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference accentuated and reaffirmed the link between social reform and the black church. Some historians, such as Lutz (2001), have argued that one of the factors which allowed a the social gospel to thrive in the black church—even in Southern states after the introduction of Jim Crow laws—is the fact that preachers at black churches have historically been responsible only to their black congregations as their income originated from their church-body and not from white employers. As a result, black preachers have historically been independent from white-owned organizations and thus uncensored to express their views and take action on behalf of social reform.

Similarly, Hispanic ethnic churches, which are largely Catholic,⁴⁸ have been active supporters of social reform and of public causes directly linked to the improvement of social conditions of the Hispanic population in the US. For example, since the late 1960's and early 1970's ethnic Hispanic churches have offered services in Spanish, endorsed Cesar Chavez's agricultural boycotts aimed at improving wages and working conditions of farm workers through the Bishop's Committee on Farm Labor in 1973, generated support for organizations like PADRES (Priest's Associated for Religious, Educational and Social Rights), and actively sheltered and provided for illegal immigrants and their families (Sandoval 2006; De la Torre and Espinosa 2006). Furthermore, Wood (2005) has documented the way in which members of the Hispanic clergy adopted Saul Alinsky's model of populist organizing to organize the economically poor barrios across the American southwest to demand higher wages as well as better social and infrastructure services.⁴⁹ Even Cesar Chavez frequently acknowledged the religious roots of his movement. In the midst of organizing a march from Delano to Sacramento to protest the wages and working conditions of Californian grape pickers, Cesar Chavez mentioned, "I don't think I could base my will to struggle on cold economics or some political doctrine. I don't think that there would be enough to sustain me. For me the base must be faith" (Chavez cited in Espinosa, Elizondo and Miranda 2005: 3).

⁴⁸ Nonetheless, as noted by Sandoval (2006) as well as Lee and Panchon (2007) the number of Protestant churches with predominantly Hispanic congregants has increased dramatically over the past thirty years.

⁴⁹ The most prominent organization to arise from such efforts was COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service).

The present study does present some evidence of the continuing strength of the social gospel narrative within black and Hispanic churches. For instance, in Table 20 in Chapter 5 we observe that Black Christians who identify themselves either as “liberal,” “mainline” or “fundamentalist” are consistently supportive of all of the social protection policies analyzed in this study.⁵⁰ In the case of Hispanic Americans, we observe that in Table 26 in Chapter 5, those Hispanics who identify themselves as “mainline” or “liberal” are very supportive of income redistribution, particularly if compared to the preferences of “mainline” or “liberal” Christians found in the national sample as displayed in Table 13 in Chapter 5.

In light of the strong tradition of the social gospel in the Black and Hispanic church and due to the socio-historical importance of Christianity in struggles for social justice and reform among African Americans and Hispanics, the researcher suspected that the relationship between Christian religiosity and support for social protection in these two groups would not be negative, as had been suggested in the analysis of national data by Scheve and Stasavage (2006) as well as Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004). While Scheve and Stasavage (2006), Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004), among others, argued that religion and social protection constitute two *competing* mechanisms to cope with adverse life events, the findings for Black and Hispanic Americans in the present research suggest an alternative interpretation. The findings outlined in Chapter 5 of the present work indicate that, as expected, there is no strong correlation between any of the three measures of

⁵⁰ In General Social Survey waves in which the “evangelical” category is not included, we notice that evangelicals have a tendency to identify themselves as “fundamentalist” for the most part, and “mainline” to a lesser extent.

Christian religiosity and the indicators of support for social protection policies among Black and Hispanic Americans.

Nonetheless, the lack of a strong positive correlation between Christian religiosity and support for social protection among Black and Hispanic Americans found in this study is also somewhat puzzling. One could argue that the strong emphasis on social reform in the Black and Hispanic churches as well as the notable involvement of Black and Hispanic clergy in movements for social justice should lead more religious Hispanic and Black Christians to have a stronger level of support for social protection policies in comparison to those who are less religiously involved. But the findings of the present study indicate that this is not the case as the researcher did not find a strong association between Christian religiosity and greater support for social protection among Black or Hispanic Americans. The findings contained in the present work, however, respond to various dynamics taking place within the Hispanic and African-American communities and are explained as follows.

First, it is important to point out that, as shown on Table 3 in Chapter 5 and discussed within the same chapter, Hispanic and Black Americans are generally more supportive of social protection policies, and in particular, of all social protection policies analyzed in this study: welfare, social security, health care, income redistribution, and unemployment benefits. Previous research has established that Hispanic and Black Americans are generally more supportive of social protection policies because they face greater economic risk in comparison to White Americans and, in part, because such policy preferences may also be learned through socialization with their peers, families, local communities, local churches, etc. (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Williams 1995; Branton

2007). Thus, one of the factors which helps explain the lack of a strong, positive correlation between religiosity and support for social protection among Hispanic and Black Americans has to do with economic risk. Because economic risk is higher among Hispanic and Black Americans in comparison to White Americans, there is greater demand, and thus more support, for social protection from these two minority groups. Since economic risk is faced by many religious and non religious Black and Hispanic Americans alike, religiosity does not necessarily induce a greater level of support for social protection among populations who are already supportive of such policies due to their greater exposure to economic risk. As a result, the social gospel narrative found in many Hispanic and black congregations would only serve to reinforce already existing social policy preferences responding primarily to a greater level of demand for social protection.

The second dynamic which helps to explain the lack of a strong correlation between religiosity and support for social protection policies among Black and Hispanic Americans relates to the rising socioeconomic inequalities *within* these two groups. Kerbo (2009) has argued that there is a widening gulf between the traditionally impoverished sectors and the growing middle and upper middle classes within the black and Hispanic community in the US. This widening gulf has become visible in the living conditions of the suburban black and Hispanic middle class and the non-white inner city poor. As can be expected, these distinctions have also led some middle class blacks and Hispanics to prefer involvement in suburban schools, clubs, community associations and churches (Browser 2007; Bean and Trejo 2001; Dávila 2008). In light of these developments, it is plausible that enthusiasm for social justice among some middle to

upper middle class blacks and Hispanics, particularly those who were raised in suburban America, may decline since the push for social protection policies is not typically a priority within many middle class or suburban social organizations, including the church (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). In other words, some religious black and Hispanics who enjoy a middle to high level of socioeconomic status may be relatively less eager to support social protection policies in comparison to their counterparts in the lower end of the socioeconomic scale partly because the social gospel narrative is not as salient in middle class and suburban churches as it is in churches with lower income congregants. There is some evidence to support this claim within the present study. This can be seen in the OLS regression shown in Table 16 in Chapter 5, which includes data from the Black American sample only. The regression model includes support for welfare as a dependent variable, religious attendance as the independent, and family income decile as one of the control variables. As observed in the model, religious attendance is no longer statistically significant when we take into account differences in family income, yet family income is indeed a robust and statistically significant predictor. We find a similar dynamic within the Hispanic sample. Table 22 in Chapter 5 shows the OLS regression with support for welfare as a dependent variable. This model includes the control variable “Cuban” in part to take into account political differences among Hispanic groups but also to assess differences in socioeconomic standing since Cuban Americans are the most affluent Hispanic group in America. As observed, the variable “Cuban” partly mediates the relationship between religious attendance and support for welfare among Hispanic Americans.

There is one further dynamic which may further help to explain the lack of a strong correlation between measures of religiosity and support for social protection policies among Hispanic Americans. This dynamic refers to denominational differences between Hispanic Protestants and Catholics. Although Hispanics in the US remain mostly Catholic, there is a growing Protestant community of Hispanic Americans. According to the 2006 wave of the General Social Survey, roughly nineteen percent of all Hispanics identify themselves as Protestant and sixty-six percent identify themselves as Catholic. Sandoval (2006) has argued that many Hispanic Catholics in the US and in Latin America have converted to Protestantism as a result of the perceived dogmatic and ritualistic rigidity of Catholicism, a growing sense of disillusionment with the Catholic Church, the perceived growth of secularism in Catholicism, and the charismatic and lively appeal of many Pentecostal and contemporary evangelical churches. Sandoval has further noted that the large majority of Hispanics who convert to Protestantism become Pentecostals or other types of non-denominational evangelical Christians.

Recent studies on Hispanic Americans have noted that Protestant Hispanics, and in particular Evangelical Hispanics, tend to have strong conservative stances on social value issues and are consistently aligned with Republican candidates (Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Espinosa, Elizondo and Miranda 2003; Lee and Panchon 2007). Surprisingly, it is only among the Hispanic population in the US that the Catholic-Protestant distinction is meaningful to differentiate support for social protection.⁵¹ For instance, Figure 25 in

⁵¹ According to Lee and Pachon (2007) the division between Latino Catholics and Evangelicals is far better able to account for differences in policy preferences and political behavior in comparison to other distinctions frequently used among Hispanic Studies scholars such as Hispanic country of origin or region of residence.

Chapter 5 indicates that being a Hispanic Catholic is positively correlated with support for welfare at a statistically significant level and that it helps to mediate the relationship between welfare and religious attendance. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 5, a larger proportion of Evangelical Hispanics self-identify as fundamentalist Christians and are also less likely to support income redistribution and welfare spending. This finding constitutes a key difference in the impact which Christian religious involvement has on social safety net policy preferences between Black and Hispanic Americans. Among Black Americans, denominational differences do not yield differing levels of support for social protection policies while they do among Hispanic Americans. Moreover, the results of the current study suggest that religious conversion from Catholicism to Evangelical Christianity among Hispanic Americans carry with it a political conversion as well; this idea is further explored in this chapter as a suggestion for future research. This notable schism in political attitudes between Hispanic Catholics and Evangelical Protestants also helps to explain why Christian religiosity per se is not strongly associated either with greater or lower support for social protection policies among Hispanic Americans.

Christianity, social protection and issue-bundling in American political competition

Arguments about issue bundling suggest that religiosity may be correlated with support for socially conservative candidates who are also unfavorable to social protection policies as part of their political platform, and hence being a religious Christian may appear to be correlated to low support for social spending. This line of argumentation would also suggest that perhaps religious individuals are not inherently less favorable or unfavorable to social protection policies, but they simply appear to be so because of an

issue-bundling effect which occurs within a two party system in American political competition. The abstract theoretical model suggesting the possibility that opposition to social protection issues is bundled with particular positions on social value issues among religious individuals was outlined initially by Roemer (1998) and restated as an econometric model in a more recent contribution by Lee and Roemer (2008). However, to the knowledge of the researcher, up until the present contribution there has not been a direct attempt to empirically show the bundling of moral value issues with an opposition or downplay of social protection policies nor to explain some of the cultural or ideological factors which facilitate the formation of such issue bundling.

In the analysis of voting patterns in recent presidential elections (Table 12 in Chapter 5) we observe that there is a strong tendency for those who identify themselves as “very religious” to vote for the Republican presidential candidate while those who state that they are “not religious” tend to vote for the Democratic one. This pattern remained statistically significant even after taking into account factors which tend to influence political alignments such as differences in income, education, race and gender. In conjunction to this, as described in Chapter 5, exit polls in 2000, 2004 and 2008 (MSNBC 2008; Pew Research Center 2004) consistently indicate that people who voted for the Republican presidential candidate cited moral values as one of the most important factors in their decision while Democratic voters cited the economy, jobs, as well as health care as factors behind their support for the Democratic candidate. Taken together, these different indicators suggest that religiosity does play a role in the occurrence of an issue bundling effect in American political competition. Although, as shown here, while religious Christians are not substantively less likely to support social protection policies

in comparison to non-religious individuals, they are more likely to support Republican presidential contenders due to their positions on moral value issues in spite of the fact that the Republican candidate may generally be perceived to have a weaker social protection agenda.

To the author's surprise, Christian religious involvement appears to have a stronger effect in the alignment of political support in recent presidential elections than it does in discriminating varying levels of direct support for social safety net policies in present-day America. This finding suggests that the Christian religiosity has a rather indirect but negative role in the advancement of social protection policies in the US. In other words, it is the role which Christian religious involvement plays in facilitating the bundling of moral issues with opposition to social protection in electoral competition, and not differing attitudes on social protection between those who are more religious Christians and those who are not, that serves as a possible deterrent to the expansion of social safety net policies in contemporary America. In essence, greater social safety net coverage must compete with moral value issues for the attention and predilection of American Christian voters in a two party system that juxtaposes these two concerns across party lines in such a way that a preference for one comes at the expense of the other.

In addition to its effect in political alignments, issue bundling is also likely to produce a sense of ambivalence and strain among many Christian voters, particularly during high-profile elections. Such strain arises because both social justice and moral concerns are central issues to many American Christians, yet each of these two issues is

typically championed by opposing parties and candidates in electoral competition. This sense of ambivalence was expressed by Rachel Karaam, an active member of Boca Raton Community Church, a local evangelical congregation, roughly a month before the 2008 presidential election. On her personal blog Ms. Karaam says,

I still haven't made up my mind on the election. I feel that we need to find a better way to provide healthcare, I feel that government needs to be more involved in caring for the poor and the unemployed, and I feel that our current economic system produces far too many inequalities. Because of all this, I understand where Obama is coming from and why so many people are encouraged by his candidacy. But I can't stand his social agenda. As a Christian, it is hard for me to support someone who believes abortion should be legal. I will continue to pray for the welfare of our country and to ask the Lord for understanding and wisdom so that His will be done on November 3 (Karaam 2008: para. 3).

This tension between socio-economic and moral issues was also visible during the debate on health care reform throughout 2009. For instance, some critics of health care reform claimed not to oppose the notion of making health care more affordable, but rather, the possibility that public funding for abortions would be possible through such reforms. In particular, although the Catholic Church in America has long been a strong advocate of expanding health care coverage to the poor and marginalized, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has threatened to withdraw its support for health care reform since the Senate bill passed late in 2009 left open the possibility of using public funding indirectly for elective abortions (Werner 2009). In a similar tension between moral and socio-economic issues, the Catholic Archdiocese of Washington said that it would discontinue the social service programs it runs for the District of Columbia if the city doesn't change a proposed same-sex marriage legislation, a threat that could affect

tens of thousands of people the church helps yearly with adoption, homelessness and health care (Craig and Boorstein 2009).

The tension between moral and social protection issues in recent presidential elections, particularly among religious Christian voters, raises three important questions. First, what explains the current prominence of moral value issues in relation to other issues, such as those relating to social justice and socio-economic inequality, among American Christians? Second, given that many American Christians have a blend of the social gospel and conservative doctrine narrative, what cultural dynamics ease the psychological tension which may arise when Christian voters support a political candidate who reflects their views on value issues but not on social protection issues? Third, is such issue bundling as strong or as likely to occur among Black and Hispanic American Christians as it is nationally? The following paragraphs respond to each of the aforementioned questions.

With regard to the first question, George Lakoff (2002) argued that the liberal establishment in America has lost considerable ground among several segments of American society since the 1980s—including numerous American Christians—because its representatives utilize language and terminology which favor conservative arguments. Lakoff suggests that the usage of terms like *partial birth abortion* among liberals only elicit mental frames which favor arguments against abortion. However, beyond terminology and language use, Wilcox and Larson (2006), Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007) as well as Liebman, Wuthnow and Guth (1983) have identified the influential role which some “born again” evangelical groups belonging to what is commonly called the

Christian Right⁵² have had in positioning moral concerns like abortion, the teaching of evolution in public schools and same-sex marriage as pivotal issues in political competition. These same authors have argued that over the past thirty years the Christian Right has been successful in organizing and mustering support for moral issues from various Christians groups, such as some moderate Protestants and Catholics. More importantly, such efforts have also helped to conceptualize the future relevance of Christianity in the minds of many American Christians as a function of the progress attained in wining political battles towards socially conservative legislation (Wilcox and Larson 2006). The success of the Christian right in bringing attention to and gathering support for moral issues from less conservative Christians has been crucial in swaying religious Christians to politically support candidates with conservative stances on moral issues even if such candidates do not necessarily reflect their policy preferences in other issue dimensions, such as social protection.

With regard to the second question, the researcher has identified two cultural dynamics which help ease the possible tension faced by some American Christians as they support political candidates with strong stances on moral issues but who, at the same time, do not necessarily reflect their social protection policy preferences. The first is based on strong conviction that upward social mobility is not only possible but commonplace in America while the second relates to the belief that support for faith-

⁵² Wilcox and Larson (2006) have identified the Christian right as a political agglomeration of Christian leaders, congregants and organizations characterized by strong support for conservative political and social values. Although this agglomeration includes denominational and non-denominational Christians, it is primarily led by “born again” evangelical Christians. Some of the most prominent Christian right organizations include Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, the Christian Coalition of America, among others.

based social services may serve as a substitute for backing government-provided social protection.

As noted in the discussion of descriptive findings of the present chapter, the belief that an individual can improve his or her economic circumstances and escape social and structural impediments remains prominent in contemporary US society and culture, in spite of some evidence to the contrary (Kerbo 2009). For instance, the General Social Survey asked participants to state their opinion on how it is that people get ahead. Of those respondents interviewed from 2000 to 2006, sixty seven percent said “hard work,” eleven percent said “luck or help,” and twenty two percent said “both equally” (GSS 2006). What was most surprising about these figures was that they have not changed much since the 1970s when economic dynamics which hinder the possibility of upward social mobility, such as outsourcing, the decline of well-paid factory jobs and the expansion of low-paying service jobs, were certainly not as prevalent as they were between 2000 and 2006. In sum, in spite of diminishing social mobility and growing social inequality during the past thirty years, the belief that hard work gives way to upward social mobility remains influential in American culture.

Among Christian voters, this belief may facilitate issue bundling as it softens the psychological tension inherent in supporting a candidate who may represent their moral value viewpoints but not necessarily their stance on social protection issues, particularly those relating to income redistribution or poverty alleviation. In other words, in the mind of a strong American Christian it may be easier to negotiate social protection issues than moral value issues because of the belief that even if the government were not to help out

as much, upward social mobility is still possible for the poor who are diligent and are thus “able and willing to help themselves.” Conversely, moral issues are harder to negotiate for religious American Christians because they represent “a Christian way of life,” the cultural future of American society, and, more importantly, political battles which are yet to be won.

Given that faith in upward social mobility may facilitate giving precedence to moral issues over socio-economic ones, it is also possible that the priority of moral issues among some American Christians would considerably diminish if the notion that hard work unequivocally led to upward social mobility were to subside as a commonly held belief. There is some recent evidence to support this claim, particularly among white evangelicals in rust belt states where large segments of the population have experienced notable downward social mobility in recent decades. As indicated by Sullivan (2008), roughly a third of white evangelical voters in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana supported Obama in the 2008 presidential election and mentioned widespread unemployment, poverty and health care as the top reasons for their choice. Although there may have been multiple reasons as to why a third of all white evangelical voters in these states supported Mr. Obama, it is plausible that the diminishing confidence in upward social mobility in these economically depressed states may have made it more difficult for a number of white evangelicals to give strict precedence to moral issues over the need for greater public social protection. This possibility is further outlined as a suggestion for future research.

The second cultural dynamic which facilitates the prominence of moral issues over social protection issues among some American Christians relates to the support for faith-based social programs, either through direct financial contributions, by volunteering hours, or through expressing support for such ministries in local congregations. The expansion and notoriety of faith-based social services became particularly visible since the creation of the *Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives* through executive order in January of 2001. Although the researcher believes that by and large the commitment and thrust behind the support and involvement of American Christians in faith-based social services is genuine, such support and involvement may have the unintended effect of facilitating issue bundling in political competition. For some American Christians, the support of faith-based social services may help to reduce the tension produced by politically supporting candidates who champion moral issues but oppose the expansion of social spending. Some religious Christians may believe that although they traditionally support political candidates who oppose social protection policies, they are not unresponsive to Christ's teachings of social benevolence by virtue of their support for or involvement in faith-based social programs. In sum, by supporting faith-based social services, some American Christians may believe that they are indeed engaged in alleviating social problems in a way that is consistent with the overall message of Christ, which in turn, facilitates their political support for politicians who push for conservative moral values while also oppose spending more on public social programs.

Lastly, with regard to the third question, the present research found that giving preference to moral issues over socio-economic ones is generally much less likely to

occur among Hispanic and Black Americans. As was the case with the general population, exit polls in 2000, 2004 and 2008 (MSNBC 2008; Pew Research Center 2004) have indicated that the majority of Hispanic and Black Americans who voted for the Republican presidential candidate cited moral values and national security as the most important factors in their decision while Democratic voters cited unemployment, health care, and economic hardship. However, in contrast to the patterns observed in the national sample, religious and non-religious Blacks have been consistently supportive of the Democratic presidential candidate in recent elections while those Hispanics who self-identify as “very religious” have favored the Republican presidential candidate only by a very slim margin as observed in Table 25 in Chapter 5. Nonetheless, overall both Hispanic and Black voters have very conservative stances on moral issues which are not commonly championed by the Democratic presidential candidate for which they traditionally vote. Given that both Hispanic and Black Americans are at a higher risk of poverty in American society and given that the social gospel narrative has been a historically defining component of many Black and Hispanic congregations, it may be generally more difficult for Hispanic and black Christian voters to favor moral issues such as abortion or homosexual marriage over welfare, health care spending, or income redistribution in comparison to white Christian voters. Additionally, many African Americans and Hispanics continue to perceive the Republican Party as the party which has incorporated the racist and ethnocentric thrust of the Dixiecrats and anti-immigrant groups (Ross 2004; Eason 2003; Zarrella 2008) and are thus unlikely to vote for Republican candidates even if such candidates better reflect their moral stances. Hispanic evangelicals constitute the only segment of the Hispanic American population which has

consistently favored the Republican candidate in recent presidential elections. This reflects the conservative orientation of many Hispanic evangelicals on both economic and social issues as well as a growing cultural and political schism between Hispanic Catholics and Hispanic Evangelical Protestants.

Suggestions for future research

The findings and conclusions outlined within the present text offer some possibilities for further research. Three broad research propositions to fill existing knowledge gaps on the relationship between Christianity and political attitudes on social protection policy preferences are described in the proceeding paragraphs.

First, as argued here, American individuals have an inclination to accept and involve themselves in Christianity in a way that is consistent with the interests and discourse of their social and political standing. As a result, the factions and congregations within American Christianity tend to embody social divisions in class, race/ethnicity, power, and political ideology. In relation to this, further qualitative research could assess whether or not a change in the socioeconomic status of congregants brings with it a change in the predominant cultural narratives and political preoccupations of their church. In other words, as a given congregation transitions from being mostly made up of members within lower socioeconomic strata to one with a larger middle or middle-upper class membership, would sermons and church activities also tend to stray away from concerns about social justice and focus more on individual righteousness, personal salvation and moral value issues? Conversely, do the narratives and concerns of better off churches change as a result of receiving a large influx of poorer congregants? The large

influx of Mexican and Central American immigrants into predominantly white, middle-class Catholic Churches across the American Mid-West and South provide excellent case studies of churches experiencing transition in the socioeconomic composition of their membership. Further qualitative research on the possible change in narratives and preoccupations of such churches could complement or further elaborate on the arguments presented here based primarily on quantitative analysis.

The second suggestion for future research relates to the interplay of moral and socio-economic issues among evangelicals. In this study, it is argued that as the belief in upward social mobility winds down, it becomes more difficult for religious Americans to give strict preference to moral issues over social protection issues in political competition. As a possible example, it was mentioned that in the 2008 election Barack Obama was able to make some gains among white evangelicals in rust belt areas in states like Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. Further research in future presidential elections could assess whether this was primarily due to the weakening of the belief in upward social mobility among white evangelicals in these areas or the result of the novelty surrounding Obama's candidacy. Additionally, there may be a geographical component to consider as part of this proposition. As Sullivan (2008) explained,

[...] there are unquestionably theological and racial reasons for the continued alignment of many white Evangelicals with the GOP in the South [...] Obama's gains among Catholics were driven by Latino and white working-class Catholics for whom the economy trumped all other issues. But for lower-income Evangelicals in Southern states, that wasn't enough. Even in states that Obama carried, like Virginia and North Carolina, his percentage of the white Evangelical vote was much lower than in the Rust Belt (Sullivan 2008: para. 12).

With this consideration in mind, future research could assess whether or not diverging views on the priority given to socio-economic issues could amount to a visible schism in the political attitudes and behavior between white evangelicals in the South and those found elsewhere.

Third, further research needs to be done on the cultural narratives present within the Hispanic evangelical churches. As noted here, Hispanic evangelicals tend to be far more conservative on moral issues, less supportive of social protection policies, and also more likely to vote for Republican presidential candidates in comparison to their Catholic counterparts. Based on the present work, the researcher considers the rift between Hispanic evangelicals and Catholics to be one of the most defining divisions in political attitudes among Hispanic voters. Nonetheless, up until now, there has been little to no research done on the link between the institutional affiliation of Hispanic evangelical churches and subscription to the conservative doctrine narrative. Many Hispanic evangelical churches around the country are partially or entirely funded by Anglo-American evangelical churches. In many instances, Hispanic evangelical churches are actually not separate entities but a ministry within a larger, and predominantly white, evangelical church (Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Espinosa, Elizondo and Miranda 2003). Given that such financial and institutional dependence may have consequences in terms of the selection of pastors, church activities and the overall “tone” of sermons, it is plausible that greater independence from white evangelical churches may have a visible effect on the broad orientation of Hispanic evangelical churches. It would be thus worthwhile to research whether or not more independent Hispanic evangelical churches are more likely

to foreground elements of the social gospel narrative, and thus be more supportive of social protection policies, in comparison to lesser independent ones.

Chapter summary

This chapter has contextualized the major findings of the present study. In particular, the lack of a strong correlation between Christian religiosity and opposition to social protection policies found here is explained in terms of counterpoised cultural narratives within Christianity which have the ultimate effect of canceling each other out in statistical analysis. The two juxtaposed cultural narratives within Christianity identified here are the social gospel and the conservative doctrine narrative. In this chapter, it is argued that most American Christians have a blend of both narratives. Those Christians closer to the social gospel narrative tend to favor social protection policies while those closer to the conservative doctrine narrative tend to oppose them. In relation to this, the findings of this study also indicate that there is a strong tendency for the social gospel narrative to be more prominent among those who identify themselves as “liberal” Christians, while the conservative doctrine narrative is more visible among those Christians who identify themselves as “fundamentalists” or “evangelicals.” In this chapter it was further argued that American individuals have an inclination to accept and involve themselves in Christianity in a way that is consistent with the interests and discourse of their social and political standing. As a result, those social groups with a greater ideological commitment to social justice and a greater level of economic vulnerability have an inclination to accept Christianity on the terms outlined in the social gospel narrative and thus tend to support social protection policies, while those who are

politically more conservative and less economically vulnerable lean toward the conservative doctrine narrative and thus tend to prefer lower spending on social protection policies.

The present chapter also discussed the role of Christian religiosity on social protection policy preferences among Black and Hispanic Americans. Although the present study also found Hispanic and Black Americans to be generally more supportive of social protection policies in comparison to White Americans, the researcher did not find evidence that Christian religiosity is correlated to greater support for social protection policies among these two minority groups. In the present chapter, this was explained in part due to the higher levels of poverty and economic risk found among Black and Hispanic Americans. Since economic risk is faced by many religious and non religious Black and Hispanic Americans alike, religiosity does not necessarily induce a greater level of support for social protection among populations who are already supportive of such policies due to their greater exposure to economic risk. Moreover, in this chapter it was argued that views on social protection policies among Black and Hispanic Americans better respond to income differences more than levels of Christian religiosity.

This chapter also examined the influence of Christian religiosity on issue bundling in American political competition. Issue bundling occurs as the more religious Christian voters tend to give precedence to moral issues over social protection issues and thus have an inclination to support candidates with strong moral value stances who may also oppose or downplay social protection issues. The present chapter examines some of

the main cultural and social dynamics within American Christianity which facilitate the occurrence of such issue bundling in recent presidential elections.

Lastly, the chapter also offers suggestions for future research. Three broad propositions for future research are offered in an effort to fill existing knowledge gaps on the relationship between Christian religiosity and social safety net policy preferences as well as to expand on the findings of the current study.

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