

Women of the Pew: Mobilizing Civic and Religious Capital

Session C-1, Thematic Session: The Political Capital of People of Faith
Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting 2005

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Women differ from men in their level of church participation and civic involvement. A description of female worshipers across a national random sample of U.S. congregations revealed these patterns. Individual-level demographic factors and religious involvement exhibited significant correlations with civic engagement, thus, supporting the theory that congregations generate social capital. However, several demographic characteristics (e.g., age, education) showed a more significant relationship to women's civic involvement than did religious involvement measures. Analyses confirmed modest congregational effects on individual civic engagement, including denomination (reflecting theological differences) and highly mobilized worshipers (a "social contagion" effect). Mainline Protestant congregations and highly mobilized congregations contributed to higher levels of civic engagement by female worshipers independent of their individual characteristics.

Congregational Characteristics:

Denomination

Size

Income (average and heterogeneity)

Education (average and heterogeneity)

Race (heterogeneity)

Density of social networks (number or percentage of close friends)

Leadership style of key leader (participatory)

Other Congregational Characteristics:

Norms of civic engagement in congregation (“contagion effect”)

% voting

% contact with officials

% working on community problems

% involved in community social service, charity groups

% involved in community advocacy, justice, lobbying groups

Factors affecting norms of congregation

Average age

Average income

Average education

Theology of congregation

Relativism (% agreeing with relativist position)

Literalism (% agreeing with literal interpretation of the Bible)

Development of Civic Skills

Involved in decision-making (% participating)

Geographic Context

14-indicator Social Capital Index (Putnam 2000)

Urban vs. Rural

Works cited:

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Matthew Loveland, “Civic Congregations: Congregational Dynamics and Individual Civic Involvement,” Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, Notre Dame, June 2005.

Matthew Loveland, David Sikkink, Daniel J. Myers, and Benjamin Radcliff, “Private Prayer and Civic Involvement,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44:1 (2005) 1-14.

C. Woolever, (woolever@hartsem.edu), Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary. Presented at the 2005 Association for the Sociology of Religion annual meeting, Philadelphia. For more information about the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, see www.USCongregations.org

DESCRIPTIVES

| <i>Individual-level Variables</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Min</i> | <i>Max</i> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Voting..... | .80 | .40 | 0 | 1 |
| Involved in community groups... | .34 | .52 | 0 | 2 |
| Worship attendance..... | 3.79 | 1.04 | 0 | 5 |
| Length of attendance (> 5 years) | .34 | .48 | 0 | 1 |
| Participation in church groups... | .75 | .91 | 0 | 3 |
| Involvement in decision making.. | .29 | .46 | 0 | 1 |
| Social density (close friends).... | .14 | .35 | 0 | 1 |
| Sense of belonging..... | .72 | .45 | 0 | 1 |
| Relativism..... | .53 | .50 | 0 | 1 |
| Literalism..... | .27 | .45 | 0 | 1 |
| Prayer or devotions..... | 4.86 | 1.44 | 1 | 6 |
| Age..... | 51.24 | 16.25 | 19 | 98 |
| Race (% white)..... | .79 | .41 | 0 | 1 |
| Education..... | 5.51 | 1.67 | 1 | 8 |
| Income..... | 3.52 | 1.40 | 1 | 6 |
| Employment (FT or PT)..... | .58 | .49 | 0 | 1 |
| Married..... | .66 | .47 | 0 | 1 |
| Children in home..... | .59 | .49 | 0 | 1 |
| Spouse attends | .44 | .50 | 0 | 1 |
| Congregational-level Variables | | | | |
| % Voting..... | .71 | 14.45 | 13.70 | 100.00 |
| % Contact with local officials ... | .18 | 6.99 | 0.00 | 68.40 |
| % Work on community issues... | .19 | 6.60 | 0.00 | 55.00 |
| % Involved in charity groups.... | .26 | 8.90 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| % Involved in advocacy groups | .05 | 3.17 | 0.00 | 13.70 |
| Social contagion index..... | .28 | 6.76 | 0.00 | 55.79 |

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Table 1
Multiple Regression:
Voting as Predicted by Individual Characteristics and Faith Group

| | Total (All Women) | Catholic Women | Mainline Protestant Women | Conservative Protestant Women |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| Worship attendance | .030 *** | .030 *** | .017 | .001 |
| Tenure (> 5 yrs) | -.072 *** | -.095 *** | -.043 *** | -.040 *** |
| Cong'l groups | .090 *** | .074 *** | .061 *** | .104 *** |
| Decision making | .008 | -.006 | .046 *** | .023 * |
| Close friends | -.025 *** | -.027 *** | -.008 | -.021 * |
| Sense of belonging | .003 | .006 | .001 | -.009 |
| Relativism | -.029 *** | -.004 * | -.023 * | -.044 *** |
| Literalism | -.041 *** | -.062 *** | -.066 *** | .023 * |
| Frequency of prayer | .034 *** | .033 *** | .023 * | .025 * |
| Age | .177 *** | .190 *** | .181 *** | .130 *** |
| Race (white) | .182 *** | .221 *** | .040 *** | .087 *** |
| Education | .122 *** | .108 *** | .138 *** | .149 *** |
| Income | .116 *** | .121 *** | .083 *** | .105 *** |
| Employment | .038 *** | .029 *** | .052 *** | .036 *** |
| Married | .031 *** | .033 *** | .067 *** | .029 * |
| Children in home | -.024 *** | -.025 *** | -.019 | -.033 ** |
| Spouse attends | -.003 | -.007 | -.008 | .022 * |
| Adjusted R square | .167 | .207 | .092 | .118 |
| N of worshipers | 55,126 | 30,493 | 12,234 | 10,471 |
| Mean on voting | .80 | .77 | .87 | .80 |
| SD on voting | .399 | .421 | .331 | .400 |

Note: Scores on the table are standardized beta coefficients.

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

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Table 2
Multiple Regression: Voting
as Predicted by Individual Characteristics and High/Low Contagion
Congregations

| | Total (All Women) | High Contagion Congregations | Low Contagion Congregations |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| Worship attendance | .030 *** | .026 *** | .038 *** |
| Tenure (> 5 yrs) | -.072 *** | -.061 *** | -.087 *** |
| Cong'l groups | .090 *** | .070 *** | .102 *** |
| Decision making | .008 | .023 *** | -.004 |
| Close friends | -.025 *** | -.016 * | -.025 *** |
| Sense of belonging | .003 | .001 | .003 |
| Relativism | -.029 *** | -.022 *** | -.036 *** |
| Literalism | -.041 *** | -.040 *** | -.035 *** |
| Frequency of prayer | .034 *** | .021 *** | .039 *** |
| Age | .177 *** | .160 *** | .187 *** |
| Race (white) | .182 *** | .075 *** | .180 *** |
| Education | .122 *** | .115 *** | .117 *** |
| Income | .116 *** | .090 *** | .128 *** |
| Employment | .038 *** | .030 *** | .044 *** |
| Married | .031 *** | .049 *** | .024 ** |
| Children in home | -.024 *** | -.012 | -.030 *** |
| Spouse attends | -.003 | .006 | -.008 |
| Adjusted R square | .167 | .083 | .187 |
| N of worshipers | 55,126 | 29,754 | 24,698 |
| Mean on voting | .80 | .87 | .72 |
| SD on voting | .399 | .334 | .451 |

Note: Scores on the table are standardized beta coefficients.

- * p < .05
- ** p < .01
- *** p < .001

Table 3
Multiple Regression: Involvement in Community Organizations
as Predicted by Individual Characteristics and Faith Group

| | Total (All Women) | Catholic Women | Mainline Protestant Women | Conservative Protestant Women |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| Worship attendance | -.032 *** | -.018 ** | -.032 ** | -.023 * |
| Tenure (> 5 yrs) | -.021 *** | -.023 *** | -.019 * | -.021 * |
| Cong'l groups | .137 *** | .172 *** | .105 *** | .108 *** |
| Decision making | .102 *** | .088 *** | .125 *** | .071 *** |
| Close friends | -.034 *** | -.011 * | -.043 *** | -.062 *** |
| Sense of belonging | -.020 *** | -.031 *** | -.025** | -.019 |
| Relativism | .036 *** | .016 ** | .034 *** | .025 ** |
| Literalism | -.064 *** | -.017 *** | -.053 *** | -.064 *** |
| Frequency of prayer | .051 *** | .058 *** | .037 *** | .053 *** |
| Age | .059 *** | .041 *** | .055 *** | .050 *** |
| Race (white) | .020 *** | .043 *** | -.013 | -.027 ** |
| Education | .174 *** | .169 *** | .166 *** | .149 *** |
| Income | .058 *** | .057 *** | .074 *** | .033 ** |
| Employment | -.030 *** | -.022 *** | -.054 *** | -.022 * |
| Married | -.050 *** | -.050 *** | -.039 *** | -.044 ** |
| Children in home | -.016 *** | -.021 *** | -.017 * | -.011 |
| Spouse attends | -.010 * | -.005 | -.022 * | -.013 |
| Adjusted R square | .094 | .108 | .089 | .061 |
| N of worshipers | 55,126 | 30,493 | 12,234 | 10,471 |
| Mean involvement | .34 | .30 | .45 | .28 |
| SD on involvement | .515 | .497 | .558 | .479 |

Note: Scores on the table are standardized beta coefficients.

- * p < .05
- ** p < .01
- *** p < .001

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Table 4
Multiple Regression: Involvement in Community Organizations
as Predicted by Individual Characteristics and High/Low Contagion
Congregations

| | Total (All Women) | High Contagion Congregations | Low Contagion Congregations |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| Worship attendance | -.032 *** | -.035 *** | -.021 ** |
| Tenure (> 5 yrs) | -.021 *** | -.021 *** | -.028 *** |
| Cong'l groups | .137 *** | .124 *** | .145 *** |
| Decision making | .102 *** | .114 *** | .076 *** |
| Close friends | -.034 *** | -.036 *** | -.028 *** |
| Sense of belonging | -.020 *** | -.017 * | -.030 *** |
| Relativism | .036 *** | .038 *** | .030 *** |
| Literalism | -.064 *** | -.063 *** | -.055 *** |
| Frequency of prayer | .051 *** | .047 *** | .063 *** |
| Age | .059 *** | .044 *** | .070 *** |
| Race (white) | .020 *** | .001 | .008 * |
| Education | .174 *** | .169 *** | .156 *** |
| Income | .058 *** | .058 *** | .048 *** |
| Employment | -.030 *** | -.044 *** | -.009 |
| Married | -.050 *** | -.055 *** | -.046 *** |
| Children in home | -.016 *** | -.023 *** | .001 |
| Spouse attends | -.010 * | -.012 | -.007 |
| Adjusted R square | .094 | .089 | .082 |
| N of worshipers | 55,126 | 29,754 | 24,698 |
| Mean involvement | .34 | .40 | .26 |
| SD on involvement | .515 | .544 | .465 |

Note: Scores on the table are standardized beta coefficients.

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001