

Pathways of Religious Influence on Family Relationships from One Generation to the Next

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In the present analyses, we examine the transmission of religiosity across generations, as well as how religious practices and beliefs influence competence in family roles for a cohort of young adults. Specifically, we evaluate the degree to which exposure to parents' religiosity during adolescence affects the quality of romantic and parenting relationships when adolescents become adults. Study participants come from the Family Transitions Project (FTP), a 20-year longitudinal study of youth from Iowa. We assessed religiosity in terms of 1) attendance or participation in a religious community or religious activities (Allport & Ross, 1967; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Day, Jones-Sanpei, Price, Orthner, Hair, Moore, & Kaye, 2009; Good & Willoughby, 2006) and 2) the beliefs and emotions that are part of a commitment to religious teachings (Allport & Ross, 1967; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Day, et al., 2009; Good & Willoughby, 2006).

The data from this research project provide a rare opportunity to examine the association between religiosity and family life using independent reports from multiple informants, observational ratings of the quality of family interactions, and the assessment of study variables over a significant period of time during the important life transition from adolescence to adulthood. These aspects of the study are consistent with recommendations for future research from several investigators in this field (e.g., Bridges & Moore, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2001). The richness of the data from this ongoing study also allowed us to draw together several areas of research that are usually considered independently to look not only at the degree to which religiosity is transmitted across generations but also how intergenerational religiosity affects the quality of family relationships.

Intergenerational Continuity of Religiosity

Research shows strong patterns of intergenerational continuity in religiosity (Bengtson, Copen, Putney, & Silverstein, 2009; Myers, 1996; Pearce & Thornton, 2007), with the majority of adults remaining in the church affiliation or denomination of their childhood (Sullivan, 2009). Many American parents believe it is important to transmit religious beliefs and morals to their children, and most religious affiliations guide parenting practices by instilling childrearing with moral significance, by providing biblical teachings, guidance, and support for parenting practices, and by offering opportunities for parents and children to participate in activities together and with other families (Eggebeen & Dew, 2009; Flor & Knapp, 2001; King et al., 1997; Mahoney, Pergament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003; Pearce & Axinn, 1998; Pearce & Thornton, 2007; Putnam, 2000; Smith, 2003; Smith & Denton, 2005; Wilcox, 2001, 2004). Participation in religious services or activities increases exposure to messages and creeds, which is essential to the continuation of belief, and increases social capital with others in the community (Coleman, 1988).

Not only does participation in religious activities guide family norms and interactions, but children with religious parents are more likely to attend church and participate in religious activities during their adolescence and into adulthood. Several studies have shown that parents' church attendance has a strong positive effect on youths' church attendance during adolescence and beyond (Baker & Smith, 2009; Bao, Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Conger, 1999; Gunnoe & Moore, 2002; Myers, 1996; Pearce & Thornton, 2007; Simons, Simons, & Conger, 2004). In a sample of young adults in the Detroit area, Pearce & Thornton (2007) found that mother's church attendance in the year before their child was born was positively related to their children's church attendance at age 18. Among a group of high school students in Canada, the very act of

attending church, regardless of adherence to the creed or belief system, was associated with more positive psychosocial adjustment in adolescence (Good & Willoughby, 2006).

Although Good and Willoughby (2006) found an identical pattern of adjustment among youth who attended church regardless of their belief in God, other studies have shown that the centrality of parents' religious beliefs also is important to consider (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Bao et al., 1999; Flor & Knapp, 2001; Pearce & Axinn, 1998; Pearce & Thornton, 2007). For example, Bader & Desmond (2006) found that adolescents are most likely to attend church when their parents attended church *and* believed that religion was important. Additionally, several studies have indicated that youth from divorced families are less likely to be religious in adulthood (Day, et al., 2009; Myers, 1996; Zhai, Ellison, Stokes, & Glenn, 2008), in part, due to decreases in the parents' religious behaviors after the divorce.

Although parents' practices and beliefs play an important role in the intergenerational continuity of religiosity, youth are even more likely to share their parents' religious beliefs and practices when they enjoy a positive relationship with them. Adolescents who report a good relationship with their parents are more likely to attend church and to maintain their religiosity into adulthood (Day, et al., 2009; Dudley & Wisbey, 2000). Pearce & Axinn (1998) also demonstrate that religious parents perceive higher quality relationships with their children in adulthood. They found when mothers attended church frequently and when the mother and the adolescent attended church with the same frequency, mothers perceived a more positive relationship with their child in adulthood. However, these factors did not affect the child's perception of the relationship.

In addition to affecting how the parent views the quality of the parent-child relationship, parents' religiosity also influences how youth view the relationship (Pearce & Axinn, 1998;

Snider, Clements, & Vazsonyi, 2004; Stokes & Regnerus, 2009), with religious parents being evaluated as more positive and effective by their children. In the Pearce & Axinn (1998) study, when a mother stated that religion was important to her, the child was more likely to report a higher quality relationship with her in adulthood, independent of religious service attendance. In sum, positive parent-child relationships are important to intergenerational transmission of religiosity because such affinity increases the likelihood that parents' religious values will be transmitted to and embraced by adolescents and young adults.

The Effect of Earlier Religiosity on Later Family Relationships

Previous research has demonstrated that religious practices and beliefs have a long-term influence on competence in family roles during adulthood. Religious participation tends to decline in emerging adulthood but then rises again as people marry, have children, and settle down geographically (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Baker & Smith, 2009; Hill, 2009; Kimball, Mitchell, Thornton, & Young-Demarco, 2009; Petts, 2009; Smith & Denton, 2005; Stolzenberg, Blairloy, & Waite, 1995; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). Religion has traditionally played a strong role in family and community socialization, particularly among Judeo-Christian traditions that promote the enrichment of relationships in general, and family relationships in particular (Beaman, Whitbeck, & Simons, 1992; Brody, Stoneman, Flor, & McCrary, 1994; King et al., 1997; Pearce & Axinn, 1998; Pearce & Thornton, 2007).

Several studies have shown that religiosity is associated with increases in marital satisfaction and commitment (Allgood, Harris, Skogrand, & Lee, 2009; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001) and decreases in marital conflict (Brody et al., 1994; Mahoney, Pargament, Jewell, Swank, Scott, Emery, & Rye, 1999). Booth, Johnson, Branaman, & Sica (1995) found a reciprocal influence between marital happiness and church attendance, with

increases in church attendance leading to greater marital happiness and interaction, as well as higher levels of marital happiness leading to increased religious behavior. Religiosity also is associated with lower risk for divorce (Booth et al., 1995; Brown, Orbuch, & Bauermeister, 2008) and infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Dollahite & Lambert, 2007), although the causal direction is uncertain. In a meta-analysis of scholarly works, Mahoney et al. (2001) found that church attendance did not decrease after divorce, but rather that church attendance predicted divorce and served as a protective factor against divorce for some couples. Additionally, the relationship between religiosity and divorce could be spurious. Mahoney et al. also found that individuals with no religious affiliation had a higher divorce rate than the general population, but those with a religious affiliation had divorce rates on par with the average person.

In addition to the positive effect of religion on marital quality, there also is consistent evidence that religiosity leads to better parenting. Parents who are religious show more warmth and affection with their children (Gunnoe, Hetherington & Reiss, 1999; Simons et al., 2004; Snider et al., 2004; Wilcox, 1998), are less harsh or inconsistent in their parenting (Brody et al., 1994; Gunnoe et al., 1999; Simons et al., 2004; Wilcox, 1998), and are more likely to engage in activities with their children (Bartkowski, 2000; Wilcox, 1998, 2002). These findings suggest that religiosity in one generation may promote effective parenting that influences the eventual childrearing practices of children grown to adulthood.

In fact, the literature shows strong intergenerational effects of the quality of parenting during childhood and adolescence. Neppl, Conger, Scaramella, & Ontai (2009), as well as other researchers (e.g., Belsky, Jaffee, Sligo, Woodward, & Silva, 2005; Conger, Neppl, Kim, & Scaramella, 2003) have shown that adults who were raised by warm and supportive parents are more likely to treat their own children in a similar fashion. Therefore, we would expect that

positive parenting in the first generation (G1) might explain the intergenerational effect of parents' religiosity on the subsequent parenting practices in the next generation (G2). That is, G1 religiosity should promote positive parenting toward G2 and these childrearing practices are likely to be emulated by G2 once G2 has children.

We also expect that positive parenting will help explain the relationship between parents' religiosity and the child's romantic relationship quality in young adulthood. For example, Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder (2000) and Donnellan, Larsen-Rife, & Conger (2005) found that adults who had nurturing and involved parents during adolescence were more likely to be warm and supportive in their romantic relationships. Parenting behaviors were the only significant predictor of later interpersonal competence; the quality of their parent's marital interactions did not have an effect on the young adult's romantic interactions. Again, if G1 religiosity affects the quality of parenting toward G2, then these findings suggest that G2 parenting practices may also link G2 religiosity to the quality of G2's adult romantic relationships.

It also is possible that the intergenerational relationship between religiosity and parenting is reliant on the youth's acceptance of his or her parents' beliefs. For example, Pearce & Thornton (2007) did not find support for a direct effect of mother's church attendance on child's ideologies, but rather that the indirect effect occurred through the youth accepting and adopting the practices in adulthood. The direct effect of parent religiosity on the youth's own parenting may be contingent on the internalization of and commitment to religious beliefs in his or her life.

The Present Investigation

The present investigation examines how religiosity is transmitted across generations and how parents' religious practices and beliefs influence their adolescent's competence in romantic relationships and parenting during adulthood. We use data from a twenty year study of a cohort

of adolescents grown to adulthood to examine three objectives. First, we look at the degree to which parents' (G1) religiosity during the G2 child's period of adolescence affects the G2's religiosity in emerging adulthood. We propose that G1 religiosity during G2's adolescence has an indirect effect on G2 religiosity in emerging adulthood through G2's religiosity during adolescence.

Second, we examine the role of G1 religiosity during G2's adolescence on the quality of G2 romantic relationships in adulthood. We again propose an indirect effect through G2's religiosity in adolescence, but based on prior work in our sample (see Conger et al., 2000; Donnellan et al., 2005), we also predict that the quality of G2 romantic relationships will be affected by the quality of G1 parenting during G2's adolescence. Lastly, we examine the association between G1 religiosity during G2's adolescence and the quality of G2's parenting in adulthood. We expect that there will be an indirect effect through G2's religiosity in adolescence and the quality of the G1 parenting during G2's adolescence.

There are several gaps in the literature that will be addressed in the present investigation. First, prior research has oftentimes defined religiosity with single-item measures, typically religious affiliation (for a critique, see Boyatzis, 2006; Dougherty, Johnson, & Polson, 2007). However, religious affiliation is less salient in current generations, replaced by an increased identification with specific churches or congregations (Dougherty et al., 2007). Additionally, one can claim membership in a religious denomination without accepting the content of beliefs or participating in the religious practices. We address this issue by primarily focusing on religiosity for both G1 and G2 as a multi-dimensional construct involving religious practices and beliefs.

Second, several researchers have noted the problem of having only one reporter providing information about family religious beliefs and the quality of family interactional processes (e.g., Boyatzis, 2006; Myers, 1996). When only one person provides assessments regarding these dimensions of family life, estimates of the associations among measures may be inflated because of the personal dispositions of the single informant. For example, a highly religious parent may assume stronger religious beliefs by a child and more benign parenting practices than actually exist. In the present study we address this problem by having each family member independently report on his or her religiosity and by using observer ratings of the quality of family interactions based on video and audio recordings of family discussions in the home.

The use of observational data to measure positive relationship quality and positive parenting is a major strength of the current investigation. By testing the hypothesized model using observer ratings as an independent source of information about G1 and G2 behaviors, we eliminate a potential source of error variance. As part of this strategy, G1 parenting during G2's adolescence was rated by different observers than those who rated G2 behaviors towards a romantic partner and G2 parenting behaviors to the G3 child.

Finally, to ascertain whether any of the relationships within the model were due to outside social or background characteristics, we used G1 gender, family income, divorce status, education level, and religious affiliation as control variables in the analysis. Past evidence suggests that these characteristics may be related to both religiosity and to relationship quality (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Conger & Simons, 1997).

Method

Participants

Data for the present investigation come from the Family Transitions Project (FTP), a longitudinal study of 559 target youth and their families (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger & Elder, 1994). The FTP represents an extension of two earlier studies: the Iowa Youth & Families Project (IYFP) and the Iowa Single Parent Project (ISPP).

In the IYFP, data from the family of origin (N=451) were collected annually from 1989 through 1992 as part of a long-term, prospective study of family economic stress in the rural Midwest. Participants included the target (G2) adolescent (236 females, 215 males), their parents (G1), and a sibling within four years of age. When the study began in 1989, the G2 adolescent was in seventh grade (M age = 13.2 years) and parents were in their late 30s and early 40s (G1 father M age = 40.4 years, range 31.1 to 68.8 years; G1 mother M age = 38.2 years, range 29.2 to 53.5 years). Participants were recruited from schools in rural towns in North Central Iowa; 78 percent of eligible families agreed to participate. Given the homogenous racial composition of rural Iowa at that time, all families were Caucasian.

The ISPP began in 1991 when the G2 adolescent was in ninth grade (M age = 15.2 years), the same year of school in 1991 as the IYFP youths. Data from the family of origin (N=108; 57 females, 51 males) were collected annually from 1991 through 1993. Participants included the G2 adolescent, the G1 mother (mother M age = 39.3 years, range 31.6 to 50.0), and a sibling within four years of age. The participants were Caucasian, single-parent families who had experienced divorce within the two years prior to study commencement. Measures and protocols for the IYFP and ISPP studies were identical except that ISPP fathers did not participate in the in-home interviews but did have the opportunity to participate in telephone surveys (1991 N=69).

In 1994, the families from the IYFP were combined with the families from the ISPP to create the FTP. At that time the G2 adolescents from both studies were in the twelfth grade. In 1994, G2s participated in the study with their G1 parents as they had during the earlier years of the study. Beginning in 1995, the G2 participated in the study with a spouse or romantic partner, and in 1997 the study was expanded to include the G2's first-born child (G3). Data collection continues to the present day as G2s have transitioned to adulthood (in 2008, *M* age = 32.8 years), and the project has a cumulative retention rate of 91 percent over its 20-year history. By 2008, there were more than 350 third-generation children (G3) participating in the FTP, ranging in age from 18 months to 16 years old.

Procedures

During the early years of the study (1989-1994), trained interviewers visited each family's home annually to administer questionnaires and to videotape interaction tasks among family members (for a detailed description of study protocols, see Conger & Elder, 1994). For the videotaped interaction tasks, G1s and G2s were recorded while engaged in a discussion task about family events and problems, which lasted 30 minutes. Beginning in 1995, full assessments were collected biennially and the G2 participated in the study with a romantic partner. During these visits, a trained interviewer visited the G2 at his or her place of residence to administer questionnaires and to videotape a discussion task with the G2 and the romantic partner. Trained observers rated the quality of interactions using the Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scales (Melby & Conger, 2001).

Beginning in 1997, the study was expanded to include the G2's first-born child (G3), who was at least 18 months of age. For these assessments, a trained interviewer visited each G2 parent and the G3 child in their home. During the visit, the G2 parent completed questionnaires

and participated with the G3 child in a variety of videotaped interaction tasks. Observational codes derived from a “clean-up” task were used for this analysis. This task followed a segment during which the child played alone and with an interviewer using developmentally appropriate toys; the interviewer dumped out all the toys before instructing the G2 parent that the G3 child needed to clean up the toys. The task creates a stressful yet familiar environment for both parent and child, and the resulting behaviors indicate how well the parent handles the stress and how responsive the child is to the parent’s directions. Trained observers rated the quality of interactions during this task using the Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scales (Melby & Conger, 2001).

Measures

Religiosity. We used three variables to construct a latent measure of religiosity for G1 and G2. Respondents indicated the importance of religious or spiritual beliefs to their day-to-day life (1 = not at all important, 4 = very important); the importance of being a religious person (1 = not at all important, 5 = extremely important); and the frequency of church attendance (1 = never, 4 = once a week once or more than once a week). G1 parent variables were derived from mother and father questionnaire data in 1991, when the G2 adolescents averaged 15 years of age. At this assessment, questionnaires were completed separately by the mothers and fathers and then their responses were averaged to create a composite parent measure. During adolescence the religiosity variables for G2 were assessed at three waves of data collection (1991, 1992, and 1994). A mean for each variable was computed across the waves to reflect the time period of late adolescence when G2 still resided with his or her parents (age 15, 16 and 18, respectively). An additional variable was computed from the 1997 questionnaires to reflect G2 religiosity during emerging adulthood (age 21).

Positive relationship quality. The measure of G2 positive relationship quality is derived from observation data during the romantic relationship discussion task. Three indicators were computed to indicate high warmth and low hostility toward the spouse or romantic partner: hostility (reversed) and communication (alpha = .83), antisocial (reversed) and prosocial (alpha = .86), and angry coercion (reversed) and assertiveness (alpha = .76). *Hostility* is the extent to which the G2 is hostile, angry, critical or rejecting of the romantic partner. *Communication* is G2's ability to positively express his or her own view in a clear and appropriate way, while demonstrating consideration of the other person's point of view. *Antisocial* is the demonstration of self-centered behavior that shows defiance or lack of constraint. *Prosocial* includes acts of helpfulness, sensitivity, and cooperation. *Angry coercion* is G2 behaviors that are threatening or blaming. *Assertiveness* is the G2's ability to express him or herself using a straightforward, non-threatening style. Each rating was scored on a nine-point scale, ranging from low (no evidence of the behavior) to high (the behavior is highly characteristic of the G2).

Positive parenting. The measures of G1 and G2 positive parenting were derived from the parent-child interaction task described earlier. The same observer rating scales were used for both G1 and G2 parenting. Three indicators were computed to indicate high warmth and low hostility from the parent to the child: hostility (reversed) and communication (alpha = .83), antisocial (reversed) and prosocial (alpha = .84), and angry coercion (reversed) and assertiveness (alpha = .83). These scales are described in the previous paragraph. Each rating was scored on a nine-point scale, ranging from low (no evidence of the behavior) to high (the behavior is highly characteristic of the G2).

Control variables. Several control variables were used in the analysis. (1) Gender of G1 and G2 (0 = female, 1 = male) was taken into account, as previous research has shown differing

effects for mothers/fathers and daughters/sons (see Bao et al., 1999; Boyatzis, 2006; King et al., 1997; Wilcox, 2002). (2) Intact family structure was a measure of whether or not the G1 parents were divorced by 1991; more than one-fifth of the families were divorced. (3) Income was a measure of total G1 family income in 1991, derived from wages, salaries, and other sources of income, such as self-employment income, farm net income, and supplemental security income (M income = \$35,102). (4) Education of G1 parent was constructed to indicate whether or not one G1 in the home held a bachelor's degree or a higher level of education; less than one-third of the families had one or both parents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. (5) Religious or denominational affiliation of G1 parents and G2s was obtained from questionnaire data collected during the first assessment wave (1989 for IYFP, 1991 for ISPP) and coded using the RELTRAD system (Steensland, Park, Regnerus, Robinson, Wilcox, & Woodberry, 2000). This resulted in five categories: Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic, Other, and None.

Data Analysis

In the following analyses, we present three sets of models. First, we evaluate the intergenerational transmission of religiosity from G1 to G2 when the G2 averaged 21 years of age, an age that represents the years of emerging adulthood (Arnett 2000, 2004). The sample for these analyses is composed of all G2s who participated in the 1997 assessment (N=509). In 1997, 63% of G2s were enrolled in vocational college or a four-year university. Ten percent of the G2s were married. See Table 1 for additional characteristics of the sample.

Second, we examine the association between G1 religiosity and the quality of G2 romantic relationships. We use time-shifted data from the G2's first wave of participation with a romantic partner (N=386); the data are constructed such that the time of analysis is the very first wave that the G2 participated in the study with a spouse or cohabitating partner. Thus, the

assessment point ranged in time from 1995 to 2005. G2s averaged 23 years of age at this time-shifted assessment (range 17-30 years) and romantic partners averaged 24.2 years (range 17-50 years). Fifty-two percent of the G2s were married to their romantic partner.

Lastly, we predict from G1 religiosity to the quality of G2 parenting. To maximize this sample size, we use data from the first wave of the G3 child's participation in the study ($N=290$, child M age = 2.2 years, range 2-5 years). Thus, the interaction may have occurred anywhere from 1997 to 2008 because G2 participants had children at different points in their lives.

Results

Table 2 presents the mean values for all the variables in the analyses. Overall, the G1 and G2 participants demonstrated fairly high religious orientation; the average G1 went to church at least monthly ($M = 3.11$) and considered religious beliefs to be of reasonably high importance. For G2s, religious beliefs appear to be consistent between late adolescence and emerging adulthood, but church attendance declined over time.

Table 3 presents the bivariate correlations among study constructs estimated as latent variables. The zero-order correlations among latent constructs were estimated using AMOS 17.0 full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation (Arbuckle, 1997). FIML was used because it is one of the most widely recommended approaches for dealing with missing data in longitudinal research (Allison, 2003; Arbuckle, 2003). Studies indicate that FIML provides better estimation of model parameters than ad hoc procedures, such as listwise or pairwise deletion. FIML was also used in the estimation of structural equation models (SEMS). Overall, the correlations show a strong relationship between G1 and G2 religiosity during adolescence ($r = .65$) and emerging adulthood ($r = .52$), as well as a small but significant effect on the quality of G2's romantic relationship ($r = .17$) and parenting ($r = .13$). The stronger effect is noted between

G2 religiosity during adolescence and G2 adult outcomes ($r = .28$ for G2 positive parenting, $r = .20$ for positive relationship quality). We also see the intergenerational effect of G1 positive parenting on the G2 adult outcomes ($r = .29$ for G2 positive parenting, $r = .33$ for positive relationship quality).

SEMs were used to estimate intergenerational continuity in religiosity and the relationship between religiosity and the quality of interactions in family relationships. The findings were the same with or without the control variables; therefore, the results are reported without the control variables in the equations. In addition, models were first run separately by G1 mother and G1 father. Because the results did not differ by parent gender, we average across mother and father in the SEMs.

Figure 1, model 1a shows a strong zero-order relationship between G1 religiosity during G2's adolescence and G2 religiosity at age 21 ($\beta = .57$, $p < .001$). Model 1b shows that this relationship is fully mediated by G2 religiosity during adolescence. G1 religiosity was strongly related to G2 religiosity during adolescence ($\beta = .69$, $p < .001$), which, in turn, affected G2's religiosity in emerging adulthood ($\beta = .84$, $p < .001$). In other words, G1 religiosity is indirectly related to G2 religiosity in emerging adulthood through G2 religious beliefs and practices during adolescence.

In the second set of analyses (Figure 2), we find a small but significant direct effect of G1 religiosity during G2's adolescence on G2 positive romantic relationship quality during adulthood ($\beta = .11$, $p < .05$; Model 2a). Model 2b shows that the relationship is explained by G1 positive parenting during G2's adolescence and G2 religiosity in adolescence. G1 religiosity led to more positive parenting practices during G2's adolescence ($\beta = .20$, $p < .001$), which influenced G2's behaviors towards his/her romantic partner ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$). G1 religiosity

also predicted G2 religiosity in adolescence ($\beta = .69, p < .001$), which also had a significant effect on G2's romantic relationship quality ($\beta = .15, p < .01$).

The third set of analyses (see Figure 3) shows a similar effect. There is a small but significant direct effect of G1 religiosity during adolescence on G2 positive parenting in adulthood ($\beta = .13, p < .05$). Model 3b shows that this relationship is fully mediated by G1 positive parenting during G2's adolescence and G2 religiosity in adolescence. G1 religiosity was associated with G1 positive parenting practices during G2's adolescence ($\beta = .18, p < .01$), which led to more positive G2 parenting ($\beta = .26, p < .001$). G1 religiosity also affected G2 religiosity during adolescence ($\beta = .69, p < .001$), which also had a significant effect on G2 parenting ($\beta = .24, p < .001$).

Discussion

This study examined some of the pathways through which religiosity in one generation may affect both religiosity in the second generation, as well as the competence of children in romantic and parenting roles as they transition to adulthood. Results are consistent with the prediction that G1 religiosity during G2's adolescence will be related to G2's subsequent adult outcomes. Specifically, when G1 is religious, it is more likely that the G2 will be religious during adolescence and in emerging adulthood. G1 religiosity is related to G2 religiosity in adulthood only through its association with G2 religiosity during adolescence. In both generations, higher levels of religiosity led to more positive parenting. Additionally, when G1 was religious during G2's adolescence, he/she engaged in more positive parenting practices, which affected the quality of G2's romantic relationships in adulthood and how the G2 parents raised their children.

The findings suggest that G1 religiosity during G2's adolescence promotes higher quality G1 parenting behaviors, which, in turn, have a beneficial impact on G2 competence in close relationships during the adult years. But we also find that G2 religiosity in adolescence has a positive, independent effect on G2 in adulthood, regardless of how the G2 was parented in adolescence. G2s who were religious in adolescence have better interactions with their romantic partners and their children when they reach adulthood, showing the positive role of religiosity across time. So regardless of how G2 parents the child, it appears that G2 religiosity during adolescence has a positive influence on G2's family relationships during the adult years. Similarly, G1 positive parenting promotes greater G2 social competence during adulthood whether G2 is religious or not. We believe this is one of the only analyses to examine all three intergenerational relationships in tandem, rather than considering each one of them in a separate set of analyses.

The interesting nature of these findings is reinforced by the strong methodology employed in the research. First, we used a multi-dimensional measure of religiosity, rather than the single-item approach oftentimes used in other studies, to encompass both the religious practices and spiritual beliefs that make up an individual's religiosity. This latent measure is a better indicator of religiosity than simply using reported church attendance or religious affiliation, as other studies have frequently employed. Second, we used multi-informant data in the analysis. Using observational data, rather than self-report data, as indicators of parenting practices and romantic relationship interactions reduces method variance biases produced by reliance on a single informant. Moreover, each family member independently reported their own religiosity. Additionally, participants were assessed prospectively and over time, which reduces memory bias in self-reported behaviors and also assures the correct temporal ordering from

explanatory to outcome variables. Several past analyses (e.g., Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Baker & Smith, 2009; Dudley & Wisbey, 2000; Good & Willoughby, 2006; Snider et al., 2004; Uecker et al., 2007) used single-reporter and/or retrospective data to draw conclusions about the intergenerational role of religiosity. Lastly, this analysis uses both mother and father data for a more robust measure of G1 religiosity, whereas other analyses have frequently been limited to mother data alone (e.g., Gunnoe & Moore, 2002; Pearce, 2002; Pearce & Axinn, 1998; Pearce & Thornton, 2007).

Despite these strengths, there are limitations to this study that are worthy of comment. First, the sample lacks racial, ethnic and geographic diversity. The Midwest is more religious than many areas of the country (Kosmin & Keyser, 2009; Silk, 2007), therefore these results may be biased to a white, Midwestern, homogenous sample. It may be the case, given the rural background and relatively conservative nature of the participants in the study, that religion has different effects for members of this population than for people who live in more urban environments. Second, and especially important, participants in this study were primarily members of mainstream, Christian religions. The findings reported here may apply only to this type of religious orientation and may not apply to more fundamentalist sects or to entirely different religious traditions.

In sum, the results reported here suggest that religion may play a particularly important role in competent family functioning across generations. For the respondents in this investigation, religiosity demonstrated strong intergenerational continuity and appears to have a positive influence on competence in family relationships across generations. Future analyses should also examine other types of family relationships (i.e., grandparents, siblings, peers; Baker & Smith, 2009; Bengston et al., 2009; Hoge, Petrillo, & Smith, 1982; Pearce & Axinn, 1998) in

order to better understand the processes by which adolescents negotiate the role of religion in their lives. For the moment, these findings suggest that religiosity may be an important resource for many families in terms of promoting more positive family dynamics that may facilitate competent life course development.

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Table 1. Sample characteristics

	G1 Mother	G1 Father	G2	G2's Partner	G3 Child
<i>Family of Origin (1991)</i>					
Sample size	515	476	515	--	--
% female	100	0	54	--	--
% divorced	22.5	22.5	--	--	--
Mean age (years)	40.1	42.5	15.1	--	--
% BA or higher	16.1	29.6	--	--	--
% Mainline Protestant	61.0	59.8	58.7	--	--
% Evangelical Protestant	13.0	10.3	10.1	--	--
% Catholic	20.6	19.5	21.5	--	--
% Other	1.5	1.6	1.6	--	--
% None	4.0	8.8	8.1	--	--
<i>Emerging Adulthood (1997)</i>					
Sample size	--	--	509	--	--
% female	--	--	54.8	--	--
% married	--	--	10.4	--	--
Mean age (years)	--	--	21.1	--	--
<i>Romantic Relationships (1995-2005)</i>					
Sample size	--	--	386	386	--
% female	--	--	55.4	44.6	--
% married	--	--	51.6	51.6	--
Mean age (years)	--	--	23.0	24.2	--
<i>Parenting Relationship (1997-2008)</i>					
Sample size	--	--	290	--	290
% female	--	--	58.6	--	45.9
Mean age (years)	--	--	26.0	--	2.2

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations

		Mean (SD)
G1 Religiosity (1991) N=509	Importance of beliefs	3.26 (0.66)
	Importance of being religious	3.62 (0.85)
	Church attendance	3.11 (0.98)
G2 Religiosity (1991-1993) N=509	Importance of beliefs	2.86 (0.73)
	Importance of being religious	3.44 (1.01)
	Church attendance	3.06 (1.02)
G2 Religiosity (1997) N=509	Importance of beliefs	2.85 (0.89)
	Importance of being religious	3.41 (1.22)
	Church attendance	2.33 (1.02)
G1 Positive Parenting (1991-1994) N=386	Hostility (reversed) and communication	5.39 (1.07)
	Antisocial (reversed) and prosocial	5.32 (0.94)
	Angry coercion (reversed) and assertiveness	4.53 (1.23)
G2 Positive Relationship Quality (1995-2005) N=386	Hostility (reversed) and communication	5.33 (1.30)
	Antisocial (reversed) and prosocial	5.31 (1.41)
	Angry coercion (reversed) and assertiveness	4.24 (1.24)
G2 Positive Parenting (1997-2008) N=290	Hostility (reversed) and communication	4.71 (1.32)
	Antisocial (reversed) and prosocial	5.43 (1.47)
	Angry coercion (reversed) and assertiveness	4.62 (1.35)

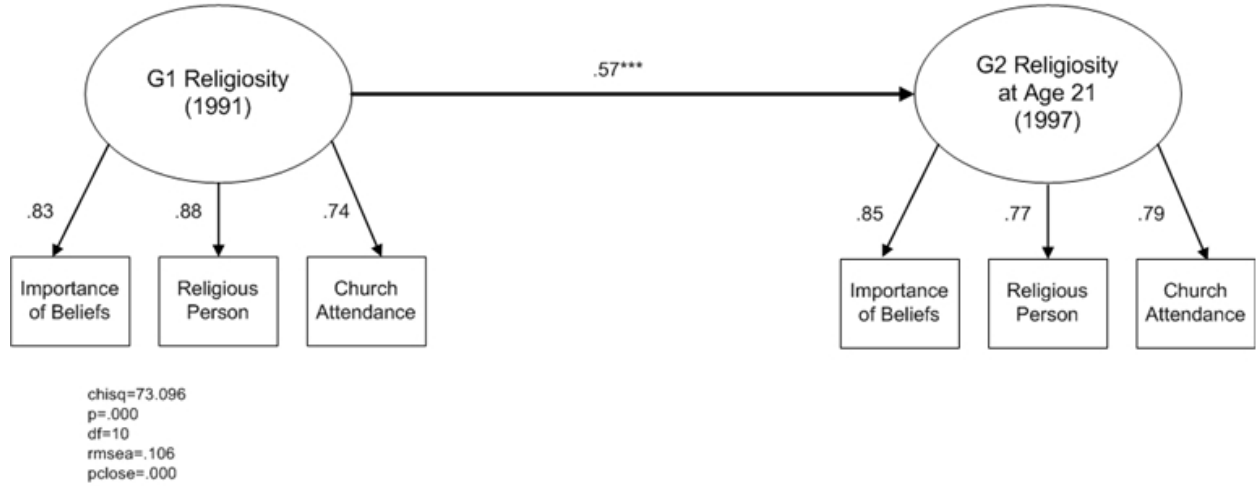
Table 3. Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) G1 Religiosity 1991	1.00					
(2) G2 Religiosity 1991-1993	.646**	1.00				
(3) G2 Religiosity 1997	.520**	.728**	1.00			
(4) G1 Positive Parenting	.194**	.197**	.140**	1.00		
(5) G2 Positive Parenting	.170**	.279**	.225**	.294**	1.00	
(6) G2 Positive Relationship Quality	.131*	.201**	.116*	.326**	.396**	1.00

** p < .01 * p < .05

Figure 1.

Model 1a: The Intergenerational Transmission of Religiosity (N=509)



Model 1b: The Intergenerational Transmission of Religiosity, mediated by G2 Religiosity during Adolescence (N=509)

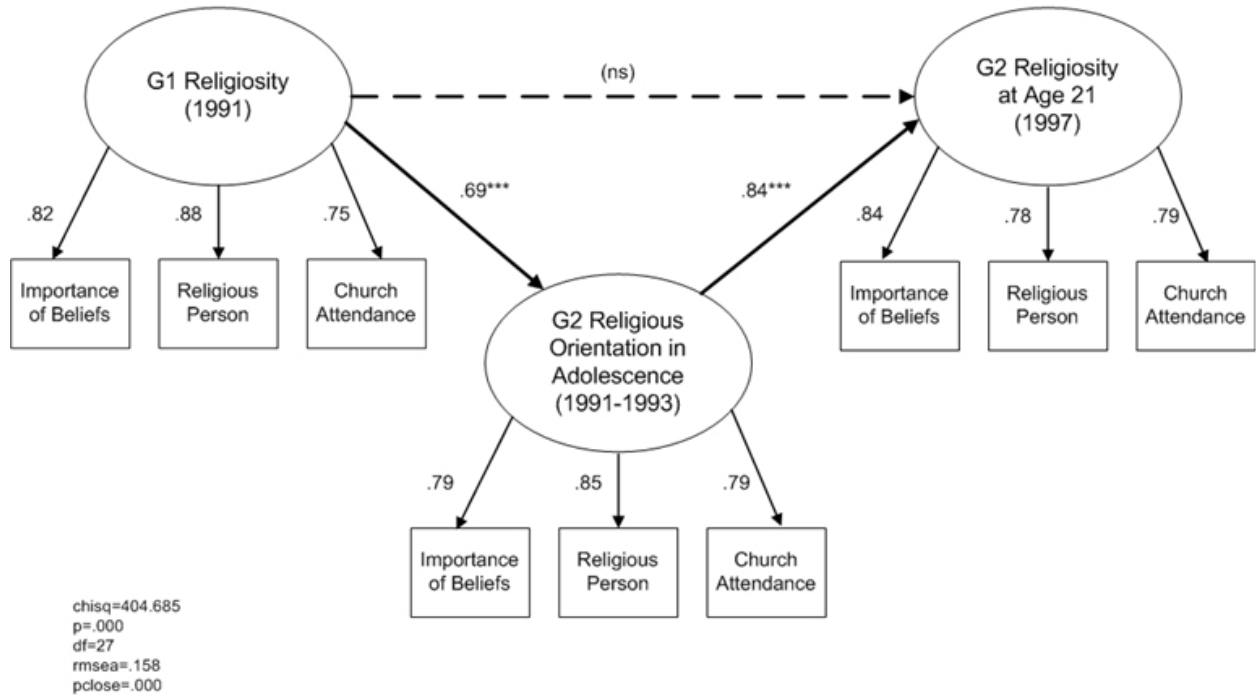
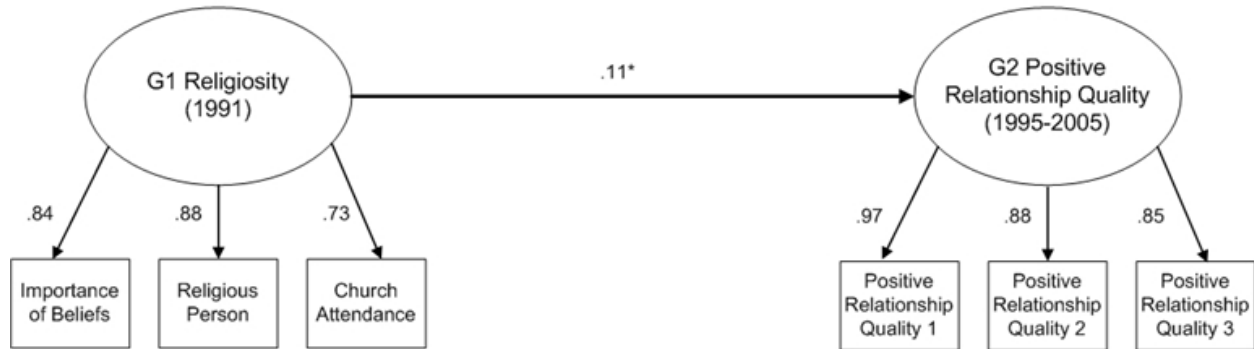


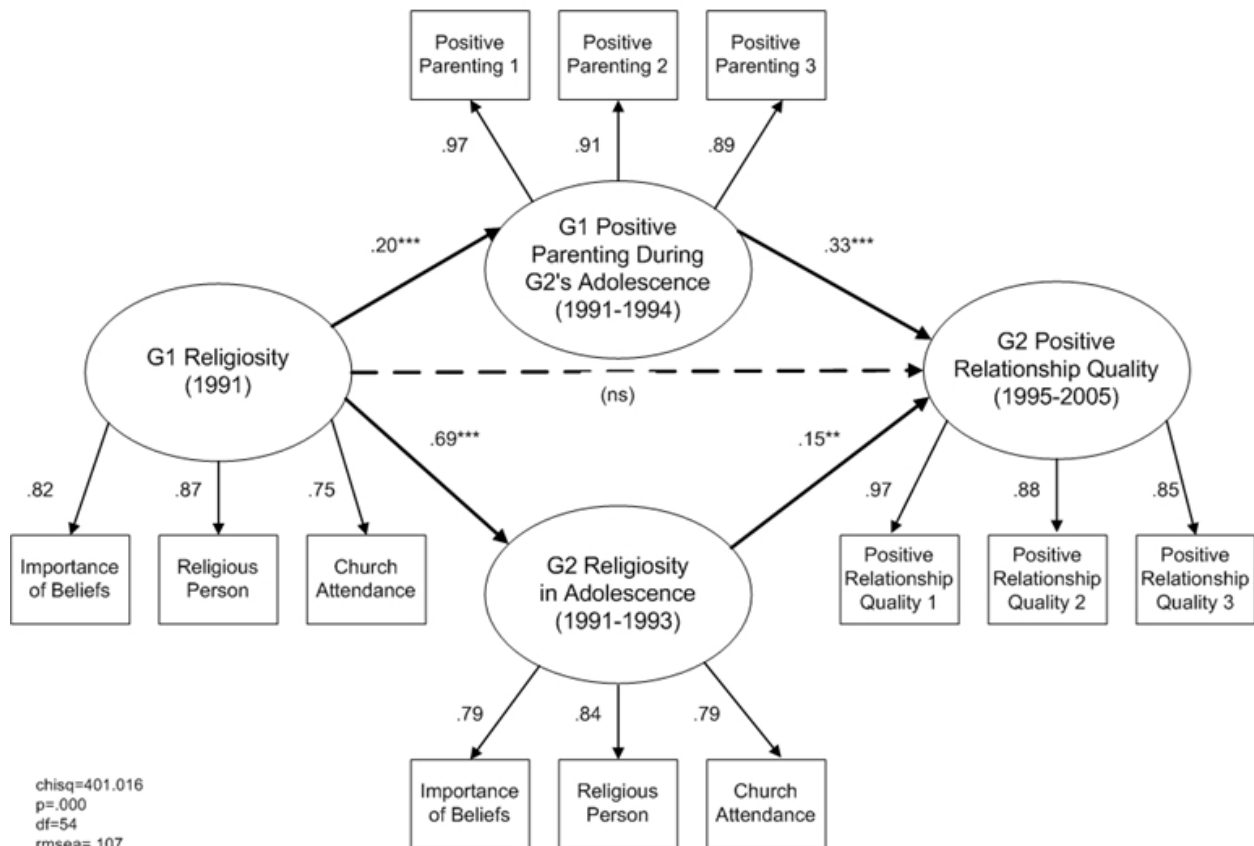
Figure 2.

Model 2a: G1 Religiosity to G2 Positive Relationship Quality (N=386)



chisq=35.014
p=.000
df=10
rmsea=.067
pclose=.112

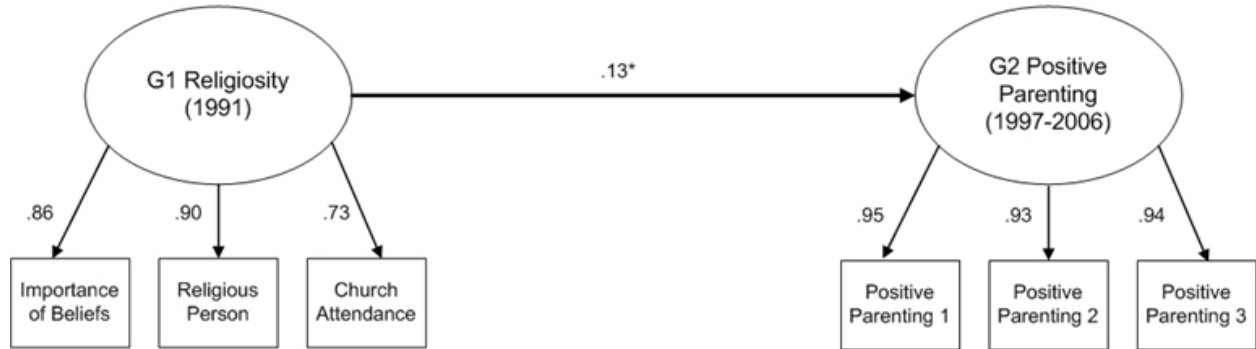
Model 2b: G1 Religiosity to G2 Positive Relationship Quality, mediated by G1 Parenting and G2 Religiosity during Adolescence (N=386)



chisq=401.016
p=.000
df=54
rmsea=.107
pclose=.000

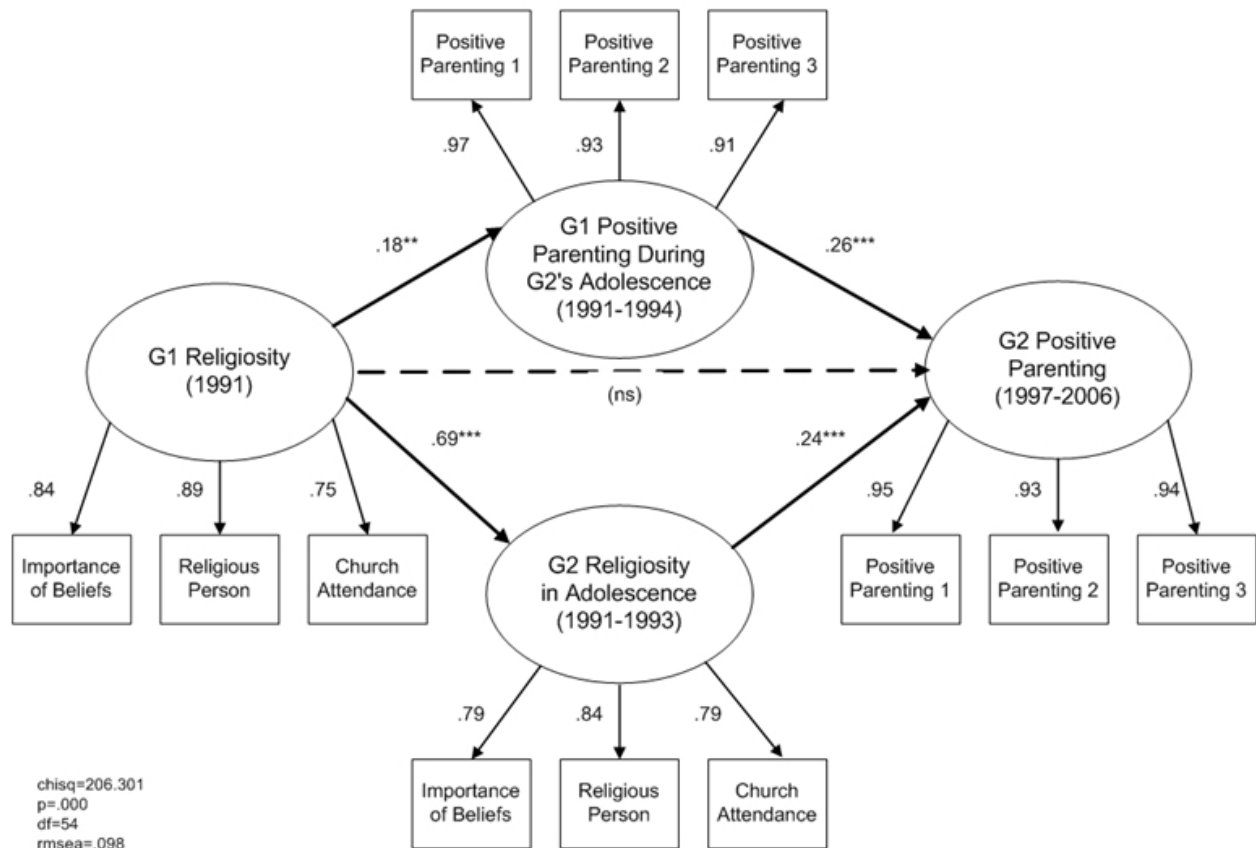
Figure 3.

Model 3a: G1 Religiosity to G2 Positive Parenting (N=290)



chisq=29.920
 p=.001
 df=10
 rmsea=.083
 pclose=.052

Model 3b: G1 Religiosity to G2 Positive Parenting, mediated by G1 Parenting and G2 Religiosity during Adolescence (N=290)



chisq=206.301
 p=.000
 df=54
 rmsea=.098
 pclose=.000