

“Wealth and Worship: The Relationship Between Resources and Religiosity  
Among African Americans”

Quenton L. Keatts

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Onwubiko Agozino, Chair

James E. Hawdon

P.S. Polanah

Sylvester T. Smith

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## *Abstract*

The purpose of this project is to investigate the correlation between wealth and religion, particularly focusing on how financial prosperity influences African American religiosity. Wealth (specifically in the form of income) is the independent variable (addressing the larger concept of socioeconomic status, which is often abbreviated as SES) and religiosity (as measured by religious service attendance) is the dependent variable. The aim of this work is to determine whether economic progress is in any way related to the spirituality or religiosity of African Americans.

This project attempts to reexamine E. Franklin Frazier’s thesis in *Black Bourgeoisie*. More explicitly, it is focused on how class (and to some degree, status) as an independent variable influences religiosity among African Americans. It takes a similar view of class distinctions, particularly analyzing the psyches and behaviors of the Black middle class as addressed in *Black Bourgeoisie*. Frazier argued that Blacks who reached middle class status soon lose touch with the history of their race, ultimately turn their backs on longstanding cultural values, and opt for inclusion in White, middle class American culture. These longstanding, neglected values include Black religious traditions and loyalty to the institution of the Black Church. Thus, reaching middle class status for African Americans may mean that they have bought into the American ideal of capitalism, while simultaneously rejecting African American (or any) religious traditions.

I conducted an analysis using data collected from the General Social Survey (GSS). The sample is drawn from adult respondents who have participated in these surveys since 1972. The data set includes the years 1972, 1980, 1988, 1996, 2004, and 2010. The primary focus of this project is to determine whether there is statistically significance between income and religious service attendance among African Americans.

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## CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to investigate whether there is a statistically significant correlation between wealth and religion, particularly focusing on how economic variables interact with African American religiosity. Income is the independent variable and religious service attendance is the dependent variable. The aim of this work is to determine whether economic progress is related in any way to the spirituality or religiosity of African Americans.

This project attempts to examine the claims set forth by E. Franklin Frazier in *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957). The primary focus is on how class (and to some degree, status) as an independent variable affects religiosity (in the form of religious service attendance) among African Americans. The goal is to determine whether there is a correlation between income and class statuses of African Americans and their worship activities.

Frazier argued that Blacks who reached middle class status would soon lose touch with the history of the race, turn their backs on longstanding, African American cultural values, and ultimately opt for inclusion in White, middle class American culture. These longstanding values include Black religion and loyalty to the institution of the Black Church. Thus, reaching middle class status for African Americans may mean that they have bought into the American ideal of capitalism, while simultaneously rejecting African American (or any) religious traditions.

I proposed to conduct a regression analysis using data collected from the General Social Survey (GSS). The sample is drawn from adult respondents who have participated in these surveys since 1972. The primary focus of this project is to determine whether there is a relationship between socioeconomic status (at a specific time) and socioeconomic progress (over time) and religion among African Americans.

## STATEMENT OF RELEVANCE

Countless scholars have chronicled the history of the Black Church (though “religiosity” among non-churchgoers is not so frequently addressed).<sup>1</sup> Understanding the Black Church and its history is in many ways critical for understanding the life experiences of African Americans, though in recent decades more African Americans have turned to other religions such as Islam for spiritual nurturing (X, 1964; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). Throughout their history African Americans have looked to the Church as a source of education, enrichment, and empowerment. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find any experience or area of African American life that has not been directly or indirectly influenced by the Black Church.

W.E.B. Du Bois recognized the value of African history and Calvinist creeds in African American Christianity. He noted that Africans living in America utilized Christianity as a religious cover while they continued to practice African Traditional Religions in private and in depth. In fact, Du Bois pointed out that the Black Church in America was originally an adaptation of the rites of fetish known as “obe worship.” He wrote in *The Negro Church* (1903: 5):

Association and missionary effort soon gave these rites a veneer of Christianity, and gradually, after two centuries, the Church became Christian, with a simple Calvinistic creed, but with many of the old customs still clinging to the services. It is this historical fact that the Negro Church of to-day bases itself upon the sole surviving social institution of the African fatherland, that accounts for its extraordinary growth and vitality.

Even prior his claim in *The Negro Church*, Du Bois asserted in his seminal work, *The Philadelphia Negro* (2007 [1899]), that the African experience is maintained by the Black Church. He further pointed out that as a social group that exists on American soil, the African American Church may have preceded the African American family (Du Bois, 2007: 201). The

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the distinction is made between the *African American Church*, which deals specifically with African-descended Christians in the Americas and the *Black Church*, which deals with the Christian experience of African people both on the native continent and throughout the Diaspora. At times these terms are used interchangeably.

preservation of African religious rites was historically documented when examining the Igbo who were enslaved in Virginia (Chambers, 2005).

Reflecting back to the nineteenth century, Robert Wortham posited that the contemporary structural functionalist perspective views religion for its “answers to questions of ultimate concern”, emotional comfort, fortified social ties, and agency of social change. He further expounded upon Du Bois’ claim, asserting that the Church was “the center of religious and political activity” and it became the center of social life (Wortham, 2005: 436).

Social progress for African Americans has most often been facilitated by the Church. Major societal concerns that hindered the life chances and hurt the life experiences of African Americans created a need for social revolutions. These social revolutions allowed the African American Church to put into practice its prophetic calling (West, 1999; 2002; 2003; 2004). For example, the American Civil Rights Movement is arguably one of the most significant social movements of the twentieth century (Morris, 1984; 1999). African Americans in the past saw the value of the movement because it marked a dramatic improvement in their life chances and life experiences, which included voting rights legislation, educational reform, employment opportunities, desegregation of public facilities, and a more equitable system of justice.

The struggle for equality and justice of the 1950s’ and 1960s’ Civil Rights Movement provided an opportunity for a public platform. African Americans were finally able to speak to White America and declare that they would not accept an inferior position, thus rejecting the existing oppressive system. Black resistance to racial discrimination did not begin in the 1950s and 1960s, but racial and social progress did gain noticeable momentum during that time. From this developed a systematic study of the African American experience, which facilitated the

development of Africana Studies<sup>2</sup> programs across the country (Jackson, 1970; Daniel, 1980; Karenga, 1988; 2002; Aldridge and Young, 2000: 4, 5).

The Church was the catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement (King, 1964; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Keatts, 2011). The Civil Rights Movement created the atmosphere for the development of the field of Africana Studies. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that, even if indirectly, the African America Church initiated major changes in American society and in the academy. Undeniably, the Civil Rights Movement afforded the Black Church the opportunity to put its prophetic calling into practice (West, 1999; 2002; 2003; 2004), which was quite effective.

Molefi Asante (1990), one of the leading scholars in the field of Africana Studies, appears harsh and unfair in his criticism of Christianity, specifically the Church, for its role in the oppression African descendants. Undeniably Europeans twisted the principles of Christianity for their selfish agenda of maintaining racial hegemony. But while it is true that much of the religious exposure that enslaved Africans received in America was a distorted and misleading form of Christianity, the Church as a whole is not to blame the circumstances of Black Americans. Christianity is a liberating religion. Jesus is a Liberator. Leaving the Church and forsaking Christianity is not the answer; rather the faithful scholar or truth-seeker should objectively examine the principles of the religion and not define it solely by its professed practitioners. One can be Afrocentric while simultaneously being Christian.

It should be noted that the Black Church has changed since the 1960s. E. Franklin Frazier (1957) addressed this impending transformation when he acknowledged that Blacks who

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<sup>2</sup> Africana Studies is often interchanged with related titles such Black Studies, African American Studies, and to some extent, African Studies. The nomenclature can become important for questions about intent and focus. For example, *Black Studies*, by definition, is a study of issues and experiences related only to Black people (Jackson, 1970). *Africana Studies*, on the other hand, relates to the culture, history, places, and experiences of people of African descent, both of the native content and the Diaspora. The theories, paradigms, and methodological approaches of Africana Studies can be relevant to all people, regardless of race or ethnicity.

were gaining social and economic progress tended to become less devoted to traditional Afrocentric values and practices but intentionally opted for inclusion in mainstream America, which generally translated into some form of assimilation to core Eurocentric values. Part of this divorcement from the African American community included forsaking the Black Church tradition (Frazier, 1957: 89).

At the outset it is important to recognize that much of the literature on Blacks and religious practices focuses on Blacks within the *Black Church* context, but as I attempt to demonstrate in the next chapter, not all Black congregants attend traditionally Black denominations or predominantly Black Churches. In fact, the *Black Church* (not the universal Church) may be less relevant when speaking of middle class Blacks who practice organized religion. One should consider that “religion” is not limited to Christianity or the Church, but most African Americans who practice religion do so within the context of the Christian tradition (Frazier, 1957; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990).

Though William Julius Wilson’s thesis in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) asserts that poor African Americans have not progressed economically, it could be argued that there is visible progress (even if this is limited). If Blacks have made socioeconomic progress, then one could question whether the Church is still expected to be the agent of change that it once was. In fact, as some Blacks have prospered economically and race relations in America have improved to some extent, it could be argued that both rich and poor Blacks see their needs and expectations differently than they did during the middle of the twentieth century. Therefore, this study is a look at the vital past, the present, and the future of the African American Church. It examines the congregants who make up the African American Church and how these congregants see their lives as reflected in their responses to questions on the GSS. As social conditions improve for

African Americans, the roles of economics and religion are still important when evaluating if and how both contribute to increased life chances and better life experiences.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION

I endeavored to answer the following questions: Does African American income influence religious service attendance? In other words, as African Americans' socioeconomic status improves (or worsens), does that have any influence on their religious behavior?

#### NULL HYPOTHESIS

I hypothesized that age, gender, race, and income will be related to religious service attendance. Race is the central independent variable. Age and gender will be the control variables while income, education, and occupational prestige will be rough indicators of the independent variable; the frequency of religious service attendance will be the dependent variable. There is a distinction in the perception of race and racial identity with a gendered division marked by age and income. If respondents are older and less economically privileged, then their religiosity will increase, depending upon their gender. In other words, the results will differ between elderly and younger, male and female, educated and less educated respondents and respondents of different income levels.

The non-directional hypothesis was as follows: there is a relationship between religious service attendance and income levels. The null hypothesis would simply state that there is no relationship between income and religiosity. The null hypothesis to be directly tested was opposite of the Frazier's hypothesis; there is no relationship between income (SES) and religious service attendance among African Americans. If the null hypothesis was rejected, I would have been able to embrace Frazier's original hypothesis; however, if the null hypothesis was upheld, Frazier's thesis would then be questioned.

One must be cautious about the implications of the results. Religious service attendance is just one measure of religiosity, and religiosity (or specifically one's relationship with the Black Church) was just a portion of Frazier's thesis. The institutional role of the Black Church is not addressed in the analysis of this project.

## CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

### THE CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MAX WEBER AND E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber correlated the rise of a capitalistic economy with the Puritan religious tradition of salvation through the performance of good deeds. Weber argued, however, that Protestant ethic and capitalist ideology appeared to have a relationship that operated in both directions, and that the spirit of capitalism could be separated from religion. In Weber's time the best capitalists were either anti-religious or passively indifferent to religion.

This project begins by examining the main claims of both Weber and Frazier in their respective books. Since Weber's time, there seems to be a reception of the ideology that religion is influential on economic outcomes. It is important to note that Frazier's assessment of Black America seems to refute Weber's analysis. Frazier's thesis is the main focus of this project, but Weber's analysis does offer some classical sociological theory and historical background to religiosity in America.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (2008) posited that Calvinists looked at their calling and the manifestation of wealth as evidence of God's favor. This is part of the way that Puritans lived out their religion. A calling is part of the Protestant ethic. At the same time, good and moral ideals such as hard work, frugality, saving, and sobriety were components as well. Weber observed that Catholics tended to be poor and less mobile than Protestants. This led to Weber's research question: "Why did capitalism emerge first in Protestant rather than Catholic, Hindu, or Buddhist cultures?" Religion had something to do with this economic history. He believed that it had some relationship with Calvinist teachings. The answer was not in capitalism; it was the teachings of the religion that promoted habits that

are conducive to capitalism, such as the accumulation of wealth, attention to work, and sobriety. Maybe Puritan Europeans saw themselves as hard workers. Many Americans also pride themselves on being hard workers. One could argue that Weber was looking at Catholics as more altruistic than Protestants, and therefore, having more of an eschatological purpose in their work.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber was addressing the issue of wealth and the correlation with religiosity. Protestantism made the concern with the ascension to Heaven irrelevant. Calvinists were able to focus on this world because of their belief in predestination. Their belief in predestination allowed them to focus on the accumulation of wealth in this world. Weber was not suggesting that Calvinists were more religious, but he was claiming that their religious beliefs allowed them to focus on saving in this world. They believed one was supposed to have wealth but it was in poor taste to flaunt it. Therefore, they saved and then invested their savings. Weber never argued that religious individuals were going to become successful; he argued that Calvinists were going to become capitalists.

Weber was writing about the emergence of capitalism. He claimed that religious devotion often resulted in the rejection of worldly affairs, such as the pursuit of economic ends. A typical value was to avoid work and to only do what was necessary for one to have a meager material existence while spending more time in devotion (like monks, nuns and catholic priests, some of whom had taken vows of chastity, poverty, or celibacy). Calvinists were good capitalists because they embraced the notion of predestination. Because they lacked a priest who could give them confirmation, Calvinists searched for other signs to “prove” their salvation. They had an incentive to save and to reinvest. They believed that the “calling” from God was not limited to clergy because any occupation could be a calling. Those who bought into this

ideology tended to work harder (Weber, 2008: 3). Thus, those who were believed to be pious could also gain economic prosperity without any threat to their perceived piety. Capitalism works because people buy into it. In a sense, capitalism is portrayed as a tough economic system that forces individual participation, dominates economic life, and “educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs through a process of economic survival of the fittest” (Weber, 2008: 55).

Weber (2008: 2) argued that “capitalism was the social counterpart of Calvinist theology.” Covetousness, though a hazard to one’s spiritual development, was less of a character flaw than sloth. Thus, the pursuit of riches became less frowned upon and more readily accepted (Weber, 2008: 3).

Karl Marx was a historical materialist who saw religion as the opium of the people. The whole purpose of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was to dispute Marx. Weber countered Marx’s argument by suggesting that variables work together and that no one variable always influenced another. Weber claimed that many of the successful businessmen of his time were hostile to religion or, at least, apathetic to it.

It is worth noting that this was a community ideology. If more individuals embraced this thought then this would generate more capital, which would be invested in large quantities and capitalism would take off. So in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber studied the ways in which values of ascetic Protestantism contributed to the development of the spirit of capitalism.

Research data supports the claim that Blacks are generally more religious than Whites (Taylor et al, 1999; NORC, 2009), but consistently earn less and are plagued by poverty and lower socioeconomic statuses. To better understand Weber’s perspective, one could examine his

essay entitled “The Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, and Party” and how he conceptualized all the three variables in relation to the life chances and life experiences applicable to African Americans. As Weber (1978: 926) argued, social honor and prestige may be the basis for economic power. Social honor is distributed in a community between groups in what Weber called the “status order.” His claim was that “‘classes’, ‘status groups’, and ‘parties’ are a phenomena of the distribution of power within a community” (Weber, 1978: 927).

African Americans are a status group, one that has been dishonored throughout American history. If Weber’s claim that social honor and prestige were grounds for economic power is valid, then it is reasonable to conclude that may be why African Americans have traditionally had a more difficult time reaching economic prosperity. Because African Americans looked differently they could be distinguished from those of European descent. Their different physical features led to lower status positions. This created a sense of social “dishonor” for African Americans. African Americans had a more difficult time assimilating and masking their “dishonor” compared to ethnic Europeans (Frazier, 1957: 135; Omi and Winant, 1994). To further complicate matters, the enslavement and continued exploitation of African descendants helped develop the system of capitalism and wealth in America (Du Bois, 1903; 1935; 1989; 2007; Frazier, 1957).

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber addressed the complex interaction between religion and social and economic institutions. In many ways his analysis serves as a starting point for continued research and discussion, much like in Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957). Frazier claimed that Black Americans who reach middle class (bourgeois)

status seem to remove themselves further from the Black masses and Black tradition. Part of this Black tradition includes the Black Church.

According to Frazier's thesis, Blacks who are good capitalists and reach middle class status seem to fall off when it comes to being good, practicing Protestants (Frazier, 1957: 89). In a small part of his analysis Frazier was really focusing on the importance of the Black Church and how becoming bourgeois meant rejecting one's history. In Frazier's framework becoming bourgeois meant turning one's back on the institution and the entire community. Weber and Frazier seemed to have hypotheses that can be tested in modern society. Frazier's claim is easier to test because he approached his analysis from an individual level, while Weber's analysis is on the societal level and is more historically bound. Additionally, there is no data to support Weber's thesis on such questions as the acceptance of predestination, saving, investment, or right living.

#### E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER AND *BLACK BOURGEOISIE*

In *Black Bourgeoisie*, Frazier diligently formulated an argument that the Black middle class is truly a hindrance to the race as a whole. The desires of this group to reach and maintain financial prosperity and inclusion into mainstream White America have caused the Black middle class to become distant from the masses of Blacks and their own identity. Frazier claimed that as Blacks reach bourgeois status they become isolated from both Black and White cultures. This section is devoted to analyzing Frazier's arguments and examining each chapter of the book. *Black Bourgeoisie* is divided into two major sections. In the first section Frazier looked at the world of reality of Blacks in America. In the second section Frazier examined what he viewed as the world of make believe that middle class Blacks had created for themselves.

The Preface and the Introduction set up the history of Africans in America, and more importantly, how African descendants were assimilated into European culture. Even though Blacks were acquainted with and assimilated into American culture with European values, they did not always apply these values the same way that European descendants did. Weber argued that Calvinist theology was correlated with thrift and saving. Calvinists believed one was supposed to have wealth but it was in poor taste to flaunt it. Conspicuous consumption was a character flaw. Because of this belief Calvinists saved and then invested their savings. Weber argued that Calvinists would become capitalists.

Frazier posited that Blacks flaunted their middle class prosperity through conspicuous consumption. He admittedly did not concern himself with an adequate statistical sample of the Black middle class; rather he opted for observable patterns of their behaviors and values. He noted that Blacks were attempting to participate in the capitalist system that they helped to create. Much like many scholars of African American history, Frazier pointed out that the trade of Africans in the New World created wealth and made capitalism flourish (Frazier, 1957: 9). Frazier further explained that the interactions between Whites and enslaved Africans became an intertwined system of relationships, allowing for interracial intimacy while maintaining the subordination of Blacks (Frazier 1957: 10, 11).

In Chapter 1 Frazier attempted to trace the roots of the Black bourgeoisie. Though there were some instances of Black prosperity during slavery, it is clear that Black businesses did not effectively take root until after Emancipation. Before the Civil War some Blacks became upwardly mobile through the acquisition of land and by enslaving others. After the war the main business path for Blacks was banking, namely the Freedman's Saving Bank (Frazier, 1957: 29-35).

Thrift and saving in effort to create wealth were practiced by White artisans. Eventually free Blacks espoused these same principles. These individuals had been trained in the “old style” of the bourgeois spirit of Benjamin Franklin. After Emancipation the new bourgeois spirit was embraced among free Black leaders (Frazier, 1957: 34). Banks became the enduring symbol of the Black bourgeoisie spirit (Frazier, 1957: 42).

In Chapter 2 Frazier opened by asserting that the Black bourgeoisie is composed of Blacks who make their incomes primarily as white-collar workers (Frazier, 1957: 43). He argued that this group (which accounted for approximately two to three percent of all workers) had gradually become differentiated from the masses of Blacks. Employment and location were critical to understanding how individuals became part of the bourgeois class. In the North Blacks were allowed to enter occupations that they were not allowed to enter before. And the Great Depression of the 1930s allowed for economic expansion and forced Blacks in both the North and the South to engage in employment opportunities that had previously been denied to them (Frazier, 1957: 45).

The education of the Black bourgeoisie is the focus of Chapter 3. Education is vital to indoctrination and ideological formation. The formal education of Blacks was grounded in the bourgeois ideals of capitalism, industry, and thrift (Frazier, 1957: 71-78). Interestingly, Frazier argued that in many institutions of higher learning the teachers were not concerned with making individuals better but with maintaining their own middle class status (Frazier, 1957: 63, 83). Middle class meant looking and living the part. Frazier criticized Black colleges and universities for being overly concerned with the Black bourgeoisie and with misguidedly attempting to develop money-makers in attempts to uplift the race economically (Frazier, 1957: 84).

Frazier focused primarily on religion in Chapter 4. He made a claim that I completely disagree with, asserting that the Black Church (he used the term “Negro” to be consistent with his context) is a product of the American environment. While it is true that the Black Church has been influenced to some degree by American society, American culture cannot take credit for producing the Black Church. Christianity was born in Africa and the Black Church has retained many of its African origins, though Frazier argued that it has not (Frazier, 1957: 87). Frazier briefly addressed the idea of Blacks who use religion as a status symbol, particularly those who join Episcopal, Congregational, and Catholic churches.

Frazier highlighted how the Black Church has also been involved in politics, and how during the 1930s Blacks shifted their support from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party. Political progress, voting tendencies, and the increase of Black workers joining labor unions were directly related to the activism of the Black Church (Frazier, 1957: 89, 90). When addressing the question of Blacks’ voting practices, Manning Marable (2011: 34) writes:

Perhaps most importantly, the alternative of black Republicanism, which had quietly gained respectability within black suburbs and within the black business community in recent years, suffered a major defeat. The percentage of Blacks who consistently identified themselves with the interests of the Republican party [*sic*] increased from a low 2 to 3 percent in 1968 to roughly 8-11 percent in 1972. Large numbers of black petty bourgeois who had been attracted to Nixon’s version of “black capitalism” in the early 1970s and who had been turned off by the rhetoric of black revolutionaries in the 1960s pulled the voting booth levers for Jimmy Carter.

Thus, as both Frazier and Marable pointed out, the shift in Blacks’ voting practices was based on their economic needs, and to a large degree the Black Church has been influential in shaping these voting practices.

Chapter 5 is a critical point where Frazier made one of his first major claims. He wrote: “The black bourgeoisie has been uprooted from its ‘racial’ tradition and as a consequence has no

cultural roots in the Negro or the white world.” He continued: “As a consequence of their isolation, the majority of the black bourgeoisie live in a cultural vacuum and their lives are devoted largely to fatuities” (Frazier, 1957: 112). What Frazier was asserting was that the quest for middle class status is accompanied by a break from traditional values.

In Chapter 6 Frazier claimed that the Black bourgeoisie strive to make themselves into the image of White men. He argued that this is evidence of a desire to escape racial identification and reflects an inferiority complex. As far back as slavery, the American capitalist system used economic exploitation to demoralize and dehumanize Blacks. Religion played a major role in this. Frazier (1957: 134) wrote: “Not only did Christianity fail to offer the Negro hope of freedom in this world, but the manner in which Christianity was communicated to him tended to degrade him.” This may have been the problem that many critics such as Asante have with Christianity. But the point is clarified in Frazier’s statement that it was not Christianity but the manner in which it was communicated that oppressed African Americans.

The second part of the book begins at Chapter 7. The aim of that particular chapter is to show that Black business is a myth. Frazier argued that there is a broad idea of what “business” is, but these so-called businesses in the Black community do not generate or maintain any real capital. The idea of “business men” was loosely applied to include such occupations as ministers and farmers to propagate the myth. This myth, according to Frazier, is continued because Blacks live in an isolated social world and have no real economic base (Frazier, 1957: 173).

Chapter 8 focuses on the Black press and its role in maintaining the bourgeois myth in the Black community. Frazier (1957: 174) wrote: “The Negro press is not only one of the most successful business enterprises owned and controlled by Negroes; it is the chief medium of communication which creates and perpetuates the world of make-believe for the black

bourgeoisie.” Frazier formulated an excellent argument in demonstrating the power of propaganda. The myth of Black business was perpetuated by the fact that mostly Black achievements and not a comprehensive view of Black economic progress were highlighted in the Black-owned media outlets, which reflects clear bias and unbalanced reporting (Frazier, 1957: 179).

Chapter 9 addresses another smaller myth of Black “society” and how this supports the larger myth of Black business created by the Black bourgeoisie. Though the idea of Black “society” was not created by the Black press according to Frazier, the Black press helped to feed these illusions. Once again, Frazier pointed out that when the Black bourgeoisie attempt to engage in the activities of “society”, they further distance themselves from the masses of Blacks and the larger White community (Frazier, 1957: 195).

As he did frequently throughout the book, in Chapter 9 Frazier reverted back to the discussion of Black religion. He clearly argued that the Black bourgeoisie cannot completely escape from the religious traditions of the Black masses because the bourgeoisie comes from the masses (Frazier, 1957: 209). Frazier subtly reinforced the idea of the “myth” of the Black bourgeoisie, as he argued that when middle class Blacks do abandon the traditional religion of their ancestors, they become worshippers of the God of Chance (Frazier, 1957: 210). These middle class Blacks who believe that they are members of Black “society” engage in activities of make-believe (Frazier, 1957: 212).

Chapter 10 clearly restates Frazier’s major argument: as Blacks gain middle class status they overcompensate for their frustrations and feelings of inferiority. The Black bourgeoisie hide behind their “masks” in order to distance themselves from the Black masses and to cope with the pain of not being accepted into the larger White society. In fact, Frazier argued that no

matter what the outward display may appear to show, middle class Blacks are still plagued by feelings of insecurity, frustration, and guilt (Frazier, 1957: 232).

In the concluding chapter Frazier pointed out that the purpose of the book was to examine the Black middle class as a case study and not to compare that group to the White middle class. Frazier (1957: 234) restated the fact that the Black bourgeoisie lacks a basis in the American economic system. He also noted that these individuals have acted irresponsibly in their duty to uplift the Black race (1957: 235). This speaks to exactly what other scholars, including Du Bois (1989), had previously argued. Frazier (1957: 238) closed the book with a poignant statement: “The black bourgeoisie suffers from ‘nothingness’ because when Negroes attain middle-class status, their lives generally lose both content and significance.” Frazier’s overall argument seems to be less about the perils of gaining economic prosperity but more about the effects that such prosperity has on the psyche of the Black middle class.

#### RACE AND RELIGION IN AMERICAN LIFE

The United States is generally regarded as more religious than most industrialized nations and religion shapes political and social attitudes, independent of education, class, and other traditional sociological factors (Steensland et. al, 2000: 291, 292). Because of religion’s influence on the American social landscape it is important that scientists study it. However, religious theory is not a phenomenon that is applicable across racial lines. Religion, particularly for African Americans, serves as a vehicle for collective political action. In fact, Fredrick Harris (1994) used the GSS data to demonstrate evidence that individual religious beliefs and practices affect different modes of political participation among African Americans and White Americans.

Race appears to be a consistent indicator of subjective religiosity between Blacks and Whites (Taylor et. al, 1999). For example, religiosity and doctrinal orthodoxy appear to be

factors that affect differences in racial attitudes toward abortion (Wilcox, 1992). Further, Blacks tend to be more religiously involved, attend religious services more frequently, and pray at higher rates when compared to Whites. Simply stated, Blacks tend to be more religious than Whites. However, Blacks generally have lower income, lower financial assets and wealth, and less education (Taylor et. al, 1996: 404). Among Blacks, religious participation differs by age, educational attainment, region, marital status, and denomination (Chatters et. al, 1999). It is also helpful to note that denominations may show some effect on religious participation, but denomination seems to have little to no significant effect on congregants' expectations of their leadership (Harris, 1987).

There are competing conclusions based on data as to the connection between region and social class and these variables' effect on religiosity. Hunt and Hunt (1999) concluded that there are mixed results when discussing the correlation between social class and religious attendance. They also found mixed results as to the question of whether religiosity varies by region.

#### RELIGION CONCEPTUALIZED

Religion is a “social phenomenon, a shared group experience that has shaped and influenced the cultural screens of human communication and interpretation” (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: 2). Skip Worden (2005: 221) defines religion as: “a particular institutionalized or personal system of beliefs, values and practices relating to the divine—a level of reality or power that is regarded as the ‘source’ or ‘ultimate’, transcending yet immanent in the realm of human experience.” Religious leadership follows many of the same trends as general leadership. Jan Kerkhofs (1980: 15) speaks of the minister’s charge: “First, that a minister, whether or not he is a priest, has to work within a community, and thus needs to be accepted by the community, usually by virtue of his personal and social involvement with that community...”

Robert Greenleaf (1977: 218) asserts that the purpose of religion “is to rebind humankind to the cosmos, to heal the pervasive alienation.” I would argue that if this purpose is valid (which I think it is to a large degree), then true religion has to have a social component. To address this “alienation”, religion often deals with these symptoms as they are manifested by human actions and expressions, specifically in human-Divine and human-human relations.

Black leadership in the protest era of 1945 to 1965 displaced and transformed conservative Black leaders. The new generation of civil rights leaders, which included Martin Luther King, Jr., came on the scene and toppled the existing leadership structure. By 1965, Blacks at every level were being influenced by Black preachers and civil rights leaders (Lusane, 1994: 18-20). As Ronald Walters and Robert Smith (1999: 21) point out, King inspired many young ministers to become involved politically. The problem is, however, that the literature typically categorizes ministers as “moderates, traditionalists, or conservatives.”

W.E.B. Du Bois is one of the most recognized Black sociologists in history and was a major contributor to the history and sociology of the Black Church. Though much of his work was developed in the earlier part of the twentieth century, his contributions hold significant merit because of what he has added to scholarship that succeeded him. For example, his work in *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), *The Negro Church* (1903), and *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) were all precursors to scholarship such as Frazier’s sociological work *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957) and Lincoln and Mamiya’s socio-religious work *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990). Robert Wortham (2005: 449) gives credit to Du Bois for offering groundbreaking work on the Black Church, and for his structural-functionalist approach to explaining the Black Church. One could also categorize Du Bois as a critical sociologist, given that he addressed the relationship between power, status, and stratification. In a sense, Du Bois’

work is critical for understanding the modern-day Black Church, as he provided the foundation for Black Church studies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Wortham, 2009: 145).

#### CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Many of the most important social and economic institutions in the African American community originated from, or are in some way directly affiliated with, the Black Church (Hill, 1994: 150). This fact may not be surprising given that this was common in the Christian tradition. Early Christian churches were intended to be fellowships, where followers of the faith pooled their resources and contributed to the less fortunate. At one time there was a common treasury (Leach, 1960: 71). Christian stewardship can be defined to include proportionate giving of time, resources, and abilities, based on a covenant relationship with God (Leach, 1960: 74). Time donated to religious activities, tithes, and sacrificial offerings are ways to evaluate religiosity in respondents.

Weber's (2008: 35) international research found that "business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the higher grades of skilled labour [*sic*], and even more the higher technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant." Gannon and Schwartz (1992: 116) seem to find competing data, asserting that American Catholics on average earn more than American Protestants; however, the latter tend to offer more in giving to church institutions. Weber (2008: 35) explained his data by suggesting that Protestant domination in the ownership of capital was the result of historical circumstances, many of them reaching far into the past, and that religious affiliation is not the cause of economic conditions.

In the 1960s the proportion of giving was fairly equal between Catholics and Protestants, but since then there has been a widening gap between the two. At the time of their 1992

publication, Gannon and Schwartz reported that Protestants were giving two times as much of their annual family income compared to Catholics. It is important to note that African Americans rarely align with the Roman Catholic Church, opting by far more often for membership in Protestant churches (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990).

#### AFRICAN AMERICANS AND ECONOMICS

Cheikh Anta Diop (1974) traced racism back to as early as the Middle Ages. He maintained that when the Europeans and the Africans encountered one another, the need for economic exploitation made the Europeans feel superior to the Africans. Because many Europeans believed that they were more civilized and intelligent than the Africans, the Europeans justified colonialism as a moral duty. Diop (1974:25) concluded that “from then on, capitalism had clear sailing to practice the most ferocious exploitation under the cloak of moral pretexts.”

Adding to this discussion, Eugene Genovese (1989) claimed that the economy of slavery in America developed within and was exploited by the capitalist world market. Like Du Bois, Genovese (1989:19) used Marxian language when he posited that “defenders of the ‘planter-capitalism’ thesis have noted the extensive commercial links between the plantation and the world market and the modest commercial bourgeoisie in the South...” Whether the discussion is about chattel slavery or a legal form of slavery where exploitation takes place, a Marxian analysis of human capital could describe the worker as a “commodity” and their labor as useful. The workers’ usefulness (or the usefulness of any particular thing) makes them valuable (Marx, 1906: 41-56).

Much like Marx and Engels, Du Bois’ analysis addresses the issue of exploitation. In *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935: 9, 150) Du Bois argued that exploitation of Black

workers and White workers by White capitalists was a lucrative business and a form of slavery. In fact, James Forman (1997: 183) contends that White America has exploited and continues to exploit Black people.

Using similar Marxian language, E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957) suggests that the minimal gains of the Black middle class were not sufficient to characterize the race as having achieved economic success. He asserted that despite a fairly successful middle class, Blacks did not own any real wealth or play an important role in American business (1957: 5). Frazier also claimed that White Americans, who acknowledged the painful past of slavery and the social inequality since Emancipation, began to downplay the condition of Blacks. They believed that civil rights had been won and as a race Blacks were better off economically. Because of this fact they wanted to dismiss the impact of slavery and social injustices that Blacks have encountered since that time (Frazier, 1957: 4).

Clearly the most important assertion that Frazier made is the claim that as Blacks prosper and achieve middle class status their identities seem to undergo a detrimental change. Reflecting back to slavery, Frazier attributed the social interaction of the Black underclass with the White ruling class as the catalyst for the former's assimilation. The problem is that prosperity creates a segment of the Black community that has a changing identity (Fanon, 1965).

Frazier (1957:24) wrote: "As the result of the break with its cultural past, the black bourgeoisie is without cultural roots in either the Negro world with which it refuses to identify, or the white world which refuses to permit the black bourgeoisie to share its life." Frazier's conclusion is support for the double-consciousness thesis mentioned by Du Bois (1989) in *The Souls of Black Folk*. From a deeper psychological perspective, this could be a sign of an identity crisis.

I must note that whether or not this change in identity is a problem is an empirical question. This is something that should be examined on the individual level. If the Black individual gets to the point where he or she does not have to constantly be bombarded with the issue of race, then that may be a good thing, suggesting that they have achieved such social prosperity that race does not matter to them. Such a situation could offer a sense of freedom. The problem is that the GSS cannot test such a question; however, if the changing of identity is less race-based and more class-based it could still pose a problem for the Black community (Wilson, 1996).

In *Black Reconstruction* (1935) Du Bois discussed a class analysis of poor people (both Black and White) and how an activist stance led to empowerment and ultimately to their agency in creating their own life chances and life experiences. Empowerment is vital, but as Frazier pointed out, identity may be just as important. Similarly, consider Orlando Patterson's (1982) example of slavery among the Margi people of Nigeria. He argued that they sometimes enslaved local offenders and ultimately demoted them to the same status as institutional outsiders. The criminal was allowed to be part of the society in a physical sense while simultaneously being separated psychologically. Physical expulsion would be less humiliating; loss of societal acceptance and normality was by far more extreme. Institutional marginality was the liminal state of social death for the Margi (Patterson, 1982: 46).

Patterson (1998) makes the distinction between the punishment of slavery in the United States and other parts the world. While chattel slavery and lynching in America served to psychologically strip Blacks of their self-worth, one could argue that the two were just as physically violent as they were emotionally violent. And though legal slavery in America ended more than a century ago, its enduring effects on Blacks did not end with Emancipation.

Patterson (1998: 212) writes: “Spiritually, the degenerate, masterless slave who dared to assert his manhood or freedom became the ideal sacrificial victim.” Patterson convincingly argues for the enduring effects of slavery on the African American psyche.

Much like Weber’s (1978) position in “The Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, and Party”, Orlando Patterson (1982; 1998) directs much of his focus to status. Slavery was a status and that status placed one within the class structure. Slavery determined every aspect of one’s life. The status of slave was the dominant determinant in the class system. Class and status can be related and sometimes one determines the other. During chattel slavery, status determined class. Even after Emancipation, the oppression of Blacks as a status group limited their class progress.

Patterson argued that the true profound effect on slavery was a “social death” because one’s status determined status potential. In other words, money meant nothing without social standing. Even after Emancipation there were still vestiges of that status group. During Reconstruction, some Blacks made significant amounts of money, which allowed them to climb up the class ladder but race still restricted them from climbing the status ladder.

Black capitalism<sup>3</sup> emerged from the small but affluent Black elite who lived in the North prior to the Civil War. Even in the antebellum South there was some Black entrepreneurial activity. As can be expected, much of this Black progress was met with White resistance,

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<sup>3</sup> Roy Innis (1997) would likely take issue with Du Bois’ position on class in *Black Reconstruction*, if for nothing else, because of the Marxian language that Du Bois incorporated. Innis argues that there is no such thing as “Black capitalism” (though there is no suggestion that Du Bois used the term either). Innis (1997) maintained that both capitalism and socialism are economic and political philosophies designed by Europeans. According to Innis, neither is effective for Blacks. He claims that Blacks must create their own ideologies, which may include elements of either capitalism or socialism, but must be distinctly different from both systems to effectively meet the needs of African Americans. His assertion is that the focus must be on economic development.

particularly in the South. But despite opposition, Black capitalism continued on and survived into the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.

Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) were major proponents of Black capitalism. Even Du Bois recognized Garvey's plan as a feasible option for Black empowerment (Marable, 1983). Marable argues that the most recent resurgence of contemporary Black capitalism programs and ideology was propagated by the Reagan Administration and that in 1983 (when Marable's *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society* was published) Frazier's initial critique of Black capitalism in *Black Bourgeoisie* was more valid than at any other time up to that point (Marable, 1983: 139-140).

Innis' claim does not negate Du Bois' (1935) position. Innis asserts that whatever system of economics that Blacks embrace should be created by Blacks. Du Bois referred to the Black and White poor as "the proletariat." How the poor in a society are classified by nomenclature (including Du Bois' attempt to do so) is irrelevant; their condition is what takes primary importance.

Innis (1997:181) further argues that Blacks "must control every single institution that takes our tax moneys and is supposed to distribute goods and services equitably for us." To say that Blacks should "control" every one of these institutions may be a bit extreme and ambitious, but I (nor do I think Du Bois would) do not disagree with this position. In fact, that is what Du Bois (1935) was addressing when he wrote about Blacks in South Carolina taking an active involvement in the political process. The need for Blacks to be in control or at least be able to exercise some degree of efficacy is important for increasing their life chances and improving their experiences.

Social conditions since Du Bois' research have changed, but only to an extent. Consider the widening inequality of employment opportunities for Blacks. Though William Julius Wilson (1978) claims that class is becoming more of a variable of interest than race when considering the life chances of African Americans, he also recognizes the consequences of joblessness are irrespective of race (Wilson, 1996). Middle class status and income do not help Black empowerment if gainful employment is lost. Thus, gaining income or middle class status is not sufficient enough for Blacks to claim social progress or empowerment.

#### INCOME DISPARITIES AND RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Religion becomes relevant for the discussion of economics and residential segregation because many Black churches are located in low-income neighborhoods. Black churches' memberships often comes from the residents of these communities. By being situated within low-income neighborhoods, the Black Church is able to be centered (physically and psychologically) within the Black community (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Hill, 1994; Pinn, 2002).

Even in the case where Blacks do achieve some upward mobility and reach middle class status, there is still the issue of race which cannot be overcome. In an effort to assimilate in the middle part of the twentieth century, Blacks who worked hard to reach middle class status in essence lost touch with some of their cultural values. When this happens, Blacks become completely isolated, never overcoming White privilege or become "White" (in the sense of mainstream assimilation), while at the same time they lose all relationships with the Black culture from whence they come (Frazier, 1957).

Black wealth and White wealth must be analyzed differently. Private wealth is not enough to draw conclusions on racial prosperity. As Oliver and Shapiro (1997) posit, the racial

inequality of wealth must be examined from both the historical and contemporary impacts of both race and class. The culture of poverty position provides an interesting explanation for continued socioeconomic disadvantage though, like most theories, it is widely debated. The culture of poverty arose out of many historical contexts, but tends to be far more prevalent in societies that meet these conditions: (1) a cash economy and wage labor; (2) persistently high unemployment and underemployment of unskilled labor; (3) low wages; (4) failure to provide social, political, and economic organization to the low-income population; (5) the presence of a bilateral kinship system opposed to a unilateral one; and (6) the presence of a dominant class that places emphasis on the accumulation of wealth and property and that explains the low economic status of others as a consequence of personal inadequacy or inferiority. The culture of poverty is viewed as a coping mechanism for feelings of hopelessness and despair among the poor, produced by their improbability of achieving success based on the values and goals determined by the larger society (Lewis, 1969: 187, 188).

Consider the claims of Massey and Denton (1993: 8) in their discussion on residential segregation and the making of the underclass. They offer an effective insight into the culture of poverty argument, though they do not feel that the thesis explains why poor, urban Blacks fail to have socioeconomic success in America. Their argument focuses on residential segregation as the cause of Black poverty. Massey and Denton (1993:8) write:

We argue instead that residential segregation has been instrumental in creating a structural niche within which a deleterious set of attitudes and behaviors—a culture of segregation—has arisen and flourished. Segregation created the structural conditions for the emergence of an oppositional culture that devalues work, schooling, and marriage and that stresses attitudes and behaviors that are antithetical and often hostile to success in the larger economy. Although poor black neighborhoods still contain many people who lead conventional, productive lives, their example has been overshadowed in recent years by a growing concentration of poor, welfare-dependent families that is an inevitable result of residential segregation.

Examining Lewis' culture of poverty position can explain social inequality from a class position with little attribution to race. Massey and Denton's (1993) culture of segregation, on the other hand, explains social inequality as a result of residential segregation which suggests that race contributes to class divisions (as do ownership of the means of production and differential pay). This point supports Derrick Bell's (1992) position that racism will always be a part of American society and that it affects the life chances of Blacks, while at the same time it warrants being reevaluated alongside William Julius Wilson's (1978) argument that race is declining in significance and is giving ground to class in explaining Black inequality.

#### HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH TRADITION

There are two critical institutions in the Black community: the family and the Church. Even today African roots are present and visible in both institutions (Woodson, 1977 [1933]). The Black Church has a history of liberating and healing ministry. Within the Black Church there are two inseparable aspects of ministry: the priestly and the prophetic. The former refers to the healing and comforting aspect of ministry, while the latter refers to the areas particularly focusing on social justice and social transformation. Black theology brings meaning to the Black community and gives attention to social reform, which is the major focus of the Black Church (Roberts, 2002: 96).

The roots of the Black prophetic tradition lie in the Black Church (West, 1988: 42). The Black Church and the Black prophetic tradition have historically brought about social transformation, liberation, and empowerment. Cornel West writes (1988: 43, 44):

Black churches permitted and promoted the kinetic orality of Afro-Americans—the fluid and protean power of the Word in speech and song along with the rich Africanisms such as antiphonality (call-and-response), polyrhythms, syncopation, and repetition; the passionate physicality; including the bodily participation in liturgical and everyday expressions; and the combative spirituality which accents

a supernatural and subversive joy, an oppositional perseverance and patience. Some of these churches served as the places where slave insurrections were planned—such as those of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nate Turner. And legal sanctions against black people worshipping God without white supervision were pervasive throughout the southern USA. In short, black churches were the major public spheres in Afro-America where strategies of survival and visions of liberation, tactics of reform and dreams of emancipation were put forward. Black Christian discourse became the predominant language wherein subversive desires and utopian energies of Afro-Americans were garnered, cultivated, and expressed.

James Cone acknowledges the history and value of emotion and expression in the Black Church.

In no way does he discount this experience. He does, however, caution that emotion is not a substitute for education. The trained preacher and the educated theologian work together, and to some degree, are one in the same. Cone (2010:322) writes:

The Black church, therefore, needs to find ways to bring charismatic preachers under the control of critical theological reason and the prophetic judgment of God. The Black church needs seminary-trained, prophetic theologians, who are committed to their intellectual vocation as pastors are to their call to preach. The preacher proclaims the gospel and the theologian explains it so the preacher will not get too carried away with his/her eschatological rhetoric. The preacher inspires people to make a commitment to the gospel and the theologian analyzes the preached word and subjects it to the justice and mercy of the God revealed in Jesus Christ. To be a profound preacher, therefore, one must be a critical theological thinker. As preacher, one proclaims God's love for the poor, and as theologian one reflects on the meaning of divine love for the poor when their poverty seems to deny that claim.

Emotions in worship and the preaching event have their place; however, they must be aroused while the preacher is exercising spiritual integrity. Emotions are effective at moving the congregation, but should flow naturally, be used with all deliberate caution, and never for the preacher's own agenda (Mitchell, 1990). The preacher—what Du Bois (1994: 116) called “the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil”—was deeply involved in the emotion and frenzy of enslaved Africans in their revivals. The point is that the Black Church has

historically been important to the Black community, and church leaders are therefore important to the Black community.

African Americans demonstrate differing levels of religiosity along gender and age divisions. Interestingly, African American women demonstrate higher levels of religious participation, but African American men, on average, spent more hours per week in other activities at their place of worship (Taylor et al, 2009).

There are intra-racial and cultural distinctions in Black (not simply African American) religiosity as well. For example, African Americans and Caribbean Blacks report similar degrees of religious involvement, which is generally higher than non-Hispanic Whites. Compared to Caribbean Blacks (those who trace their heritage back to a Caribbean country but who currently reside in the United States, are racially classified as Black, and who are English speaking), African Americans were more likely to be official members of places of worship, engage in activities such as choirs and church clubs, and request prayer from others. Caribbean Blacks, however, reported reading religious material more frequently than African Americans (Chatters et al, 2009).

#### RELIGION AND THE OPIATE OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MASSES

In the essay entitled “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, the classical theorist Karl Marx (2002 [1844]: 171) offered this declaration:

Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

While Marx was metaphorically referring to religion as “opium”, some religions have embraced the use of drugs for a multiple reasons. Different religious traditions condone drug use (Hawdon, 2005). The vast majority of African American practitioners of religion are Christian,

and more specifically, Protestant (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990); however, religion for African Americans is not limited to the Christian tradition. As mentioned above, individuals of African descent embrace various religions. And the religious traditions that they hold in common are sometimes interpreted and applied in different manners. Understanding that fact and bearing in mind Marx's position on religion, it could stand to reason that religion is for some, an escape from reality, a rebellion against oppression, and a coping mechanism (Woodson, 1977 [1933]).

Literally speaking, religion and drug use dates back more than 50,000 years ago and religion is probably the oldest social function of drug use (Hawdon, 2005: 166, 185). Among native Africans religious drug use is commonly practiced. For example, the African iboga plant is used by the Bwiti of Gabon and the Congo to foster communication with ancestral and deity images. The Zulus use drugs to predict the future (Hawdon, 2005: 187-189).

Further consider the modern example of Rastafarianism. Rastafarianism is a political and religious movement that synthesizes the oral traditions of West Africa and Christianity. This religious practice began in the 1930s and spread throughout Jamaica and the Caribbean. The vast majority of Rastafarians are working class. Their use of marijuana is justified by the Bible (according to Rastafarians), particularly by Psalm 104:14. Marijuana is utilized as a sacrament and a meditation aid. It is believed by Rastafarian practitioners that marijuana allows one to get closer to their inner spiritual self and to God (Hawdon, 2005: 98).

Rastafarians smoke marijuana to achieve an altered state of consciousness. When in this altered state it is believed that the practitioner realizes the tenets of the faith. In a similar manner, Hindu holy men use cannabis to aid in meditation (Hawdon, 2005: 191). Followers of Christianity have used texts from the Bible in order to justify limited drug use. The Qu'ran, on the other hand, condemns all forms of intoxicant use (Hawdon, 2005: 198, 199).

Black Muslims and the Nation of Islam are an alternative to traditional Black Christianity. The Nation of Islam offers Blacks immediate identity and an escape from their weariness of waiting for social change (Frazier and Lincoln, 1974: 167, 168). When Blacks embraced the Nation, particularly during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, it was seen in some ways as a rebellion against traditional religion and a rejection against the perceived complacency of Christianity.

The civil rights leader Malcolm X was the son of a Baptist preacher (X, 1964), but rejected Christianity in his adult life because of his perceived inability of the religion to meet his race's needs (Cone, 1991). In his autobiography, Malcolm X expounded upon the frustration of young Blacks, suggesting that Christianity was "incompatible with the Negro's aspirations for dignity and equality in America", "separated believers on the basis of color", "Christian love is the white man's love for himself", and that "Islam is the hope for justice and equality" (X, 1964: 240, 241). Malcolm X embraced Islam because he felt that it was the religion for Blacks and that Christianity and the Bible were attempts by Whites to oppress Blacks (X, 1964; Cone, 1991). Martin Luther King, Jr. acknowledged that Black Muslims and the Nation of Islam were addressing the frustrations of Black America; however, he criticized them from advocating violence. King justified the fact that he attempted to bridge the gap between those who wanted to do nothing for the cause of civil rights and those who was so radical that they endorsed violence (King, 1964: 75).

Elijah Muhammad, who was once the leader of the Nation of Islam, strongly advocated for Black Nationalism. His stance for social justice appeared to be limited to the Black Muslim agenda, dissimilar to someone like King, who worked to advance the civil rights cause of all Blacks and the human rights cause all of humanity. Whether intentionally or inadvertently,

Muhammad's assertions about what Muslims want and what Muslims believe incorporated language that was less about deliverance for Blacks and more divisive among Blacks (Muhammad, 2008 [1965]: 92-96).

Much like Carter G. Woodson (1977 [1933]) critiqued the Black Church for being divisive in the Black community, Frazier pointed out the same dilemma within the Nation of Islam. Frazier argued that though Elijah Muhammad appeared to promote Black empowerment, Frazier saw him as using ethnic identity to turn blackness into an asset for the select few but not for many. The Nation of Islam has not been immune to disgruntled members and subsequent fractioning. Much of this is the result of what is being perceived as growing materialism within the Nation of Islam, as Muhammad presided over various enterprises in the Black community, including restaurants, clothing stores, bakeries, grocery stores, and fish markets (Frazier and Lincoln, 1974: 156, 157).

In a similar manner but with a distinctly different message from the Nation of Islam and Black Muslims, Black Jews in America are racial-religious minorities. Many of their claims center around justifying their legitimacy and tracing their lineage back to ancient Africa and ancient Judaism. As many consider Moses to be the most recognized revealer of God's truth (although the New Testament would bear witness to Jesus being a far greater authority and revealer of God or Yahweh), his African and Jewish roots generally go undisputed. However, the Black Jews throughout the world must simultaneously endure and combat racial intolerance and religious bigotry. Much like many Black Christians in America who were limited in their acceptance by the White vanguard, Black Jews have felt the same exclusion from their European-descended counterparts (Ben-Jochannan, 1993).

## AFRICAN AMERICAN DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

According to Lincoln and Mamiya (1990: xii), more than eighty percent of Black religious affiliation in the United States is housed within seven major Black denominations of Christianity. The remaining fifteen to twenty percent of Black religious affiliation is accounted for by sects, the Roman Catholic Church, and mainline White Protestant denominations. When they do not join predominantly White denominations the Black middle class tend to join elite congregations in traditional Black denominations (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: 159). Addressing the conclusions of E. Franklin Frazier (1957; 1974), Lincoln and Mamiya (1990: 342) write:

At the present time there is no evidence of a large-scale abandonment of black churches by the black middle class. The practice, too, of upwardly mobile black people joining white churches or denominations, which Frazier once saw as their assimilative destiny, has been stemmed by the resurgence of black consciousness and an affirmation of black institutions. If members of the black middle class join churches, they tend to join the elite black churches. Only the Roman Catholic Church has experienced a rise in black membership among the major white denominations; much of this is due to a surge in West Indian immigrants, especially Haitians, and to the preference of some black parents for the discipline provided by urban parochial schools.

Though the Black middle class may not have “abandoned” the Black Church in mass, Lincoln and Mamiya’s findings do not directly address whether economic prosperity plays any major role in African American’s religiosity. In other words, Blacks who reach a certain level of affluence may not leave the *Black* Church but may demonstrate less religiosity. Black congregants who hold membership in White churches is far more common today than it was in the 1970s (McMickle, 2000: 140).

To clarify, church membership in any congregation and loyalty to a particular congregation are different discussions. Do poorer Blacks change church membership (or leave the Church altogether) less frequently compared to middle- and upper-middle class Blacks? Do they “church hop” when they do not like the direction of the leadership or the direction that the

church may be going? Are there other activities that compete with the Church for their loyalty? These questions may warrant serious consideration.

Marvin McMickle (2000) addresses this by drawing upon his own experiences pastoring a middle class church. He argues that congregational loyalty is often problematic in middle class settings. The Black middle class does, however, demonstrate a divided loyalty between the sacred and the secular. Social clubs, activities, fraternities, and sororities are just a few of the examples of what draws the attention of the Black middle class from the Church. As McMickle (2000: 80) testifies, he has never seen a Black middle class congregation that was not affected by the influence of one or more social groups and activities. If there is a clear class distinction in the Church as it relates to loyalty between the secular and the sacred, then McMickle's analysis may demonstrate that affluence leads to Black middle class congregates leaving the Church altogether or choosing to join White denominations, which is a steadily progressing trend (McMickle, 2000: 140).

While not discounting the findings of McMickle and his own experiences, one must consider that these trends are not absolutes. For example, Taylor et al (2004: 21) found that 82.2% of the respondents to the National Survey of Black Americans viewed the Church as influential and beneficial to the circumstances of Black Americans. Those who viewed the Church positively tended to be older individuals, women, those who reside in the South (as opposed to those who live in the Northeast), and those with more years of formal education. This seems to conflict with Frazier's (1957) claim. Since those with more formal education tend to have higher income and social status, it would stand to reason that as Blacks move up the economic ladder they would view the Church more favorably and participating more frequently because of the Church's communal influence and their individual benefit; however, Frazier

argued just the opposite, saying that as Blacks prospered and moved toward middle class status they lost touch with such traditional African American values, including religion and the Church.

Few will likely argue against the historical influence of the Black Church, but the question of the Church's benefit is debatable depending upon one's values and life experiences.

When addressing the notion of loyalty and commitment, Taylor et al (2004: 27) write:

In comparison to persons who remained in black mainline religious denominations, religious apostates were more likely to be male, younger, and reside outside of the South. Further, they tended to hold negative attitudes about black churches, had lower levels of racial group identification, less frequent contact with family members, and were less likely to be a member of a national or neighborhood organization. In contrast, religious switchers (persons raised in a black mainline denomination but with a different current religious affiliation) were more likely than persons remaining in mainline denominations to be married, reside in urban areas, and to support political protest to gain equal rights. However, religious switchers had lower levels of racial group identity than their religious mainline counterparts.

Blacks have consistently supported the Church, possibly because they have always understood that it is one of the most viable institutions in the Black community (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). With more than three-fourths of African Americans having some sort of church-affiliation, their contributions make the Black Church the largest recipient of volunteer time and personal finances. About two-thirds of the money contributed by Blacks to charitable organizations goes to the Church (Hill, 1994: 152).

#### EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

American religious traditions also differ in their constituencies. For example, the religious groups that generally have the highest percentage of college graduates tend to be Unitarians and Jewish Americans with 60%. The Presbyterian Church comes in second with approximately 40% of its members possessing with a college degree. It is worth noting that African Americans rarely participate in these groups. The conservative, sectarian, and

Pentecostal groups generally have the lowest rate of formal education (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Smith and Faris, 2005: 97). Blacks lean toward affiliating with the groups that have the lowest rate of college graduates, though Lincoln and Mamiya asserted that all denominations within the Black Church are involved with education in some manner. They claimed that no other area in the life of Blacks had a higher priority for Black churches than education, which is likely attributed to the fact that “education is traditionally considered the primary means of achieving economic mobility, and personal and social fulfillment” (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: 251).

#### POLITICS AND THE PULPIT

Eurocentric Protestant churches have historically used politics and the pulpit for different agendas than Afrocentric Protestant churches. Though both the White Church and the Black Church have blended politics and the pulpit, the latter has consistently been the place where public issues that affect the Black community can be addressed. The Black Church has historically been involved in community change (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; McMickle, 2000; Day, 2001). Simply stated, Blacks and Whites in America have not always looked to religion for the same purpose.

For years, the Black Church has fought to create better economic conditions for Black Americans. One of the strategies to accomplishing these goals was by electing officials who were sympathetic to the Black condition. Mayors, governors, and congressmen from the Black community have been elected to serve as the representative voice (Pinn, 2002: 73, 74).

In fairness, the Black Church is not without criticism, even from those within the Black community. Some argue that the Black Church has long since lost its orientation and purpose for empowering and elevating the Black masses. In a sense, the critics of the Black Church suggest

that the struggle for racial equality has been stunted because of class distinctions within the institution. Carter G. Woodson (1977 [1933]: 53) wrote:

In many respects, then, the Negro church during recent generations has become corrupt. It could be improved, but those Negroes who can help the institution have deserted it to exploiters, grafters, and libertines. The “highly educated” Negroes have turned away from people in the churches, and the gap between the masses and the “talented tenth” is rapidly widening.

Woodson addressed the divisive nature of the Black Church and went on to suggest that if individuals within the Church would pool their resources then they would be far more efficacious.

Consider the case of President Barack Obama. For years Obama claimed membership in Chicago’s Trinity United Church of Christ, one of the most radical and Afrocentric congregations in the nation. However, during his bid for the presidency the pastor of said church, the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., became the target of the media in an effort to mar both Obama’s character and that of his pastor. In an attempt to do political damage control, Obama disassociated himself from his pastor and his church of many years (Robinson, 2009: 214); however he did eventually associate himself with another church. One should note that Obama was (and still is) a very affluent African American member of society, having obtained both economic prosperity and political clout. In his bid for the presidency, Obama denounced his pastor and his church, capitalized on his economic and political status, and downplayed his Blackness by choosing to portray himself as a race-neutral candidate (Robinson, 2009; Utley and Heyse, 2009).

One could easily conclude that Obama was aware of the fact that his affiliation with such an outspoken, Afrocentric pastor would not benefit him in his bid for the presidency of a nation that is still divided along racial and class lines. At the time, Dr. Wright promoted a very

Afrocentric culture and Trinity was clearly a Black church affiliated with a traditionally White denomination. Dr. Wright's Afrocentricity and empowerment for the masses may not have been appealing to those on the national scale who refuse to acknowledge race and class differences in American society (Billingsley, 2003).

The reason why the Black underclass tends to be more loyal to the Church may have something to do with the Church's mission. According to Hill (1994: 151), the community development agenda of many Black churches are usually aimed at enhancing the social welfare of low-income neighborhoods. Furthermore, as Kelly Miller Smith (1984: 4) points out, the Church means something different to different people based on their station and status in society. She writes: "The Black church did and does facilitate Black people's search for truth about themselves. The Christian faith transfers Blacks from the status of nonpersons to the level of somebodiness."

Smith's claim makes sense, but it seemingly implies that all who are affiliated with the Black Church are searching for truth and seek an improved status. It could be that there is a group (i.e. the middle class) within the Black Church that does not need to feel empowered because these individuals already feel that their status has empowered them. That may be why they demonstrate less faithfulness to their churches, attend less frequently, demonstrate less religiosity, or leave the Church altogether.

#### PROMINENT PREACHERS IN THE MODERN AFRICAN AMERICAN TRADITION

Martin Luther King, Jr. is arguably the most socially influential preacher in the African American tradition. His prophetic leadership is accepted by most within the religious community and his scholar-activism has been addressed by others (Keatts, 2011). However, preaching and leadership in the Black Church since King and the Civil Rights era have

undergone a dramatic transformation. Much of this transformation is due to the fact that the needs, the progress, and the outlook of African Americans have changed.

In the early part of the twentieth century W.E.B. Du Bois (1989: 50) questioned the change in focus of preachers and teachers who once embodied the ideals of the people and suddenly gave way to the question of “cash and a lust for gold.” Today some of the most successful practitioners in the modern African American Christian community are televangelists, many of whom are proponents of the prosperity gospel. Not surprisingly prosperity preachers and their ministries are among the most scrutinized groups in the African American Christian faith. There are questions that arise concerning whether the aim is on the Gospel or personal greed; whether it is an “authentic” voice for the Black Church or whether it is the Christian Right under the guise of Black religion; or whether it is Christianity or an ethnocentric “Americanness” with a religious undertone (Wilson, 2009: xii).

The preoccupation with wealth and status has dominated much of Christian theology in modernity. Weber (2008: 156, 157) wrote:

Wealth as such is a great danger; its temptations never end, and its pursuit is not only senseless as compared with the dominating importance of the Kingdom of God, but it is morally suspect. Here asceticism seems to have turned much more sharply against the acquisition of earthly goods than it did in Calvin, who saw no hindrance to the effectiveness of the clergy in their wealth, but rather a thoroughly desirable enhancement of their prestige. Hence he permitted them to employ their means profitably. Examples of the condemnation of the pursuit of money and goods may be gathered without end from Puritan writings, and may be contrasted with the late mediaeval ethic literature, which was much more open-minded on this point.

Weber argued that the pursuit of wealth as an end of itself was bad. When obtained wealth was a by-product of the execution of one’s calling it was seen as evidence of God’s favor. What Weber (2008: 157) was really cautioning the reader against was the “relaxation in the security of

possession” and allowing one’s possessions to create a distraction from the pursuit of a religious life.

Religious messages in the African American context are starting to promote material prosperity as a sign of God’s favor. Jonathan Wilson (2009: xiii) notes that some of Black America’s leading televangelists, which includes T.D. Jakes, utilize traditional African American preaching practices, including “rhythmic syncopation, kinetic orality, and emotional physicality”, endearing them to their congregants and listeners. For those who are socially disadvantaged and disenfranchised, engaging with these ministers and their ministries increases self-esteem and eschatological hope.

By these ministries focusing particularly on social and financial empowerment, African Americans, particularly the new Black middle class, are starting to embrace televangelism’s theme of social uplift. Even more important, which speaks to the crux of this project, is the distinction between age and income divisions within the African American Christian community. As Jonathan Wilson points out, African American televangelists seem to be most appealing to the post-Civil Rights generations with middle and upper-class desires. Those who have seen their parents and grandparents struggle on the bottom of America’s capitalistic economy because of racial inequality readily receive a message of God’s financial liberation in their quest for inclusion in America’s economic wealth distribution (Wilson, 2009: xiii).

The first red flag with prosperity ministries is the inconsistency and lack of biblical congruity when applied to the lives of many Black Americans. Once again consider T. D. Jakes for example. His message of self-help and positive outcomes appears to be groundless. He even appears to contradict himself. He predicts an imminent world revival, and in order for the reader to carry out the plan of God, Divine intervention and not human effort will be the catalyst.

However, he then admonishes (and encourages) the reader to enjoy the fullness of God through the Holy Ghost by accessing the power that lies within (Jakes, 2002: 9).

When one juxtaposes the prosperity preaching and the perspective of someone like Jakes with other perspectives such as that of Stephanie Mitchem, there is a great gulf in the analysis of opportunity in the African American Christian community. For example, Mitchem (2007:35) argues that African American spirituality has always desired economic justice as part of its aim for social justice. Looking at the current state of African Americans' economic conditions suggests that there is a contradiction between the way that they live and the promise of abundance. Mitchem asserts that Black Americans are suffering from "poverty fatigue", as roughly forty percent live in the state of poverty.

After visiting several mega-churches and seeing prosperity ministry in action, Mitchem critiques the practice of these churches on several fronts. First, she argues that leadership (especially from the senior pastor or head pastor) is very impersonal. Church in these mega-churches becomes more about the business and less about the spiritual side of ministry.

Secondly, Mitchem suggests that there is an underlying ideology that wealth accumulation instantly brings about a change in social class. She argues that this is not true based on the structure of American society. Mitchem (2007:108-109) continues by positing that the American structure is such that "social class requires that a person claiming membership has ownership of the cultural tenets and practices of a given group."

Thirdly, Mitchem seems to imply that in mega-churches, particularly prosperity-focused ministries, the poor are viewed as a problem. Congregants who are not consistent givers are often dropped from membership rolls. Poor people are seen as a liability and non-prosperity practitioners are either ostracized or dismissed. This finding reinforces what Frazier suggested

approximately half a century earlier. Frazier (1957: 89) wrote that in some cities the Baptist congregations had split along color and class lines. Middle class Baptists were choosing to distance themselves from “the emotional religious activities of the Negro masses.”

Manning Marable (1989: 318) claims that the African American Christian experience must be contextualized within American history. He writes:

Black Christianity, as well as the totality of the Black religious experience within America, cannot be understood outside of the development of white racism and capitalist exploitation. America was largely created through oppression—the systematic genocide of native Americans [*sic*], the use of indentured servants, and most importantly the exploitation of a significant number of African people within the “peculiar institution” of slavery. The cultural or ideological vision of pioneer America was Christianity...

The unavoidable point is that African American Christianity (particularly the formal institution of the African American *Church*) developed under a social context of oppression and capitalist exploitation. E. Franklin Frazier (1957: 22) argued that as Blacks’ economic status improved, the Black middle class, or the “Black bourgeoisie” had grown and become the dominant group within the Black community. Frazier maintained that something happens to the Blacks when social progress takes place.

#### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL PROSPERITY

*The Wretched of the Earth* is Frantz Fanon’s (1965) analysis of the psyche and praxis of colonizers and colonized people. Part of Fanon’s discussion examines the drawbacks of national consciousness, both the intent and the outcome of a post-colonial regime. Most of his focus, however, is on the problems with a dysfunctional national consciousness and how it affects the ruling elite. In his discussion Fanon argued that though national consciousness has good intentions, the eventual outcomes and applications over time are counterproductive and become detrimental to the colonized.

According to Fanon, sometimes after the overthrow of a colonizer, the colonized group works for the cause of democracy. However, this new regime is often short-lived and is rendered ineffective in bringing about the desired changes of the masses. Fanon placed blame for most of these unmet goals on the shoulders of the elite or new ruling class. He attributed this failure in part due to lack of preparation of the elite, lack of practical ties between the elite and the masses, the elite's apathy, and their cowardice during moments of the struggle. He characterized the resultant national consciousness as nothing but an empty shell, leaving the possibility of societal regression (Fanon, 1965: 97).

The "national bourgeoisie" (or what Fanon called the "phantom bourgeoisie" because of their lack of capital and their role simply as agents) is the new ruling elite that take over power on the heels of colonialism and they demonstrate a diseased mentality. What Fanon called a "willful narcissism" appears to be his interpretation of a selfish, narrow-minded leadership regime. Based on his description of the national bourgeoisie's practices and their thought processes, I would not be so quick to classify their behavior as "willful narcissism"; while I cannot conceptualize a better term for them, I would prefer to give them the benefit of the doubt. After all, they too were colonized subjects and for them the taste of power coupled with their lived experiences of oppression may produce some undesirable qualities, but it could be less of a result of their purposeful change in character and more about their infected consciousness.

Fanon wrote that the national bourgeoisie, after some time in leadership, begins to turn its back on the masses. In his continued discussion of the national bourgeoisie, he began to use the language of "bourgeois dictatorship" when discussing both developed and underdeveloped

countries. According to Fanon, the leadership acts one way while under colonial rule but soon changes after the overthrow of colonial rule (Fanon, 1965: 111, 112).

What I conclude is that Fanon was not addressing authentic leadership, though he may have thought that he was. There is a clear distinction between the authentic leader and one who is a dictator. Fanon was addressing the lack of patriotism among the phantom bourgeoisie who were content to serve as agents of foreign capital at the expense of their society.

This may be helpful in understanding the Black middle class and social prosperity. Fanon's psychological analysis of Blacks (the colonized) is similar to Frazier's (1957). The colonized will often internalize the colonization and in turn seek to mimic the actions, attitudes, and values of the colonizer. That may be why Frazier argued that middle class Blacks divorce themselves from the traditional African American value system.

#### RELIGION AND LIFE EXPERIENCES

Much like Weber's claims in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, C. Wright Mills argued that the nineteenth century middle class (whom he referred to as "the old middle class") carried on American ideals of individualism and the salvific religious interpretation that God helps those who help themselves. For many in the nineteenth century, their character was demonstrated by their economic prosperity in a capitalistic system and in their religious ethic. Capitalism was seen as a God-given system (Mills, 1953; Vidich, 1987). In fact, Mills claimed that the world of small enterprises was self-balancing and even referred to the common held belief of its relationship to "Divine Providence" (Mills, 1953: 10).

Mills continued his discourse by suggested that "the old middle class" was becoming outnumbered by "the new middle class." He asserted (at the time of his middle twentieth century publication) that eighty percent of the individuals who work in the United States earn their

livings by working for the two or three percent of the population who own forty to fifty percent of the private property. He wrote: “Labor markets, not control of property, determine their chances to receive income, exercise power, enjoy prestige, learn and use skills” (Mills, 1953: 63).

Mills made a valid argument, but he appeared to be silent in addressing the Black struggle. Income can be correlated with social power and prestige, but Mills neglected the race variable (as well as the gender variable). Mills seemingly failed to account for Black income and economics in his analysis, an issue even more glaring when one considers that his book *The American Middle Classes* (1953) was basically a contemporary of E. Franklin Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957). In Mills’ defense, however, he was focusing primarily on two percent of the population that had real economic power, most of whom were White. Blacks, like most others, were workers who were able to labor to achieve middle class status, though this was not the way to becoming part of the power elite.

The conclusions reached by David Morris may suggest that age is a variable that should be controlled for when addressing the effects of income on religiosity. For example, Morris cited research that found a positive correlation between older adults and religious attendance with life satisfaction and personal health. He also cited data that concluded that, on average, older adults more frequently stated that “religion is very important”, compared to those age 18 to 29 (Morris, 1997: 4).

Those who are religiously active tend to have higher life satisfaction and subjective health assessments. In fact, only the variables of health status, income satisfaction, and church attendance had direct effects on life satisfaction (Morris, 1997: 11). This may have an obvious correlation with socioeconomic status or income. Those who have more money tend to have

access to better health care. When compared to Whites, on average Blacks earn less money. Poverty and the lack of opportunity for economic development still affect the Black community. Blacks are more likely to be segregated from Whites in urban environments with less access to social progress and economic empowerment (Wilson, 1987; Massey and Denton, 1993). According to Anthony Pinn (2002: 73, 74), three out of ten Blacks live below the poverty line compared to one out of every ten Whites who live below the poverty line. In 1995, the median Black family income on average was approximately sixty percent of the median White family income. In 1999, Black poverty was 23.6% compared to 7.7% of non-Hispanic Whites. The median household income of African Americans was 62% of Whites (Gaskin et. al, 2005: 95). In 2008, Blacks and Hispanics continued to disproportionately suffer from the effects of poverty, with 24.7% of Blacks and 23.2% of Hispanics living in poverty. This is even more staggering when compared to the 8.6% of non-Hispanic Whites who are vulnerable to the effects of poverty (Edin and Kissane, 2010: 461). The relevant point is that Black wealth in relation to White wealth has changed very little over the past two decades.

Income and religion seem to be correlated in some ways. For example, Bradshaw and Ellison (2010) found that subjective financial hardships and objective financial hardships are both separately related to psychological distress. Subjective hardship has to do with how individuals see themselves in the economically competitive American society, where individuals are often graded based on wealth, material possessions, standard of living, and lifestyles. Feeling inadequate when compared to others can leave one distressed. The frequency of religious attendance was inversely linked to psychological distress. Bradshaw and Ellison (2010: 202) explain this by concluding that religious service attendance and the belief in an afterlife buffer both the effects of financial hardships and the psychological distress that said hardships may

cause. For persons experiencing real or perceived economic hardships, religious service attendance may provide much of the necessary assistance they need to cope. For example, congregations may provide help to overcome objective financial hardships. Religious messages may also provide emotional support. Through the aid and the teaching of the congregation, individuals may in turn reinterpret their circumstances in such a manner that does not cause them to develop threatening concepts of self and therefore they ultimately become less psychologically damaged.

Denominations have been shown to influence members' economic and political views through preaching from the pulpit and informal discussions (Steensland et. al, 2000: 292). Service attendance and belief in an afterlife appear to be emotional compensators for perceived financial deprivation. This may be part of the reason why poorer Blacks tend to be faithful to the Church.

#### BOURGEOIS CHRISTIANITY

Much like financial hardships have psychological effects, financial prosperity does so as well (Bradshaw and Ellison, 2010). If Fanon's ideology of national consciousness is applied to the African American Christian experience, one could see how some degree of social progress of the formerly oppressed group might cause members of said group to forget their history and forsake those whose plight is similar to theirs. Thus, it is not beyond the scope of rationality to see how the Black Christian tradition of liberation, justice, and empowerment can be infiltrated and infected by unethical practices and unhealthy strands of Christianity. Cornel West (2004) articulates this division of Christianity in America by suggesting that it comes in two competing forms: Prophetic Christianity and Constantinian Christianity. The former is demonstrated through love, justice, compassion, and concern for all of humanity. It is the model set up by

Jesus. The latter is a religiously-driven, hegemonic structure designed to protect the interests of the state and the majority population, all while perpetuating an ongoing cycle of injustice that creates winners and losers.

West (2004: 146) further argues that as Constantinian Christianity influences governmental policies it begins to subvert the most fundamental teachings of Christianity. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that many who profess to be believers in Jesus and who practice Christianity (at least as they understand it and have been taught) may have subconsciously rejected the greatest principles of the faith. Even within the African American community, Fanon's ideology of national consciousness and West's notion of Constantinian Christianity may have helped to create a Black bourgeoisie.

Gibson Winter (1961: 50) asserted in the middle of the twentieth century that Western strains of Christianity had a bourgeoisie undertone (though this is not a novel claim). He wrote:

The identification of Christianity with the middle and upper classes occurred in recent centuries in Western Europe. This seems to be the primary factor in the decline of Christian churches in Sweden, England, and France. Christianity has deep roots in these countries, but urbanization has undermined it for centuries. Urban Christianity in Western Europe has been concentrated among the bourgeoisie and has been alienated from the working classes; it is not uncommon in these countries for participation in worship to include only 10 to 15 per cent [*sic*] of the total population.

In contextualizing Winter's assessment one must bear in mind that his writing was over half a century ago and focuses on Christianity in a European context, which likely includes a very limited number of African-descended congregants and Afrocentric congregations. He admitted that American Christianity does not follow the same pattern as its European counterparts. At the same time he also recognized that American Christianity differs from North African Christianity in certain unique characteristics. In other words, conclusions that may be drawn about

Christianity and its influences in America may be limited to American (particularly White American) contexts.

Winter recognized that Black churches (the term he used was “Negro”) cultivated Black leadership. He made a valid point, recognizing that Black churches shaped Black leadership, but he overly emphasized the influence of the White community and its discrimination in creating the Black community. Winter infantilized the Black community and the Black Church in such a way that he seemed to suggest that the Black community would have never come into existence without White discrimination. I argue that the Black community’s identity and collective consciousness would have developed independent of White hegemony. Past White oppression led to the perpetual inequality of Blacks, not the identity of Blacks.

However misguided Winter may have been in describing the Black community, he did offer some valuable perspectives when discussing class. He echoed the sentiments of E. Franklin Frazier (1957) when Winter (1961:115) wrote:

The Negro middle class rejects the second-class citizenship foisted upon it by the White community; consequently, it rejects its own identification with the Negro community. On the other hand, its success and future depend upon serving a Negro clientele, for it is financially dependent upon the Negro community. Middle- and upper-class Negroes identify with the majority White culture in education and style of life, but they lack access to that culture; for example, they cannot purchase homes in residential areas commensurate with their ability to pay, and, although they live in the best areas of the Negro ghetto, these areas are deteriorating before they have access to them. Their children are forced to attend schools in disorganized areas; in fact, they are subjected to slum conditions even though their parents are prosperous enough to afford the best kind of housing. The prosperous Negro has climbed the economic ladder, yet finds himself on the lower rungs of the social ladder; his economic future is bound up with the Negro community, yet his heart is fixed on achieving his birthright as a full participant in the opportunities of the White culture.

Winter argued that the Black Church changed with the mentality of the middle class Black community. He suggested that Black worship services became more formal and dignified while

rejecting folk religion. The Black Church insulated the Black bourgeoisie from the rest of the Black community “without explicitly signifying a rejection of the hand that fed them” (Winter, 1961: 116). The changing Black Church allowed the Black middle class to appear to be more White-acceptable while distancing them from the lower class Black community. In the half-century after Reconstruction, Cedric Robinson (1983: 206) claimed that “through its wealth and educational institutions the Black elite survived, growing more remote from the masses of Blacks as its ability to reproduce itself developed.”

Jürgen Moltmann took the position that “the living remembrance of Christ directs the church’s hope towards the kingdom, and living in the kingdom leads back to the inexhaustible remembrance of Christ.” The power of the Holy Spirit, and not human strength, will, and reason, is what fosters belief in “Jesus as the Christ and hope for the future as God’s future.” Faith in Christ and the hope in the Kingdom of God are credited to the presence of the Spirit of God (Moltmann, 1977: 197).

Moltmann (1977: 78, 79) contended that the Gospel writers present Jesus as One concerned with the plight of the poor, and that His preaching message was designed for the poor and to call the captives into the liberty of the coming Kingdom. Moltmann had an interesting spin on the discussion of poverty, where he argued that the Gospel writers’ address of poverty:

extends from economic, social, and physical poverty to psychological, moral, and religious poverty. The poor are all those who have to endure acts of violence and injustice without being able to defend themselves. The poor are all who have to exist physically and spiritually on the fringe of death, who have nothing to live for and to whom life has nothing to offer. The poor are all who are at the mercy of others, and who live with empty and open hands.

What Moltmann (1977: 79) concluded is that the biblical model for poverty is not just defined by economic acquisitions or lack thereof; instead it refers to the enslavement and dehumanization of humanity in multiple dimensions. Therefore, as can be reasonably deduced in modern contexts,

poor people (even those within the Church) do not just need economic uplift but aid and assistance in other areas of life. What the prophetic message (including the messages of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and Martin Luther King, Jr.) insisted upon was a sense of equity and justice. Once those conditions are satisfied, economic empowerment will be a byproduct.

#### PREACHING AS COMMUNICATION IN THE COMMUNITY

Henry Mitchell (1989: 361) suggests that Black preaching is influenced by every element that affects the Black ghetto. Black preaching clearly incorporates theology. In turn theology has a sociological effect because the sermon deeply involves the congregation. Preaching and Black religion have in many ways been a coping mechanism for Black survival (Mitchell, 1989).

Alvin Porteous (1979: 16) declared that those who are called to preach are called to keep in constant tension the focus on inward sin and a focus on outward economic, cultural, and political oppression. This is the message of a liberating Gospel. The sermon is not meant to lock individuals down; it is designed to lift them up. The sermon is a liberating event. It is more than transmitting ideas; it is about engaging and ministering “the total selfhood of the hearer in such a way as to bring about an event of transformation and liberation” (Porteous, 1979:60). The Gospel takes control of the listener and transforms them. The Gospel is God’s message that liberates those who are low in spirit and who are subjected to the hurts and pains of an unredeemed world (Cone, 2010: 323). Thus, the sermon has at the very least a theological component, but can be argued to possess sociological and anthropological components as well.

Mitchell (1970:30) defines “hermeneutic” as a code word for the presenting the Gospel “on a tell-it-like-it-is, nitty-gritty basis.” Mitchell (1990:13) claims that the strength of Black Christianity came in part from clandestine meetings of enslaved Africans who transformed their African Traditional Religion into the Christian faith. Logically, Black culture has shaped Black

religion and theology. Therefore, it is not hard to conceive why Mitchell (1990:17) suggests that the term “Black hermeneutic” is the expression of “unique thoughts and interpretations of the Bible that grow out of the Black religious experience and are expressed in Black preaching.” The Black hermeneutic may be the coping mechanism that Blacks use to deal with their objective and subjective financial hardships (Bradshaw and Ellison, 2010).

#### AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVISM

Dwight Hopkins advocates for a new millennium Black Church that focuses on missions to nations around the world where darker skinned people are oppressed. The missionary aim would be to foster solidarity, healing, and liberation (Hopkins, 2010: 403). While I give credence to this position, the more pressing matter for the Black Church in America may be missionary efforts and outreach ministry at home and then eventually taking the message abroad.

The survey questions and the data from James Harris’ *Black Ministers and Laity in the Urban Church: An Analysis of Political and Social Expectations* (1987) helped as a starting point for this project, for it identifies schisms in research on Black religiosity. According to Harris, the vast majority of the respondents thought that the minister’s “active concern for the oppressed” was important. Harris concluded that his findings reflect the expectations of congregants to have ministers who are spiritual leaders as well as social and political leaders.

Harris (1987: 47-48) further concluded that there is no relationship between denominational affiliation and Black congregants’ expectations of minister’s social and political activism. In other words, Black congregants’ expectations of clergy seem consistent across denominational lines. Further, Harris found that there was no significant difference in expectations of ministers based on laity’s socioeconomic status. And though Harris concluded that there was no significant relationship between the socioeconomic status of congregants and

their expectations of ministers, he did not control for race or age, which is something I did in this project. One might argue that these are systematically biased; however, there is no reason to suspect that these congregations sampled by Harris are any different than any other congregations across the country. I know that this cannot be generalized to Methodists or Catholics for example, but this is not a biased sample to Baptists.

Harris' (1987) study might be of relevance for the present study. It appears that socioeconomic status has no influence of laity's expectations of clergy, but such a conclusion offers little insight for interpreting religious behavior of congregants and non-congregants. In other words, Harris' research speaks to what congregants (church-goers) expect of their pastors and leaders, but does not address how they feel about God, what they expect of themselves, and how they demonstrate their religiosity.

## **CHAPTER 3—METHODS**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this project is to examine the correlation between religious service attendance and family income among African Americans. I used the General Social Survey (GSS) to test the relationship between Black socioeconomic status and their religiosity. The independent variable is income and the dependent variable is religious service attendance. Age, gender, and marital status, among other variables, were also factored. I controlled for race, since the analysis focuses primarily on African Americans. And because I am focusing primarily on African Americans to test Frazier's hypothesis, I had to analyze other Americans as well to see if there are distinctions by race. Further, I tested for the correlation between income and religiosity among White Americans, being open to the possibility that the mediating effect on religiosity may not be race but income. Such activities as worship service attendance, praying, and Bible reading serve as indicators of one's religiosity (at least these are objective and measurable). Prayer, in some form, "is the most widely recognized and universally practiced religious behavior (Taylor et al, 2004: 63). These observable behaviors allow me to evaluate which respondents appear to be more spiritual or religious than another.

Ideally, "religiosity" would refer to many observable religious practices such as religious service attendance, prayer, and devotional readings; however, many of the questions that provide the data for GSS were not asked in all of the years relevant for this study. Therefore, throughout the project the term "religiosity" can only be used to refer to the recoded church attendance variable. It should also be noted that the term "church attendance" is not restricted to mean "Christian Church"; rather the term is used to encapsulate all forms of religious devotion and worship attendance.

## AIM

I performed an individual-level, sociological test of Frazier's hypothesis in *Black Bourgeoisie*. Frazier posited his thesis about African Americans but he did not empirically test it. I tested and applied this thesis to African Americans in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the end I offer a critique of Frazier's position and attempt to utilize relevant factors to accept or to completely reject a portion of his thesis altogether based on the results of the test of his hypothesis.

The use of W.E.B Du Bois' historiography and critique of the Black Church along with the role of religion and economic prosperity in the life experiences of African Americans are critical for this project. Historically, African Americans have viewed the institution of the Church with a high regard, but as a whole do not demonstrate the prosperity that the relationship between religion and capitalism seems to promise.

Scholar-Activism (Kershaw, 1990; Zerai, 2002; Keatts, 2011) is heavily focused on centeredness. Because of this fact I first focus how respondents interpret their own lived experiences, as expressed through such avenues as interviews done by the GSS. The social problems within the African American community have been addressed by a plethora of scholars, including E. Franklin Frazier (1957) in *Black Bourgeoisie*.

## DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE POPULATION

Produced by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), the GSS is made up of hundreds of questions that measure, among many other things, income and religiosity. The GSS data used for this project was collected during the months of February, March, and April for the years 1972-1978, 1980, 1982-1991, 1993, and every even year beginning with 1994 through 2010. A total of 53,043 (the total N value) completed interviews were conducted during that

time. The surveys from 1972 to 2004 were conducted on English-speaking persons, living in the United States, 18 years of age or older, and living in non-institutional facilities. Spanish-speaking respondents were added to the sample in 2006 and thereafter (NORC, 2009: vii).

### MEASURES

This project indirectly tests Frazier's thesis. It is considered an indirect test, firstly, because I am only attempting to measure a portion of Frazier's thesis. Secondly, I do not have longitudinal data; however, I examined the correlation over time. Education, income, and occupational prestige are variables used to measure socioeconomic status. I intended to see if the correlation between SES and religiosity is the same for different years when comparing Blacks and Whites as well as other races. Further, I sought to determine if such a correlation changes over time.

I used the GSS to conduct a univariate analysis by presenting the frequencies and graphs for my major variables. I then did a bivariate analysis in which I used correlations to answer the following questions: 1) Is there a relationship between the key variables? 2) How strong is the association? 3) If there is a strong relationship, can the direction of the association be determined? 4) Is the relationship statistically significant?

I performed regression analyses with interaction effects. The purpose of this was to examine the race interaction coded for Black and White and SES on religiosity. The variables that prior research concludes have some influence on religiosity will be controlled for, including: age, income, gender, marital status, and region of the country of the respondents.

There are two different measures or interpretations of religion: religiosity and church attendance. Though the two are correlated there is a distinct difference. The former measures one's beliefs. This takes on the form of how they may feel about God, the Church, and

organized religion. The latter addresses one's behaviors. Since this project addresses religious service attendance and race, I hypothesized that the relationship between attendance and race is more significant than the relationship between income and race. Further, religious service attendance is incorporated into religiosity for the purpose of this study.

#### VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity and reliability are important factors in research. Measurements need to have low error and also need to be replicated at various times. Further, any claim made from resultant data is frivolous and inconclusive if such error factors in validity and reliability are not accounted for.

The term "validity" deals with the accuracy of the data produced in relation to the actual measures. All measures have some level of validity threats. For this project data is provided from surveys. The GSS used for this project is valid data on basic grounds. That claim can be made because the questions asked appear to give researchers a clear measure of the variables in question.

In this project, the aim is to test a portion of Frazier's hypothesis. There is, however, a concern with predictive validity. For example, knowing a respondent's income alone does not allow for a solid claim to be made about their religiosity. Other social factors or control variables must be considered before one can draw such a conclusion.

The term "reliability", on the other hand, deals with ability of a procedure to be replicated and produce the same or similar results, even if said results are not close to the actual data. The question of reliability has already been answered to some degree because the GSS allows other researchers to use the same database and potentially arrive at similar findings even with different samples.

One may doubt the validity of data collected since 1972 and comparing it to the time of Frazier. Such skepticism deserves valid consideration. There are other variables that can be tested to reinforce or reject Frazier's thesis. One dependent variable that I will not use but is worth considering is community involvement. The problem with that is that I do not have measures for how active one is (or was during Frazier's time) in the community, because "activity" comes in many forms and is interpreted differently.

Another potential dependent variable would be family structure, which does have data available in GSS; however, including this would distract from the original variables and the purpose of this project. It is worth noting that by not factoring in such variables as the two mentioned above that this study and its subsequent findings have some limitations. As Du Bois pointed out in *The Philadelphia Negro* (2007 [1899]), one does not want to overgeneralize when it comes to data findings.

#### ANALYSIS

Three regression analyses were performed for every eight years beginning with data from 1972 and ending with data from 2010. If, for example, the results from a regression of income and religious service attendance determined that in 1972 there is a significant correlation between SES and religiosity but was no significant difference between Blacks and Whites, then race does not matter as it relates to attendance. These results would suggest that Frazier's emphasis on race is inaccurate. Wealth may move individuals away from the Church, but his thesis could have been addressing any racial group and not necessarily Blacks. If, on the other hand, there is a significant difference between Blacks and Whites, then this would suggest, that in 1972, race is related to attendance. More importantly, the effect of income on attendance is stronger for one race than another if the interaction effect were significant.

This same analysis was performed for 1980 and every subsequent eight years. If statistics demonstrate that the influence of income on attendance was significantly different for Blacks and Whites in 1972 but insignificantly different in 1980, then that may suggest the declining significance of race. Race would then be viewed as losing its effect on moderating the relationship between income and attendance. At this point, the data would allow one to conclude that *class* effects attendance. Class would matter, but that would be irrespective of race. Wealth then would be determined to affect religious service attendance.

All of the potential data outcomes must be accounted for in the results. If statistics reflect that the influence of income on attendance was insignificantly different for Blacks and Whites in 1972 and still insignificantly different in 1980, then that may suggest that the effect of income on attendance was unrelated to race in 1972 and was still unrelated in 1980. Blacks may be more religious on average than are Whites, but if one is rich, the lack of religiosity will be seen irrespective of race.

If statistics reflect that the influence of income on attendance was insignificantly different for Blacks and Whites in 1972 but significantly different in 1980, then that would conclude that Frazier's thesis was wrong at some point but correct over time. And if statistics reflect that the influence of income on attendance was significantly different for Blacks and Whites in 1972 but still significantly different in 1980, then one would need to compare the size of the effect and the size of the gap between Blacks and Whites.

If the outcomes for Blacks does not change from 1972 to 1980, then that means that class has been an important factor in determining the religiosity of Blacks. If, for example, during those same years income and attendance for Whites developed a stronger correlation, then that would suggest that there is something different about what class does for religiosity in Whites

but does not do for Blacks. For practical purposes and comparison, one must keep in mind that in 1972 the size of the Black middle class was relatively small. By 1980 and thereafter, the Black middle class was substantially larger.

If Frazier was correct, then the more successful Blacks become the more the above mentioned effects will be seen. This would not matter so much for Whites. Basically, Frazier's point was that Blacks are selling out to White culture and capitalism. If this is true across the entirety of the African American community, then the gap within the group should become larger as certain members of the group become more economically successful. If there was a strong and significant association, I would reject my null hypothesis and affirm Frazier's original hypothesis if there was an inverse relationship between income and religious service attendance.

#### EXPLANATION OF DATA

If Frazier was correct, then the more economically successful Blacks become the less likely they are to attend church, particularly predominantly Black congregations. The difference between the racial groups will be shown with an interaction effect. If the interaction term between race and socioeconomic status (SES) is statistically significant then the influence of SES on religiosity is different for Blacks and Whites.

In the first regression analyses Blacks are the referent group. Whites and Other Race were assigned the value of zero (0) and Blacks assigned the value of one (1). Religiosity is calculated by the following formula:  $Rel = a + b_{X_{SES}} + b_{X_{RACE}} + b_{X_{SES \bullet RACE}}$ . The variable "a" is the intercept of the religiosity of Whites with a theoretical null socioeconomic status (though this is not possible). The  $b_{X_{SES}}$  is the variable effect of SES alone, independent of race. The  $b_{X_{RACE}}$  is the variable effect of being Black. The  $b_{X_{SES \bullet RACE}}$  is the variable interaction effect of SES and race.

There are four possible outcomes. First, if “a” is significant,  $b_{X_{RACE}}$  is significant, but the  $b_{X_{SES} \bullet BLACK}$  is insignificant, then the resultant graph would reflect that religiosity increases as SES decreases for both races. In this case, Frazier’s thesis would have been correct but his focus on race was not needed, as the effect would be the same for both Blacks and Whites. The second possibility is that if  $b_{X_{RACE}}$  is insignificant, but the  $b_{X_{SES} \bullet BLACK}$  is significant, then the resultant graph would reflect that religiosity increases as SES decreases, but this effect would be seen differently between Blacks and Whites. The slope would be steeper for Blacks than it is for Whites, suggesting that Frazier’s thesis was correct.

The third possibility is that if  $b_{X_{RACE}}$  is significant and the  $b_{X_{SES} \bullet BLACK}$  is significant as well, then the resultant graph would reflect that religiosity increases as SES decreases, but the line slopes of Blacks and Whites would intersect at some time. The slope would be far steeper for Blacks than it would be for Whites, suggesting that Frazier’s thesis was correct and the effect of decreasing SES shows a greater influence on religiosity among Blacks than it does for Whites. Finally, if  $b_{X_{RACE}}$  is insignificant and the  $b_{X_{SES} \bullet BLACK}$  is insignificant as well, then the resultant graph would reflect that religiosity increases as SES decreases, but the lines for Blacks and Whites would be the same. In this case, Frazier’s thesis would be incorrect.

Care must be made in drawing conclusions about religiosity based on religious service attendance. Religiosity and religious service attendance are not necessarily the same concepts. Though in many cases the two variables go together, there are clear examples of how the two are separated. For example, a highly spiritual or “religious” person may demonstrate the factors that relate to religiosity (i.e. belief in God, frequent prayer, devotional readings, and volunteerism) but for any number of reasons may not attend church or religious services on a regular basis. And conversely, one who frequently attends church or religious services may not demonstrate

traditional religiosity. It is possible that high-SES African Americans remain religious but they drop out of the Church. Whites, on the other hand, may lose their religious zeal, but stay in the Church because of the social status it can provide.

#### VARIABLES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Appendix A shows the GSS questions that were used for this project. I chose to look for questions that were asked in the years 1972, 1980, 1988, 1996, 2004, and 2010. The only exception was the question that relates to political views of the respondents, which was not asked in the 1972 survey but was asked in the subsequent years.

#### RECODING OF VARIABLES

The dependent variable is religious service attendance. In the regression analyses each constant is the value for the average respondent by race, depending upon which is the referent category. In the first regression analyses, Black is the referent category. The outcomes are given on a range from 0 to 4 with the following interpretation: 0=Never; 1=Seldom (less than once a year to several times a year); 2=About Monthly (once a month to two or three times a month); 3=About Weekly (nearly every week to every week); and 4 (more than once a week).

Fundamentalism was recoded in a dichotomous relationship, with respondents being classified as Fundamentalist (Yes=1) or not (No=0). Marital status was recoded to classify respondents as married (Yes=1) or not married (No=0). Sex was recoded into the male variable (Male=1, Female=0). Occupational Prestige and Political Views remained unchanged as they are continuous variables. Occupational Prestige ranges from 12 to 82 and Political Views ranges from 1 (Extremely Liberal) to 7 (Extremely Conservative). Income is taken as a continuous variable that does not need recoding, but it must be noted that income for this project accounts for *family* or *household* income and not *individual* income.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I deleted some variables that might be misleading or insignificant to the study. For example, initially I included the question “What specific denomination is that, if any?” and the corresponding variable *denom* in an effort to discern any difference in Protestant denominations. Instead, I chose to use the variable *fund* to address the respondents’ fundamentalism or liberalism in religion. Given that this project’s focus is on race and income, there is no reason to suspect that denominational differences alone influence income. Additionally, there is no reason to suspect that on being Baptist might influence respondents’ income any more than choosing to be Methodist would.

There are, however, clear distinctions between denominations and income, but this may be the result of other mediating effects. For example, the Church of God in Christ denomination has demonstrated a negative feeling toward education over the past several decades (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). Research clearly supports the claim that those who are highly educated tend to have better paying jobs and ultimately higher incomes. Thus, we can deduce that one’s lack of economic prosperity is not the direct result of being affiliated with the Church of God in Christ denomination per se; rather this is the result of not having an extensive education or being affiliated with a denomination that does not advocate for education as some other denominations might.

As mentioned above I used the *fund* variable to avoid having to include and recode the *denom* variable. If necessary, however, the denomination variable could have been recoded to group denominations into simpler categories; however, this may be problematic on several levels. First, there are many variations and strands within denominations. Take the the Baptist denomination for example. A strong similarity exists between National Baptist Convention of

America and National Baptist Convention USA, and this similarity is strong enough to group the two together. One main similarity is that both groups are predominantly African American in constitution. The denomination of Southern Baptist, on the other hand, is usually synonymous with Whites. Many of the differences are subtle, varying by ethnicity and race. Some differ by philosophy, though this is probably less significant from theological or doctrinal differences (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990).

Methodists can be grouped by theology but not by polity. For example, the United Methodists are more laity-led congregations and the African Methodist Episcopal and the Christian Methodist Episcopal congregations are more pastoral-led (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). The Other category is not sufficient for generalizing all of the other denominations. For example, Pentecostalism and Holiness take on many forms. Doctrinal differences and rituals vary even among churches with seemingly the same or similar affiliations.

The Non-Denominational category is further misleading, as “non-denomination” generally refers to the fact that congregants prefer to not be limited or locked into a traditional denominational affiliation. But even non-denominational congregations create doctrine from some sources. Even if non-denominational congregations have no fixed affiliation with any long-standing traditional Christian denominations, sometimes their doctrine is derived from a combination of doctrines. Thus, there they are not “non-denominational” but more “multi-denominational” in their doctrinal application and interpretations.

For this project, I recoded the data to include four religious categories: Protestants, Catholics, Jewish, and No Religious Affiliation (None). Admittedly this approach could raise some questions and criticisms. GSS data originally included nearly thirteen different categories. The problem was that many of these categories did not have sufficient enough respondents to

offer an analysis. Therefore, all of the religious responses that did not have enough responses were grouped in the None category. Another issue with this is that it includes individuals who may or may not have any similarities in religious practices, even as far as having no religious practices at all.

## CHAPTER 4—PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### ONE-WAY ANOVA FOR BIVARIATE MEANS OF RELIGIOUS SERVICE ATTENDANCE

One of the initial questions of this project was whether there is a distinction in the religious service attendance or a discernible difference in religiosity between wealthy Black Americans and poorer Black Americans. Frazier argued that as African American wealth increased there would be a marked difference in their participation in traditional Black institutions, one of which being the Black Church. Since most African Americans who participate in religion do so in traditional, predominantly African American contexts and since most African Americans who are religious are Christians (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990), it stands to reason that most Black religiosity would be related to Black church attendance. Therefore, for Frazier’s claim to be correct, one might expect that as Black wealth increases religiosity in the form of religious service attendance should decrease.

**Table 1: Bivariate Means of Religious Service Attendance For Blacks Compared Whites and Other Races**

	<i>1972</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2010</i>
<b><i>Black</i></b>	2.12* <sup>a</sup>	2.04* <sup>a</sup>	1.83* <sup>b</sup>	1.96* <sup>ab</sup>	2.20* <sup>ab</sup>	1.96* <sup>ab</sup>
<b><i>White</i></b>	1.92	1.79	1.74	1.65	1.65	1.52
<b><i>Other Race</i></b>	N/A	N/A	1.72	1.62	1.73	1.54
N	1600	1461	1478	2823	2801	2036

\* p<0.05

<sup>a</sup> p<0.05 Statistically significant compared to White

<sup>b</sup> p<0.05 Statistically significant compared to Other Race

Note: In the years 1972 and 1980 the sample sizes for Other Races were too small to draw analyses.

One-Way ANOVAs were run to test the influence of income on religious service attendance by race. Table 1 gives the following results for the average church attendance in 1972: Black = 2.12 and White = 1.92. In a clear comparison, when no other factors are

considered, on average Black religious service attendance was higher than White religious service attendance in 1972. In real world interpretation this means that on average Whites attended religious services a little less than once a month and Blacks attended religious services a little more than once a month. Further, Black religious service attendance alone was statistically significant and also statistically significant when compared to White religious service attendance. This trend holds the same for 1980 when Black religious service attendance dropped slightly to 2.04 and White religious service attendance dropped to 1.79.

In 1988 Other Race was factored into the comparison. All three values were noticeably close to one another. In fact, of all the years tested, this was the closest in terms of outcomes. Though Black religious service attendance (1.83) was statistically significant by itself, it was not statistically significant when compared to either Whites (1.74) or Other Races (1.72).

In 1996 the religious service attendance of Blacks increased to 1.96 (a little less than once a month) and White and Other Races both decreased and were about the same at 1.65 and 1.62, respectively. The value for Black religious service attendance was statistically significant, and statistically significant when compared to both Whites and Other Races. In 2004, the outcome for Blacks (2.20) showed a noticeable increase in religious service attendance from 1996. Whites remained the same and Other Races showed a slight increase in religious service attendance. On average Blacks attended more than once a month, while on average Whites and Other Races attended several times a year. The value for Blacks was statistically significant, and statistically significant when compared to both Whites and Other Races.

In 2010, the outcome for Blacks (1.96) is interpreted to mean that on average Blacks attended religious services a little less than once a month. White (1.52) and Other Races (1.54) did not attend quite as often, which is interpreted as attending several times a year. The value for

Blacks was statistically significant, and again was statistically significant when compared to both Whites and Other Races. Though Black religious service attendance dropped from 2004 back to the same value as in 1996, White and Other Race religious service attendance dropped as well, but both values dropped below their 1996 outcomes.

In a real sense, this was an indirect test of a very small element of Frazier's thesis. The ANOVAs show religious service attendance remains relatively constant, except for a few noticeable rises and drops. The lowest value for Blacks (1.83) occurs in 1988 and the lowest values for both Whites (1.52) and Other Races (1.54) occur in 2010. Also of note is that the lowest value for Black religious service attendance (1.83 in 1988) is higher than all of the values for White and Other Race religious service attendance, except for White (1.92) in 1972.

#### REGRESSION ANALYSES

Each of the tables presented below reflect the SPSS output for each year and for all three racial categories (Black, White, Other Race) in three different models: (1) a model with religious service attendance as the dependent variable and race and family income as the independent variables; (2) a model with religious service attendance as the dependent variable and race and family income as the independent variables along with the other control variables relevant to religious service attendance; (3) a model with religious service attendance as the dependent variable and race and family income as the independent variables along with the other control variables relevant to religious service attendance, as well as the interaction effect between race and religious service attendance. The Adjusted R-Squared and F-values are presented as footnotes of each table. The ANOVA and the regressions have different sample sizes because the SPSS uses list-wise deletion and removes respondents who do not apply to each category;

therefore the regressions have smaller sample sizes than the ANOVAs. Significance is easier to attain when the sample size is larger.

In the first set of regression analyses Blacks were the referent category; therefore White and Other Race are listed in the analyses. Appendix B contains the entirety of regression results run for Whites and Other Races. Since this project focuses particularly on African Americans, in this chapter I only present the data for African Americans as the reference group.

**Table 2: 1972— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	2.095 ***	1.211 ***	1.355 ***
White	-0.120	-0.191 *	-0.404 **
Other Race	-0.406	-0.685	-3.028
Family Income	-1.442E-006	-8.681E-007	-1.107E-005 *
Age		0.011 ***	0.011 ***
Education		0.025 *	0.027 **
Male		-0.296 ***	-0.290 ***
Political Views		N/A	N/A
Married		0.186 **	0.204 **
Catholic		0.636 ***	0.639 ***
Jewish		-0.862 ***	-0.870 ***
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.254 ***	-1.248 ***
South		0.193 **	0.197 **
Occupational Prestige		0.000	-0.001
Fundamentalism		0.203 **	0.192 **
White*Family Income			1.091E-005
Other Race*Family Income			0.000
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.000	0.190	0.192
F	0.718	15.308	13.567
N	796	796	796

\* p ≤ 0.10

\*\* p = 0.01-0.05

\*\*\* p ≥ 0.001

Note the results from Table 2 shown above. For the year 1972, the constant was Black religious service attendance and this value was statistically significant in all three models. In

Model 2 age, gender, Catholic, Jewish, and No Religious Affiliation were highly statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance; marital status, region of the country, and Fundamentalism were all moderately statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance; and White (when compared to Blacks) and education were only statistically significant when using liberal levels of significance. In Model 3 these patterns remain the exact same except for a higher significance for White and education. Family income only became slightly significant when using liberal levels of significance ( $p \leq 0.10$ ).

**Table 3: 1980— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
Constant	2.098	***	0.665	**	0.830	***
White	-0.351	**	-0.273	**	-0.465	***
Other Race	0.099		0.091		0.296	
Family Income	7.916E-008		-2.342E-007		-7.827E-006	
Age			0.010	***	0.011	***
Education			0.037	**	0.037	**
Male			-0.274	***	-0.274	***
Political Views			0.053	*	0.047	
Married			0.150	*	0.151	*
Catholic			0.472	***	0.472	***
Jewish			-0.572	**	-0.601	**
No Religious Affiliation (None)			-1.136	***	-1.142	***
South			0.185	*	0.179	*
Occupational Prestige			0.002		0.003	
Fundamentalism			0.352	***	0.351	***
White*Family Income					8.459E-006	*
Other Race*Family Income					-2.517E-006	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.006		0.186		0.188	
F	2.411		13.364		11.962	
N	760		760		760	

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

For the year 1980, the constant of Black religious service attendance was statistically significant in all three models (though in Model 2 it was only moderately significant). White was moderately significant in the first two models, but was highly significant in Model 3. In Model 2 age, gender, Catholic, No Religious Affiliation, and Fundamentalism were highly statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. Education and Jewish were moderately statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. Political views, marital status, and region of the country of the respondent were only statistically significant when using liberal levels of significance. In Model 3 these patterns remain the exact same except for the fact that political views became statistically insignificant and the White\*Family Income interaction only became slightly significant, when using liberal levels of significance ( $p \leq 0.10$ ).

**Table 4: 1988— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	1.749 ***	0.351	0.403
White	-0.135	-0.223 *	-0.270
Other Race	-0.351	-0.017	-0.522
Family Income	2.014E-006	-1.836E-006	-3.888E-006
Age		0.009 ***	0.009 ***
Education		0.063 ***	0.062 ***
Male		-0.175 **	-0.179 **
Political Views		0.044	0.047
Married		0.293 ***	0.291 ***
Catholic		0.127	0.124
Jewish		-0.648 ***	-0.647 **
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.194 ***	-1.197 ***
South		0.194 **	0.188 **
Occupational Prestige		0.002	0.002
Fundamentalism		0.167	0.162
White*Family Income			2.088E-006
Other Race*Family Income			1.666E-005
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.000	0.157	0.157

F	0.902	11.099	9.782
N	758	758	758

- \*  $p \leq 0.10$
- \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$
- \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

In 1988, the constant of Black religious service attendance was statistically significant only in Model 1 (though it was highly significant). White was only significant when using liberal levels of significance in Model 2. In Model 2 age, education, marital status, Jewish, and No Religious Affiliation were highly statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. Gender and region of the country were both moderately statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. In Model 3 these patterns remain the exact same, except for the fact that Jewish drops in level of significance.

**Table 5: 1996— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
Constant	1.934	***	0.652	**	0.653	**
White	-0.475	***	-0.421	***	-0.502	***
Other Race	-0.163		-0.067		0.113	
Family Income	1.622E-006		-4.730E-007		-2.347E-006	
Age			0.005	*	0.005	*
Education			0.036	**	0.037	**
Male			-0.230	***	-0.228	***
Political Views			0.124	***	0.124	***
Married			0.125		0.126	
Catholic			0.244	**	0.245	**
Jewish			-0.280		-0.292	
No Religious Affiliation (None)			-1.005	***	-0.981	***
South			-0.001		-0.005	
Occupational Prestige			0.003		0.004	
Fundamentalism			0.339	***	0.342	***
White*Family Income					2.088E-006	
Other Race*Family Income					-6.296E-006	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.022		0.206		0.207	

F	6.038	13.415	11.905
N	669	669	669

- \*  $p \leq 0.10$
- \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$
- \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

In 1996, the constant of Black religious service attendance was highly statistically significant only in Model 1 and moderately statistically significant in the other two models. White was highly significant in all three models. In Model 2 gender, political views, No Religious Affiliation, and Fundamentalism were highly statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. Education and Catholic were both moderately statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. Age was only statistically significant when using liberal levels of significance. In Model 3 these patterns remain the exact same.

**Table 6: 2004— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	2.111 ***	0.964 **	0.910 **
White	-0.857 ***	-0.776 ***	-0.656 ***
Other Race	-0.370	-0.314	-0.362
Family Income	2.466E-006	2.065E-007	-3.407E-006
Age		0.006	0.006
Education		0.032	0.031
Male		-0.216 **	-0.213 *
Political Views		0.090 **	0.088 **
Married		0.340 ***	0.341 ***
Catholic		0.210	0.210
Jewish		-0.316	-0.308
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-0.894 ***	-0.895 ***
South		-0.022	-0.018
Occupational Prestige		0.001	0.000
Fundamentalism		0.624 ***	0.616 ***
White*Family Income			-3.832E-006
Other Race*Family Income			5.951E-008
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.074	0.314	0.312

F	9.828	11.788	10.373
N	331	331	331

- \*  $p \leq 0.10$
- \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$
- \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

In 2004, the constant of Black religious service attendance was highly statistically significant only in Model 1 and moderately statistically significant in the other two models. White was highly significant in all three models. In Model 2 marital status, No Religious Affiliation, and Fundamentalism were highly statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. Gender and political views were both moderately statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. In Model 3 these patterns remain the exact same except the value for gender dropped and made it statistically significant only when using liberal levels of significance.

**Table 7: 2010— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Constant	1.613 ***	1.012 ***	0.897 ***
White	-0.259 **	-0.258 **	-0.156
Other Race	-0.088	-0.002	0.255
Family Income	1.426E-006	1.439E-006	2.940E-006
Age		0.004	0.004
Education		0.032 **	0.033 **
Male		-0.089	-0.088
Political Views		0.053 *	0.052 *
Married		0.365 ***	0.354 ***
Catholic		-0.096	-0.104
Jewish		-0.423 *	-0.411 *
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.180 ***	-1.187 ***
South		0.202 *	0.213 *
Occupational Prestige		0.000	0.000
Fundamentalism		0.071	0.065
White*Family Income			-4.179E-006
Other Race*Family Income			-9.932E-006

Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.219	0.220
F	1.750	15.599	13.841
N	729	729	729

- \*  $p \leq 0.10$
- \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$
- \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

In 2010, the constant of Black religious service attendance was statistically significant in all three models. White was only moderately significant in the first two models and was not statistically significant in Model 3. In Model 2 marital status and No Religious Affiliation were highly statistically significant indicators of religious service attendance. Education was a moderately statistically significant indicator of religious service attendance. Political views, Jewish, and region of the country were only statistically significant when using liberal levels of significance. In Model 3 these patterns remain the exact same.

Positive values for coefficients mean that the variable is positively correlated with religious service attendance. In other words, as the value for that factor increases so does the frequency of religious service attendance. Negative values for coefficients mean that the variable is inversely correlated with religious service attendance. Many factors influence religious service attendance, but these factors are so small that they are statistically insignificant to mention.

## **CHAPTER 5—ANALYSIS OF DATA**

In multivariate regression analysis the omitted category is the referent. Everything in the analysis is compared back to that particular variable. Whites and Other Races are being compared to Blacks. So if the coefficient is negative for Whites, it means that Whites attend religious services less often than Blacks (or more often if the coefficient is positive). The same principle applies for Other Races. The omission of Blacks in multivariate regression outputs indicates that this is the category to which Whites and Other Races are to be compared.

A constant in regression is represented when all of the independent variables equal to zero or equal to their centered mean. The constant is for Black religious service attendance. The only way that can happen is if the respondent is Black. If the respondent is White, that individual will have a value of 1 and all of the other independent variables would not equal zero. If the respondent is Other Race that individual will have a value of 1 and all of the other independent variables would not equal zero (Elliot and Woodward, 2006: 101).

The regression analyses show that Black religious service attendance is truly only statistically related to the following variables: age, education, gender, political views, marital status, Catholics, Jewish, No Religious Affiliation, region of the country of the respondent, and Fundamentalism. What is also important to note is that over the years of this study none of these variables are consistently, statistically significant indicators of Black religious service attendance.

For the purpose of having a deeper and more balanced discussion, one could consider the outcomes if Whites as the dominant group in American society were the referent and multivariate regression analyses were run.<sup>4</sup> Since this project focuses primarily on Blacks and

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<sup>4</sup> The term “dominant group” refers not to the size of the group in terms of numbers but to the group’s relative power and privilege (Henslin, 2011).

testing E. Franklin Frazier's theory, it seems logical that Blacks would be the referent group. Critics, however, might question the statistical results if Blacks were not the reference group but if Whites or Other Races were; therefore the same analyses were run with Blacks, Whites, and Other Races all changing positions and being the reference group. These tables are presented in Appendix B. Though this is basic statistical analysis, performing multiple regression analyses in this manner might suppress any further criticism as to why Blacks were chosen to be the referent or why Blacks are not visible in the models presented in Chapter 4. In reality, omitting the Black category from the regression analyses is not "hiding" or "suppressing" them as a group; in fact, it is making them the most important part of the equation as the reference category.

#### EVALUATION OF HYPOTHESES

In Chapter 1 I hypothesized that age, gender, race, and income (among other variables) would be related to religious service attendance. The initial analysis held Blacks as the reference group. Age, gender, and race were the control variables while education and occupation (in this case the variable is occupational prestige) were designed to be rough indicators of the independent variable; the frequency of religious service attendance is the dependent variable. I predicted that female, older, and less economically privileged respondents would have increased attendance. In other words, I hypothesized that there would be marked difference between older and younger respondents, male and female respondents, educated and less educated respondents, and respondents of different income levels.

The initial non-directional hypothesis was as follows: there is a relationship between religious service attendance and income levels; the null hypothesis was simply that there is no relationship between income and religious service attendance. The null hypothesis to be directly tested was contradictory to Frazier's hypothesis. Frazier predicted that Black income and

religiosity would be negatively correlated, and to some degree, the effect would be more pronounced throughout the Black community. Frazier's hypothesis examined the Black community as a whole, but the GSS looks at data on the individual level.

In none of the three regression models for any of the six years was income or the race-income interaction statistically significant in relationship to religious service attendance. Three regression analyses were performed for every eight years beginning with data from 1972 and ending with data from 2010. The interpretation for the results is that in none of these years was family income a significant predictor of religious service attendance. Income has no statistically significant effect on religious service attendance; race, on the other hand, does have at least some effect on it. Black religious service attendance remained statistically significant and fairly constant throughout all of the years of analysis when compared to Whites and Other Races. When it comes to religious service attendance, race is the significant predictor and not family income.

#### BLACK AND WHITE RELIGIOSITY

When the regression analyses were run again with Whites as the referent, the constant for each coefficient is the religious service attendance for the average White respondent. The same was done for Other Races. Appendix B shows the complete results for these same regression analyses. The R-Squared and Adjusted R-Squared values indicate that approximately the same percentage of the model is explained by the control variables and the interaction effects when Whites (or Other Races) are the referent compared to the same values when Blacks are the referent. When Whites (or Other Races) are compared to Blacks the numbers are the exact same, the only difference is the direction of the correlation.

## CHAPTER 6—CONCLUSIONS

The main focus of this project was to investigate whether there is a correlation between wealth and religion when controlling for race. Wealth and socioeconomic status are similar concepts and the main variable used in the GSS to measure these two is income; however, one should take note of the fact that the GSS makes two distinctions in the income variable: *respondent's* income and *family* income. And this is not a trivial difference. While the principle idea of this project focuses on individual-level data, any reliable sociological study cannot ignore the life experiences of the individual respondents. Overall family or household income may offer a greater understanding of wealth and socioeconomic status because some individuals may become middle class or move to a higher socioeconomic status simply because they are part of families that have two or more incomes. This is especially important when considering the effect of gender. The status of women has undergone some major changes between the time of the first data collection of the GSS in 1972 and the most recent in 2010. More women work today than in 1972. And since that second income may be the deciding factor in whether one moves to a different class status, the overall family or household income should be considered over the individual income.

### LIMITATIONS OF GSS DATA

Since the GSS treats racial categories as if they are mutually exclusive, one must note that the term “Black” may imply that all individuals of African ancestry have similar life experiences; however, the review of the literature in Chapter 2 reflects the fact that there are distinct differences in religious practices even among those of African descent. That is the reason why a variable such as religious affiliation is used to separate Black Protestants, Black Jews, Black Catholics, and Blacks who do not identify with any of these major factions.

Location also plays a factor in the experiences of respondents. For example, African Americans from the United States and African Americans from other parts of the Americas, particularly Central America, have differing levels of religiosity and different religious traditions. In some cases a valid measure of religious participation cannot be attained because the sample size is just too small.

Also, literally speaking, “Black” is a subjective term that is not clearly defined. Many Blacks in America are not exclusively of African descent. Researchers should be mindful of racial heritage in analyses. The GSS asks respondents to identify their own racial category, but individuals who are clearly biracial or multi-ethnic must also be considered. Racial characteristics are one thing; ethnic practices and behaviors may be something altogether different. As Omi and Winant (1994) clearly pointed out, there is a distinction between the language of race and the language of ethnicity.

Another major problem is the necessary recoding of the GSS data. For example, in religious categorization, the term “None” is used to include those who do not claim a religious affiliation as well as those who are undecided. Even more misleading is that this designation includes those respondents who are aligned with a particular religious persuasion, but some categories do not have a large enough sample to do a reflective analysis. Grouping unlike factions together for any reason can cause data to become skewed and the interpretation of the data to be misleading.

#### INTERPRETATION OF DATA AND APPLICATION OF FRAZIER’S THEORY

Frazier argued that as Blacks prospered economically they would continuously distance themselves from traditional Black institutions, including the Church and organized religion. The results from the regression analyses offer, at least on the surface, enough evidence to deny a

portion of Frazier's claim that there is an inverse relationship between economic prosperity and religious service attendance among Blacks. From the data alone one could seriously question Frazier's theory.

In his defense, Frazier's argument was far more comprehensive than just looking at religious service attendance. Frequently middle class Blacks who desire to distance themselves from the masses of the Black community and Black religious traditions still attend church, but do so in within the context of predominantly White denominations (Frazier, 1957; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). What one can conclude from the ANOVAs and the regression analyses is that there is a consistent difference in church attendance between Blacks and Whites over recent decades. When it comes to religious service attendance, race is the determining factor and not income.

#### RELIGION AS SOCIAL CAPITAL

Charles Murray (2012: 200-202) asserts that the major influence of religion on social capital should not be underestimated. He argues that religion is one of the key sources for social capital, claiming that the individuals who are able to generate social capital through their places of worship are not necessarily "believers" of every theological tenet of their faith. Some may be and some may not be. But the point is that these individuals who attend worship services regularly are often times the ones who have prominent positions in the church and the community (Murray, 2012: 207).

Caution must be used when analyzing individual-level, self-reported data. From the beginning of the twentieth century through the dawn of World War II, church membership and attendance simply paralleled population growth. At least the data results for this project appear to support this fact. However, attendance actually declined during that particular time period.

On the other hand, the number of those claiming membership remained high, with three-quarters of Americans reporting membership in a church or synagogue, while actual attendance was much lower. In 1940, only thirty-seven percent of respondents said they attended worship services the previous week. This would suggest that while seventy five percent of Americans claimed membership, only approximately half of those interviewed actually attended church the previous week (Murray, 2012: 202). The point here is that individuals' perceptions of their own religiosity in terms of church attendance alone may not actually parallel their private devotional practices or inner beliefs.

#### SECULARIZATION

Murray's analysis of secularization focuses solely on Whites. Since 1960 Whites as a whole have become more secular across the board. This project was designed to test the influence of income on religious service attendance while controlling for race. Controlling for race is important because Whites and Blacks demonstrate differing levels of religious service attendance and sometimes different expressions of religiosity. Therefore, Murray's analysis is useful for understanding *American* religiosity (in a broad, general sense), but it does little to help in the discussion of *Black* religiosity. That is not to say that Blacks or Other Races do not use religion as social capital, but Murray's data only supports a claim to be made about Whites.

Utilizing religious service attendance as the independent variable as opposed to the dependent variable may offer a different perspective into the role of religion in American life. For example, religiosity (which is often correlated with religious service attendance) has been strongly and positively correlated with satisfaction of life, self-esteem, decreased levels of depression, and less frequency of substance abuse. Additionally, individuals who attend church

regularly and credit religion's importance in their lives generally have longer life expectancies, less disability with increased age, and more stable marriages (Murray, 2012: 201).

Murray offers a subtle insight to understanding and interpreting the church attendance (as is asked in the data set) variable in the GSS. Church membership and attendance started to rise and continued throughout the 1950s. Membership climaxed during the mid-1960s; attendance climaxed around 1963. When the GSS came along and data was first collected in 1972, American church membership and attendance were already on the decline (Murray, 2012: 202).

The term "secular", according to Murray (2012: 202), represents individuals who forthrightly answer "none" to the question about their religious preference. Among Whites ages 30-49, the percentage of those considered secular has continued to rise. In 1972 the number was four percent; in 1980 it had risen to ten percent; and by 2010 it had more than doubled to twenty-one percent. This may reflect the fact that Americans no longer feel compelled to actually be "religious" or they no longer desire to be pretentious about their faith for the benefit of others. Of course one could argue that those who answer "none" may be those who do not have a preference or who choose not to participate in organized religion; however, such a distinction does not necessarily disqualify those same individuals from being spiritual in their private devotion. For one to be categorized as secular means a lot more than just simply not being religious.

When measuring religiosity, there is a measure of religious behavior and religious beliefs. The former is a superficial measure of one's religiosity. By looking at religious behavior one can examine such acts as church attendance, reading of the Scriptures, tithing and giving, and praying. A lot of people engage in these behaviors but may also have lower levels of belief. So in order to understand spirituality and religiosity from the perspective of one's beliefs, the

faithful researcher must not only examine this from the sociological angle but also from anthropological and theological angles as well.

It may be that religiosity and church attendance (which are two different analyses) produce similar outcomes. Quite possibly individuals who think that they are “religious” feel the need to go to church or to participate in religiously-centered activities and organizations in order to portray that image to themselves and to the larger society; and individuals who “go to church” on a regular basis may think that is enough to consider themselves religious and to demonstrate to others that they are religious. In other words, the social and the psychological effects of religiosity influence one another. If one internalizes that he or she is religious, they may feel more compelled to do “religious” things in and outside of the group dynamic, including church attendance, volunteerism, and even private praying and religious reading. Regardless of what the motivation is, it seems clear that religion does have a social function and group inclusion provides some level of social progress.

Religion has a social function and produces social capital; however, church attendance is far more influential than just being religious alone. While privatized religion and individual spiritual devotion may be morally compelling and psychologically fulfilling, it does not produce the same levels of social capital. And individuals who “surf” from church to church may still be religious even though they are not committed to a particular community of believers. Not having group involvement can hinder one’s social progress. Because these individuals are not beneficiaries of membership they have limited social capital. Therefore, they may “believe” but the fact that they do not “belong” hurts them in the social realm (Putnam, 2000: 74). Robert Putnam (2000: 66) put it very succinctly:

As a rough rule of thumb, our evidence shows, nearly half of all associational memberships in America are church related, half of all personal philanthropy is

religious in character, and half of all volunteering occurs in a religious context. So how involved we are in religion today matters a lot for America's social capital.

Putnam (2000: 66, 67) further adds:

Religious worshipers and people who say that religion is very important them are much more likely than other people to visit friends, to entertain at home, to attend club meetings, and to belong to sports groups; professional and academic societies; school service groups; youth groups; service clubs; hobby and garden clubs; literary, art, discussion, and study groups; school fraternities and sororities; farm organizations; political clubs; nationality groups; and other miscellaneous groups.

Thus, being religious or at least involved in the corporate religious experience opens certain avenues for participants.

Murray (2012: 203, 204) points out that many Americans feel that "they are supposed to be religious, and so they tend to tell interviewers that they profess a religion even if they haven't attended a worship service for years." In practical terms, respondents who attended religious services once a year are as little involved as those who are considered secular or who readily admit to having no religious affiliation. So the label "secular" can be broadened to not only include those who admit to having no religious affiliation but also those whose practices do not convincingly demonstrate a conviction or belief.

As mentioned above, Du Bois noted that the Church was "the center of religious and political activity" and it became the center of social life (Wortham, 2005: 436). However, if one regularly attends church, then he or she may interpret (or misinterpret) their own religiosity, as was the case with this nation's founders who "bordered on hypocrisy", and though they "went to church", few of them were sincere in what they practiced (Murray, 2012: 200).

Religiosity and religion are not quite the same concepts. The former may simultaneously address individuality and spirituality, while the latter clearly has a social function. Religion and

its effects must be contextualized. Consider the comparison of religion in Europe and the United States. Europe has become secularized. Relative to their counterparts in the United States, churches in Europe are empty. In an international survey of religious attendance conducted 1998-99, including Scandinavia, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain, regular church attendance ranged from two percent in Denmark to fourteen percent in Great Britain. Compare this to thirty-two percent in the United States. America is still the leader in church attendance when compared to many other Western nations; it is just not as religious as it once was (Murray, 2012: 204, 205).

The disappearance of religion in Europe may be a consequence of an economically secure state. In the past, as individuals such as Karl Marx suggested, religion may have been a way to cope with life and deal with anxiety and misery. If and when these factors are nonexistent, the need for religion passes away as a result. On the other hand, religion is still very active and prevalent in the United States. Secularization has occurred primarily in advanced welfare states, as demonstrated in European countries (Murray, 2006: 85, 86).

The independent variable in this project was income and the aim here was to determine whether increased income had any effect on religious service attendance. From a purely sociological angle, economic factors influence much of individuals' life chances, experiences, and perspectives. As many of the paradigms in the field of Africana Studies posit, how one sees the world has a lot to do with their own experiences.

On a global perspective, the economic analysis of Paul Krugman (2009: 181) is both semi-optimistic and far more realistic. He writes:

The world economy is not in depression; it probably won't fall into depression, despite the magnitude of the current crisis (although I wish I was completely sure about that). But while depression itself has not returned, depression economics—the kinds of problems that characterized much of the world economy in the 1930s

but have not been since—has staged a stunning comeback. Fifteen years ago hardly anybody thought that modern nations would be forced to endure bone-crushing recessions for fear of currency speculators, and that major advanced nations would find themselves persistently unable to generate enough spending to keep their workers and factories employed. The world economy has turned out to be a much more dangerous place than we imagined.

It is not beyond the realm of possibility that economic development or economic decline greatly influence individual-level responses, including individuals' perspectives of religion. And ultimately these individuals influence their member institutions. If this is the case, then future research could examine whether church attendance and religiosity in coming decades mimic that of the 1960s and 1970s.

#### REVISITING FRAZIER

Prior to penning *Black Bourgeoisie* Frazier often just simply referenced to the bourgeoisie as the middle class. In 1955 when Frazier wrote “The New Negro Middle Class” (Frazier, 1968) he made it clear that Black middle class status was more about social factors and not simply about their sources of income. But in *Black Bourgeoisie* Frazier (1957) seemed to emphasize economic prosperity, wealth accumulation, and how income leads to bourgeois behavior and ideology.

Frazier (1957; 1968) adamantly contended that Black business was a myth because Blacks had no real financial holdings. Roy Innis (1997) completely disagreed with this notion. He argued that Blacks do have financial power and that Black businesses are necessary for the development of the race. According to Innis, in order for Blacks to have economic freedom they must control every aspect of their financial future.

Manning Marable's claims initially seem to negate Frazier's position that Black business prosperity is a myth, but ultimately reinforces what Frazier posited. Marable admittedly sees Black economic growth and political influence as related. Marable (2011: 38) writes:

The single most influential element within this new black petty bourgeoisie is the black entrepreneur. Although there are fewer than 230,000 black businesses in the United States, black businessmen have always wielded significantly more political power and economic influence than their numbers would indicate.

Marable went on to say that thousands of black grocery store owners, gasoline station proprietors, bankers, black insurance executives, and record company distributors among others have pushed for a segregated economic system that is controlled by Blacks and exists alongside the U.S. capitalist system (Marable, 2011: 38). But unlike the White petty bourgeoisie, the Black middle class has never maintained substantial economic base because Black capitalism has never produced surplus capital (Marable, 2011: 39).

When addressing the notion of respectability, the Black petty bourgeoisie reject the cultural images of the historical South and the blues and instead opt for cultural images which “reject their upwardly mobile aspiration to merge within white civil society” (Marable, 2011: 39). It may be out of a sense of inferiority and self-loathing that the petty bourgeoisie reject their histories and attempt to embrace systems that hate them.

Part of the problem in Black politics is the breakdown in Black leadership. Traditionally the Black Church provided political leaders who challenged the White establishment without the fear of economic sanctions. According to Marable, for a number of reasons, Black ministers resigned their role as advocates for progressive change (Marable, 2011: 40-42). As a result this trickled down to the congregations. Marable argued that Black church members became “absorbed into the conservative structures which they had intended originally to reform from within” (Marable, 2011: 42).

Though his research was unique and, to some degree, enlightening, Frazier’s analyses of the African American community appeared to be divisive. Anthony Platt argued that Frazier

never thought of *Black Bourgeoisie* as a serious, scholarly work; it was more musings and satire (Platt, 2002). His criticism of the Black intellectuals and Black leaders did little in the way to enhance and fortify the Black community, the very criticism that Frazier had of Black middle class intellectuals (Frazier, 1957: 235). In fact, *Black Bourgeoisie* may have been more hurtful than helpful. Frazier's constant criticism (Frazier, 1957; Frazier and Lincoln, 1964 [1974]) of the Black minister, community leaders, and intellectuals only offers a negative outlook on education and social prosperity and creates a schism within the race. And though *Black Bourgeoisie* was a ground-breaking in its time and still remains a seminal work for Africana scholars and sociologists, Frazier's perspective seems to offer little positive feedback to Black intellectual prosperity and economic growth.

The changing role of the African American middle class was a priority for Frazier throughout his career. Frazier's class discussions, however, focused more on political concerns and less on economic concerns. And even his political concerns appeared to overgeneralize. He seemingly consolidated all middle class Blacks into a schizophrenic community: one that simultaneously boasted of Black pride while also turning their backs on the rest of African American culture (Platt, 1991: 145-147). In reference to middle class Blacks' religious behavior, Frazier (1968: 264, 265) wrote:

The attempt of the middle class Negro to escape from the realities of his position in American life is really an attempt to escape from himself. This is shown partly in the case of the religious life of the middle class. At one time the Negro middle class was identified with the Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and, in a few cases, the Catholic churches. When one acquired middle class status it often meant a change from membership in the Baptist or Methodist denomination to affiliation with one of the above churches. But today, the new middle class has lost much of its religion and is constantly seeking some new religious or quasi-religious affiliation. But since the middle class has no philosophy of life and can only draw upon scraps of a religious tradition which it has rejected, it seeks solutions of life's problems in spiritualism and other forms of superstition. In fact, the world has become a world of chance for the middle class.

The GSS findings from the regression analyses performed during this research project suggest that income has never had any statistically significant effect on religious service attendance, at least not since 1972. The initial aim of this project was to test to prove or disprove Frazier's claim in *Black Bourgeoisie*. While the results may not have clearly and conclusively provided the results initially expected, there are unintended benefits to the results. At least a portion of Frazier's argument comes into question. Also, since race is a significant predictor of religious service attendance and family income is not, then these findings support Derrick Bell's (1992) claim in *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* that race is still a significant factor in American society.

Maybe the modern critique of Frazier is unfair on at least three levels. First, Frazier had no idea of the impact that his writing would have or the magnitude to which the Black bourgeois class would develop. In fact, the current size of the Black bourgeois class is several times as large as it was at the time Frazier published *Black Bourgeoisie*. Frazier's review of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* and his preoccupation with Black "social pathology" may have tainted his objectivity and moved his writing to a more explanatory focus and less of an empowerment focus. Thus, Frazier's writing of *Black Bourgeoisie* and many of his other works portray the middle class Black community as more problematic and less promising.

Secondly, as John Bracey (2002) pointed out, *Black Bourgeoisie* was not meant to be a serious sociological work. It is a jeremiad. Maybe it is not Frazier's best sociological work, and maybe it was not meant to be. Quite possibly *Black Bourgeoisie* should serve as a rewarding writing that is designed to keep Blacks focused on what is important and from becoming too bourgeois as social progress is made. Keep in mind that Frazier himself addressed the issue at

the beginning of the book that his conclusions were based on his experiences and observations and were not grounded in sufficient statistical data.

Thirdly, Frazier published *Black Bourgeoisie* in 1957. The first GSS data was not recorded until 1972, which leaves a gap of approximately fifteen years. From a sociological angle, the decade and half between the two publications may have offered some usable data to further the discussion and to draw conclusions either to support or to reject Frazier's theory.

#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In this project I attempted to test a piece of Frazier's theory. This is an original contribution to scholarship because I have not encountered any research that has attempted to statistically test any portion of Frazier's thesis. I believe that this work offers substantive knowledge to both the disciplines of sociology and religion as well as to the field of Africana Studies.

Based on the data derived during this study the conclusion is that race, not income, is the determining factor of religious service attendance. Income, however, does play a significant role in other areas of sociological interest. What Dalton Conley (1999) argued, much like William Wilson (1978), is that class and income are the most significant factors in determining one's life chances. When comparing Blacks and Whites, Conley (1999: 133) asserted that the effects of race are overshadowed by the influence of class and economic resources. Race alone is not a conclusive predictor of educational attainment, because when class is controlled for, Blacks are just as likely as Whites to complete college. When parental assets are taken into account the Black-White wealth gap disappears among young adults, as do the chances of using welfare among the same group, as Wilson (1978) argued.

Conley (1999) concluded that the impact of race depended upon the variable being measured but socioeconomic factors have a much greater effect in predicting outcomes than race. Race may be good for predicting religious service attendance while income and wealth are not; however, income and wealth are good indicators for forecasting and determining the life chances and life experiences of individuals. Therefore, when policies such as the New Deal, No Child Left Behind, and Affirmative Action are enacted, legislators and policy-makers should not be overcome with criticisms about unfair racial treatment, but consider it to be a leveling of social inequality. For example, class-based affirmative action might be far more palatable to the majority of society than race-based or gender-based affirmative action.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Existing literature has established the variables that in some way (directly or indirectly) influence religious service attendance. The interpretation of the data gathered in this project suggests that race, more than any other variable, is a consistent predictor of attendance. In the twenty-first century, it would be innovative to see what impact technology has on religious service attendance and religiosity. This project sought to test a portion of Frazier's theory that emerged in the late 1950s. In all fairness, I attempted to use a cross-section of the GSS data from the earliest available data in 1972 and up to the latest in 2010. One problem with the data collection during this project is that many of the variables that would be considered strong indicators of religiosity were not asked frequent enough throughout the existence of the GSS.

In a constantly evolving technological age it would be interesting to see if religiosity is reflected in watching religious television or worshipping via the internet. Many individuals express a lack of desire to attend worship in traditional settings for a myriad of reasons. One advantage of television and the internet is that they allow individuals to maintain their spiritual

devotion without the hindrances that may deter them from the customary context. On the other hand, such isolation could distract from the development of social capital and ultimately distance practitioners from the social function that religion is intended to have in the first place.

Future research examining the influence of technology on religiosity may be an avenue to examining how socially integrated individuals are who choose to worship in unconventional ways. In a real sense, such practices almost seem contradictory. Religion has a social function and the Church (particularly speaking of Christianity) is a social institution. To embrace and even encourage a separation and isolation from the social influence of the Church is contrary to the very principles of its foundation.

#### RETROSPECTIVE ETHNOGRAPHY

I am unashamedly Christian and proud of my lifetime personal relationship with the Black Church. I grew up in the Church and at the age of twenty I acknowledged my call into the Gospel ministry. My entire life has been spent in the Church, specifically the Black Church; my entire adult life has been focused on preaching and pastoral ministry. As a sociologist and a theologian I am able to evaluate theoretical evidence in light of practical experience. In other words, I can compare and contrast the GSS data alongside my own involvement with the Church.

My own lived experiences validate the results of this project: income seems to have no noticeable bearing on Blacks' church attendance or religiosity. I have encountered the very wealthy as well as the very poor, side by side, seated, singing, and serving in the same congregation. I have not observed a mass of individuals who, for one reason or another, move up or down the social class ladder and become more devoted to or distant from the Church.

Income has little to do with church attendance; it does, however, seem to have some effect on worship behavior. It seems as though individuals who have higher income or who have

reached a certain level on the social class ladder are often times more reserved in how expressive they are in worship. Sometimes these individuals gravitate to join a certain congregation or denomination. Literature supports this (Frazier, 1957; 1968; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Being wealthy does not necessarily stop one from attending corporate worship or make one distant from traditional Black institutions, but being affiliated with certain congregations does reinforce the social capital argument addressed above. It almost seems that when certain individuals reach a middle class status they feel that they need to distance themselves from “low church” and only be associated with “high church” (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990).

Additionally, I have observed that income does wield influence. From my experience, it seems that those parishioners who are wealthier than others tend to be elevated to the power elite, a trend that Charles Murray (2012) also addressed. These individuals are given prominent positions in leadership, are respected, and are influential in the direction that the congregation takes. Their ability to influence others often times has nothing to do with any perceived level of spirituality; rather it is a result of their ability to command the respect of others, whether that respect is deserved or not. Much along the same lines as Murray’s argument, my experience in the Church is that some individuals use the Church as their own personal playground to exploit those who are not as intellectually savvy or financially accomplished as they are, while at the same time using the Church to massage their own egos.

What I have noticed (and such an observation is not limited to the Church) is that money often times changes individuals. It may not change their actions but it can change their attitudes. Quite possibly individuals who have climbed the economic ladder no longer desire to come to church or see a need for organized religion, but for a myriad of reasons they continue to come out of obligation or for opportunity. Their actions may not have changed even though their

attitudes have. This I have seen for years. Granted, most individuals in the Church who are middle class or upper-middle class, who are in leadership roles, and who have any significant tenure in positions are much older than me. With that said I have not been able to watch them or observe any transformation in terms of their social mobility over time. In all fairness, I can only analyze them in their current state without knowing whether economic prosperity has changed their character.

At the beginning of this project I set out to test Frazier's claim about the relationship between Black wealth and Black worship. I emphasize the Black Church specifically because my experience is limited to the African American Christian context. The GSS data from this project allows one to reject the portion of Frazier's claim that asserts Black economic prosperity produces a Black bourgeois class, one that is detached from the masses of the Black community. My own personal experience of more than thirty years in the Black Church further supports the results from the GSS dataset and brings Frazier's claim into question.

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## APPENDIX A

### Questions Used From the General Social Survey (GSS) [Corresponding Variables]

Year	[VAR: YEAR]
Respondent's Age	[VAR: AGE]
Respondent's Education	[VAR: EDUC]
Code Respondent's Sex <i>Recoded to Male [Male =1; Female =0]</i>	[VAR: SEX]
What race do you consider yourself? <i>Recoded to Black, White, Other Race</i>	[VAR: RACE]
Region of Interview <i>Recoded to South [South =1; Other Regions = 0]</i>	[VAR: REGION]
We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal--point 1--to extremely conservative--point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?	[VAR: POLVIEWS]
What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion? <i>Recoded to Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and None</i>	[VAR: RELIG]
Fundamentalism/Liberalism of Respondent's Religion <i>Recoded to Conservatism [Fundamental =1; Non-fundamental =0]</i>	[VAR: FUND]
Prestige in Respondent's Occupation	[VAR: PRESTIGE]
Are you currently—married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married? <i>Recoded to Married [Married =1; Not married = 0]</i>	[VAR: MARITAL]
How often do you attend religious services? (Use Categories as Probes, if Necessary) <i>Recoded [0=Never; 1=Seldom (less than once a year to several times a year); 2=About Monthly (once a month to two or three times a month); 3=About Weekly (nearly every week to every week); and 4 (more than once a week)]</i>	[VAR: ATTEND]
Family income on 1972-2006 surveys in constant dollars (base = 1986)	[VAR: REALINC]
Interaction Effects	

White and Family Income = [VAR: WHITEREALINC]

Other Races and Family Income = [VAR: OTHERRACEREALINC]

Black and Family Income = [VAR: BLACKREALINC]

**APPENDIX B**  
Regression Analyses By Race and Year With Controls and Interactions

**Table 8: 1972— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
Constant	1.975	***	1.020	***	0.951	***
Black	0.120		0.191	*	0.404	**
Other Race	-0.287		-0.494		-2.625	
Family Income	-1.442E-006		-8.681E-007		-1.529E-007	
Age			0.011	***	0.011	***
Education			0.025	*	0.027	**
Male			-0.296	***	-0.290	***
Political Views			N/A		N/A	
Married			0.186	**	0.204	**
Catholic			0.636	***	0.639	***
Jewish			-0.862	***	-0.870	***
No Religious Affiliation (None)			-1.254	***	-1.248	***
South			0.193	**	0.197	**
Occupational Prestige			0.000		-0.001	
Fundamentalism			0.203	**	0.192	**
Black*Family Income					-1.091E-005	
Other Race*Family Income					0.000	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.000		0.190		0.192	
F	0.718		15.308		13.567	
N	796		796		796	

\* p ≤ 0.10  
 \*\* p = 0.01-0.05  
 \*\*\* p ≥ 0.001

**Table 9: 1980— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	1.747 ***	0.393	0.365
Black	0.351 **	0.273 **	0.465 ***
Other Race	0.450	0.364	0.761
Family Income	7.916E-008	-2.342E-007	6.313E-007
Age		0.010 ***	0.011 ***
Education		0.037 **	0.037 **
Male		-0.274 ***	-0.274 ***
Political Views		0.053 *	0.047
Married		0.150 *	0.151 *
Catholic		0.472 ***	0.472 ***
Jewish		-0.572 **	-0.601 **
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.136 ***	-1.142 ***
South		0.185 *	0.179 *
Occupational Prestige		0.002	0.003
Fundamentalism		0.352 ***	0.351 ***
Black*Family Income			-8.459E-006 *
Other Race*Family Income			-1.098E-005
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.006	0.186	0.188
F	2.411	13.364	11.962
N	760	760	760

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 10: 1988— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	1.614 ***	0.129	0.133
Black	0.135	0.223 *	0.270
Other Race	-0.215	0.205	-0.252
Family Income	2.014E-006	-1.836E-006	-1.800E-006
Age		0.009 ***	0.009 ***
Education		0.063 ***	0.062 ***
Male		-0.175 **	-0.179 **
Political Views		0.044	0.047
Married		0.293 ***	0.291 ***
Catholic		0.127	0.124
Jewish		-0.648 ***	-0.647 **
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.194 ***	-1.197 ***
South		0.194 **	0.188 **
Occupational Prestige		0.002	0.002
Fundamentalism		0.167	0.162
Black*Family Income			-2.088E-006
Other Race*Family Income			1.458E-005
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.000	0.157	0.157
F	0.902	11.099	9.782
N	758	758	758

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 11: 1996— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	1.459 ***	0.231	0.151
Black	0.475 ***	0.421 ***	0.502 ***
Other Race	0.312 **	0.354 **	0.615 ***
Family Income	1.622E-006	-4.730E-007	2.578E-007
Age		0.005 *	0.005 *
Education		0.036 **	0.037 **
Male		-0.230 ***	-0.228 ***
Political Views		0.124 ***	0.124 ***
Married		0.125	0.126
Catholic		0.244 **	0.245 **
Jewish		-0.280	-0.292
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.005 ***	-0.981 ***
South		-0.001	-0.005
Occupational Prestige		0.003	0.004
Fundamentalism		0.339 ***	0.342 ***
Black*Family Income			-2.605E-006
Other Race*Family Income			-8.902E-006
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.022	0.206	0.207
F	6.038	13.415	11.905
N	669	669	669

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 12: 2004— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
Constant	1.254	***	0.188		0.254	
Black	0.857	***	0.776	***	0.656	***
Other Race	0.487	**	0.463	***	0.294	
Family Income	2.466E-006	*	2.065E-007		-4.252E-007	
Age			0.006		0.006	
Education			0.032		0.031	
Male			-0.216	**	-0.213	*
Political Views			0.090	**	0.088	**
Married			0.340	***	0.341	***
Catholic			0.210		0.210	
Jewish			-0.316		-0.308	
No Religious Affiliation (None)			-0.894	***	-0.895	***
South			-0.022		-0.018	
Occupational Prestige			0.001		0.000	
Fundamentalism			0.624	***	0.616	***
Black*Family Income					3.832E-006	
Other Race*Family Income					3.891E-006	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.074		0.314		0.312	
F	9.828		11.788		10.373	
N	331		331		331	

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 13: 2010— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Constant	1.354 ***	0.754 **	0.740 **
Black	0.259 **	0.258 **	0.156
Other Race	0.171	0.256 **	0.411 **
Family Income	1.426E-006	-1.439E-006	1.240E-006
Age		0.004	0.004 **
Education		0.032 **	0.033 **
Male		-0.089	-0.088
Political Views		0.053 *	0.052 *
Married		0.365 ***	0.354 ***
Catholic		-0.096	-0.104
Jewish		-0.423 *	-0.411 *
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.180 ***	-1.187 ***
South		0.202 *	0.213 *
Occupational Prestige		0.000	0.000
Fundamentalism		0.071	0.065
Black*Family Income			4.179E-006
Other Race*Family Income			-5.753E-006
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.219	0.220
F	1.750	15.599	13.841
N	729	729	729

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 14: 1972— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	1.689 **	0.526	-1.673
White	0.287	0.494	2.625
Black	0.406	0.685	3.028
Family Income	-1.442E-006	-8.681E-007	0.000
Age		0.011 ***	0.011 ***
Education		0.025 *	0.027 **
Male		-0.296 ***	-0.290 ***
Political Views		N/A	N/A
Married		0.186 **	0.204 **
Catholic		0.636 ***	0.639 ***
Jewish		-0.862 ***	-0.870 ***
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.254 ***	-1.248 ***
South		0.193 **	0.197 **
Occupational Prestige		0.000	-0.001
Fundamentalism		0.203 **	0.192 **
White*Family Income			0.000
Black*Family Income			0.000
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.000	0.190	0.192
F	0.718	15.308	13.567
N	796	796	796

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 15: 1980— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	2.197 ***	0.756	1.127 *
White	-0.450	-0.364	-0.761
Black	-0.099	-0.091	-0.296
Family Income	7.916E-008	-2.342E-007	-1.034E-005
Age		0.010 ***	0.011 ***
Education		0.037 **	0.037 **
Male		-0.274 ***	-0.274 ***
Political Views		0.053 *	0.047
Married		0.150 *	0.151 *
Catholic		0.472 ***	0.472 ***
Jewish		-0.572 **	-0.601 **
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.136 ***	-1.142 ***
South		0.185 *	0.179 *
Occupational Prestige		0.002	0.003
Fundamentalism		0.352 ***	0.351 ***
White*Family Income			1.098E-005
Black*Family Income			2.517E-006
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.006	0.186	0.188
F	2.411	13.364	11.962
N	760	760	760

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 16: 1988— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Constant	1.398 ***	0.334	-0.119
White	0.215	-0.205	0.252
Black	0.351	0.017	0.522
Family Income	2.014E-006	-1.836E-006	1.278E-005
Age		0.009 ***	0.009 ***
Education		0.063 ***	0.062 ***
Male		-0.175 **	-0.179 **
Political Views		0.044	0.047
Married		0.293 ***	0.291 ***
Catholic		0.127	0.124
Jewish		-0.648 ***	-0.647 **
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.194 ***	-1.197 ***
South		0.194 **	0.188 **
Occupational Prestige		0.002	0.002
Fundamentalism		0.167	0.162
White*Family Income			-1.458E-005
Black*Family Income			-1.666E-005
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.000	0.157	0.157
F	0.902	11.099	9.782
N	758	758	758

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 17: 1996— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
Constant	1.771	***	0.585	*	0.766	**
White	-0.312	*	-0.354	**	-0.615	***
Black	0.163		0.067		-0.113	
Family Income	1.622E-006		-4.730E-007		-8.644E-007	
Age			0.005	*	0.005	*
Education			0.036	**	0.037	**
Male			-0.230	***	-0.228	***
Political Views			0.124	***	0.124	***
Married			0.125		0.126	
Catholic			0.244	**	0.245	**
Jewish			-0.280		-0.292	
No Religious Affiliation (None)			-1.005	***	-0.981	***
South			-0.001		-0.005	
Occupational Prestige			0.003		0.004	
Fundamentalism			0.339	***	0.342	***
White*Family Income					8.902E-006	
Black*Family Income					6.296E-006	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.022		0.206		0.207	
F	6.038		13.415		11.905	
N	669		669		669	

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 18: 2004— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
Constant	1.741	***	0.651		0.548	
White	-0.487	**	-0.463	***	-0.294	
Black	0.370		0.314		0.362	
Family Income	2.466E-006	*	2.065E-007		3.466E-006	
Age			0.006		0.006	
Education			0.032		0.031	
Male			-0.216	**	-0.213	*
Political Views			0.090	**	0.088	**
Married			0.340	***	0.341	***
Catholic			0.210		0.210	
Jewish			-0.316		-0.308	
No Religious Affiliation (None)			-0.894	***	-0.895	***
South			-0.022		-0.018	
Occupational Prestige			0.001		0.000	
Fundamentalism			0.624	***	0.616	***
White*Family Income					-3.891E-006	
Black*Family Income					-5.951E-008	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.074		0.314		0.312	
F	9.828		11.788		10.373	
N	331		331		331	

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

**Table 19: 2010— Linear Regression Models of Factors Influencing Religious Service Attendance**

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Constant	1.525 ***	1.010 ***	1.151 ***
White	-0.171	-0.256 **	-0.411 **
Black	0.088	0.002	-0.255
Family Income	1.426E-006	-1.439E-006	-6.992E-006 *
Age		0.004	0.004
Education		0.032 **	0.033 **
Male		-0.089	-0.088
Political Views		0.053 *	0.052 *
Married		0.365 ***	0.354 ***
Catholic		-0.096	-0.104
Jewish		-0.423 *	-0.411 *
No Religious Affiliation (None)		-1.180 ***	-1.187 ***
South		0.202 *	0.213 *
Occupational Prestige		0.000	0.000
Fundamentalism		0.071	0.065
White*Family Income			5.753E-006
Black*Family Income			9.932E-006
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.219	0.220
F	1.750	15.599	13.841
N	729	729	729

\*  $p \leq 0.10$   
 \*\*  $p = 0.01-0.05$   
 \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$