

# Parental Religiosity and Youth Religiosity: Variations by Family Structure

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*Many studies have explored the links between family structure, parental religiosity, and youth religiosity, but results across studies have been inconsistent and have largely ignored new diverse family forms. Using data on 2,320 youth and their parents from the National Study of Youth and Religion, this study focused on whether and why religious transmission from parents to youth varies among diverse family structures. Results suggest that family structure is not directly related to youth religious outcomes, but that the influence of parental religiosity on religious participation and religious salience (but not closeness to God or private religious practices) was weaker for youth raised in stepfamilies, never-married single-parent families, and cohabiting families than for those raised by married biological/adoptive parents. Results also suggest that less effective religious transmission within nontraditional families compared with traditional families is due (at least in part) to less effective religious socialization within these families.*

*Key words:* family; socialization; adolescents/youth.

Research has increasingly focused on the religious lives of adolescents and young adults, exploring the ways in which youth construct their religious identities, the patterns of religiosity they experience during this life stage, and factors that influence these processes (e.g., [Desmond et al. 2010](#); [Petts 2009](#); [Smith and Denton 2005](#); [Smith and Snell 2009](#)). Such studies are especially important because adolescence is a life stage often characterized by religious instability but also one that plays a key role in the development of a religious identity ([Desmond et al. 2010](#); [Petts 2009](#); [Uecker et al. 2007](#)).

The most important source of religious socialization is family. Youth raised in religious families are more likely to be religious than those raised in nonreligious families ([Cornwall 1989](#); [Myers 1996](#); [Smith and Denton 2005](#)). Family structure

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also matters. Studies suggest that youth raised by married biological parents are most likely to be religious (e.g., Day et al. 2009; Myers 1996), but research on specific differences in adolescent religiosity by family structure have been mixed. For example, Myers (1996) finds that youth raised in stepfamilies have lower religiosity than those raised by biological parents, but other studies find a difference only between single- and two-parent families (Petts 2009; Uecker and Ellison 2012) and still others find no direct effect of family structure on youth religiosity (Denton 2012). Research also suggests that the influence of family structure on youth religiosity may vary by religious outcome (Desmond et al. 2010; Uecker and Ellison 2012; Zhai et al. 2007).

Despite advances in our understanding of family religious socialization, previous studies have focused primarily on religious transmission within married, divorced, or remarried families (Uecker and Ellison 2012; Zhai et al. 2007, 2008). Little is known about religious transmission in other family structures. This is an important limitation, as families have become increasingly diverse. Perhaps most notably, rates of cohabitation have increased dramatically since the 1980s; 33 percent of women in their childbearing years ever cohabited in 1987 compared with 60 percent in 2010 (Manning 2013). As a result, most people cohabit at least once in their lives, and the majority of marriages are preceded by cohabitation today (Cherlin 2010; Manning 2013). Due to high divorce rates and increases in out-of-wedlock childbearing, single-parent families have also become more common; 24 percent of children reside in a single-parent family, which is currently the second most common family structure for children (Cherlin 2010; Payne 2013). Thus, it is important to consider whether religious transmission may be different in these family structures.

The current study attempts to provide a more comprehensive examination of the relationships between parental religiosity, family structure, and youth religiosity. Using two waves of data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) and focusing on four religious outcomes and six family types, two research questions are considered. First, does religious transmission from parents to children vary by family structure? Second, what explains these differences? Variations in the consistency of parents' religiosity, level of parental religious socialization, and parent-child relationship quality have been suggested as possible explanations for why youth religiosity may vary by family structure (Bader and Desmond 2006; Myers 1996; Uecker and Ellison 2012; Zhai et al. 2007). The current study reconsiders these explanations.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *Parents' Influence on Youth Religiosity*

Youth religiosity is highly dependent on how much they are exposed to religion by their parents, as parents often serve as the primary source of socialization for their children (Cornwall 1989; Smith and Denton 2005; Stolzenberg et al.

1995). Religious socialization may also be different from other forms of socialization, as youth may feel especially pressured to adhere to their parents' religious beliefs (due to parental guilt, fear of eternal consequences, etc.).

Social learning theory provides insight into parents' roles in the religious socialization process, as this theory suggests that children learn based on observing (and later imitating) role models (Bandura 1977). The processes of observation and imitation also apply to religion, suggesting that youth religiosity is largely influenced by observing and imitating the religious behaviors and attitudes of their parents. Moreover, the spiritual modeling and spiritual capital perspectives build on the framework of social learning theory and provide some additional context for understanding familial religious transmission. The spiritual modeling perspective suggests that youth develop spiritually by modeling the spiritual behavior of important people in their life (King and Mueller 2003). Thus, having a religious parent may lead youth to model their spiritual life after this parent. The spiritual capital perspective suggests that active religious training is important for fostering religious behavior (King and Mueller 2003). That is, youth are more likely to be religious when they are exposed to religious activities by parents.

Although parental religiosity is a strong predictor of youth religiosity, not all families are the same. That is, some family structures may be more conducive to providing spiritual modeling and capital perhaps due to greater acceptance within religious institutions or the presence of two spiritual exemplars as opposed to one (Bandura 1977; Edgell 2006; Wilcox et al. 2004; Zhai et al. 2007). Parental religious socialization may also vary in its influence on specific religious outcomes (i.e., public versus private), although research on these differences has been mixed (Denton 2012; Desmond et al. 2010; Uecker and Ellison 2012; Zhai et al. 2007).

### ***Youth Religiosity and Family Structure***

Previous research suggests that family structure may directly influence youth religiosity, arguing that youth raised by married biological parents are most likely to be religious (e.g., Day et al. 2009; Myers 1996). However, evidence from the literature suggests that this relationship is likely due to lower levels of parental religiosity in nontraditional families (Denton 2012; Uecker and Ellison 2012). Married parents are more religious (on average) than unmarried parents, perhaps due to an emphasis on a traditional family structure within religious institutions (Edgell 2006; Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 1992; Wilcox et al. 2004). In contrast, never married parents, cohabiting parents, and divorced parents (perhaps to a lesser extent) may feel stigmatized by religious institutions due to the belief that sex and childbearing outside of marriage are sinful (Edgell 2006; Thornton et al. 1992; Wilcox et al. 2004). Single parents may also have less time to be religiously engaged, and unmarried fathers especially are less likely to be involved in a religious community (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Petts 2011; Sullivan 2008). Therefore, youth raised in nontraditional families may be less religious than those raised in married families due to being raised by less religious parents.

Although levels of parental religiosity may vary by family structure, the primary goal of this study is to examine whether the influence of parental religiosity on youth religiosity varies by family structure. That is, given similar levels of parental religiosity, is the likelihood of religious transmission from parents to children different across diverse family structures? Thus, it is important to consider why religious transmission may be strongest in married biological families, how divorce (and subsequent family formation either as a single-parent family or stepfamily) may disrupt religious transmission, and how religious transmission may vary in family structures that have not yet been explored in the literature such as never-married single-parent families (including those formed by the disruption of a cohabiting relationship) and cohabiting families. Differences in religious transmission by family structure may be due to variations in the consistency of parental religiosity, effectiveness of religious socialization, and parent–child relationship quality between family structures.

Religious transmission may be strongest in intact, married families for a number of reasons. First, married parents may serve as effective spiritual models to their children. Because these parents are following religious norms regarding family structure and formation, children in these families may be especially likely to adhere to their parents' religious beliefs and practices because they perceive them as being good religious role models (Edgell 2006; King and Mueller 2003; Thornton et al. 1992). According to social learning theory, youth are more likely to imitate role models they view as credible (Bandura 1977). As a result, spiritual modeling (and religious transmission) may be most effective in married, intact families. Second, married parents who share religious beliefs may be better able to provide religious socialization to children by having teachings reinforced by multiple parents (Myers 1996; Regnerus and Uecker 2006). Indeed, receiving a consistent religious message from parents increases youth religiosity (Bader and Desmond 2006). Third, strong parent–child relationships increase the likelihood that youth adopt their parents' religious beliefs (Bao et al. 1999; Myers 1996; Ozorak 1989). Married parents may have more time to be engaged in children's lives than other parents (Amato 1987; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994), increasing the likelihood of religious transmission.

In contrast, divorce may disrupt religious transmission. Divorce may limit parents' ability to provide a consistent religious message. Religious socialization may also be weakened due to one parent (often the father) leaving the household. Youth may have limited interaction with the nonresident parent, reducing the ability of the nonresident parent to serve as a credible religious model (Bandura 1977; King and Mueller 2003). Indeed, the loss of a father's religious socialization after a divorce is associated with lower youth religiosity (Zhai et al. 2007).

Conflict stemming from divorce may also reduce parent–child relationship quality (Booth and Amato 1994), and nonresident parents are often less engaged in children's lives than resident parents (Amato et al. 2009). Thus, religious transmission may lessen following a divorce due to the weakening of parent–child relationships. This may be especially true for youth raised in religious families.

Religious youth and their parents may sanctify family relationships (i.e., view these relationships as having spiritual significance) (Mahoney et al. 2003). Sanctification may lead religious youth to experience feelings of sacred loss if family relationships dissolve and make it difficult for them to maintain a high level of public and private religious activity (Denton 2012; Ellison et al. 2011; Warner et al. 2009).

The influence of divorce on youth religiosity may also depend on subsequent family formation. For example, most research finds no differences in religiosity between youth raised in intact families and stepfamilies (Petts 2009; Regnerus and Uecker 2006; Smith and Denton 2005; Uecker and Ellison 2012). Stepparents may help to provide a consistent religious message to youth if he/she shares religious beliefs with the biological parent (Bader and Desmond 2006). Gaining a stepparent may also help to compensate for spiritual loss following a divorce; if the stepparent is religious, then youth have another spiritual model to look up to and another parent who may provide spiritual capital (King and Mueller 2003). Moreover, youth may view the stepparent as a credible religious model because the stepparent is married to the biological parent, increasing the likelihood of religious transmission (Bandura 1977; King and Mueller 2003). However, stepparents are less likely to be involved parents than biological parents (Coleman et al. 2000; Hofferth and Anderson 2003). As a result, religious transmission may be less effective in stepfamilies due to weaker parent–child relationships, resulting in lower religiosity among youth raised in stepfamilies (Myers 1996).

In contrast to youth raised in stepfamilies, youth raised in single-parent families following a divorce may be more likely to experience sacred loss. These feelings of sacred loss may lead youth to feel angry at God and less likely to adhere to their parent's religious beliefs and practices (Smith and Denton 2005). Although some research suggests that private religious practices do not differ between youth raised by single parents and those raised by two parents (Petts 2009; Uecker and Ellison 2012; Zhai et al. 2007, 2008), other research suggests that sacred loss may lead youth to pray less and feel that religion is less important; sanctification of family relationships may result in feelings of loss if these relationships dissolve, creating internal spiritual struggles among youth who experience a parental divorce (Warner et al. 2009). Single parents may also experience sacred loss after the disruption of their marriage, reducing their ability to serve as effective spiritual models and provide religious socialization for their children (King and Mueller 2003; Krumrei et al. 2009; Mahoney et al. 2003). These feelings of spiritual loss may limit the effectiveness of religious transmission from divorced single parents to their children (Denton 2012).

Religious outcomes of youth raised by never married parents and cohabiting parents are less understood. Although never married parents may provide a consistent message about religion (as they are the only parent in the household), they may be viewed as less credible spiritual models due to violations of religious norms regarding sex outside of marriage (Bandura 1977; Edgell 2006; Wilcox

et al. 2004). Youth may also have access to fewer spiritual models in never married families than two-parent families, resulting in less effective religious socialization (Myers 1996; Regnerus and Uecker 2006). However, there may also be variation in religious transmission within never married families; in addition to single-parent families in which children never resided with another parent, single-parent families may also be formed by the dissolution of a cohabiting relationship due to the high level of instability of cohabiting unions (Manning et al. 2004). Youth raised by never married parents who experience the dissolution of a parental cohabiting relationship may experience sacred loss similar to divorced single-parent families, resulting in less effective religious transmission (Krumrei et al. 2009; Warner et al. 2009). In contrast, youth raised by single parents who never resided with another parent likely do not have to cope with spiritual loss in the same way. There is evidence to suggest that some single parents are highly involved in religion and place a high level of importance on religion, which may help to facilitate religious transmission to children (Petts 2012; Sullivan 2008). Even so, the stigma of nonmarital childbearing may result in a lower likelihood that youth raised by never married single parents embrace these religious beliefs relative to those raised in families that are more accepted within religious institutions.

Similar to religious outcomes among youth raised by never married parents, religious transmission within cohabiting unions has been understudied. Although youth raised in cohabiting families may benefit from having two parents (especially if parents share religious beliefs), the relative instability of cohabiting unions may limit the effectiveness of religious socialization that youth receive from cohabiting parents (Manning et al. 2004). Similar to stepparents, cohabiting parents may also be less invested in children's lives than married parents (Brown 2004), which may limit the effectiveness of religious socialization in these families. In contrast to stepfamilies, cohabiting parents may be viewed as less credible spiritual models than married parents (Bandura 1997; King and Mueller 2003). As a result, religious transmission may be weaker in cohabiting families than in married families.

## HYPOTHESES

Four hypotheses guide this study. First, although residing in a nontraditional family may be associated with lower levels of youth religiosity, this is likely due to lower levels of parental religiosity in nontraditional families compared with married families. Thus, I expect that:

*H1: Family structure will not be significantly related to youth religious outcomes when controlling for parental religiosity.*

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Second, the emphasis on the married biological family within religious institutions may lead married parents to be seen by youth as more credible spiritual

models than parents in other family structures, increasing the likelihood of religious transmission. Thus, I expect that:

*H2: The influence of parental religiosity on public religious practices will be weaker for youth raised in nontraditional family structures than those raised by married biological/adoptive parents.*

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Third, although parents in nontraditional family structures may view private religious practices as important, youth in these families may experience spiritual loss and lack credible spiritual models, which may reduce the effectiveness of religious transmission. Thus, I expect that:

*H3: The influence of parental religiosity on private religious practices will be weaker for youth raised in nontraditional family structures than those raised by married biological/adoptive parents.*

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Finally, the dissolution of a parental relationship may disrupt the consistency of religious transmission to youth, and youth who reside in nontraditional families may have access to less spiritual capital than youth residing with married parents. Parent–child relationship quality may also be lower in nontraditional families than in married families, which may limit parents' ability to transmit their religious beliefs effectively. Thus, I expect that:

*H4: The relationships between family structure, parental religiosity, and youth religious outcomes will be partially mediated by consistency in religious beliefs between parents, religious socialization within the family, and parent–child relationship quality.*

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## DATA AND METHODS

### *Sample*

Data from two waves of the NSYR were used. The NSYR is a nationally representative, longitudinal survey of 3,370 youth. Youth between the ages of 13 and 17 were first interviewed in 2002 along with one of their parents (W1). Approximately 77 percent of the sample was retained for the first follow-up survey, which took place in 2005 when youth respondents were between the ages of 16 and 21 (W2). Of the 2,604 youth interviewed in both waves, 74 youth that were part of a Jewish oversample and 210 youth who had missing data on family structure or did not reside with a biological/adoptive parent at W1 were excluded. These exclusions result in a final sample size of 2,320 youth and their parents.

### *Dependent Variables*

Four indicators of youth religiosity at W2 were used as dependent variables. *Religious attendance* indicates how often (0, *never*, to 6, *more than once a week*) youth attend religious services. *Religious salience* indicates how important youth's religious faith is in shaping how they live their daily life (ranging from 0, *not*

*important at all*, to 4, *extremely important*). *Closeness to God* indicates how close youth feel to God most of the time (ranging from 1, *extremely distant*, to 6, *extremely close*).<sup>1</sup> *Private religious practices* is measured by how often youth pray alone and how often they read religious texts alone<sup>2</sup> (ranging from 0, *never*, to 6, *many times a day*). The mean was used as the indicator.

### **Independent Variables**

*Family structure.* Six categories of family structure (measured at W1) were used. Youth in this study reside with: (a) married biological/adoptive parents (reference group), (b) a married biological/adoptive parent and a stepparent or legal guardian, (c) a divorced biological/adoptive single parent (and youth experienced the breakup of the marriage), (d) a never married biological/adoptive single parent, (e) a never married biological/adoptive single parent in which youth experienced the dissolution of a marriage-like parental relationship, or (f) a biological/adoptive parent and his/her unmarried partner.<sup>3</sup>

*Parental religiosity.* Three indicators of parental religiosity were used to create an index, and each indicator was based on one parent's reports of his/her religious activity at W1. Religious attendance indicates how often (0, *never*, to 6, *more than once a week*) the parent attended religious services. Religious salience indicates how important (0, *not important at all*, to 4, *extremely important*) religious faith is in providing guidance in their daily living. Prayer indicates how frequently (0, *never*, to 6, *once a day or more*) parents prayed for their child. Each measure was standardized ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ), and the mean of the three measures was used.

### **Mediating Variables**

*Parental religious homogamy.* A variable was included to indicate parental religious homogamy. Parents are considered religiously homogamous if they reported sharing a religious affiliation with their partner/spouse or if there was only one parent in the household at W1.

*Religious socialization.* Two variables were used to indicate the degree to which religious socialization occurs within families at W1. First, *family religious practices* indicate whether youth engage in religious practices with their parents. Youth were asked whether they had prayed with one or both parents at least once in the previous year (other than at mealtimes or religious services) and how often their family talks about God, the Scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual things together. Youth are considered to engage in religious practices with their family if they had

<sup>1</sup>Youth who do not believe in God were not asked this question and were excluded from analyses with this outcome, resulting in a smaller sample size ( $N = 2,212$ ). Results including these youth (and coding them as being least close to God) were similar to those presented here.

<sup>2</sup>Youth were asked about the religious text associated with their affiliation (Bible, Torah, etc.).

<sup>3</sup>This category includes cohabiting relationships involving the other biological parent as well as those involving romantic partners. These groups are combined due to small sample sizes (there were only 11 cases involving cohabiting stepfamilies).



prayed together with their family in the past year and talked with their family about religious things at least once a week. Second, *parent–child denominational homogamy* indicates youth who identify with the same religious tradition as their parent. This variable utilized the same categories used to indicate parent’s religious affiliation.

*Parent–child relationship quality.* Four variables were used to measure parent–child relationships at W1. *Monitoring* is measured by parents’ reports on how much (0, *never*, to 4, *always*) they monitor their child’s television/movie watching and internet use. The mean is used as the indicator ( $\alpha = 0.58$ ). *Engagement* indicates whether parents (a) visited a museum, art gallery, or historical site, (b) gone to a play, concert, or other show, (c) visited a library, (d) worked on a project, and (e) played a game/sport or exercised with their child over the previous six months. Responses were summed to indicate the level of parental engagement. *Closeness* is based on youth’s reports on how close (0, *not close at all*, to 5, *extremely close*) they felt to their mother and/or father. For youth residing in two-parent families, the mean response for both parents was used. *Affection* is based on youth’s responses on how often (0, *never*, to 4, *very often*) their mother and/or father (a) praise and encourage them, (b) hug them, and (c) tell them that they love them. The mean was used as the indicator ( $\alpha = 0.74$  for mothers and 0.85 for fathers). For youth residing in two-parent families, the mean response for both parents was used.

### Control Variables

A number of additional variables (measured at W1) were included as controls. Parent’s religious affiliation was classified as (a) Conservative Protestant, (b) Black Protestant, (c) Mainline Protestant, (d) Catholic, (e) Mormon, (f) Other Religious Affiliation, or (g) no religious affiliation (used as reference group)<sup>4</sup> (Steenland et al. 2000). Other control variables include parent’s and youth’s age (measured in years), parent’s and youth’s gender (1, *female*), the total number of hours that the resident parent(s) worked per week, household income, resident parents’ average education level (ranging from 1, *did not complete high school*, to 5, *at least some graduate school*), whether the resident parent(s) owned their home and an indicator of parent’s depressive symptoms. Parents were also asked about their assets and debt and this information was used to create an indicator of parent’s wealth (0, *in debt or just breaking even*; 1, *at least some savings and assets*). Youth’s race/ethnicity was categorized as White (used as reference category), Black, Hispanic, and other racial/ethnic group. A variable was also included to indicate youth that report a different race/ethnicity from their parent.

To account for possible selection into particular family structures, Heckman’s (1979) two-stage method was used. A probit model was used to predict whether

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<sup>4</sup>Supplemental analyses included the Jewish oversample and a separate category for Jewish affiliation. Results were unchanged, and Jewish was not significant in any of the models. To keep the models parsimonious (inclusion of the Jewish oversample requires variables for region of country), Jewish parents were incorporated into the Other Religious Affiliation category.

youth resided with married biological/adoptive parents at W1 based on parental characteristics (age, race, income, religiosity, etc.). The model estimates were used to create a lambda term that represents the effects of characteristics associated with selection into a married biological/adoptive family.

Three variables were also included to account for changes in family structure between W1 and W2: (a) whether youth were no longer residing with their parent(s) at W2, (b) whether youth still residing with their parent(s) at W2 experienced any transition in resident family structure between waves, and (c) whether youth experienced a break-up of their parents' marriage or marriage-like relationship (both resident and nonresident) between waves.

### **Analytic Strategy**

Ordinary least squares regression models were used in this study.<sup>5</sup> For each indicator of youth religiosity, three models were used. The first model included the indicators of family structure, parental religiosity, and all control variables. Interaction terms were included in the second model to assess whether the influence of parental religiosity on youth religious outcomes varies by family structure. Finally, mediating variables were added in model 3.<sup>6</sup>

Summary statistics for all variables are included in table 1. Missing data were accounted for using multivariate normal imputation, and results from 10 imputed models are shown here. Weights were included in all analyses to adjust for number of teenagers in household, number of household telephone numbers, census region of residence, and household income.

## **RESULTS**

Results exploring the relationships between parental religiosity, family structure, and each religious outcome are presented in separate tables. Results focused on youth religious attendance are shown in table 2. As seen in model 1, H1 is largely supported. Parental religiosity was a strong predictor of youth religious attendance ( $b = 1.10, p < .001$ ) and family structure was not significantly related to youth religious attendance with one exception; youth raised in stepfamilies attended religious services less frequently than those raised by married biological/adoptive parents ( $b = -0.33, p < .05$ ). Interaction terms were included in model 2 to examine whether the influence of parental religiosity varies by family structure, and results support H2. Specifically, parental religiosity was less likely to increase religious attendance for youth raised in stepfamilies ( $b = -0.42, p < .01$ ), never-married single-parent families ( $b = -0.93, p < .05$ ), single-parent families who experienced a nonmarital breakup ( $b = -1.45, p < .01$ ), and cohabiting families ( $b = -1.36, p < .01$ ) than those raised by married parents.

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<sup>5</sup>Ordered logistic models were also considered. Due to the violation of the proportional odds assumption for some models and similarity in results, OLS models are presented here.

<sup>6</sup>Mediation tests were performed using methods described by Preacher and Hayes (2008), and the delta method was used to compute standard errors.

TABLE 1 Summary Statistics

	M	SD	Max	Min
Youth religious outcomes (W2)				
Religious attendance	2.62	2.19	0.00	6.00
Religious salience	2.26	1.30	0.00	4.00
Closeness to God	3.87	1.19	1.00	6.00
Private religious practices	2.12	1.58	0.00	6.00
Family structure				
Married biological/adoptive parents <sup>a</sup>	0.62	—	0.00	1.00
Stepfamily	0.14	—	0.00	1.00
Divorced single-parent family	0.15	—	0.00	1.00
Never married single-parent family	0.03	—	0.00	1.00
Never married single-parent family with nonmarital breakup	0.02	—	0.00	1.00
Cohabiting	0.04	—	0.00	1.00
Parental religiosity	0.02	0.82	-2.38	1.34
Mediating variables				
Parental religious homogeneity	0.78	—	0.00	1.00
Religious socialization				
Parent-child denominational homogeneity	0.84	—	0.00	1.00
Family religious practices	0.29	—	0.00	1.00
Parent-child relationship quality				
Parental monitoring	2.86	0.98	0.00	1.00
Parental engagement	3.26	1.25	0.00	4.00
Parent-child closeness	3.82	0.96	0.00	5.00
Parental affection	3.12	0.83	0.00	5.00
Control variables				
Parent is Conservative Protestant	0.32	—	0.00	1.00
Parent is Black Protestant	0.10	—	0.00	1.00
Parent is Mainline Protestant	0.16	—	0.00	1.00
Parent is Catholic	0.27	—	0.00	1.00
Parent is Mormon	0.04	—	0.00	1.00
Parent is other religious affiliation	0.05	—	0.00	1.00
Parent has no religious affiliation <sup>a</sup>	0.06	—	0.00	1.00
Parent age	42.73	6.20	22.00	70.00
Youth age (W1)	15.44	1.49	13.00	18.00
White <sup>a</sup>				
Black	0.70	—	13.00	18.00
Hispanic	0.13	—	0.00	1.00
Other race/ethnicity	0.11	—	0.00	1.00
Different race/ethnicity from parent	0.06	—	0.00	1.00
Parent is female	0.08	—	0.00	1.00
Youth is female	0.82	—	0.00	1.00
Parents' work hours	0.50	—	0.00	1.00
Parents' education	62.19	30.01	0.00	1.00
	3.15	1.05	1.00	5.00

*Continued*

TABLE 1 *Continued*

	M	SD	Max	Min
Household income	6.49	3.01	0.00	11.00
Parent's depressive symptoms	1.21	1.71	0.00	5.00
Parents own home	0.78	–	0.00	1.00
Parents' wealth	0.51	–	0.00	1.00
Does not reside with parents (W2)	0.14	–	0.00	1.00
Resident parent transition (W2)	0.12	–	0.00	1.00
Experienced parental breakup (W2)	0.15	–	0.00	1.00

$N = 2,320$ .

<sup>a</sup>Used as reference category.

These results are further illustrated in figure 1A, which shows predicted values from estimates in model 2. As shown in this graph, higher levels of parental religiosity were associated with higher levels of religious attendance for youth raised by married parents. A similar pattern holds true for youth raised in stepfamilies and never married families, but overall levels of religious attendance were lower for youth at moderate and high levels of parental religiosity in these family structures than for youth raised by married parents (there is less difference in youth religious attendance between family structures when parents have low levels of religiosity). In contrast, the relationship between parental religiosity and youth religious attendance was different for youth raised in cohabiting families and youth raised by single parents who experienced a nonmarital breakup. For youth raised in these family structures, parental religiosity had little influence on their religious attendance.

Mediating variables were included in model 3 of table 2, and parent-child homogamy ( $b = 0.41, p < .01$ ), family religious practices ( $b = 0.84, p < .001$ ), and parental affection ( $b = 0.15, p < .05$ ) were all positively related to religious attendance. When these variables were included, the size of the coefficients for the interaction terms was slightly reduced and the interaction involving never married families was no longer significant. Thus, results in model 3 provided some evidence for H4 in showing that less effective religious transmission in never-married single-parent families was primarily due to less effective religious socialization in these families. Overall, approximately 53 percent of the total effect is mediated by these three variables.

Results in table 3 focus on religious salience. Again, H1 was largely supported in model 1. Consistent with other religious outcomes, parental religiosity was a strong predictor of youth religious salience ( $b = 0.61, p < .001$ ) and there was only one significant difference in family structure, with youth raised in stepfamilies having lower levels of religious salience than those raised in married families ( $b = -0.20, p < .05$ ). Interaction terms were included in model 2, and results provide some support for H3. Specifically, parental religiosity was less likely to lead to higher levels of religious salience among youth raised in stepfamilies

TABLE 2 Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Religious Attendance among Youth

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Family structure						
Stepfamily	-0.33	0.14*	-0.28	0.14*	-0.19	0.14
Divorced single-parent family	-0.11	0.17	-0.08	0.16	-0.18	0.17
Never-married single-parent family	-0.35	0.35	-0.26	0.33	-0.29	0.33
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup						
Cohabiting	-0.39	0.33	-0.64	0.30*	-0.49	0.29
Parental religiosity	1.10	0.09***	1.27	0.10***	1.01	0.10***
Mediating variables						
Parental religious homogamy					0.13	0.13
<i>Religious socialization</i>						
Parent-child denominational homogamy					0.41	0.13**
Family religious practices					0.84	0.11***
<i>Parent-child relationship quality</i>						
Parental monitoring					0.08	0.05
Parental engagement					-0.01	0.04
Parent-child closeness					0.01	0.06
Parental affection					0.15	0.07*
Control variables						
Parent is Conservative Protestant	0.61	0.23**	0.67	0.22**	0.49	0.23*
Parent is Black Protestant	0.40	0.35	0.62	0.35	0.51	0.34
Parent is Mainline Protestant	-0.04	0.22	0.04	0.21	0.09	0.22
Parent is Catholic	-0.18	0.21	-0.13	0.20	-0.06	0.22
Parent is Mormon	0.64	0.36	0.67	0.35	0.26	0.35
Parent is other religious affiliation	-0.19	0.29	-0.10	0.27	-0.76	0.28
Parent age	-0.05	0.01**	-0.05	0.01*	-0.04	0.01**
Youth age	-0.11	0.03**	-0.12	0.03***	-0.06	0.03
Black	0.19	0.30	0.23	0.30	0.13	0.27
Hispanic	0.15	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.07	0.18
Other race/ethnicity	-0.09	0.26	-0.03	0.26	-0.07	0.26
Different race from parent	-0.04	0.23	-0.08	0.23	0.05	0.22
Youth is female	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.06	0.09
Parent is female	-0.24	0.13	-0.24	0.13	-0.18	0.12
Parents' work hours	-0.01	0.00*	-0.01	0.00**	-0.01	0.00**
Parents' education	0.16	0.07*	0.16	0.07*	0.12	0.07
Household income	-0.01	0.03	-0.01	0.03	0.00	0.03
Parent's depressive symptoms	-0.07	0.03*	-0.06	0.03	-0.04	0.03

Continued

TABLE 2 *Continued*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Parents own home	-0.34	0.21	-0.42	0.21*	-0.38	0.20
Parents' wealth	0.22	0.11	0.23	0.11*	0.17	0.11
Lambda	-1.13	0.45*	-1.28	0.45**	-1.17	0.44**
Does not reside with parents (W2)	-0.22	0.15	-0.19	0.15	-0.19	0.14
Resident parent transition (W2)	-0.15	0.16	-0.15	0.16	-0.16	0.16
Experienced parental breakup (W2)	-0.14	0.15	-0.12	0.15	-0.04	0.14
Interactions						
Stepfamily × parental religiosity			-0.42	0.16**	-0.37	0.16*
Divorced single parent × parental religiosity			-0.27	0.16	-0.23	0.16
Never-married single parent × parental religiosity			-0.93	0.42*	-0.77	0.43
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup × parental religiosity			-1.45	0.51**	-1.33	0.49**
Cohabiting × parental religiosity			-1.36	0.40**	-1.26	0.40**
R <sup>2</sup>		0.29		0.30		0.34

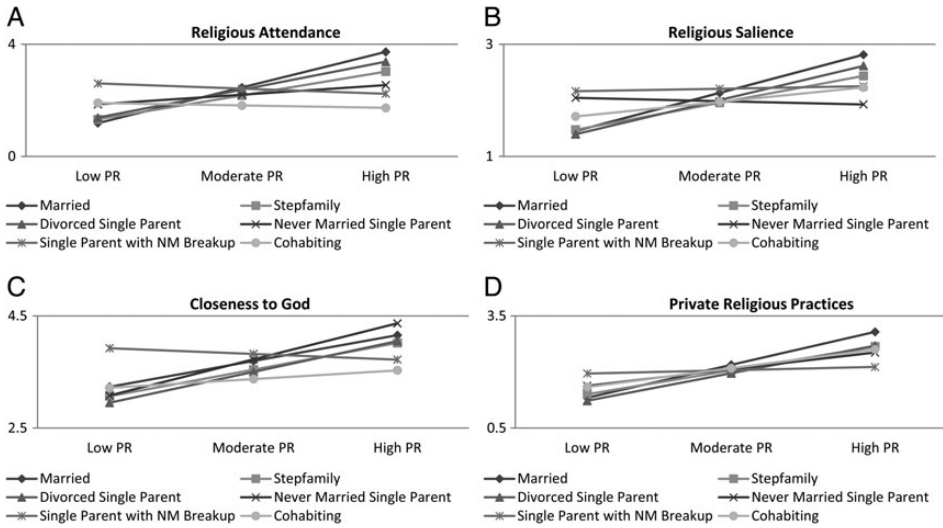
$N = 2,320$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

( $b = -0.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ), never-married single-parent families ( $b = -0.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ), single-parent families who experienced a nonmarital breakup ( $b = -0.64$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and cohabiting families ( $b = -0.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ) than those raised by married biological/adoptive parents.

These differences are further illustrated in figure 1B, which shows that the influence of parental religiosity on youth religious salience was especially lower for youth raised by never married parents, as the slopes of the lines for each type of never married single-parent family were flatter than for other family structures. Also similar to results in figure 1A, religious salience was lower for youth at moderate and high levels of parental religiosity in stepfamilies and cohabiting families than for those raised by married parents (there is less difference in youth religious salience between family structures when parents have low levels of religiosity).

When mediating variables were introduced in model 3 of table 3, a number of them were positively related to religious salience including parent-child homogamy ( $b = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), family religious practices ( $b = 0.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), parent-child closeness ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and parental affection ( $b = 0.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ). When these variables were included, the size of the coefficients for the interaction terms was reduced and the differences between stepfamilies, single-parent families with a nonmarital breakup, cohabiting families, and married families

FIGURE 1. Predicted Values of Youth Religious Outcomes based on Family Structure and Parental Religiosity (PR).



were no longer significant. Thus, results in model 3 provided some evidence for H4 in showing that less effective religious transmission in nontraditional families was due to less effective religious socialization in these families and lower levels of parental affection and parent–child closeness. Overall, approximately 51 percent of the total effect is mediated by these four variables.

Results in table 4 focus on closeness to God. Once again, results in model 1 show that parental religiosity was a strong predictor of feelings of closeness to God among youth ( $b = 0.46, p < .001$ ), but family structure was unrelated. Results in model 2 provide only limited support for H3; parental religiosity was less influential in predicting closeness to God among youth raised in single-parent families with a nonmarital breakup than those raised by married parents ( $b = -0.56, p < .05$ ). This result is further illustrated in figure 1C, which shows a slight negative relationship between parental religiosity and closeness to God among youth raised in single-parent families with a nonmarital breakup. Mediating variables were added in model 3, and approximately 48 percent of the total effect was mediated by parent–child homogamy ( $b = 0.24, p < .01$ ) and family religious practices ( $b = 0.36, p < .001$ ). When these variables were included, the difference in the influence of parental religiosity on closeness to God between youth raised in single-parent families with a nonmarital breakup and those raised in married families was slightly reduced, providing some support for H4.

Results in table 5 focus on private religious practices, and, results in model 1 again provide support for H1. Parental religiosity was a strong predictor of youth’s private religious practices ( $b = 0.80, p < .001$ ), and there is only one significant difference in family structure, with youth raised by divorced single parents having lower levels of private religious practices than those raised in married

TABLE 3 Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Religious Salience among Youth

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Family structure						
Stepfamily	-0.20	0.08*	-0.18	0.08*	-0.09	0.08
Divorced single-parent family	-0.14	0.09	-0.13	0.09	-0.22	0.09*
Never-married single-parent family	-0.24	0.20	-0.15	0.19	-0.18	0.18
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup	0.07	0.21	0.07	0.20	-0.05	0.20
Cohabiting	-0.09	0.18	-0.16	0.19	-0.04	0.18
Parental religiosity	0.61	0.06***	0.68	0.06***	0.52	0.06***
Mediating variables						
Parental religious homogeneity					0.10	0.08
<i>Religious socialization</i>						
Parent-child denominational homogeneity					0.35	0.08***
Family religious practices					0.44	0.06***
<i>Parent-child relationship quality</i>						
Parental monitoring					0.05	0.03
Parental engagement					-0.04	0.02
Parent-child closeness					0.08	0.04*
Parental affection					0.11	0.04**
Control variables						
Parent is Conservative Protestant	0.48	0.13***	0.50	0.12***	0.39	0.13**
Parent is Black Protestant	0.36	0.20	0.47	0.20*	0.36	0.19
Parent is Mainline Protestant	-0.05	0.12	0.08	0.12	0.10	0.12
Parent is Catholic	-0.00	0.12	0.02	0.12	0.03	0.12
Parent is Mormon	0.46	0.23*	0.46	0.22*	0.24	0.22
Parent is other religious affiliation	-0.06	0.17	-0.03	0.16	-0.01	0.16
Parent age	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.00	0.01
Youth age	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02
Black	0.25	0.18	0.26	0.19	0.21	0.17
Hispanic	0.31	0.10**	0.32	0.09**	0.28	0.10**
Other race/ethnicity	0.08	0.15	0.11	0.15	0.10	0.15
Different race from parent	-0.17	0.13	-0.19	0.13	-0.11	0.12
Youth is female	0.21	0.05***	0.21	0.05***	0.20	0.05***
Parent is female	-0.04	0.07	-0.05	0.07	-0.00	0.07
Parents' work hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Parents' education	-0.07	0.04	-0.07	0.04	-0.08	0.04*
Household income	-0.00	0.02	-0.01	0.02	0.00	0.02
Parent's depressive symptoms	-0.04	0.02*	-0.04	0.02	-0.02	0.02

Continued



TABLE 3 *Continued*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Parents own home	0.10	0.12	0.07	0.12	0.08	0.11
Parents' wealth	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.06
Lambda	0.22	0.25	0.15	0.25	0.22	0.25
Does not reside with parents (W2)	-0.12	0.09	-0.11	0.09	-0.09	0.08
Resident parent transition (W2)	-0.11	0.09	-0.12	0.09	-0.11	0.09
Experienced parental breakup (W2)	0.00	0.08	0.02	0.08	0.07	0.08
Interactions						
Stepfamily × parental religiosity			-0.20	0.09*	-0.16	0.09
Divorced single parent × parental religiosity			-0.07	0.09	-0.04	0.10
Never-married single parent × parental religiosity			-0.74	0.25**	-0.59	0.23*
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup × parental religiosity			-0.64	0.29*	-0.54	0.30
Cohabiting × parental religiosity			-0.42	0.21*	-0.38	0.21
R <sup>2</sup>	0.28		0.29		0.34	

$N = 2,320$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

families ( $b = -0.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Interaction terms were included in model 2, and parental religiosity was only less likely to lead to higher levels of private religious practices for youth raised by stepparents ( $b = -0.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ) than for those raised by married parents. These results are further illustrated in figure 1D. Mediating factors were included in model 3 of table 5, and results again provide some support for H4. Specifically, parent-child homogamy ( $b = 0.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and family religious practices ( $b = 0.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were both positively related to private religious practices among youth. When these variables were included, the difference between youth raised by stepparents and those raised by married biological parents was no longer significant. Thus, the lower influence of parental religiosity on private religious practices for youth raised by stepparents is due to less effective religious socialization in these families (accounting for approximately 56 percent of the total effect).

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to better understand the relationships between parental religiosity, family structure, and youth religious outcomes by using longitudinal

TABLE 4 Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Closeness to God among Youth

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Family structure						
Stepfamily	-0.15	0.08	-0.15	0.09	-0.07	0.09
Divorced single-parent family	-0.19	0.10	-0.19	0.10	-0.28	0.10**
Never-married single-parent family	0.05	0.24	0.03	0.23	-0.01	0.23
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup	0.12	0.21	0.13	0.20	0.04	0.20
Cohabiting	-0.27	0.18	-0.32	0.18	-0.21	0.17
Parental religiosity	0.46	0.06***	0.46	0.07***	0.31	0.07***
Mediating variables						
Parental religious homogeneity					0.16	0.09
<i>Religious socialization</i>						
Parent-child denominational homogeneity					0.24	0.09**
Family religious practices					0.36	0.06***
<i>Parent-child relationship quality</i>						
Parental monitoring					0.06	0.03
Parental engagement					0.02	0.03
Parent-child closeness					0.06	0.04
Parental affection					0.09	0.05
Control variables						
Parent is Conservative Protestant	0.37	0.15*	0.38	0.15*	0.26	0.15
Parent is Black Protestant	0.43	0.21*	0.45	0.22*	0.35	0.22
Parent is Mainline Protestant	0.10	0.15	0.12	0.15	0.11	0.15
Parent is Catholic	0.07	0.15	0.08	0.14	0.07	0.14
Parent is Mormon	0.46	0.22*	0.47	0.22*	0.25	0.22
Parent is other religious affiliation	-0.04	0.18	-0.02	0.18	-0.06	0.17
Parent age	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
Youth age	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.02
Black	-0.10	0.17	-0.09	0.17	-0.12	0.17
Hispanic	0.34	0.10**	0.33	0.10**	0.29	0.10**
Other race/ethnicity	-0.01	0.16	-0.00	0.16	-0.02	0.16
Different race from parent	-0.20	0.13	-0.21	0.13	-0.12	0.12
Youth is female	0.17	0.05**	0.17	0.05**	0.16	0.05**
Parent is female	0.03	0.08	0.03	0.08	0.07	0.07
Parents' work hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Parents' education	-0.05	0.04	-0.06	0.04	-0.09	0.04*
Household income	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.02	-0.00	0.02
Parent's depressive symptoms	-0.06	0.02**	-0.06	0.02**	-0.05	0.02*

Continued

TABLE 4 *Continued*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Parents own home	0.21	0.14	0.20	0.14	0.22	0.13
Parents' wealth	-0.02	0.07	-0.02	0.07	-0.06	0.07
Lambda	0.32	0.29	0.31	0.30	0.38	0.29
Does not reside with parents (W2)	-0.01	0.09	-0.01	0.09	0.02	0.09
Resident parent transition (W2)	-0.02	0.10	-0.02	0.10	-0.02	0.10
Experienced parental breakup (W2)	0.03	0.09	0.03	0.08	0.09	0.09
Interactions						
Stepfamily × parental religiosity			0.01	0.10	0.04	0.10
Divorced single parent × parental religiosity			0.09	0.11	0.13	0.11
Never-married single parent × parental religiosity			0.18	0.26	0.29	0.26
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup × parental religiosity			-0.56	0.25*	-0.49	0.25*
Cohabiting × parental religiosity			-0.31	0.20	-0.27	0.19
R <sup>2</sup>	0.16		0.17		0.34	

$N = 2,212$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

data and a variety of family types to examine whether religious transmission varied by family structure and type of youth religiosity as well as whether and how consistency in parents' religiosity, religious socialization, and quality of parent-child relationships explain these differences.

Consistent with previous research, the first hypothesis was largely supported. Although there were a few exceptions, family structure generally did not have a direct influence on youth religious outcomes.<sup>7</sup> This finding is consistent with other research that finds no direct influence of family structure on youth religiosity (Denton 2012; Uecker and Ellison 2012). In contrast, parental religiosity was a strong predictor of youth religiosity; youth were less likely to be religious when raised by parents with low levels of religiosity and vice versa (Cornwall 1989; Myers 1996; Smith and Denton 2005).

Despite the lack of a direct influence of family structure on youth religiosity, the main goal of this study was to examine whether the influence of parental

<sup>7</sup>In models that did not include parental religiosity, there were a few additional family structures that were significantly less likely to influence youth religious outcomes. However, family structure was largely unrelated to youth religious outcomes in these supplemental models.

TABLE 5 Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Private Religious Practices among Youth

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Family structure						
Stepfamily	-0.18	0.10	-0.15	0.10	-0.08	0.10
Divorced single-parent family	-0.25	0.11*	-0.22	0.11*	-0.29	0.11**
Never-married single-parent family	-0.17	0.22	-0.12	0.21	-0.11	0.21
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup	-0.16	0.32	-0.14	0.29	-0.22	0.29
Cohabiting	-0.04	0.20	-0.09	0.21	0.02	0.20
Parental religiosity	0.80	0.07***	0.88	0.08***	0.66	0.08***
Mediating variables						
Parental religious homogeneity					0.06	0.10
<i>Religious socialization</i>						
Parent-child denominational homogeneity					0.24	0.09**
Family religious practices					0.84	0.09***
<i>Parent-child relationship quality</i>						
Parental monitoring					0.05	0.04
Parental engagement					-0.00	0.03
Parent-child closeness					0.02	0.05
Parental affection					0.10	0.05
Control variables						
Parent is Conservative Protestant	0.38	0.14**	0.39	0.14**	0.27	0.15
Parent is Black Protestant	0.06	0.23	0.14	0.23	0.09	0.22
Parent is Mainline Protestant	-0.17	0.14	-0.16	0.14	-0.08	0.14
Parent is Catholic	-0.58	0.13***	-0.57	0.13***	-0.46	0.14**
Parent is Mormon	0.62	0.28*	0.62	0.28*	0.26	0.27
Parent is other religious affiliation	-0.25	0.19	-0.23	0.19	-0.18	0.18
Parent age	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
Youth age	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.03*
Black	0.15	0.21	0.18	0.22	0.08	0.21
Hispanic	0.34	0.12	0.35	0.12**	0.26	0.12
Other race/ethnicity	-0.05	0.18	-0.01	0.18	-0.04	0.17
Different race from parent	-0.09	0.14	-0.11	0.14	0.01	0.13
Youth is female	0.33	0.07***	0.33	0.07***	0.32	0.07***
Parent is female	-0.18	0.09	-0.19	0.09*	-0.14	0.09
Parents' work hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Parents' education	-0.10	0.05*	-0.09	0.04	-0.13	0.05**
Household income	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02
Parent's depressive symptoms	-0.04	0.03	-0.04	0.02	-0.03	0.02

Continued

TABLE 5 *Continued*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Parents own home	0.12	0.16	0.08	0.16	0.11	0.15
Parents' wealth	0.09	0.08	0.10	0.08	0.05	0.08
Lambda	0.50	0.35	0.41	0.35	0.48	0.34
Does not reside with parents (W2)	-0.05	0.11	-0.03	0.11	-0.05	0.10
Resident parent transition (W2)	-0.14	0.11	-0.14	0.11	-0.14	0.11
Experienced parental breakup (W2)	-0.01	0.10	-0.00	0.10	0.07	0.10
Interactions						
Stepfamily × parental religiosity			-0.25	0.11*	-0.20	0.12
Divorced single parent × parental religiosity			-0.15	0.10	-0.11	0.10
Never-married single parent × parental religiosity			-0.44	0.29	-0.31	0.28
Single-parent family with nonmarital breakup × parental religiosity			-0.80	0.44	-0.69	0.39
Cohabiting × parental religiosity			-0.38	0.21	-0.28	0.20
R <sup>2</sup>	0.26		0.27		0.32	

$N = 2,320$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

religiosity on youth religiosity varies by family structure. First, results largely supported H2. Specifically, the influence of parental religiosity on religious attendance was lower for youth raised by stepfamilies, never married single parents, never married single parents who experienced the dissolution of a marriage-like relationship, and cohabiting parents than youth raised by married biological/adoptive parents. These results contrast with previous studies that found no difference in religious transmission between stepfamilies and married biological families (Uecker and Ellison 2012). This may be due to weaker relationships between stepparents and children or because adolescents may not perceive stepparents (or other nontraditional parents) as credible spiritual models (Bandura 1977; King and Mueller 2003; Myers 1996).

Results testing H3 were mixed. The influence of parental religiosity on religious salience was lower for youth raised by stepfamilies, never married single parents, never-married single parents who experienced the dissolution of a marriage-like relationship, and cohabiting parents than youth raised by married biological/adoptive parents. Again, this may be due to fewer credible spiritual models in nontraditional families; stepparents and cohabiting parents may be viewed as less effective spiritual models to youth, and the stress of single parenthood may limit the ability to serve as a religious model to youth, resulting in less

effective religious transmission within these families (Bandura 1977; King and Mueller 2003; Myers 1996).

However, in contrast to H3, the influence of parental religiosity on closeness to God and private religious practices did not vary much by family structure. It was hypothesized that sacred loss may lead youth who experienced a parental breakup to face internal spiritual struggles or be angry with God (Denton 2012; Krumrei et al. 2009), but results from this study provided limited evidence to support this argument. Although there was no difference in the influence of parental religiosity on youth religious outcomes between married parents and divorced parents (who may be most likely to experience spiritual loss), youth raised by highly religious single parents who experienced a nonmarital breakup felt less close to God than those raised by less religious single parents, providing some evidence that experiencing a parental breakup may weaken youth's religious beliefs (Denton 2012). Future research should further examine whether and how spiritual loss may impact religious transmission.

In attempting to better understand why these differences in religious transmission by family structure may exist, there is evidence to support the argument that religious socialization (both family religious practices and parent-child consistency in religious beliefs) helps to explain the less effective religious transmission that appears to occur in nontraditional families. Consistent with social learning theory, if youth are less exposed to religious practices within their families, they will have fewer opportunities to observe and engage in religious behavior (Bandura 1977). Stepparents, never-married single parents, and cohabiting parents may be less likely to provide youth with spiritual capital; by engaging in religious activities together less frequently, youth raised in these families may not have the spiritual capital needed to maintain a high level of religious behavior during a stage in the life course that is often marked by religious instability (Desmond et al. 2010; Petts 2009; Uecker et al. 2007). Furthermore, stepparents may be unsure of their roles as parents due to a lack of institutionalized support regarding their parenting roles and thus may not appear to be credible spiritual models to their stepchildren (Cherlin 1978; Coleman et al. 2000).

Overall, religious transmission in nontraditional families appears to be less effective for religious participation and religious salience among youth, and these differences are most pronounced at higher levels of parental religiosity. That is, youth raised in nontraditional families with highly religious parents have lower levels of religious participation and religious salience than those raised by highly religious married parents.<sup>8</sup> Results suggest that these differences between family structures are largely attributable to variations in family religious socialization.

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<sup>8</sup>This finding was further examined in supplemental analyses. Combined measures of parental religiosity and family structure were used to compare whether youth religious outcomes differed between highly religious families. Results were consistent with those presented here, suggesting that youth raised in highly religious nontraditional families reported lower levels of religious participation, religious salience, and private religious practices.

That is, consistency in religious affiliation among family members and engaging in religious behavior as a family are important in predicting youth religiosity, and these forms of family religious socialization are less common in stepfamilies, never married families, and cohabiting families than in married intact families. Less exposure to these forms of spiritual capital appears to reduce the influence of parental religiosity on youth religious participation and religious salience in non-traditional families; youth in these families may lack credible spiritual models and have fewer opportunities to observe and imitate religious behavior, resulting in lower levels of religiosity (Bandura 1977; King and Mueller 2003). Even though some parents may be highly religious in nontraditional families, their lower propensity to provide their children with spiritual capital reduces the likelihood of transmitting their religiosity to their children. Thus, both family structure and family religious practices are important factors to consider in order to fully understand processes of religious transmission.

There are also some limitations in this study to acknowledge. One key limitation is that information was only collected from one parent. While parents provided some information about their spouse/partner and youth reported on family religious behavior, detailed information about the religious behavior of the second parent is not available in the NSYR. Having measures of parental consistency in specific religious behaviors would be helpful in further strengthening the conclusions of this study. Qualitative data would also be helpful for understanding processes of religious transmission and why these might differ across family structures.

Another limitation is that although this study utilizes longitudinal data, only two time points are considered. Previous research suggests that adolescents and young adults may experience patterns of religiosity that fluctuate over time (Desmond et al. 2010; Petts 2009), and that religiosity generally declines during adolescence (Uecker et al. 2007). Also, family structure was measured only in adolescence. Although this study attempts to account for possible selection into family structures, married biological/adoptive families in this study are likely selective of more stable, happy families. Thus, future research should consider utilizing prospective measures of family structure and more extensive measures of youth religiosity that may better capture these processes throughout the life course and whether differences in religious transmission by family structure may help to better understand these patterns of youth religiosity. Future studies should also consider how sociodemographic characteristics (race, gender, religious affiliation, etc.) influence processes of religious transmission and how these factors may help to explain any variations between family structures.

Overall, this study contributes to our knowledge of religious transmission by exploring whether and why this process may vary among diverse family structures. In doing so, this study both supports and adds to the complexity of previous research; there is evidence suggesting that religious transmission from parents to children is less effective for some religious outcomes in nontraditional families than in traditional married families. Results also extend previous research by highlighting differences in religious transmission for youth raised by cohabiting

parents and never-married single parents, and demonstrate that less effective religious socialization within nontraditional families explains at least part of the difference in religious transmission by family structure. Therefore, future research should continue to examine how and why family structure may influence youth religiosity and how these processes may vary across diverse family types.

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