

RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: INDIVIDUAL AND
CONGREGATIONAL EFFECTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Scholars in the field of community psychology have called for a closer examination of the mediating role that religious congregations serve in society, especially in relation to the promotion of social justice. The current study provides such an examination, offering a multilevel examination of religious individuals ($n = 5,023$) nested within Christian religious congregations ($n = 62$) with a particular focus on how individual and congregational level variables (i.e. theological orientation, frequency of religious participation, bonding and bridging social capital) predict individual prioritization of and participation in congregational social justice activities. In addition, the study examined cross-level interactions to examine how individual level associations may be different in different types of congregations, specifically in liberal versus conservative congregations, or high versus low bridging congregations. Findings indicated that both individual and congregational level variables were predictive of social justice prioritization and participation. Specifically, all four individual level variables of theological orientation, frequency of religious participation, bonding social capital, and bridging social capital predicted social justice prioritization whereas frequency of religious attendance and bonding predicted social justice participation. Demographics also predicted prioritization and participation. This indicates that personal theological liberalism, greater participation, and higher levels of bonding and bridging social capital were associated with greater social justice prioritization whereas higher frequency of participation and bonding predicted social justice participation. At the level of the congregation, only congregational bridging predicted social justice prioritization such that higher congregational bridging predicting greater social justice. No other congregational level variables predicted prioritization or participation. However, congregational theological orientation and congregational bridging emerged as moderating

variables. Specifically, the associations between frequency of participation and both social justice prioritization and social justice participation were stronger in liberal rather than conservative congregations. In addition, the association between bonding and participation was stronger in liberal rather than conservative congregations. This shows that greater religious participation or friendship networks have a differential influence on individual social justice prioritization and participation depending on if the congregation is liberal or conservative. Finally, congregational bridging moderated the association between bonding and social justice prioritization such that a stronger association was present in high versus low bridging congregations. This shows that social friendship networks within congregations that are actively working with other congregations have a stronger influence on how individuals prioritize social justice as something important to the mission of their congregation. These findings indicate that religious context may exert an influence on individual social justice prioritization and participation by moderating other associations, whereas direct effects of congregational context may be less common or more difficult to detect. Furthermore, these findings show that religious types of variables such as theological orientation or frequency of religious participation are predictive of how individuals prioritize and participate in congregational social justice activities. In addition, different patterns of prediction emerged for social justice prioritization and participation, showing that these two outcomes are related yet distinct aspects of social justice. Finally, these findings provide broad support for the role of religious congregations as mediating structures for social justice.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many lines of research have explored the role of altruism (Batson, 1991; Batson, Ahmad, & Stocks, 2004), empathy (Eisenberg, Valiente, & Champion, 2004), and self-interest (Batson, 1991) as potential explanations for personal involvement in addressing social problems. There has been less attention in the literature to understanding how particular contexts may impact individual engagement with social problems. Practically, individuals interface with a variety of social structures such as the family, educational systems, or religious institutions that provide a context for people to address social problems (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977). Termed “mediating structures” in the field of sociology, these structures serve as both the practical bridges between individuals and society and provide unique contexts that may influence, or “mediate,” how individuals engage with society and social problems. Examining the role and function of these mediating structures is important in understanding how particular contexts may influence how individuals engage with addressing social problems, including, for example, how religious congregations may impact *how* and *why* individual participants address social problems. The purpose of this study is to examine how one such set of mediating structures, religious congregations, influence how individuals address social problems, with particular attention to social justice engagement, or one’s prioritization of and participation in social justice focused congregational activities.

The connection between religious congregations and efforts to address social problems is not a new revelation. Previous studies have examined the different types of services and resources that congregations offer to address basic social problems such as hunger and homelessness (Chaves, 2001; Tsang & Chaves, 2001). There is also a large historical literature

examining how religious individuals and groups have worked for the common good to address social problems regarding poverty (Marsden, 1991) and civil rights (Sernett, 1999). This study is less interested in the specific ways religious individuals and groups promote justice, but instead focuses on *social justice prioritization*, or how important it is to members to have their congregation support social justice activities (i.e., help people in need, reduce poverty, work for world peace and human rights, address local needs) as part of the mission and action of their congregation. In addition to prioritization, we are interested in the *participation* of members who are aware that their congregation has some type of social justice program (i.e., social service program or program to promote peace and justice). Throughout the study, “social justice engagement” will be used to refer to both *prioritization* and *participation*.

Given that approximately 42% of adults in the United States report attending a religious service at least weekly according to the World Values Survey (2006), examining the setting level characteristics of congregations associated with engagement in social justice is an important step in understanding the degree to which and how these congregations function as mediating structures to promote social justice. At the same time, characteristics of the individual will also be important in understanding the impact of mediating structures as individuals may respond differently to the same context depending on characteristics of the individual. For example, theologically conservative versus theological liberal individuals may hear and interpret messages of social justice engagement in fundamentally different ways in the same congregation (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005; Marsden, 1991). We are interested in characteristics of the mediating structure, the individual, and how these interact to influence social justice engagement. The multilevel nature of the data in this study allows for such an examination of individual and congregational effects on social justice engagement.

This study will focus on four characteristics of individuals and congregations that relate to social justice engagement. The first characteristic is theological liberalism/conservatism, with both individuals and congregations falling somewhere on this continuum between theologically liberal and conservative. Generally referred to as theological orientation, this continuum is often defined by specific beliefs regarding biblical literalism, evangelism, and the role of the individual in society. Typically, theological conservatives promote biblical literalism, evangelism as outreach, and the individual staying separate from society whereas liberals stereotypically take the Bible less literally, focus on social works as outreach, and strive to be a part of the world (Hood et al., 2005). Historically, in the last century congregations have tended to be defined along this continuum with direct implications for how these congregations engage with social problems (Chaves, 2001; Wuthnow, 1996). For example, more liberal congregations have been found to provide more social services and to collaborate with other organizations whereas conservative congregations focus more on meeting the needs within their own religious community with less external collaboration (Chaves, 2001; Hoge, Zech, McNamara, & Donahue, 1998). This study explores how theological orientation relates to individual and congregational social justice engagement.

The second characteristic of individuals and congregations related to social justice engagement is the frequency of participation in the religious setting, in this study conceptualized as how often individuals attend weekly church services and participate in other congregational activities. Intuitively, the impact of a mediating structure depends on an individual being present and engaged in the structure, with the influence of the mediating structure increasing as the individual increases in participation. Previous research has found that across denominations, increased church attendance relates to increased odds of giving to the poor (Regenerus, Smith, &

Sikkink, 1998), though other studies have found attendance to be negatively associated with community volunteering (Lam, 2002). In addition, Deckman (2002) found that associations between theological conservatism and particular social attitudes were moderated by attendance, with stronger relationships present for those with higher attendance. Examining frequency of religious participation as moderated by theological orientation will help to clarify how levels of participation in different types of religious congregations relate to social justice engagement.

The third and fourth characteristics of congregations related to social justice engagement are bonding and bridging social capital (Kim, Subramanian, & Kawachi, 2006; Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital refers to the web of relationships an individual has within their congregation, in this study characterized by the number of close friends present in one's religious congregation. Bridging social capital refers to connections outside of one's congregation, in this study represented by how much individuals agree that their congregation values cooperative projects with other congregations of different denominations. Studies examining bonding capital in religious communities have found positive effects for individuals with increased connections across class status (Wuthnow, 2002), the facilitation of moral development in adolescence (King & Furrow, 2004), and individual participation in civil rights activism in Black congregations (Brown & Brown, 2003; Chaves & Higgins, 1992). As a congregation level variable, bridging capital has been found to have positive impacts for the larger community with higher bridging related to reduced community crime (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2005) and greater community health (Kim et al., 2006). Though separate constructs, previous research has proposed an inverse relationship between bonding and bridging social capital, with higher bonding related to less bridging (Kim et al., 2006). This has been a consistent finding in conservative religious

communities, with more bonding related to less bridging capital (Campbell, 2004), reflecting this proposed trade-off between bonding and bridging capital. Bonding and bridging are important in understanding how social networks within and between congregations relate to social justice engagement. This study examines how individual and congregational bonding and bridging social capital relates to social justice engagement.

Up to this point, the four constructs of interest have been discussed at both the level of the individual and the congregation. This has been an intentional differentiation as the structure of the data (e.g., multiple individuals nested within multiple congregations) allows for a multilevel examination of both the individual and congregational influences of the four constructs of interest. This distinction allows for a direct testing of how participation in particular types of religious settings impacts individual social justice engagement while concurrently accounting for characteristics of the individual, particularly as they differ from the settings in which they participate (e.g., separating individual and congregational effects). Practically, this means hypotheses can be generated about how individual characteristics relate to social justice engagement while simultaneously proposing how characteristics of religious settings also impact individual social justice engagement (i.e., the characterization of the setting based on the aggregate of individual characteristics). For example, one can examine the degree to which the theological orientation of individuals *and* the theological orientations of settings relate to social justice engagement. Moreover, the moderating impact of context can be tested by examining cross-level interactions where particular individual-level associations (e.g., depth of religious involvement and engagement with social justice) may be moderated by particular congregational contexts (e.g., generally liberal vs. conservative congregations). This approach which

simultaneously considers multiple constructs at multiple levels helps to elucidate how particular setting characteristics influence particular types of people and their social justice engagement.

The following sections provide expanded theoretical and empirical reviews of the four constructs – theological orientation, frequency of religious participation, bonding social capital, bridging social capital – and their proposed relationship to social justice engagement.

Throughout all of these sections the importance of theological orientation as both an explanatory and moderating variable in relation to social justice engagement is centralized. Two preludes to these sections are first offered to clarify the conceptualization and operationalization of social justice engagement and to situate the current study within the historical context of Christianity in the United States with a particular focus on theological orientation. After these two preludes, the main constructs of interest will be discussed to provide a rationale for the specific study hypotheses. Broadly speaking, this study will explore the extent to which religious contexts – mainly defined by theological orientation – shape their individual members’ social justice engagement. Specifically, the study will examine how theological orientation, frequency of religious participation, and bonding/bridging social capital operate at individual and setting levels to explain social justice engagement (i.e., examining both individual and congregational effects). Moreover, the study will explore how particular individual-level relationships (e.g., frequency of religious participation and engagement with social justice) may be moderated by particular congregational contexts (e.g., liberal vs. conservative congregations). Overall this study provides an integrated multilevel examination of the independent and interactive effects of theological orientation, frequency of religious participation, bonding social capital, and bridging social capital on social justice engagement at both individual and congregational levels of analysis.

Two Preludes

Defining Social Justice Engagement

The general framing of “social justice engagement” in this study focuses on *prioritization of and participation in* congregational activities intended to help those in need, to reduce poverty, to work for world peace and human rights, and to address local needs. The purpose of this section is to specify how social justice engagement is operationalized in the current study with an associated discussion of how this conceptualization compares to other definitions of social justice. Concretely, social justice engagement is approached in two ways in this study. First, prioritization captures how high of a priority individuals think their congregation should have for a variety of tasks related to social justice such as engaging in programs to help the needy, programs to promote human rights and well-being, or groups to promote world peace and justice. This conceptualization assesses how the individual prioritizes their congregation being involved in social justice, with a focus outside of their explicit congregation. Second, social justice participation reflects the amount of time individuals participated in congregational programs to provide a community social service or to promote peace and justice. Taken together, social justice prioritization and participation constitute social justice engagement in this study.

Measurement is not content based. Absent from this conceptualization of social justice engagement is any type of data regarding the concrete activities or programs individuals or congregations are labeling as social justice. There are both advantages and disadvantages to this strategy, with the major disadvantage being the inability to know what types of activities participants are considering “social justice.” Other bodies of work suggest that although congregations engage in many similar types of justice activities (e.g., food distribution, Chaves, 2001), there is still variability between congregations on the types and amounts of social justice

activities. The current study does not allow for comparisons based on types of social justice activity. On the other hand, it could be difficult to compare involvement between churches as different types of projects/activities may inherently take different amounts of time, resources, or commitment and may carry different meanings for the members. The current study circumvents some of these issues by not comparing content, but rather compares how individuals prioritize and participate in whatever social justice activities are available to them in their local congregation. Though not intended to be a method of standardization, this strategy helps to focus on how individuals prioritize and participate relative to their own idiosyncratic definitions and methods of engaging with justice. Examining social justice prioritization and participation as relative to the congregation also helps to step around the conundrum that congregations have different values and may be working for different, possibly contradictory outcomes in the name of justice. For example, one church may work to support gay marriage while another church works to keep marriage between heterosexual couples. Different churches may have different goals related to justice, and this method of content-free measurement circumvents the creation of criteria to judge the values of congregations as consistent with social justice or not, but focuses on what features of congregations orient their members to social action – however idiosyncratically defined. Even though we hope to avoid setting up criteria for judgment, it may be helpful to locate this current definition of social justice in the larger discourse of social justice (e.g., Miller, 1999; Rawls, 1971).

Definitions of social justice. Although an in-depth examination is beyond the scope of this study, there is considerable philosophical debate over what constitutes an act of “justice” and even more so an act of “social justice.” Furthermore, it has been argued that the term social justice should be reserved for actions that have the intention of enacting structural change to

decrease inequality and not to acts of charity that seek to relieve the suffering caused by these structural inequalities (National Committee Responsive Philanthropy, 2003). Similar to the distinction between *ameliorative* and *transformative* change (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004), an act qualifies as socially just if it seeks transformative change through changing structures instead of by ameliorating the problem through charity, ultimately perpetuating the problem. This study will not settle these disputes, and given that the method of measurement does not allow for the identification of exactly what people are doing, there is not any leverage to judge or classify if their actions are geared toward structural change or alleviating suffering through acts of charity. At the same time, the current study uses the language of “social justice” as most of the work congregations do focus on addressing problems such as poverty (even if not with intended structural solutions) as well as many of the items of the social justice prioritization scale use “justice” language. Moreover, these “justice” actions are being mediated through the social structure of the church, with the resulting “justice” actions being social in nature as they are carried out by or mediated through the congregational community.

Social justice mediated through the congregation. In addition, the social justice engagement in this study is directly related to what the individual thinks the congregation should be doing (prioritization) and how they are personally involved in what the congregation is doing (participation), thus centralizing the congregation as a mediator for social justice. Though appropriate given the overarching focus on the congregation as a mediating structure, these data do not speak to how individuals may be involved in other types of social service provision, volunteerism, or other forms of social justice activities located outside of the congregation. It is possible that congregations may encourage this type of extra-congregational social justice activity, though the data in this study are not able to address such questions. Still, the current

study advances knowledge by examining the role of the congregation as a mediating structure in connecting congregational participation with social justice engagement.

History

Two major assumptions guiding this study are that, a) there are marked differences between congregations on certain variables such as theological orientation and that, b) these variables of interest relate in meaningful ways to social justice engagement. Although there is an empirical literature to support these assumptions, there is also a rich historical account that supports these assertions. This section will highlight parts of this history by focusing on the early 20th century through the 1980's, as it was during this time period that theological orientation became more central to the definition of religious groups, with the current demarcations of fundamentalists, Evangelicals, and mainline Protestants reflecting this continuum (Hood et al., 2005; Marsden, 1991; Noll, 1992; Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Furthermore, it was often issues regarding the role of church in society, especially around issues of *if*, *how*, and *why* to intervene in social problems, that directly related to particular types of congregations adopting particular attitudes and behaviors regarding social justice. This historical account examines how religious traditions in the United States became increasingly fragmented along the continuum of theological orientation and how this fragmentation relates directly to social justice engagement.

Denominations, religious tradition, and theological orientation. Religious diversity has been a hallmark of United States history, from the founding of the country on principles of religious freedom to the numerous splits and schisms that have occurred resulting in new religious organizations (Sutton & Chaves, 2001). As discussed by Chaves (2001), the United States served as fertile soil for a variety of religious denominations (i.e., formal national religious organizations connected to congregations such as Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist) and religious

traditions (i.e., theological traditions such as Anabaptist, Reformed, Catholic that are not linked to a specific denomination). At the beginning of the 20th century, most congregations were strongly defined by their denomination and tradition. This review begins at the turn of the 20th century as religious organizations faced a number of social and theological challenges to their faith. The response to these challenges began to shape new movements within Christianity, thrusting to prominence theological orientation as an organizing principle with the emergence of a continuum containing fundamentalists, Evangelicals, mainline Protestants, and liberal Christians. Moreover, Chaves (2001) makes the argument that:

Indeed, the social salience of this distinction within denominations and religious families led Robert Wuthnow (1988) to argue influentially that this liberal-conservative line, cutting across denominations, has replaced denominations and religious families as the most sociologically significant religious boundary within American [*sic*] society.

Wuthnow (1988) further makes the argument that although some denominations may be, on average, more liberal or conservative than others, that there is considerable difference within denominations and traditions regarding theological orientation. The consequence of this observation is that though denomination and tradition may be important, theological orientation may be more relevant and exert more of a direct influence on personal attitudes and behavior. As the historic events responsible for this increased salience of theological orientation are presented, it should be noted that the major questions facing congregations during these challenges were to engage or withdraw from society (especially regarding if and how to address social issues), and how to maintain fidelity to traditional biblical interpretation.

Social Gospel Movement (1900-1920s). An event that influenced the structure of religious organizations in the United States was the theological development of the Social

Gospel Movement. Walter Rauschenbusch, one of the major founders, leaders, and writers of this movement (1907, 1917), developed a systematic theology where Christian ethics were directly applied to pressing social problems of his day, with a call for social responsibility to address social problems. His work quickly became associated with socialism, communism, and was branded a type of liberal theology dangerous to more traditional individualistic interpretations of scripture. Religious conservatives began to associate social justice as a liberal agenda and not appropriate for the mission of the church (Evans, 2001; Marsden, 1991; Noll, 1992). Engaging with society to address social issues was seen as suspect whereas a disengagement with society, except for the purpose of evangelism to save souls, was embraced by more conservative individuals and congregations. Mainline Protestants and liberal Christians embraced the spirit of the Social Gospel movement and saw their faith related to social justice action. This marked one of the beginnings of a “liberal/conservative” divide centered on interpretations of scripture and the role of church in engaging with society, with liberal Christians embracing social justice as part of the mission of the church whereas conservative Christians began to withdraw.

Red Scare, Prohibition, Scopes Trial (1920s). In addition to the Social Gospel movement, a series of societal events served to further catalyze liberal/conservative divides in the 1920s. First, the Red Scare of the 1920s and growing anti-communism fervor identified any collective system of thought –including the Social Gospel – as communist, socialist, and ultimately anti-Christian. In addition, there were deep struggles during the 1920s regarding the role of religion in society, with prohibition lasting from 1920-1933, a movement largely driven by religious fervor (Green, 2005). The eventual overturning of this “godly” amendment was interpreted by many religious conservatives as societal degeneration and a loss of political and social influence.

This loss of influence was further solidified with the Scopes trial of 1925 where religious conservatives, led by William Jennings Bryan, were unable to have their point of view (e.g., the non-teaching of evolution in schools) enforced. This directly resulted in a deep reaction and withdrawal from more conservative leaning people, leading to a disengagement from society and inward focus to their religious congregations. Without a view outward, social justice was not enacted or engaged. These events of the 1920s contributed to a growing liberal/conservative divide, with the ultimate outcome of religiously conservative people retreating from society and active engagement with social justice.

Fundamentalists, Evangelicals, and Mainline Protestants (1940s). Numerous scholars (Hood et al., 2005; Woodberry & Smith, 1998) detail how the conservative groups who withdrew from society at this time eventually branched to form those currently classified as fundamentalist (Hood et al., 2005) and Evangelical (Hubbard, 1991), with a defining characteristic of both groups being their attitude toward the Christian Bible and the importance of the proper interpretation of scripture. Fundamentalists generally hold a strict literal interpretations of the Bible (e.g., high view of scripture, biblical inerrancy) and reactionary view toward society (e.g., going to war with society) whereas Evangelicals have a high but not literal view of scripture (e.g., a more nuanced position regarding infallibility and interpretation; Evangelical Manifesto, 2008; Hubbard, 1991). In addition, specific Evangelical – as opposed to fundamentalist – educational institutions (e.g., Fuller Theological Seminary, Wheaton College) and national organizations (e.g., National Association of Evangelicals) were formed in the 1940's as a further indicator of the differentiation within conservative Christianity between fundamentalist and Evangelical. There is overlap between some tenants of fundamentalist and Evangelical belief and denominational membership as well as overlap between Evangelical and

mainline denominations. Even so, these broad designations regarding interpretation of scripture represent the underlying continuum of theologically conservative (fundamentalist) to theologically liberal (mainline Protestants). These examples of distinct theological beliefs and the emergence of educational and national organizations reflects the growing divide among Christian denominations and adds further evidence to the variability between congregations on theological orientation. Understanding the broad differences – especially in regards to beliefs about Scripture and engagement with society – among fundamentalists, Evangelicals, and mainline Protestants is central to this study and provides a rationale to conceptualize theological orientation along a continuum, to operationalize theological orientation as related to beliefs about Scripture, and to control for denomination throughout the analyses.

Rise of the Religious Right (1980s). Finally, the rise of the religious right, as described by Woodberry and Smith (1998) and Marsden (1991), is an important historical phenomenon in understanding the intersection of conservative Protestants with politics. Instead of withdrawing from society, a national movement within conservative religious organizations sought to influence United States society through voting political candidates into office who embodied their values and perspective. This movement was very political in nature with pastors, congregations, and denominational leaders encouraging the voting for particular candidates. The idea was to restore political control to religious conservatives to uphold traditional values. This movement reached its first pinnacle when Pat Robertson made a serious run for president in 1988, though was ultimately defeated in the primaries by George H. W. Bush. Robertson then endorsed Bush, and the block of “religious right” conservative voters arguably helped to eventually elect this Republican president. The rise of the religious right also ushered in a new era of linking religious belief to political preference and voting, an effect that still impacts our

political system. Yet, increased political activity along religious lines should not be equated with an increase in social justice engagement. If anything, the rise in the religious right further solidified the separation of religious organizations based on theological orientation and marks another way that conservative individuals became less personally involved in the social sphere: investing their energies to elect a like-minded person instead of personally engaging with local social problems. Understanding this social milieu of religious voting and the merging of faith with politics in the late 1980s is especially relevant given that the current data were collected in 1987, and provides further evidence to examine individual and congregational level influences of theological orientation on social justice engagement.

Catholic developments (1960s). Absent from this review is a discussion of developments in the Catholic Church during this same time period related to justice. Although the Catholic faith has a deep commitment and action to social issues (e.g., the Catholic Worker Movement), the focus and breadth of this commitment was sharpened through theological refinement during Vatican II (1962-1965). Vatican II was a series of meetings over a number of years culminating in a re-writing and clarification of Catholic theological doctrine. A major emphasis of these new documents was intersecting faith with social justice, opening the door for individuals and congregations to have their social justice activities legitimated through official church doctrine. Even post Vatican II, the Catholic Church has continued to produce theological statements (e.g., encyclicals; Heyer, 2005) intersecting faith with justice. In regards to theological orientation, most of this framing regarding definitions of theologically liberal/conservatism has occurred in Protestant churches and is denoted by Chaves (2001) as located within Protestantism. This historical point is important when understanding the construct of theological orientation within Catholic Churches in this study.

Historical conclusions. This historical review supports the assumption that there will be individual and congregational variability in theological orientation, and provides evidence that these differences have become more codified over time. Furthermore, this review suggests that this difference in theological orientation will relate to how individuals and congregations engage in social justice. Finally, the review discussed that the treatment of Scripture – as literal, inerrant, metaphoric – is intertwined as a major defining feature of congregations as liberal or conservative. Taken together, this review suggests that not only will individuals and congregations differ in theological orientation as defined by attitudes toward Scripture, but that these differences will also relate to social justice engagement.

Study Variables

Theological Orientation

Overview. The historical review argued that denominations and traditions in the United States differ in meaningful ways along a continuum of theological conservatism/liberalism, and that attitudes toward scripture are one way to define a theological conservatism/liberalism continuum. Furthermore, it was posited that theological orientation relates directly to engagement in social justice. This section buttresses these claims from an empirical perspective and demonstrates that there are marked differences between individuals and congregations in theological orientation and that such differences relate to social justice engagement. Theoretical explanations for these findings will then be presented culminating in the general hypothesis that individual and congregational theological liberalism will be positively related to social justice engagement.

Defining and measuring theological orientation. The historical overview highlighted a multifaceted definition of theological orientation consisting of a reaction against liberalism,

attitudes toward scripture, and particular attitudes toward social engagement. In the empirical literature, the measurement of theological orientation does not capture this complexity, but often focuses on specific markers for theological orientation (Regenurus et al., 1998; Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Woodberry and Smith discuss three such markers of theological orientation – denomination, theological belief, and self-identification – and weigh the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. The denominational approach classifies denominations or traditions as liberal or conservative based on a socio/historical/theological analysis, where major denominations and traditions are sorted along a liberal/conservative or exclusive/universal continuum (Smith, 1987; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003, p. 413; Steensland et al., 2000; Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Though helpful, this approach does not account for congregational or individual differences in theological orientation, may misclassify congregations, and may be predicated on an inaccurate definition of the liberal/conservative continuum. A second measurement approach is to examine adherence to specific theological beliefs (e.g., otherworldliness, born-again, Christian orthodoxy, beliefs about scripture) with the assumption that closer adherence to orthodox beliefs relates to theological conservatism. There is debate about which theological beliefs should be considered “orthodox,” which beliefs are central to defining to theological orientation, and how to combine these beliefs into a meaningful scale (see Green, Guth, Smidt, & Kellstedt (1996) for further discussion of how to designate conservative protestants based on particular beliefs). Third, Woodberry and Smith (1998) propose self-identification with religious movements (i.e., fundamentalism, evangelicalism, mainline protestant) as another avenue for determining theological orientation. Finally, Hood et al. (2005) argue that conservatism is best understood, and subsequently defined, as a meaning system that is created based on a strict adherence to religious texts such as scripture. This

engagement to find “intertextual meaning” from scripture is proposed as the defining feature of conservatism, and is proposed to be associated with a number of theologically conservative beliefs. Similar to Silberman (2005), religion, and specifically understandings of religious scripture, form a coherent meaning system, especially for religious conservatives. Overall, theological orientation has been operationalized in multiple ways across the psychological and sociological study of religion, though it is evident throughout these definitions how important attitudes toward scripture are in defining and differentiating theological liberals and conservatives.

In this study, theological orientation is assessed through a measure of participants’ attitudes toward the Bible and biblical interpretation. Socio-historically this method of assessment relates directly to debates within Protestant Christianity over how the Bible should be interpreted with more theologically conservative individuals holding to a more literal/absolutist interpretation, liberals embracing a variety of non-literalist interpretations, and Evangelical Christians falling somewhere in-between with a high view of Scripture that allows for ambiguity (Evangelical Manifesto, 2008; Hood et al., 2005; Hubbard, 1991; Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Moreover, sociological and psychological research have used this variable as a proxy for theological orientation and this method of measurement has become a standard in the field. Kellstedt and Smidt (1993) outline the basic format of such questions, where participants are asked their degree of agreement that scripture should be interpreted literally or is inerrant, or alternatively that scripture should be interpreted non-literally and understood as a set of metaphoric stories which may not be actually true. The construct validity of such an item, or that attitudes toward scriptural interpretation represents theological liberalism / conservatism, has been relatively well established since this item predicts self-identification as theologically liberal

or conservative (Wuthnow, 1996), other theological beliefs that are considered conservative such as “orthodox” or “fundamentalist” (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005; Watson et al., 2003), political identification as liberal or conservative and associated presidential voting behavior (Kellstedt & Smidt, 1993), other political attitudes associated with conservatism such as attitudes toward gay marriage (Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006) and gay civil rights (Rosik, 2007a, 2007b), the environment (Guth, Green, Kellstedt, & Smidt, 1995), abortion (Kellstedt & Smidt, 1993), and social conservatism (Felson & Kindell, 2007). Finally, a wealth of research has been conducted using the Religious fundamentalism scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992, 2004). Although this scale assesses religious fundamentalism, at least half of the items ask about attitudes toward interpretation of scripture, with more literalist/inerrant responses indicting greater religious fundamentalism. This scale is strongly (correlations consistently greater than .55) associated with Christian orthodox beliefs, dogmatism, religious prejudice, and right wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005), constructs that are also purported to define theological conservatives. Therefore, the religious fundamentalism scale, based on items about the literal interpretation of scripture, provides further empirical support for the use of attitudes toward scripture as a measure of theological orientation. Although one question can not pick up on all of the historical, theological, and political nuance between conservative and liberal Christians (for a summary of this critique see Woodberry & Smith, 1998), this approach to measurement focusing on Scripture is a standard in the field and reflects the historical differentiations of liberal and conservative Christians and will be used as the measure of theological orientation in this study.

Attitudes toward scripture have also been used to assess theological orientation for Catholics. Although Catholics have a different history and emphasis on scripture than

Protestants, the use of attitudes toward scripture has been found to predict political party affiliation, presidential voting behavior, and attitudes toward abortion for Catholics as well as protestants (Kellstedt & Smidt, 1993). Wuthnow (1996) has also shown that the distribution of religious conservatives, moderates, and liberals is similar within Catholic and other Protestant denominations, indicating that there are similar amounts of variation on theological orientation within Catholic traditions. Even so, it is more common in research to see Catholic and Protestants separated for analyses, or Catholics used as the reference group in analysis. This convention is followed in this study with denomination used as a control in order to examine the influence of theological orientation without the confound of denomination. Furthermore, we use Catholic as the reference group, which is often the case in research across denominations (Schwadel, 2005).

Theological orientation and congregational social services. Examining social service provision provides an examination of how congregations attempt to improve society or to alleviate suffering. This provides some insight into how theological orientation may influence social justice engagement, particularly because there is a limited research base regarding the latter. Though the *types* of social services offered by congregations did not differ based on theological orientation, Chaves (2001) notes that religious tradition and theological orientation did relate to the *amount* of social services provided, with

Moderate and liberal Protestant congregations, as well as Catholic and Jewish congregations, perform more social services than conservative Protestant congregations. Without regard to denominational affiliation, self-described theologically liberal congregations also perform more social services than self-described conservative congregations. (p. 53).

Chaves concludes that these findings are in line with previous research, attributing this pattern to liberal individuals and congregations being more connected to the community outside of their congregation whereas conservative individuals and congregations focus on the congregation. In addition, Kangy (1992) found that congregational theological orientation, as defined by the congregation's aggregated view of the Bible, related to the prioritization of social action with more liberal congregations placing a higher priority on social action. These findings corroborate the historical narrative where mainline-liberal churches have a stronger emphasis on social justice through practical engagement with the local community whereas conservative churches expended their energy within their congregation. Thus, given the current study focuses on social justice engagement with the broader community, it is likely that liberal individuals and congregations will evidence more social justice engagement than conservative individuals and congregations.

Individual volunteering. The likelihood of greater social justice engagement among liberals is supported by research on theological orientation and individual volunteering. While there is a dearth of research examining social justice engagement, literature regarding the intersection of theological orientation and volunteering shows ways in which religious organizations serve as mediating structures by connecting individuals to voluntary participation within and outside the church, most likely in the service of addressing individual and community needs. People involved in religious organizations tend to volunteer more than non-religious individuals, and there are no differences between liberal, moderate, and conservative Protestants in amounts of general volunteering (Lam, 2002). Thus, theological orientation is less important in determining *if* religious individuals volunteer, but *where and how* they volunteer with more conservative individuals volunteering within their church whereas more liberal individuals

volunteer in secular organizations. For example, Hoge et al., (1998) found that conservative versus mainline-liberal members of congregations exhibited more religious volunteering whereas mainline-liberal members exhibited more secular volunteering. Park and Smith (2000) reported similar findings where they found that, based on their cross-sectional nationally representative sample of Protestants, that self-labeling as conservative related to more within congregation volunteering whereas self-labeling as liberal related to more secular volunteering. In addition, Wilson and Janoski (1995) found a similar pattern of conservatives volunteering within their congregations and liberals volunteering in the secular world. Using a panel design, Wilson and Janoski also posited that theological orientation may impact *when* religious individuals begin to connect personal faith with volunteering to address community problems. They note that Catholics appear to make this connection early in life, liberal Protestants in midlife, whereas moderate and conservative Protestants do not appear to make this connection. In summary, though volunteering appears to be important regardless of theological orientation, conservatives volunteer more within their church whereas liberals volunteer more in secular society. This general pattern of conservatives engaging more within their congregation whereas liberals engage outside of their church is instructive when considering social justice engagement, with the implication that liberal individuals and congregations will exhibit greater social justice engagement since in this study this engagement is focused outside the church (i.e., local community and world).

Theoretical explanation for the impact of theological orientation. Although the historical narrative and empirical work presented earlier provide a backdrop to understand the relationship of theological orientation to engagement with social justice, these examples do not provide a theoretical account of *why* or *how* theological orientation relates to social justice engagement.

One possible explanation is that the specific theological beliefs of liberals and conservatives are different, and that such beliefs are associated with social justice engagement. Before discussing specific beliefs, it is important to understand how *theological* beliefs may translate into *personal/political* beliefs and behavior. Kaufman (2004) discusses theories of how religious belief may impact personal belief/behavior by discussing; (a) cognitive theories of internal consistency with the tendency for people to seek congruence among multiple beliefs/preferences, (b) social identity and group belonging dynamics within a congregation may impact individuals to hold particular beliefs similar to their group, and (c) the context of a religious organization to provide a lived space to perform and act out these beliefs. Hood et al. (2005) expands these arguments to propose that religious texts provide meaning and purpose, and that this meaning system constrains other beliefs individuals may hold. Kellstedt and Smidt (1993) describe similar arguments, and propose that individuals seek consistency in belief, such that individuals who believe the Bible is literally true may feel constrained to have particular beliefs about women, abortion, and gay rights based on their understanding of what the literal truth of scripture tells them. At the same time, Unnever and Cullen (2006) caution that there may not be a direct relationship between beliefs and actions as people hold multiple, possibly competing religious beliefs especially around issues such as the death penalty. In short, there are multiple theories of how religious belief may be impacting the personal actions and beliefs of the individual, though a common element of these theories is the importance of a religious community in the formation and enactment of beliefs. This study specifically examines how participation in particular types of religious organizations (e.g., liberal or conservative) influences individual social justice engagement, thus contributing an understanding of how setting level contexts impacts personal belief (social justice prioritization) and behavior (social justice participation).

Differences in one belief that has traditionally separated theologically liberal and conservative individuals – pre-millennial dispensationalism – will be used as an example of how a particular belief may relate to particular attitudes toward social justice engagement. Pre-millennial dispensationalism, also known as otherworldliness (Barker & Carman, 2000; Wilcox, Linzey, & Jelen, 1991; Wilson, 1995), has historically and empirically been associated as a conservative belief (Hood, Hill & Williamson, 2005; Marsden, 1991). Pre-millennial dispensationalism is the belief that the world cannot get better until Christ returns and that human efforts to address social problems are ultimately futile and may actually be counter-productive to ushering in the second coming of Christ (Hood et al., 2005). One result of an adherence to this belief is an “otherworldly” focus, where evangelism and the winning of souls become of primary importance to ensure that people are ready for the second coming. In contrast, post-millennial dispensationalism is the belief that Christ will not return until humanity has improved the social conditions to a point that we are experiencing a “heaven on earth.” This post-millennial belief was a key part of the Social Gospel, leading theological conservatives to reject the Social Gospel as well as to have liberals focus on social works to improve the human condition to more quickly bring about the kingdom of God. Empirically, a premillennial belief has been associated with a decreased sense of efficacy for political participation, probably due to perceived futility in having influence through political participation since the second coming of Christ is immanent (Wilcox et al., 1991). This short example of conservative and liberal views on dispensationalism (pre- versus post-millennial) shows how particular beliefs associated with theological orientation relate to social justice engagement, with pre-millennial impeding action whereas post-millennial encourages action based on a religious belief.

Other beliefs such as a Calvinist based freewill individualism (Emerson, Smith, & Sikkink, 1999) and negative images of God (e.g., God as harsh or wrathful; Froese & Bader, 2008; Unnever & Cullen, 2006) may be other examples of conservative/liberal beliefs that contribute to social justice engagement. Furthermore, Emerson and Smith (2000) have provided compelling evidence that evangelical Christians have an individualistic and anti-structural view of social problems, with direct implications for their proposed relational solutions for racism in the United States. Based on these examples, it is reasonable to hypothesize that theological orientation will be an integral variable in this study as both an explanatory and moderating variable. Given these examples of conservative beliefs that discourage social justice engagement, it is likely in this study that theological conservatives will exhibit less social justice engagement than theological liberals.

Frequency of Religious Participation

Defining and measuring frequency of participation. For this study, frequency of participation is conceptualized as frequency of religious service attendance and participation in congregational activities (i.e., religious education, extra worship church activities). Taken together, these various types of engagement reflect participation in services, extra types of education, and additional church related activities. Individuals involved in frequent and multiple activities will evidence greater frequency of participation whereas those participating less or in one capacity will reflect less depth of involvement. Given that this study examines the influence of contextual level factors on individual action, it is important to understand the degree to which individuals are interfacing with the setting as greater frequency of participation may relate to increased internalized of group norms with a stronger impact on engagement (Wilson & Janoski, 1995). For example, Deckman (2002) found that associations between theological

conservatism and particular social attitudes were moderated by attendance, with stronger relationships present for those with higher attendance. In addition, scholars argue that participation, especially in leadership roles in a congregation (e.g., serving on a committee), increases the likelihood of civic participation and develops the skills necessary to volunteer in secular society (Park & Smith, 2000; Schwadel, 2005). In other words, participating in a religious context may build skills and social networks that increase extra-church civic participation.

Frequency of religious participation and religiosity. This conceptualization of frequency of participation – attendance and participation in congregational activities – reflects a combination of standard measurements of religiosity. Religiosity is often defined as concrete, observable behaviors relating to religious participation. For example, measurements of religiosity often focus on (a) frequency of attendance, (b) engagement in extra church religious activities such as Bible reading and prayer, and (c) participation in extra church programs like Bible study or choir. These measures of religiosity differ from measures of spirituality, whereas spirituality focuses on the (a) personal importance of religion, (b) feelings related to transcendence or connectedness to something outside of oneself, and (c) spiritual well being (Gorsuch, 1984; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Slater, Hall, & Edwards, 2004). The current study does not focus on spirituality, but the degree of participation in religious activities in a given congregation, and how such involvement relates to social justice engagement.

Frequency of religious participation: Moderated by theological orientation? Although a few studies have examined the relation of religiosity to specific social justice outcomes (e.g., volunteering), the authors of this work note many difficulties when studying the direct impact of religiosity (Hoge et al., 1998; Kaufman, 2004; Lam, 2002; Park & Smith, 2000; Regenerus et al.,

1998). First, religiosity is a multi-faceted construct with different relationships emerging depending on the specific component of religiosity under study (Lam, 2002). For example, Park and Smith (2000) found different relationships between religiosity and volunteering when religiosity was defined as attendance versus involvement in church activities. Second, literature has shown that religious conservatives report higher levels of church attendance and involvement (Hoge et al., 1998), thus conclusions based on attendance could be confounded with conservatism. Specifying the theological orientation of the individual and congregation becomes important when understanding the impact of involvement, as there may be different effects for participation depending on if the congregation is liberal or conservative. Third, religiosity may have different impacts depending on the specific outcome of interest, even if all outcomes relate to some facet of social justice. For example, Regenurus et al. (1998) found that regardless of denomination there was a positive relationship between church attendance and giving to the poor whereas Lam (2002) found a negative relationship between religious attendance and secular volunteering. Lam (2002) and Hoge et al. (1998) posit that this negative association may be a function of higher attendance being associated with more church involvement, leaving less time for secular volunteering; or that the link between conservative leanings and within church volunteering may account for this negative association. Nevertheless, these examples show the difficulty in making blanket statements about the impact of frequency of participation without understanding the type of context the individual is engaged in. The current study will examine the relationship between depth of involvement and social justice engagement and how this relationship may be moderated by theological orientation. Specifically, one might expect that greater participation will relate to social justice engagement differently depending on the type of congregation one is participating in, with greater involvement in

conservative churches associated negatively with social justice engagement whereas greater involvement in liberal congregations may relate positively with social justice engagement.

Bonding and Bridging Social Capital:

Bonding social capital. There are multiple definitions of bonding social capital in the literature, though most center on personal connections and interpersonal interactions as central to the definition of bonding social capital (Field, 2003). Field (2003) describes three different conceptualizations and definitions of social capital, reflected in the development of the construct by Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam. According to Field, (2003), Bourdieu discusses bonding capital as the sum of resources that accumulate due to the social ties of an individual, providing an explanation of how privileged social group members use their social connections to maintain their privileged position, thus maintaining inequality. In contrast, rooted in rational choice theory, Coleman describes bonding social capital as a resource that is produced as individuals cooperate with the expectation of reciprocity, creating future obligations to maximize ones' self interested goals. Putnam extends and refines these definitions of social capital by focusing on connections among individuals, and the trust and norms of reciprocity that come from such associations. Furthermore, Putnam describes bonding social capital as maintaining strong in-group loyalty and mobilizing solidarity around shared values. Each of these definitions from Bourdiue, Coleman, and Putnam provide slightly different understanding of what bonding capital is, and what social effects are produced from such capital. Nevertheless, each definition assumes that social ties within a group are foundational to the definition of bonding social capital. This basic definition is reflected in this study, where bonding social capital is defined as friendship ties, or the number of close friends present in one's religious congregation. In this study, we extend the literature on social capital as defined by friendship ties, by examining how such ties

are associated with social justice engagement. In addition, we measure social capital at both individual (i.e., how many bonding ties an individual has) and congregational (i.e., how dense is the bonding in a congregation measured by the average number of bonding ties) levels, allowing for the assessment of effects at both levels. We propose that bonding capital creates a context where people can do more together than they could if they were operating alone. Therefore, connection within a congregation is proposed to be associated with how much individuals prioritize social justice activities, as well as becoming involved in such activities. Bonding also creates a form of collective capacity for cooperation to address local needs and to engage in justice activities.

The beneficial role of bonding social capital in religious organizations has been examined in previous research. Wuthnow (2002) found that bonding capital related to increased connections across class status, with membership in church organizations providing a context for friendship across class status. King and Furrow (2004) examined the role of bonding capital in moral development in adolescence, showing that religious settings provided social interaction, trust, and shared vision with adults and peers (the three-fold way they were defining social capital to account for the positive moral outcomes of empathy, perspective taking, and altruism). In short, these interactions in the religious setting accounted for the positive moral outcomes for these adolescents (King & Furrow, 2004). Furthermore, in Black congregations, greater bonding social capital in an activist type of church related to increased individual participation in civil rights activism (Brown & Brown, 2003; Chaves & Higgins, 1992). Moreover, Campbell (2004) argues that higher within group similarity and connection may relate to an ability to more quickly mobilize around issues salient to the specific community such as civil rights activism. These studies exhibit how bonding social capital may be a positive force across a number of

domains within religious congregations. The current study adds to this literature, to examine how bonding social capital at both individual and congregational levels may be associated with social justice engagement, an outcome variable that has not been examined in previous scholarship.

Bridging social capital. Similar to bonding social capital, bridging social capital is centered on social relationships. In contrast to bonding social, bridging capital focuses on ties between heterogeneous group members (Putnam, 2000). As discussed by Field (2003), Bourdieu and Coleman do not make the differentiation between bonding and bridging social capital, whereas Putnam (2000) was the first to bring this distinction to the mainstream literature, defining bridging social capital as the ties between individuals from diverse social groups. These types of connections overcome the tendency of homophily, or the tendency for “birds of a feather to flock together” (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Furthermore, Granovetter (1973) notes the importance of such ties between diverse groups, even if they are weak, as they provide linkages between multiple groups and open up the possibility for collaboration, cooperation, and the sharing of resources to address larger scale social problems. In this study, bridging social capital follows this tradition of connection across differences to refer to connections outside of one’s congregation, in this study represented by how much individuals agree that their congregation values cooperative projects with congregations of different denominations. At the individual level, bridging represents an awareness of congregational bridging activities whereas at the congregational level bridging is an aggregate perception that the congregation values cooperative projects with other denominations.

Bridging social capital has been found to have positive impacts for the larger community with higher bridging capital related to lower rates of community crime (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2005) and elevated levels of community health (Kim et al., 2006). These two studies are highlighted

due to their operationalization of bridging, that communities with higher percentages of religiously conservative churches would have lower amounts of bridging and higher amounts of bonding. Based on an historical analysis, the authors began with the assumption that conservative churches would be more inward focused and would exhibit less bridging capital. With religious denomination serving as a proxy for both conservatism and bridging, the authors then found that higher bridging related to less community crime (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2005) and greater community health (Kim et al., 2006). One of the difficulties of assessing the impact of bridging social capital is specifying the level of measurement, in these studies the level was at the broad community (e.g., assessed by community crime rates) and did not directly assess bridging at individual or group levels. In the current study, bridging is assessed at both individual and congregational levels, although the focus is more on congregational bridging and less on individual bridging. This is due to the measurement strategy, where the individual level assessment focuses on a reflection upon the group, not on an individual attitude (i.e., the question does not ask how much the individual values bridging, but rather how much the congregation values bridging). Even so, individual awareness of bridging may be associated with social justice engagement and is examined in this study. At the level of the congregation the interpretation is more clear, specifically that the aggregation of individual observations reflects something meaningful about how much the congregation engages in bridging.

Inverse association between bonding and bridging social capital. Though separate constructs, previous research has proposed an inverse relationship between bonding and bridging social capital, with higher bonding related to less bridging (Kim et al., 2006). This has been a consistent finding in conservative religious communities, with more bonding related to less bridging capital (Campbell, 2004), possibly reflecting this proposed trade-off between bonding

and bridging capital. In addition, some studies treat bonding/bridging social capital along a continuous dimension with bonding at one extreme and bridging at the other extreme (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2005; Kim et al., 2006), thus conflating the possible independent effects bonding and bridging social capital. The current study explores each construct separately, allowing for an examination of the independent effects of both bonding and bridging social capital. In addition, it is possible that the association between bonding and social justice engagement will depend the level of bridging of the congregation. Specifically, there may be a positive and stronger association between bonding and social justice engagement in high versus low bridging congregations. In this study we test this cross-level interaction to examine this hypothesis, and to extend the social capital literature to see how bonding and bridging may interact in relation to social justice engagement.

Bonding, bridging, and theological orientation. As with frequency of participation, it is important to take into account the individual and congregational context within which bonding and bridging social capital may be operating. Wald, Owen, and Hill (1990) argue that social psychological group processes within congregations may operate to shape individual attitude and behavior such as social cohesion, social conformity, and social identification. Bonding within a liberal church may produce fundamentally different results than bonding with a conservative congregation as these groups may have different perspectives, especially in relation to social justice engagement. A consistent finding is that more conservative congregations often have higher bonding but are less engaged with the world around them (e.g., less bridging, Campbell, 2004). Research has shown higher personal and congregational conservatism to relate to less civic engagement (Schwadel, 2005) and personal conservatism to less secular volunteering (Park & Smith, 2000). Wald, Owen, and Hill (1989) claim that Christian conservatives are

disconnected from society whereas Iannoccone (1994) posits that conservative churches are more strict and attempt to regulate and discourage participation in the world beyond the church. These theories serve as explanations for both higher bonding and lower bridging among conservatives. Bonding in these types of more conservative churches may then relate to less bridging, and for the current study, less social justice engagement.

At the same time, higher bonding within a particular tradition may not necessarily be negative, as Park and Smith (2000) demonstrated by showing that more relationships within a particular faith tradition increased volunteering activities and opportunities within the church, but not for secular volunteering. In addition to personal engagement, Chaves and Tsitios (2001) found, at the level of the congregation, that theological orientation impacted the degree of willingness to collaborate with others for social services. “Congregations are not equally likely to collaborate . . . large, mainline Protestant, theologically liberal congregations with more college graduates are significantly more likely than others to collaborate on social services” (p. 674). Also at the level of the congregation, Kangany (1992) found that stronger views of scripture (e.g., more conservative) related to less ecumenism (e.g., less cooperation across different religious groups). Taken together these findings indicate that personal and congregational theological orientation will be important to take into account when understanding the type of context where bonding relationships are developed and bridging relationships promoted. Based on this literature it is expected that higher bonding and bridging within liberal congregations will relate to more social justice engagement than in conservative congregations.

Demographic Variables

To understand the influence of theological orientation, frequency of participation, and bonding / bridging social capital on social justice engagement, it is important to control for

demographic variables. Previous research has shown that demographic variables are associated with both the outcome of social justice engagement and the various predictor variables. First, Wuthnow (1996) notes how the demographic variables of education and age are related to theological orientation with those who are less educated and who are older are more likely to be more theologically conservative. Woodberry and Smith (1998) further note that education is associated with attitudes toward biblical literalism, and other authors control for education when measures of biblical literalism are used for theological orientation (e.g., Felson & Kindell, 2007). Given the association between income and education, it also may be important to control for income. Although gender and race are not consistently associated with theological orientation (Wuthnow, 1996), it is possible that these variables are associated with social justice engagement with members of non-dominant groups (i.e., women, Blacks) more likely to prioritize and participate in congregational based social justice activities. Moreover, there may be differences in bonding within a congregation for women versus men, as well as for those who are White versus Black; therefore, controlling for these variables is important to understand how bonding social capital may predict social justice engagement. Finally, urbanicity, or if the person lives in an inner-city urban versus suburban location may also relate to the outcome of social justice engagement, where people from more urban settings may have greater exposure to social justice issues, and may also see their congregation as needing to be involved in activities to overcome injustice. All of these demographics, race, gender, education, income, and urbanicity are therefore examined in this study; specifically to understand the associations with the outcome of social justice engagement as well as to serve as controls. Denomination is also controlled for at level II.

Current Study and Hypotheses

The current study provides an integrated multilevel examination of how theological orientation, frequency of participation, bonding social capital, and bridging social capital may relate to social justice engagement at both individual and congregational levels of analysis. Thus, both individual and congregational level hypotheses are explored. Moreover, it was argued that the *type* of congregation (e.g., liberal or conservative, high or low bridging) may moderate individual level associations. Cross-level interactions are tested to examine possible moderations. Based on these arguments and the historical and empirical work surrounding the connection of theological orientation and social justice, the following individual level, congregational level, and cross-level interactive hypotheses are explored in this study:

- H₁: There will be a positive association between individual and congregational theological liberalism and social justice engagement¹.
- H₂: There will be a positive association between individual and congregational frequency of participation and social justice engagement.
- H₃: There will be a positive association between individual and congregational bonding and social justice engagement.
- H₄: There will be a positive association between individual and congregational bridging and social justice engagement.
- H₅: The association between frequency of participation and social justice engagement will be moderated by congregational theological orientation. It is predicted that within liberal congregations the association between frequency of participation and social justice engagement will be positive and stronger than in conservative congregations.
- H₆: The association between bonding and social justice engagement will be moderated by congregational theological orientation. It is predicted that within liberal congregations the association between bonding and social justice engagement will be positive and stronger than in conservative congregations.
- H₆: The association between social capital bonding and social justice engagement will be moderated by congregational social capital bridging. It is predicted that within

¹ Social Justice Engagement refers to both prioritization and participation throughout these hypotheses.

high bridging congregations, there will be a stronger positive association between bonding and social justice engagement than in low bridging congregations.

These hypotheses are tested while controlling for demographics and denomination.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Source of Data: Study Context and Sampling Procedures

The data used in this research, individual responses to the *Church and Community Planning Inventory* (CCPI), are from a large multi-method project sponsored by the Lilly Endowment² facilitated by the Center for Church and Community Ministries. As outlined in full detail by Dudley (1991), the purpose of the overarching project was, “to study congregational transformation toward social ministry” (p. 197) and encompassed multi-year involvement with congregations in Illinois and Indiana to facilitate and encourage the development of social justice initiatives. The CCPI was administered at the beginning of the project in 1987 to collect baseline data on participating congregations and is publicly available (www.thearda.com). As noted by Dudley, many of the CCPI items were drawn from previous scholarly work though items were also circulated and discussed by congregational leaders prior to dissemination. The final data set utilized in this study consists of 5,123 members of 62 congregations representing 11 different Christian denominations. Participants per congregation ranged from 14 through 222.

The sampling process used to select congregations for participation is important to understand who these individuals and congregations are and how to appropriately, if at all, generalize to other individuals and congregations. See Dudley (1991) for a complete description of the sampling methods. Overall, a multi-faceted sampling method was employed to select demographically “typical” mainline and evangelical churches within Illinois and Indiana. The demographics of interest were geographic population (one third rural, one third small cities and suburbs, one third metropolitan areas), denominational affiliation, congregation size, race/ethnicity, and liberal/conservative identification. To facilitate this representation, four

² <http://www.lillyendowment.org/>

geographic regions were selected (Chicago, Central Illinois, Northern Indiana, and Indianapolis). Within each region the main investigator and several denominational leaders from those areas selected prospective congregations that were “typical” and also were identified by these leaders as not heavily engaged in social ministry. Congregations not heavily engaged in social ministry were selected as the larger goal of the project was to increase sustainable social ministry. Prospective congregations were approached for participation in the larger multi-year project, offered seed money and support for the development of social ministries, were asked to plan and document their progress, and were asked to have lay leaders facilitate the endeavor. Dudley notes that, “about a third of the prospective congregations declined” with a lack of interest by lay leaders cited as the main reason for disinclination. Out of the remaining congregations, survey packets were mailed to all members, though “sampling procedures” were used in congregations larger than 250³. The average return rate was 55%, a rather high rate attributed by Dudley to buy-in and support from the church leaders (p. 203).

Although the data were collected in 1987, there are many compelling reasons to conduct a secondary analysis of the data that will contribute to the literature regarding religious participation and social justice engagement. First, the basic processes and relationships studied are likely to be stable over time and still applicable in today’s religious context. Second, the multilevel nature of the data provides a unique opportunity to examine individual and congregational effects in relation to social justice engagement. Given that there are few data sets with this type of structure or power, this analysis will contribute new findings to the literature. Moreover, the data were collected amidst the rise of the religious right (Woodberry & Smith, 1998), thus providing a historical background through which to view the results. Finally, these analyses conducted with data earlier in time will provide initial findings to be corroborated or

³ Dudley does not specify what these, “sampling methods” are.

disconfirmed by current research. In short, these data, though from 1987, provide a rich source of data to better understand the relationship of religious participation and social justice engagement.

Measures

Social justice prioritization. A four-item scale was used to assess social justice prioritization. Each item was in response to the statement, “There are many tasks that a church can do. Of those listed below, what priority would you give to each for your church?” Sample items include “Encourage individual members to support local social reforms to relieve poverty and hunger” and “Develop church programs which would help people understand local programs and issues.” Items are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*highest*). For the present investigation, the internal consistency estimate of the Prioritization scale was .82. See Table 1 for individual and congregational level descriptive statistics, and Table 2 for denominational differences in social justice prioritization. All measures and study items are presented in Appendix A.

Social justice participation. One item was used to assess social justice participation. First, participants were asked, “Does your congregation participate directly in any programs to provide a community social service or promote peace and justice?” Seventy-five percent of participants answered yes to this question, and were then asked “How much time have you been able to give to these programs?” to assess their level of participation. Response options ranged from 1 (*I am not able to give any time*) to 5 (*More than five hours a week*). The distribution of responses was positively skewed. Therefore, Participation was dichotomized into those who gave no time (69.4%) and those who gave any amount of time (30.6%), coded 0 and 1 respectively. Participation thus represents participation or not for people who were aware of congregational social justice programs.

Theological orientation. Belief about literal interpretation of the Bible was used to indicate theological liberalism/conservatism. Participants were asked “Which of the following statements best expresses your view of the Bible?” with four response options ranging from 1 (*The Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally*) to 4 (*The Bible is a valuable book because it was written by wise and good people, but I do not believe it is really God’s word*). Higher numbers represent theological liberalism, and smaller numbers theological conservatism. At the individual level this variable represents personal theological orientation, and at the level of the congregation the average theological orientation in the congregation. Although one item cannot capture the complexity of theological orientation (Woodberry & Smith, 1998), the use of a view of Bible question to indicate theological liberalism/conservatism is relatively frequent and well established in the sociological and psychological literature (Kellstedt & Smidt, 1993). Such an item predicts self-identification as theologically liberal or conservative (Wuthnow, 1996), other theological beliefs that are considered conservative such as “orthodox” or “fundamentalist” beliefs (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005), political identification as liberal or conservative and associated presidential voting behavior (Kellstedt & Smidt, 1993), other political attitudes associated with conservatism such as attitudes toward gay marriage (Olson et al., 2006), the environment (Guth, Green, Kellstedt, & Smidt, 1995), abortion (Kellstedt & Smidt, 1993), and social conservatism (Felson & Kindell, 2007). Individual and congregational descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1, with differences in theological orientation between denominations included in Table 3.

Frequency of religious participation. Frequency of Religious Participation was assessed by a three-item scale. Each item was in response to the question, “How often do you personally

do the following” with the response options ranging from 0 (*never*) to 7 (*every day*). The three items were “Attend worship service,” “Participate in religious courses or Sunday school,” and “Participate in other church activities other than worship.” Frequency of Religious Participation thus assessed both participation in worship services and extra congregational activities such as religious education. This variable represents personal religious participation at the individual level, and at the level of the congregation the average amount of participation in the congregation. For the present investigation, the internal consistency estimate of the Frequency of Religious Participation scale was .64. Individual and congregational descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Social capital bonding and bridging. Social Capital Bonding was assessed using one item regarding friendships within the congregation. Participants were asked, “Of your five closest friends, how many are members of this congregation?” with response options ranging from 0 (*0 friends*) to 5 (*5 friends*). At the individual level, more friends indicate more personal Bonding Social Capital, whereas at the congregational level higher numbers indicate a more densely bonded congregation. Social Capital Bridging was assessed with a single item asking about partnerships with churches of other denominations. Participants were asked, “To what extent do you agree that [this] statement describes your congregation? Cooperative projects and joint workshops with churches of other denominations are highly valued” with response options ranging from 1 (*don’t know*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). Due to the ambiguity of a “don’t know” response, participants (6.6%) were excluded if they endorsed such a response. At the individual level, bridging represents an awareness of congregational bridging activities whereas at the congregational level bridging is an aggregate perception that the congregation values cooperative

projects with other denominations. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 for Bonding and Bridging social capital.

Denomination. The sixty-two congregations in this study were nested within the 11 denominations of American Baptist, AME Zion, Brethren, Disciples of Christ, ELCA, Evangelical Covenant, Presbyterian USA, Southern Baptist, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, and Catholic. These denominations represent the full spectrum of liberal to conservative denominations, though scholars have noted within denominational variability on theological orientation (Steensland et al., 2000; Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Denomination was included as a control at the congregational level, given that some of the congregational variability may have been explained by denominational affiliation. Ten dummy-coded variables were used to represent denomination, with Catholic as the reference group.

Demographic control variables. Six standard demographic controls were assessed in this study. Age was recorded in years, with an average age of 51.46 ($SD = 18.18$). Education was assessed on a one (*did not graduate high school*) to six (*post graduate degrees*) scale, with an average education of 3.38 ($SD = 1.53$) that corresponds to having some college and not finishing a college degree. Income was assessed on a one (1,000 – 1,999) to seven (60,000 or more) scale, in increments of 10,000. The average income was 3.74 ($SD = 1.81$) which is closest to the 30,000 – 39,000 income bracket. Urbanicity was assessed on a one (*midtown*) to nine (*rural settlement*) scale, with smaller numbers representing a more urban location. The average Urbanicity was 4.76 ($SD = 2.10$), closest to the “metro suburb” location. Gender was coded zero for male (35.5%) or one for female (62.1%). Race was coded zero for White (86%) and one for Black (10%). Individual and congregational descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. All measures and study items are presented in Appendix A.

Multilevel Modeling Data Analysis Strategy

Multilevel modeling was used to examine the individual and congregational influence of theological orientation, frequency of religious participation, bonding social capital, and bridging social capital on the two social justice engagement outcomes of prioritization and participation, while controlling for individual demographics and congregational denomination. Congregation level variables were created by computing the mean for each congregation. Multilevel modeling allows for the separation and simultaneous testing of level I (i.e., individual) and level 2 (i.e., congregational) effects for nested data structures (i.e., individuals nested within congregations) while accounting for dependence in the data (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Moreover, interactions between level I and level II (i.e., cross-level interactions) are tested to assess if a level II variables moderate associations at level I. These cross-level interactions test if there are different patterns of associations at the individual level in different types of congregations (e.g., liberal or conservative, Shinn & Rapkin, 2000).

For this study, the goal was to examine both the individual and congregational effects of the study variables, as well as the possible cross-level interactions between individual frequency of religious participation (Level I) and the theological orientation of the congregation (Level II) in predicting social justice prioritization and participation. Exploring these effects reveals how congregational social context may contribute to the individual prioritization of and participation in congregational social justice activities, even after taking into consideration relevant demographics and personal beliefs. Therefore, seven models were examined that sequentially added demographics (Model 1), level I variables (Model 2), denomination (Model 3), level II variables (Model 4), and the cross-level interactions to predict each outcome (Models 5, 6, and 7). The three cross-level interactions were tested in separate models as simultaneously testing

more than one cross-level interaction lead to non-convergence of models. Parameters for fixed effects were examined in each model to determine the presence of individual, congregational, and cross-level interactive effects, as displayed in Tables 4 through 7. All independent variables were standardized for the entire sample, and were thus grand-mean centered. This centering was used so that the congregational level fixed effects would be a pure estimate of the “compositional/contextual” congregational impact, representing the congregational impact minus any individual level impact (see Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002 for a discussion of how level I centering impacts level II parameter estimates). Comparing the models, as well as examining the fixed effects in the final model, reveals the individual, congregational, and cross-level interactive effects of the study variables on social justice prioritization and participation.

The two outcomes of interest, prioritization and participation, were two different types of variables that influenced the multilevel modeling approach. Prioritization was a continuous outcome, and PROC MIXED in SAS 9.2 was used to model the data. Participation was a binary outcome, thus PROC GLIMMIX in SAS 9.2 was used to conduct multilevel logistic regression. This procedure allows for multilevel modeling of binary outcomes, that was specified with a logit link and binomial distribution. For Participation, the Laplace method of estimation was used, as this numeric maximum likelihood method of estimation allows for the computation of likelihood estimates (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Finally, parameter estimates for the participation fixed effects are reported in Tables 6 and 7 as standardized coefficients (B), though they are converted to odds ratios (i.e., e^{B}) and discussed as such in the text. For both outcomes, the same seven models were compared. The fifth model, or an example of one full model including the cross-level interaction between Frequency of Participation and Congregational Theological Orientation, is listed in Table 8.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Social Justice Prioritization

To determine the amount of variance in Prioritization that could be explained at the congregational level, the intra-class correlation was computed from the variance components of the random intercept null model (i.e., no independent variables). The result indicated that 9.52% of the variance in scores could be explained at the congregational level. Although most of the variability is at the individual level (i.e., 89.48%), almost 10% is a sizeable amount that should be further explored to understand what aspects of the congregation are associated with individual social justice prioritization. Further examination of descriptive graphs confirmed the need to model a random intercept for Prioritization, that is included in all further modeling. In addition, as displayed in Table 9, the intraclass correlations for the four predictor variables ranged from 8.3% to 13.7%, indicating that some of the variance in the predictors existed between congregations. The following modeling examines how this congregational level variance for each predictor may be used to predict social justice engagement.

Tables 4 and 5 show the results from the seven models examining individual and congregational predictors of social justice prioritization. The first model shows that the demographic variables of age, gender, race, Urbanicity, and income were significantly associated with prioritization. Older members had higher levels of prioritization than younger members. Women and Blacks had higher levels of prioritization than men and Whites. Those from more Urban areas had higher prioritization, and those with less income also had higher prioritization. Education was not significantly associated with prioritization. Overall, these results indicate that

demographic variables are associated with prioritization, with those from lower status groups (i.e., women, Blacks, Urban, and poor) exhibiting higher levels of social justice prioritization.

The second model added the individual level religious variables, while continuing to control for all demographic variables. All of the religious variables had a significant positive association with prioritization. This indicates that those who are more theologically liberal, participate more in their congregation, have higher numbers of close friends in the congregation, and who view their congregation as a bridging congregation had higher levels of social justice prioritization. Moreover, individual level perceptions of congregational bridging had the strongest effect of all the variables in the model. Furthermore, the same demographic variables from the first model remained significant after adding the individual level religious variables.

The third model added the denominational affiliation of the congregation to the prediction of social justice prioritization as a level two control. Six of the ten denominations had significantly different levels of social justice prioritization than Catholics. Specifically, the Brethren denomination had significantly higher levels of prioritization, whereas Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Covenant, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist all had lower levels of prioritization than Catholics. See Table 4 for the significant differences between denomination on social justice prioritization. Furthermore, none of the estimates for the level 1 variables changed appreciably after adding denomination to the model. Finally, the addition of denomination improved the model fit indices.

The fourth model added in the congregational level variables to assess the influence of congregational context on individual social justice prioritization, after controlling for denomination and other level 1 variables. Congregational Bridging was the only significant congregational effect, indicating that Congregational Theological Orientation, Frequency of

Participation, and Bonding did not have an influence on individual Prioritization. The individual level religious and demographic variables remained significant in this model, except for Urbanicity which was no longer significant. Finally, Evangelical Covenant was no longer significantly different from Catholics. Overall, individual level perceptions of congregational bridging remained the strongest predictor, as well as Congregational Bridging (the aggregate perception of congregational bridging for a given setting) emerged as a congregational level predictor of social justice prioritization.

The fifth model added the cross-level interaction between individual Frequency of Religious Participation and Congregational Theological orientation, and it was significant in this model indicating that the association between Frequency of Religious Participation and Prioritization was not the same in liberal versus conservative congregations. Follow-up regressions were conducted for liberal and conservative congregations (e.g., as defined by a median split using Congregational Theological Orientation) to examine this significant cross-level interaction. There was no association ($\beta = .01$, $SE = .02$, $p = .41$, $n = 2,449$) between Frequency of Participation and Prioritization for people in conservative congregations, whereas there was a significant and positive association ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .01$, $p < .05$, $n = 2,439$) for people in liberal congregations, as displayed in Figure 1. Moreover, Congregational Bridging remained a significant congregational level predictor. The pattern for denominations was similar to model four. All individual level religious predictors remained significant, with Bridging still evidencing the strongest association with Prioritization. Finally, the demographic variables remained significant, and Urbanicity was once again significant. Overall, demographic (i.e., Age, Gender, Race, Urbanicity, and Income), individual (i.e., Theological Orientation, Frequency of Religious Participation, Bonding, and Bridging) congregational (Congregational Bridging), and cross-level

interactive effects (Frequency of Religious Participation * Congregational Theological Orientation) were present in predicting individual Social Justice Prioritization.

The sixth model added the cross-level interaction between individual Bonding and Congregational Theological orientation, and this interaction was not significant ($p = .75$). This indicates that congregational theological orientation did not moderate the association between individual level bonding and social justice prioritization in this sample. Recall that there was a positive main effect for bonding social capital in previous models, indicating that higher bonding is associated with greater prioritization, regardless of the theological orientation of the congregation.

The seventh model added the cross-level interaction between individual bonding and Congregational Bridging, which was significant in this model ($p < .05$), indicating that the association between Bonding and Prioritization was not the same in congregations with different levels of bridging. Follow-up regressions were conducted for low and high bridging congregations (e.g., as defined by a median split using Congregational Bridging) to examine this significant cross-level interaction. There was a significant and positive association ($\beta = .05$, $SE = .01$, $p < .001$, $n = 3,292$) between Bonding and Prioritization for people in low Bridging congregations. In high Bridging congregations, there was a significant and stronger positive association between Bonding and Prioritization ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$, $n = 1,600$), as displayed in Figure 2. Moreover, Congregational Bridging remained a significant congregational level predictor. The pattern for denominations was similar to model four. The individual level religious predictors of Theological Orientation, Bridging, and Religious Participation remained significant. Finally, the demographic variables remained significant, except for Urbanicity. Overall, demographic (i.e., Age, Gender, Race, and Income), individual (i.e., Theological

Orientation, Frequency of Religious Participation, and Bridging) congregational (Congregational Bridging), and cross-level interactive effects (Bonding * Congregational Bridging) were present in predicting individual Social Justice Prioritization. A summary of findings for prioritization is displayed in Figure 5, and in Table 10.

Social Justice Participation

For this study, social justice participation was treated as a binary outcome variable with zero indicating no time given to congregational social justice programs whereas one indicated some time given. The decision to treat prioritization as a binary outcome was based on a number of factors. First, the initial question to assess social justice participation asked participants if their congregation had social justice programs. Most (75%) participants answered yes, indicating they were aware of programs and would thus have opportunity to give time to such programs. These 75% of participants were then asked how much time they gave. Of the remaining 25%, 11% indicated that they were not aware of social justice programs whereas 13.9% had missing data. These 25% of participants were thus not asked a follow-up question of how much time they gave. The first decision was whether to include these 25% as “no time given” since they would logically have not given time if they were unaware of programs, or to exclude them from the analysis. These participants were excluded for the following reasons. First, comparing people who did not give time because they did not know of any programs with those who did give time is a different comparison than comparing participants who identified a program but gave no time with those who both identified and gave time. Thus, interpretation of no time given versus time given is clearer when both groups knew about programs, thus removing the doubt that time was not given due to a lack of knowledge of programs. Second, it was possible that some churches did not have programs or that the majority of people in the church were not aware of programs,

thus not including these individuals would result in some churches having a disproportional amount of people excluded from analysis. However, most churches had over half of the participants agreeing that there were social justice programs, indicating general agreement that congregations had programs in existence. Therefore, it appears that all congregations had programs for people to participate in. Finally, independent sample *t*-tests showed that those who were aware or unaware were not significantly different on the study variables of theological orientation, religious frequency, or bonding; however, those who were aware had significantly higher ($p < .05$) bridging responses than those who were unaware. This indicates that it is not that more active, conservative, or bonded members who are aware. Finally, the individual level and congregational direct effect findings for social justice prioritization tested with the full sample continue to be present when conducting the same analysis with the remaining 75%. However, it was not possible to determine if the moderation effects (i.e., cross-level interactions tested in models 5-7) found in the full sample were also present with the remaining 75%. When models 5-7 were run for the remaining 75%, each model did not converge, and therefore no estimates of the cross-level interactions were given. This non-convergence indicates that the models were more complex than could be supported by the data. Thus, it was not possible to determine if the moderation effects found in the full sample were also present in with the remaining 75%. However, the presence of similar individual and congregational direct effects lends further evidence to the similarity of the full and reduced sample. For these reasons, only the 75% of individuals who were aware of social justice programs were included in the analyses.

The second major consideration was treating social justice participation as binary instead of ordinal. The original question was ordinal and asked how much time was given to social justice programs, with responses ranging from “none” (69.39%), “two hours a month” (20.94%),

“one to two hours a week” (5.86%), to “three to five hours a week” (2.03%), and “more than five hours a week” (1.77%). The distribution of responses shows that the majority of the participants did not give time, and the rest of the distribution was positively skewed. This was problematic as it was very likely that in some congregations, there would be limited if not absent representation in the response options of weekly giving of time, leading to difficulty in fitting models and unstable parameter estimates. Therefore, the social justice participation variable was collapsed into those who gave no time (69.39%) and those who gave time (30.61%). This is conceptually compelling as it compares those who are aware and give no time, with those who are aware and give time. Social justice participation was thus treated as a binary variable.

Multilevel logistic regression was used to examine study hypotheses. The logic of model testing is similar to how prioritization was tested, and a similar set of models was examined to test individual, congregational, and cross-level interactive effects. But, there were differences in the execution and interpretation of model parameters. First, analyses were conducted using PROC GLIMMIX in SAS 9.2 (instead of PROC MIXED used for prioritization). This procedure allowed for multilevel modeling of binary outcomes, which was specified with a logit link and binomial distribution. The Laplace method of estimation was used as it is a type of numeric maximum likelihood estimation, and allows for log likelihood ratio tests to compare models and to estimate random slopes in multilevel logistic regression models (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Second, the interpretation of parameter estimates for fixed effects is different in logistic regression, given that logistic regression is predicting the probability of group membership (e.g., 0, 1) and is considered non-linear (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Specifically, parameter estimates for fixed effects are interpreted as odds ratios. Converting these estimates to odds ratios is achieved by taking $e^{\hat{\beta}}$. For example, $\hat{\beta} = .21$ for bonding indicates that for a one unit increase on

the bonding scale, the odds of social justice participation are 1.23 times larger ($e^{.21} = 1.23$). A negative parameter estimate indicates less likely to participate. If the 95% confidence interval for the odds ratio does not include one, then the estimate is significant. Associated p values are reported in the text and tables.

An intraclass correlation was not computed for Social justice participation as this is not recommended for multilevel logistic regression (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Instead, a conditional likelihood ratio test was used to compare a null model with and without a random intercept, assessing how the inclusion of the random intercept may improve model fit. The model with the random intercept improved the model fit ($p < .05$); thus, a random intercept was included in all subsequent modeling. The same five models used for Prioritization were examined for Social Justice Participation, with statistical information presented in Tables 6 and 7.

The first model shows that the demographic variables of race, education, and income were significantly associated with Social Justice Participation. This indicates that those who are Black, more educated, and who had less income had greater odds of social justice participation in congregational social justice activities ($ORs = 1.17, 1.26, \text{ and } 1.08$ respectively) than those who are White, less educated, or who have more income. The other demographic predictors of Age, Gender, and Urbanicity were not significant.

The second model added the level 1 study variables. Frequency of Religious Participation and Bonding Social Capital were both significant, with Frequency of Participation emerging as the strongest predictor. Thus, those who participate more in their congregation, or who have more close friendships within the congregation, have greater odds of participating in congregational social justice activities ($ORs = 2.20, 1.23$ respectively) than those who participate

less or who are less bonded. Theological Orientation and Bridging Social Capital were not significant. Finally, the same demographic predictors were significant.

The introduction of denomination in model three had little effect on the individual level demographics or religious predictors. Moreover, only the United Church of Christ had a significantly different likelihood of social justice participation than Catholics, with the odds of social justice participation 1.19 times greater for United Church of Christ members than the odds of social justice participation for Catholics. The model fit indices only had a slight decrease when denomination was added. However, a chi-square test for equal distributions showed that the distribution of social justice participation or not was dependent upon denomination, $\chi^2_{10} = 111.91, p < .001$. Denomination is thus included in further modeling to serve as a control between congregations at level 2.

The fourth model added the congregational level variables to assess the influence of congregational setting on individual Social Justice Participation, after controlling for denomination. None of the congregational level predictors were significant, indicating that congregational theological orientation, frequency of religious participation, and congregational bonding and bridging social capital did not have direct effects on individual participation in social justice activities. Furthermore, the level 1 demographic and religious variables did not change appreciably with the addition of the congregation level variables, although United Church of Christ was no longer significant different than Catholics. Finally, the model fit statistics remained relatively constant, indicating that these congregational level variables did not appreciably improve the model fit.

The fifth model added the cross-level interaction between individual Frequency of Religious Participation and Congregational Theological Orientation to examine if there were

different associations between frequency of religious participation and social justice participation within liberal and conservative congregations. The cross-level interaction was significant. Follow-up logistic regressions showed a significant association between frequency of religious participation and social justice participation for people in conservative congregations ($\beta = .72$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$, $OR = 2.05$, $n = 1,879$). There was also a significant and slightly stronger association for people in liberal churches ($\beta = .92$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$, $OR = 2.51$, $n = 1,956$). This shows that Congregational Theological Orientation moderated the association between Frequency of Religious Participation such that there were greater odds of social justice participation with increased frequency of religious participation, with a more pronounced effect in liberal congregations, as displayed in Figure 3. Finally, the inclusion of the cross-level interaction did not alter effects for other study variables. The final model showed significant effects for race, education, income, individual level Frequency of Religious Participation and Bonding, and a more pronounced effect for frequency of religious participation in liberal congregations.

The sixth model added the cross-level interaction between individual Bonding and Congregational Theological Orientation to examine if there were different associations between bonding and social justice participation within liberal and conservative congregations. The cross-level interaction was significant ($p < .05$). Follow-up logistic regressions showed a significant association between Bonding and social justice participation for people in conservative congregations ($\beta = .30$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$, $OR = 1.35$, $n = 1,882$). There was also a significant and slightly stronger association for people in liberal churches ($\beta = .43$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$, $OR = 1.54$, $n = 1,957$). This shows that Congregational Theological Orientation moderated the association between Bonding such that there were greater odds of social justice participation with increased

bonding, with a slightly more pronounced effect in liberal congregations, as displayed in Figure 4. Finally, the inclusion of the cross-level interaction did not alter effects for other study variables. The final model showed significant effects in predicting social justice participation for race, education, income, individual level Frequency of Religious Participation and Bonding, and a more pronounced effect for bonding in liberal congregations.

The seventh model added the cross-level interaction between individual Bonding and Congregational Bridging, and it was not significant ($p = .28$). This indicates that congregational bridging did not moderate the association between individual level bonding and social justice participation in this sample. A summary of findings for social justice participation is displayed in Figure 6, and in Table 10.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine religious congregations as mediating structures for social justice. The study examined whether aspects of the congregational context – theological orientation, levels of bonding and bridging social capital – would have significant associations with individuals’ prioritization of and participation in congregational social justice activities. These assertions were tested through the use of multilevel modeling to ascertain the individual and congregational predictors of social justice prioritization and participation, while controlling for relevant demographics. Indeed, at the individual level, bonding and bridging social capital and theological orientation were associated with prioritization, whereas bonding social capital predicted social justice participation. Individual demographics also predicted social justice prioritization and participation. Yet, results indicated that congregational bridging social capital predicted social justice prioritization and moderated the association between bonding social capital and prioritization; and that congregational theological orientation served to moderate the associations between frequency of religious participation and both prioritization and social justice participation as well as between bonding and social justice participation. This demonstrates that particular aspects of congregational context, such as congregational bridging and theological orientation, were associated with social justice prioritization and participation over and above individual effects and demographic controls. These findings suggest that religious congregations serve as mediating structures of social justice, with particular congregational and individual characteristics influencing how individuals prioritize and participate in congregational social justice activities.

Theological Orientation and Frequency of Religious Participation

The findings from this study suggest that the theological orientation of individuals and congregations influence social justice engagement. Such findings affirm observations from history, (Marsden, 1991; Woodberry & Smith, 1998) sociology (Chaves, 2001) and psychology (Hood et al., 2005) that theological dimensions influence social justice attitudes (i.e., prioritization) and behavior (i.e., participation). Furthermore, these findings extend these literatures by simultaneously examining theological orientation at individual and congregational levels of analysis, allowing for implications to be drawn about both personal *and* congregational theological orientation. At the individual level, the findings indicated that theological liberalism was positively associated with the prioritization, but not participation in congregational justice activities. It appears that, at the individual level, liberalism facilitated the intersection of justice activities within a religious congregation. This interpretation is consistent with historic accounts of the theological conservative movement pushing away social justice as a function of the church (being *apart* from the world); whereas a defining feature of theological liberalism was embracing social justice (being *a part* of the world; Marsden, 1991). To be clear, these findings do not indicate that conservative individuals or congregations are anti-justice or are not engaged in activities they see as making the world a better place, but the findings do reflect differences in how social justice is articulated and actualized between liberal and conservative individuals and settings. As discussed in the limitations section, the current study does not allow for conclusions or comparisons about the types or even amounts of social justice activities, but rather shows that theological liberals prioritize social justice as part of the mission and function of the congregation. This limitation points to the need of future research to examine how theologically

liberal and conservative people articulate an understanding of social justice, and how both groups may link their spirituality to doing good in the world, however defined.

At the level of the congregation, theological orientation played a more subtle role in the prediction of social justice activities by acting as a moderator. Specifically, the theological orientation of the congregation did not demonstrate a main effect (i.e., the average congregational theological orientation did not predict average congregational social justice prioritization), but interacted with the frequency of individual religious participation, such that the more involved people were in liberal congregations, the more they prioritized and participated in social justice activities whereas no association (e.g., for prioritization) or a weak association (e.g., for participation) was present in conservative congregations. Thus, it was not only being more involved that was associated with prioritization and participation, but involvement in a particular type of setting, showing how a characteristic of the setting (i.e., theological orientation) accounted for the extent to which the setting does indeed mediate individual social justice engagement. Furthermore, congregational theological orientation moderated the associations between bonding and social justice participation, such that stronger effects were present in liberal congregations. Given that previous scholarship has found that liberal congregations do more social justice work (Chaves, 2001), it is possible that there are more social justice options in a liberal congregation, leading to a higher likelihood of involvement in a social justice activity for those who are more involved. More social justice opportunities may also perpetuate a self-selection process, where social justice minded individuals select into liberal justice focused congregations as this is a good person-environment fit with the congregation providing a backdrop of support for these individuals (Moos, 2002). A community culture promoting social justice, possibly created through sermons, teachings, songs,

and programs aimed at issues of justice may also influence how the individuals value justice (i.e., prioritization), and how their time is spent in congregational activities (i.e., participation).

Though speculative, these findings point to the need of understanding more concretely *how* and *why* liberal congregations promote this association between religious participation and the prioritization and participation in congregational justice activities. Finally, these findings show how religious congregations serve as mediating structures for social justice, influencing both the prioritization of and participation in social justice, and by providing a concrete location for people to be involved in justice activities, mediated through the congregation.

Bridging and Bonding Social Capital

Bridging. The results suggest that bridging, or congregational interdenominational collaboration, also influenced how individuals prioritized, but not participated in, congregational social justice activities. Specifically, individual awareness of congregational bridging was associated with individual prioritization of social justice. Given that congregations often bridge with other congregations for social justice of activities (Ammerman, 2002), it is possible that individuals see and internalize a commitment to justice by observing the justice actions of the congregation. Of course the directionality of this association cannot be determined, and those who are more aware of bridging may simply be those who already have a higher priority for social justice. Nevertheless, it is this acknowledgement of an outward, collaborative focus that is associated with how individuals prioritize justice as an activity of their congregation. Moreover, bridging at the level of the congregation also predicted individual prioritization, but not participation in social justice activities. Higher congregational bridging may indicate that the congregation in fact has more collaborations, and that the presence of these collaborations communicates to members the importance of social justice, possibly because they see their

congregation and congregational leaders involved in such activities. Furthermore, higher congregational bridging may promote a climate of openness and collaboration, having an outward focus on meeting larger community and societal needs. Although this study shows how congregational bridging influences individual prioritization, future research should explore how this setting level bridging translates into individual prioritization. In addition, congregational bridging moderated the association between bonding and social justice prioritization, to be discussed shortly. Finally, at individual and congregational levels, bridging related only to prioritization of, and not participation in, congregational social justice activities. Apparently, bridging influenced the value placed on justice, but not actual involvement behavior. It is possible that observing others involved in social justice may increase individual prioritization, but may not provide the structure or support necessary for personal involvement. In addition, the two outcomes of prioritization and participation may tap into different aspects of social justice (e.g., an abstract ideal versus concrete actions) and may hold different meaning to members, thus being predicted by different individual and congregational level variables. Future research should explore why bridging was associated with prioritization but not participation in social justice activities.

Bonding. In contrast to bridging, bonding was related to both social justice prioritization and participation at the level of the individual. This indicates that the degree of connection within a congregation provided a link to both prioritize justice and to be involved in congregational justice activities. Furthermore, this association between bonding and social justice participation was slightly stronger in liberal congregations, compared to conservative congregations. According to social capital theory (Putnam, 2000), bonding ties can create obligations, systems for reciprocity, or trust. If bonding creates trust and solidarity within a group, greater connection

and involvement may engender a sense of trust and/or obligation to being more involved in the tasks of the setting (i.e., social justice participation). Furthermore, information about personal need or congregational activities may be more accessible to higher bonded individuals as they are more densely connected, thus they are positioned to be more aware of and to participate in congregational activities. In regards to prioritization, higher bonded individuals may be more aware of the needs of others in the congregation, and may feel that it is the congregation's responsibility to meet these needs. Previous scholarship suggests that people give more time and energy to higher bonded religious congregations (i.e., volunteering within the congregation, Hoge et al., 1998), and thus higher bonded individuals may prioritize many congregational activities, including social justice, as part of the congregations mission. These findings also add to the bonding social capital literature by showing that another outcome of bonding ties, in addition to social support or status connections (Wuthnow, 2002), is the prioritization of and participation in justice activities. Although bonding may not always have positive outcomes (i.e., see Schwadel, 2005 for an example of higher bonding relating to less civic involvement), these findings show that individual bonding is associated with the prioritization and participation in congregational social justice activities.

Finally, bonding and bridging capital worked in combination to predict the prioritization of social justice. Specifically, congregational bridging moderated the association between bonding and social justice prioritization, such that bonding within a high bridging congregation had a positive and stronger association with prioritization, whereas this association was not as strong in low bridging congregations. This shows that not only is bonding important, but bonding in what *type* of congregation (i.e., low versus high bridging) is important in predicting social justice prioritization. This finding provides further evidence for treating bonding and bridging

capital as separate constructs, and not as two ends of the same continuum, given that they interacted to predict social justice prioritization. Furthermore, this finding highlights that it is not purely bonding that predicts an outcome, but understanding what type of context one is bonding within. Here, bonding in a congregation that values bridging lead to a stronger association with prioritization, whereas bonding in a congregation that is not engaging in bridging evidences a weaker association. Future research should treat these as separate constructs, while also testing for individual and cross-level interactions.

Demographics and Social Position

Demographic variables were associated with both social justice prioritization and participation. One common thread between these demographics and the patterns of association, was that individuals from non-dominant social positions (i.e., Black, poor, women, urban) were more likely to prioritize congregational social justice activities. This finding is not surprising given that previous research has found that congregations do more social justice work in economically disadvantaged areas (Chaves, 2001). However, these results indicate that congregations may be valued more highly as mediating structures for social justice by those who are disadvantaged. Given the lower prioritization of justice, it is possible that dominant group members may not have the same awareness of social inequality and may thus not see the relevance of social justice activities to congregational life. Scholarship affirms this link, by showing that justice work is indeed more important and relevant for people from underprivileged groups (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007). In addition, race, income, and education predicted the likelihood of participating in congregational justice activities. Although previous research has shown levels of income to relate to the amount of congregational social justice activities (Chaves, 2001), the finding that higher education predicts more social justice participation is

intriguing, and shows that income and education may function differently in predicting participation in social justice. Overall, including demographics both as controls *and* as substantive variables will be important in future research to understand how social position may influence how individuals value and use religious congregations as mediating structures for social justice.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although current study findings contribute a multilevel understanding of religious congregations as mediating structures for social justice, they are not without limitations. First, the definition of social justice engagement is narrowly defined (i.e., limited to congregations) and relativistic. Although this definition allows for the exploration of the congregation as a mediating structure, such a narrow definition does not allow for a determination of how religious settings may influence social justice activities outside of the congregation. In addition, the definition of social justice engagement is relativistic, with no way of knowing the content or purpose of these programs. Consequently, programs that individuals are prioritizing or participating in may or may not be social justice programs at all, or may even be diametrically opposed to definitions of social justice. In fact, Paul Speer (2009) recently proposed that congregations may be moderated mediating structures for social justice, with different types of congregations (e.g., moderator) mediating particular types of social justice activities (e.g., liberal congregations working *for* and conservative congregations working *against* particular social issues such as abortion or gay rights). Future research should explore this proposition, examining how the definitions, content, and purpose of congregational social justice activities may differ based on different types of congregations. Second, the assessment of bridging does not allow for a differentiation between if people think the congregation “should” be valuing partnerships, or if

the congregation is actually engaging in partnerships. Future research may tease these two components apart. Third, although the current study examines religious congregations, the only religious/spiritual variable was theological orientation. Future research should examine how other specifically spiritual (i.e., beliefs, practices, traditions) aspects of congregations may influence social justice engagement. Fourth, three of the study variables relied on single item measures and another had low reliability, possibly attenuating relationships that may have been observed if a stronger measurement strategy had been used. Fifth, generalizability of these findings to other religious congregations should be made with caution, especially since these congregations represent a limited number of denominations, are exclusively Christian and represent a small geographic area. Furthermore, these congregations were not randomly sampled, but were selected due to their lack of focus on social justice. Future research should randomly select congregations across denominations for wider generalizability, and to see if the findings from this study replicate. Sixth, the study design does not allow for a determination of causality, and it is possible that people self-select into congregations that match their values rather than congregations exerting a causal effect on social justice engagement. Finally, the data are not current as they were collected in 1987; however, the basic influence of congregations on social justice is likely to be relatively stable over time and still applicable in today's religious context.

Conclusions

The findings in this study support the assertion that religious congregations serve as mediating structures for social justice in society. First, aspects of the congregation (i.e., congregational bridging) were predictive of how strongly individuals prioritized social justice activities as part of the mission of the congregation. Second, congregations provided a space for individuals to participate in congregationally sponsored social justice activities, linking

individuals into larger community based social justice participation. Moreover, aspects of the congregation, such as congregational theological orientation, augmented if individuals participated in social justice activities. Specifically, there were stronger associations in liberal congregations between social justice participation and both frequency of religious participation and social capital bonding. This shows that congregations provided not only the space for social justice participation, but that the theological orientation of the congregation facilitated this social justice participation. These findings showed that congregations served a dual mediating role, both by influencing the prioritization of social justice and by providing a space to participate in social justice activities. Future research should continue to unpack these and other ways in which congregations mediate if and how individuals are involved in social justice.

Furthermore, this study showed that both individual variation within congregations and variation between congregations were important in understanding how religious congregations influence individual social justice engagement. By teasing apart these individual and congregational level effects, this study showed that most of the associations were at the level of the individual, whereas the influence of the congregation was more nuanced and better understood through the presence of cross-level interactions rather than congregational level direct effects. For example, the only congregational level effect was for congregational bridging predicting prioritization, whereas four cross-level interactive effects emerged. Research that examines the mediating role of congregations should examine more specific cross-level interactive effects, as these may shed light on how different types of congregations moderate individual-level associations. This also implies that findings based on a single sample from one congregation should be generalized with caution, and should be replicated across a number of different religious contexts before general claims are made regarding the influence of religious

organizations on social justice engagement. Furthermore, null findings may be a function of the specific religious congregation, whereas the same study in a different congregation may reveal significant associations. Finally, future research should examine and unpack the multiple ways that social justice is pursued in different types of religious congregations, and how individuals link their spirituality to working for social justice.

These findings have direct implications for the field of community psychology. First, there is promise for partnerships with religious organizations where community psychologists can bring their unique skills and social justice values to help catalyze social justice engagement within a congregation that holds similar social justice values. A congregation may be able to better realize its social justice agenda through such collaborative partnerships with a community psychologist, and a community psychologist may be able to further their own social justice agenda through such collaborative partnerships. Second, as noted by many community psychologists (e.g., Kloos & Moore, 2000) religious organizations are an excellent place to locate theory, research, and social justice action. The current study provides an example of one way to examine community psychology questions within religious congregations, whereas future theory, research, and action could build upon such findings to systematically examine how such religious organizations can be utilized for positive social change, while concurrently contributing to the larger community psychology literature. Indeed, there is much promise in the examination of religious organizations as mediating structures for social justice action.

TABLES

Table 1

Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Study Variables at Individual and Congregational Levels

Variable	PR	FP	TO	BR	BO	AG	UR	ED	IN	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
1. Prioritization (PR)	—	.08*	.00	.19*	.09*	.06*	-.08*	-.04*	-.13*	3.49	0.77	4892
2. Frequency of Participation (FP)	.14	—	-.08*	-.10*	.26*	.01	-.01	.12*	.00	4.17	1.30	5063
3. Theological Orientation (TO)	.09	-.25	—	-.04*	-.07*	-.04*	.01	.14*	.08*	2.19	0.71	4856
4. Bridging (BR)	.57*	.08	.03	—	-.01	.09*	-.05*	-.13*	-.09*	3.21	1.00	4869
5. Bond (BO)	-.12	.44*	-.25*	-.10	—	.31*	.13*	-.16*	-.17*	2.05	1.79	5123
6. Age (AG)	-.13	-.09	-.01	-.02	.36*	—	.09*	-.16*	-.18*	51.46	18.18	4927
7. Urbanicity (UR)	-.25	-.03	-.03	-.04	.35*	.27*	—	-.12*	-.05*	4.76	2.10	5123
8. Education (ED)	.13	.17	.39*	.02	-.26*	-.12	-.19	—	.38*	3.38	1.53	4962
9. Income (IN)	-.03	-.05	.34*	.14	-.35*	-.08	.01	.70*	—	3.74	1.81	4500
<i>M</i>	3.46	4.28	2.17	3.17	2.13	51.94	4.85	3.27	3.53			
<i>SD</i>	0.28	0.48	0.23	0.37	0.61	7.83	2.28	0.78	0.73			

Note. Intercorrelations for the individual level are presented above the diagonal, and Intercorrelations for the congregational level ($n = 62$) are presented below the diagonal. Means and standard deviations for the individual level are presented in the vertical columns, and means and standard deviations for the congregational level are presented in the horizontal rows.

* $p < .05$.

Table 2

Denominational Differences on Social Justice Prioritization

Denomination	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Roman Catholic	—										
2. Evangelical Covenant	L	—									
3. Southern Baptist	H	H	—								
4. United Church of Christ	L	NS	L	—							
5. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	L	NS	L	NS	—						
6. AME Zion	H	H	NS	H	H	—					
7. United Methodist	L	NS	L	NS	NS	L	—				
8. Presbyterian Church (USA)	L	NS	L	NS	NS	L	NS	—			
9. Disciples of Christ	NS	NS	L	NS	NS	L	NS	NS	—		
10. American Baptist	NS	NS	L	NS	NS	L	NS	NS	NS	—	
11. Brethren	H	H	NS	H	H	NS	H	H	H	H	—

Note. H indicates that the denomination on the horizontal row had a significantly higher mean than the denomination on the vertical column. For example, Brethren had higher mean social justice prioritization than all but Southern Baptist and AME Zion denominations. L indicates that the denomination on the horizontal row had a significantly lower mean than the denomination on the vertical column. For example, Evangelical Covenant had lower social justice prioritization than Roman Catholic. NS indicates no significant difference in means. Results are based on Tukey's multiple comparison procedure. All significant results are $p < .05$.

Table 3

Denominational Differences on Theological Orientation

Denomination	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Roman Catholic	—										
2. Evangelical Covenant	L	—									
3. Southern Baptist	L	NS	—								
4. United Church of Christ	H	H	H	—							
5. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	NS	H	NS	L	—						
6. AME Zion	NS	NS	NS	L	NS	—					
7. United Methodist	NS	H	H	L	NS	H	—				
8. Presbyterian Church (USA)	H	H	H	NS	H	H	NS	—			
9. Disciples of Christ	H	H	H	NS	H	H	H	NS	—		
10. American Baptist	H	NS	NS	L	NS	NS	L	L	L	—	
11. Brethren	H	H	H	NS	H	H	H	H	H	H	—

Note. H indicates that the denomination on the horizontal row had a significantly higher mean than the denomination on the vertical column. For example, Brethren had higher mean theological orientation (i.e., more liberal) than all but United Church of Christ. L indicates that the denomination on the horizontal row had a significantly lower mean than the denomination on the vertical column. For example, Evangelical Covenant had lower theological orientation (i.e., more conservative), than Roman Catholic. NS indicates no significant difference in means. Results are based on Tukey's multiple comparison procedure. All significant results are $p < .05$.

Table 4

Multilevel Modeling of Social Justice Prioritization

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Standardized coefficient (<i>SE</i>)				
Level 1 (Individual)				
Intercept	3.46 (0.03)*	3.47 (0.03)*	3.49 (0.02)*	3.49 (0.02)*
Age	0.07 (0.01)*	0.04 (0.01)*	0.04 (0.01)*	0.04 (0.01)*
Gender	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*
Race	0.09 (0.02)*	0.09 (0.02)*	0.11 (0.02)*	0.10 (0.02)*
Urbanicity	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.04 (0.02)
Education	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Income	-0.08 (0.01)*	-0.07 (0.01)*	-0.07 (0.01)*	-0.07 (0.01)*
Theological Orientation (TO)	—	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*
Frequency of Participation (FP)	—	0.05 (0.01)*	0.06 (0.01)*	0.06 (0.01)*
Bonding	—	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*
Bridging	—	0.16 (0.01)*	0.16 (0.01)*	0.16 (0.01)*
Level 2 (Congregational)				
American Baptist	—	—	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
AME Zion	—	—	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Brethren	—	—	0.04 (0.02)*	0.05 (0.02)*

Disciples of Christ	—	—	-0.04 (0.02)*	-0.05 (0.02)*
ELCA	—	—	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Evangelical Covenant	—	—	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.04 (0.02)
Presbyterian (USA)	—	—	-0.07 (0.02)*	-0.07 (0.02)*
Southern Baptist	—	—	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
UCC	—	—	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.05 (0.02)*
United Methodist	—	—	-0.09 (0.02)*	-0.07 (0.03)*
Catholic (reference)	—	—	—	—
Mean TO	—	—	—	0.02 (0.03)
Mean FP	—	—	—	0.00003 (0.03)
Mean Bonding	—	—	—	-0.01 (0.02)
Mean Bridging	—	—	—	0.05 (0.02)*
Variance Components				
σ^2	0.52 (0.01)*	0.47 (0.01)*	0.47 (0.01)*	0.47 (0.01)*
τ_{00}	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*	0.01 (0.004)*	0.01 (0.004)*
τ_{00} (RP)	—	—	—	—
Selected Fit Statistics				
-2 Log Likelihood	9343	8061	8035	8027
AIC	9361	8087	8081	8081

Note. * $p < .05$. Standard Errors in parenthesis. Individual (level 1) $N = 5, 123$. Congregation (level 2) $N = 62$. Akaike Information Criterion = AIC.

Table 5

Multilevel Modeling of Social Justice Prioritization Cross-Level Interactions

Variables	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Standardized coefficient (<i>SE</i>)			
Level 1 (Individual)			
Intercept	3.49 (0.02)*	3.49 (0.02)*	3.49 (0.02)*
Age	0.04 (0.01)*	0.04 (0.01)*	0.04 (0.01)*
Gender	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*
Race	0.11 (0.02)*	0.10 (0.02)*	0.10 (0.02)*
Urbanicity	-0.04 (0.02)*	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)
Education	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Income	-0.07 (0.01)*	-0.07 (0.01)*	-0.07 (0.01)*
Theological Orientation (TO)	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*	0.03 (0.01)*
Frequency of Participation (FP)	0.05 (0.01)*	0.05 (0.01)*	0.05 (0.01)*
Bonding	0.03 (0.01)*	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Bridging	0.16 (0.01)*	0.16 (0.01)*	0.16 (0.01)*
Level 2 (Congregational)			
American Baptist	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)*	-0.04 (0.02)*
AME Zion	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Brethren	0.05 (0.02)*	0.04 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Disciples of Christ	-0.05 (0.02)*	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)

ELCA	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Evangelical Covenant	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Presbyterian (USA)	-0.05 (0.02)*	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.06 (0.02)*
Southern Baptist	-0.003 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
UCC	-0.05 (0.02)*	-0.05 (0.02)*	-0.05 (0.02)*
United Methodist	-0.07 (0.02)*	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.06 (0.03)*
Catholic (reference)	—	—	—
Mean TO	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)
Mean FP	0.003 (0.02)	0.001 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Mean Bonding	0.002 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Mean Bridging	0.06 (0.02)*	0.04 (0.02)*	0.05 (0.02)*
Cross-Level Interaction			
Mean TO X FP	0.04 (0.01)*	—	—
Mean TO X Bonding	—	-0.004 (0.01)	—
Mean BR X Bonding	—	—	0.04 (0.01)*
Variance Components			
σ^2	0.47 (0.01)*	0.47 (0.01)*	0.47 (0.01)*
τ_{00}	0.01 (0.003)*	0.01 (0.004)*	0.01 (0.004)*
τ_{00} (RP)	0.00 (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Selected Fit Statistics			
-2 Log Likelihood	8014	8020	8013
AIC	8074	8080	8073

Note. * $p < .05$. Standard Errors in parenthesis. Individual (level 1) $N = 5, 123$. Congregation (level 2) $N = 62$. Akaike Information Criterion = AIC.

Table 6

Multilevel Logistic Regression Modeling of Social Justice Participation

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Standardized coefficient (<i>SE</i>)				
Level 1 (Individual)				
Intercept	-0.76 (0.08)*	-0.90 (0.08)*	-0.91 (0.07)*	-0.91 (0.07)*
Age	0.04 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
Gender	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)
Race	0.16 (0.07)*	0.20 (0.07)*	0.18 (0.08)*	0.19 (0.08)*
Urbanicity	0.09 (0.08)	0.11 (0.07)	0.12 (0.07)	0.06 (0.09)
Education	0.23 (0.05)*	0.12 (0.05)*	0.12 (0.05)*	0.12 (0.05)*
Income	-0.08 (0.02)*	-0.12 (0.05)*	-0.12 (0.05)*	-0.12 (0.05)*
Theological Orientation (TO)	—	0.07 (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
Frequency of Participation (FP)	—	0.79 (0.05)*	0.78 (0.05)*	0.78 (0.06)*
Bonding	—	0.21 (0.05)*	0.21 (0.05)*	0.20 (0.05)*
Bridging	—	0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
Level 2 (Congregational)				
American Baptist	—	—	-0.02 (0.07)	0.02 (0.08)
AME Zion	—	—	0.04 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)
Brethren	—	—	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.09)

Disciples of Christ	—	—	0.02 (0.08)	0.02 (0.09)
ELCA	—	—	0.02 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)
Evangelical Covenant	—	—	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.003 (0.09)
Presbyterian (USA)	—	—	-0.02 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.09)
Southern Baptist	—	—	0.06 (0.09)	0.07 (0.10)
UCC	—	—	0.17 (0.07)*	0.15 (0.08)
United Methodist	—	—	0.10 (0.09)	0.06 (0.11)
Catholic (reference)	—	—	—	—
Mean TO	—	—	—	0.09 (0.11)
Mean FP	—	—	—	-0.04 (0.10)
Mean Bonding	—	—	—	0.13 (0.09)
Mean Bridging	—	—	—	-0.02 (0.08)
Variance Components				
τ_{00}	0.26 (0.07)	0.18 (0.06)	0.15 (0.06)	0.13 (0.05)
τ_{00} (RP)	—	—	—	—
Selected Fit Statistics				
-2 Log Likelihood	3965	3335	3327	3324
AIC	3981	3359	3371	3376

Note. * $p < .05$. Standard Errors in parenthesis. Individual (level 1) $N = 3,816$. Congregation (level 2) $N = 62$. Akaike Information Criterion = AIC.

Table 7

Multilevel Modeling of Social Justice Participation Cross-Level Interactions

Variables	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Standardized coefficient (<i>SE</i>)			
Level 1 (Individual)			
Intercept	-0.92 (0.07)*	-0.91 (0.07)*	-0.91 (0.07)*
Age	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
Gender	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)
Race	0.19 (0.08)*	0.18 (0.08)*	0.19 (0.08)*
Urbanicity	0.07 (0.08)	0.04 (0.09)	0.06 (0.09)
Education	0.11 (0.05)*	0.12 (0.05)*	0.12 (0.05)*
Income	-0.12 (0.05)*	-0.11 (0.05)*	-0.11 (0.05)*
Theological Orientation (TO)	0.06 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
Frequency of Participation (FP)	0.78 (0.06)*	0.79 (0.06)*	0.79 (0.06)
Bonding	0.20 (0.05)*	0.22 (0.06)*	0.21 (0.06)*
Bridging	0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
Level 2 (Congregational)			
American Baptist	0.01 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)	0.02 (0.08)
AME Zion	0.05 (0.08)	0.05 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)
Brethren	-0.07 (0.09)	0.0001 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.10)
Disciples of Christ	0.01 (0.09)	0.07 (0.10)	0.05 (0.10)

ELCA	0.02 (0.08)	0.06 (0.09)	0.04 (0.08)
Evangelical Covenant	0.01 (0.09)	0.03 (0.09)	0.01 (0.09)
Presbyterian (USA)	-0.002 (0.09)	0.05 (0.11)	0.02 (0.10)
Southern Baptist	0.06 (0.10)	0.09 (0.10)	0.08 (0.10)
UCC	0.15 (0.08)	0.18 (.09)*	0.17 (0.08)*
United Methodist	0.05 (0.11)	0.14 (0.12)	0.11 (0.12)
Catholic (reference)	—	—	—
Mean TO	0.02 (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)
Mean FP	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.10)
Mean Bonding	0.14 (0.09)	0.13 (0.09)	0.13 (0.09)
Mean Bridging	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.08)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Mean TO X FP	0.19 (0.06)*	—	—
Mean TO X Bonding	—	0.11 (0.06)*	—
Mean BR X Bonding	—	—	0.06 (0.06)
Variance Components			
τ_{00}	0.12 (0.05)	0.14 (0.06)	0.13 (0.05)
τ_{00} (RP)	0.01 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Selected Fit Statistics			
-2 Log Likelihood	3311	3311	3314
AIC	3367	3369	3372

Note. * $p < .05$. Standard Errors in parenthesis. Individual (level 1) $N = 5, 123$. Congregation (level 2) $N = 62$. Akaike Information Criterion = AIC.

Table 8

The Full Model: Model Five

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{Social\ Justice\ Prioritization\ or\ Participation} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Age}) + \beta_2(\text{Gender}) + \beta_3(\text{Race}) + \beta_4(\text{Urbanicity}) + \beta_5(\text{Education}) \\ &+ \beta_6(\text{Income}) + \beta_7(\text{Theological Orientation}) + \beta_8(\text{Frequency of Religious Participation}) + \beta_9(\text{Bonding}) \\ &+ \beta_{10}(\text{Bridging}) + e \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{B}_0 &= \tau_{00} + \tau_{01}(\text{American Baptist}) + \tau_{02}(\text{AME Zion}) + \tau_{03}(\text{Brethren}) + \tau_{04}(\text{Disciples of Christ}) + \tau_{05}(\text{ELCA}) + \tau_{06}(\text{Evangelical Covenant}) \\ &+ \tau_{07}(\text{Presbyterian USA}) + \tau_{08}(\text{Southern Baptist}) + \tau_{09}(\text{United Church of Christ}) + \tau_{010}(\text{United Methodist}) \\ &+ \tau_{011}(\text{Congregational Theological Orientation}) + \tau_{012}(\text{Congregational Frequency of Participation}) + \tau_{013}(\text{Congregational Bonding}) \\ &+ \tau_{014}(\text{Congregational Bridging}) + U_0 \end{aligned}$$

$$\mathbf{B}_8 = \tau_{80} + \tau_{81}(\text{Congregational Theological Orientation}) + U_9$$

Note: The level-one error term is e whereas U_0 and U_9 are the level-two error terms.

Table 9

Intraclass Correlations for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable name	Variance Within	Variance Between	Intraclass Correlation
Social Justice Prioritization	0.54	0.06	0.095
Theological Orientation	0.92	0.09	0.088
Frequency of Religious Participation	0.90	0.11	0.107
Bonding Social Capital	0.93	0.08	0.083
Bridging Social Capital	0.90	0.14	0.137

Note. The intraclass correlation was computed by specifying each variable as the dependent variable in a null model with no predictors. Thus, five separate models were run, one for each variable, with the intraclass correlation computed for each variable.

Table 10

Summary of Findings Controlling for Demographics, Denomination and Lower-Level Effects

Variable	Theological Orientation	Frequency of Participation	Bonding Social Capital	Bridging Social Capital
Prioritization				
1. Individual effect	Yes (+)	Yes (+)	Yes (+)	Yes (+)
2. Congregational effect	No	No	No	Yes (+)
3. Individual level variable interaction with Congregational Theological Orientation	—	Yes	No	—
4. Individual level variable interaction with Congregational Bridging	—	—	Yes	—
Participation				
1. Individual effect	No	Yes (+)	Yes (+)	No
2. Congregational effect	No	No	No	No
3. Individual level variable interaction with Congregational Theological Orientation	—	Yes	Yes	—
4. Individual level variable interaction with Congregational Bridging	—	—	No	—

Note: “—” indicates that a significance test was not conducted. The “+” indicates a significant positive association.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Congregational Theological Orientation Moderating Religious Participation and Social Justice Prioritization.

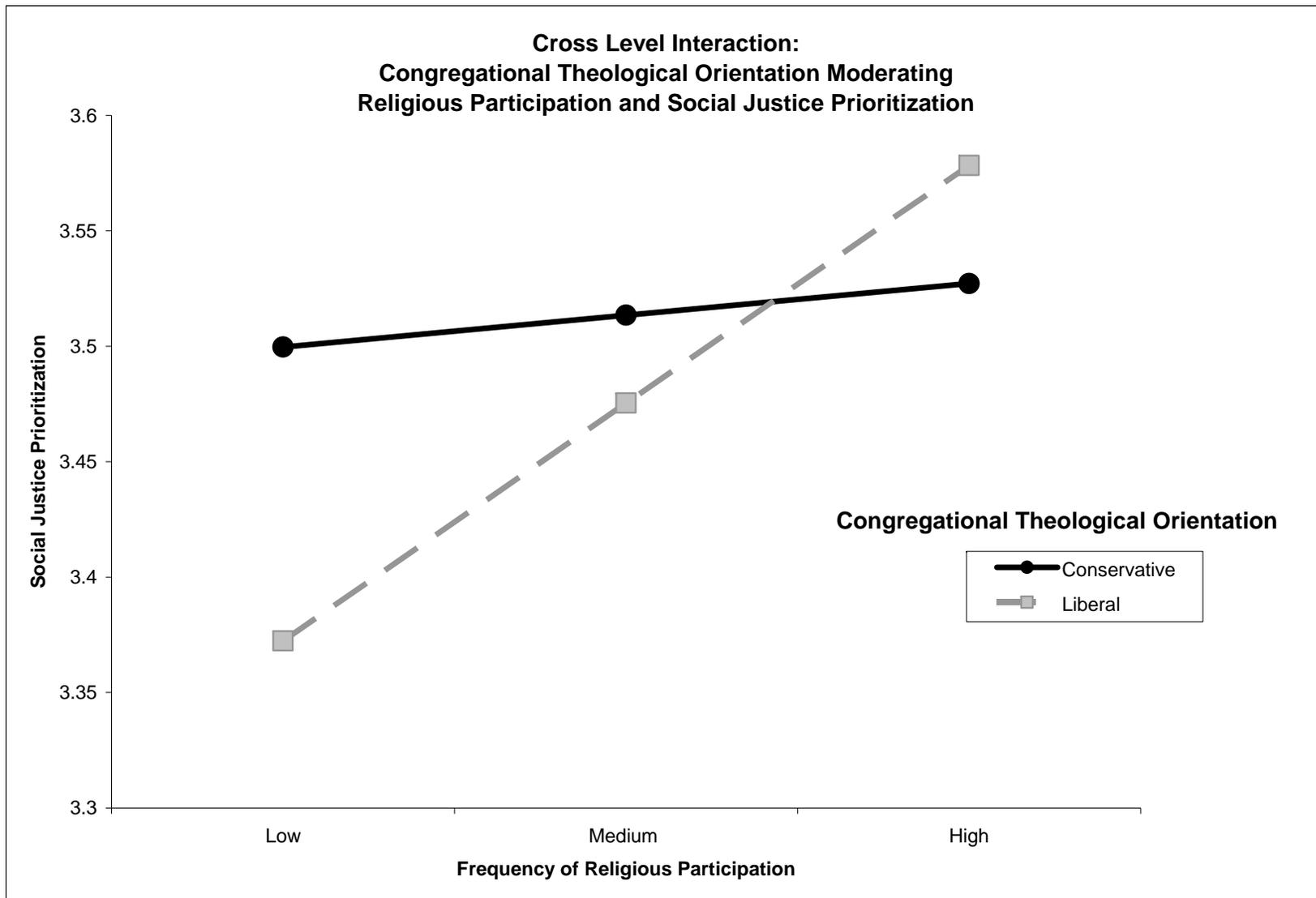


Figure 2. Congregational Bridging Moderating Bonding and Social Justice Prioritization.

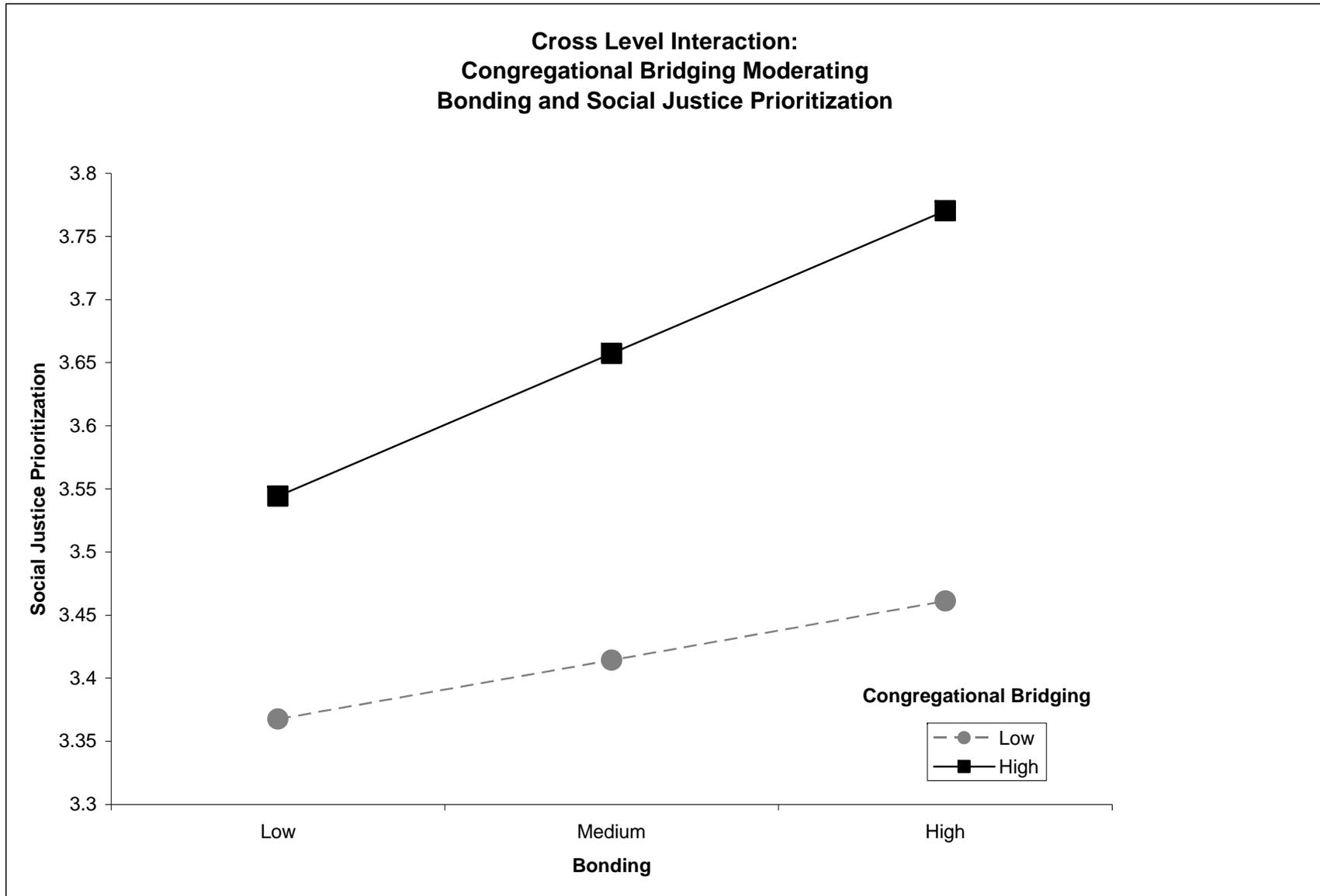
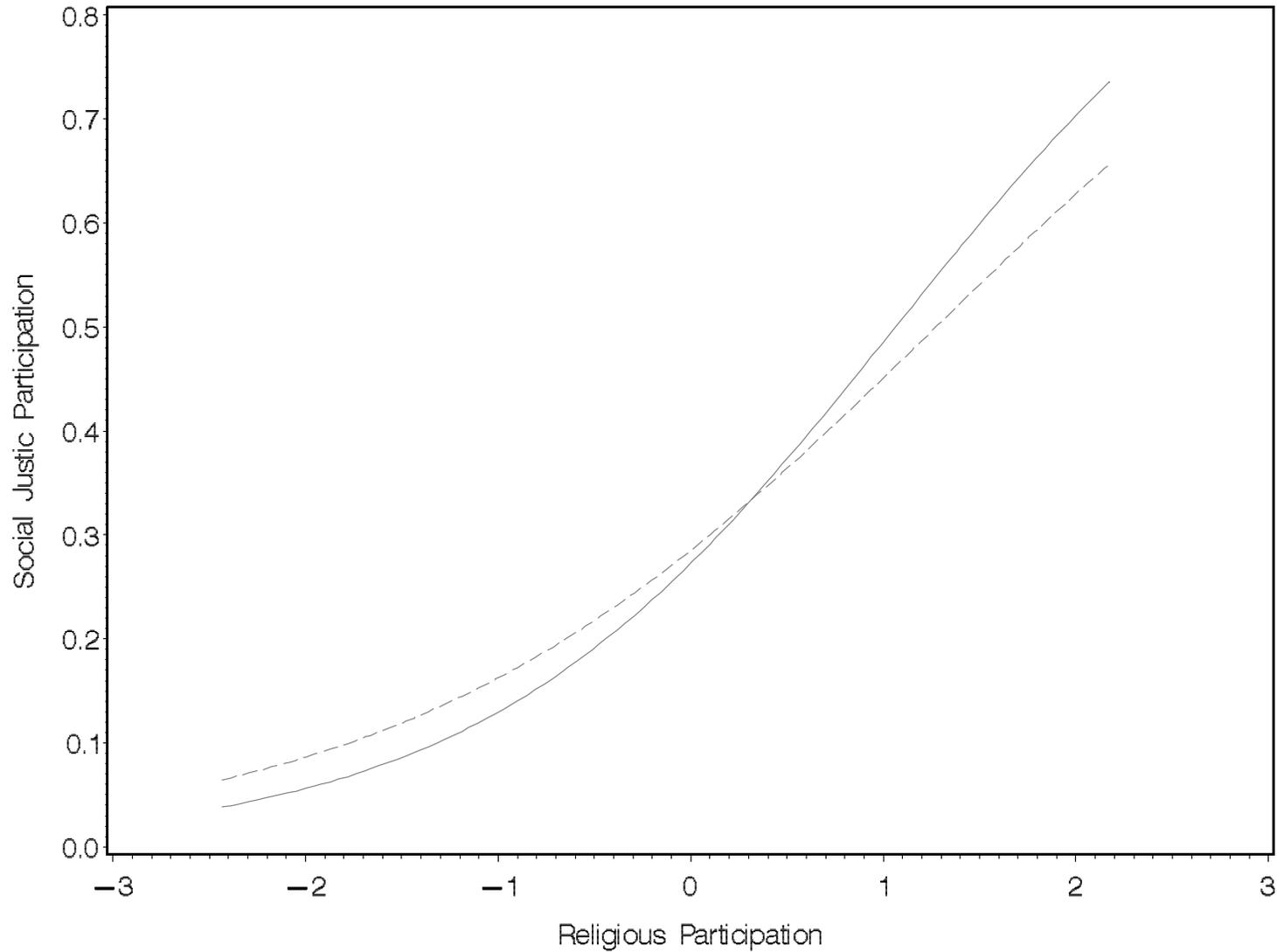


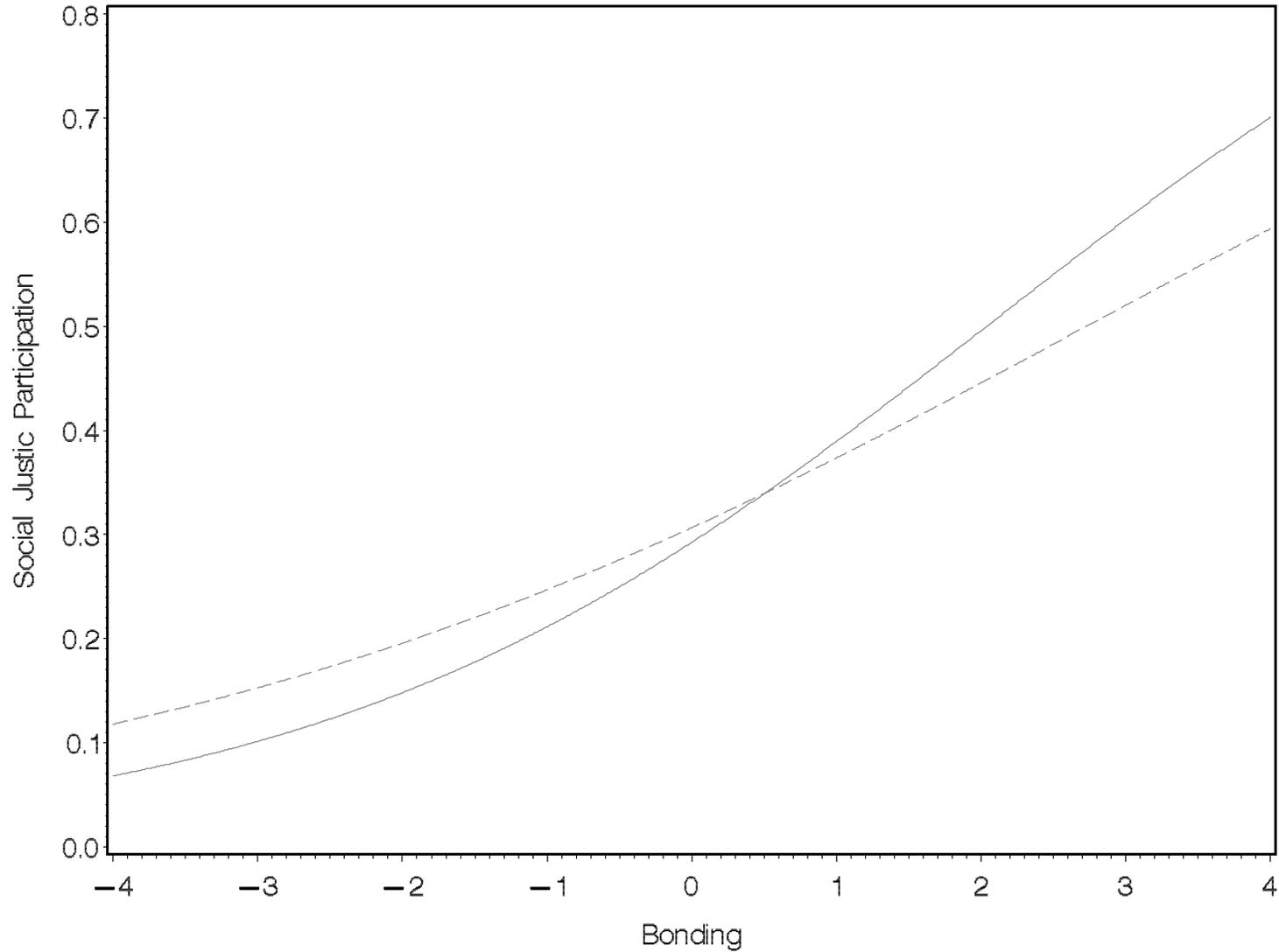
Figure 3. Congregational Theological Orientation Moderating Religious Participation and Social Justice Participation.

Congregational Theological Orientation Moderating Religious Participation and Social Justice Participation



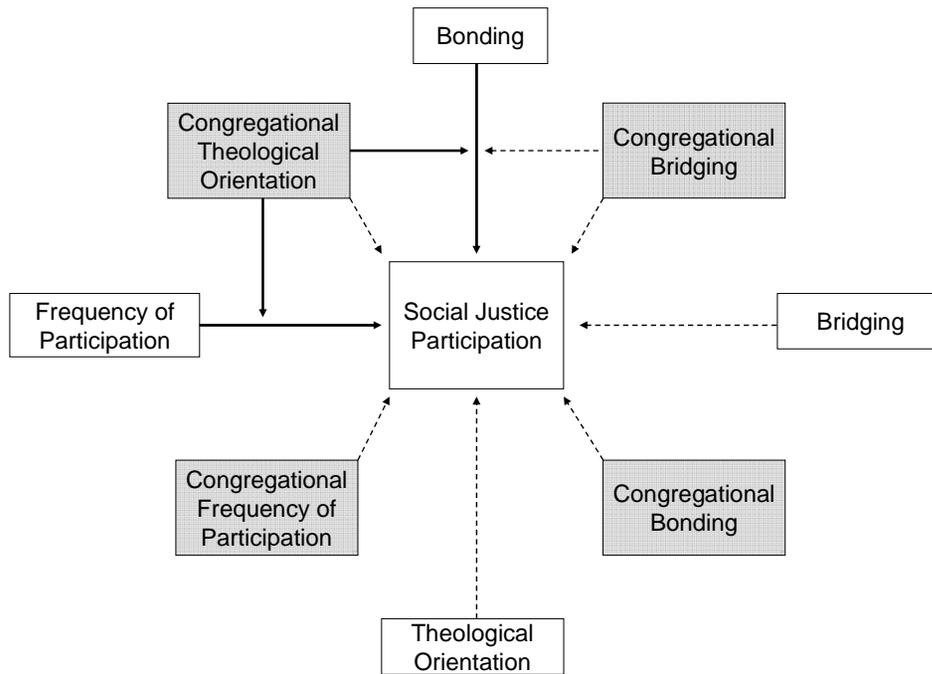
Note. Dotted Line = Conservative Congregations, Solid Line = Liberal Congregations.

Figure 4. *Congregational Theological Orientation Moderating Bonding and Social Justice Participation*
Congregational Theological Orientation Moderating Bonding and Social Justice Participation



Note. Dotted Line = Conservative Congregations, Solid Line = Liberal Congregations.

Figure 6. Summary Model of Results for Social Justice Participation



Note. Solid arrows indicate significant associations, dashed arrows indicate non-significant associations. Level-two variables are in shaded boxes. Perpendicular lines indicate cross-level moderation.

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APPENDIX A: STUDY ITEMS

Social Justice Prioritization Four Item Scale: $\alpha = .82$

There are many tasks that a church can do. Of those listed below, what priority would you give to each for your church?

1. *Encourage individual members to support local social reforms to relieve poverty and hunger.*
2. *Provide organizational support to groups attempting to promote world peace and justice.*
3. *Provide opportunities for channeling members into actively promoting human rights and well-being.*
4. *Develop church programs which would help people understand local programs and issues.*

Response options ranged from 1 (none) to 5 (highest)

Social Justice Participation Item:

Those who answered yes to the question, “*Does your congregation participate directly in any programs to provide a community social service or promote peace and justice?*” were then asked,

1. *How much time have you been able to give to these programs?*

Response options ranged from 1 (none) to 5 (More than five hours a week)

Theological Orientation Item:

Which of the following statements best expresses your view of the Bible?”

1. *The Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally.*
2. *The Bible is the inspired Word of God and its basic moral and religious teachings are clear and true, even if it does contain some human error.*
3. *The Bible is a record of many different people’s response to God and because of this, people and churches today are forced to interpret for themselves the Bible’s moral and religious teachings.*
4. *The Bible is a valuable book because it was written by wise and good people, but I do not believe it is really God’s word.*

Frequency of Religious Participation Three Item Scale: $\alpha = .64$

How often do you personally do the following:

1. *Attend worship service?*
2. *Participate in religious courses or Sunday school?*
3. *Participate in other church activities other than worship?*

Response options ranged from 0 (never) to 7 (every day)

Social Capital Bonding Item:

Of your five closest friends, how many are members of this congregation?

Response options ranged from 0 (0 friends) to 5 (5 friends)

Social Capital Bridging Item:

To what extent do you agree that each statement describes your congregation? A “Don’t Know” response is provided, but please use it only when absolutely necessary.

1. *Cooperative projects and joint workshops with churches of other denominations are highly valued.*

Response options ranged from 1 (don’t know) through 5 (agree strongly) scale.