ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: CONFORMITY OR REBELLION? CHILDHOOD RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENTS AND FUTURE DELINQUENCY

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This thesis examines the complex relationship between childhood religious environments and adolescent delinquency, focusing on whether early exposure to religion acts as a protective factor or contributes to deviant behavior. Drawing on social control theory and general strain theory, the study explores two competing hypotheses: that increased presence of religiosity during childhood may be associated with decreased engagement in delinquent acts, and that extreme levels of religious exposure may be associated with increased engagement in delinquent acts. Using data from the Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS), the analysis includes a sample of 2,657 adolescents and applies linear and quadratic regression models to test these hypotheses. Results show that moderate early religious exposure is associated with lower engagement in delinquent acts, supporting the protective role of religion. However, the evidence for a curvilinear relationship, where both very low, and especially very high exposure increase risk, is limited, as quadratic terms were not statistically significant. Children who associate with more "strict" or "rigid" religious ideologies reported the highest levels of religious exposure, but no significant association with delinquency was found when controlling for family and

demographic factors. Overall, the findings demonstrate that religion can serve as a protective force against engagement in delinquent acts, however findings are inconclusive regarding religions role as a harmful factor. This paper highlights the need for more future research into the harmful effects of religion's impact on youth behavior and delinquency.

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Introduction

According to a Pew Research Center survey (2012), over 80% of the global population identifies with a religious group, highlighting its influence and prevalence worldwide. Religion plays a major role in family life around the world, influencing how children grow and develop. The relationship between being immersed in a religious environment during childhood and its impact on the likelihood of future delinquency in adolescence is an understudied topic in the field of criminal justice and criminology. This gap is especially important as religion continues to shape how children are raised, yet its long-term effects on behavior remain unclear (Sumter et al., 2018).

Religion remains an important source of emotional support, socialization, and identity development, particularly for adolescents (Greenfield & Marks, 2007). Most American youth consider religion meaningful in their lives, with nearly one-third attending weekly services and over one-third participating in religious group activities (Smith & Denton, 2005). Moreover, according to the Pew Research Center (2020), for U.S. teenagers aged 13-17, 80% report belief in God or a universal spirit, 67% affiliate with some religion, 60% have participated in religious education programs, 51% have been a part of a religious youth group, and 44% attend services at least monthly. This demonstrates that religion is an active and influential part of their lives. Despite its significance, the influence of religion on delinquent behavior remains underexplored (Sumter et al., 2018). Scholars have noted that religion has not received much attention in social science, mostly because it is hard to measure, and some fields have tended to overlook it. (Perry, 2023).

Early religious exposure refers to the cultural and environmental influences, often provided by parents, that shape an individual's religious beliefs and practices from a young age. This includes factors such as a child's religious affiliation, the frequency of service attendance, and the extent to which religious practices are integrated into daily family life (Pearce & Davis, 2016). The exposure often starts passively, as children observe rituals and routines, but can grow into more active participation through faith-based conversations, moral lessons, or religious youth activities. These early experiences do not just influence what a child believes, they help shape how they see the world, how they deal with challenges, and how they relate to others (Pearce & Davis, 2016). Research consistently shows that adults who say religion was very important in their family growing up, and whose parents frequently discussed religious matters, are more likely to continue identifying with their parents' religion later in life (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Religious environments serve as a form of social support and often emphasize moral teachings, values, and community engagement, all of which can significantly influence a child's ethical development and decision-making processes later in life (Erickson, 2019). When implemented positively, religiosity may benefit children as they grow into adolescence. Past research suggests that a lack of religious influence in children's lives is associated with negative outcomes such as an increased likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior, weaker moral development, reduced social support, diminished well-being, and a higher chance of participating in risky behaviors such as substance use and early sexual activity (Salas-Wright et al., 2012). If religious environments help reduce criminal behavior, this insight could inform the development of programs and policies that utilize faith-based initiatives to prevent youth crime or reduce the risk of adolescents and adults engaging in delinquency (Adamczyk, Freilich, & Kim, 2017).

It is important to note that religion's influence is not uniformly positive. While many studies emphasize its protective qualities, some studies argue that strict religious environments or heightened childhood religiosity can negatively affect adolescents by creating family tensions, reinforcing gender and sexual inequality, or encouraging risky sexual behaviors (Pearce, Uecker, & Denton, 2019). Additionally, rigid religious norms can lead to marginalization, secrecy surrounding abuse, lower educational attainment, and psychological harm caused by hypocritical or abusive leaders (Pearce, Uecker, & Denton, 2019). These findings illustrate that religious environments can, in some cases, negatively impact individuals both physically and psychologically, potentially contributing to a higher risk of violence or delinquency. Understanding these dynamics is essential, as it helps identify how certain aspects of religious settings, such as inflexible moral codes or oppressive social norms, can foster stress, resentment, or alienation that manifests in deviant behavior. By examining these complexities, researchers and policymakers can promote healthier religious practices and foster environments that support personal growth and social development rather than contribute to harm.

This study examines how childhood religious environments influence the likelihood of delinquency during adolescence. While past research has mostly focused on the positive effects of religion, such as encouraging prosocial behavior and reducing deviance, few studies have explored more complex or potentially negative outcomes. This research explores both possibilities between childhood religious environments and adolescent engagement in delinquent acts.

Literature Review

Religious Exposure and Decreased Delinquency

This study investigates how parental religiosity in a child's environment influences adolescent delinquency, with the first hypothesis suggesting that increased levels of religious exposure are associated with lower delinquency. The theoretical foundation for this hypothesis is social control theory, developed by Travis Hirschi in 1969. Hirschi argued that people have natural tendencies toward deviant behavior, but societal controls, such as institutions, norms, and social bonds, restrain individuals and prevent them from acting on those impulses (Hirschi, 1969). Strong bonds to social institutions reduce the likelihood of delinquency (Erickson, 2019). Although Hirschi didn't initially emphasize religion as a main form of social control since his research focused more on family and school, later research has challenged this by highlighting religion as a powerful source of social bonding, particularly religious involvement. Religious involvement, such as events or services, reduces unstructured time, opportunities for deviance, and fosters strong social bonds through adult mentorship and community expectations.

Supporting research includes work from Hill and Pollock (2015), who used data from the National Youth Survey Family Study. They found that higher levels of religious service attendance and personal belief in religion were associated with a lower likelihood of substance use during adolescence and early adulthood. These findings emphasize that religious participation plays a vital role in fostering prosocial behavior during the formative years. Additionally, Good and Willoughby (2006) found that church-attending adolescents exhibited better psychosocial adjustment, stronger parental relationships, and lower engagement in risky behaviors, reinforcing the view that religion can act as a stabilizing force in young people's lives.

Furthermore, Johnson and colleagues (2006), found that church attendance or the frequency of attending religious services has significant inverse effects on illegal activities, drug selling, and drug use among disadvantaged youth.

When religiosity is accepted as a belief system, it influences children by shaping moral decisions, life choices, and behavioral outcomes. Moreover, children whose parents regularly attend religious services are consistently rated by both parents and teachers as having higher levels of self-control, better social skills, and fewer behavioral issues such as impulsivity and externalizing behaviors (Bartkowski et al., 2008). Parental attendance is also associated with improved approaches to learning, greater emotional well-being, and stronger interpersonal skills. These benefits are most pronounced when both parents are frequent attenders, suggesting that strong involvement in religious networks can reinforce positive development through both modeling and building support structures (Bartkowski et al., 2008). Overall, this body of research suggests that religious involvement strengthens social bonds, enhances moral development, and serves as a protective factor and stabilizing force against delinquency (Baier & Wright, 2001; Costello, 2016). Finally, adolescents with higher religious commitment, measured through service attendance, prayer frequency, and the importance of religion, tend to engage in fewer delinquent behaviors (Johnson et al., 2001). This supports social control theory, which argues that strong connections to institutions like religion help keep people from breaking rules (Hirschi, 1969). Even after accounting for factors like family structure, peer influence, and school attachment, religiosity remains a significant protective factor (Johnson et al., 2001). Its influence is especially strong when adolescents are part of religious social networks that reinforce prosocial norms (Johnson et al., 2001).

Beyond limiting deviant opportunities, religion shapes the moral framework that guides behavior. It plays a powerful role in forming individuals' values and beliefs about right and wrong, including attitudes toward social issues such as abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and criminal punishment (Call & Heaton, 1990; Hess & Rueb, 2005; Westwood, 2022). Early exposure to these teachings can instill value systems that discourage delinquency and promote conformity to social norms. For at-risk youth, religion can also provide emotional support and resilience. Practices like prayer and involvement in supportive communities can help youth cope with trauma and stress and avoid externalizing behaviors such as aggression or defiance (Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013). This demonstrates that religion functions both as a social and psychological buffer against delinquent behavior.

Religion also supports positive parenting by promoting emotional warmth, clear structure, and open communication between parents and children (Rich et al., 2024). Families who share religious practices tend to spend more quality time together, engaging in meaningful activities that strengthen bonds. Additionally, parents with strong spiritual awareness are more likely to raise children who demonstrate better self-regulation, psychosocial adjustment, and academic success (Rich et al., 2024). Religion can serve as a valuable source of guidance, instilling moral values and enhancing overall family cohesion.

Religious Exposure and Increased Delinquency

While religious exposure in prior literature is often associated with lower engagement in delinquent behavior, some literature has shown inconsistent results and that in certain cases, when extreme levels of religious exposure are present, these settings may be associated with higher engagement in delinquent behaviors (Bartkowski et al., 2008; Hookway & Habibis, 2013; Pearce and Haynie, 2004). This challenges the common assumption that more religiosity is

always beneficial. The second hypothesis draws from Agnew's General Strain Theory, which suggests that stress or strain in an individual's life, especially when combined with negative emotions, can lead to delinquent behavior (Agnew, 1989). In highly religious households, particularly where expectations are rigid or conflicting, adolescents may experience strain that creates emotional stress and family tension. Pearce and Haynie (2004) found that shared religiosity between mothers and children reduced delinquency, while nonshared religiosity increased it by weakening familial bonds and fostering conflict. Strain on one's life is especially heightened when highly religious parents impose strict expectations on nonreligious children, leading to alienation, disappointment, and a lack of emotional support, conditions that increase the likelihood of delinquent coping mechanisms.

Moreover, frequent parent-child discussions about religious beliefs and traditions can act as an "intergenerational bridge," helping parents transmit values and expectations (Bartkowski et al., 2008). However, frequent conflict over religion between parents can have a negative impact on children, contributing to greater sadness, loneliness, and impulsive behavior (Bartkowski et al., 2008). When religion becomes a source of tension, it undermines the positive potential of the family's religious life. Bartkowski and colleagues (2019), later found that 3rd graders raised in more religious households or with higher religiosity were negatively linked to standardized test performance in core subjects like math and science. The researchers suggest that a strong religious emphasis on moral and social values may come at the expense of academic priorities, potentially deprioritizing educational achievement in favor of character development.

Some religious environments may instead foster coercion, psychological strain, or even radicalization, particularly when religious authority is rigid or unquestioned (Perry, 2024; Riedel & Rau, 2025). In religious contexts, strain may arise from the pressure to conform to strict rules,

coercive doctrines, or societal expectations that conflict with individual goals or values. According to strain theory, when individuals, especially youth, face barriers to achieving autonomy, acceptance, or identity through socially approved means, they may experience frustration and seek alternative pathways, which can include deviant behavior. Rosenberg and Siegel (2020) note that controlling religious language or behavior can contribute to this strain, prompting responses such as heresy, apostasy, or covert resistance to religious norms. Similarly, Erving Goffman (1961) described "total institutions," such as rigid religious communities, as environments where individuals are stripped of autonomy through routine, isolation, and strict regulation of personal expression. These highly controlled settings can suppress individuality and elevate psychological stress. In such environments, religious pressure may undermine personal agency and foster deviant coping mechanisms, especially among youth navigating conflicting identities. When individuals are unable to achieve personal or social goals within these rigid systems, strain may intensify, prompting rule-breaking or acts of quiet resistance. Goffman's concept of the "mortification of the self" illustrates how the erosion of individuality can lead to adaptive responses. For religious youth, this may manifest as secret defiance, emotional withdrawal, or eventual disengagement from the religious group to regain autonomy and alleviate internal tension. As shown across these theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, extreme or coercive religious environments may inadvertently foster conditions that increase rather than decrease delinquent behavior. This highlights the need for more nuanced and advanced research to better understand the complex relationship between religiosity and deviance.

Prior research shows that in some cases, growing up with intense religious exposure, like that experienced by children raised in the Jehovah's Witnesses, can be linked to higher

engagement in risky or delinquent behaviors after leaving the faith (Hookway & Habibis, 2013). Several participants described turning to drug use, alcohol, crime, or other harmful behavior after disaffiliation, often as a reaction to suddenly having freedom after years of strict rules and limited personal choice (Hookway & Habibis, 2013). Much of this control came from specific practices within the religion, including shunning, rigid gender roles, and the non-celebration of holidays. These practices led many to feel isolated, different, or embarrassed, especially during adolescence when fitting in with peers became more important (Hookway & Habibis, 2013). Leaving was often seen to gain independence, explore relationships, and experience a more typical social life. However, the transition was difficult. Without the structure they had grown up with, some struggled to make decisions, developed feelings of guilt, or experienced a loss of identity and self-worth. The study suggests that while strict religious environments may promote discipline on the surface, they can also lead to emotional and behavioral challenges later, particularly when young people are suddenly left to navigate the outside world on their own (Hookway & Habibis, 2013).

Furthermore, religion can also have restrictive effects on parenting. In some contexts, religious beliefs justify the use of physical discipline, such as spanking, as a moral duty. Moreover, when religious values are imposed rigidly or without mutual understanding, they may lead to parent-child conflict or emotional control (Rich et al., 2024). While many religious families are shifting toward more communicative discipline strategies, overly authoritative approaches can undermine a child's autonomy and emotional well-being (Rich et al., 2024). Additionally, according to Bornstein and colleagues (2017), when researching parental religiousness on child development, parents and children agreed that parental religiousness is

associated with more controlling parenting, and as a result, this increases child problem and externalizing behaviors.

Mother's Role with Religion

Mothers tend to play a central role in shaping the early environments children grow up in, especially when it comes to social routines, emotional development, and religious or moral guidance. Research shows that mothers are more often the primary caregivers and are typically more involved in the day-to-day parenting that influences how children behave and feel early in life (Fomby & Musick, 2017). When it comes to religion, mothers are also more likely to lead family religious practices and guide their children's participation. Research shows that mothers remain the primary caregivers, and consistent time spent with their children, whether directly engaged or readily accessible at home, has been linked to better reading scores and fewer externalizing behavior problems**,** especially in adolescence (Fomby & Musick, 2017).

Data suggests that when parents come from different religious backgrounds, children are more likely to follow their mother's faith. For example, nearly 40% of people raised by a Catholic mother and a Protestant father now identify as Catholic (Pew Research Center, 2015). On a global scale, women are more likely to be religious than men. According to Pew Research Center's 2016 report on gender and religion, 83% of women across 192 countries reported a religious affiliation compared to 80% of men. In about one-third of those countries, more women than men identify with a religion by at least two percentage points, and there are no countries where men are more religious than women by the same percentage (Pew Research Center, 2016). Additionally, men are more likely to be unaffiliated or identify as atheist or agnostic (Pew Research Center, 2016). Taken together, these patterns highlight the key role mothers and women play in shaping a household's religious environment.

Accounting for Other

To better understand how early religious exposure may relate to adolescent delinquency, this study also considers a range of other factors that influence a child's development. These include information from the baseline and Year 1 mother surveys, which were collected when children were very young. Looking at early life conditions helps ensure that we are considering influences that came before any reported delinquent behavior.

Important background characteristics include whether the mother is employed, her marital status, parental substance use, and parenting practices like how often she spends time with the child or whether she uses physical discipline. Other factors include maternal education, early behavioral issues in the child, and broader challenges the family may be facing. These kinds of conditions matter because children raised in low-income or single-parent homes often experience more stress and instability, which can increase the risk of behavioral problems (Shader 2001). Having a parent who struggles with substance use or who has been incarcerated, especially a father, can also lead to emotional and behavioral difficulties for children (Murray and Farrington 2008). Parenting style plays a key role as well. Harsh or inconsistent discipline, such as spanking, has been linked to increased aggression, while more supportive and engaged parenting tends to reduce the risk of delinquency (Baumrind 1991; Gershoff 2002). High levels of parenting stress can make it harder for caregivers to respond calmly and consistently to their child's needs (Crnic and Low 2002). The religious environment itself may also shape how children interpret moral rules, whether they feel supported by their faith, or whether they feel overly restricted by it (Pearce and Haynie 2004). Early behavioral traits are important too. Patterns of impulsivity, aggression, or social difficulty often remain consistent over time and are among the strongest predictors of later delinquency (Augustyn et al., 2020).

Current Study

Criminologists have long debated how religion relates to deviant behavior, but the findings are mixed and often depend on factors like the type of offense, religious background, and social context (Evans et al., 1996). While much of the research focuses on how religion might reduce engagement in delinquent acts through moral guidance and social control, few studies explore whether very high levels of religiosity might have the opposite effect. In some cases, extreme religious exposure could create pressure, conflict, or even push young people toward rebellion. This study looks at that possibility by examining how parental religiosity shapes adolescent delinquency, using data from the Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). It tests two main ideas: that higher levels of religious exposure may be associated with less engagement in delinquent acts, and that extremely high exposure may be associated with increased engagement in delinquent acts, indicating a possible curvilinear relationship. By exploring both possibilities, this research adds a more nuanced view of how religion can influence youth behavior and questions the assumption that religion is always a protective factor.

Since religion plays a significant role in many children's lives, it's important to understand how it affects their behavior. The results of this study could be useful for both faith-based programs and public policy. If religious involvement does help reduce delinquency, then expanding those programs would be beneficial. On the other hand, if intense religious environments increase the risk of delinquency, religious groups and policymakers may need to rethink certain practices and make sure religiosity is implemented in a balanced way. This research can help shape more thoughtful approaches to religious education, parenting, and policy

by highlighting both the benefits and potential downsides of growing up in a deeply religious environment.

Data and Methods

Data - The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study

The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS) is a longitudinal dataset that is designed to explore family life and child development in the United States. It includes information on a cohort of roughly 5,000 children born in large U.S. cities from 1998 to 2000. Children being born to unmarried mothers were oversampled by a 3 to 1 ratio, which created a diverse and representative sample of disadvantaged urban families, including many Black, Hispanic, and low-income families. The study collects survey data from various sources, including mothers, fathers, and other primary caregivers, as well as the children themselves. Interviews or surveys were conducted right after the child's birth (baseline) and then again when they were around the ages of 1 (Y1), 3 (Y3), 5 (Y5), 9 (Y9), 15 (Y15), and 22 (Y22) years old. Each wave includes various data collection methods, such as parent and child surveys, home visits, observations, and cognitive and medical assessments. The FFCWS data provides quality data on family dynamics, religious prevalence, and delinquency, making it a key resource for this specific research study. The unit of analysis being used for this research study is the focal child and the current study uses Baseline, Y1, Y3, and Y15 for analysis. Data from Baseline and Y1 is controlled for, Y3 includes information on religious prevalence from parent's surveys, while Y15 provides data on delinquency using the violence and vandalism questions from the focal child's survey. Additionally, I decided to use the FFCWS dataset because it provides rich longitudinal data on parent and child behavior, as well as variation in religious participation and its relationship to delinquency.

Analytical Sample

To create the analytic sample, I began with the 4,898 children in the FFCWS at baseline. First, I dropped cases where the child did not live with their mother at Y3, based on the question: *"Does the child live with the mother most or all of the time?"* (n=4,167). This resulted in the removal of 731 cases. Since child surveys began at Y9, and this study examines the link between religious environments during childhood and adolescent delinquency, I assumed that children living with their mothers were exposed to the same religious atmosphere, events, and immersed in the associated cultural environment as they grew up. By focusing on mothers only, I was able to keep the measurements consistent and avoid extra variability that could come from comparing across different parental roles. Next, I excluded cases where the child did not answer more than six questions on the violence and vandalism scale in Y15, which was based on the question: *"Would you say never, 1 or 2 times, 3 or 4 times, or 5 or more times in the past 12 months?"* (n=3,152) This resulted in the removal of 1,015 cases. I only retained those with valid data on the outcome variable. Last, I removed cases with missing data on the control variables (n=2,657). This resulted in the removal of 495 cases. Therefore, the analytic sample is limited to children living with their biological mothers at Y3, those who answered more than half of the Y15 violence and vandalism questions, and for those that provided data on the control variables. The final analytical sample size for this research is 2,657.

Outcome Variable: Delinquency

Delinquency is measured using a variety score, which sums binary indicators of youth participation in delinquent behaviors. Each behavior is coded as 0 ("Not Engaged") or 1 ("Engaged"), indicating whether the individual has participated in the act at least once. This measure focuses on the breadth of delinquent activity rather than its frequency. Using Year 15

(Y15) data from the FFCWS, participants reported how often they engaged in delinquent acts over the past 12 months, with response options ranging from "Never" to "5 or more times." After data cleaning, responses were recoded into binary variables, where any engagement (1-2 times or more) was coded as 1 ("Engaged"), while those who reported "Never" were coded as 0 ("Not Engaged"). The delinquent behaviors assessed include vandalism (graffiti, property damage), theft (shoplifting, stealing items under/over $50, car theft, burglary), violence (serious fights, injuring others, weapon-related theft, group fights), drug-related behaviors (selling marijuana or other drugs), and disorderly conduct (being loud/unruly in public). The final total delinquency score represents the sum of all reported delinquent behaviors, providing a comprehensive measure of delinquency variety rather than frequency. The variety score in this research is based on 13 items, with a maximum possible score of 13.

Explanatory Variable: Religious Exposure

Early religious exposure is measured by the frequency of religious service attendance, based on the Y3 mother survey question: "*How often do you attend religious services?*" Responses ranged from Every Day (1) to Never (7). To ensure higher values represent greater religious exposure, I cleaned and reverse-coded the data so that higher values indicate higher levels of early religious involvement. This variable was kept as a continuous measure.

To prepare the variable for analysis, I standardized early religious exposure by calculating z-scores, which set the variable's mean to zero. This process, known as mean-centering, was necessary to reduce multicollinearity when including a quadratic term in the regression model. Centering the variable before creating its squared term helps separate the effects of the linear and nonlinear components, allowing for clearer interpretation of both the regression coefficients and visual patterns in the data.

Controls

This study controls for a range of child, parent, and household characteristics using data from the baseline wave (M1) and the Year 1 wave (M2) of the Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). M1 data were collected when children were approximately 9 months old, and M2 data were collected when children were about one year old. Using data from these early waves helps establish the correct order of events, ensuring that background characteristics are measured prior to religious exposure and delinquency outcomes. Frequency tables and summary statistics were used to examine the descriptive characteristics of each control variable.

Key sociodemographic characteristics of the mother were drawn from M1. Maternal race (M1H3) was assessed through a multiple-choice question with options including White, Black/African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, Hispanic, and others. Binary variables were created for each racial group, and responses marked as "Other," "Don't Know," or missing were excluded. Maternal education (M1I1) was measured on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (no formal schooling) to 9 (graduate or professional school), with higher values indicating greater educational attainment. Maternal employment (M1I2D) was based on whether the mother expected to work in the coming year, and marital status (M1A4) was determined by whether the mother was currently married to the child's biological father. Responses were coded 1 = Yes and 0 = No.

Several additional controls addressed parental behaviors that may influence child development. Maternal substance use (M1G6) was measured by asking whether the mother had ever sought treatment for drug or alcohol problems. Paternal substance use (M1I9) was reported by the mother based on whether the child's father had experienced drug or alcohol-related issues. Paternal incarceration history (M2C36) was assessed in the Year 1 wave (M2) by asking whether

the father had ever spent time in jail or prison. Responses for all three variables were coded 1 = Yes and 0 = No.

Parenting practices were measured using multiple indicators from M2. Maternal engagement (M2B18A-H) was assessed through questions asking how many days per week the mother engaged in various activities with the child, such as reading, singing, or playing. Responses were grouped into high, moderate, or low engagement and averaged into an overall score. Disciplinary style (M2B19) was measured by whether the mother had spanked the child in the past month (coded 1 = Yes, 0 = No). Parenting stress (M2B20A-CX) was measured using a set of items rated on a 1–4 scale (1 = "Strongly agree," 4 = "Strongly disagree"), including statements such as "Being a parent is harder than I thought" and "I feel trapped by parenting responsibilities." In two cities, additional items were included in the stress scale. To ensure comparability across all respondents, responses were cleaned and averaged to create a mean parenting stress score, with higher values indicating greater stress. This approach prevents inflation of scores in locations with more items and provides a consistent measure of perceived stress across the full sample.

Religious affiliation (M1F7) was reported at baseline through a question asking about the mother's religious preference. Respondents selected from options including Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Christ, and others. I made each a binary variable, and responses were coded 1 = Yes (this is my religious affiliation) and 0 = No (this is not my religious affiliation).

Finally, the study controls for early child behavior using caregiver-reported assessments from M2. Mothers rated how well a series of behavioral descriptors (M2B17A-F) applied to their

child, including traits such as fussiness, sociability, emotional reactivity, and shyness. Items were scored on a 1-5 scale, with some reverse-coded so that higher scores reflected more positive behavior. These items were combined into a composite behavior score to control for early temperament.

Methods

To test the hypotheses, the researcher will use a linear probability model (LPM) in Stata to examine the relationship between explanatory variables and the binary outcome of adolescent delinquency. For Hypothesis 1, which predicts that moderate levels of religious attendance are associated with decreased engagement in delinquent acts, the model will estimate the effect of early religious exposure on the likelihood of delinquent behavior. For Hypothesis 2, which suggests that extremely strict religious environments may have an association with increased engagement in delinquent behavior, the model will include both the main effect of early religious exposure and a quadratic term to capture potential curvilinear patterns. This allows the analysis to assess whether moderate levels of religious exposure are protective, while very high levels are associated with greater risk. Interaction terms may also be added to explore whether the effects differ by subgroup. Using a linear probability model allows for straightforward interpretation of coefficients as changes in the probability of delinquency, while still accommodating continuous and polynomial predictors.

For the purposes of my analysis, I simplified several variables to prepare the data for regression. Religious affiliation was categorized into three groups: Strict, Moderate, and Not Strict. Strict was composed of religions: Muslim, Baptist, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, and Pentecostal. Past research shows that some religious groups can be described as more

structured or strict, often involving higher levels of early religious exposure and strong behavioral expectations. For instance, Islam (Muslim) emphasizes daily rituals such as prayer, fasting, and modest dress, which set clear expectations from a young age (Rahman, 1976). Baptists and other fundamentalist denominations promote strict moral teachings and gender roles based on Biblical literalism (White, 2008). The Church of Christ encourages moral purity and tends to avoid secular culture (Ferguson, 1996). Jehovah's Witnesses are known for rules around holidays, medical decisions such as no blood transfusions, no military participation, and internal discipline, creating a very controlled environment (Holden, 2002). Pentecostal groups often focus on moral discipline and obedience to spiritual authority (Miller & Yamamori, 2007). These groups are important to this study, which looks at how growing up in structured religious settings might relate to delinquent behavior during adolescence.

Moderate was composed of religions: Catholic, Jewish, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Prior research generally describes these traditions as more flexible in how their beliefs and practices are applied. While they can be enforced strictly in some households or communities, this tends to vary based on the specific home environment (Rhodes, 2015). Overall, the literature does not consistently associate these religions with rigid or highly strict teachings, which is why they are categorized as moderate in this study.

Finally, the not strict category is composed of religions: Christianity (when no specific denomination is identified), No Religious Affiliation, and Other. These classifications tend to lack clearly defined doctrinal expectations or structured religious practices. In the case of unaffiliated individuals or those identifying with vague or loosely organized religious labels, there is often less emphasis on behavioral regulation or moral discipline.

I also created a race minority variable, coding non-white racial groups (Black, Asian, American Indian, Hispanic, and Other) as 1 and White as 0. Educational attainment was grouped into three levels: Low Education (no formal education through some high school), High School or Some College (HS diploma, GED, some college, trade school), and Higher Education (bachelor's or graduate degree). After defining each variable, I checked distributions to ensure appropriate categorization. This approach helped simplify the dataset while preserving key distinctions for regression analysis.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in my analyses. On average, delinquency scores were low (M = 1.075, SD = 1.652), though the relatively high standard deviation indicates that while many children showed little to no delinquent behavior, some engaged in much higher levels. Additionally, the delinquency variable responses ranged from 0-13, corroborating that although most participants reported minimal involvement, a small number reported engaging in multiple or more serious acts. Early religious exposure was common (M = 3.773, SD = 1.539, range 1-7) though the level of involvement varied. Most children reported moderate exposure to religion during childhood, while fewer experienced either very low or very high levels.

Other family and social factors are also important to note. About 75% of mothers were married to the child's father, which may provide stability that reduces delinquency risk. Roughly 29% of children had a father who had been incarcerated, a potentially significant risk factor. About 29% of mothers reported spanking their child in the past month during Y1. On the other hand, mothers generally showed moderate to high levels of engagement with their children (M = 1.569, SD = 0.667). Parenting stress levels were moderate overall (M = 11.323, SD = 2.542). Early behavior problems were also present for some children (M = 17.823, SD = 3.977), which may predict externalizing behaviors.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that children with moderate levels of religious exposure may be less likely to engage in delinquent behavior. In this sample, most participants had at least some exposure to religion, and the overall average delinquency score was low, supporting the idea that religious involvement may have a protective effect.

Hypothesis 2 suggests that more rigid or high-control religious environments could contribute to increased delinquency. A smaller portion of the sample reported being raised in stricter religious settings. These groups included Jehovah's Witnesses (1.4%), Pentecostals (1.5%), Church of Christ (0.8%), and Muslims (1.1%), all of which are often associated with more structured religious practices. Baptists, who are also commonly linked to more traditional religious expectations, made up a larger share of the sample (29.8%). Catholics (26.2%) and Christians who identified with a general label (17.1%) also represented substantial portions of the sample.

When comparing average delinquency scores, participants identifying with the Church of Christ reported the highest mean (M = 1.62), followed by Jehovah's Witnesses (M = 1.45), and Baptists (M = 1.23). Pentecostals reported a slightly lower average (M = 1.02), and Muslims had the lowest mean score (M = 0.69). Those religions with higher mean delinquency scores may indicate that, on average, individuals in those groups reported engaging in more delinquent behaviors compared to other groups with lower means.

Delinquency Frequency

The dataset also provides an overview of self-reported delinquent behaviors, such as painting graffiti or damaging property, by showing how many acts each participant reported. According to Table 2, delinquency was relatively uncommon in this sample. About 41% of participants reported no delinquent acts at all. On average, individuals reported engaging in just over one act (M = 1.075, SD = 1.652), and the total number of reported acts ranged from 0 to 13. Notably, 64% of participants reported committing two or fewer delinquent acts, reinforcing the idea that most engaged in minimal delinquent behavior. Very few participants exhibited high levels of delinquency. Less than 1% reported extreme behavior, only 0.14% had a delinquency

score of 10 or higher, and just two individuals reached the maximum score of 13. The distribution of delinquency is highly skewed to the right, indicating that while most youth engaged in little to no delinquent behavior, a small number were involved in multiple or more serious acts. Overall, these findings suggest that delinquent behavior is not widespread in the sample, with most participants showing limited involvement in such activities.

Religious Exposure Frequency

According to Table 3, most children experienced moderate exposure, with the largest number of responses falling at values of 3, 4, and 5. Specifically, 580 participants reported a score of 3, 571 reported a 4, and 586 reported a 5. Lower levels of exposure were reported less often, with 298 participants selecting 1 and 244 selecting 2. Higher levels of exposure were also less frequent, with 360 selecting 6 and only 18 selecting the highest score of 7. These patterns show that while early religious involvement was widespread, very low and very high levels of exposure were relatively uncommon.

In addition, because I hypothesized a curvilinear relationship, I included both a linear and a quadratic term for early religious exposure in the model. To make the results easier to interpret and reduce multicollinearity between these two terms, I standardized the early religious exposure variable using a z-score. This process mean-centered the data, setting its average to zero, which helps improve model stability and ensures that both the linear and squared terms can be included without interfering with each other.

LOWESS Curve

Figure 1 displays a LOWESS curve, which stands for Locally Weighted Scatterplot Smoothing. This technique is used to visualize the relationship between two continuous variables

by fitting overlapping local regressions, allowing the shape of the trend to vary rather than assuming it is linear. For this chart, both early religious exposure and total delinquency were standardized so they would be on the same scale. The resulting curve reveals a U-shaped pattern, with lower levels of delinquency observed at moderate levels of religious exposure and higher delinquency reported at both the low and high ends of the exposure scale. This visualization suggests that engagement in delinquent acts may be more common among individuals with very limited or very intense early religious involvement, while moderate exposure appears to align with lower levels of delinquent behavior. Although the curve helps highlight potential patterns in the data, it is a descriptive tool and does not provide statistical evidence. Further analysis using regression models is necessary to examine whether this observed pattern remains when other factors are considered.

Regression Analysis

The bivariate regression analysis in Table 4 examines the relationship between standardized religious exposure and delinquency. The results indicate that each one standard-deviation unit increase in early religious exposure is associated with a 0.087 decrease in delinquency ($p = 0.007$). This finding supports hypothesis 1, that higher early religious exposure is associated with lower engagement in delinquent acts. The coefficient for standardized religious exposure is negative (-0.087), and the statistical significance at the 0.01 level ($p <$ 0.01**) indicates that this relationship is unlikely to be due to random chance.

The linear regression results presented in Table 5 examine the relationship between early religious exposure and delinquency using a multivariate model that includes both a linear and a quadratic term for religious exposure. In this context, "multivariate" refers to the inclusion of more than one explanatory variable, in this case, standardized religious exposure and its squared

term, to explore whether the relationship follows a curvilinear pattern. The results indicate that each one standard-deviation unit increase in early religious exposure is associated with a 0.076 decrease in delinquency ($p = 0.022$). This statistically significant finding supports the idea that higher levels of religious involvement are linked to lower levels of delinquent behavior.

For the second hypothesis, the squared term for religious exposure was added to the model. The results indicate that each one standard-deviation unit increase in the squared term is associated with a 0.043 increase in delinquency ($p = 0.158$). While the positive coefficient suggests that delinquency may rise at higher levels of religious exposure, the result is not statistically significant. This means there is not enough evidence to confirm a curvilinear (U-shaped) relationship between religious exposure and delinquency based on this model. Although the descriptive LOWESS chart suggested such a pattern, the regression findings do not offer strong statistical support for that interpretation.

When adding in the control variables, father incarceration appears to have the largest association with delinquency, with a positive coefficient of 0.348 and a statistically significant association. This indicates that having an incarcerated father could be strongly associated with higher delinquency levels. Other family-related variables, such as maternal education and marital status, also demonstrate significant relationships. Specifically, lower parental education is significantly associated with higher delinquency, highlighting the importance of educational attainment in preventing delinquent behavior. Children from White families were also significantly less likely to report delinquency, while having a mother who is married was surprisingly associated with slightly higher delinquency in the final model. In contrast, maternal unemployment, early behavioral problems, maternal engagement, and spanking are not statistically significant predictors of delinquency, suggesting that these factors may play a

smaller role than expected when controlling for other variables. These findings suggest that while religious exposure may have a weak negative association with delinquency, its influence is not as strong as family and socioeconomic factors such as parental incarceration, education, and marital status.

Strict Religious Exposure Analysis

T-tests were used to compare early religious exposure across strict, moderate, and not strict religious environments. Participants from strict religious backgrounds reported significantly higher levels of early religious exposure ($M = 0.14$) compared to those from non-strict backgrounds ($M = -0.078$), with the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, there was no significant difference in early religious exposure between participants from moderate environments ($M = -0.024$) and those who were not classified as moderate ($M = 0.006$), with a p-value of 0.437. Participants from non-strict religious backgrounds reported significantly lower levels of early religious exposure ($M = -0.131$) compared to those not in this category ($M = 0.062$), and this difference was also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). These results suggest that individuals from strict environments reported the highest levels of early religious involvement, while those from not-strict backgrounds reported the lowest.

A multivariate regression model was used to examine the relationship between early religious exposure and delinquency, specifically testing whether this relationship differed for participants from strict religious backgrounds. Instead of limiting the sample to only those in strict environments, interaction terms were included to assess whether the effects of religious exposure varied based on religious context, while also accounting for family and demographic factors. However, even with controls added, when testing whether strict environments showed a

different pattern, they were not significant. This means that even though participants from strict backgrounds reported higher levels of early religious exposure, that exposure was not clearly linked to higher or lower engagement in delinquent acts once other factors were considered.

Sensitivity Check

Since the delinquency variable was right-skewed, with a small number of participants reporting very high levels of delinquent behavior, I ran two additional checks to make sure those extreme values were not driving the results. First, I applied a natural log transformation to the delinquency variable to reduce skewness and lessen the impact of outliers. In this model, religious exposure was still a significant predictor. Each standard-deviation increase in religious exposure was linked to a 0.022 decrease in logged delinquency ($p = 0.021$), showing a similar pattern to the original model. Next, I created a simplified version of the outcome by turning delinquency into a binary variable. Participants who reported any delinquent behavior were coded as 1, and those who reported none were coded as 0. This approach helped confirm whether the overall trend held when focusing just on whether someone engaged in delinquency at all. Again, the results were consistent. A one-unit increase in religious exposure was associated with a 0.036 decrease in the likelihood of reporting any delinquent behavior ($p = 0.003$). Overall, both checks supported the original findings. While the size of the effect changed slightly depending on how delinquency was measured, the direction and significance stayed the same.

Discussion

The results of this study help deepen the understanding of how early religious exposure, particularly in relation to stricter religions, relates to adolescent delinquency. Overall, my findings support Hypothesis 1, which proposes that moderate religious involvement during childhood may serve as a protective factor against delinquency (Baier & Wright, 2001; Hill & Pollock, 2015).

However, support for Hypothesis 2, which suggests a curvilinear relationship, where both very low and very high levels of religiosity may be associated with increased engagement in delinquent acts is less clear. While visual patterns from LOWESS plots showed a U-shaped trend, suggesting that extreme ends of religious exposure may be linked to higher delinquency, the quadratic term in the regression analysis was not statistically significant. This weakens the argument for a confident curvilinear relationship. One possible reason the quadratic term was not significant is that very few participants reported extremely high levels of religious exposure. The steep rise in delinquency seen at those higher levels is based on a small number of cases, which introduces greater uncertainty and makes the results less reliable. This limited data may affect the model's ability to detect a clear curvilinear pattern. Overall, the lack of statistical significance suggests that the U-shaped trend seen in the chart could be influenced by sampling error or outliers. More data or further analysis would be needed to understand this relationship more confidently. Due to the inconclusive results, there is a strong need for future research to further explore the relationship between early religious exposure and adolescent delinquency, particularly across different religious environments to determine its societal impacts.

Both the bivariate and multivariate regression models showed a significant negative relationship between early religious exposure and delinquency, suggesting that religion can

promote prosocial development (Good & Willoughby, 2006; Erickson, 2019). However, after considering family and demographic controls, this relationship became weaker. This suggests that part of the reason why religion appeared to reduce delinquency may be due to other factors. Among the control variables, having an incarcerated father emerged as the strongest predictor of delinquency, emphasizing the broader influence of family circumstances. Other important factors included low maternal education, minority racial status, and being raised in a married household, highlighting the complexity of how family structure intersects with behavioral outcomes.

A subgroup analysis was conducted for participants from strict or high-demand religious environments. Although youth in these settings reported higher levels of early religious exposure, this was not associated with significantly different delinquency outcomes in the regression models. This suggests that religious strictness by itself may not be a strong predictor of youth behavior. Instead, the way religion is practiced, the quality of parent-child relationships, and broader social context likely play a more central role.

Other contextual factors, such as how religion is practiced within the household, the quality of parent-child relationships, and peer dynamics, may be more directly associated with delinquency (Pearce and Haynie, 2004). The LOWESS graph for participants from strict backgrounds displayed a slight increase in delinquency at the highest levels of exposure, which provides some visual support for curvilinear strain theory. However, given that neither the interaction terms nor the quadratic term reached statistical significance, these patterns should be interpreted with caution. Overall, the findings indicate that strict religious environments are not necessarily associated with stronger or more consistent behavioral outcomes.

These results corroborate previous research that sees religion as both supportive and, under certain conditions, stressful. Highly structured religious environments may provide moral clarity and boundaries, but they can also create pressure and limit personal expression (Pearce, Uecker, & Denton, 2019). This is consistent with Goffman's (1961) idea of "total institutions," settings that heavily regulate behavior and can lead to psychological strain or resistance. For adolescents, particularly those navigating personal identity and autonomy, this form of strict control may contribute to deviant coping mechanisms such as secret rebellion or withdrawal (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2020).

Limitations

Throughout the research process, several limitations became clear. Early religious exposure was reported by the mother during the child's early years, which may not accurately reflect the child's actual beliefs or how their religious involvement changed over time. Also, due to the data being drawn from early childhood interviews with the mother, I was unable to control for several important factors in the child's upbringing, such as peer influence or educational experiences.

Religious experience is also deeply personal and can vary widely, making it difficult to fully capture through standardized survey items. Religion does not impact all individuals the same way, and its influence may depend heavily on family environment, community context, and cultural background. Other factors, such as parenting style, may also have a stronger influence on both religiosity and delinquent behavior in ways this study could not fully address. Moreover, the measure of delinquency in Year 15 was based on self-reports from adolescents, which may be affected by underreporting due to recall bias or social desirability.

The data for this study came from the Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS), which focuses on children born in large U.S. cities and includes a representative sample of disadvantaged urban families. Due to this, the findings may not be generalizable to rural populations or communities with different religious compositions. Additionally, some strict religious groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, or Conservative Protestants were underrepresented in the sample. The small number of participants from these groups made it difficult to detect meaningful patterns or associations.

Finally, a significant gap in the literature is the lack of longitudinal studies that follow individuals' religious exposure consistently from early childhood through adolescence. Most existing research begins in early adolescence, typically around age 12 or later. I was not able to find any studies that tracked religious involvement beginning in early childhood and continuing into the teenage years, which limits my understanding of how continued religious exposure may shape long-term behavioral outcomes.

Implications

The findings from this study suggest that early religious exposure may serve as a protective factor against delinquent behavior, particularly when that exposure is moderate and supportive. These results have important implications for both policy and practice. Specifically, they can help inform faith-based initiatives, which are programs that incorporate religious or spiritual elements to promote well-being and address various health or social challenges (Lee & Barrett, 2007). By fostering supportive religious environments that strengthen social bonds, encourage prosocial behavior, and provide a sense of meaning and purpose, such programs can play a role in building resilience and reducing risky behaviors among youth.

For parents, educators, and professionals working with youth, these findings highlight the importance of balance. Moderate religious involvement may offer structure and guidance, while excessive pressure or rigid enforcement could lead to resistance, particularly during adolescence. In applied fields such as social work and juvenile justice, recognizing how religion functions differently across communities may help practitioners better support youth from a variety of backgrounds. On a broader level, these findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of religion's role in youth development, emphasizing that its impact is shaped by context, experience, and individual interpretation.

Future Directions

While this study did not provide strong statistical support for a clear relationship between religious intensity and delinquency, the findings suggest that the effects of religion on youth behavior may be more complex than simple measures can capture. Future research should consider exploring how factors like intensity, context, and personal experience shape the influence of religion during adolescence. It may not be just a question of whether a child is religious, but how that religiosity is expressed, supported, and experienced (Smith & Faris, 2002). The finding that participants from more religiously intense backgrounds reported higher exposure but showed no consistent differences in delinquency outcomes highlights the need for more nuanced approaches to studying religion in youth development.

Future research should look beyond simple measures of attendance or affiliation and consider qualitative elements like personal belief, family dynamics, and how religious teachings are interpreted. Researchers should also explore qualitative dimensions of religious experience and look at long-term effects of early exposure. I would be very interested to interview individuals of different religious backgrounds and determine their experiences with their

upbringings in relation to delinquency. I also think for the future it would be beneficial to use a different dataset. The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study was publicly available, included measures of religiosity, and featured well-structured questions on delinquency. However, after running descriptive statistics and regression analyses, it became evident that the overall sample size was small, the number of participants within specific religious subgroups was limited, and relatively few individuals reported engaging in delinquent behavior. As a result, while there was visual evidence supporting my second hypothesis, the small sample size limited the ability to detect statistically significant results with confidence due to too many possible errors such as outliers or sampling errors. Additionally, for the future, larger or more representative samples of strict religious subgroups are needed to better understand their overall impact as well as potentially a different unit of religious measurement. Frequency of attendance has been studied in several papers, but it can be difficult to completely grasp religions' effects by using just that variable.

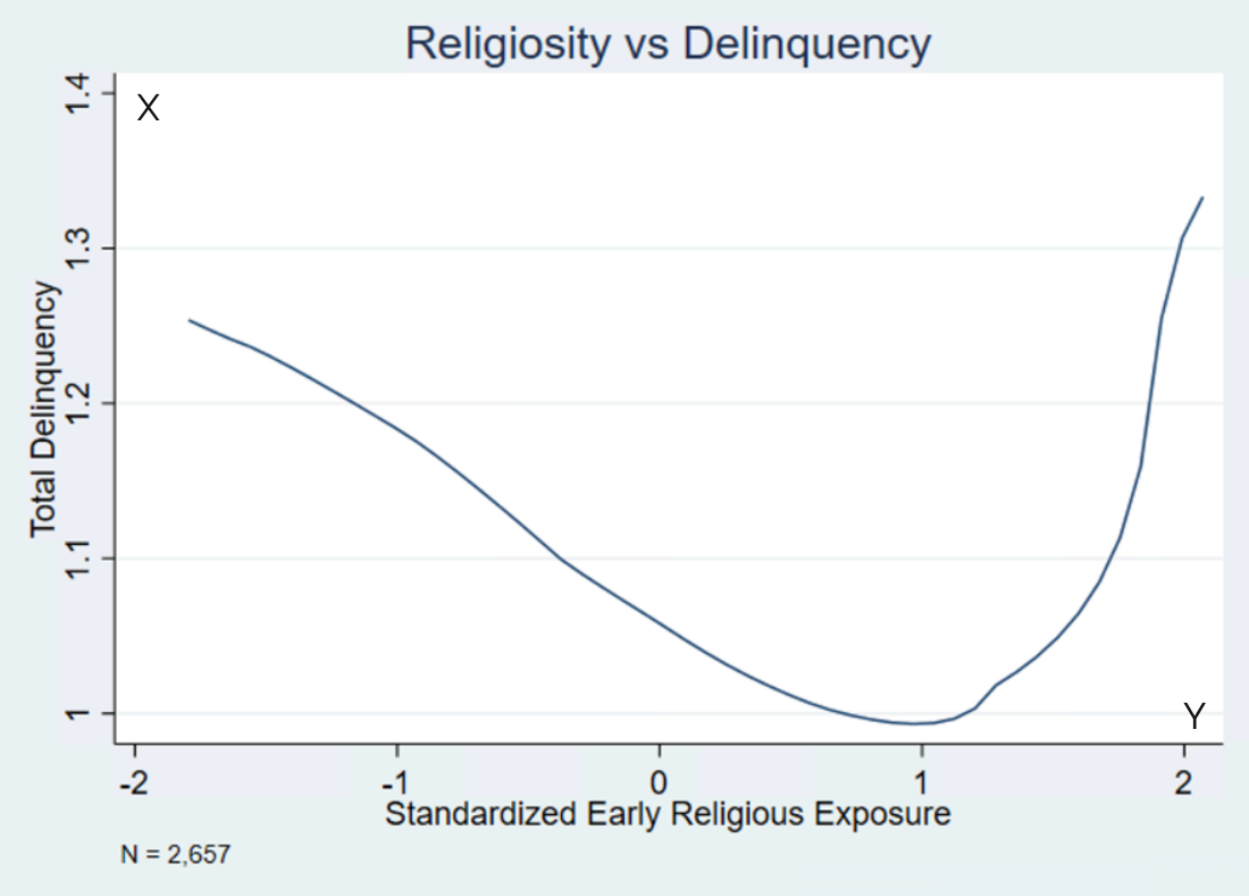
Conclusion

This study highlights the complex role that early religious exposure can play in shaping adolescent behavior. Findings suggest that when religious involvement is balanced and supportive, it may be associated with lower levels of delinquency. However, this protective effect appears most consistent at moderate levels of exposure. The results regarding more strict or rigid religious environments were not conclusive. This indicates a need for future research to better understand how different types of religious environments influence youth outcomes. Overall, there is a need for more research addressing the contextual impact of religion on adolescent development depending on the context in which it is practiced and how it is experienced by the individual.

Appendix

Figures

Figure 1: Curvilinear Relationship Between Early Religious Exposure and Delinquency



Source: The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS).

Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analyses

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analyses						
Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Outcome Variable					
Delinquency	2,657	1.075	1.652	0	13
Explanatory Variable					
Early Religious Exposure	2,657	3.773	1.539	1	7
Control Variables					
Mother Employment Status	2,657	0.114		0	1
Mother Married to Father	2,657	0.754		0	1
Mother Substance Use (No Drugs)	2,657	0.965		0	1
Father Substance Use (No Drugs)	2,657	0.945		0	1
Early Child Behavioral Problems	2,657	17.823	3.977	0	30
Mother Engagement with Child	2,657	1.569	0.667	0	2
Spank Child	2,657	0.291		0	1
Frequency of Mother Parental Issues	2,657	11.323	2.542	0	16
Father Incarcerated	2,657	0.290		0	1
Religion Type					
Not Religious	2,657	0.113		0	1
Catholic	2,657	0.262		0	1
Jewish	2,657	0.008		0	1
Muslim	2,657	0.011		0	1
Christian	2,657	0.171		0	1
Baptist	2,657	0.298		0	1
Church of Christ	2,657	0.008		0	1
Episcopalian	2,657	0.009		0	1
Jenovah's Witness	2,657	0.014		0	1
Lutheran	2,657	0.015		0	1
Methodist	2,657	0.022		0	1
Presbyterian	2,657	0.006		0	1
Pentecostal	2,657	0.015		0	1
Conservative	2,657	0.001		0	1
Other, not specified	2,657	0.049		0	1
Religious Categories					
Strict	2,657	0.347		0	1
Moderate	2,657	0.321		0	1
Non-Strict	2,657	0.333		0	1
Mother Education					
Low Education	2,657	0.301		0	1
High School/Some College Education	2,657	0.584		0	1
Higher Education	2,657	0.115		0	1
Mother Race					
White	2,657	0.313		0	1
Black	2,657	0.522		0	1
Asian	2,657	0.020		0	1
American Indian	2,657	0.035		0	1
Hispanic	2,657	0.001		0	1
Other	2,657	0.108		0	1
Source : The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS).					

Table 2. Delinquency Frequency Table

Table 2. Delinquency Frequency Table		
Variable		*n*
Delinquency		
0		1,435
1		527
2		283
3		177
4		100
5		65
6		30
7		18
8		8
9		6
10		2
11		1
12		3
13		2
Total		2,657
Source : The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS).		

Table 3. Religious Exposure Frequency

Table 3. Delinquency Frequency Table	
Early Religious Exposure	*n*
1	298
2	244
3	580
4	571
5	586
6	360
7	18
Source : The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS).	

Table 4. Regression of Delinquency and Early Religious Exposure

Table 4. Regression of Delinquency and Early Religious Exposure			
Coefficients	Bivariate	Add Quadratic Term	Add Controls
Religious Exposure	**-0.087	*-0.076	-0.059
Religious Exposure^2		0.043	0.026
Strict			0.109
Moderate			-0.103
Mother Employment Status			0.117
Mother Married to Father			***0.268
Mother Substance Use (No Drugs)			*0.288
Father Substance Use (No Drugs)			-0.060
White			*-0.156
Low Education			*0.265
High School/Some College Education			0.077
Early Child Behavioral Problems			0.004
Mother Engagement with Child			-0.009
Spank Child			0.074
Frequency of Mother Parental Issues			-0.018
Father Incarcerated			***0.346
Source : The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS).			
Note: " race minority, higher education, and Not Strict were omitted from the model due to collinearity and serve as the reference categories for race, education, and religion			
Note : p < .05 (*), p < .01 (**), p < .001 (***)			
Note: Strict consists of Muslim, Baptist, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, and Pentecostal			
Note: Moderate consists of Catholic, Jewish, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Conservative			
Note: Not Strict consists of Christian (general/unspecified label), No Religious Affiliation, and Other, Not Specified			
Note : Minority Race consists of Black, Asian, American Indian, Hispanic, Other			
Note : Low Education consists of No School, 8th Grade or Less, Some High School			
Note : High School or Some College consists of HS diploma, GED, Some College, Trade School			
Note : Higher Education consists of Bachelors or Graduate Degree			

Table 5. Regression of Delinquency and Early Religious Exposure by Interaction Term (Strict)

Table 5. Regression of Delinquency and Early Religious Exposure by Interaction Term (Strict)	
Coefficients	Interaction Term (Strict Religiosity) & Controls
Religious Exposure	-0.048
Religious Exposure^2	0.027
Religious Exposure x Strict	0.033
Religious Exposure^2 x Strict	0.004
Strict	0.107
Moderate	-0.104
Mother Employment Status	0.118
Mother Married to Father	***0.270
Mother Substance Use (No Drugs)	0.081
Father Substance Use (No Drugs)	*-0.288
White	*-0.156
Low Education	*0.264
High School/Some College Education	0.074
Early Child Behavioral Problems	0.004
Mother Engagement with Child	-0.010
Spank Child	0.064
Frequency of Mother Parental Issues	-0.023
Father Incarcerated	***0.347
Source : The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS).	
Note: "race minority, higher education, and Not Strict were omitted from the model due to collinearity and serve as the reference categories for race, education, and religion	
Note : p < .05 (*), p < .01 (**), p < .001 (***)	
Note: Strict consists of Muslim, Baptist, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, and Pentecostal	
Note: Moderate consists of Catholic, Jewish, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Conservative	
Note: Not Strict consists of Christian (general/unspecified label), No Religious Affiliation, and Other, Not Specified	
Note : Minority Race consists of Black, Asian, American Indian, Hispanic, Other	
Note : Low Education consists of No School, 8th Grade or Less, Some High School	
Note : Higher Education consists of Bachelors or Graduate Degree	

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