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# The Contribution of Religion to Volunteer Work

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*The connection between church membership, church activism, and volunteering is explored using a three-wave panel study of young adults. Volunteering to help others solve community problems is more likely among members of churches that emphasize this-worldly social concerns, especially among those socially involved in these churches. Among Catholics, the connection between church involvement and volunteering is formed early and remains strong. Among liberal Protestants, the connection is made only in middle age. Among moderate and conservative Protestants there is little connection at all. Conservative Protestants who attend church regularly are less likely to be involved in secular volunteering and more likely to be involved in volunteering for church-related work. The results suggest caution in generalizing about the connection between religious preference or involvement, and volunteering because this connection depends on the theological interpretation of volunteering and the significance attached to frequent church attendance.*

The issue of religion's contribution to volunteerism has lately received a lot of scrutiny. Volunteerism is the name given to that set of activities in which people engage, usually without pay, on behalf of others in need, such as assisting the elderly, providing staff assistance for neighborhood groups, or coaching Little League. Disillusionment with big government and continued distrust of the market to meet social needs has drawn attention to the contribution that might be made by voluntary labor. This, in turn, generates scholarly interest in the social roots of volunteerism. What induces people to give their time to those organizations that can neither impel commitment nor buy loyalty?

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that those who volunteer tend to have more "human capital" such as income, occupational standing, property, and education (Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1992:59; Pearce 1993:65). Human capital not only increases people's "stake" in the community but also provides the resources that volunteering often demands. However, self-interest is by no means the only reason people volunteer. People give because they consider it their duty to do so. Volunteering "helps individuals remain true to their conception of self and allows the expression of deeply held values . . ." (Clary and Snyder 1991:125). An important source of values of benevolence in Western cultures is

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religion: Most religions "encourage altruistic values and behavior" (Fischer and Schaffer 1993:60). It therefore comes as no surprise that "[t]hroughout much of our history, religion and giving have been closely linked . . ." (Wuthnow 1990:3). Hence the current interest in the contribution religion might be making to creating a "thousand points of light."

Not all religious bodies emphasize volunteering to the same degree. Wuthnow (1991:322) finds that "By a margin of 35 percent to 26 percent, Protestants were more likely than Catholics to be currently involved in charitable and other social service activities." Jews, especially those belonging to the more liberal Reform denomination, have a strong tradition of service to the community, while ethnic Jews "lacking denominational identification are much less active in general community voluntary associations" (Lazerwitz and Harrison 1979:662).

Considerable variation in volunteering is also found within the Protestant tradition. Liberal denominations (e.g., United Church of Christ, Unitarian, Presbyterian, Episcopalian) are associated with "social activism" while "the social identity of evangelicals is . . . oriented towards . . . saving souls" (Mock 1992:21). Liberal congregations are at least twice as likely as very conservative congregations to participate in or support programs for battered women, abused children, pregnant teenagers, migrants or refugees, and foster care, with somewhat smaller differences for day-care programs for the elderly, tutoring, international peace and economic development, adult education, and higher education (Hodgkinson et al. 1988). Nearly two-thirds of liberal congregations support volunteer work in the area of "community development" compared to one-third of the very conservative congregations. At the individual level, Hoge et al. (1978:45) report "a significant and negative relationship between beliefs in scriptural authority . . . and social action": More conservative Protestants give priority to evangelism. Gallup poll data reveal denominational differences in what people define as the "top priority for Christians." Only 8 percent of Southern Baptists give top priority to "Support causes to improve the entire community," compared to 15 percent of Methodists (Gallup and Castelli 1987:22). Conservative Protestants are taught to interpret biblical teachings on stewardship and charity in highly spiritual terms — as assisting the individual to "get right with God." Glock and Stark (1965:106) found that "Doing good for others" was an "absolutely necessary" requirement for salvation for 58 percent of the Congregationalists interviewed but only 29 percent of the Southern Baptists. This does not rule out volunteering for more conservative Protestants. It simply suggests that their volunteer work will be concerned more with the maintenance of their church as a spiritual community, and with outreach to non-believers in evangelical work.

Denomination is not the only kind of religious variation in volunteering. Religious congregations are networks of social relations. Involvement in the social life of a congregation increases the degree of integration of the individual into the religious community. It multiplies opportunities to come into contact with others who are already engaged in volunteer work. People who belong to a church but do not attend regularly are also less likely to internalize the norms of the group (White 1968:25). Theological doctrine has a greater impact on people

who are more involved in the social life of their congregation. Volunteering thus serves what psychologists call a "socially-adjustive function," reflecting "the normative influences of friends, family, and other significant associates who themselves volunteer" (Clary and Snyder 1991:125). In short, religious "preference" is not enough to enforce obligations: "The single best predictor of individual giving is whether or not the person attends weekly religious services" (Watt 1991:260).<sup>1</sup>

A number of predictions can thus be made about the influence of religion on volunteering.

(i) People raised by religious parents will be more likely to volunteer than people raised by parents who are not religious.

(ii) Members of denominations that emphasize this-worldly concerns will be more likely to volunteer than members of denominations that emphasize "other-worldly" concerns.

(iii) The more church members are active in their congregations, the more likely are they to volunteer.

(iv) Activism in more this-worldly denominations is more likely to encourage volunteering than activism in other-worldly denominations.

The fourth hypothesis is a corollary of hypotheses two and three. Indeed, it is open to question whether active membership in other-worldly denominations actually poses an obstacle to secular forms of volunteering because of the amount of time and energy devoted to church maintenance and evangelism (Iannaccone 1994). If this is true, church activism may not so much affect the overall level of volunteer work as the type of work for which people volunteer. We will explore this possibility in this paper by looking at different types of volunteer work and asking if activism in conservative Protestant denominations is more strongly related to one type than another.

We test our hypotheses by taking a sample of people who have reached middle age, when volunteering peaks (Fischer and Schaffer 1993:17; Hayghe 1991:18). We try to account for variations in volunteering by religious background, early socialization into volunteering, current religious denomination, and religious participation, holding constant human capital and life-course factors that also affect volunteerism, such as education, occupational prestige, and parental status (Clary and Snyder 1991:128).

## METHODS

Our analytical design assumes that there are multiple "paths" from religious background to volunteering in middle age. Parental religiosity might have an immediate impact on the likelihood of children volunteering, in which case it will show up soon, in adolescence and early adulthood. This, in turn, will increase the likelihood of volunteering in middle age. Looking back from the vantage point of middle age, current volunteering is the result of earlier volunteering, which is the result of religious background. However, there is a more direct

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<sup>1</sup> The average hours volunteered per week rises from 1.6 for those who do not attend church to 3.4 for those who attend church weekly (Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1992:162).

path from religious background to middle age volunteering. Religious parents tend to have children who are more active in the church. Those religious children might then, in middle age, be more likely to volunteer, regardless of whether or not they began volunteering early in life.

Our hypotheses predict that the impact of church involvement will vary by denomination. We therefore first examine differences in volunteering across levels of church attendance within four denominational categories, for people in the early adult years (age 26) and for people in middle age (age 35). We then construct causal models to estimate volunteering in middle age. We look first at the predictors of early adult volunteering, using parental religiosity and a proxy measure of adolescent volunteering. In this same model, we also test for an association between volunteering and religious participation in early adulthood.<sup>2</sup> We then look at the impact of middle age religion on any change in the amount of volunteering between age 26 and age 35. In this second model, we control for volunteering in early adulthood because volunteer work is something of a habit (Fischer and Schafer 1993:12). We are therefore estimating changes in the level of volunteering brought about by middle age religion. Finally, we enter educational achievement and occupational status into the model, as well as a measure of parental status. Because our theory assumes that the relation between social integration into the church and volunteering differs by theological doctrine, we perform separate analyses for different denominational categories.

Since the analytical design calls for measures of volunteering at more than one point in time and requires a distinction to be made between early and late religious influences, panel data are preferable. This study uses the three-wave Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study, collected by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan (Jennings and Niemi 1981). The first wave of interviews was conducted in 1965, when the respondents were high school seniors; the second wave of interviews occurred in 1973, when most respondents were twenty-six years old, and the third in 1982, when most respondents were thirty-five years old. A randomly selected parent of each student was also interviewed in each wave. To circumvent attrition problems, we created a subset of these data containing only students who were interviewed in all three waves and who had at least one parent interviewed in both of the first two waves [ $n = 924$ ].

The Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study contains items questioning the respondent's participation in volunteer work in 1973 and in 1982. It also contains questions on religious affiliation, church attendance, and participation in church-related organizations in all three waves. Identical questions are asked of the parent interviewed. With these data it is possible to examine the effect of parental religiosity on the respondent's initiation into volunteering, and the effect of the respondents' own religious affiliation and church activism on their responses to the volunteer question in 1973; and it is possible to carry through these analyses into 1982, when the respondents have reached middle age. The

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<sup>2</sup> Here we broaden the definition of church involvement to embrace not only church attendance but also active participation in church-related organizations, following the lead of Hoge and Yang (1994), who found that involvement in church-related organizations and involvement in other voluntary associations in the community tend to go together. We construct a church activism measure combining the respondent's score on church attendance and participation in church related organizations.

survey also contains data on human capital variables such as education, income, and occupational status, as well as information on marital status and number of children.

### *Variables*

**Parent's church attendance.** In the first wave of the Youth-Parent Socialization Study both parents were interviewed in some cases, the mothers only in some cases, and the fathers only in some cases. We therefore constructed a single "parent" variable, consisting of the mother's report of attendance when she was interviewed, the father's report of attendance when he was interviewed. We averaged scores when both were interviewed. The parent's frequency of church attendance measure ranges from 1 = never to 5 = weekly.

**Student's high school social participation.** This measure was derived from a number of questions put to the high school seniors concerning the level of their participation, if any, in a number of high school extra-curricula activities. These included being a member of a school athletic team, school band, school debating team, publication board, hobby club, school subject club, occupation club, and neighborhood club. Students were also asked if they had ever run for political office, and we included this in our measure of social participation. Responses were coded 0 for not a member to 3 for a very active member. The social participation index for 1965 was created by summing the scores on these variables.

**Church attendance.** An item measured student's frequency of church attendance, which we reverse-coded to make high numbers equal more frequent attendance (1 = never, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = once or twice a month, 4 = almost every week, 5 = weekly). In the 1973 wave, this question was not asked of those who indicated no religious preference.

**Church activism.** An index consisted of combined scores from two items, the first measuring extent of participation in church-related organization (0 = not a member, 1 = member but not active, 2 = fairly active member, 3 = very active member), the second measuring church attendance (1 = never, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = once or twice a month, 4 = almost every week, 5 = weekly). Respondents scored 1 on the activism index if they reported 1, 2 or 3 on the church attendance item and 0 to 1 on the participation in church-related organization measure, otherwise they received a score of 2.

**Denominational category.** The original 99 denominational codes, as reported in 1965, were collapsed into fourteen for the purposes of comparing mean volunteering rates and into five for the multivariate analysis stage. Liberal Protestants = Presbyterian, United Church of Christ (Congregationalist), Episcopal, Unitarian; Moderate Protestant = Methodist, Disciples, Lutheran; Conservative Protestant = Baptist, Mormon, Christian, Pentecostal. "Other" is a residual category, Catholic includes all forms of catholicism, and the fifth category is no religious affiliation.

**Volunteerism.** An index of student's responses to a questionnaire item was asked first in 1973 and repeated in 1982. "Have you ever worked with others to solve some community problem?" Two mentions were allowed in 1973 and three mentions were allowed in 1982. Scores range from 0 to 2 in 1973 and 0 to 3 in

1982. In 1982 a new question on volunteerism was added to the survey. This question asked: "Apart from any work for which you receive pay, do you do any volunteer work, or not?" Responses were coded into "types of groups, organizations, and programs." Among the types was included "church-connected groups" (e.g., ladies' group, church bingo, church nursery). Respondents were given three opportunities to mention "volunteer work" they did. We therefore coded this variable in the same manner as the "community problems" question, giving it a range of 0-3. Not asked in 1973, the "volunteer work" question is unusable in the causal models we construct. However, since it avoids any reference to solving community problems and provides a "prompt" for church-related volunteering, it is a crude measure of more "sacred" as opposed to secular volunteering.

Occupational status. Occupation was coded in different ways, depending on the year of the survey. To achieve consistency and to make comparisons and correlations feasible, we converted all occupational codes into the Duncan SES code for 1970. The code runs from 1 to 99.

Education. Level of education was measured in years of schooling, ranging from 12 to 21.

Parental status. Number of children ranging from 0 to 6 was used.

## RESULTS

In 1973 respondents were given two chances to mention a volunteer activity. Seventy-three percent made no mention; 22 percent mentioned one and 5 percent mentioned two. In 1982 respondents were given three chances. Sixty-four percent made no mention; 27 percent mentioned one; 7 percent mentioned two and 2 percent mentioned three. Thus, only about one quarter of the young adults interviewed in 1973 were doing volunteer work. The proportion of respondents mentioning at least one volunteer activity is lower than the 45 percent reported in a 1988 Gallup poll conducted for the Independent Sector (Wuthnow 1991:6), and much lower than the 51 percent reported in a follow-up survey in 1991 (Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1992:45). Some of this discrepancy might be accounted for by the age of the respondents in 1973; early adulthood is not a prime time for volunteering. But since the second wave in 1982 caught people in their peak period of volunteering activity, age cannot account for all the discrepancy between the surveys, for the proportion reporting at least one volunteer activity in our data set has only risen to 36 percent. Another possibility might be that rates of volunteering had risen between 1982 and 1988 (and reports of philanthropic activity in the 1980s would seem to back this up), but the increase necessary to bring this about is too steep to be plausible. Another possibility is that the Gallup question encouraged more positive responses, since it prompted respondents with a list of organizations for which they might possibly have volunteered. The Gallup question was also more general, since it did not identify "community problems" as the target of volunteering. Both of these differences in question wording could help account for the larger numbers reporting volunteer activity in the Gallup surveys.

*Denominational Differences*

Table 1 reports mean differences in volunteering across religious denominations (including the non-affiliated).

TABLE 1  
Mean Differences in Volunteering 1973 and 1982 by Denomination

	1973		1982	
	n	Mean	n	Mean
Liberal Protestant				
Episcopalian	20	.50	26	.50
Presbyterian	56	.39	61	.50
Unitarian	6	.33	5	.00
United	30	.40	23	.61
Moderate Protestant				
Lutheran	54	.20	57	.44
Methodist	103	.26	106	.59
Conservative Protestant				
Baptist	171	.27	175	.38
Christian	13	.23	8	.62
Mormon	12	.33	13	.61
Pentecostal	41	.32	48	.50
Catholic	185	.41	171	.49
Jew	29	.55	34	.59
Other	56	.34	88	.47
None	123	.26	106	.38

Young adults provided partial support for the theory that religious affiliation encourages volunteering. People with a religious affiliation were more likely to volunteer than those without — but not all. While Catholics, Jews, and Episcopalians scored much higher on the volunteering index than the unaffiliated, Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, and Christians scored no higher, and for many others there were minor and statistically insignificant differences. Data from the third wave, in 1982, provided somewhat stronger support for the theory that religious affiliation encourages volunteering, although the low numbers in many of the categories and the low overall rates of volunteering make reliable comparisons difficult. All but the Unitarians volunteered at a rate equal to or above that of the unaffiliated. However, only the difference between the Methodists and the unaffiliated is statistically significant.

The data provide mixed support for the hypothesis that, among church members, denominational differences exist in rates of volunteering. In 1973, Jews were more likely to volunteer than any others, while the means for liberal groups such as Presbyterians, United, and Episcopalians are also higher than for more conservative Protestant groups. Catholics, however, volunteered at about



the same rate as liberal Protestants, at least when they were young adults. Some of the interfaith differences reported by earlier studies (e.g., Greeley and Rossi 1966; Wuthnow 1991) showing Protestants with higher rates of volunteering than Catholics might therefore be misleading because they fail to distinguish among Protestants. Compared to liberal Protestants, Catholics were no more likely to volunteer. Compared to conservative Protestants, however, they were. While only 8 percent of Southern Baptists gave "top priority" to supporting "causes to improve the entire community," 17 percent of Catholics did so, as did 15 percent of Methodists (Gallup and Castelli 1987:22).

By the 1982 wave, when respondents were middle aged, these denominational differences had all but disappeared. Only the difference between Methodists and Baptists is statistically significant. The numbers in many of the cells in Table 1 are quite small and perhaps significant differences would have emerged with a larger sample, but this is not the first time denominational differences in volunteering have failed to emerge. Clydesdale (1990:201) used a question on "volunteer work for a community organization other than a church, such as civic group or charity," which was asked in a 1988 Gallup poll to measure liberal-conservative differences in volunteering. He found that, once volunteering for specifically religious purposes is excluded, "41 percent of the evangelicals volunteered and 38 percent of non-evangelicals volunteered." Mock (1992) asked members of eleven different denominations to say whether or not their congregation was socially active; he found no linear relationship between the theological conservatism of the congregation and social activism. Geographical location of the congregation was much more important.

### *Church Attendance and Volunteering*

We expected that frequent church attenders would be more likely to volunteer. Table 2 reports mean volunteer scores for all respondents in 1973 and 1982 and mean volunteer scores for separate denominational categories for 1973 and 1982, by frequency of church attendance. In 1973, respondents who indicated no religious preference were not asked the church attendance question. The first column thus reports the volunteer means for various church attendance frequencies for those reporting a religious affiliation in 1973 ( $n = 794$ ).

None of the differences in volunteering by church attendance shown in the first column are statistically significant, although the differences in the mean run in the predicted direction. In the second column, the mean volunteering rate of weekly church attenders is nearly twice that of the non-attenders. This second column, reporting 1982 data, includes those without a religious affiliation. The "never attend" category thus undoubtedly includes many people unaffiliated with a religious denomination. Actual frequency of church attendance, whether it be only a few times a year or every week, did not make much difference to the chances of volunteering, at least for the sample as a whole. The most significant break is between those who never attended and those who attended, a break that overlaps with those who belonged to a church and those who did not. This is why the other columns in the table are important, because they refer to church members only.

TABLE 2

Mean Differences in Volunteering 1973 and 1982 by Level of Church Attendance  
By Denominational Category

Church Attendance	All		Conservative		Liberal		Moderate		Catholic	
	1973 n = 794	1982 n = 924	1973 n = 237	1982 n = 244	1973 n = 112	1982 n = 115	1973 n = 157	1982 n = 163	1973 n = 185	1982 n = 171
Never	.29	.34	.25	.23	.29	.25	.28	.45	.23	.30
Few times a year	.28	.46	.21	.45	.41	.47	.16	.51	.34	.41
Once or twice a month	.36	.46	.32	.42	.66	.38	.28	.52	.36	.35
Monthly	.40	.54	.42	.38	.22	.70	.39	.55	.48	.47
Weekly	.38	.58	.25	.48	.40	.84	.23	.64	.59	.70
Overall Mean	.33	.48	.28	.42	.24	.50	.24	.92	.40	.49
Pr >	.22	.01	.35	.62	.31	.04	.44	.53	.15	.09

The other columns in the table report differences in the mean levels of volunteering for 1973 and 1982 for each denominational category, by frequency of church attendance. Among young adult conservative Protestants, frequency of church attendance is related to volunteering, but the relation is curvilinear: those who attended church very frequently were as unlikely to volunteer as those who never attended. By 1982, this relation had become linear such that the most frequent church attenders were the most likely to volunteer, but the differences (at least in this sample) are not significant. The third column shows that, among young liberal Protestants, the most significant difference as far as volunteering is concerned was that between casual church attendance (i.e., once or twice a month) and never attending. By the time liberal Protestants reached middle age, the relation had become more linear and the difference between frequent church attendance and never attending church is more striking. The large group of moderate Protestants were unaffected by frequency of church attendance in either wave of the study. Young adult Catholics who attended church weekly were more likely than infrequent attenders to volunteer, and the difference had become more marked by the time they reached middle age.

#### *Religion and Volunteering Over the Life Course*

The data presented thus far suggest quite strongly that the impact of church attendance on volunteering varies not only by denomination but, within each denomination, by life-course stage. In the final part of our analysis, we test our hypotheses concerning the impact of religious socialization on volunteering. We expect that children reared in religious families will be more likely to develop the habit of volunteering. The family is not the only source of socialization into participation values; the school is important, too (Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1992:270). Therefore, we also test for the effect on adult volunteering of participation in high school extra-curricular activities. We also expect that volunteering in the early adult years will be influenced by the degree of integration of the respondent into the church during those years.

Turning to volunteering in middle age, we expect to find considerable consistency across waves and therefore predict that those who volunteered in 1973 will be more likely to volunteer in 1982. Our major hypothesis, however, concerns the impact of church activism. We expect to find that church activism subsequent to 1973 had a positive impact on change in volunteering. That is, those who participated in the church between 1973 and 1982 were likely to increase their volunteering, while those who did not participate in their church were likely to decrease their volunteering over its 1973 amount.

Table 3 shows that parent's church attendance had a significant, albeit weak, impact on volunteering in 1973 for the conservative Protestants, but this is the only religion variable to have any impact on the volunteer rates of this group.

TABLE 3

OLS Regression Estimates of Volunteering in 1973 and 1982 By Denominational Category  
(standardized estimates)

	<i>Conservative</i>		<i>Liberal</i>		<i>Moderate</i>		<i>Catholic</i>	
	1973	1982	1973	1982	1973	1982	1973	1982
Parent's Church Attendance	.13*	.06	-.02	-.04	.08	.11	-.11	-.11
High School Participation	.02*	.03	.06	.13	.05	.23***	.33***	.15***
1973 Church Activism	.05	—	-.05	—	.01	—	.17***	—
1973 Volunteer		.18***		.36***		.30***		.14
1982 Church Activism		.04		.16***		.06		.15*
Occupation (1982)		.09		.16		-.10		.03
Education (1982)		.06		-.05		.07		.19*
Parental Status (1982)		.16*		.09		-.11		.14*
N	267	221	121	102	185	147	208	182
R <sup>2</sup>	.04	.11	.01	.22	.01	.20	.15	.20

\*  $p < .05$ \*\*  $p < .01$ \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The second two columns in Table 3 show how different the pattern of volunteering is for liberal Protestants. None of the variables intended to capture early socialization predicts 1973 volunteering. Nor did they have a direct effect on 1982 volunteering. The relation between volunteering in the 1973 and 1982 waves is very strong for liberals, but the seeds were not planted by early religious activity. The picture is different in the third wave, however, for the relation between church activism in 1982 and volunteering in 1982 is positive, indicating that religion had helped boost volunteering over its 1973 level. The fifth and sixth columns in Table 3 show that moderate Protestants resembled conservative Protestants more than any other group. Their volunteering was unaffected by either the religious activism of their parents or their own religious activism in the second wave, and subsequent church activism did nothing to either increase or decrease volunteer levels between ages 26 and 35.

The seventh and eighth columns show that the Catholics resembled most the liberal Protestants. In contrast to either moderate or conservative Protestants, Catholics active in their church between 1973 and 1982 were likely to increase their volunteering over their 1973 levels. One striking difference between Catholics and liberals is that high school social participation encouraged volunteering later in life. Analysis of the relation between high school social participation, church activism, and volunteering in 1973 (not shown) reveals that, net of the effects of parent's church attendance, high school social participation had both a direct effect on volunteering in 1973 and an indirect effect, through its positive impact on church activism in 1973. Catholics appear to have gained from their schools what members of no other denominational category receive — a disposition to be socially active in both church organizations and in more secular volunteer work. It is striking that only for Catholics and conservative Protestants were high school activities an influence on volunteering. The interpretation of this relation might not, however, be the same. In the case of conservative Protestants in 1965, before the rise of conservative Protestant "academies," much of this schooling would have been secular and therefore social involvement in the school pulled this group of conservatives away from theological doctrine into volunteering. For most of the Catholics in 1965, on the other hand, most of this schooling would have been parochial, reinforcing theological doctrine encouraging "good works."

## DISCUSSION

The data presented in this paper indicate that the relation between religion and volunteering is much more complex than previously believed. It is not always true that people reared in religious homes are more likely to volunteer than those reared by non-religious parents. Only among conservative Protestants does parental religiosity have any impact on young adults' volunteering, but those adult's own church activism turns out to have no subsequent impact. We will return to this issue below. The data do support the theory that social integration encourages volunteering. However, this again is not true for all religious denominations. Church activism increases the likelihood of volunteering only among Catholics (in both waves) and liberal Protestants (in their mid-thirties). Social

integration into the church has no impact on the likelihood of volunteering among either conservative or moderate Protestants.

How can these denominational differences in the impact of church activism on volunteering be explained? The data reported in Table 2 indicate that among young conservative Protestants volunteering is curvilinearly related to degree of integration into the church. Very frequent church attenders are as unlikely to volunteer as those who never attend. This would suggest that conservative churches do indeed discourage more "secular" activities among their more committed members, as others have argued. Conservative Protestant churches provide their members with a rich array of opportunities to "volunteer." They are, if anything, more communal than moderate and liberal Protestant churches (Roozen et al. 1984:241-245). However, a greater proportion of their organizational activities cater to their own members, are aimed at maintaining the social fabric of the church, or are thinly-disguised missionary enterprises. This type of activity relies heavily on voluntary labor.

The idea that church activism affects the type, rather than the amount, of volunteering thus appears to have some foundation. This can be substantiated by looking at the other question on volunteering contained in the Youth-Parent Socialization study. Recall that, in this case, respondents were asked whether they did volunteer work. No reference is made to community problems and a prompt is provided for "church connected groups." A comparison between responses to this question and responses to the earlier volunteerism question is instructive. In the earlier version of the volunteer question, the code for "church organizations" elicited only two responses in 1973 and one response in 1982. The code for "church-connected groups" under the differently-worded volunteering question in 1982 elicited 22.2 percent of all responses, by far the largest category, followed by "school-related" (16.0 percent) and "youth-oriented" (15.8 percent). The combination of a slightly differently worded volunteering question and a different coding scheme, placing responses into categories of organizations rather than areas (e.g., health), boosted the count of church-related volunteering.

A comparison by denominational group of responses to the two questions in 1982 shows no difference for conservative Protestants (their mean score was .42 on the community problems variable and .42 on the "volunteer work" variable). Both liberal Protestant and Catholic respondents reported higher "volunteer work" scores than "community problems" scores. However, the inclusion of church-related groups as a volunteer option alters the pattern of association between church attendance and volunteering. Whereas church attendance made no difference to the "solve community problems" volunteer variable within the conservative Protestant group, it has a definite impact on the "volunteer work" variable. The mean volunteer rate for conservative Protestants who never attend church is .38; for the conservative Protestants who attend church weekly the mean volunteer rate is .71. (This difference is significant at the .035 level.) The conclusion is obvious: conservative Protestants do volunteer work more if they

are integrated into the church, but what they volunteer for is church maintenance work.<sup>3</sup>

Within the Catholic community, church involvement has a positive effect on volunteering in both early adulthood and in middle age. The fact that the weekly mass is "[t]he focal point of Catholic religious life" (Gallup and Castelli 1987:26) might help explain this. Frequent and regular participation in church activities is considered a more accurate measure of faith and requirement for salvation among Catholics than is the case in other denominational groups (Glock and Stark 1965:104). This in itself would not entirely account for the fact that Catholics are the only young adults for whom variation in church activism makes a difference. Catholics come closest to the stereotypical image of the connection between religiosity and good works. They are a religious denomination in which volunteering is encouraged and where frequent church attendance, even for young people, is strongly encouraged as a sign of commitment. The various Protestant groups, on the other hand, either do not mandate secular volunteer work, preferring to leave it to the conscience of the individual, or do not place a high premium on church attendance.

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<sup>3</sup> When it comes to the liberal Protestants, the interesting finding is that the impact of church activism is not felt until they reach middle age. Liberal Protestants are the most likely to have been taught by their parents that religion should inspire social action. Indeed, as Wood (1990a) has suggested, children of liberal Protestant parents are the most tempted to replace religious activism with secular activism. If this is true, the relation between church attendance and volunteerism should be quite strong for this group. However, it only appears once the group reaches middle age. Among young liberal Protestants volunteering is at the lowest rate of all the denominational groups, and those who do volunteer are casual church attenders (once or twice a month) rather than frequent church attenders. Perhaps the more committed liberal Protestants have interpreted their "social action" teachings more broadly than helping with (local) community problems. The timing of the interviews (1973) might not be without significance here, for it was a period of considerable social and political upheaval in which liberal churches became heavily involved in broad civil rights and peace movement issues. By 1982, issues had become more local. Social action was now focused on community building and "points of light" initiatives. The connection between the (local) congregation and volunteerism had been restored. Another explanation for the difference among liberals in church activism effects over the two waves is that, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, liberals controlled the social agenda. Variations in religious intensity made little difference in such a climate. By 1982, however, liberals had lost control of the social agenda and had become something of a minority group, thus increasing the significance of integration into the church — under these "minority" conditions, inactive liberals would be pressured away from volunteering, and only the really committed would continue.

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