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Religious Mobility in the United States: The Effects of Income and Economic Mobility on Religious Conversion*

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Religious Mobility in the United States: The Effects of Income and Economic Mobility on Religious Conversion

ABSTRACT

Why do people switch religions? Under the theoretical framework of interactionism theory of conversion, which posits that the interplay between active, negotiated, and socially constructed aspects of human behavior and different aspects of social context lead to religious conversion, I propose that economic mobility and income affect whether or not one chooses to switch religions from the one in which they were raised. I rely on the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS) that was administered to 2,867 randomly selected adults living in households in the United States in 2016. I analyze data from a subset of 1,068 married respondents to examine the effects of economic mobility, income, exogamy, geographic mobility, education, race, age, and sex on religious mobility and apostasy. There are no significant correlations between economic mobility and income with religious mobility or apostasy. The only significant predictor of religious mobility and apostasy is exogamy. Respondents who have married outside of the religion in which they were raised are more likely to be religiously mobile or abandon religion altogether than those who are endogamous. Additionally, older respondents are less likely to abandon religion than younger respondents. My hypothesis is not supported. However, the results support interactionism theory of conversion as exogamy is a significant predictor of religious mobility. These results confirm that the institution of marriage plays a significant role in whether or not someone converts religions; furthermore, the bonds of marriage outweigh one's bond to the religion in which they were raised.

Religious Mobility in the United States: The Effects of Income and Economic Mobility on Religious Conversion

Over the past few decades, sociological interest in the structure, performance, and permanence of religious affiliations has burgeoned (Kilbourne and Richardson 1989; Loveland 2003; Roof and Hadaway 1977; Snow and Machalek 1984; Straus 1979; Suchman 1992; Sherkat 1993, 2001). The concerns of Hout and Fischer (2002) about the rising rate of Americans reporting no religious preference in less than a decade in the 1990s remains relevant today as the answer 'none' in response to one's religious affiliation on the General Social Survey (GSS) has ranked as the third most common response over the past fifteen years. Furthermore, in response to the question "How often do you attend religious services?" on the 1976 GSS, the modal response from respondents was 'every week'; however, in 2016, the modal reply was 'never' in response to the same question. Recent trends of secularization and religious abandonment in the United States have inspired sociological interest in the study of apostasy and 'religious switching' in particular (Hout and Fischer 2002; Newport 1979). The influence of education predominates literature on secularization (Hastings and Hoge 1970; Hout and Fischer 2002; Loveland 2003), but other factors such as race, sex, exogamy, socioeconomic status and geographic mobility have been shown to influence religiosity (Ellison and Sherkat 1990; Glenn 1982; Loveland 2003; Nelson and Clews 1973; Newport 1979). While the "none" responses for in which religion one was raised is growing in the United States, Americans remain to be a largely religiously affiliated, and religiously stable, population (Hayes 1996). Yet, as individuals have the agency to switch religious affiliations, current discussion on the saliency and mobility of religion and religious identity is ever growing.

Conversion is most broadly understood as the change from one belief to another; Lofland and Stark (1965:862) define the process as "when a person gives up one such perspective or

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ordered view of the world for another.” Conversion can be a dramatic, deliberate shift from one religion to another, or, as Nock (1933) terms, an acceptance of a new religious affiliation as a supplemental, not substitutive, support system (Snow and Machalek 1984). While sociological interest in conversion and religious mobility focuses on switches from one major religion to another, both conventional and unconventional sects (Parrucci 1968), inter-denominational change (Alston 1971; Sherkat 1991), or a revitalization of a belief system (regeneration) that had previously not been taken seriously by the convert are also seen as types of religious conversion (Clark 1929; Snow and Machalek 1984). Yet, the question still remains: what drives individuals to convert?

Research on religious conversion and variables that are significantly correlated with religious mobility in recent years can help us understand which stocks of people make the active decision to switch religious affiliations once they enter adulthood. Developing an understanding of conversion and its causes not only allows researchers to identify the convert (Snow and Machalek 1984), but also to measure to what extent religious conversion is selective. While religion may not be as salient an identity as sex or race for some individuals, understanding religious identity and the intersections between religious affiliation, income, education, age, sex, and other individual indicators remain a pertinent topic of sociological interest in identity and identity formation.

Previous literature on religious mobility suggest that sex, race, years of education, age, exogamy, religious practices, time spent with family, socioeconomic status and the religion/denomination in which one is raised influences religious mobility (Lauer 1975; Loveland 2003). Prior research has studied a multitude of significant predictors such as these, yet there is a lack of recent study on the income component of socioeconomic status (Alston 1971).

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While research on the relationship between income and religion suggests that *religiosity* increases in conditions of economic insecurity and declines in conditions of economic security and prosperity (Storm 2017), little research has been done on the effects of income on religious mobility in the United States within the last decade. And so, the purpose of this study is to explore the effects of income and economic mobility, on religious mobility and apostasy in the United States. My central research question is: to what extent do income and economic mobility predict religious mobility and apostasy. Given previous literature on religious mobility and the relationship between income and religiosity, I present the following two hypotheses:

1. Respondents who experience economic mobility (in either direction) will be more likely to be religiously mobile than those who not experience economic mobility. Therefore I hypothesize that respondents whose total family income in 2016 has a different value than their estimated family income when they were 16 will be more likely to report a different religious affiliation than the one in which they were raised than those who do not report different values of family income from when they were 16 and in 2016.

2. Respondents whose total family income is above average in 2016 will be more likely to abandon religion altogether than those whose total family income is below average in 2016. Therefore I hypothesize that if the respondent was raised with a religious affiliation other than ‘none’ and their total family income is above the average family income in the year 2016, they will be more likely to report ‘none’ for their religious preference in 2016.

THEORY

The dominant perspectives of theory of religious conversion primarily divide along four different arguments: active role of the convert, passive role of the convert, intraindividual level of analysis, and interindividual of analysis (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988; Sherkat 1993). In

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reference to the first two of these dissenting perspectives, theories of religious conversion remain divided along passive and active viewpoints of the convert; researchers of religious conversion either place emphasis on the agency of the convert or the sociological and psychological forces that act upon the convert (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988; Sherkat 1993; Snow and Machalek 1984). In their review of theoretical approaches to religious conversion, Kilbourne and Richardson (1988) classify the passive lens as the 'old paradigm' and the active lens as the 'new paradigm'. The “old paradigm” (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988:1-2) of religious conversion (passive convert) is generally characterized as “sudden and dramatic, irrational or magical in nature, involving a powerful, external, and impersonal force, usually a single event, the negation of the old self and the affirmation of a new self, etc.” Conversely, the “new paradigm” argues that converts are seekers who actively make the choice to convert (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988; Straus 1979). Bridging the conflict between these two perspectives, religious conversion can be viewed as a combination of intraindividual (e.g. personal constructs, internal states, biology, predispositions, etc.) and interindividual levels of analysis (e.g. group influences, societal stress, social status, anomie, etc.) (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988). Kilbourne and Richardson (1988) propose that conversion can be best conceptualized as a form of socialization that differs from other forms of socialization because of its focus on self-change and the emphasis of a social audience reaction to that self-change. And so, while literature is often divided on the subject of what drives religious conversion, a more holistic conclusion is that religious mobility is driven from both inward and outward sociological and psychological forces.

While social-environmental determinism theories of conversion (old paradigm) emphasize the influence of social-environmental factors, such as income, they discount the agency of the individual and focus on the effects of arguably negative forces on converts

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(Kilbourne and Richardson 1988; Lofland and Stark 1965; Somit 1968). Furthermore, these theories have been critiqued for their assumptions of the homogeneity of membership in new religions and their “failure to appreciate how individuals may use groups to satisfy their quests for identity, meaning, and community” (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988:12). Thus, while income has been associated with conceptions of conversion under social-environmental determinism theoretical approaches, the theoretical framework driving this study is interactionist. This perspective not only recognizes the voluntary nature of religious conversion, but does not negatively code what drives conversion.

Interactionist theories of religious conversion focus on “both the voluntaristic nature of conversion and the social context of conversion” (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988:9). In regards to the ‘voluntaristic nature’ of conversion, interactionist theories examine the “active, negotiated, and socially constructed aspects of human behavior,” coupled with the social context of the conversion (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988:10). Under this theoretical framework, converts seek to construct their own subjective realities that depend on factors such as status and power hierarchies, degrees of continuity with other socialization experiences, and resource and opportunity structures (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988). Therefore, religious conversion is understood as a form of socialization in which individuals learn the norms of a religious group, adopt the beliefs and values of a group, and develop a new social identity from their new group membership (Greil and Rudy 1984; Kilbourne and Richardson 1988; Machalek and Snow 1985). As income and economic mobility are closely related to one’s community, capital (fiscal, human, and social), and socialization, I predict that there will be a relationship between income and religious affiliation. As socio-economic status influences the social networks and communities one engages with (or strives to interact with), I predict that economic mobility will lead people to

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change religious affiliations once they enter adulthood. Whether it be to switch to a religious preference whose community, members, and social ties more closely match one's own in terms of income (and the other forms of capital that come with it), or to abandon religion altogether as the quality of interaction, opportunities, and resources of the religious faith from one's youth no longer serve a purpose as one's family income changes over time, I anticipate that income and economic mobility will affect religious mobility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Stark and Bainbridge's (1985) secularization thesis, as societies develop, religion becomes less important. Yet, what aspects of societal "development," lead to religious mobility and apostasy? Under theoretical frameworks of conversion that suggest sociological concepts and institutions affect religious mobility and religiosity, literature on religious mobility is rich with patterns and predictors of religious mobility and religiosity around the globe.

Generally, literature on the topic of religious mobility highlights how demographic characteristics (like race, gender, age, and sex), interreligious marriage (exogamy), geographic mobility, and origin/destination religious affiliations affect religious conversion. While little research has been done in the United States on the direct impact of income and economic mobility on religious mobility, studies from around the globe suggest that there is a significant relationship between income and religion that prompts this study.

Religious Preferences, Denominations, and Religious Mobility

Research on religious mobility recognizes how some religious groups experience more in-group or out-group membership rates due to religious switching than others (Ellison and Sherkat 1970; Lofland and Stark 1965; Loveland 2003; Newport 1979; Parrucci 1968; Sherkat 1991, 2001, 2002; Sherkat and Wilson 1995). Musick and Wilson (1995) find that the likelihood

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of switching religion is influenced by both the retentiveness of the denomination of origin and the attractiveness of the destined denomination. For example, the higher the membership of denomination, the greater likelihood of individuals converting to that denomination due to network ties (Whitt and Babchuk 1992). Similarly, groups that have more distinctive traditions and strict practices (Loveland 2003; Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 1987), and groups with ethnic ties (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Sherkat and Wilson 1995; Sherkat 1997) have greater retention rates of membership. According to previous studies, Catholics and Baptists appear to have the highest rates of retention rates in the United States (Loveland 2003; Newport 1979). If individuals do convert, they are likely to switch interdenominationally or to a religious preference similar to their original group (Sherkat and Wilson 1995), unless for marriage reasons (Musick and Wilson 1995). While significant, origin and destination religious affiliations do not fully account for or predict religious mobility; other contextual and structural factors, other than denomination size, may lead to religious conversion (Loveland 2003; Newport 1979; Sherkat 1993).

The Effects of Demographic Variables on Religious Mobility

Sociological research on conversion offers various motivators of religious conversion (Loveland 2003; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Sherkat 1997, 2001). Research on indicators of religious mobility suggests that occupational and geographic mobility, specific denomination, exogamy, education, sex, race and generation (in terms of age cohort) correlate with religious mobility (Alston 1971; Lauer 1975; Loveland 2003; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Sherkat 1991). Regarding sex³, research on sex differences, like socioeconomic status, of religious mobility is mixed (Hayes 1996; Roof and McKinney 1989). Yet, males tend to be more likely to be religious mobile than females (Hayes 1996). For the most part, however, gender does not have

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a heavy impact on religious mobility outside of marriage reasons (Alston 1971; Glenn 1982; Loveland 2003; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990). When switching for marriage reasons, religious switchers tend to be female (Alston 1971). Additionally when the *rates* of mobility between men and women were found to be similar, the *processes* of religious mobility were different (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990). Men were most affected by changes in family status that led to religious conversion and women were more affected by their denomination of origin (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990). This suggests that women's drive to switch religions is shaped by deep-rooted religious practices/beliefs and contemporary facets, such as current family structure, drive men to convert (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990). Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) posit that the reason for the discrepancy between the rate and processes of religious disaffiliation between men and women is because the timeline for religious conversion in relation to stages of family events and development is different for men and women, which would lead men and women to convert at different ages.

Corresponding with theories of secularization (Stark and Bainbridge 1985), high degrees of education increase the probability of religious mobility and decreases participation in religious practices (Buser 2015; Lauer 1975). Despite the positive correlation between age and years of education, studies show that older individuals are more religiously stable than younger individuals, net of other factors (Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves 1993; Hayes 1996; Loveland 2003; Newport 1979). In regards to race, theory on religious mobility has been predominantly focused on white denominations (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990) and has not looked closely at patterns of religious mobility for Black Americans (Ellison and Sherkat 1990).

Once examined, Black Americans are less likely to switch religions than white Americans (Ellison and Sherkat 1990; Loveland 2003). In their study on the prevalence of self-

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reported religious and spiritual identity in a sample of African American adults, Williams et al. (2015) found that 95 percent of the sample identified as religious, spiritual, or both, which reflected the importance of religiosity in African American heritage and culture in this sample. When religious or spiritual identity change was present, it was concentrated with participants with lower socioeconomic statuses (SES), further suggesting the relationship between religious mobility and SES that serves as one of the foundations for this study (Williams et al. 2015). Similarly, Ellison and Sherkat (1990) find relative stability among Black religious groups. However, like white cohorts (Hout and Fischer 2002), the proportion of African Americans who are apostates is increasing; these tend to be younger males residing in urban areas where facets of black religion are gradually diminishing value in “competition [with] secular lifestyles, organizations, and worldviews” (Ellison and Sherkat 1990:564; Frazier 1974). Additionally, Ellison and Sherkat (1990:564) found a rising proportion of African Americans reporting conservative denominational preferences, which, they argued, was because conservative churches offered opportunities for social integration in “response to the rootlessness and structural isolation of inner-city life.” Both of these central findings further illustrate how religion serves non-religious functions for individuals, which imply that individual characteristics and life outcomes impact religious preferences.

Exogamy and Religious Mobility

Religious switching is often associated with exogamous marriage (Cavan 1970; Johnson 1980; Loveland 2003; Musick and Wilson 1995). Further, Cavan (1970:319) emphasizes that religious intermarriage is “so common a practice now that it should be accepted as a minor but normal type of marriage, a part of the total social pattern of marriage, capable of analysis by accepted sociological concepts and theories.” Religious switching for marriage reasons is

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generally characterized as a way to harmonize a marriage (Cavan 1970; Musick and Wilson 1995). Literature on religious mobility for marriage reasons suggests that both the original religious affiliation and the destined affiliation have push and pull factors that influence the decision to switch to a spouse's religion (Musick and Wilson 1995). Certain groups may emphasize religious homogeneity within unions more than others, or some destined religious affiliations may be more lucrative (in terms of social, cultural, or economic elements) to the switcher (Musick and Wilson 1995). Additionally, overlaps between family and social ties at churches lessens the chances of finding a spouse of a different religion, meaning that conservative religious groups have less of an opportunity to take part in exogamy. Yet, stricter, conservative religious affiliations may have more pull in the marriage market for religious mobility because they emphasize religious homogeneity between spouses (Musick and Wilson 1995). Musick and Wilson (1995:268) argue that religious switching for marriage reasons "alters the terrain over which religious mobility take place," in which conceptualizing religious mobility in married populations without considering the "barriers" marriage creates is limiting. For example, the expectation within certain religious affiliations to marry within the group may lead to less exogamous marriage across religious faiths, but more exogamy interdenominationally (Musick and Wilson 1995).

Newport (1979) found that while female respondents completed the majority of switching due to marriage reasons, both male and female individuals switched religions to that of their spouse, and in some cases *both* spouses had switched religions to the same destination faith. Liberal Protestant groups are more likely to switch to more moderate or conservative protestant groups for marriage reasons (Musick and Wilson 1995), and Liturgical Protestant groups (e.g. Episcopalians) are more likely to switch to Roman Catholicism for marriage reasons than other

reasons (Musick and Wilson 1995). Conversely, more conservative groups (e.g. Mormons) are less likely to switch to Roman Catholicism for marriage reasons than for other reasons (Musick and Wilson 1995). Roman Catholics on the other hand are more likely to become apostates than convert to a spouse's Protestant faith if they are switching for marriage reasons (Musick and Wilson 1995). When switching for marriage reasons across faiths, the positive effects of education on religious mobility minimize (Musick and Wilson 1995).

Musick and Wilson (1995:269) "cautiously" conclude "switching for marriage is an occasion to break out of conventional circuits of mobility -- liberals become more conservative, conservatives become more liberal." In contrast to Iannaccone (1990), who posits that the likelihood of switching religious groups increases the more similar to groups are, Musick and Wilson (1995) find that switching for marriage reasons actually increases the distance over which religious moves occur. Literature on interreligious marriage suggests that norms of endogamy, while they still persist, do not have as strong a hold on religious affiliation membership (Cavan 1970; Glenn 1982; Musick and Wilson 1995). Yet, high levels of interreligious marriage also suggest that there is a cultural norm of religious preferences to agree between spouses (Glenn 1982). Furthermore, the willingness to switch religions for marriage reasons is demonstrative of the secularization of the institution of marriage in the United States where religious institutions have a weak influence over marital choices (Glenn 1982).

Income and Religious Mobility

Research on the direction of the effect of income on religious mobility is divided (Alston 1971; Joshanloo and Weijers 2016; Hadaway 1991). While Roof and McKinney (1989) and Newport (1979) find that upwardly mobile individuals are more religiously mobile, Sherkat (1991) and Roof and Hadaway (1977) do not find evidence to support this theory. Yet, given the

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difference between which religious affiliations have the most in and out-group mobility rates, previous literature suggests that socioeconomic status may influence religious mobility (Alston 1971; Newport 1979, Roof and Hadaway 1979). Newport (1979) argues that because religious groups develop to serve certain socioeconomic groups, individuals may choose to belong to certain affiliations that have values, networks, and opportunities that more closely mirror the individual's level of education, occupation/occupational status, and income. Thus, individuals who experience economic mobility tend to shift denominations to one that is more congruous between their social statuses (Hayes 1996). Moreover, religious groups provide members with nonreligious benefits such as social and human capital, which influence religious preference (Ellison and Sherkat 1995, 1995). Therefore, religious switching may lead to social rewards that, in-turn, affect the decision of the individual to convert (Sherkat 2001).

According to the Lofland and Stark (1965) model of conversion, predisposing personality traits, social attributes, and situational factors induce types of tension that lead to conversion (Lofland and Stark 1965; Sherkat 1991; Snow and Machalek 1984); such situational factors include “marital strain, the loss of a family member, change or loss of a job, the pressures of higher education” (Snow and Machalek 1984:181). Similarly, Lofland and Stark (1965:864) specify the following example, among others, of tension: “longing for unrealized wealth, knowledge, fame, and prestige.” This finding suggests that downward mobility, low income, and poor life chances may leave individuals, or “seekers” as Straus (1971) terms, searching for change, which may manifest in the form of religious conversion.

In their study on whether religiosity moderates the relationship between income inequality and life satisfaction, Joshanloo and Weijers (2016:731) found that religiosity “mitigates the negative influence of income inequality on life satisfactions.” Furthermore, it is

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religious belief, not religious practice, which serves this purpose. Joshanloo and Weijers (2016) illustrate that there is a relationship between religion and income where religious practices are influenced by income inequality. Whether to buffer negative life circumstances such as income inequality or to gain access to social networks that mirror economic status, there appears to be relationship between income, economic mobility and religiosity, religion, and religious mobility (Alston 1971; Buser 2015; Joshanloo and Weijers 2016). Following the same religiosity-stress-buffer framework of Joshanloo and Weiger (2016), Storm (2017:146) finds that “lower income, GDP, and social welfare availability in Europe are associated with more religiosity, and increases in social security through government welfare expenditure reduces country levels of religiosity” over a twelve-year period.

In his 1971 article on religious mobility, Jon P. Alston uses data from a national survey of the adult American population from 1955 to analyze changes in religious membership for a group of white respondents. Alston (1971:140) defines religious mobility as “the change from one denomination to another, one major religious group to another or from a status of ‘no religion’ to any religious membership (as well as the reverse).” Alston (1971:141) also finds that of the denominations who had a higher percentage of mobile members, “these three denominations are also highest in family income, occupational SES, and education,” while those denominations with lower socioeconomic variables have less religiously mobile members. Alston (1971) posits that one reason behind this trend is that the upwardly mobile (in terms of income) are attracted to higher status Protestant denominations. Similarly, Lauer (1975) found that the majority of the religiously mobile in his sample moved into high status Protestant denomination or out of faith altogether. This finding suggests that religious mobility is related to

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the attractiveness of higher status denominations and that religious apostasy relates to upward mobility.

Similarly, Newport (1979:546) found that individuals who were “occupationally upwardly mobile are more likely to have been religiously mobile than those individuals either occupationally stable, or occupationally downwardly mobile.” As occupational mobility often coincides with economic mobility, this finding suggests that those who are upwardly mobile in terms of income will also be more likely to be religiously mobile. Newport (1979) also found that the average income for those individuals who switched religions more closely matched the average income for their religion of destination and not their religion of origin. Newport (1979) finds a positive relationship between the socioeconomic statuses of switchers and the average status of the destination religious affiliation for these switchers, which suggests that individuals were switching religions for socioeconomic status compatibility. Additionally, those who are upwardly mobile have not only shown to be more religiously mobile, but also more likely to switch out of religion altogether (Roof and Hadaway 1979; Loveland 2003; Newport 1979).

Buser (2015) found that moderate differences in income had significant effects on the number of times families attended religious services and the kind of church that they attended. A higher income was positively related to frequency of religious service attendance and increased the likelihood of joining Evangelical communities (Buser 2015). Buser (2015) argues that church activities and communities, like Evangelical communities, may have been previously unavailable to less affluent families (because of an emphasis on donation or other cultural, monetary aspects of religion), which is why income and religious service attendance are positively correlated.

While Buser’s (2015) results show that higher income leads to more religious participation, he notes that cross-country studies show that national income is negatively

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correlated with religious participation. In reconciliation of these two diverging findings, Buser (2015) posits that as societies develop, the national income rises with the average level of education, and it is the combination of the two that leads to less religiousness. Buser's (2015) findings suggest that there is a significant relationship, regardless of the direction, between income and religious affiliation. Buser's (2015) article highlights the monetary aspects of religion that make religiousness costly in time and money, which could influence religious mobility. Yet, income is not the only explanatory factor for religious mobility (Newport 1979).

Given the literature on religious mobility in and outside of the United States, I expect the following factors to be significant predictors of religious mobility: economic mobility, higher income, exogamy, more years of education, being younger, and being female; in contrast, I expect being a person of color, being older, being male, being endogamous, having a lower income, and not experiencing economic mobility to be predictive of religious stability (Alston 1975; Buser 2015; Glenn 1982; Loveland 2003; Musick and Wilson 1995; Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990; Sherkat 1991, 1993).

DATA & METHODS

Using the individual as my unit of analysis, I rely on General Social Survey (GSS) data from the year 2016 to measure religious mobility and apostasy in the United States. The General Social Survey (GSS) is a national survey administered across the United States vastly through face-to-face interviews.¹ The population of the GSS are randomly selected respondents (18+ adults) living in households in the United States, who speak English or Spanish,² are not residing in institutions (e.g. prison or university), and do not have mental and/or physical conditions that would prevent them from completing the survey. In the year 2016, the response rate for the GSS

¹ Computer-assisted interviewing (CAPI) began in 2002; under conditions where an in-person interview with a sampled respondent cannot take place, GSS interviews are conducted by telephone.

² From 2006 to present the GSS has included those able to do complete the survey in English or Spanish

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was about 61 percent yielding a total sample of 2,867 respondents. For the purposes of my study, I use a subset of only married respondents from the 2016 GSS data file, which left me with a sample of 1,068 total respondents. For further information on how the data were collected, visit the website of the General Social Survey.³ While the GSS did not administer the religion and culture modules (Loveland 2003) in the year of interest for this study– 2016– the GSS regularly administers survey questions considered to be a part of the “GSS replicating core” that cover background information on respondents, including their religious affiliation. In addition to the respondent’s religious affiliation, the 2016 GSS includes other questions of interest for this study such as: the religion in which the respondent was raised, their race, sex, age, income, their spouse’s religious preference, number of years of education, whether or not they have been geographically mobile since the age of 16, and what their estimated family income was at the age of 16.

My dependent variable, religious mobility, measures whether or not a respondent has switched religious affiliations from the one in which they were raised. In order to measure religious mobility I compared the respondent's response to what their religious preference is currently and the religion they report having been raised. The GSS asks respondents the following two questions: "What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?" and, "In what religion were you raised?". Using these two variables in the 2016 GSS, I can see which respondents report a different religious affiliation since entering adulthood. To measure this, I created a dichotomous variable coded 1 for individuals whose religious preference in 2016 is different from the religion in which they were raised and 0 for those whose religious preference has remained constant. If the respondent replied ‘None’ in response to the question of their current religious preference and they were

³ <http://gss.norc.org/>

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raised with a religious affiliation other than 'None', they have abandoned religion altogether as they entered adulthood and are coded as a 1 for a dummy variable of my creation that measures apostasy. If the respondent replied 'None' in response to the question in which religion were they raised and listed a religious preference other than 'None' in 2016, they have been coded as 1 for another dummy variable of my creation, which denotes respondents who have joined a religious affiliation in 2016 from not having been raised with any of the other listed affiliations on the GSS. Respondents who were coded as 'Don't know' or 'No answer' in response to their current religious preference or the religion in which they were raised are counted as missing cases.

My independent variables, income and economic mobility, are measured using two variables in the GSS; the first asks the respondents:

In which of these groups did your total family income, from all sources, fall last year -- 2015 -- before taxes, that is. Just tell me the letter. Total income includes interest or dividends, rent, Social Security, other pensions, alimony or child support, unemployment compensation, public aid (welfare), armed forces or veteran's allotment.

This variable is the independent variable for testing my second hypothesis that if the respondent was raised with a religious affiliation other than 'none' and their total family income is above the average family income of 2016, they will report 'none' for their religious preference in 2016. To test my first hypothesis, I compare the responses between the respondent's total family income in 2016 and their estimated family income at age 16. The latter variable asks:

Thinking about the time when you were 16 years old, compared with American families in general then, would you say your family income was--far below average, below average, average, above average, or far above average?

In order to appropriately divide the total family income variable in 2016 into the five categories of the respondent's family income when they were 16 years old (far below average, below average, average, above average, and far above average), I used U.S. Census Data on

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household income dispersion in the year 2016⁴ to determine what the average family income was in 2016. I then used the U.S. Census income percentiles in 2016 to divide the rest of the GSS 2016 family income variable. I define respondents whose family income in 2016 is more than their estimated family income at age 16 as upwardly mobile. Respondents whose family income in 2016 is less than their estimated family income at age 16 are considered to be downwardly mobile.

In addition to my independent variables, I controlled for the effect of other variables that literature on religious mobility and religiousness suggests affect religious mobility. My control variables are:

- age
- sex (dummied)
- race (dummied)
- exogamy (interreligious marriage)
- geographic mobility (different city/state since age of 16)
- education (number of years of education).

I dummied the demographic control variables as follows: respondents who are female are coded as 1 and respondents who are 'Black' or 'Other' are coded as 1. To measure exogamy I compared the religion in which the respondent was raised and the religious preference of the respondent's spouse. If the religious preference of their spouse is different from the religion in which they were raised, then the respondent is coded as a 1 for a variable of my creation called 'exogamy' that denotes interreligious marriage. To measure geographic mobility I used the GSS variable which asks, "when you were 16 years old, were you living in this same (city/town/county)?" Respondents who are coded as 'Same [state], [different] city,' or 'Different

⁴ See Table A-2 of household income dispersion from www.census.gov

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state' are given a value of 1 for a variable of my creation that denotes that the respondent has moved to a different city or state than the one in which they were living at the age of 16. To measure the influence of education on religious mobility, I use the education variable on the GSS that denotes the number of years of school completed by the respondent.

I have chosen to limit my dependent variable of religious mobility to those who have switched between major religious groups— the first religious preference question in the GSS— and exclude denominational switching. Additionally, I have chosen to exclude those respondents who are not married in order to clearly see the effects of exogamy over religious mobility in 2016.

FINDINGS

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of respondents' total family income at age 16.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

The majority of respondents estimated that their total family income at the age of 16, in comparison to other American families, was average. Additionally, Figure 1 reveals that 38 percent of respondents estimated that their family income fell *below* average when they were 16 in comparison to the 20 percent that estimated their family income at age 16 to be *above* average.

Figure 2 depicts the total family income distribution for respondents in the year 2016.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

The income distribution is divided into five categories that denote total family incomes as follows: Far below average \$0-\$12,499; Below average \$12,500-\$39,999; Average \$40,000-\$74,999; Above average \$75,000-\$169,999; Far above average \$170,000 or over. In contrast to Figure 1, Figure 2 illustrates that more than fifty percent of respondents' total family income in 2016 is *above* average in comparison to 18 percent of respondents' whose family income fell

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below average for the year 2016. In figure 1, the majority of respondents fell into the above average category, meaning that they had a total family income between \$75,000 and \$169,999.

Figure 3 illustrates the number of respondents whose total family income in 2016 falls into a different category (far below average, below average, average, above average, far above average) than their estimated family income at age 16, which indicates that they are economically mobile.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

Figure 3 shows that 73 percent of the sample is considered to be economically mobile, while nearly 27 percent of respondents have a total family income in 2016 of equal categorical value to their estimated family income at age 16.

Figure 4 depicts the percentage of respondents who list one of twelve religions as the religion in which they were raised.

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

The majority of respondents (52.8%) answered Protestant as the religion in which they were raised. "Catholic" (33.1%) and "None" (8.1%) follow "Protestant" as the next most frequent responses to this question on the GSS. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of current religious preferences for respondents in the year 2016.

[Insert Figure 5 about here]

Correspondingly to Figure 4, Figure 5 yields a modal response of "Protestant" (51.3%) for respondents' religious preference, followed by "Catholic" (24.2%) and "None" (18.2%). Figure 6 illustrates the number of respondents whose current religious preference in 2016 is different from the religion in which they were raised, indicating that they are religiously mobile.

[Insert Figure 6 about here]

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Figure 6 shows that the majority of the sample has not switched religions as they entered adulthood and that only approximately 29 percent of respondents are religiously mobile. Figure 7 illustrates the number of respondents who have spouses with a different religion from the one in which the respondent was raised, indicating that the respondent is exogamous.

[Insert Figure 7 about here]

Here, nearly 42 percent of the sample is exogamous and nearly 59 percent of respondents have married within the religion in which they were raised. Figure 8 depicts the number of respondents who were living in a different state or city since the age of 16 from the one in which they currently reside.

[Insert Figure 8 about here]

Figure 8 shows that 68 percent of respondents have been geographically mobile, while 32 percent of respondents have resided in the same city since the age of 16. Figure 9 depicts the percent distribution for years of education within this sample.

[Insert Figure 9 about here]

Figure 9 yields a negatively skewed distribution; the majority of respondents (25.7%) are high school graduates, having completed 12 years of education. Likewise, the next most frequent number of years of education for respondents in this sample are: 16 (21.7%), 14 (11.9%), and 13 years of education (7.5%).

[Insert Figure 10 about here]

Figure 10 illustrates racial demographics of this sample. Here, 82 percent of respondents are white, nearly 10 percent are Black, and approximately eight percent are coded as "other." Figure 11 illustrates the sex distribution for this sample. Here, 52 percent of respondents are female and 48 percent of respondents are male.

[Insert Figure 11 about here]

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Figure 12 depicts the age distribution for the sample. In this sample, the age of respondents ranges from 19 years old to respondents 89 years of age or older. The highest percentage frequency of the age of respondents is 52 years old, in which three percent of the sample falls.

[Insert Figure 12 about here]

Table 1 gives the means, medians, and standard deviations for the variables of interest for this study.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

On average, 73 percent of the sample is considered to be economically mobile. Additionally, over half (54%) of the sample has a total family income of \$75,000 or above on average in the year 2016. On average, only 29 percent of the sample is considered to be religiously mobile. Additionally, on average, 41 percent of respondents are considered to be exogamous and 68 percent have been geographically mobile since the age of 16. On average, respondents have completed about 14 years of education with a standard deviation of 3 years of education. On average, only 18 percent of the sample is a person of color and 52 percent of respondents are female. The distribution of age in this sample yields a mean age of about 50 years old with a standard deviation of almost 15 years.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

[Insert Figure 14 about here]

Figure 14 is a visualization of the cross tabulation of religion in which raised, religious stability, mobility and apostasy displayed in Table 2. The most religiously stable religious affiliations are Native American, Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic. The religious affiliations that experience the most out-group movement due to religious conversion are: 'Other,' Christian, and

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'None.' While the visualization suggests some stark percentages of religious mobility & stability (e.g. Native American), some of the religious affiliations in this sample have very few members represented in the General Social Survey. For example, in this subset of married respondents, there is only one Native American identifying respondent and only five Buddhist, Hindu, and Orthodox-Christian respondents. Thus, the more representative religious affiliations (with samples greater than 10) of interest in this cross tabulation are: Protestant, Catholic, None, and Jewish. In regards to those respondents who were raised as Protestant, 80 percent still affiliate with the Protestant faith and 20 percent have switched religions. Of that 20 percent of religiously mobile respondents, almost 14 percent switched to identifying with no religion at all.

Respondents who were raised Catholic tended to be more religiously mobile than Protestants with almost 35 percent switching out of Catholicism after entering adulthood. Furthermore, nearly half of Catholic raised respondents who switched religions abandoned religion altogether. Of the eighty-seven respondents who were raised without a religious affiliation, a little over half joined a religious affiliation after entering adulthood. In contrast, all of the respondents who switched out of the Jewish religious affiliation abandoned religion altogether.

Table 3 is a correlation matrix between religious mobility, religious apostasy, and eight independent variables that illustrates the relationships between all of the variables of interest.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Table 3 is the correlation matrix between religious mobility and eight variables (economic mobility, income, exogamy, geographic mobility, years of education, age, sex, and race). The table illustrates that there is no statistically significant correlation between economic mobility and income with religious mobility. Additionally, years of education, being female, and

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being a person of color have no statistically significant correlations with religious mobility. In contrast, exogamy and age have statistically significant relationships with religious mobility. At the .01 level, age has a very weak, negative correlation (-.098) with religious mobility; this means that there is relationship between being older and having not switched religions. Also at the .01 level, exogamy has a strong, positive relationship (.557) to religious mobility; this suggests that marrying outside of one's religious faith has a strong relationship with switching religions. Income is weakly, positively correlated with economic mobility, meaning that those who are economically mobile have higher incomes. Additionally, income is moderately, positively related to the education variable, meaning that respondents with more years of education have higher total family incomes. Income is negatively, weakly correlated with being a person of color, meaning that on the average respondents of color in the sample have lower total family incomes. Education is weakly, positively correlated with geographic mobility, where respondents who have more years of education, on the average, are geographically mobile. Being a person of color is negatively, weakly correlated with the education variable, which suggests that people of color have less years of education on the average. Age is negatively, very weakly correlated with being female, meaning that in this sample females, on the average, are younger. In contrast to literature that suggests women live longer than men, because the sample is a subset of only married respondents, this finding suggests that on the average men are marrying younger women, skewing the age distribution of the sample.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Table 4 is the correlation matrix between religious apostasy and eight variables (economic mobility, income, exogamy, geographic mobility, years of education, age, sex, and race). The table illustrates that there is no statistically significant correlation between economic

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mobility and religious apostasy. However, at the .01 level, there is a statistically significant, weak correlation between income and religious apostasy. Here, there is a very weak relationship between having a higher income and abandoning the religion in which one was raised.

Additionally, age has a statistically significant relationship with religious apostasy at the .01 level. Similar to the findings from Table 2, there is a weak relationship between being of *older* age and choosing to convert to another religious affiliation other than 'none.' Moreover, Table 3 demonstrates a moderate, positive relationship between religious apostasy and exogamy, which suggests that those who marry outside of their faith are more likely to be apostates than those who are religiously endogamous. At the .05 level, education has a weak, statistically significant relationship religious apostasy that suggests that respondents who have more years of education or more likely to be religious apostates.

As evidenced in both correlation matrices, economic mobility has a statistically significant, weak relationship with income at the .01 level meaning that those with higher incomes are more likely to be economically mobile. Also at the .01 level of significance, there is a very weak relationship between geographic mobility and economic mobility. The causation of this relationship is difficult to discern from this table as one could argue that those who are economically mobile, in particular those who are upwardly mobile, will be more likely to be geographically mobile and vice-versa. At the .05 level, economic mobility has a very weak, negative relationship with exogamy that suggests those who are economically mobile are less likely to marry outside of the religion in which they were raised. At the .01 level, there are significant relationships between income, education, and race. In regards to education, there is a moderate association between those with more years of education and having a higher total family income. Further, if the respondent is a person of color, they are likely to have a lower

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income given the weak relationship between income and race. Likewise, there is a statistically significant weak, negative relationship between race and education. Also at the .01 level of significance, the correlation matrices illustrate weak, negative associations between age and sex, and age and race. In this sample, female and nonwhite respondents are younger than their male and white counterparts.

Table 5 is a logistic regression of religious mobility on all predictors (economic mobility, income, exogamy, geographic mobility, education, age, race, and sex).

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Using the Cox & Snell Pseudo R^2 , 29 percent of the variability in religious mobility can be explained by these variables at the .01 level. In contrast to my hypothesis, neither economic mobility nor having an above average income were statistically significant predictors of religious mobility. Rather, the only statistically significant predictor of religious mobility in this model is exogamy. Those who are exogamous, meaning that they have married outside of the religious affiliation in which they were raised, are almost nineteen times as likely to be religiously mobile than those who are endogamous. I find similar results in Table 4, which is a logistic regression of religious apostasy on all predictors (economic mobility, income, exogamy, geographic mobility, education, age, race, and sex).

[Insert Table 6 about here]

Using the Cox & Snell Pseudo R^2 , 11 percent of the variability in religious apostasy can be explained by these variables at the .01 level. Similar to the results displayed in Table 3, none of the economic predictors had any statistically significant effect on religious apostasy. Additionally, having been geographically mobile, being a high school dropout, a person of color, or female did not have any statistically significant effects on religious mobility

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or apostasy. However, like religious mobility, exogamy has a statistically significant effect on religious apostasy at the .01 level. Those who are exogamous are almost eight times as likely to abandon the religion in which they were raised and choose to identify with no religion than those who are endogamous. Additionally, age has a statistically significant effect on religious apostasy where those who are older are less likely to abandon a religious affiliation than those of a younger age. Both of the regression models confirm the results of the multivariate analysis in Table 2 as the relationships between only exogamy, age, and religious mobility/apostasy are significant. The regression results refute my hypotheses that economic mobility and income would have an effect on religious mobility and apostasy.

DISCUSSION

Similar to the conclusion of Hayes (1996), the majority of the sample continues to identify with the religious affiliation in which they were raised. Mirroring the frequency of religious mobility in previous studies (Loveland 2003), almost 30 percent of my sample is religiously mobile. In contrast, the majority of my sample is economically mobile. At the age of 16, nearly 38 percent of the sample estimated that their family income fell below average in comparison to other families in the United States. In contrast, only 18 percent of respondents' total family income in 2016 fell below average. Correspondingly, the percentage of respondents whose total family income in 2016 fell above the average increased by 33 percent from the percentage of respondents whose family income fell above average when they were 16. While the measurement of total family income at age 16 is subjective and arguably arbitrary, these findings suggest that the majority of this sample is 'better off,' economically speaking, in 2016 than they were at the age of 16. In regards to other socio-demographic variables such as education, race, sex, and age, this sample is comprised of largely white, female, high-school

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graduates who, on average, falls between fifty and fifty-one years of age. Given that the majority of the sample, on average, also had family incomes of \$75,000 or above, we can conclude that the sample is relatively well off, socioeconomically speaking, in the United States. Through the lens of a social-environmental determinism framework of religious conversion (Kilbourne and Richardson 1988), in which negative life outcomes act as forms of tension that leave individuals vulnerable to religious conversion (Lofland and Stark 1965), the implication of a largely upwardly mobile sample is that because less economic distress is present, we might expect to see less individuals switching religions for economic reasons.

When looking at the frequency distributions of the religions in which respondents were raised and their current affiliations, the general distributions are similar: the highest percentage of respondents fall into the Protestant religion in both categories, followed by Catholics, None, and Jewish. Yet, when looking at how these distributions shift for each of these religions in terms of religious mobility, we can see the in and out-group membership rates. The Protestant group appears to have very little out-group membership loss (only one percent), while the Catholic group drops by almost 10 percent. In contrast, both the Jewish and no religious affiliations appear to gain members. The Jewish group hardly increases (less than one percent), but the “None” category increases by a slightly more than 10 percent.

In contrast to findings that Catholics have the highest rates of retention (Loveland 2003; Newport 1979), Catholic membership in this sample drops significantly. What might explain this finding is Musick and Wilson’s (1995:270) argument that switching for marriage reasons “increases the impact of religious versus secular variables, increases the distance over which religious moves occur, and increases the chances of mobility out of the theological groups to which is normally confined.” Thus, because I am using a subset of only married respondents, it is

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possible that the denominations we might expect to have higher retention rates may lose more members due to marriage reasons. While the Jewish category increased by less than one percent, it is notable that of those who were raised Jewish and no longer identify as Jewish, 100 percent of them identify with no religious affiliation in 2016. Thus, instead of switching to a new religion, Jewish raised respondents opt out of religion altogether. This finding links with the 10 percent increase in the “None” category in 2016. Echoing the concerns of Hout and Fischer (2002), the increase of the ‘nones’ is prevalent in this study. Further, we see trends across the board of those who are religiously mobile that suggest one has about a fifty-fifty chance of adopting a new religious faith or opting out of religion altogether when they choose to switch out of the religious affiliation of their youth.

In regards to the correlation matrices that revealed no statistically significant relationship between religious mobility or apostasy with income or economic mobility, some variables that were significantly associated with religious mobility and apostasy did *not* have relationships that were sustained in either regression model. For example, at the .01 level, age was negatively correlated with religious mobility. Given the weakness of this relationship, it is not surprising that it did not persist in the regression model for religious mobility. However, age had a slightly weaker, statistically significant relationship with religious apostasy at the .01 level in the correlation matrix that *did* persist in the logistic regression model. This suggests that if one decides to abandon the religion in which they were raised, their age is more closely tied to the choice to opt out of religion altogether. Therefore, the younger one is when they decide to switch religious affiliations, the more likely they are to be religious apostates. This finding too speaks to the rising of the “nones” (Hout and Fischer 2002) in the last two decades. While the United

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States remains a highly religious country, these findings beg the question of whether or not this will remain the case in the next fifty years for future generations as these younger cohorts age.

The only variable that had a sustained, statistically significant association with both religious mobility and apostasy at the .01 level was exogamy. Given the literature on interreligious marriage (Cavan 1970; Johnson 1980; Musick and Wilson 1995), this result is not surprising. Corroborating the social-interactionist notion that social interaction and degree of community leads to religious mobility, exogamy is a heavily predictive variable for both mobility and apostasy. Interestingly, the effects of exogamy on religious mobility are twice as much as the predictive effects of interreligious marriage on religious apostasy. This suggests that when switching for marriage reasons, unlike with age, respondents are more likely to be switching to another religious affiliation instead of abandon religion altogether. Perhaps, as Musick and Wilson (1995) posit, interreligious marriage serves as an opportunity to break out of the “conventional circuits of mobility,” (269) which would lead spouses to attempt to partake in the benefits of another religious affiliation as opposed to opting out of religion. Further, individuals are likely to adopt the religious affiliation of their spouse when switching for marriage reasons (Glenn 1982; Musick and Wilson 1995).

This study substantiates Cavan's (1970) argument that “religious intermarriage is so common a practice now that it should be accepted as a minor but normal type of marriage, a part of the total social pattern of marriage, capable of analysis by accepted sociological concepts and theories” (319). Regardless of the effect of intermarriage over religious mobility and apostasy, this study illustrates the prevalence of religious exogamy in the United States. Just as Cavan (1970) argues that exogamy is an increasingly common occurrence in the United States, nearly half of this sample is married to a spouse of a different religious affiliation than the one in which

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they were raised. Further, under the sociological interactionist theoretical framework, this study evidences how social interaction and social institutions like marriage are deeply tied to identity and can be analyzed as such.

Primarily this study is concerned with the effects of different variables on whether or not one switches to a different religious affiliation than the one of their youth, or chooses to abandon religion altogether. Broadly speaking, this study is concerned with issue of identity: how we choose to identify ourselves, and how those identities change throughout a lifetime. Under the theoretical framework of social interactionism, this study illustrates how social interactions shape identity (e.g. the decision to adopt a different religion for marriage reasons) and how identity shapes the communities, people, and institutions (e.g. churches) individuals have access to.

CONCLUSION

The central question of interest for this study is what leads individuals to switch religions from the ones in which they were raised; further, what leads individuals to not only switch religions, but abandon religion altogether after having entered adulthood. The purpose of this study is to assess the extent to which, if any, income and economic mobility influence religious conversion. In order to measure the effects of economic mobility and income on religious mobility I ran statistical analyses on a sample of married respondents from the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS). Under the interactionist theoretical framework of religious conversion, I hypothesized that:

- 1) Respondents whose total family income in 2016 has a different value than their estimated family income when they were 16 will be more likely to report a different religious affiliation than the one in which they were raised than those who do not report different values of family income from when they were 16 and in 2016;

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And, 2) if the respondent was raised with a religious affiliation and their total family income is above the average family income of 2016, they will report 'none' for their religious preference in 2016.

My results do not support either hypothesis. Neither economic mobility nor having an above average total family income had any statistically significant effects on religious mobility or apostasy. However, my findings support the interactionist theoretical framework as exogamy surfaced as a significant predictor of both religious mobility and religious apostasy. Additionally, the effects of age on religious apostasy supported the literature regarding the relationship between age and religious affiliation (Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves 1993; Hayes 1996; Loveland 2003; Newport 1979).

One of the limitations of my study is that it does not address the more intrinsic, intraindividual levels of analysis regarding religious conversion. For example, the measures I used to measure religious mobility only measure the mobility of religious affiliation identification and do not measure the religiosity or spirituality of respondents. That is to say that identifying oneself as Jewish is different from observing Shabbat and attending services every week. Not only does my study not measure the religiosity of those affiliating with a religious group like Judaism, but it does not measure the religiosity or spirituality of those choosing to affiliate with no religious preference in 2016; while the "nones" in my sample may not be specifying any religious affiliation, it is possible that those with no religious affiliation continue to religious or spiritual in some way. Another limitation in my research design is how I coded my economic mobility variable; given the way the General Social Survey codes the income variable (ordinally), my division of economic mobility into five categories (very below average, below average, average, above average, very above average) using percentiles from 2016 U.S. Census

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data on household income is not an exact representation of economic mobility in the United States. Additionally, by using a subset of the GSS I reduced and skewed my sample significantly (only married respondents, older respondents).

Another limitation of my research design is that I did not consider interdenominational religious switching. While the literature finds evidence for support and rejection of the importance of interdenominational switching as a form of conversion (Sherkat 2001; Wuthnow 1993), future research might want to examine the effects of income and economic mobility across religious denominations. In particular, for historically higher and lower status denominations of Protestantism (Lauer 1975), economic mobility and income yield statistically significant relationships. Additionally, future research should examine the relationship between religious identity and religiosity; further, research could attempt to discern which factors contribute to being more religious (going to services more often, having a leadership role in the religious group, etc.) than just identifying as an affiliation. Additionally, the question of the unknown religiosity of the "nones" in my sample alludes to debates between religiosity and spirituality and whether or not individuals are perhaps becoming less religious, but more spiritual.

As I only examined married respondents in order to see the effects of exogamy on religious mobility and apostasy, future research should investigate the effects of income and economic mobility (and age, sex, race, education, and geographic mobility) on single respondents; future research should delve into whether or not other variables emerge as statistically significant for single respondents that do not, or are overshadowed by the effects of exogamy, for married respondents. Further, research might find that a higher or lower percentage of variability in religious mobility or apostasy can be explained by other variables for single

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respondents in comparison to the twenty-nine percent and explained by exogamy in my study. Moreover, because I limited my analysis to a subset of older respondents, the average age is quite high (around 50 years old), which encourages future research to look into the effects of the variables in this study on a younger sample. Future research may also wish to attempt to answer the question of 'who's marrying who' that we are left with at the conclusion of this study. Which religious affiliations are driving religious conversion for marriage reasons? How do couples decide which partner's religion is adopted by the other, or whether neither spouse's religious affiliation is adopted at all? These questions embody the underlying structures, institutions, and social interactions that contribute to the force of exogamy on religious mobility and apostasy that may inspire future research.

Given the divided findings in the literature and theories of religious conversion, my results corroborate that religious switching cannot be treated as one generic type (Glenn 1982; Loveland 2003). While the central question of interest of my study was whether or not income and economic mobility predicted religious mobility, I expected that most of my variables would bear significantly on religious mobility. But this was not the case. Instead, we can only conclude that exogamy is a key predictor of religious mobility and apostasy. Further, age is inversely related to abandoning any religious affiliation. The implications of my findings are best suited for interactionist theories of religious conversion. At the forefront of the interactionist theoretical framework is social interaction and how individuals adapt and adjust to navigate social milieus. My results support the notion that religious conversion is driven by social relationships and communities generated through marriage. Furthermore, it appears that the bonds of marriage eclipse the bonds of faith.

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ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

Table 1. Means, Medians, and Standard Deviations for Variables (N=1068)

Variable	Mean	Median	SD
Economic Mobility	0.73	1.00	0.444
\$75,000 or Above Total Family Income	0.54	1.00	0.499
Religious Mobility	0.29	0.00	0.453
Exogamy	0.41	0.00	0.493
Geographic Mobility	0.68	1.00	0.466
Education (in years)	14.23	14.00	3.013
Age (in years)	50.60	51.00	14.964
Person of Color	0.18	0.00	0.384
Female	0.52	1.00	0.500

Table 2. Cross Tabulation of Religion in Which Raised and Religious Stability, Mobility, and Apostasy

	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	None	Other	Buddhism	Hinduism	Moslem/ Islam	Orthodox- Christian	Christian	Native American
Religiously Stable	80.1%	65.3%	85.0%	48.3%	0.0%	60.0%	60.0%	50.0%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Religiously Mobile	6.2%	17.5%	0.0%	51.7%	57.1%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	30.0%	0.0%
No Religious Preference	13.7%	17.2%	15.0%	0.0%	42.9%	20.0%	20.0%	30.0%	0.0%	30.0%	0.0%
N	564	354	20	87	7	5	5	10	5	10	1

n = 1068; ² test, p<.001

Table 3. Correlations (r) between Religious Mobility and Eight Variables (listwise deletion, two-tailed test, n = 1068)

Variable	Economic Mobility	Income	Exogamy	Geographic Mobility	Education	Age	Female	Person of Color
Religious Mobility	.021	.053	.557**	.076*	.058	-.098**	.024	.004
Economic Mobility		.121**	-.068*	.083**	-.026	.005	.004	.031
Income			.060	.064*	.428**	.021	-.047	-.188**
Exogamy				.018	.047	-.067*	.062*	-.038
Geographic Mobility					.111**	.002	.000	.007
Education						-.034	.036	-.110**
Age							-.088**	-.162
Female								-.008

*p < .05; **p < .01

Table 4. Correlations (r) between Religious Apostasy and Eight Variables (listwise deletion, two-tailed test, n = 1068)

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

Variable	Economic Mobility	Income	Exogamy	Geographic Mobility	Education	Age	Female	Person of Color
Religious Apostasy	-.007	.081**	.315**	.043	.078*	-.087**	-.053	-.037
Economic Mobility		.121**	-.068*	.083**	-.026	.005	.004	.031
Income			.060	.064*	.428**	.021	-.047	-.188**
Exogamy				.018	.047	-.067*	.062*	-.038
Geographic Mobility					.111**	.002	.000	.007
Education						-.034	.036	-.110**
Age							-.088**	-.162**
Female								-.008

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 5. Logistic Regression of Religious Mobility on All Predictors ($n = 1068$)

Variable	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Economic Mobility	.396	.197	1.486
Above Average Income	.022	.178	1.023
Exogamy	2.929	.185	18.710**
Geographic Mobility	.435	.181	1.545
High School Dropout	.278	.288	1.321
Age	-.014	.006	.986
Person of Color	.091	.223	1.095
Female	-.091	.167	.913
Constant	-2.449	.394	.086

Cox & Snell Pseudo $R^2 = .290$

** $p < .01$

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

Table 6. Logistic Regression of Religious Apostasy on All Predictors (*n* = 1068)

Variable	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Economic Mobility	.240	.203	1.272
Above Average Income	.065	.221	1.067
Exogamy	1.996	.216	7.636**
Geographic Mobility	.266	.209	1.304
High School Dropout	.202	.321	1.223
Age	-.017	.007	.983**
Person of Color	-.325	.266	.723
Female	-.480	.190	.619
Constant	-2.213	.444	.109

Cox & Snell Pseudo $R^2 = .111$

***p* < .01

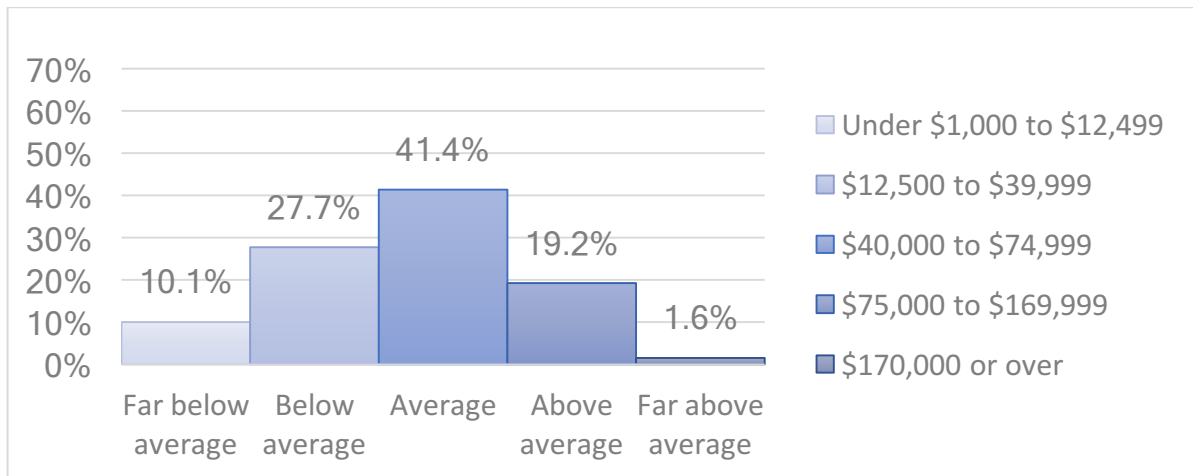


Figure 1. Total Family Income at Age 16

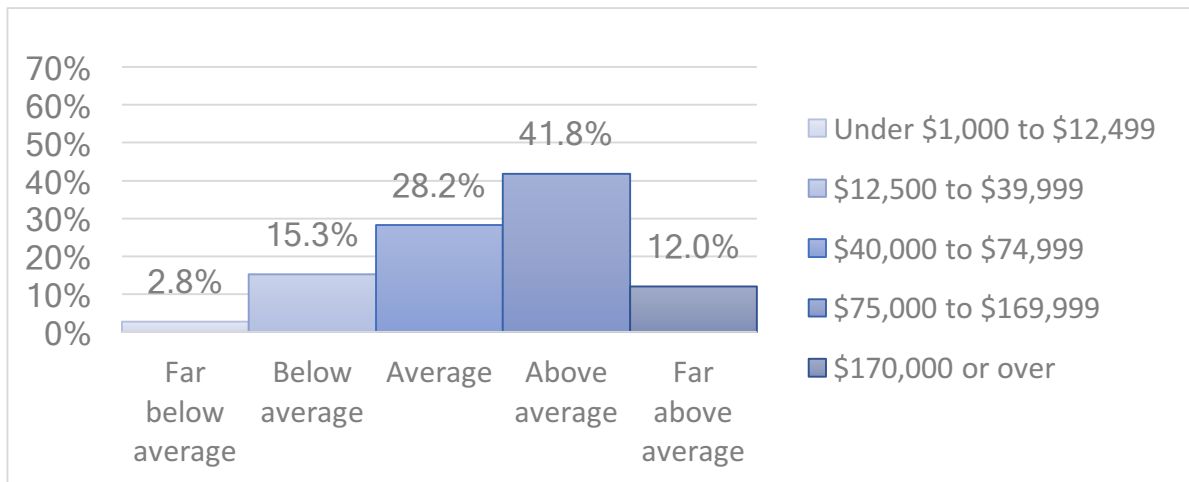


Figure 2. Total Family Income 2016

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

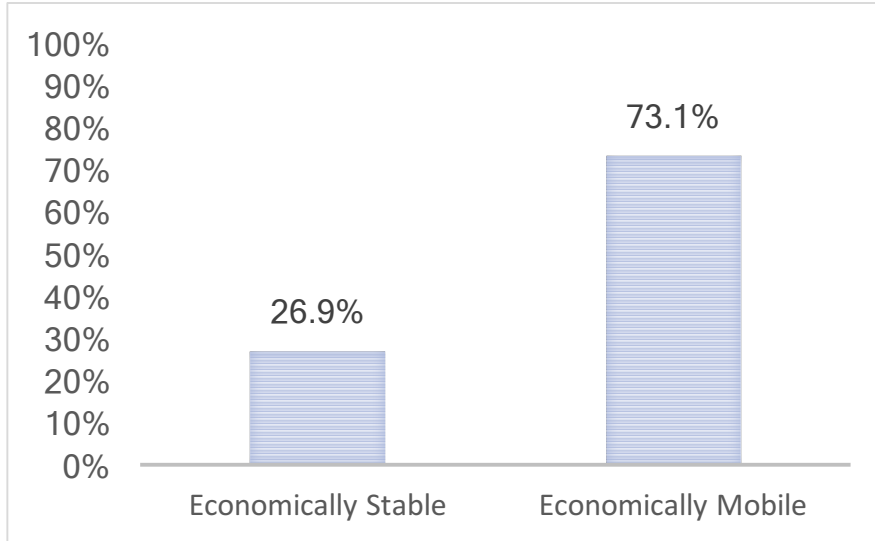


Figure 3. Economic Mobility

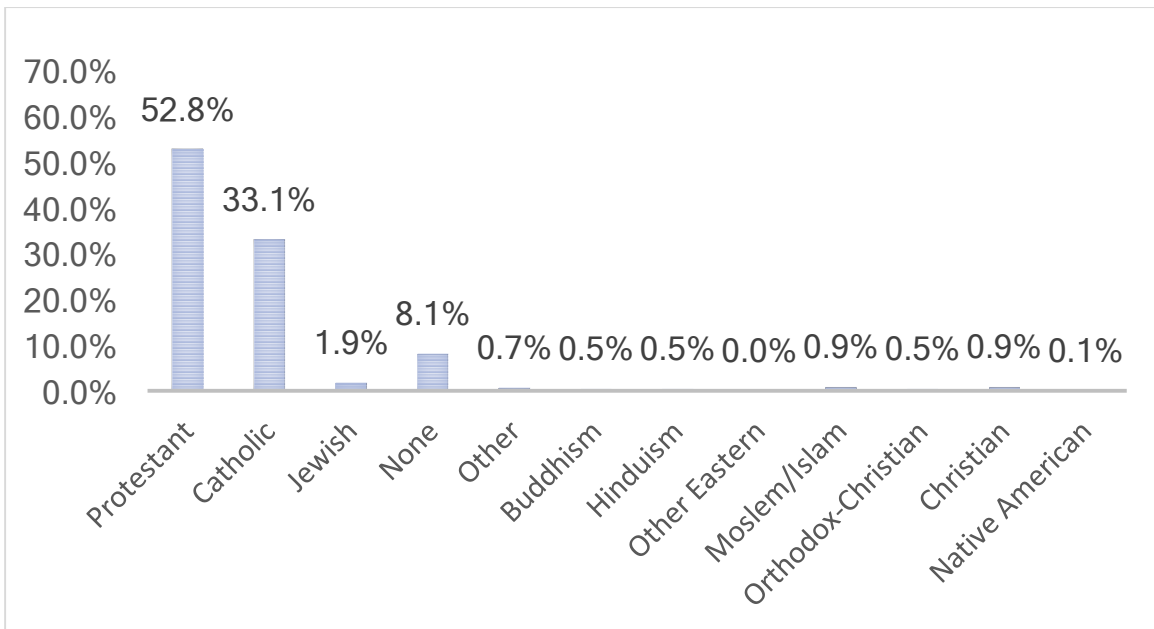


Figure 4. Religion in Which Raised

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

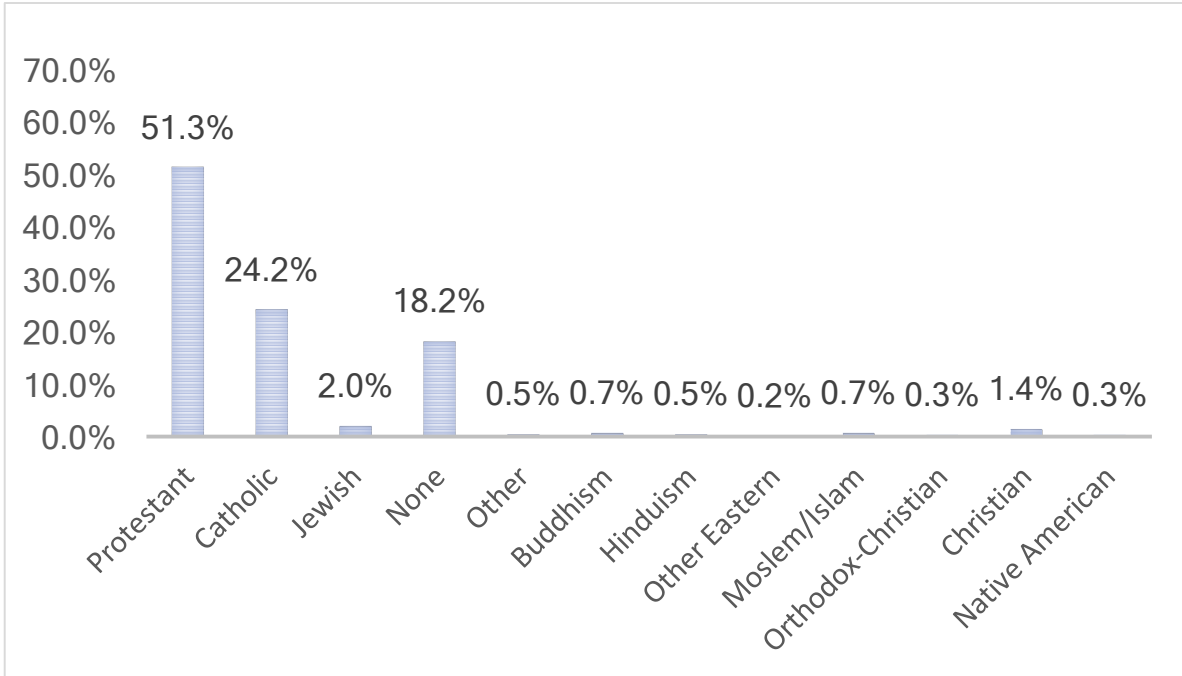


Figure 5. Respondent's Religious Preference

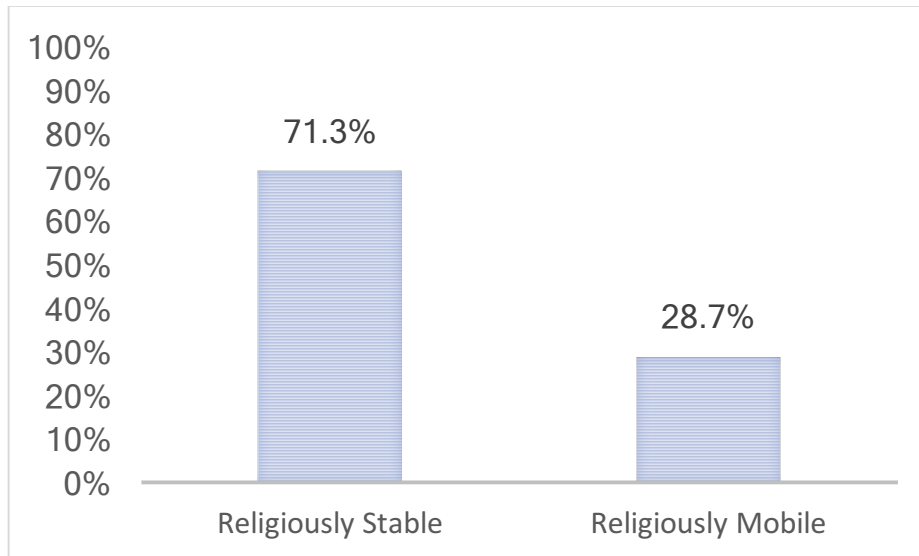


Figure 6. Religious Mobility

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

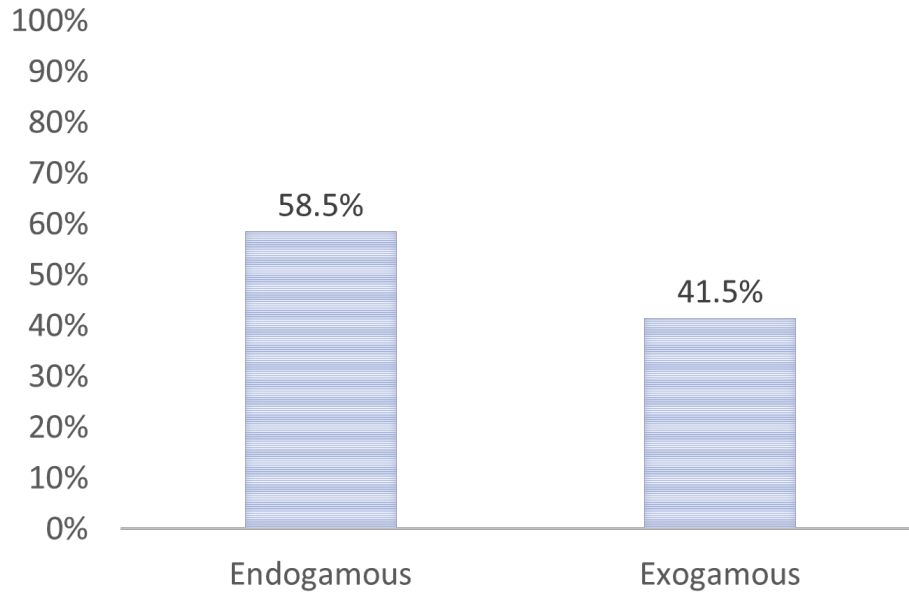


Figure 7. Exogamy

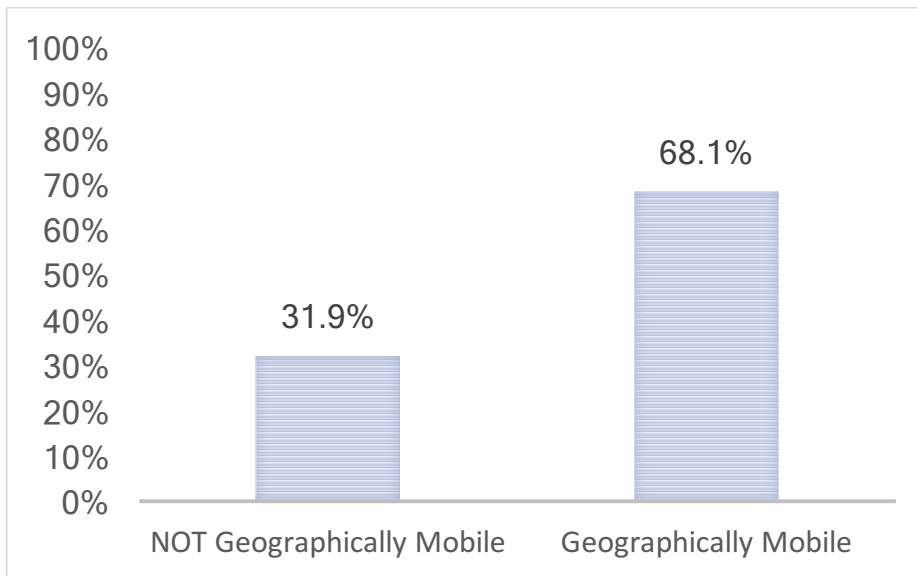


Figure 8. Geographic Mobility

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

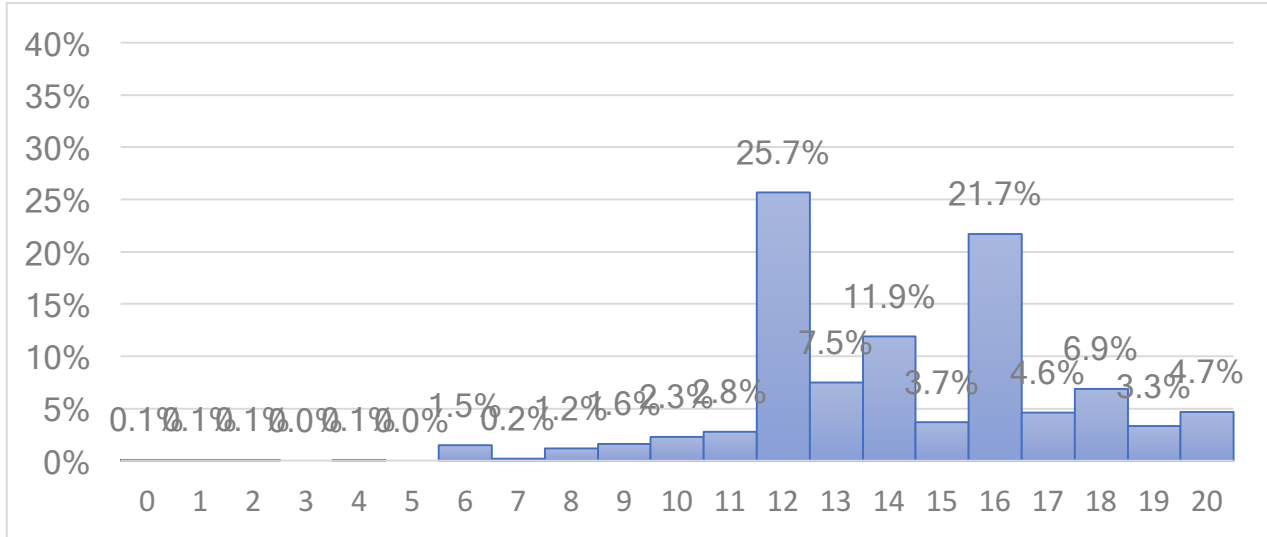


Figure 9. Years of Education

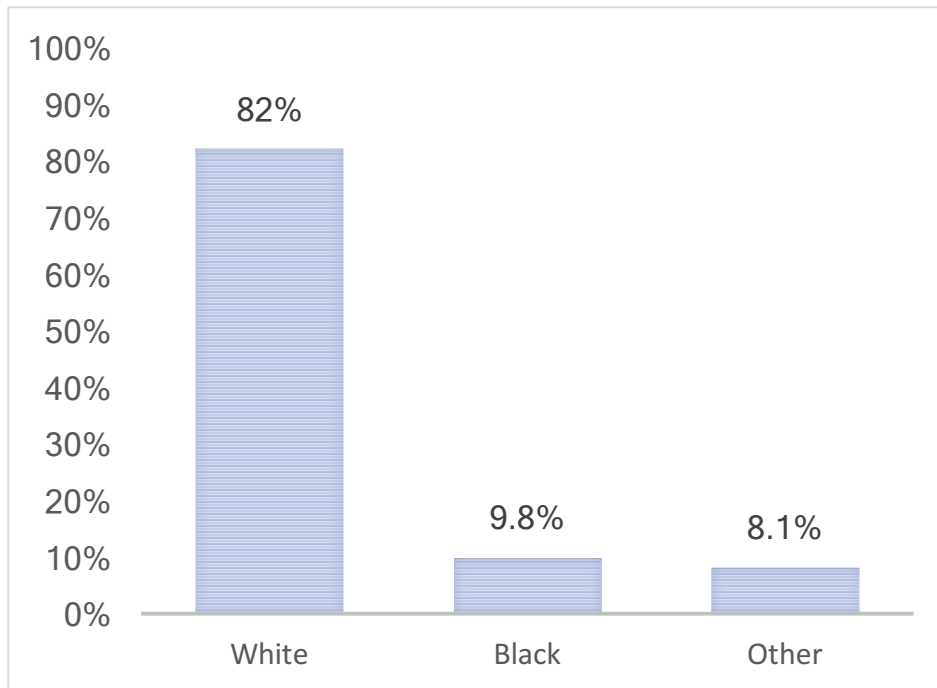


Figure 10. Race

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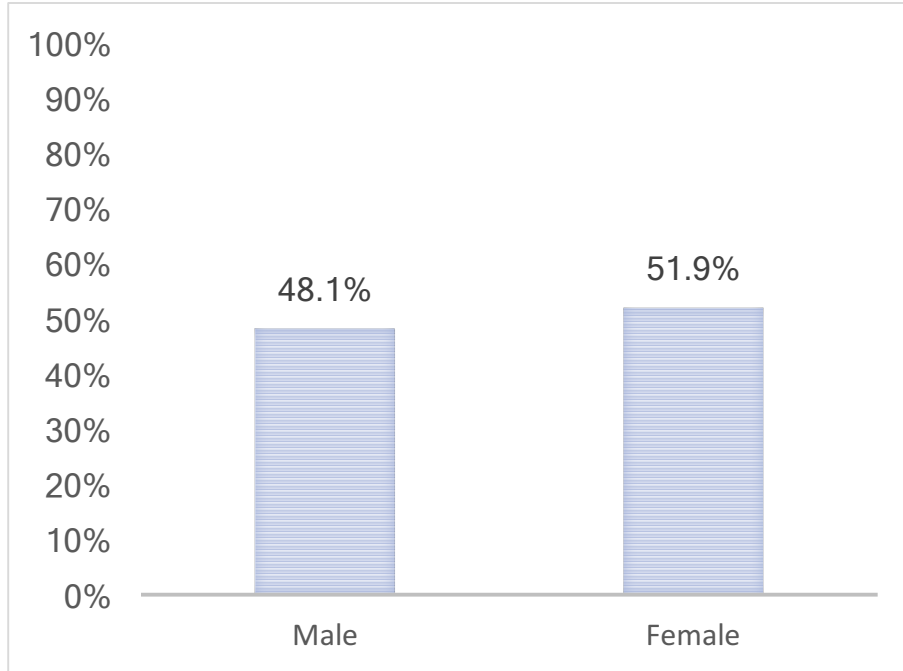


Figure 11. Sex

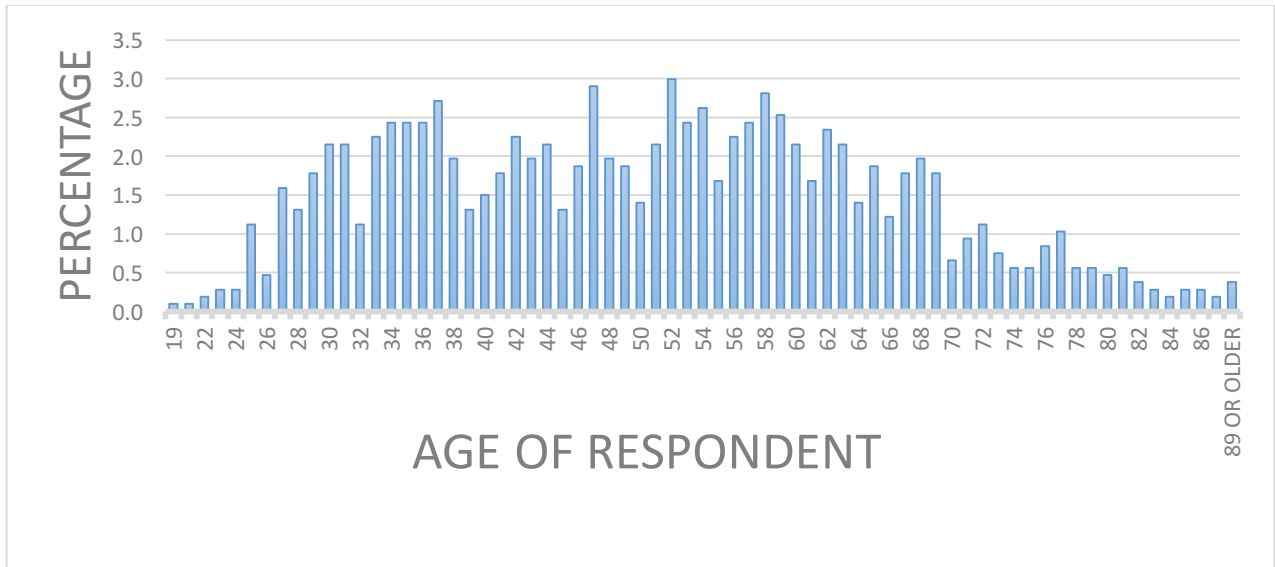


Figure 12. Age