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CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANTISM AND HORIZONTAL STRATIFICATION IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF COLLEGE SELECTIVITY

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Abstract

College selectivity is associated with numerous positive life outcomes, but research on the antecedents of college selectivity, including religion, is limited—despite a long tradition of religion and stratification research. Using survey data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health ($N=2,093$) and semi-structured interviews from the National Study of Youth and Religion ($N=46$), we test for and seek to explain differences in the college selectivity of students from conservative Protestant (CP) religious backgrounds compared to others. Based on prior literature and theory, we hypothesize that CPs attend less selective colleges than other young adults, and that this may especially be the case among women. Our quantitative findings suggest CPs do attend less selective colleges, and the difference is greater among those with better high school GPAs. These differences vary by gender: They are nonexistent for men once background factors are controlled, but CP women attend less selective colleges—a difference that is even larger among women with higher academic ability. Our qualitative findings suggest that these differences stem from young women’s different understandings of the purposes of college (general self-betterment versus human capital investment) which relate to unique strategies for balancing work and family, enacting altruism, and achieving self-satisfaction. These findings show the continued link between religion and stratification and, more broadly, culture and stratification.

Sociologists have long been interested in the role of religion in social stratification. Marx (1843/1967), Durkheim (1912/1976) and Weber (1905/2002) provide some of the earliest examples of how religion is associated with economic circumstances, and contemporary research has identified many stratification outcomes which vary by religious background in the United States, usually focusing on the negative consequences of conservative Protestant (hereafter: CP) affiliation or holding fundamentalist beliefs (Darnell and Sherkat 1997; Sherkat and Darnell 1999; Lehrer 1995, 1999; Glass and Jacobs 2005; Glass and Nath 2006; Keister 2011; Sherkat 2000, 2012; Davidson and Pyle 2011; Massengill 2008).

Although the quantitative educational gap between CPs and others has been well-documented (e.g., Darnell and Sherkat 1997; Lehrer 1999; Massengill 2008) and seems to have been consistent over time (Massengill 2008), *qualitative* differences in educational outcomes that could produce further disadvantages for CPs have been unexamined. Inequality can be created and perpetuated through stratification within the higher education system via horizontal stratification—the differences in types or quality of education received (Charles and Bradley 2002; Gerber and Cheung 2008). A sizeable literature presents evidence that those who attend selective and thus prestigious colleges subsequently benefit in a variety of social and economic ways. Individuals who enroll in more selective post-secondary institutions are more likely to obtain a bachelor's or graduate degree (Brand and Halaby 2006; Long 2008), have higher occupational status (Brand and Halaby 2006), earn higher wages (Behrman, Rosenzweig, and Taubman 1996; Dale and Krueger 2002; Hoekstra 2009), have higher subjective assessments of their own social status (Nielsen, Roos, and Combs 2015), and enjoy better long-term health (Ross and Mirowsky 1999). Attending a selective college may be especially beneficial for race-ethnic minorities and those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (Dale and Krueger 2002).

But what of the factors affecting the decision to enroll at more selective or elite colleges? Much of the sociological investigation into the question of college selectivity has examined differences by race/ethnicity, SES, and gender, and how these differences are mediated by academic ability (Hearn 1991; Davies and Guppy 1997; Karen 2002). Beyond these relationships, however, we know very little about how social background may influence the selectivity of the college a student attends. In particular, researchers have yet to document the role that religious background plays in influencing college choice. In this study, we use survey and semi-structured interview data to examine how conservative Protestantism shapes college choice with respect to selectivity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We build from a more nuanced understanding of cultural influence which places individuals amid a web of (often conflicting) cultural schemas suggesting how life could and/or should be lived (Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011; Lamont and Small 2008; Vaisey 2010). Drawing on a range of available options, individuals interactively frame, or come to understand, life in ways that make certain lines of action more preferable or natural-feeling (Snow and Benford 1992)—a “moral intuition” (Vaisey 2009:1684)—and enact the most preferable lines of action which are supported by the resources around them (Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011). Thus, in this paper, we theorize and investigate how CP culture frames college (and life beyond college) in unique ways, presenting certain preferable lines of action that shape the choice of college institution in ways that presumably limit one's occupational attainment.

Conservative Protestant Affiliation and College Choice

Before describing how CP culture might shape college choice, we first note that differences in college choice could stem from differential economic and social circumstances that make the decision to attend an exclusive institution more or less possible. CP parents are more likely to have nonprofessional jobs, lower incomes, and less wealth and may find it difficult

to finance the steep cost of selective college or university (Pyle 2006; Keister 2011; Sherkat 2012). The lower proportion of CP parents who hold a college degree could also translate into less social and human capital available to CP adolescents seeking to navigate the college admissions process (Lehrer 1999; Massengill 2008; Keister 2011). Moreover, attendance at more selective colleges may be less feasible for CPs who are disproportionately found in the South and rural regions of the country (Hunter 1983; Hackett and Lindsay 2008), where selective colleges are less numerous.

Beyond these social class or material differences, conservative Protestantism in the United States offers particular schemas about what is acceptable. One set of cultural beliefs common in CP contexts are those related to skepticism of secular higher education. CPs sometimes limit their understanding of truth to that which is revealed in the Bible rather than that which is discovered through other means (Darnell and Sherkat 1997). Thus, intellectual sources other than the Bible or those based on the Bible are sometimes viewed with deep suspicion (Sherkat 2010). Holding these beliefs could result in less engagement in one's education, limiting academic abilities and aspirations and thus future opportunities for admittance to exclusive colleges or universities. CPs may also be especially skeptical of prestigious universities where a disproportionate amount of scientific knowledge is produced, and where less-religious faculty (Ecklund 2010; Gross and Simmons 2009) and students perform irreligious boundary work to distinguish themselves from their more religious and less intellectual peers (Hill 2011). This perception of hostility to faith may lead some CPs to avoid these institutions.¹

Skepticism and distrust of outsiders could lead to insular social networks that hamper intellectual development (Sherkat 2010). Individuals select networks in part on the basis of the cultural worldviews of their adherents (Vaisey and Lizardo 2010), and given the educational disadvantages of CPs, these networks are less likely than other networks to contribute as significantly to intellectual development. Fear of negative spiritual influence may also discourage weak (and strong) ties to others outside of conservative Protestantism (Sherkat 2010), which are thought to be important avenues for the introduction of new information, including the benefits of attending more selective colleges (Granovetter 1973). Attendance at CP secondary schools and CP colleges—many of which may be less selective—may be the clearest example of these insular networks.² Pennings et al. (2011), however, do not find a negative influence of attendance at a CP high school on college selectivity.

Skepticism and network insularity could lead to lower academic performance among CPs, which could then translate into attendance at less selective colleges. Indeed, some evidence does suggest CPs have lower academic ability. Sherkat (2010) finds that both sectarian religious affiliation and beliefs in the inerrancy of the Bible are associated with lower verbal ability in the General Social Survey. CPs and biblical inerrantists also fare poorer on a scientific literacy test (Sherkat 2011). Evans' (2011) study of CPs challenges this

¹There is empirical evidence that students at elite institutions become less religious over time than students at other universities in terms of belief in Christian super-empiricism (Hill 2011).

²Although we explored the possibility that CP differences in selectivity stem from attendance at religious colleges, we could not identify explicitly CP colleges. Our quantitative findings are substantively similar when we control for attendance at a religious college or exclude those who attended religious colleges from the sample.

conclusion, however, finding that religiously-active CPs only side with religion over science as a source of knowledge on the few issues where there is direct conflict. Epistemological conflict, then, may lead CPs “not to become evolutionary biologists or cosmologists” (Evans 2011:723), but not to avoid more selective institutions altogether.³

The Intersection of Gender and Conservative Protestant Affiliation

Gendered cultural schemas in conservative Protestantism, pertaining to higher education and the life course, likely influence the kinds of moral intuitions about college choice that young CPs internalize. The result is that the influence of CP affiliation could depend on one’s gender.

CP men are likely exposed to heavy emphasis (through discourse, literature, or modeling) on the idea that men are responsible for being the main financial providers for their families. This likely accentuates the perceived importance of human capital investments such as educational attainment and college selectivity and counteracts negative views of secular education or elite institutions (Bartkowski 2001; Gallagher and Smith 1999). Therefore, the selectivity of colleges that CP men attend may be similar to that of other men (net of their preexisting socioeconomic disadvantages).

CP women may have more pronounced differences in college selectivity. Many studies find that CP women are less likely to be in the labor force and more likely to leave the labor force after having a child (Lehrer 1995; Sherkat 2000; Glass and Jacobs 2005; Glass and Nath 2006). Women’s domestic roles are prioritized over their careers, though CPs are not categorically opposed to female employment (Sherkat 2000; Gallagher 2003). This being the case, those CP women who attend college may perceive less need for, or payoff to, attending (often expensive) prestigious universities. Thus, CP women—no matter their resources or academic ability—may opt out of more selective universities because their potential benefits—higher pay, occupational prestige, access to elite networks, etc.—are not relevant to achieving their primary goal of raising a family. These gendered schemas could be the reason CP women—but not men—who graduated from college are significantly less likely to be working in a professional occupation than others (Sherkat 2012).

The Present Study

In this study, we test several hypotheses. To begin, we examine whether there are bivariate differences in the college selectivity of CPs and other college students using national survey data. We then test whether these are the function of background socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics, schooling type, academic ability, and expectations of marriage. We then test for gender differences in the effect of conservative Protestantism and present results stratified by gender. We also examine the interaction of conservative Protestantism and academic ability, as high-ability individuals may be the only ones with the opportunity to attend highly selective institutions and thus have a broader range of college choices where

³Other processes may be at work as well. For example, CPs are more likely to be averse to forms of “highbrow” cultural capital associated with elite colleges, such as art, music, film, or literature (Wuthnow 2003). Thus, young CPs are likely to have deficits in cultural capital relative to other young people, which has been shown to limit schooling success (DiMaggio 1982), and likely have a strong moral intuition that one does not fit well in a college setting where such cultural capital is rewarded and further developed (e.g., at highly selective colleges).

schematic differences across religious tradition may be more evident. Finally, following our hypothesis tests, we seek to further explain and flesh out relationships between religious affiliation and college selectivity using qualitative data.

QUANTITATIVE DATA, METHODS, AND RESULTS

The quantitative data for this study come from Waves 1 and 3 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health).⁴ Wave 1 was conducted in 1994 and 1995 and consisted of survey interviews with 20,745 American youth enrolled in grades 7–12. Wave 3 was conducted in 2001 and 2002, when respondents were 18–28 years old, and consisted of interviews with 15,197 of the Wave 1 respondents.

We also draw on data from The Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement (AHAA) study, which supplements the Add Health data with detailed measures of Add Health respondents' academic progress and high school performance. The AHAA study collected high school transcript data for Add Health Wave 3 respondents and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) codes for the institutions attended by currently enrolled respondents at the Wave 3 interview. We limit our sample to respondents who (a) had valid information on their high school GPA and their college's selectivity,⁵ (b) were currently pursuing a bachelor's degree at a four-year college or university, and (c) had a valid sample weight ($N = 2,093$). Analyses were conducted using the *svy* commands in Stata 14 to account for the complex sampling design of Add Health. Missing values for the independent variables were imputed using multiple imputation with chained equations. Thirty data sets with imputed values were created.

Measures

Dependent variable.—The dependent variable for this study is the respondents' college selectivity as measured by the median SAT score of entering students. This measure of college selectivity is the most commonly used and is also the most reliable (Black and Smith 2006). To construct this variable, AHAA researchers created a mean of the reported median SAT score of respondents' institution based on information from IPEDS, Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, U.S. News and World Report, and American Survey of Colleges. AHAA researchers imputed values for institutions with missing data using multiple imputation based on graduation rates, median ACT scores, and the proportion of the entering class that was in the top 25% of their high school graduating class. AHAA researchers then ranked institutions from high to low based on their median SAT score and—in order to anonymize institutions for data release—grouped into vigintiles with scores ranging from 1 (highest median SAT scores) to 20 (lowest median SAT scores). To make interpretation of the coefficients more intuitive, we convert these values back into percentile estimates, with higher values indicating higher selectivity, by reverse coding the AHAA 1–20 variable,

⁴Although the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) includes a survey, these data have a much smaller sample size which limits the analysis that can be conducted. The sample size of four-year college students with valid information on their college in NSYR is 1,105, compared to Add Health's sample of 2,093. Moreover, studies of college selectivity emphasize the need for adequate controls for academic ability, and NSYR only has one self-reported and imprecise measure of grades in high school.

⁵Per the AHAA User's Guide, data on this variable were missing for those attending "proprietary institutions (as these schools are typically open-enrollment and cannot be meaningfully described in terms of academic selectivity), as well as those who attended schools that were missing SAT information and the variables used to impute SAT."

multiplying by five, and subtracting 2.5. Thus, the variable ranges from 2.5 to 97.5 and serves as an approximate percentile ranking.

Key independent variable.—The key independent variable for this study is the respondents' stated religious tradition as adolescents (i.e., at the Wave 1 survey) in response to the question, "What is your religion?" Responses are grouped into one of three categories: CPs, indeterminate Christians (i.e., those who identified as "Christian Church/Disciples of Christ" as described below), and others (i.e., those we are confident are mainline Protestants,⁶ as well as those who are Catholic, those who affiliate with religions other than Christianity, and those with no religious affiliation).⁷

Those classified as CP identified as Adventist, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Holiness, National Baptist, Pentecostal, or other Protestant. We are confident those who identify as "other Protestant" are conservative Protestant and not mainline Protestant, because all the major mainline denominations are included as possible response options in the survey.

More than 10% of the original Add Health sample identified with the small mainline Protestant denomination called the Christian Church or Disciples of Christ. Other nationally representative surveys which ask about religious affiliation in a more detailed way find fewer than 1% of individuals identify with this group (e.g., Pew Research Center 2015). Therefore, it is clear many who wanted to identify simply as "Christian" inadvertently reported this affiliation in the Add Health survey. Because we cannot distinguish among respondents who selected the Christian Church or Disciples of Christ affiliation, we make a separate category for these respondents—indeterminate Christians. Separating these respondents lowers measurement error in the other two categories and prevents us from dropping 10% of the sample from our analyses.

The "other" category, which serves as our reference category, includes respondents who identified with another religious tradition (including mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, and non-Christian religions) or no religious tradition.

Other independent variables.—We include measures from the Wave 1 survey to account for background characteristics that may explain differences by religious affiliation. We include measures for race (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian; American Indian is included in models but not displayed because of small cell sizes), age in years (at Wave 3), urbanicity of Wave 1 school (urban, suburban, rural), region of Wave 1 school (West, Midwest, South, Northeast), mother's education (1=bachelor's degree or more; 0=else), family income (11

⁶Our measure of conservative Protestantism is less precise than in some surveys. Some CPs, like Missouri Synod Lutherans, will be included in our "other" category because the response category read "Lutheran," and most Lutherans are mainline Protestants. Missouri Synod Lutherans are the biggest concern here as other conservative Protestant denominations that broke off from the mainline tradition tend to be very small relative to the mainline denomination. Treating all "Lutherans" as "indeterminate Christians" did not affect the results in any substantive way. Moreover, if anything, mistakenly treating CPs as mainline Protestants is likely to bias the effects in a *conservative* direction (Adamczyk 2009).

⁷We rely on this measure rather than a finer-grained measure of religious tradition [e.g., Steensland et al. (2000)] because our theory predicts differences between CPs and all others, save perhaps a few small groups (e.g., Mormons) or groups like conservative Catholics that cannot be specified in the data. Models using the RELTRAD scheme, including a separate black Protestant category, did not produce substantively different findings from those presented here (controlling for race), although we sacrifice statistical power (and therefore statistical significance) when we split the groups into smaller categories.

categories in \$10,000 with highest category of \$100,000 or more), and growing up with married parents (1=married parents; 0=else). Four-category variables for frequency of religious service attendance and religious salience at Wave 1 are also included as controls. We also control for secondary schooling type (Protestant, Catholic, or secular). In addition we include measures for the Peabody Vocabulary Test (PVT) score as a measure of Wave 1 verbal ability⁸ and the cumulative high school grade point average (GPA) taken from the respondent's official high school transcript.⁹ Lastly, we include a measure, ranging from 1–5, of respondents' expectations of being married by age 25 at Wave 1.

Descriptive statistics for study variables can be found in Table 1.

Analytic Strategy

In Table 2, we run Ordinary Least-Squares (OLS) regression models predicting the percentile-rank of the respondents' college or university median student SAT score. We include four models. The first model includes only the religious affiliation measure. The second models include controls for background characteristics—race, age, urbanicity, region, schooling type, parent SES (mother's education and family income), family structure, religious service attendance, and religious salience—as well as variables representing potential mechanisms for the relationship between being CP and college selectivity: respondent PVT score, high school GPA, and the marital expectation variable. The third and fourth models examine the interaction between academic ability and conservative Protestantism—PVT score in Model 3 and high school GPA in Model 4—with the idea that differences in the effect of conservative Protestantism may only occur among those with higher academic ability, owing to the inability for low ability students of any religious tradition to gain admission to highly selective colleges. The interaction terms from Models 3 and 4 are graphed in Figure 1.

Fully-interacted models (i.e., models interacting each independent variable with gender) revealed a statistically significant difference (at $p < .05$) in the effect of conservative Protestantism by gender in models parallel to Models 2 and 3 of Table 2, and a marginally significant difference ($p < .10$) in a model parallel to Model 4. In order to ease interpretation, we present models split by gender in Table 3 (male sample) and Table 4 (female sample). The interaction terms from Table 4 (female sample) are graphed in Figure 2. Interaction terms in Table 3 are not statistically significant and thus not depicted graphically.

Results

Table 2 reports coefficients from OLS regression models predicting respondents' college selectivity. Model 1 reveals a strong bivariate association between CP affiliation and college selectivity. CPs attend colleges 11.91 lower percentile-ranks than do those with other affiliations or no affiliation. These non-CPs attend colleges in about the 58th percentile (the constant term), while CPs attend colleges in about the 46th percentile. Model 2 adds our background measures, academic ability, and marital expectations. In Model 2, the coefficient

⁸Measures of verbal ability are highly correlated with other intelligence measures (Hauser and Huang 1997).

⁹Transcript data were not always available for all years. The cumulative GPA is an average of the data available, which is why a college student could have a cumulative high school GPA of 0.

for CPs is reduced to -1.37 and is no longer statistically significant. We ran models (not shown) adding the background measures, academic ability measures, and marital expectation measure in three nested models, and the CP effect was not significant in any of the three models. An ancillary decomposition of the total effect into indirect and direct effects¹⁰ revealed that race (specifically identifying as black) was the significant confounding factor ($p < .05$; two-tailed tests) explaining the gap between CPs and others. Thus, race accounts for much of the CP effect, but not socioeconomic factors, geographic factors, other background factors, or the proposed mechanisms of academic ability or attitudes toward marriage.

In Model 3, there is a significant interaction between CP affiliation and verbal ability, such that the effect of CP affiliation becomes more negative as verbal ability increases. This interaction is depicted in the top half of Figure 1. There is also a significant interaction between CP affiliation and high school GPA in Model 4 such that CPs attend relatively less selective colleges than their peers as their high school GPA increases. This interaction is shown in the bottom half of Figure 1. High-ability CPs—those with more options for colleges—are not attending as highly selective colleges as other high-ability students.

Table 3 reports results for men. Similar to Table 2, we find a significant and negative CP effect in the bivariate model, with CP men attending 9.07 lower percentile-rank colleges than others. There is no difference between CP men and others in their college selectivity in Model 2, nor in models (not shown) excluding the academic ability and marital expectation measures. Ancillary decomposition of the total effect reveals the variables added in Model 2 explain a statistically significant proportion of the CP effect, and identifies race (specifically black) and religious salience as the only variables that are statistically significant confounders of the CP-college selectivity relationship ($p < .05$; two-tailed tests).¹¹ There is no significant interaction effect in Models 3 or 4, yielding no evidence that high-ability CP men attend less selective colleges than other men once their sociodemographic characteristics are controlled.

Table 4 reports coefficients from OLS regression models predicting the percentile rank of the median SAT score of the respondent's college for women. Model 1 shows stark differences in the college selectivity of women by their religious affiliation. The predicted percentile rank of CP women's colleges based on median SAT score is 14.59 points lower than it is for others.

Model 2 accounts for background characteristics, academic ability, and marital expectations that might explain these differences by religious affiliation. Nevertheless, after accounting for all these factors, CP women remain distinct from other women in their college selectivity, though the size of the effect is reduced considerably to -6.02 . This reduction, per an ancillary decomposition of the total effect, is statistically significant, and key factors

¹⁰This decomposition, and subsequent ones like it, were executed with the user-written *kbb* program in Stata (Karlson, Holm and Breen 2011). We also generated bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals on unweighted data with the user-written *binary_mediation* program to confirm statistical significance (Hayes 2009). In both programs, we performed the analysis using only the first imputed data set.

¹¹Bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals generated from analysis of *unweighted* data did not show that religious salience was a significant confounder.

include race (specifically black) and PVT score, which are significant explanatory factors at $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests). Race and academic ability are responsible for some, but not all, of the difference in college selectivity between CP women and other women. We should also note that when academic ability is considered in a decomposition approach that treats the background factors in Model 2 as controls rather than as simultaneous explanatory factors (which is theoretically appropriate), PVT score is not a significant mediator, suggesting it is not a significant mediator net of the control variables.

Because we would not expect women from any religious tradition with low verbal ability or high school grade point averages to have the opportunity to attend highly selective colleges (because of the college admissions process), these differences may be more pronounced among those with high ability and the full spectrum of college choices. Indeed, the interaction effect in Model 3 shows that the gap between CP women and other women increases as verbal ability increases. The top half of Figure 2 depicts this graphically. Here, at one standard deviation below the mean on verbal ability, CP women actually attend similar colleges as other women. At one standard deviation above the mean, however, CP women attend colleges about 11 percentile-ranks lower than other women, controlling for other factors. A similar interaction exists between CP affiliation and high school GPA for women. At a 2.0 GPA, CP women attend slightly *more* selective colleges, but as GPA increases conservative Protestant women attend less selective colleges. At a GPA of 4.0, CP women attend colleges 12 percentile-ranks lower than other women. Interestingly, the slope of the lines for other women in both models is positive and statistically significant, meaning these women attend more selective schools as their academic ability increases, but the slope is not significantly different from zero for CP women (results not shown). CP women attend similar schools in terms of selectivity irrespective of their academic ability.

We performed additional analyses that might further specify the circumstances in which conservative Protestantism influences the college selectivity of women. Specifically, we examined whether this influence may vary by the religiosity of the women or their other background characteristics. We found little evidence of either. None of the religiosity interactions were statistically significant for women (the p -values for the interaction terms in the full sample of women were .38 for religious service attendance and .52 for religious salience), and neither were interactions between CP affiliation and income ($p = .16$), mother's education ($p = .21$), or marital expectations ($p = .45$). Two region interactions for women were statistically significant: Conservative Protestantism had an even more negative effect on women's college selectivity among women from the Northeast vis-à-vis women from the South or the Midwest ($p < .05$). We suspect that the concentration of highly selective universities in the Northeast makes these options more viable for women in this region and thus the religious differences in selectivity are most pronounced there.

QUALITATIVE DATA, METHODS, AND RESULTS

Our quantitative analysis suggests that differences in socioeconomic background are only part of the explanation, and that differences in academic ability or greater expectations for marriage prior to age 25 are not explaining all of the college selectivity difference either. To flesh out the link between conservative Protestantism and women's college choice and build

theory about what explains lower levels of college selectivity for CP women, we analyze qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with young women prior to and during college. The qualitative analysis focuses on how cultural scripts, or the kind of people young women strive to be, differ for CPs compared to other women. We then link this to differences across the two groups in how they view college and select where to go. We also compare the narratives of college-attending CP women to those of CP men to understand why our findings are stronger for women.

There are no qualitative data collected as a part of the Add Health study, so we turn to a highly comparable cohort study that has qualitative interview data—the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). The NSYR began with a nationally representative sample of US 13–17 year olds in 2002 ($N = 3,290$), so they are a cohort born 7–8 years later than the Add Health cohort, but interviewed at very similar age points. Following the telephone survey, a quota sample of survey respondents ($n = 267$) participated in in-person, semi-structured interviews covering a range of topics. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The NSYR includes three additional waves of survey and semi-structured interview data (in 2005, 2008, and 2013), following these same participants into the transition to adulthood. Our analysis focuses on female interview participants who were ages 16–21 at Wave 2 (2005) and 18–24 at Wave 3 (2007) to show how college-attending women who are CP frame their futures and college choices differently than those who have a different or no religious background.

We selected the 23 college-bound/attending young women who were categorized as CP (based on their description of their religious affiliation in their first interview, using a similar coding scheme we used with the Add Health data) and who had enrolled in a four-year college at some point. We then identified 23 other college-attending female participants who generally matched the young, CP women on race/ethnicity, family socioeconomic markers, family structure, and GPA. The matched cases were all mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, or religiously unaffiliated. Of the 46 young women whose transcripts we analyzed, 23 were interviewed at both Waves 2 and 3, and 23 were interviewed at just one of those waves (12 at Wave 2 and 11 at Wave 3). We use the interviews from those two waves because the young women were either just making decisions about where to attend college or had recently enrolled in college, so they spoke in the interviews about the process of choosing a college.¹² Table 5 summarizes the demographic characteristics of these 46 young women.

Analytic Strategy

Our analysis of the qualitative data from Waves 2 and 3 of the NSYR proceeded in two phases. First, we read transcripts and wrote memos based on differences we noticed in the ways the two sets of young women (CP or not) spoke about themselves, their aspirations, their views of college, and their college selection process. We read whole transcripts, paying

¹²We focus more closely on the interviews with young women in their late teens because they are in the process of choosing a college. These interviews make up 62% of our transcripts. We use retrospective information from interviews with women who were in their 20s when that is all we have. We compared the narratives of 12 women who were interviewed in their late teens and early 20s and did not detect noticeable differences. Also, although some participants were interviewed at Wave 1 in their late teens, there were no direct questions about the college application and decision-making process in the interview guide, so we do not use any Wave 1 transcripts.

close attention to the social class, family, peer, and religious contexts in which they lived as well as ways in which these young women's discourses revealed what they felt was expected of them in the arenas of education, career, and family, and the balance of all three. We then outlined a set of themes that were emerging from the data, and created a codebook of concepts (e.g., "purpose of life" or "family plans") that allowed for the systematic tagging of transcripts for a more objective assessment of evidence for the processes we perceived. The coding and analysis were conducted using [Dedoose.com](https://www.dedoose.com/), an online platform for qualitative data analysis.

Results

With respect to the cultural scripts young women hold about whom they are becoming and how to achieve that, we first noticed that virtually all of the girls interviewed expressed scripts supporting and encouraging meaningful careers, marriage, and motherhood. They spoke as if it was a given that they would attend college, have jobs, marry, and have children, in that order. In addition, many of them talk at length about their purpose in life or what they hope to accomplish. Although you can find evidence of all these schemas in nearly every transcript, it is how they weave the schema together, articulating different models for helping others and being satisfied, that reveals differences between the CP girls and the others. CP girls highlight how they will help others and achieve satisfaction through their roles as (married) mothers, with their careers in the background, whereas the non-CP girls discuss how their careers will be avenues for helping others and achieving satisfaction, with family life to follow (also as an avenue for care and altruism) and to be balanced equally with one's career. The ways in which they negotiate the unfolding and balance of these aspirations then correlate strongly with how they describe choosing a college and their experience there. Thus, data from these semi-structured interviews reveal ways in which CP culture frames and shapes the pursuit of education in the larger context of young women's future lives.

Avenues of Altruism and Resulting Satisfaction.—All girls receive heavy socialization around the importance of helping others (Chodorow 1999; Gilligan 1982; Marini et al. 1996). Therefore, when all the young women in this interview study were asked about their purpose in life or what they would most like to accomplish, it is not surprising that half of them cast these desires in altruistic terms, like wanting to "help people," or "make a difference in the lives of others." And, CPs were no more likely to express altruism than the others. But CPs were, not surprisingly, far more likely to express their altruistic goals as motivated by their personal faith. In fact, none of the non-CP women mentioned anything religious in their replies to questions about purpose of life or what they would most like to accomplish in life. More interesting was the variance we discovered in how those raised as CPs and the other young women expressed their altruistic intentions. The CP women were more likely to express their altruistic aspirations only or first through family plans, whereas the other women were much more likely to articulate their purpose as helping others only or first through a career in the labor force.

Six of the 10 young CP women who expressed altruistic life goals talked about family goals only or before they brought up career goals. Renee,¹³ a young white woman who fairly regularly attended a non-denominational church growing up and got mixed grades in school,

was interviewed at the ages of 16 and 18. In the first interview, she was aspiring to college, and when asked what she most wanted to accomplish in life, she said, “Raising a good family—a tight-knit, close family.” When we interviewed her again two years later, with one year of college completed, she reiterated her family goals,

I’ve always known that I wanted to be a mommy. I’ve always known that I wanted to support a husband... And I kinda set in my head that whether, no matter who I marry, I’m gonna be that kinda woman. This is what I’m looking for.

When asked what she would most like to accomplish in her life, Natalia, an 18-year-old who was CP, regularly attended church on Sundays and youth group on Wednesdays, got all A’s in high school, and identified as white and Latina replied,

I want to do more than one thing. I want to get married, I want to have kids, and I want to raise them... I want them to be good. I want to be the church pianist, and I want to scrapbook.

Natalia, like most other CP young women, gave a list of multiple goals, but started that list with marriage and childrearing, emphasizing that she hopes to raise them well, reflecting altruistic intentions. In fact, later in the interview, following a discussion about how she would like to major in music, the interviewer asked what she would like to do when she finishes college and she said, “What I really want to do is be a mom.” It is not that CP women do not bring up careers or other activities, but family roles tend to come first, and be primary avenues through which they can help others and derive meaning and satisfaction.

The way the non-CP women express their altruistic intentions in answers to questions about their purpose in life or what they hope to accomplish in life is primarily through their careers. Lilly, a 20-year-old, African American Methodist who attended church regularly during her high school year, got mostly B’s in school, and is a first generation college student attending a highly respected historically black university, expressed that her purpose is connected to her future career.

I know what I want to do. I want to be a social worker and my immediate goal is to, you know, help people get the best that they can get out of what they have, I would consider that as my purpose.

Kelsey, a 20-year-old non-practicing Catholic who identified as White and Latina, got all A’s in high school, and was proud to be maintaining a 3.5 GPA while taking very challenging pre-med courses at a highly-ranked public university, also connected her purpose to education and career.

I want to help people...somewhere in the health field. If I could accomplish one thing, I’d become a Physician’s Assistant. Finish the whole program. Because it means you accomplished something, like you went to undergrad, you went to graduate school, like wow, you really made something of yourself.

For young women like Lilly and Kelsey, their strong desire to help others achieved through their career. Both Lilly and Kelsey talk excitedly in other sections of their interview about

¹³All names of people or institutions are pseudonyms.

their hopes to marry a “soulmate” who shares housework equally and with whom they can hopefully have two children while they continue to work and pursue career goals. Therefore, it is not that family life goals are not valorized, but they are not primary features of how they share plans for altruism or self-satisfaction.

Careers and education are major foci of their answers to the questions about life purpose or desired accomplishments even when their specific purpose in life, or goals, are yet to be worked out. A 17-year-old, mainline Protestant woman named Amelia who describes a close personal relationship with God, prays every day, attends church, Sunday School, and youth group weekly, and got “mostly A’s and B’s” in high school told her interviewer,

I don’t know my purpose yet. I don’t think I’m old enough to be like, “that’s what I’m supposed to do, or that’s my calling.” But once I get out of college, or graduate school, or whatever, then I’ll know what I’m supposed to be doing... I do know I want to accomplish something... like helping find a cure for cancer.

About half of the young women who were Catholic, mainline Protestant, or had no affiliation gave similar responses about not yet knowing their purpose in life, compared to a quarter of the CP women. As Amelia does, they often mentioned that they would probably have it figured out once their education was completed, suggesting they associated their “purpose” with a career for which they will train in school. When probed, these young women usually gave examples of career-based achievements. For example, Amelia mentions finding a cure for cancer. Others refer to possibly being teachers, psychologists, or medical doctors. On the one hand, we might be concerned that these young women do not seem sure about their goals; on the other hand, they are considering a wide range of options and many, including Amelia who attended one of the most highly ranked public universities in the country, select colleges or universities for which the prestige of their degree is likely to be valued quite highly by future employers regardless of what career they choose.

Linking to Understandings of College.—There were also perceivable differences in how CP or non-CP women tended to talk about deciding where to go to college or what they wanted from college that makes sense in light of how the young women differently understand their avenues for altruism and main sources of satisfaction and happiness.

When CP women expressed their views of college, they would describe it as a way to experience some independence and learn more about oneself; only one of the CP women explicitly mentioned college as an investment in achieving the best career possible. When one CP participant was asked what she expected college to be like, she said, “I know that I’m going to have a lot more freedom when I go to college, and I’m excited about that.” Another said, “I want to go, I want to get out of my house. I want to spread my wings just a little bit more.”

By contrast, several of the young women who were not CP emphasized how college is a time to work hard in classes to get the grades and learn the skills that will be rewarded by admittance to graduate or professional schools and/or getting jobs that will allow them to become financially independent before marriage. Lilly, an African American Methodist

attending a historically black university who was quoted earlier about becoming a social worker, stated,

I'm studying psychology and minoring in social work, so pretty much all my time these days is being in school. I don't do much except focus on my, you know, grades and what not, just trying to get my degree.

Her quote reflects what we saw in many of the transcripts from non-CP women—high value on good grades which are understood as currency for achieving the best job possible after college.

Several of the young women who were not CP also demonstrated a focus on how better high school grades would help them gain admittance to “good” schools, by which they meant schools with top academic reputations—the ones that were most selective or difficult from which to gain admittance. When Jenna, a White Methodist who considered herself “very religious” was 16 years old, she explained to an interviewer that she was focused on and worried about what she needed to do to get into a “good” college.

I am planning on taking all the AP courses, and I need to work on getting money to pay for my own college. I'm trying to find different ways to get scholarships, but lately I've been letting my grades drop and that's one thing I'm going to work on a lot more so I can get a good GPA so I can be accepted to a good college. When my grades dropped, I was sitting there telling myself, “You're never going to get into a good college this way.”

Views of what college is for, or how the value of a college education is perceived, connect to how these young women described the process they went through in applying for or selecting a college. CP women often selected smaller and less prestigious colleges or colleges closer to home without much consideration for the difference in returns to a diploma from different kinds of institutions. For example, when re-interviewed for Wave 2, Anna (who is quoted in an earlier section), now 20 years old and in college, said the regional state school she attended was “actually the only school I applied to, because it was close enough that I could get home, but not close enough that I had to come home.” She, like many of the other CP women, expressed a desire to have a good amount of independence, but to also be close to her parents and friends, so she did not consider a wide range of options like many of the young women without a CP background did. In fact, her state's flagship university was located in the city in which she grew up, but she opted for the bit of distance (a two-hour drive) the regional state school afforded.

Natalia, also quoted earlier, decided to attend a four-year, Christian university, because her older sister was attending school there and she and her family valued that it was a familiar and Christian environment not too far from their hometown. Other young people from her family's church went to this school as well, so it was familiar to their community, although a day's drive away. Natalia told the interviewer she was majoring in music, but primarily focused on further strengthening her Christian faith, growing as a person, and possibly meeting a Christian husband during college. As do many of the other CP women, Natalia demonstrates a view of college that prioritizes personal development more than building credentials for labor market success. Of course, many young people decide on where to go

to college by taking into account geographic proximity to home, following siblings or friends, or with some expectation of the personal development an institution might offer (Perna 2006). However, our evidence suggests these particular factors have more influence for young women who are CP than those who are not.

Contrary to our findings for CP young women, young women who are not CP emphasized college as a time to gain human capital and craft a resume that would enable them to land a well-paying, rewarding career that provides financial stability before “adult life begins.” For example, Jennifer, a mainline Protestant, told us when she was 18 and about to begin classes at a prestigious, large public university,

I applied to a lot of small schools, because I initially wanted to do the small school atmosphere, but I also applied to Big State U, because it’s a public school—the best in the state. I was weighing Big State U, which is more affordable, against all the small schools that aren’t as well known, and it was just logical to go to Big State U.

Although price was definitely an issue, Jennifer demonstrated that she was also keenly aware of the “well known” factor. That is, she might have been forfeiting the intimate feeling and experience of a small school that she desired, but she perceived that she would benefit from going to a college or university with a positive reputation. Only one of the CP women discussed the selection of a college in terms of how a degree from there might be viewed in the labor market or affect future earning potential.

What About Men?

Almost all the college-bound or attending young men in the interview data place some emphasis on how important it is to go to the “best possible school,” meaning one that translates into greater human capital down the line. One very devout CP was asked if he had ever considered going to a religious college, and he replied, “No, it’s not what I need, it’s not gonna help me get a job.” A young, Catholic man who wanted to be an engineer expressed that his sole focus was keeping up his 4.0 in high school, so he could get into the best possible school for engineering. Regardless of religious affiliation, college-attending young men emphasize choosing college based on what will be most marketable career-wise.

The only difference in narratives we found is that CP young men were far more likely to explicitly state that their desire to achieve the highest possible financial gain was so they could be the sole or main economic provider for their future families. For example, one CP young man stated, “I want to try and make it big so that if my future wife wants to stay home with our children, she can.” Young men of other religious backgrounds occasionally expressed these sentiments, but usually kept the discussion very general, like emphasizing “financial security” for their families without indicating how they imagined economic and care provision would be divided. We do not go into a fuller discussion of this analysis because there were so few group differences, but our analysis of these interviews did support our conclusions from the quantitative data analysis—that the reason that religious affiliation does not differentiate the selectivity of the colleges young men choose is that all men are focused on college as a human capital investment above all else.

DISCUSSION

We examined the role of religious affiliation—particularly conservative Protestantism—in shaping the college choice of adolescents and thereby in contributing to horizontal stratification. We found robust differences in college selectivity for CP women, but not men. In the case of women, the difference was only partially explained by background characteristics and disparities in academic achievement or marriage expectations. Unlike other women, CP women did not choose more selective colleges as their academic ability increased, resulting in a large selectivity gap between high-ability CP women and other high-ability women. Our qualitative evidence suggests that this is a function of seeing their primary expressions of altruism and sources of personal satisfaction as motherhood with education and career activities as secondary. This lessens the importance of college as a prestige factor that might translate into a more financially rewarding future and places the emphasis on college being a comfortable place for self-exploration and some independence.

Our study suggests that cultural institutions contribute to horizontal stratification. The schemas purveyed by religious institutions early in the life course (i.e., childhood and adolescence) shape socioeconomic decisions in subtle and gendered ways. The CP “focus on the family” and downplaying of female career investments as primary vehicles for altruism or personal satisfaction and happiness alters possible life outcomes for CP women years before they bear children or get married. Furthermore, our evidence is consistent with the idea that the gap in occupational prestige between college-educated CPs and others may indeed be a function of college selectivity (Sherkat 2012), though future research will need to test this hypothesis directly.

Our findings also have implications for understanding CPs’ ascension to elite circles in America. Lindsay (2007) details how CPs have broken into these circles, even though they are still underrepresented among elites given their representation in the general population. Because CP young men are educated at similar institutions as other religious groups (net of background factors), some CP men are able to break into the ranks of the elite. High-ability CP women, however, are not typically attending the colleges that will enable them to join these circles. Many CPs—including many CP women—are perfectly willing to sacrifice this cultural power in order for women to raise families. But to the extent that CPs also value cultural influence, and many do, these findings suggest that a large portion of CPs are removing themselves from the pool of candidates that might join the ranks of the American elite.

Our study sheds light on the way in which CP women internalize cultural scripts about family life and its primacy over, if not incompatibility with, a successful career that color the decisions they make far in advance of their family formation. Interestingly, we found no evidence in the qualitative data that these women were avoiding more highly selective institutions for fear of their secularizing influence. We also found only limited evidence that diminished academic ability explains conservative Protestantism’s effect on attendance at highly selective colleges among women who go on to attend college. More consequentially, CP women have marriage and motherhood closer to their moral core than a non-family career (Wellman and Keyes 2007). They see family roles as central to their purpose and

identity, and a profitable career as secondary and needing to fit around family plans.¹⁴ Clearly, CP schemas remain gendered. Family life is no less important for CP men, but their contribution to the family is in large part financial, and thus career success is compatible with being a good husband and father. This gendered script becomes the moral intuition of CPs and, from an early age, affects their socioeconomic trajectories.

We also cast significant doubt on some other explanations for the differences we see in college selectivity between CPs and other religious groups. Because these differences exist net of background factors only for women, it is likely that there is no deficit in cultural capital among college-educated CP men that is attributable to CP subculture itself. There may be a deficit in cultural capital among CPs more generally, but those men who go to college appear to have similar preparedness to their counterparts from other traditions. Similarly, because this difference is only observable among women, limited social networks and distrust of nonreligious intellectual sources are likely not at work here. We can also say with confidence that the differences we observe are not purely a function of family socioeconomic status. These findings hold while controlling for family socioeconomic factors. The data we have presented show that this is much more a story of CP women “choosing” (or better, intuiting) a college that is the best fit for them, and this “fit” happens to be institutions that are less academically rigorous and less able to signal prestige to future employers.

Our study opens up many avenues for promising future research. Because of our data limitations, we were unable to explore in detail the role that religious colleges may play in this, though our story holds even among women who attended secular institutions or when controlling for religious college attendance (see note 2). Nevertheless, a closer look at the students who sacrifice institutional prestige to attend religious colleges could shed further light on this stratification process. Future research may also explicitly test the mediating influence of college selectivity between conservative Protestantism and other socioeconomic outcomes. Additionally, interesting qualitative work might be done to examine how CP women who *do* attend elite institutions manage their identities in the face of powerful cultural schemas that downplay (or at least do not encourage) their ambition. Future research might also examine our theory among other groups with similar gender ideology to CPs that we were not able to examine here, such as Mormons or conservative Catholics. Future research may also take advantage of data where information about individuals’ actual college options are known; we have this information for some of our interview respondents, but not all, and we do not know these options among the Add Health survey respondents.

At present, however, we have presented quantitative evidence that CP women—but not men—attend less selective colleges than their academic record might predict, and that the discrepancy between CP women and other women is most pronounced among those with high academic ability. We also test, but find little support for, hypotheses about academic ability or marriage expectations serving as mechanisms through which conservative

¹⁴Notably, marital expectations did not mediate the association between conservative Protestantism and college selectivity for women in our statistical models. Our measure taps the expectation to marry by the relatively young age of 25, not expecting ever to marry, which could reveal a different story. It is not that non-CP women do not want to or expect to marry; rather marriage precedes career is terms of its priority for CP women, while the opposite is true for non-CP women.

Protestantism operates to shape college choice. To search for greater understanding of why the relationship between CP affiliation and college selectivity exists, we turned to qualitative evidence suggesting the purpose of college varies between CP young women and others. Because conservative Protestantism frames family roles as primary avenues for altruism to be expressed and personal satisfaction and happiness achieved, CP young women make suboptimal (in a socioeconomic sense) choices about where to attend college. Non-CP young women express more of reliance on the maximization of human capital development in deciding where to attend college. These findings are important for understanding religious stratification and gender inequality among young adults in the United States.

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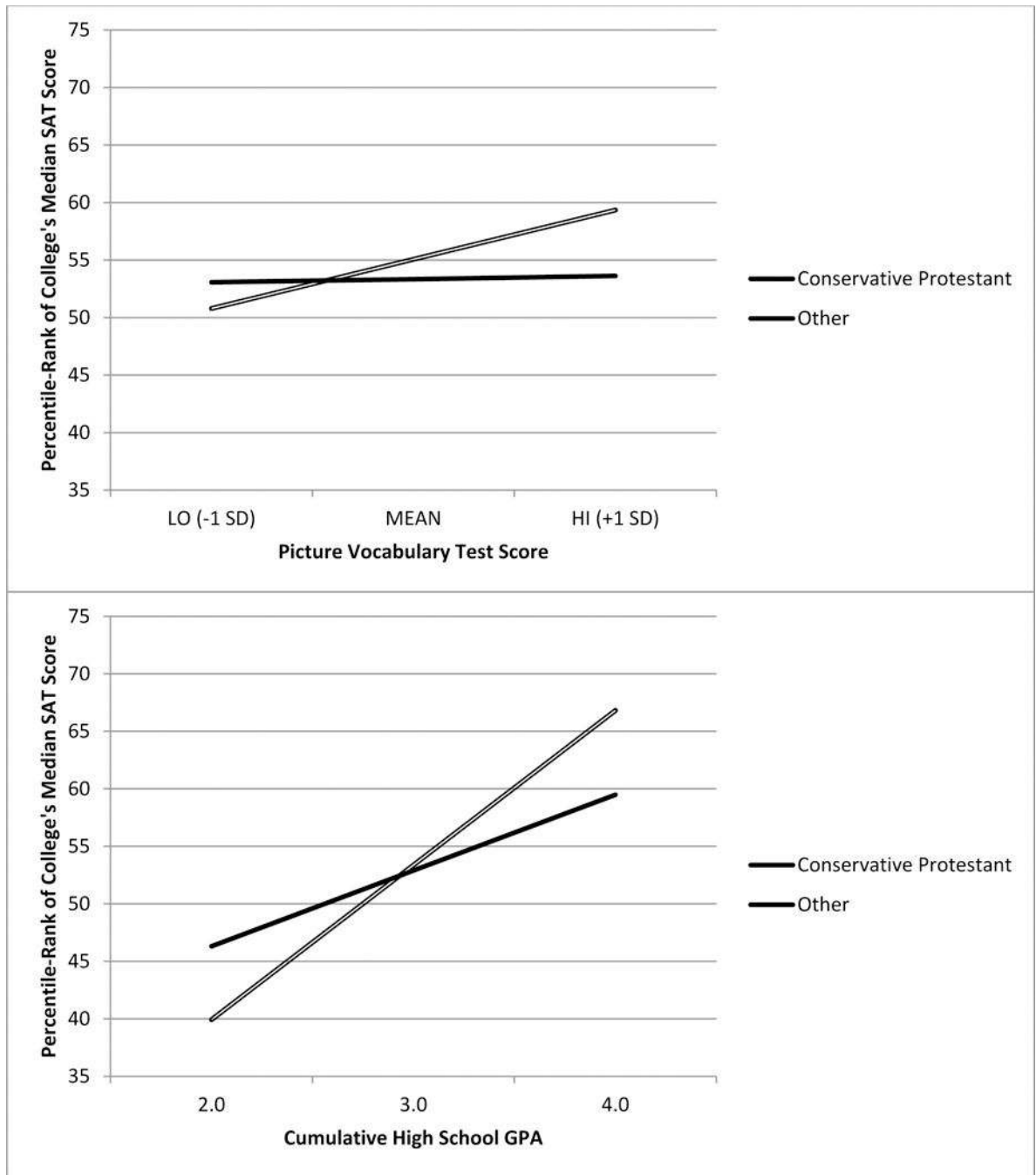


Figure 1.
 Predicted College Selectivity by Academic Ability and Religious Tradition, Current Students
 Note: Line for Indeterminate Christians not shown.

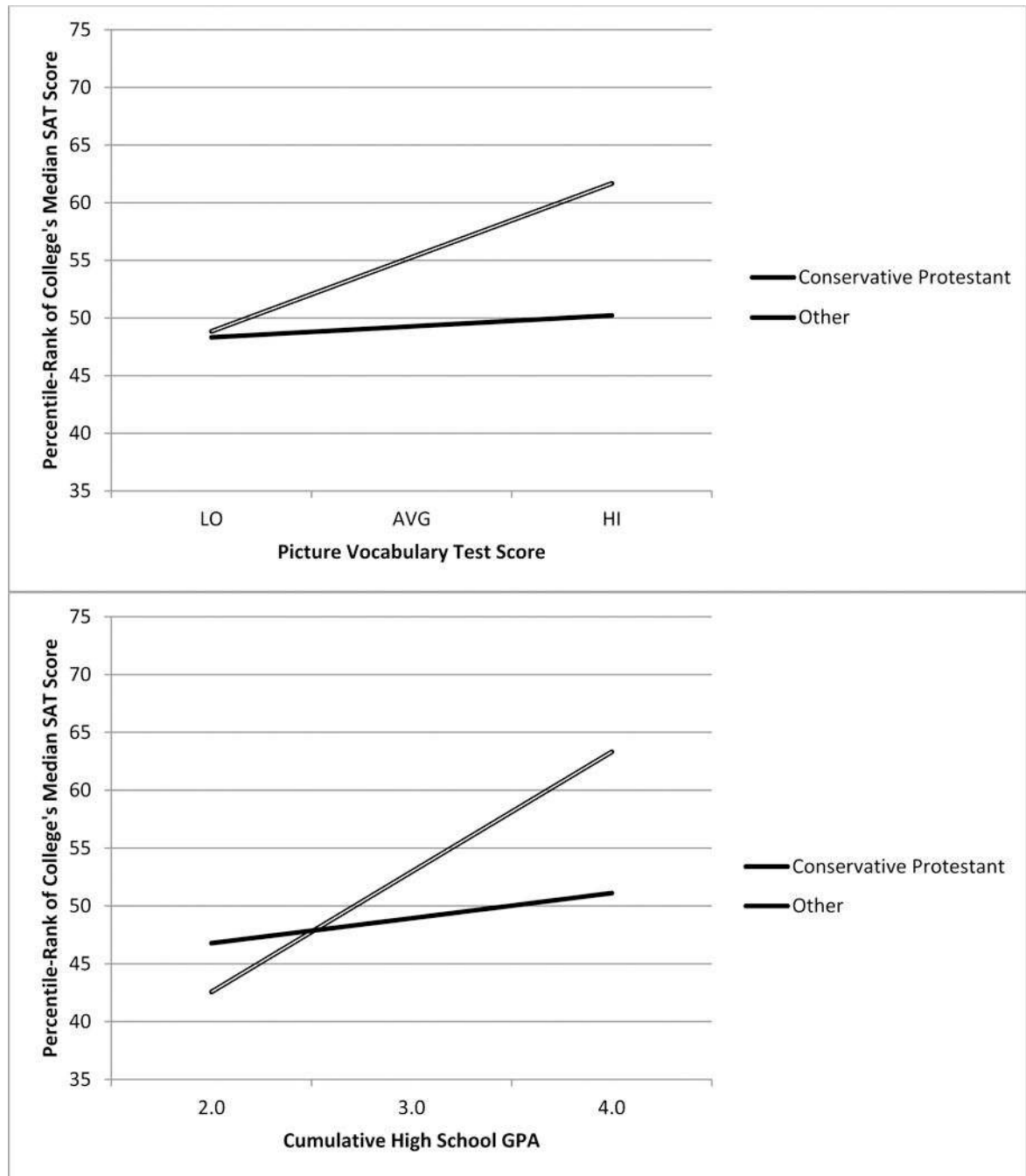


Figure 2.
 Predicted College Selectivity by Academic Ability and Religious Tradition, Current Students, Women
 Note: Line for Indeterminate Christians not shown.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analysis of Add Health

	Overall (N=2,093)			Men (N=928)			Women (N=1,165)		
	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range
Percentile rank college median SAT score	54.93	27.15	2.5–97.5	55.92	27.05	2.5–97.5	54.03	27.21	2.5–97.5
Conservative Protestant	.24		0, 1	.24		0, 1	.24		0, 1
Indeterminate Christian (Other)	.09		0, 1	.09		0, 1	.10		0, 1
Black	.67		0, 1	.67		0, 1	.66		0, 1
Hispanic	.14		0, 1	.14		0, 1	.14		0, 1
Asian	.08		0, 1	.07		0, 1	.08		0, 1
(White)	.06		0, 1	.07		0, 1	.05		0, 1
Age	.73		0, 1	.73		0, 1	.73		0, 1
High school in suburban area	20.91	1.56	18–27	21.00	1.57	18–27	20.82	1.55	18–26
High school in rural area (High school in urban area)	.62		0, 1	.62		0, 1	.62		0, 1
High school in Midwest	.14		0, 1	.15		0, 1	.13		0, 1
High school in South	.24		0, 1	.23		0, 1	.25		0, 1
High school in Northeast	.33		0, 1	.33		0, 1	.33		0, 1
(High school in West)	.34		0, 1	.35		0, 1	.34		0, 1
Catholic school, Wave 1	.17		0, 1	.17		0, 1	.17		0, 1
Protestant school, Wave 1	.16		0, 1	.16		0, 1	.16		0, 1
(Secular school, Wave 1)	.05		0, 1	.07		0, 1	.04		0, 1
Mother has bachelor's degree	.02		0, 1	.02		0, 1	.02		0, 1
Family income	.93		0, 1	.91		0, 1	.94		0, 1
Intact family	.41		0, 1	.42		0, 1	.41		0, 1
Peabody vocabulary test (PVT) score	6.10	2.77	0–11	6.24	2.80	0–11	5.97	2.75	0–11
Cumulative high school GPA	.68		0, 1	.71		0, 1	.67		0, 1
	106.69	13.42	10–137	107.96	13.46	42–137	105.51	13.28	10–137
	3.13	.59	0–4	3.02	.61	0–4	3.24	.55	1.09–4

Table 2.

Coefficients from Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models Predicting Percentile-Rank of College's Median SAT Scores, Current Students (N = 2,093)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Conservative Protestant	-11.91***	-1.37	-1.72	-1.38
Indeterminate Christian (Other)	-4.87	-.47	.60	-.27
Black		-12.98**	-14.21***	-14.10***
Hispanic		-.76	4.73	-.54
Asian (White)		4.50	-3.27	4.39
Female		-3.57*	-3.41*	-2.56*
Age		-.55	-.49	-.53
High school in suburban area		-5.34	-5.56	-5.39
High school in rural area (High school in urban area)		-12.70***	-13.13***	-12.85***
High school in Midwest		4.85	4.77	4.91
High school in South		-.10	-.37	.04
High school in Northeast (High school in West)		5.53	5.43	5.64
Catholic school, Wave 1		3.14	3.27	3.39
Protestant school, Wave 1 (Secular school, Wave 1)		3.31	3.16	3.30
Mother has bachelor's degree		1.57	1.64	1.62
Family income		.48	.48	.47
Intact family		-1.80	-1.69	-1.99
Religious service attendance		-.39	-.43	-.19
Religious salience		-1.43	-1.36	-1.60
Peabody vocabulary test (PVT) score		.26***	.32***	.26***
Cumulative high school GPA		11.21***	11.25***	13.45***
Expectations of marriage by age 25		.08	.04	.14
Conservative Protestant X PVT score			-.30*	
Indeterminate Christian X PVT score			.17	
Conservative Protestant X GPA				-6.86*
Indeterminate Christian X GPA				-1.63
Constant	58.24***	61.68***	61.72***	61.76***

p < .001

**
p < .01

*
p < .05 (two-tailed tests)

Notes: Reference groups in parentheses. Age, family income, religious service attendance, religious salience, PVT score, GPA, and marital expectations are mean-centered. Models 2, 3, and 4 also include a control for American Indian but results are not displayed due to small cell sizes.

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Table 3.

Coefficients from Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models Predicting Percentile-Rank of College's Median SAT Scores, Current Students, Men (N = 928)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Conservative Protestant	-9.07*	2.92	2.67	2.88
Indeterminate Christian (Other)	-2.97	-.83	-1.17	-.72
Black		-16.26**	-16.58***	-17.12***
Hispanic		-.64	-.48	-.51
Asian		3.25	3.21	3.37
(White)				
Age		-.33	-.26	-.31
High school in suburban area		-1.73	-1.77	-1.73
High school in rural area		-12.71**	-12.74**	-12.89**
(High school in urban area)				
High school in Midwest		6.52	6.33	6.65
High school in South		.99	.74	1.19
High school in Northeast		8.44*	8.22	8.49*
(High school in West)				
Catholic school, Wave 1		3.27	3.38	3.45
Protestant school, Wave 1		5.21	5.43	5.33
(Secular school, Wave 1)				
Mother has bachelor's degree		-.60	-.50	-.65
Family income		.39	.38	.41
Intact family		-1.56	-1.42	-1.74
Religious service attendance		.13	.08	.25
Religious salience		-2.85*	-2.78	-3.02*
Peabody vocabulary test (PVT) score		.10	.15	.10
Cumulative high school GPA		12.46***	12.45***	14.44***
Expectations of marriage by age 25		2.15*	2.12*	2.17*
Conservative Protestant X PVT score			-.13	
Indeterminate Christian X PVT score			-.11	
Conservative Protestant X GPA				-5.37
Indeterminate Christian X GPA				-3.05
Constant	58.38***	57.38***	57.35***	57.40***

p < .001

**
p < .01

*
p < .05 (two-tailed tests)

Notes: Reference groups in parentheses. Age, family income, religious service attendance, religious salience, PVT score, GPA, and marital expectations are mean-centered. Models 2, 3, and 4 also include a control for American Indian but results are not displayed due to small cell sizes.

Table 4.

Coefficients from Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models Predicting Percentile-Rank of College's Median SAT Scores, Current Students, Women (N = 1,165)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Conservative Protestant	-14.59***	-6.02*	-5.99*	-5.95*
Indeterminate Christian (Other)	-6.33	-1.68	.21	-1.28
Black		-9.78*	-11.80**	-11.07**
Hispanic		-2.39	-2.10	-2.13
Asian (White)		5.77	6.34	5.45
Age		-1.02	-1.07	-1.01
High school in suburban area		-8.81**	-9.27**	-8.98**
High school in rural area (High school in urban area)		-12.17**	-13.11**	-12.35**
High school in Midwest		3.60	3.69	3.72
High school in South		-.73	-1.11	-.71
High school in Northeast (High school in West)		3.67	3.82	4.01
Catholic school, Wave 1		.08	.13	.45
Protestant school, Wave 1 (Secular school, Wave 1)		2.27	1.02	1.64
Mother has bachelor's degree		3.81	3.70	3.97
Family income		.58	.62	.55
Intact family		-1.83	-1.95	-2.08
Religious service attendance		-1.32	-1.43	-1.27
Religious salience		.37	.42	.24
Picture vocabulary test (PVT) score		.42***	.48***	.42***
Cumulative high school GPA		8.02**	8.23**	10.38***
Expectations of marriage by age 25		-1.71	-1.75	-1.65
Conservative Protestant X PVT score			-.41*	
Indeterminate Christian X PVT score			.31	
Conservative Protestant X GPA				-8.21*
Indeterminate Christian X GPA				-1.19
Constant	58.12***	62.02***	62.50***	62.10***

p < .001

**
p < .01

*
p < .05 (two-tailed tests)

Notes: Reference groups in parentheses. Age, family income, religious service attendance, religious salience, PVT score, GPA, and marital expectations are mean-centered. Models 2, 3, and 4 also include a control for American Indian but results are not displayed due to small cell sizes.

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Table 5.

Characteristics of NSYR Semi-Structured Interview Sample, 2002 (Percent in each category)

	All Cases (n = 46)	Conservative Protestant Cases (n = 23)	Mainline Protestant, Catholic, or Unaffiliated Cases (n = 23)
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>			
Mainline Protestant	17		32
Catholic	17		32
No religion	16		36
Conservative Protestant	50	100	
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
Black	14	9	18
Hispanic	16	13	18
White	68	78	60
Refused	2	0	4
<i>Mom has bachelor's degree</i>	42	39	61
<i>Household Income</i>			
Less than \$30,000	23	17	29
\$30,000-\$50,000	30	35	25
\$50,000-\$70,000	19	30	11
\$70,000-\$100,000	8	9	7
More than \$1000	16	4	25
Don't Know or Refused	4	4	4
<i>Intact Family</i>	67	78	57
<i>GPA (mean values)</i>	2.9	2.63	3.20

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