

# Religious and Spiritual Involvement Among Older African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and Non-Hispanic Whites: Findings From the National Survey of American Life

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**Objectives.** The purpose of this study was to examine similarities and differences in religious involvement among three groups of older adults—African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites.

**Methods.** We used data from the National Survey of American Life, a nationally representative household study of African Americans and Caribbean Blacks with a national sample of non-Hispanic Whites who reside in areas (census tracts and block groups) at least 10% African American. We examined demographic correlates of 16 measures of organizational, nonorganizational, subjective religiosity, as well as religious coping and spirituality.

**Results.** The findings indicated that older African Americans and Caribbean Blacks reported higher levels of religious participation, religious coping, and spirituality than older Whites. We observed few significant differences between older African Americans and older Caribbean Blacks. Gender, age, marital status, income, education, marital status, and region all exhibited significant influences on religious participation and spirituality.

**Discussion.** Racial groups within the older population present distinctive profiles of religious participation and spirituality. The demographic correlates of religious involvement and spirituality are consistent across a variety of diverse dimensions and measures.

RESEARCH on racial differences in religious involvement has indicated that African Americans are more heavily invested in religious pursuits than their White counterparts. These differences have been consistent across study samples and religious indicators, and they have emerged within distinct age, gender, and regional subgroups within these populations (Krause, 2003; Levin, Taylor, & Chatters, 1994; Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody, & Levin, 1996). Two of the most exhaustive studies of Black/White differences in religious participation utilized multiple national probability samples (Levin et al., 1994; Taylor et al., 1996) and controlled for several factors known to be associated with religious involvement (e.g., socioeconomic status, region, and denomination). These studies found that across all the national surveys and religious involvement measures used, Blacks had significantly higher levels of religious participation than Whites. Furthermore, a recent study of Black/White differences in a multidimensional battery of prayer items within a national sample of older adults (Krause & Chatters, 2005) found that in 16 out of 17 indicators of prayer (e.g., beliefs about how prayer operates, the social context of prayer, and interpersonal aspects of prayer), older Blacks were more deeply involved in prayer life than were older Whites. In fact, length of time devoted to prayer was the only dimension on which older Blacks and Whites were similar.

## *Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Religious Involvement*

Despite pervasive and consistent race differences in religious involvement, theoretical perspectives on the issue have been fragmentary (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004). Social historical and ethnographic research has acknowledged the historical and cultural origins of Black religious traditions, as well as the varied social, economic, and political experiences that have shaped religious expression for this group. This perspective emphasizes the historical experiences of Blacks within American society and the role of Black religious traditions and institutional religion, in particular, in building individual and community social resources (Taylor et al., 2004) and in developing independent Black institutions (e.g., educational, health, social welfare; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Nelsen & Nelsen, 1975). These actions of the Black Church are representative of its long-standing civic tradition, which is manifested in community outreach, social activism, and political involvement. For example, beginning in the mid-19th century, successive waves of rural Blacks migrated from the rural South to urban centers in the Northeast and Midwest (i.e., during the Northern Migration, the Great Migration, the Second Great Migration). The African American church was instrumental in the settlement and community integration of these groups in their new urban environments. The transition from the rural South to cities in the Northeast and Midwest

involved not only physical relocation, but emotional and psychological adaptations to new urban environments and lifestyles, community customs, and social mores. The Black Church was pivotal in facilitating these transitions and served as a buffer for recent southern migrants and as a mediator of the larger culture (Frazier, 1964).

African American theological orientations and religious practices developed within the unique and dynamic social, political, and historical contexts characterizing the position of Blacks in American society. As such, they responded not only to spiritual and religious concerns, but also addressed the adverse life conditions affecting this group (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Scholars have advanced the relative centrality of religious belief, practice, and institutions in African American life as an explanation for widespread and persistent race differences in religious involvement for Blacks as compared to Whites. For example, Krause and Chatters (2005) suggested that race differentials in prayer practices for older Blacks and Whites can be understood in relation to important historical and cultural differences between these groups. The greater investment of older Black adults in prayer practices is attributable to the historically pivotal role of the church and a collectivist orientation in Black community life. These findings underscore the need to examine group differences in religious phenomena taking into account the influence of race, historical context, and culture (Krause & Chatters, 2005, p. 40). This is particularly important when examining religious participation differences among older African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites, groups that vary significantly with respect to race status, historical context, and culture.

#### *Older Caribbean Blacks and Religious Involvement*

Recent growth in the size of Black immigrant populations from Caribbean countries has revealed the presence of significant within-group ethnic variation in the African American population. The Black Caribbean population in the United States grew from 924,693 in 1990 to 1,542,895 in 2000, reflecting an increase of 67% (Logan & Deane, 2003). Caribbean Blacks represent roughly 4.5% of the Black population overall. However, 2000 Census estimates indicated that Caribbean Blacks make up fully one quarter of the Black population in New York, Boston, and Nassau-Suffolk, New York; more than 30% of Blacks in Miami and West Palm Beach/Boca Raton, Florida; and 44% of Blacks in Fort Lauderdale (Logan & Deane, 2003, Table 2). Despite the growth of the Black foreign-born population, researchers have largely ignored the issue of ethnic heterogeneity within the Black racial category. For African Americans, race and ethnicity have been traditionally viewed as interchangeable, a phenomenon that has specifically characterized the experiences of Caribbean Blacks (see Waters, 1999). However, the use of the broad category of African American obscures this ethnically defined subgroup and important differences that are associated with their ethnicity, national heritage, and life circumstances (Logan & Deane, 2003). As a consequence of this relative invisibility, very little research has examined the social status and circumstances of Caribbean Blacks in general and older adults in particular.

Waters's (1999) ethnographic study of Caribbean Blacks in Brooklyn, New York, noted that the church plays a prominent role in Black Caribbean life and that Caribbean Blacks are often members of an ethnically identified congregation whose membership may be exclusively Black Caribbean or composed of individuals from a particular country. Churches provide spiritual support to congregants, help to build and strengthen relationships among immigrants, and provide a context for intergenerational family interaction and socialization. Religion is particularly important for Black Caribbean women, who demonstrate strong religious ties and a sense of loyalty, moral obligation, and respect for the church and its teachings (McEachern & Kenny, 2002). Beyond this general overview, very little information is available on discrete forms of religious participation (e.g., religious service attendance, prayer) among Caribbean Blacks in general and older adults in particular. This is problematic, given the importance of religion in coping with life problems and the provision of church-based support (Taylor et al., 2004).

African Americans and Caribbean Blacks are clearly distinctive from one another with regard to national background, historical contexts, and life experiences. Nonetheless, there are several reasons to expect some level of comparability in their religious involvement profiles. First, in much the same way that the Black Church emerged as a core institution of Black life, the central role of the church in Black Caribbean communities may be instrumental in shaping broad patterns of religious involvement and sentiment. Waters's (1999) description of Black Caribbean communities in New York suggests that the Black Caribbean church promotes a sense of community belonging and ethnic identity, and provides tangible, psychological, and spiritual resources to assist in the adaptation of immigrants to their new environments. This suggests that religious institutions serving Caribbean Blacks have developed their own civic traditions (community outreach, social activism, and political involvement) in relation to their communities.

Second, similarities in religious involvement for older African Americans and Caribbean Blacks may reflect their shared cultural heritage as people from the African diaspora and, in particular, from the broad cultural area of West Africa. Aspects of Black religious worship in the New World share many of the features of African beliefs and practices (Stewart, 1999). Of particular importance are beliefs concerning the personal nature of God or divine powers, collective and participatory worship styles, and an emphasis on direct and personal communication with God. These cultural manifestations and practices are reflected in core elements of African American worship styles that emphasize a view of God as an accessible spiritual entity and personal friend (Black, 1999) and rely on frequent verbal communication in the form of conversational prayer (Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990; Maynard-Reid, 2000). These features of worship style and religious practice underlie the unique prayer tradition and devotional forms found among African Americans (Krause & Chatters, 2005) and may bear some similarity to religious involvement among Caribbean Blacks.

Finally, within the context of racialized social relations and power dynamics within the United States, skin color and other physical features are the primary visible markers of one's race

and social status. Despite differences in national origin, ethnic heritage, and culture, Caribbean Blacks have been historically treated in a manner largely indistinguishable from their African American counterparts, have faced a similar social reality, and have experienced many of the same life circumstances associated with possessing a devalued social status (Sutton & Chaney, 1987). As Foner (2005) argued for Black Caribbeans, being Black is a master status, because once in the United States, one's primary personal and group identity is defined and perceived by others as being Black. Given the relative invisibility of Black ethnic groups in the United States, the life experiences and social circumstances of African Americans and Caribbean Blacks are comparable in several respects, particularly with regard to a shared history of encounters with racial prejudice and discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, education, and health care (Sutton & Chaney, 1987). Given this commonality of social experience, Caribbean Blacks may also be similar to African Americans in their levels of investment in religious institutions as a source of social capital and in the emergence of distinctive patterns and modes of religious expression.

### *Focus of the Present Analysis*

The present investigation is an initial report on religious involvement and spirituality among older African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites from the National Survey of American Life: Coping With Stress in the 21st Century (NSAL). In addition to exploring race and ethnic differences, this article also investigates a full range of demographic (e.g., gender, region, socioeconomic status) and denomination differences in religious involvement and spirituality. The focus on racial and ethnic variability provides a unique opportunity to explore possible differences between three groups of older adults in the rates and patterns of religious involvement.

## **METHODS**

### *Sample*

The Program for Research on Black Americans at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research collected data for the NSAL. The Institute of Social Research's Survey Research Center, in cooperation with the Program for Research on Black Americans, completed the fieldwork for the study. The data collection took place from February 2001 to June 2003. Researchers administered face-to-face interviews in respondents' homes; respondents received compensation for their time. A total of 6,082 face-to-face interviews took place with persons aged 18 or older, including 3,570 African Americans, 891 non-Hispanic Whites, and 1,621 Blacks of Caribbean descent. Among persons 55 years of age and older, 837 were African American, 298 were non-Hispanic Whites, and 304 were Caribbean Blacks, for a total of 1,439 persons older than 55 years of age. We used this older subsample for this study. The overall response rate of 72.3% was excellent, given that African Americans (especially lower income African Americans) and Caribbean Blacks are more likely to reside in major urban areas that are difficult and expensive with respect to survey fieldwork and data collection.

The NSAL sample has a national multistage probability design. The African American sample is the core sample of the NSAL. The core sample consists of 64 primary sampling units. Of these primary areas, 56 overlapped substantially with existing Survey Research Center National Sample primary areas. The remaining eight primary areas were chosen from the South in order for the sample to represent African Americans in the proportion in which they are distributed nationally. The African American sample is a nationally representative sample of households located in the 48 coterminous states with at least one Black adult 18 years or older who did not identify ancestral ties in the Caribbean. Both the African American and non-Hispanic White samples were selected exclusively from these targeted geographic segments in proportion to the African American population. For all three racial/ethnic samples, the NSAL weights were selected to correct for disproportionate sampling and nonresponse and to provide representation across various demographic characteristics in the 48 coterminous states.

The non-Hispanic White sample is a stratified, disproportionate sample of non-Hispanic White adults residing in households located in the Census 2000 tracts and blocks that have 10% or greater African American population. These Whites represent almost 50% of the population in these African American geographic areas. In addition, they represent 13.7% of the White population and 14.8% of the White households in the United States. The NSAL non-Hispanic White sample is nationally representative of Whites who live in geographical areas (census tracts and block groups) in which African Americans make up 10% or more of the household populations (Heeringa et al., 2004, p. 230). It is not optimal for descriptive analysis of the U.S. White population. The sample design and analysis weights for this sample were designed to be optimal for comparative analyses in which residential, environmental, and socioeconomic characteristics are controlled in Black/White statistical contrasts (Heeringa et al., 2004). The design of the non-Hispanic White sample was to maximize the geographic and socioeconomic overlap with the African American sample. This is evident in Table 1, which shows the overlap of the distribution of African Americans and non-Hispanic Whites by region. This strategy built upon the recommendations of an emerging body of work that noted the difficulty of fully controlling for socioeconomic status in Black/White comparisons because of the vast differences in the geographical and residential contexts of the two groups (LaVeist & McDonald, 2002; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Yu & Williams, 1999).

The Black Caribbean sample was selected from two area probability sample frames: the core NSAL sample and an area probability sample of housing units from geographic areas with a relatively high density of persons of Caribbean descent (more than 10% of the population). Of the total Black Caribbean respondents (1,621), 265 were selected from the households in the core sample, whereas 1,356 were selected from housing units from high density Caribbean areas (see Heeringa et al., 2004, for a more detailed description of the sample designs and sampling methods used in the development of the NSAL). Caribbean Blacks reported more than 25 different countries of origin that can be characterized as Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries (e.g., Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba), English-speaking Caribbean countries (e.g., Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago), and Haiti.

Table 1. Demographic Description of the National Survey of American Life Older Adult Sample

Demographic Factor	Racial/Ethnic Subgroup			
	African American	Caribbean Black	Non-Hispanic White	Total
Education	11.49 (2.97)	12.01 (1.33)	12.45 (5.39)	12.04 (3.42)
<i>n</i>	815	301	292	1,408
Age	66.63 (7.26)	65.89 (2.78)	66.82 (14.91)	66.72 (8.85)
<i>n</i>	837	304	298	1,439
Income	32,880.96 (33,109.79)	41,826.90 (13,524.24)	39,262.52 (64,450.93)	36,745.87 (39,255.62)
<i>n</i>	816	303	292	1,411
Gender				
Male	300 (40.43)	133 (52.95)	110 (47.17)	543 (44.58)
Female	537 (59.97)	171 (47.05)	188 (52.83)	896 (55.42)
<i>n</i>	837	304	298	1,439
Marital status				
Married/partner	250 (39.71)	133 (54.94)	111 (50.13)	494 (46.02)
Separated	56 (6.17)	26 (6.98)	6 (1.14)	88 (3.35)
Divorced	162 (16.08)	52 (13.00)	65 (19.85)	279 (18.13)
Widowed	299 (31.82)	62 (19.86)	89 (22.07)	450 (25.98)
Never married	60 (6.22)	29 (5.22)	23 (6.81)	112 (6.53)
<i>n</i>	827	302	294	1,423
Region				
Northeast	108 (15.79)	198 (48.95)	37 (22.78)	343 (20.65)
Midwest	154 (19.31)	5 (7.19)	33 (8.47)	192 (12.85)
South	525 (55.62)	97 (34.87)	198 (57.33)	820 (56.02)
West	50 (9.28)	4 (8.98)	30 (11.42)	84 (10.48)
<i>n</i>	837	304	298	1,439
Denomination				
Baptist	457 (52.26)	48 (22.87)	83 (22.74)	588 (34.77)
Methodist	75 (9.12)	27 (5.32)	34 (11.25)	136 (10.22)
Episcopal	8 (1.08)	26 (4.39)	10 (2.47)	44 (1.96)
Pentecostal	63 (7.04)	33 (11.15)	10 (4.05)	106 (5.46)
Catholic	46 (5.61)	64 (17.94)	56 (20.67)	166 (14.46)
Other Protestant	132 (18.07)	75 (27.95)	70 (23.99)	277 (21.69)
Other religion	14 (1.70)	11 (2.76)	13 (6.62)	38 (4.51)
None	42 (5.11)	18 (7.61)	22 (8.21)	82 (6.93)
<i>n</i>	837	302	298	1,437

Note: Data are means (weighted standard deviations) for continuous variables, and frequencies (weighted percentages) for categorical variables.

In both the African American and Black Caribbean samples, it was necessary for respondents to self-identify their race as Black. Those self-identifying as Black were included in the Black Caribbean sample if (a) they answered affirmatively when asked if they were of West Indian or Caribbean descent, (b) they said they were from a country included on a list of Caribbean area countries presented by the interviewer, or (c) they indicated that their parents or grandparents had been born in a Caribbean area country (see Jackson et al., 2004).

### Measures

*Dependent variables.*—The present analysis examined measures of organizational, nonorganizational, and subjective religious participation, in addition to measures of spirituality and religious coping. Organizational religious participation included frequency of service attendance, church membership, and frequency of participation in congregational activities. We measured frequency of religious service attendance by combining two items—one that indicated frequency of attendance and one that identified respondents who had not

attended services since the age of 18. The categories and values for this variable were as follows: attend nearly every day (6), attend at least once a week (5), a few times a month (4), a few times a year (3), less than once a year (2), and (except for weddings and funerals) never attended services since the age of 18 (1). Church membership was measured by the question “Are you an official member of a church or other place of worship?”. Frequency of participation in congregational activities was measured by the question “Besides regular service, how often do you take part in other activities at your church? Would you say nearly every day (5), at least once a week (4), a few times a month (3), a few times a year (2), or never (1)?”.

This analysis used five measures of nonorganizational religious participation: reading religious books or other religious materials, watching religious television programs, listening to religious radio programs on the radio, praying, and asking someone to pray for you. Respondents were asked the frequency with which they engaged in these activities (i.e., nearly every day, at least once a week, a few times a month, at least once a month, a few times a year, or never). The range for each item was 6 (nearly every day) to 1 (never).

Table 2. Mean Levels of Religious Participation for African Americans, Black Caribbeans, and Non-Hispanic Whites

Religious Participation	Range	African Americans ( <i>n</i> = 837)		Caribbean Blacks ( <i>n</i> = 304)		Non-Hispanic Whites ( <i>n</i> = 298)		<i>F</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	
Organizational participation								
Frequency of church attendance	1–6	4.12	0.05	4.17	0.25	3.72	0.12	16.79***
Church membership	0–1	0.83	0.01	0.69	0.08	0.78	0.02	3.04*
Frequency of congregational activities	1–5	2.61	0.05	2.78	0.18	2.30	0.06	12.32***
Nonorganizational religious participation								
Reading religious materials	1–6	4.59	0.05	4.57	0.22	3.83	0.16	31.68***
Watching religious programs on television	1–6	4.43	0.08	4.39	0.25	2.92	0.15	143.25***
Listening to religious programs on radio	1–6	3.84	0.08	4.01	0.30	2.07	0.07	164.57***
Praying	1–6	5.70	0.04	5.60	0.21	5.14	0.19	27.68***
Requesting prayer from others	1–6	3.63	0.07	3.12	0.15	2.87	0.12	28.36***
Subjective religiosity								
Importance of religion while growing up	1–4	3.76	0.03	3.70	0.17	3.27	0.05	60.28***
Importance of taking children to services	1–4	3.89	0.02	3.73	0.11	3.63	0.09	27.29***
Importance of religion in your life	1–4	3.82	0.03	3.69	0.11	3.42	0.07	43.65***
Self-rated religiosity	1–4	3.40	0.04	3.12	0.10	2.98	0.08	45.12***
Spirituality								
Importance of spirituality	1–4	3.84	0.02	3.77	0.04	3.48	0.07	41.83***
Self-rated spirituality	1–4	3.53	0.03	3.26	0.11	3.10	0.05	50.52***
Religious coping								
Importance of prayer in stressful situations	1–4	3.87	0.02	3.74	0.11	3.52	0.09	35.15***
Look to God for strength	1–4	3.88	0.02	3.79	0.13	3.46	0.10	45.17***

Notes: *SE* = standard error.

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

We used four measures of subjective religiosity in this analysis: (a) importance of religion while growing up, (b) importance of parents taking or sending their children to religious services, (c) overall importance of religion in the respondent's life, and (d) respondent's self-rating of religiosity. All of these items had four categories ranging from 4 (very important or very religious) to 1 (not important at all or not religious at all). We used two measures of spirituality and two measures of religious coping. One item assessed the overall importance of spirituality in the respondent's life: very important (4), fairly important (3), not too important (2), or not important at all (1); the other was a self-rating of spirituality: very spiritual (4), fairly spiritual (3), not too spiritual (2), or not spiritual at all (1). The two religious coping measures addressed the importance of prayer when dealing with stressful situations (4 = very important to 1 = not important at all) and the extent to which respondents agreed that they look to God for strength, support, and guidance (4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree).

*Independent variables.*—We included several demographic variables in this analysis as independent variables, including race/ethnicity (African American, Black Caribbean, and non-Hispanic White), age, gender, marital status, education, family income, region, and denomination. We coded income in dollars and, in instances of missing data, we imputed family income. In the multivariate analysis, we divided income by 5,000 in order to increase effect sizes and provide a better understanding of the net impact of income. Denomination was measured by the question "What is your current religion?". This sample of older adults mentioned more than 35 different denominations.

We recoded this variable into eight categories: Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Episcopal, Catholic, other Protestant (e.g., Lutheran, Presbyterian), other religion (e.g., Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim), and none. Table 1 presents the frequency distribution for the demographic variables and denomination.

### Analysis Strategy

First we present the mean scores to illustrate racial and ethnic differences in religious participation. The means are weighted based on the sample's race-adjusted weight measure, and the standard errors reflect the recalculation of variance using the study's complex design. We conducted this analysis using SAS Version 9.1.3, which uses the Taylor expansion approximation technique for calculating the complex design-based estimates of variance (SAS Institute, 2005).

Next we present 16 regression equations of the demographic correlates of religious participation and spirituality. We used logistic regression with the dichotomous dependent variable (church membership); linear regression with the other measures of organizational and nonorganizational religious participation; and ordered logit regression (Borooah, 2002) with the measures of subjective religiosity, spirituality, and coping. We conducted all regression analyses using STATA Version 9.2 using `svy:logit`, `svy:regress`, or `svy:ologit`. The regression coefficients and standard errors also incorporated the sample's race-adjusted weights and complex design.

### RESULTS

The descriptive data (Table 2) for religious participation and spirituality for the three groups illustrated several important

similarities and differences (12.7% of African Americans, 14.8% of Caribbean Blacks, and 24.8% of Whites were not queried regarding church membership and in participation congregational activities because they attended religious services less than once a year). On average, older African Americans and older Caribbean Blacks participated in religious activities more frequently than did older Whites. This was evident across 15 of the 16 measures of religious participation and spirituality. Church membership was the only indicator in which a larger percentage of older Whites indicated that they were official members as compared to older Caribbean Blacks.

The percentage distributions (not shown) for the religious participation and spirituality items provided additional information about group differences (in the interest of brevity, we discuss only a few select variables). More than half (56%) of Caribbean Blacks indicated that they attended services at least once a week or more, compared to 49.8% of African Americans 41.3% of Whites. African Americans (89.16%) and Caribbean Blacks (85.92%) were similar in their rates of prayer (“nearly every day”) as compared to Whites (73.69%). However, African Americans (22.86%) were more than twice as likely to ask someone to pray for them “nearly every day” than were Caribbean Blacks (10.73%) and Whites (11.65%), who were more similar to one another. Older African Americans (88.4%) and Caribbean Blacks (82%) were more similar to one another than to Whites (65.46%) in indicating that religion was “very important” in their lives. African Americans were more likely to rate themselves as being very religious (51.34%) than were Caribbean Blacks (30.94%) and Whites (28.85%). Similarly, African Americans were more likely to view themselves as being very spiritual (60%) than were Caribbean Blacks (43.6%) and Whites (34.05%). Nine out of 10 (92.63%) older African Americans, 84.25% of older Caribbean Blacks, and 74.63% of older Whites reported that prayer was “very important” when dealing with stressful situations.

Tables 3 and 4 present the regression coefficients for the effects of the demographic variables on religious participation and spirituality. For the sake of parsimony, we present the results across all of the dependent variables in each table. Race/ethnicity was represented by a dummy variable, with African Americans as the excluded category. The results indicated that African Americans reported higher levels of religious participation and spirituality than did Whites in 15 of the 16 measures of religiosity and spirituality. Church membership was the only variable for which African Americans and Whites did not differ. Overall, older African Americans displayed significantly higher levels of religious participation and spirituality than older Whites, and these effects were independent of religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, region, and other demographic factors. The one significant difference between African Americans and Black Caribbeans indicated that older African Americans reported higher levels of church membership (Table 3).

We analyzed the same regression equations with Caribbean Blacks designated as the excluded category instead of African Americans (data not shown). In 13 of the 16 equations, older Caribbean Blacks reported significantly higher levels of religious participation and spirituality than older Whites. For three measures—church membership, frequency of requesting prayers from others, and the importance of taking children to church—there were no significant differences between older

Caribbean Blacks and Whites. In none of the regression models did older Whites report higher levels of religiosity than either Caribbean Blacks or African Americans. Overall, across several measures and dimensions, both African Americans and Caribbean Blacks had comparable and consistently high levels of religious participation and spirituality.

Age was significantly and positively associated with both the frequency of attending religious services and self-rated religiosity (Tables 3 and 4). Gender was significantly related to 13 of the 16 dependent variables. In each case, women indicated significantly higher levels of religious and spiritual involvement than men. Income was significantly associated with 3 of the 16 dependent variables and was positively associated with the importance of religion in the home while growing up and negatively related to self-rated religiosity and self-rated spirituality. Education was significant in 6 of the 16 equations. Education was positively associated with frequency of service attendance and reading religious materials, whereas it was negatively related to watching religious television programming, attitudes about parents taking children to church, importance of religion in one’s life, and self-rated spirituality.

We found significant marital status effects in 11 of the 16 measures. In each case, married respondents reported higher levels of religiosity and spirituality than their nonmarried counterparts. Separated respondents reported that they attended religious services, participated in congregation activities (e.g., choir practice, men’s club), and read religious materials less frequently and were less likely to indicate that spirituality was important in their lives. In all, 9 out of 16 regressions indicated significant differences between divorced versus married respondents for service attendance, membership, reading religious materials, prayer, requests for prayer, importance of religion, self-rated religiosity, self-rated spirituality, and looking to God for strength. Finally, widowed respondents reported attending religious services less frequently than married respondents.

We found significant regional differences in 13 of the 16 equations. In all but two instances, southerners displayed higher levels of religiosity and spirituality than respondents who resided in other regions. The most consistent regional difference was between southerners and respondents who resided in the Northeast: There was a significant difference in 12 of the 16 equations. Respondents in the North Central region indicated that they listened to religious radio programming less frequently than southerners, but reported higher levels of self-rated spirituality than their southern counterparts. Lastly, respondents in the West listened to religious radio programs less frequently than southerners but participated in congregational activities more frequently.

We observed significant denominational effects in each of the 16 equations, primarily involving comparisons between respondents who indicated that they had no religious denomination and Baptists (the excluded category). To conserve space, we do not discuss here the significant contrasts involving Baptists and other Protestants, persons of other religions, and those with no current religious denomination (data presented in Tables 3 and 4). Excluding these results, there were eight additional significant denominational contrasts in religious participation. Namely, Catholics reported that they participated in congregational activities, watched religious television programming, and listened to religious radio programming less

Table 3. Regression Analyses for Measures of Organizational and Nonorganizational Religious Involvement

Predictor <sup>a</sup>	Organizational Religious Involvement				Nonorganizational Religious Involvement			
	Church Attendance	Church Membership <sup>b</sup>	Congregation Activities	Religious Reading	Religious Television	Religious Radio	Private Prayer	Requests for Prayer
Race/ethnicity								
Caribbean Black	0.220 (.202)	-0.920 (0.450)*	0.250 (0.153)	0.303 (0.196)	0.383 (0.210)	0.328 (0.291)	0.183 (0.162)	-0.231 (0.195)
Non-Hispanic White	-0.386 (.099)***	-0.350 (0.230)	-0.275 (0.085)**	-0.553 (0.133)***	-1.106 (0.120)***	-1.593 (0.113)***	-0.427 (0.150)**	-0.482 (0.142)***
Age	0.011 (.005)*	0.032 (0.019)	-0.005 (0.005)	0.006 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.006)	0.010 (0.008)	0.006 (0.010)	-0.013 (0.009)
Gender (female)	0.621 (.115)***	1.046 (0.318)**	0.300 (0.102)**	0.943 (0.159)***	0.341 (0.172)	0.366 (0.189)	0.653 (0.146)***	0.715 (0.154)***
Marital status								
Divorced	-0.595 (.109)***	-0.689 (0.280)*	-0.136 (0.133)	-0.565 (0.172)**	-0.136 (0.125)	-0.121 (0.175)	-0.502 (0.168)**	-0.417 (0.200)*
Widowed	-0.381 (.115)***	-0.347 (0.298)	-0.217 (0.134)	0.058 (0.211)	-0.148 (0.160)	-0.119 (0.273)	-0.037 (0.169)	-0.150 (0.227)
Separated	-0.583 (.140)***	-0.640 (0.457)	-0.477 (0.198)*	-0.541 (0.234)*	-0.124 (0.225)	-0.308 (0.230)	0.045 (0.181)	-0.069 (0.267)
Never married	-0.081 (.376)	-0.555 (0.398)	-0.085 (0.198)	-0.032 (0.538)	0.074 (0.351)	-0.032 (0.500)	-0.331 (0.486)	0.119 (0.338)
Income	0.002 (.007)	0.016 (0.016)	0.009 (0.007)	0.001 (0.010)	-0.015 (0.009)	0.005 (0.008)	-0.012 (0.007)	-0.016 (0.011)
Education	0.029 (.014)*	-0.021 (0.044)	-0.003 (0.017)	0.065 (0.020)**	-0.102 (0.014)***	-0.039 (0.021)	0.031 (0.035)	-0.025 (0.034)
Region								
Northeast	-0.674 (.094)***	-0.318 (0.240)	-0.271 (0.103)*	-0.533 (0.230)*	-0.562 (0.188)**	-0.108 (0.155)	-0.031 (0.035)***	-0.452 (0.151)**
North central	-0.151 (.138)	-0.381 (0.276)	-0.035 (0.149)	-0.168 (0.203)	-0.197 (0.151)	-0.358 (0.178)*	-0.292 (0.165)	-0.201 (0.173)
West	0.041 (.347)	-0.924 (0.620)	0.436 (0.124)***	0.101 (0.197)	-0.091 (0.498)	-0.440 (0.173)*	-0.235 (0.274)	0.044 (0.237)
Denomination								
Methodist	0.015 (.131)	-0.193 (0.580)	0.010 (0.123)	-0.020 (0.169)	-0.026 (0.228)	0.026 (0.211)	-0.321 (0.157)*	-0.382 (0.294)
Pentecostal	0.279 (.197)	0.704 (0.644)	0.532 (0.168)**	0.264 (0.230)	0.337 (0.283)	0.062 (0.297)	-0.413 (0.486)	0.301 (0.354)
Catholic	0.275 (.117)*	0.513 (0.455)	-0.254 (0.127)*	-0.245 (0.294)	-0.840 (0.196)***	-0.517 (0.225)*	0.299 (0.259)	-0.241 (0.277)
Episcopal	0.411 (.231)	0.807 (0.814)	0.066 (0.290)	-0.072 (0.286)	-0.583 (0.323)	-0.474 (0.566)	0.364 (0.138)**	0.202 (0.328)
Other Protestant	0.161 (.133)	0.029 (0.333)	0.220 (0.132)	-0.102 (0.142)	-0.133 (0.236)	-0.070 (0.209)	-0.064 (0.117)	-0.086 (0.205)
Other religion	-0.675 (.197)***	-1.164 (0.588)	-0.528 (0.184)**	-1.778 (0.339)***	-1.264 (0.207)***	-0.766 (0.200)***	-1.516 (0.487)**	-1.317 (0.275)***
None	-1.39 (.238)***	-3.279 (0.533)***	-0.258 (0.352)	-1.679 (0.451)**	-1.168 (0.338)***	-0.681 (0.254)**	-1.538 (0.422)***	-1.375 (0.206)***
N	1,421	1,197	1,198	1,421	1,420	1,420	1,418	1,415
F	65.30***	5.50***	9.68***	108.08***	74.30***	37.29***	43.85***	25.72***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.265	0.137	0.102	0.268	0.315	0.225	0.319	0.163

Notes: Data are unstandardized coefficients (standard errors).

<sup>a</sup>Several predictors are represented by binary variables. Race/ethnicity: African American = 0; gender: female = 1; marital status: married = 0; region: South = 0; and denomination: Baptist = 0. Income is coded in dollars and has been divided by 5,000 in order to increase effect sizes and provide a better understanding of the net impact of income.

<sup>b</sup>The analysis for church membership is a logistic regression and a pseudo R<sup>2</sup> is presented.

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

Table 4. Ordered Logistic Regression Analyses for Measures of Subjective Religious Involvement, Spirituality and Religious Coping

Predictor <sup>a</sup>	Subjective Religious Involvement			Spirituality		Coping		
	Religion in Childhood	Take Children to Services	Importance of Religion	Self-Rated Religiosity	Importance of Spirituality	Self-Rated Spirituality	Prayer and Coping	Look to God for Strength
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>								
Caribbean Black	0.333 (0.600)	-0.558 (0.515)	-0.210 (0.359)	-0.345 (0.211)	0.366 (0.375)	-0.339 (0.276)	-0.462 (0.376)	0.450 (0.653)
Non-Hispanic White	-1.443 (0.186)***	-1.167 (0.277)***	-1.234 (0.200)***	-0.855 (0.199)***	-1.223 (0.238)***	-0.924 (0.130)***	-1.225 (0.221)***	-1.603 (0.208)***
Age	0.030 (0.017)	0.016 (0.016)	-0.002 (0.026)	0.027 (0.010)*	-0.014 (0.026)	0.004 (0.013)	-0.008 (0.029)	0.024 (0.018)
Gender (female)	0.241 (0.158)	0.631 (0.177)***	1.160 (0.278)***	1.081 (0.240)***	1.324 (0.274)***	1.032 (0.148)***	1.233 (0.319)***	1.290 (0.354)***
<b>Marital status</b>								
Divorced	-0.208 (0.246)	-0.669 (0.344)	-1.187 (0.334)***	-0.661 (0.199)***	-0.174 (0.284)	-0.364 (0.163)*	-0.696 (0.361)	-0.860 (0.260)***
Widowed	-0.238 (0.240)	-0.262 (0.331)	-0.126 (0.386)	-0.175 (0.260)	0.612 (0.438)	-0.334 (0.197)	0.716 (0.526)	0.698 (0.487)
Separated	-0.029 (0.386)	-0.587 (0.585)	-0.452 (0.580)	0.166 (0.423)	-0.871 (0.338)*	0.031 (0.370)	0.220 (0.629)	0.923 (0.776)
Never married	0.463 (0.358)	-0.498 (0.610)	0.171 (0.818)	-0.370 (0.440)	1.955 (1.138)	0.219 (0.258)	0.676 (0.983)	0.705 (0.381)
Income	0.042 (0.020)*	-0.019 (0.010)	-0.022 (0.017)	-0.026 (0.008)**	-0.020 (0.014)	-0.022 (0.007)**	-0.031 (0.017)	-0.036 (0.018)
Education	-0.083 (0.053)	-0.186 (0.052)***	-0.091 (0.042)*	-0.027 (0.027)	-0.034 (0.050)	-0.069 (0.030)*	-0.061 (0.039)	-0.091 (0.046)
<b>Region</b>								
Northeast	-0.689 (0.163)***	-0.644 (0.411)	-0.600 (0.246)*	-0.959 (0.300)**	-1.368 (0.322)***	-0.685 (0.172)***	-0.648 (0.379)	-1.065 (0.387)**
North central	0.190 (0.420)	-0.494 (0.278)	0.023 (0.347)	0.215 (0.228)	0.163 (0.400)	0.443 (0.198)*	-0.083 (0.376)	-0.133 (0.345)
West	-0.483 (0.514)	-0.053 (0.498)	-0.060 (0.461)	-0.228 (0.317)	-0.441 (0.557)	0.138 (0.277)	-0.221 (0.250)	-0.547 (0.331)
<b>Denomination</b>								
Methodist	-0.449 (0.361)	0.001 (0.476)	-0.011 (0.460)	0.178 (0.269)	0.341 (0.563)	0.629 (0.474)	-0.381 (0.539)	-0.354 (0.640)
Pentecostal	-0.822 (0.844)	-1.024 (1.136)	-0.715 (1.133)	-0.086 (0.790)	-0.819 (1.226)	-0.017 (0.767)	-1.104 (1.198)	-0.911 (1.164)
Catholic	0.701 (0.287)*	0.863 (0.529)	-0.407 (0.336)	0.179 (0.296)	-0.614 (0.447)	0.034 (0.338)	-0.135 (0.701)	0.109 (0.504)
Episcopalian	-0.502 (0.472)	-0.396 (0.481)	-0.011 (0.501)	0.430 (0.244)	-0.437 (0.453)	0.465 (0.497)	-0.032 (0.336)	0.341 (0.506)
Other Protestant	-0.162 (0.359)	0.614 (0.386)	-0.066 (0.355)	0.108 (0.217)	-0.756 (0.359)*	0.547 (0.338)	-0.106 (0.434)	0.110 (0.433)
Other religion	-0.578 (0.445)	-1.590 (0.660)**	-1.944 (0.400)***	-1.147 (0.321)***	-1.769 (0.387)***	-0.791 (0.267)**	-1.843 (0.519)***	-2.247 (0.536)***
None	-1.659 (0.630)**	-1.615 (0.621)**	-2.845 (0.770)***	-2.248 (0.462)***	-2.164 (0.650)***	-1.390 (0.732)	-2.565 (0.785)**	-2.585 (0.656)***
<b>N</b>	1,420	1,416	1,418	1,412	1,410	1,410	1,416	1,366
<b>F</b>	16.71***	27.59***	31.50***	20.41***	33.21***	15.52***	22.23***	20.90***

Notes: Data are unstandardized coefficients (standard errors).

<sup>a</sup>Several predictors are represented by binary variables. Race/ethnicity: African American = 0; gender: female = 1; marital status: married = 0; region: South = 0; and denomination: Baptist = 0. Income is coded in dollars and has been divided by 5,000 in order to increase effect sizes and provide a better understanding of the net impact of income.

\*.001 > p > .01; \*\*.01 > p > .05; \*\*\*.05 > p > .10; \*\*\*\*.10 > p > .20.



frequently than did Baptists. Catholics, however, attended religious services more frequently than Baptists and were more likely to indicate that religion had been important in the home when growing up. Methodists indicated that they prayed less frequently than Baptists, whereas Episcopalians reported that they prayed more frequently than Baptists. Finally, those identifying as Pentecostals indicated that they participated in congregational activities more frequently than Baptists.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that, irrespective of race/ethnicity, older adults report fairly high levels of religious involvement and spirituality across a number of dimensions. Race was important in patterning religious participation and spirituality, such that older African Americans consistently reported significantly higher levels than older Whites. The findings of significant differences between older African Americans and Whites are consistent with previous research on race differences in organizational, nonorganizational, and subjective religious participation (Krause & Chatters, 2005; Levin et al., 1994; Taylor et al., 1996). In addition, older African Americans engaged in religious coping more frequently than older Whites, consistent with the caregiving literature (Dilworth-Anderson, Williams, & Gibson, 2002; Miltiades & Pruchno, 2002; Wood & Parham, 1990). The findings of the present study indicate that the higher rates of religious coping among African Americans are broader than the caregiving context and consistent with overall higher rates of organizational, nonorganizational, and subjective religious involvement.

The findings revealed that Caribbean Blacks also had consistently higher levels of religious participation, religious coping, and spirituality than older Whites. This analysis, the first comparison of religious participation and spirituality for these two groups, found that older Caribbean Blacks and Whites were similar in only three domains—requesting prayer from others, importance of taking children to church, and church membership. The absence of significant differences between these groups in rates of church membership and frequency of requesting prayer from others suggests that active membership in a church is likely associated with requests for prayers from others. That is to say, the people from whom one is most likely to request prayer are those who are members of one's congregation (i.e., fellow church members). Overall, however, the fact that both Caribbean Blacks and African Americans had consistently higher levels of religious participation, religious coping, and spirituality than older Whites suggests that race (i.e., being Black, irrespective of ethnicity) has an important effect on religious factors.

Although the profiles of religious participation and spirituality for older African Americans and older Caribbean Blacks were strikingly similar, one significant difference did emerge—rates of church membership (which were higher for older African Americans). In addition, the two groups were different in terms of denominational profiles (Table 1). African Americans were twice as likely to be Baptist than were older Caribbean Blacks, whereas Caribbean Blacks were more likely to identify as Episcopalian or Pentecostal. Additionally, older Caribbean Blacks were close to 4 times more likely than older African Americans to identify as Catholic. Although beyond

the scope of this study, differences in denominational preference reflect complex historical patterns and differences between Caribbean Blacks and African Americans (Stewart, 1999). These include prior experiences with specific religious traditions during British and European colonization and missionary initiatives, directed efforts at the religious conversion of U.S. Blacks during the pre- and post-slavery periods, and the emergence and development of independent Black religious institutions in both the United States and the Caribbean region. Contemporary influences on denominational preference may also operate to produce these divergent patterns of religious affiliation. For example, Caribbean immigrants have joined American Seventh Day Adventist churches in increasing numbers and now compose a substantial portion of the membership (Lawson, 1999).

Despite the presence of these major differences in denominational preference, levels of religious participation and spirituality for older African Americans and Caribbean Blacks were comparable to one another. Stated another way, we could not attribute the similarities in religious participation and spirituality for these two groups to the effects of denominational affiliation (because of controls for denomination). Furthermore, demonstrated race and ethnicity effects on religious participation and spirituality were independent of demographic factors (e.g., marital status, region) that have known influences in shaping religious behaviors and attitudes.

Given noted differences for these two groups in their life experiences (e.g., immigration, socioeconomic status profiles, and denomination affiliations), we anticipated that they would be more distinctive from one another. However, as previously noted, several historical and cultural factors may account for their apparent similarity. The majority of older Caribbean Blacks in the sample were born in the United States (27.8%) or had resided in the United States for more than 25 years (42.4%). Noted similarities between the two groups could reflect the acculturation of Caribbean Blacks to American society. However, despite their extended residency in the United States, Black Caribbean communities reflect a fair degree of geographic and cultural insularity from other groups. For example, Caribbean Blacks and African Americans do not live in the same neighborhoods (Logan & Deane, 2003), a fact that was reaffirmed in the sampling and fieldwork conducted for this study (Jackson et al., 2004).

Given different geographic dispersion patterns and denominational affiliation profiles, Caribbean Blacks may not attend the same churches as do African Americans. However, as noted previously, the Black Caribbean church has been an important community resource for immigrants, assisting in the relocation and resettlement of successive groups of immigrants; serving as a focal point of community life; and providing an array of civic, social, recreational, educational, and social welfare services and functions (Waters, 1999). In keeping with their own distinctive tradition of civic engagement, these church affiliations certainly reflect the unique needs and life circumstances of Caribbean Blacks. Consequently, similarities between older African Americans and Caribbean Blacks in religious participation and spirituality may reflect the comparable and pivotal roles that organized religious institutions have played in their respective communities (e.g., development of social capital). Finally, similar patterns of religious

participation and spirituality for older African Americans and Caribbean Blacks may also be a reflection of their shared African cultural heritage, particularly as manifested in a collectivist orientation to religious worship (Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990; Maynard-Reid, 2000).

Although the major focus of this article was on differences between African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites, this analysis found several other significant demographic differences in religious participation, spirituality, and religious coping. Age was positively associated with service attendance and self-rated religiosity. The relationship between age and church attendance is one of the more interesting results of the present analysis. Previous work on adults 18 years and older has generally indicated that increases in age are positively associated with increases in church attendance. Among older adults, church attendance increases among respondents aged 55 to 74, with some decline among those 75 and older. Respondents 75 and older, however, generally attend religious services on a more frequent basis than respondents in their forties. This pattern is generally evident among Whites (Moberg, 1990) and Blacks (Chatters & Taylor, 1989). We had expected that among the truncated age range used in the present analysis (55 years and older), there would not be a significant relationship between age and church attendance as has been the case in previous research on older Black Americans (Taylor, 1986). Overall, the present finding is consistent with the view that older adults attend religious services on a frequent basis and make attending services a priority in their weekly schedule (in some cases despite serious long-term decline in functional limitation; see Idler & Kasl, 1997; Kelley-Moore & Ferraro, 2001). There was also a positive association between age and self-rated religiosity. This finding is consistent with earlier work among older Whites that found that religious beliefs and feelings increase and intensify with age (Moberg, 1965), as well as work on older Blacks that found a positive relationship between age and subjective religiosity (Taylor, 1986).

Gender was also a strong consistent predictor of religious involvement and was significant in 13 of the 16 equations (in 1 other equation gender bordered significance). In all instances, older women displayed much higher levels of religiosity than older men. This finding is consistent with a significant body of previous research on both older Whites (Idler & Kasl, 1997) and older Blacks (Chatters, Levin, & Taylor, 1992; Taylor et al., 2004) and indicates that older women of both races have higher levels of organizational, nonorganizational, and subjective religious involvement than their male counterparts. The present analysis also shows that this gender difference is evident in measures of religious coping (Ellison & Taylor, 1996) and spirituality. Collectively, the findings are consistent with previous work that shows that gender and race are two of the strongest and most consistent correlates of religious participation (see Levin et al., 1994, for a discussion of gender differences in religiosity).

Few investigations have examined the influence of socioeconomic status on religious participation among older adults. In this analysis, education was positively associated with church attendance (Levin et al., 1994). This finding is consistent with the research of Stump (1986) and the classic work of Lenski (1961) and Goode (1966), who argued that

individuals of higher socioeconomic status are generally more involved with churches and other types of voluntary organizations. Education exhibited an interesting pattern of relationships with two measures of nonorganizational religious participation: Education was positively associated with frequency of reading religious materials and negatively related to frequency of watching religious programming on television. The effects of education on reading religious materials probably reflect both differences in the levels of functional literacy across educational groups and the fact that persons with more years of education read more frequently. The negative association between education and frequency of watching religious television programming is consistent with work on religious television broadcasting that indicates that viewers of religious programs tend to have lower levels of education (Wuthnow, 1987).

Both income and education, however, were negatively associated with several measures of subjective religiosity and spirituality (although income was positively associated with reports that religion had been important in the childhood home). Overall, this pattern of relationships indicates an interesting divergence with income and education being positively associated with service attendance, but negatively associated with several measures of subjective religiosity and spirituality. This pattern suggests that service attendance (a behavioral indicator of religious involvement) is distinct from more subjective elements of religious and spiritual involvement and identity. There are several possible interpretations for this pattern of findings. First, persons of higher socioeconomic status, by virtue of their greater financial and educational resources, may have more intensive ties to and investments in organizational religious culture. These individuals may be called upon to make significant contributions to religious institutions, both in terms of monetary donations and human capital investment. Consequently, in addition to fulfilling religious needs, respondents of higher socioeconomic status may be motivated to attend religious services for reasons associated with their roles in the social relationships and social networks existing within religious groups and their stronger investments in these organizations.

Second, the pattern of findings indicates that older persons with lower educational and economic status are more likely than their higher educated counterparts to invest in an explicitly religious/spiritual identity (self-rated) and to have stronger endorsements of a religious perspective (importance of religion). These findings are consistent with Gallup Poll data on the general population indicating that lower levels of education and income are associated with self-reports of importance of religion in life (Newport, 2006). Furthermore, a previous study of group identification among African Americans found that persons with lower levels of education were more likely to indicate that they felt closer to "religious Blacks" (Taylor et al., 2004). In a slightly different vein, a study analyzing data from five national surveys found that lower income Blacks were more likely than their more affluent counterparts to report seeking spiritual comfort and support from religion (Taylor, Mattis, & Chatters, 1999).

Only a limited amount of work has investigated marital status differences in religious participation. Our analysis indicates that marital status is an important factor that had pervasive effects on religious participation among older adults across all forms of

religious and spiritual behaviors and sentiments. Marital status was significant in 11 of the 16 regressions, and in each instance, married respondents displayed higher levels of religious participation than their nonmarried counterparts. The most notable differences involved married and divorced persons, which accounted for 9 of the 16 associations (additionally, divorce bordered significance in 2 other equations), and differences between married and separated persons, which accounted for 4 significant associations. These findings are consistent with research on Whites (Kalmijn & van Groenou, 2005) that found that divorced respondents attended religious services less frequently than married persons. Additionally, research on Blacks has indicated that, overall, persons who are not married have lower levels of organizational, nonorganizational, and subjective religiosity than their married counterparts (Levin, Taylor, & Chatters, 1995; Taylor et al., 2004).

Research on the consequences of divorce has indicated that although there is less stigma associated with divorce now than in the past, it is still the case that (a) divorced individuals suffer from informal sanctions from their friends and relatives (Gertsel, 1987), (b) divorce results in reduced contact with mutual friends (Terhell, van Groenou, & Van Tilburg, 2004), and (c) divorce is disruptive to friendships and may divide or polarize these networks (Gertsel, 1987). Divorced or separated persons may stop attending the same church as their ex-spouse or significantly curtail their attendance and involvement in congregational activities. Additionally, there is likely more stigma attached to divorce in religious than secular settings due to religious teachings regarding the sanctity of marriage. Although divorce is more likely to be tolerated than in the past, it is still not condoned by many churches. Over time, the stigma associated with divorce and separation may result in reductions in service attendance and reduced levels of participation in nonorganizational activities, such as the frequency of prayer and requests of prayer, as well as lower levels of self-rated religiosity and self-rated spirituality.

We found significant region effects in 13 of the 16 regressions. In all but two instances, southerners indicated higher levels of religious participation than respondents who resided in other regions. The majority of the differences (12 of the 16 regressions) were between southerners and respondents in the Northeast. Southerners also listened to religious radio programs more frequently than respondents in the West and North Central regions. Collectively, these findings are consistent with prior work indicating higher levels of religiosity among southerners (Fichter & Maddox, 1965; Roof & McKinney, 1987; Stark & Bainbridge, 1985; Taylor et al., 2004), particularly in comparison to respondents who reside in the Northeast (Stump, 1986). Research by Fichter and Maddox (1965) noted that in comparison with other regions of the country, the South has more churches and greater numbers of people affiliated with those churches. Interestingly, respondents in the North Central region reported higher levels of self-rated spirituality than did southerners. The lack of previous survey-based research on spirituality prevents a comparative assessment of these findings. On the whole, the correlates of the two measures of spirituality were consistent with the correlates of religious participation (i.e., women more spiritual than men, married respondents more spiritual than nonmarried respondents, southerners reporting greater importance of spirituality

than respondents from the Northeast). Clearly, more work is needed on the correlates of spirituality and the interface between religiosity and spirituality.

There were several significant denominational differences between Baptists (the excluded category) and Catholics. First, Catholics attended religious services more frequently. This finding was unexpected and contradicts Gallup poll data on the general population that indicates that Baptists attend services more frequently than Catholics. Second, Catholics participated in congregational activities less frequently than their Baptists counterparts. The lower frequency of participation in congregational activities is consistent with the work of Pargament (Pargament, Silverman, Johnson, Echemendia & Snyder, 1983) on denominational differences in congregational climates. They noted that Catholic churches are generally larger, have a more formal worship structure and interaction patterns, and embody lower levels of emotional closeness; all of these factors are less conducive to participating in congregational activities. Third, the present analysis also found that Catholics watched and listened to television and radio religious programming less frequently than did Baptists. This is likely due to the greater pervasiveness of religious programming that originates from Protestant denominations and the less visible presence of religious broadcasts that are specifically addressed to a Catholic audience.

There are a few other denominational differences that are of theoretical interest. First, Pentecostals indicated that they participated in congregational activities more frequently than Baptists. Although both groups have high levels of church participation, research has shown that for Pentecostals, congregational activities (e.g., prayer groups, choir) play a particularly important role in daily life (Miller, 2002). Second, Baptists and respondents who indicated no current denominational affiliation were indistinguishable in terms of self-rated spirituality. This indicates that although persons without a denomination expressed lower levels of religiosity than Baptists, they did not view themselves as being less spiritual. Lastly, it is important to note that overall, only a few denominational differences emerged in this analysis, indicating that other demographic variables were more important in discerning differences in these measures of religiosity and spirituality.

Overall, there was remarkable consistency in the correlates of religious participation in relation to the patterns of race, gender, region, and marital status effects found across diverse measures of organizational, nonorganizational, and subjective religious involvement, spirituality, and coping. Somewhat surprisingly, given the lack of consistent findings in prior studies, socioeconomic status demonstrated divergent patterns of effects for different forms of religious participation and identification. The present analysis demonstrates that the impact of demographic factors in patterning religious and spiritual involvement is more clearly discernible across a battery of 16 diverse measures.

In conclusion, this study provides an initial exploration of religious participation across three distinct and important groups of Americans. The incorporation of African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites allowed for the investigation of both racial and ethnic group differences. Given the unique life experiences and histories of Black Caribbean immigrants, we anticipated that ethnicity would emerge as an important factor distinguishing older African Americans and

Caribbean Blacks. Overwhelmingly, the analyses demonstrated heightened levels of religious involvement overall for African Americans and Caribbean Blacks in comparison to non-Hispanic Whites, indicating the operation of basic race differences in these indicators.

This study provides a preliminary picture of differences in religious participation and spirituality among three racial/ethnic groups. The availability of a nationally representative sample of older Caribbean Blacks is a definite advantage of the study. Despite this advantage, restrictions in the sample limit the findings. The Black Caribbean sample excluded individuals who did not speak English (i.e., persons who only spoke Spanish, Haitian-French, or Creole dialects) and, as a consequence, the study findings are not generalizable to these groups of older Caribbean Blacks. Additionally, the non-Hispanic White sample did not reflect the regional distribution of the White population and instead reflected the regional distribution of the African American population. Consequently, the design of this sample maximized the overlap in geographic distribution with the African American sample for the purposes of Black/White comparisons, but not for subgroup analysis of Whites. The non-Hispanic White sample was taken from geographic areas with at least 10% Black population and thus was representative of Whites who lived in these geographical areas and not those who lived in areas in which the African American population was 9% or less. Nonetheless, the significant advantages of the sample, methods, and analysis provide a unique opportunity to examine racial/ethnic differences in religious participation and spirituality across these three groups of older adults. The next step is to examine religious participation and spirituality exclusively among older Black Caribbeans (Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson, 2007).

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