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Article

Neighbors Like Me? Religious Affiliation and Neighborhood Racial Preferences among Non-Hispanic Whites

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Abstract: Research on racial residential segregation has paid little attention to the role that social institutions play in either isolating or integrating racial and ethnic groups in American communities. Scholars have argued that racial segregation within American religion may contribute to and consolidate racial division elsewhere in social life. However, no previous study has employed national survey data to examine the relationship between religious affiliation and the preferences people have about the racial and ethnic composition of their neighborhoods. Using data from the "Multi-Ethnic United States" module on the 2000 General Social Survey, this study finds that white evangelical Protestants have a significantly stronger preference for same-race neighbors than do Catholics, Jews, adherents of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated. Group differences in preferences are largely accounted for by socio-demographic characteristics. Negative racial stereotyping and social isolation from minorities, both topics of interest in recent research on evangelical Protestants and race, fail to explain group differences in preferences.

Keywords: race; segregation; attitudes; religion

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1. Introduction

Understanding and explaining racial residential segregation, which is thought to affect the range of opportunities available to minorities, remains an important task for researchers [1,2]. Explanations of racial residential segregation have generally focused on economic differences between racial and ethnic groups that influence residential options, [3-5], discriminatory practices in economic institutions and in the housing market that create and maintain segregation [1,6-8], and preferences people hold

about the racial composition of neighborhoods in which they want to live [9-13]. Interestingly, little attention has been paid to the role that social institutions play in either exacerbating or ameliorating racial residential segregation. Given their important role in community and civic life, religious organizations are uniquely poised to influence intergroup relations.

Scholars have noted the potential for religious organizations to facilitate civic participation and community building [14-16]. There are indications that religious congregations sometimes play a role in supporting and facilitating racial integration in American communities [17,18]. However, religious congregations represent one of the most racially segregated institutions in the United States. The vast majority of congregations are essentially uniracial [19]. This deep racial divide has led some scholars to suggest that religion has the potential to consolidate racial division elsewhere in social life [20-22].

A recent study highlights the need for scholars to consider religion in research on racial residential segregation. Based on an analysis of county-level data from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study, Blanchard [23] reported that the number of evangelical Protestant congregations per 1,000 non-Hispanic whites was positively associated with levels of black-white residential segregation in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. This key finding was confirmed using measures of two different dimensions of residential segregation and shown to occur across all regions of the United States. Blanchard's 'closed community thesis' contends that while religious institutions sometimes foster bridging ties that link groups and promote social integration, white evangelical Protestant congregations' strong network closure and internal orientation prevent them from doing so.

Blanchard's study is an important call for more research on the role that religion and religious institutions play in facilitating or inhibiting social integration in communities. While Blanchard's study provides insight into how religious institutions may help integrate or isolate groups in a community, it does not directly examine the relationship between individuals' religious affiliation and their preferences about the racial and ethnic composition of their communities. While the roots of racial residential segregation are complex, there is strong evidence that neighborhood racial preferences are a significant contributing factor. Studies have consistently demonstrated that whites have a stronger preference for same-race neighbors than do minorities [8], and whites' avoidance of predominantly black or racially mixed neighborhoods is thought to uphold segregation [24-26]. While neighborhood preferences measured by surveys likely have an imperfect relationship with behavior, they are nonetheless useful in assessing individuals' willingness to live in integrated neighborhoods. Using data from the 2000 General Social Survey, this study will examine the relationship between religious affiliation and neighborhood racial-composition preferences among non-Hispanic white Americans. Furthermore, it will assess whether white evangelical Protestants' racial attitudes and social networks, both topics of study in recent research on race and religion, explain any observed distinctiveness in their neighborhood preferences.

2. Religion and Race

While workplaces and public institutions have become increasingly integrated, religious congregations remain deeply segregated along racial and ethnic lines [27]. Emerson and Smith [20] contend that this segregation is due in part to the nature of the American religious market, which

fosters competition, specialization, and individual choice. In addition, the authors contend, social psychological forces tend to push congregations toward internal similarity in order to facilitate the creation of symbolic boundaries and social solidarity. However, while segregation is the norm across religious traditions, there is some notable variation. Religious market share size plays a role [27]. The larger a religious tradition, the less racially diverse are its congregations. The lack of diversity is due to that fact that the more choice individuals have, the more exact they can be in realizing their preferences. Studies find multiracial congregations to be more common in Catholicism and non-Christian traditions than in Protestant denominations [27-29].

But does racial division within American religion have broader implications for society? Emerson and Smith [20] argue that it contributes to the racialization of America:

> We claim that these patterns not only generate congregational segregation by race, but contribute to the overall fragmentation of American society, generate and sustain group biases, direct altruistic impulses to express themselves primarily within racially separate groups, segregate social networks and identities, contribute to the maintenance of socioeconomic inequality, and generally fragment and drown out religious prophetic voices calling for an end to racialization (p. 154).

Furthermore, the authors contend that the "stronger" the religion, the more it contributes to the racialization of society. Hence, their work focuses primarily on white evangelical Protestants' racial attitudes and beliefs [20,30].

Despite the important role that religious congregations play in local communities, little research has examined ways in which these social institutions may either challenge or maintain racial residential segregation. While Blanchard's study [23] provided evidence that the extent of racial residential segregation in a community is related to its congregational composition, it did not examine a factor thought to contribute to segregation: individuals' preferences about the racial composition of their neighborhoods [9-13]. How might religious affiliation affect neighborhood racial preferences? This study will focus on two ways in which religion could contribute to the racialization of American society. First, religious affiliation is thought to affect the racial composition of individuals' social networks, as well as the amount of interracial contact they experience. Second, religious traditions endow individuals with cultural tools that influence how they understand and interpret aspects of the social world, including race. By affecting individuals' opportunities for interracial contact and by influencing individuals' racial beliefs and attitudes, religion could shape the preferences people hold about the racial and ethnic composition of their neighborhoods.

2.1. Social Networks

Emerson and Smith [20] contend that American religion contributes to the racialization of society by creating and reinforcing racially distinct social networks. By contributing to the separation of social life along racial lines, religion may reduce opportunities for developing intergroup social ties and bridging social capital. Furthermore, they contend that the "stronger" the religion, the greater the effect. The authors note that, during their interviews, they were "struck by how racially homogenous the social worlds of most evangelicals are" ([20], p. 80). Evangelical Protestant congregations tend to

foster strong in-group ties that limit members' non-group activities and create dense intra-group social networks [31-34]. Evangelical Protestant congregations are also less involved in the provision of social services and offer fewer community outreach programs than congregations in other religious traditions [35-37]. The strong inward orientation of evangelical Protestant congregations could to lead to spatial and social isolation from minorities [20]. Conversely, individuals in traditions with more racially diverse congregations or greater civic involvement may have more opportunities for meaningful interracial contact.

The relationship between religious affiliation and social network diversity may have consequences for neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Spatial and social isolation from minorities lead to more negative racial attitudes and stronger in-group preferences. Oliver and Wong [38] find that individuals living in more racially homogeneous neighborhoods express more racial resentment than those living in more diverse neighborhoods. Significantly, even when controlling for neighborhood preference, the negative effects of greater neighborhood racial homogeneity on out-group attitudes remain. In other words, self-selection into neighborhoods does not fully explain variations in out-group attitudes. Furthermore, individuals' prior experiences with interracial contact shape their future racial preferences. In short, racial isolation may breed future racial isolation, since people tend to choose what they have chosen or been assigned previously, a phenomenon known as the status-quo bias [39]. For example, those with prior interracial contact in schools and neighborhoods are more likely as adults to have more racially diverse general social groups and friendship circles [40,41]. Thus, to the extent that religious affiliation structures individuals' opportunities for interracial contact and friendship, it may affect their neighborhood racial-composition preferences.

2.2. Racial Attitudes

In addition to shaping the composition of individuals' social networks, religious traditions provide individuals with cultural tools that they use to organize experiences and interpret reality [42]. For many Americans, beliefs and assumptions rooted in their religious faith are central to informing their views of the social world, including race. The key to understanding how cultural tools acquired through religion can impact racial attitudes is to recognize that tools or schema are transposable [43]. That is, they are transposed or extended beyond the context in which they were learned to new and diverse situations. Differences in racial attitudes between religious groups may translate into real differences in neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Numerous studies have linked whites' negative stereotypes about and negative attitudes toward minorities to a stronger preference for same-race neighbors [9-13].

Because religion is so central to the lives of many evangelical Protestants, Emerson and Smith [20] contend that three features of their cultural "tool kit" directly shape their attitudes toward race and racial inequality: "accountable freewill individualism," "relationalism," and "anti-structuralism." These cultural tools, according to the authors, are rooted in evangelical Protestant theology. Theological understandings portray individuals as responsible for their own behavior and fate; the importance of a "personal relationship with Christ" for salvation is translated into emphasis on the potential positive or negative impact of interpersonal relationships; and claims that macro-level structural dynamics shape human outcomes are deemed incompatible with accountable individualism.

According to this account, evangelical Protestants' cultural 'tool kit' both prevents them from acknowledging social structural causes of racial inequality and leads them to blame perceived dysfunctional social relations among blacks for their own disadvantage [20,30]. Emerson and Smith do not contend that an emphasis on individualism—and an accompanying wariness toward structural explanations of inequality—is unique to evangelical Protestants, rather that their culture and theology lead them to hold these beliefs more strongly than other white Americans.

A long tradition of research in social psychology has suggested that conservative Protestants, particularly fundamentalists, are racially prejudiced [44-46]. Emerson and Smith focus not on racial prejudice, however, but rather on how supposedly race-neutral beliefs drawn from their cultural 'tool kit' lead to problematic and inaccurate views of racial inequality. Greeley and Hout [47] similarly reject the notion that evangelicals are racially prejudiced, echoing earlier assertions that opposition to race-related policies may be based on 'principled conservatism' [48]. Drawing on over twenty years of GSS data, Putnam and Campbell suggest that white evangelicals' racial attitudes have become less distinctive over time [29]. Tranby and Hartmann [49] offer an alternative view. As others have argued [50], they insist that conservative views of racial inequality and racial policy are not easily disentangled from racial resentment and anti-black bias. Based on a reading of Emerson and Smith's interviews with evangelicals, the authors argue that evangelical Protestants routinely engage in group-based negative stereotyping to explain racial inequality. Furthermore, because the norms and values that form evangelicals' idea of "American-ness" are implicitly white, they come to see demands for increased recognition of and assistance for minority groups as a threat [49].

Emerson and Smith's research has sparked a new debate about whether white evangelical Protestants' racial attitudes differ significantly from those of other whites [49,51-54]. Evidence for the distinctiveness of evangelical Protestants' attitudes is mixed, however, and these studies have varied widely in their methodological approaches to the question. Whether their racial attitudes are distinct from other whites depends both on how one measures evangelical Protestantism and to whom one compares them [55,56]. Emerson and Smith's work, for example, focuses on the roughly 8 percent of whites who self-identify as "fundamentalist," "evangelical," or "Pentecostal" *and* express a belief in the Bible and in an afterlife. Taylor and Merino [55,56] report that, even after controlling on background characteristics, these self-identified conservative Protestants are more likely than other religious groups to cite motivation or will power as reasons for black-white inequality and less likely to cite structural causes like discrimination or access to quality education. However, only in their high levels of opposition to spending on blacks do these Protestants show distinctive racial policy opinions. In contrast, the roughly 30 percent of whites whose denominational preference is evangelical Protestant are less distinctive in their racial attitudes. When region, education, and other background characteristics are controlled, these white evangelicals are statistically indistinguishable from mainline Protestants and Catholics in their explanations for racial inequality and differ on only one racial policy issue.

Other religious traditions may foster beliefs and attitudes that are more sympathetic toward racial and ethnic minorities. Scholars have noted that the stratification beliefs of white Protestants and Catholics are generally more individualistic and less structuralist than those of Jews, adherents of other non-Christian faiths, and the religiously unaffiliated [57,58]. Hunt [58] writes of a status hierarchy among religions, with Protestants and Catholics the dominant groups, other faiths and non-affiliates

being "minority" religious traditions. Members of dominant groups may be more likely to be exposed to the dominant ideology regarding race and racial inequality. In contrast, religious groups outside the Protestant/Catholic mainstream are minorities of a sort and may share a "religious underdog" perspective that positively inclines them toward other "out-groups" [58] Indeed, Taylor and Merino [55,56] find that the primary attitudinal divide among whites is between Christian groups and the more racially progressive non-Christians. In sum, if religious tradition helps to shape white Americans' racial attitudes, it may also contribute to their neighborhood racial preferences, as numerous studies have linked negative stereotypes about and negative attitudes toward minorities to a stronger preference for same-race neighbors [9-13].

2.3. Socio-demographic Characteristics

A number of socio-demographic characteristics have been linked to neighborhood racial preferences, including age, educational attainment, income, marital status, and size of community [9,12,13,59]. To the extent that white evangelical Protestants differ from whites in other religious traditions on these socio-demographic characteristics, they may be distinctive in their neighborhood racial preferences. Notable differences in socioeconomic status and educational attainment continue to exist between religious groups in the United States [60,61]. Individuals that grow up in evangelical denominations continue to attain lower levels of education than other whites, resulting in somewhat lower levels of education among white evangelicals as a whole [61]. In addition, marriage, childbearing, and homeownership tend to occur earlier for evangelical Protestants than for other groups [62-64]. Significantly, scholars have suggested that homeowners or those with children in the home hold a greater stake in their neighborhoods and may have particular preferences about neighborhood composition and quality [13,59]. Finally, white evangelicals are relatively concentrated in the South, where whites generally have more conservative racial attitudes. Carefully analyzing the relationship between religious affiliation and socio-demographic characteristics is critical to understanding how religion might affect racial attitudes. As discussed earlier, white evangelical Protestants' beliefs about racial inequality and their views of racial policies are largely indistinguishable from those of other Christians after accounting for their socio-demographic characteristics [56]. This study will examine the extent to which white evangelical Protestants differ from other whites on these socio-demographic characteristics and how any observed differences relate to their neighborhood racial preferences.

Using a uniquely suited survey item from the 2000 GSS, this study will examine the relationship between religious affiliation and neighborhood racial-composition preferences among non-Hispanic whites in the United States. The analysis will proceed in two major steps. First, it will examine the bivariate relationship between individuals' religious tradition and their preferred neighborhood racial composition. Second, using OLS regression, it will determine whether religious group differences in preferences persist after controlling for socio-demographic factors. In addition, the multivariate analysis will examine whether differences between religious traditions are attributable to differences in two key areas shown to be important for neighborhood racial preferences: stereotyping about and social isolation from racial and ethnic minorities.

3. Data and Methods

The General Social Survey (GSS) is administered biannually to stratified, multi-stage samples of non-institutionalized English-speaking Americans over the age of 17 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. The sampling technique is designed to identify a nationally representative sample of households. The key variables in the current study come from the "Multi-Ethnic United States" topical module administered on the 2000 GSS. The current study employs a sub-sample of non-Hispanic whites. The decision to limit the sample to non-Hispanic whites was guided by two main considerations. First, beginning with Emerson and colleagues' work [20,30], much of the recent research on religion and race has focused on white evangelical Protestants, including Blanchard's study linking the size of a community's white evangelical institutional base to its level of black-white residential segregation [23,51,52]. Second, because whites' majority status and avoidance of racially mixed neighborhoods are thought to contribute to and uphold residential segregation, much of the research on neighborhood racial preferences focuses on whites [8,26]. Understanding how religious affiliation shapes non-whites' neighborhood racial preferences is certainly worthy of attention, but beyond the scope of the current study. Table 1 contains descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables used in the current study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables.

Variable	Description	*N*	Mean	*SD*
Dependent:				
Percent white	Percent white in preferred neighborhood	878	0.538	0.29
Independent:				
Evangelical Protestant	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.286	
Mainline Protestant	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.182	
Catholic	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.242	
Jewish	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.028	
Other faith	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.040	
Unaffiliated	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.164	
Female	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.55	
Age	Age in years (18–89)	878	46.3	17.7
Education	Years in education	878	13.5	2.7
Total family income	1 = under $1000 to 23 = $110000 or over	878	15.1	6.3
South	1 = lives in South	878	0.338	
Size of community	1 = open country to 10 = city>250,000	878	6.61	2.7
Married	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.498	
Owns home	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.445	
Children in home:				
Under 6 years old	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.149	
7 to 12 years old	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.189	

Table 1. *Cont.*

13 to 17 years old	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.142	
"Personally knows":				
African Americans	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.864	
Hispanics	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.747	
Asian Americans	1 = yes, 0 = no	878	0.605	
Percent white in current community	Estimate of percent white in R's community	862	0.729	0.223
Racial stereotyping	Index, −6 to 6	873	0.375	0.84

3.1. Dependent Variable

Participants of the "Multi-Ethnic United States" topical module were shown a card depicting a single house surrounded by fourteen other houses. They were instructed as follows: "Now I'd like you to imagine a neighborhood that had an ethnic and racial mix you personally would feel most comfortable in. Here is a blank neighborhood card, which depicts some houses that surround your own. Using the letters A for Asian, B for Black, H for Hispanic or Latin American and W for White, please put a letter in each of these houses to represent your preferred neighborhood where you would most like to live. Please be sure to fill in all of the houses." In the data set, each household is coded individually, allowing for a calculation of the racial and ethnic composition of respondents' preferred neighborhood composition. The dependent variable in the current study is the percentage of households that respondents filled in as "white." Preliminary analysis in SPSS indicated that OLS regression is appropriate to use in this case. Despite some clustering at one end of the distribution (roughly 19% of non-Hispanic white respondents prefer an all-white neighborhood), the mean (0.55) and median (0.50) are similar and the skewness (0.40) and kurtosis (−1.1) values are near zero.

3.2. Independent Variables

Religious tradition is determined using the RELTRAD scheme that classifies individuals on the basis of their stated denominational preference into one of seven major categories: "Evangelical Protestant," "Mainline Protestant," "Black Protestant," "Catholic," "Jewish," "Other," or "None" [65]. The "Other" category is residual and includes adherents of Eastern religious traditions as well as several non-traditional Western traditions [66]. The very small number of non-Hispanic whites in the Black Protestant category necessitates its omission.

This study employs a racial stereotyping measure used in several prior studies of neighborhood racial preferences [8-13]. It is scaled from −6 to +6 and is constructed from five survey items in which respondents were asked to rate each of the four major racial or ethnic groups (white, black, Asian, Hispanic) on a given characteristic (intelligence, laziness, violence-prone, committed to strong families, committed to fairness and equality for all). High (positive) scores indicate unfavorable ratings of out-groups relative to one's own group; low (negative) scores indicate favorable ratings of out-groups; 0 indicates no perceived difference. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.62.

Social isolation from racial and ethnic minorities is measured by three separate survey items in which respondents were asked: "Do you personally know any" "Hispanics or Latin Americans,"

"Blacks," and "Asian Americans?" Each item is coded such that "0" indicates that the respondent reports not personally knowing anyone from the group, while a score of "1" indicates that the respondent reports knows a member of the group. The current study also employs a measure of racial homogeneity in respondents' communities. Studies have indicated that the racial composition of individuals' current communities affects their neighborhood racial preferences [59]. Furthermore, spatial and social isolation from ethnic outgroups is associated with more negative outgroup perceptions [38]. Respondents were asked to estimate the "percentage of the people who live in your local community" that are white.

Socio-demographic variables include sex, age (in years), total family income, and years of education. Dichotomous variables indicate whether the respondent is married, is a homeowner, has children in the home, or lives in the South. In addition, this study uses the variable XNORCSIZ, which is a measure of the size of a respondent's place of residence, ranging from 1 (open country) to 10 (city greater than 250,000).

4. Results

Table 2 compares non-Hispanic white evangelical Protestants to whites in other religious categories on key socio-demographic variables. Several significant differences are worth noting. Evangelical Protestants are most different from the non-Christian groups—Jews, adherents of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated. Compared with these groups evangelicals are older, less educated, live in less populated areas, and are more likely to live in the South. Evangelicals tend to be older than Catholics and far more likely to live in the South. Compared with mainline Protestants, they are less educated and more likely to live in the South. The religiously unaffiliated are less likely than evangelical Protestants to be married or own their home.

Table 2. Comparison of Evangelical Protestants to Other Groups on Key Socio-Demographic Variables.

	Age (years)	Educ. (years)	Lives in South	Comm. size (1–10)	Owns home	Married	Children in home		
							0–6 yrs.	7–12 yrs.	13–17 yrs.
Evangelical Protestant	48.6	12.8	54.7%	6.0	45.7%	55.0%	17%	23%	16%
Mainline Protestant	50.9	14.0**	29.8%**	6.2	50.3%	48.5%	11%	14%*	13%
Catholic	45.0*	13.2	17.5%**	6.8*	46.5%	49.1%	16%	19%	14%
Jewish	45.0	15.7**	26.9%**	8.6**	38.5%	50.0%	15%	15%	12%
Other faith	41.4*	14.6**	31.6%**	8.3*	44.7%	55.3%	16%	16%	8%
Unaffiliated	40.6**	13.9**	27.3%**	7.1*	33.8%*	41.6%*	14%	15%	15%

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; N = 878; * Difference from evangelical Protestants statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, 2-tailed); ** $p < 0.01$, 2-tailed

Table 3 compares evangelical Protestants to the other religious categories on the focal independent variables in the current study: social isolation from minorities and racial stereotyping. Again, differences between evangelical Protestants and the three non-Christian groups are most notable.

Compared with these whites, evangelical Protestants are significantly less likely to report personally knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans, and more likely to hold negative stereotypes about minorities. Evangelical Protestants show little distinctiveness from Catholics and mainline Protestant, however. The only significant difference is evangelicals' greater likelihood of knowing blacks compared with Catholics.

Table 3. Comparison of Evangelical Protestants to Other Groups on Key Independent Variables.

	"Personally knows":			Percent white in community	Racial stereotyping (−6 to 6)
	Blacks	Hispanics	Asian Americans		
Evangelical Protestant	89.0%	69.5%	54.1%	73.3%	0.452
Mainline Protestant	85.3%	73.6%	60.2%	77.2%	0.514
Catholic	80.2%**	72.6%	58.9%	71.0%	0.423
Jewish	95.6%	84.6%*	76.9%*	70.0%	−0.080**
Other faith	86.8%	93.0%**	81.6%**	74.9%	−0.060**
Unaffiliated	90.8%	81.9%**	66.0%**	70.0%	0.196*

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; N = 878; * Difference from evangelical Protestants statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, 2-tailed); ** $p < 0.01$, 2-tailed

Table 4 shows the neighborhood racial-composition preferences of non-Hispanic whites by religious tradition. Evangelical Protestants prefer the most racially homogeneous neighborhood, with an average of roughly 60 percent white [67]. Mainline Protestants prefer only slightly more diverse neighborhoods, with an average of 57.7 percent. Catholics (53.5%) and Jews (53.7%) both prefer neighborhoods in which slightly over half of all households are white. Only those of "other" faiths and the unaffiliated prefer, on average, a neighborhood in which whites do not make a majority. Those of "other" faiths have the weakest preference for same-race neighbors with an average of 42.8 percent. The religiously unaffiliated prefer a neighborhood in which about 49 percent of households are white [68]. All groups except for the "other" faith group prefer a neighborhood that is between 15 and 17 percent black. Differences in percent Asian and Hispanic are a bit more noticeable. Evangelical Protestants prefer the lowest percentage of both Asians and Hispanics, followed by mainline Protestants. Those of "other" faiths and the unaffiliated prefer the highest percentage of Asians and Hispanics.

Table 5 contains results from an OLS regression analysis of the percentage of households that respondents filled in as white. Model 1 compares non-Hispanic white evangelical Protestants to whites in each other religious tradition [69]. Results reveal that, before accounting for socio-demographic characteristics, evangelical Protestants' preference for same-race neighbors is significantly greater than that of every religious group but mainline Protestants. Model 2 introduces socio-demographic variables. Results indicate that group differences in socio-demographic characteristics largely explain the distinctiveness of white evangelical Protestants' neighborhood preferences [70]. Net of these controls, evangelical Protestants' preference for same-race neighbors is significantly greater than only those in the "other" faith category.

Table 4. Neighborhood Racial Preferences among Non-Hispanic Whites, by Religious Tradition.

	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian
Evangelical Protestant	60.3	16.0	11.3	12.2
Mainline Protestant	58.1	15.8	12.6	13.4
Catholic	53.5	17.1	15.5	13.9
Jewish	53.7	17.1	13.4	14.0
Other faith	41.8	21.3	19.1	17.8
None	49.2	17.0	16.4	15.4
All whites	55.3	17.0	13.9	13.7

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; N = 878

Table 5. Preference for Same-Race Neighbors Among Other White Religious Groups Compared to White Evangelical Protestants.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Religious Tradition[a]					
Mainline Prot.	−0.020	−0.002	−0.021	−0.024	−0.026
	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.024)
Catholic	−0.063*	−0.016	−0.053*	−0.055*	−0.035
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Jewish	−0.084†	0.020	−0.037	0.002	0.009
	(0.058)	(0.056)	(0.054)	(0.051)	(0.052)
Other faith	−0.198**	−0.113*	−0.152*	−0.116*	−0.105*
	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Unaffiliated	−0.099**	−0.031	−0.068**	−0.050**	−0.030
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.025)
"Personally know(s) any":					
Blacks			−0.059*	−0.027	−0.019
			(0.028)	(0.021)	(0.028)
Hispanics			−0.095**	−0.079**	−0.068**
			(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Asian Americans			−0.101**	−0.064**	−0.055**
			(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.020)
Percent white in community			0.002**	0.002**	0.002**
			(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Racial stereotyping				0.102**	0.095**
				(0.011)	(0.011)
Age		0.004**			0.002*
		(0.001)			(0.001)
Education		−0.018**			−0.005
		(0.004)			(0.004)
South		0.048*			0.041*
		(0.019)			(0.019)

Table 5. *Cont.*

Size of place		−0.007*			0.001
		(0.003)			(0.003)
Children in home 13 to 17 years old		−0.053*			−0.066*
		(0.026)			(0.025)
Constant	0.602	0.556	0.625	0.521	0.470
R−squared	0.031	0.143	0.165	0.259	0.284
N	859	859	859	859	859

Source: 2000 General Social Survey;
Unstandardized coefficients reported, standard errors in parentheses.
† p < 0.10; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01
[a] Reference group is evangelical Protestants
Note: Models 2 and 5 also control for family income, sex, marital status, home ownership, and the presence of children aged 0–6 or 7–12 in the household. None of these variables approach significance, so for simplicity they are not reported.

Models 3 and 4 introduce measures of social isolation from racial and ethnic minorities, as well as negative stereotyping, in the absence of socio-demographic variables. Model 3 demonstrates that the measures of social isolation from minorities used in the current study only partly explain group differences in preferences. While differences between groups are diminished somewhat, evangelical Protestants still prefer a significantly higher percentage of white neighbors than do Catholics, those of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated.

Likewise, Model 4 indicates that white evangelical Protestants' stronger preference for same-race neighbors is not well explained by a greater propensity to hold negative stereotypes about minorities. Again, differences between evangelicals and other groups shrink somewhat, particularly for the "other" faith category and the unaffiliated, but remain statistically significant. Model 5 presents results from the full model, which includes socio-demographic variables. The pattern of group differences in Model 5 is highly similar to the one in Model 2. While stereotyping and isolation from minorities partially explain evangelical Protestants' distinctiveness, Model 2 demonstrates that socio-demographic characteristics alone render insignificant the differences between evangelicals and all other groups but the "other" faith category. Overall, these results suggest that while socio-demographic characteristics explain white evangelical Protestants' stronger preference for same-race neighbors, racial stereotyping and racial isolation do not.

As other studies have found, several socio-demographic characteristics are significant predictors of neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Birth cohort is a strong predictor for non-Hispanic whites. In Model 2, each additional year of age is associated with a .4 percentage point increase in same-race households. Compared with non-Southerners, whites living in the South prefer a neighborhood with a significantly higher percentage of whites. Respondents from more populous areas have a weaker preference for same-race neighbors, as do more educated whites. Each additional year of education is associated with a nearly 2 percent decrease in preferred same-race neighbors. Household composition has an effect on preferences. In Model 2, those with children between 13 and

17 prefer fewer white neighbors. In the final model, however, residing in the South and having children between 13 and 17 are the only significant socio-demographic variables.

Generally speaking, non-Hispanic whites that report personally knowing members of minority groups have a weaker preference for same-race neighbors. However, compared with personally knowing African Americans, knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans has a stronger effect on neighborhood preferences. Net of controls for stereotyping and socio-demographic characteristics, only knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans is predictive of a weaker preference for same-race neighbors. Respondent's estimates of racial homogeneity in their current communities matter as well. The estimated percentage of whites in the respondents' community is significantly positively associated with a preference for same-race neighbors. Finally, like numerous other studies [9-13], this analysis finds that holding negative stereotypes about minorities is a strong predictor of neighborhood racial preferences for non-Hispanic whites. A one-unit increase on the stereotyping scale is associated with a roughly ten percent increase in percent white.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Prior research on the causes of racial residential segregation has focused on the role of economic and financial institutions and on the preferences of individuals regarding the racial composition of their neighborhoods. The role that social institutions, such as religion, might play in influencing intergroup relations and either isolating or integrating racial and ethnic groups has gone largely unexplored. Emerson and Smith [20] have argued that the segregation of American religion along racial lines contributes to the racialization of American society. This study examines the relationship between religious affiliation and neighborhood racial-composition preferences among non-Hispanic whites. Evangelical and mainline Protestants have the strongest preference for same-race neighbors, while those of various "other" faiths and the unaffiliated have the weakest. This finding closely mirrors the general pattern observed for a range of whites' racial attitudes, in which Protestants have the most conservative attitudes, religious minorities (Jews, other faiths, and the unaffiliated) have the most progressive, and Catholics are somewhere in between [55,56]. Interestingly, it also mirrors the racial diversity within each of these traditions, as Protestant congregations are the most racially homogeneous, followed by Catholic and non-Christian congregations [27,28]. Furthermore, this study finds that while socio-demographic characteristics largely account for white evangelicals' stronger preference for same-race neighbors, negative stereotyping and social isolation from minorities do not.

Emerson and Smith [20] have suggested that religion contributes to the racialization of American society by creating racially distinct social networks, thereby limiting opportunities for interracial bridging ties. In the current study, however, the extent to which respondents personally know members of minority groups only partly explained religious group differences in preferences. Furthermore, evangelical Protestants' concentration in the South and in less populated areas likely accounts for their lower likelihood of knowing Hispanics or Asian Americans, especially compared with Jews, those of "other" faiths, and the unaffiliated. It is possible that more detailed measures of interracial contact and social network composition may better explain religious differences in neighborhood preferences. Examining the role of interracial contact at places of worship may be a worthwhile strategy. There is evidence that such contact may be especially effective at improving racial attitudes [21].

Emerson and Smith argue that religion endows individuals with cultural tools that they use to interpret the social world. When applied to race, these cultural tools influence individuals' racial attitudes. However, in the current study, a measure of racial stereotyping did not account for white evangelical Protestants' stronger preference for same-race neighbors. Instead, controls for socio-demographic characteristics, particularly region and education, explained much of the distinctiveness of evangelical Protestants' preferences. It is possible that other measures of racial attitudes would better explain the religious gap in preferences. Additional research is necessary to determine how religious affiliation may affect racial attitudes, including preferences about neighborhood racial and ethnic diversity.

While Blanchard's study [23] found that the presence of mainline Protestant congregations is associated with lower levels of black-white residential segregation, the current study finds that mainline Protestants themselves are indistinguishable from evangelical Protestants in their neighborhood racial-composition preferences. Notably, Blanchard makes an *institutional* argument about the relationship between local congregations and interracial relations. Evangelical Protestant congregations tend to be less involved in providing community service and outreach than mainline congregations, thus missing opportunities to foster bridging social capital [35-37]. In addition, mainline clergy tend to be more liberal than the laity, which may be a contributing factor to the level and type of community involvement displayed by mainline congregations [71]. Despite the relatively conservative racial attitudes of their members, mainline congregations may nonetheless have a positive effect on community racial integration by fostering civic engagement and bridging social capital [72].

Emerson and colleagues' provocative publications [20,27,30] have spurred an important line of research about race and religion in the United States. However, their conclusions have not been universally echoed in other social science research [49,51,52]. This study and recent work by Taylor and Merino [55,56] indicate the need for important qualification to claims about the influence of religion on racial attitudes. Individuals whose denominational preference is evangelical Protestant have significantly more conservative racial attitudes than other white Americans and prefer more racially homogeneous neighborhoods. However, after accounting for their socio-demographic characteristics, this group loses much of its distinctiveness. This pattern of findings makes it less clear how religion influences whites' racial attitudes.

Why is it difficult to identify religious influences on racial attitudes? Perhaps because, as Bartkowski and Matthews suggest, "the very same constellation of religious beliefs and practices that can be used to eradicate racial stratification also can be enlisted to reinforce it" ([73], p. 164). For example, an evangelical theology that has been said to blind its adherents to structural racism and reinforce segregated churches and social networks also drives efforts at 'racial healing' and 'Christ-centered' race-bridging [74,75]. Such ambivalence is on display in Brown's [76] study using Detroit Area Studies data from the 1970s and 1990s. He reports that, despite their stronger denial of racial housing discrimination, white evangelical Protestants actually expressed significantly greater openness than other white Christians to living in racially integrated neighborhoods. Brown situates these interesting findings within Detroit's own history of race relations and religious activism. His study also highlights the need to be attentive to the differing religious dynamics within local communities.

Additional research is needed to determine how religion works to either inhibit or foster bridging ties across racial and ethnic boundaries. Blanchard's [23] 'closed community thesis,' posited as an explanation for higher levels of black-white residential segregation in evangelical-rich communities, warrants further testing. Blanchard's thesis draws on two important areas of inquiry in the sociology of religion. First, several studies have suggested that religious traditions vary in the extent to which their congregations facilitate civic engagement and the development of bridging social capital in the broader community [15,37,72,77,78]. Second, there is growing interest in how religious involvement and beliefs structure individuals' social networks and their opportunities for intergroup contact [29,32,34,79,80]. Future research should examine how involvement in congregations and their religious subcultures shapes both opportunities for and preferences regarding social connections across racial and ethnic lines, particularly when religious culture contributes to racial identity [81]. As Edgell and Tranby suggest, "if religious subcultures are shaped in the context of highly salient racial boundaries, they may in fact be about race" ([51], p. 284). In addition, the cultural tools individuals acquire through participation in religious subcultures color their experiences with racial and ethnic diversity [51,75,82,83]. The task of researchers will be to better understand how individuals draw on those cultural tools to bridge racial divides in their communities.

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66. In the sub-sample used in the current study, respondents in the "other faith" category include Orthodox Christians, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarian Universalists, Pagans, Mormons, and individuals who self-identify as Buddhist and Christian.
67. When Emerson and Smith's criteria are used for defining conservative Protestantism (self-identifies as "evangelical," "fundamentalist," or "Pentecostal" and expresses belief in the Bible and in an afterlife), the resultant group (N = 121) has very similar preferences to the evangelical Protestant category used in the current study: 59% white, 17% black, 11% Hispanic, and 14% Asian.
68. Group differences in the likelihood of preferring an all-white neighborhood are a bit more noticeable. Roughly a quarter of Protestants, evangelical or mainline, prefer an all-white neighborhood. In contrast, 15% of Catholics, 12% of Jews, 13% of the unaffiliated, and 6% of adherents of "other" faiths prefer an all-white neighborhood.
69. Additional OLS regression models were run using Emerson and Smith's self-identified conservative Protestants as the reference group. The results were highly comparable to those reported in Table 6. Results available from the author by request.
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