“WHY CAN’T WE BE FRIENDS”: WHY RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONAL-BASED SOCIAL CONTACT MATTERS FOR CLOSE INTERRACIAL FRIENDSHIPS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

A Thesis

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Master of Arts

by

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INTRODUCTION

Religious congregations are the largest type of and most active volunteer organizations in the United States. There are more than 300,000 congregations in the U.S. (Chaves 2004). Congregations play a key role in a number of areas of social life. One of those is adolescent social and spiritual development. Smith (2003) argues that religious organizations benefit adolescents by providing them with moral directives, spiritual experiences, and role models, among other things. Moreover, congregations perform various social functions: services to the poor, generating cultural capital, and civic training (Wuthnow 2004; Cnaan et. al. 2002; Putnam 2001; Smith 2003).

Although congregations play an important social role in many areas of life, they remain largely racially homogenous. One of the most common phrases about race and religion is that “11 am on Sunday is the most segregated hour in the U.S.” Recent studies suggest that 90 percent of U.S. congregations are composed of at least 95 percent of one racial group (Emerson & Smith 2000; Chaves 2004; Emerson & Woo 2006). A number of factors contribute to the uniracial congregational tendency. Emerson and Kim (2003) suggest that membership recruitment, historical and cultural factors (racism, language barriers, etc.), and residential segregation help explain the overwhelmingly tendency toward uniracial congregations.

Despite this overall uniracial tendency, there are a number of multiracial congregations in the U.S. A congregation is normally considered multiracial when 20
percent or more of its members is racially different than the dominant racial group
(Emerson & Kim 2003; Emerson & Woo 2006). Organizational researchers identify 20
percent as the critical point when the minority group’s presence is significant enough to
make a difference (Emerson & Kim 2003; Kanter 1977; Pettigrew 1975; Pettigrew &
Martin 1986). Based on this definition, about 7 percent of U.S. congregations are
multiracial (Chaves 2004).

Why do Multiracial Congregations Matter?

Some scholars have challenged the importance of racial-ethnic diversity within
congregations (Dougherty 2003), suggesting that racial diversity may not be a desirable
congregational quality. For instance, Dudley and Roozen (2001) find that racial-ethnic
homogeneity provides a sense of religious vitality, especially for minority groups.
Similarly, homogenous immigrant congregations have been identified as an important
social institution in immigrants’ lives strengthening collective identity (Warner & Wittner
1998). Nonetheless, as I will discuss, multiracial congregations have significant social
benefits. There are theological implications for some religious groups. For example, 60
percent of strong evangelicals believe that integrating congregations was important and
congruent with their faith (see Emerson and Smith 2000 Chapter 6). However, multiracial
congregations are also important in two specific sociological ways: opportunities for
interracial contact and multiracial social networks.

A lot of sociological research devotes attention to the character of intergroup
relations. Social contact is highlighted as an important factor in improving such relations
(Allport 1954; Sherif 1961; Sigelman et. al. 1996; Ellison & Powers 1994). Contact
between racial groups is believed to have an effect on both behavior and attitudes. In
terms of behavior, Ellison and Powers (1994) show that African Americans who had early contact with other racial groups are more likely to have close interracial adult friendships. With regards to attitudes, Yancey (1999) argues that Whites who attend multiracial congregations show less social distance towards African Americans and are less likely to stereotype them. His study also demonstrates that residential integration, which does not guarantee contact between groups, does not alter intergroup attitudes. Hence, actual social interaction between different racial groups is important.

Gordon Allport’s contact hypothesis is the most widely tested and used theoretical positions in regards to intergroup relations. His proposition is essentially about social interaction, but Allport specifies four important conditions for improved intergroup relations: equal group status, common goals, cooperation, and authority support. Empirical evidence supports this proposition: social contact, under the above conditions, generally produces positive intergroup outcomes.

While Allport’s contribution to the study of intergroup relations is nontrivial, his hypothesis only specifies the conditions under which contact produces positive outcomes. It does not specify how and why contact achieves these outcomes. Pettigrew (1998) suggests four processes in an attempt to specify the causal mechanisms operating through contact. The four processes are: learning about the outgroup, changing behavior, generating affective ties, and ingroup reappraisal. Pettigrew (1998) argues that contact opens up these processes and mediates intergroup attitudinal change. Furthermore, Pettigrew (1998) highlights interracial friendships as a key factor in intergroup relations. He says that “intergroup friendship is potent because it invokes all four mediating processes. This suggests that constructive contact relates more to long-term close
relationships than to initial acquaintanceship—a dramatic shift for the intergroup contact research literature” (p. 76).

These mechanisms can be extended to the dynamics of multiracial congregations. Interracial contact in multiracial congregations sets in motion these four processes which in turn produce more positive intergroup relations. In multiracial congregations different racial and ethnic groups have an opportunity to learn about different worship practices connected with other racial-ethnic groups. They also have the opportunity to form affective ties that matter socially (i.e. friendships, acquaintances, strong ties, weak ties, etc.). Consequently, this social contact can produce an in-group reappraisal, though that is not necessarily guaranteed. There always remain challenges in multiracial congregations. Previous research in multiracial congregations points to differences in worship, language, and theological viewpoints as challenges to a multiracial space (Emerson 2006). This is especially true for congregations with significant Black and White groups or what Emerson (2006) calls mixed-American culture congregations. Nonetheless, despite these challenges, people who attend multiracial congregations are, all other things equal, more likely to have interracial ties than other Americans (Emerson 2006).

Most of the extant contact literature focuses on how social contact leads to intergroup attitudinal changes. My focus here by contrast is to show how contact produces changes in friendships structure, specifically how interracial contact in multiracial congregations is associated with having close interracial friendships, an important behavioral factor in longterm positive intergroup relations.

Previous studies also show that the racial and ethnic compositon of one’s social ties matters in a variety of ways. Kao (2001) finds that students’ peer behavior has an
effect on educational outcomes which vary by race. Because most students largely maintain racially homogenous friendships, racial groups have differential access to peers with high educational achievement and attainment (Kao 2003). In another context, Granovetter (1973) argues that social ties play a key role in obtaining employment. Weak social ties outside of one’s own primary network are especially important. Given the U.S. racial homogeneity in social relationships, multiracial social ties may play an important role in improving the educational achievement and job advancement of minority groups. Religious congregations are one of the main places religiously associated Americans develop and maintain social relationships outside of school and family. For instance Wuthnow (1994) finds that religiously based small groups foster friendships (albeit homogeneous ones). Indeed, personal social ties are often the reason people join religious congregations (Stark and Bainbridge 1980). Consequently, congregational racial heterogeneity may have a place in shaping larger societal race relations. Although there are a variety of government programs, such as affirmative action, and school desegregation, aimed at reducing inequality between racial groups, personal social ties continue to be important.

Existing Literature on Multiracial Congregations and Adolescent Friendships

Previous research on multiracial congregations provides several key insights into the social dynamic affecting multiracial congregations. However, this literature largely focuses on adults who, compared with adolescents, have a certain degree of choice in where they attend religious services. *Adults* with previous multiracial social ties can “choose” to attend a multiracial congregation. Thus, multiracial congregations potentially are comprised of adults who have multiracial ties that, for the most part, precede
attendance of this congregation. On the other hand, most adolescents do not choose their religious congregations, rather they mostly attend with and because of their parents. The National Study for Youth and Religion (NSYR) finds that 71 percent of adolescents attend religious services with their parents (NSYR Wave 1 2002-2003). Removing parents who don’t attend religious services increases that figure to 84 percent, and if we omit adolescents who don’t attend religious services it increases to 92 percent. Hence, for adolescents, multiracial congregations are largely the agents of social change by modeling a multiracial environment and providing opportunities for interracial social contact and friendships. Rather than reflecting a selection effect the multiracial religious experience shapes adolescent multiracial social ties largely independent of personal attitudes. Therefore, for adolescents, attendance of a multiracial congregations helps shape their multiracial relationships. The present study seeks to add to the existing literature on this topic by examining adolescents in multiracial congregations.

There exists a significant body of scholarly work on adolescent and children interracial friendships (Quillian and Campbell 2003; Joyner and Kao 2005; Moody 2001; Kubitschek and Hallinan 1998; Hallinan and Williams 1989; Hallinan and Smith 1985; Hallinan 1982; St. John and Lewis 1975). The overwhelming majority of this research focuses on school factors that affect interracial relationships. School organization, tracking, classroom composition, extracurricular activities and especially school racial composition are important factors that affect interracial friendships. Indeed, schools are one the main places where adolescents have the opportunity to interact with other racial and ethnic groups. However, very little attention is paid to the effects of religion and religious organizations. The only way that a few studies account for religious effects is by
controlling for religious schools. I argue that the racial composition of adolescent religious congregations likely has a significant effect on their friendship choices. Therefore, studies of adolescent interracial friendships need to pay more attention to the racial composition of adolescents’ congregations. This study is an attempt to investigate the extent to which religious congregations matter for adolescent interracial friendship choices.

**Hypotheses**

This study analyzes the relationship for U.S. adolescents between congregational racial composition and having interracial friendships. Specifically, this paper examines whether adolescents that attend multiracial congregations are more likely to have a close interracial friendships compared with those attending uniracial congregations.

**H1:** I expect to find, net of all factors, that adolescents who attend multiracial congregations are more likely to have a close interracial friendship.

Since my theory is about social contact between racial-ethnic groups, I further investigate whether adolescents who are racial-ethnic minorities in their congregations are more likely to have a close interracial friendship. I call these interracial congregations. Although these congregations are not organizationally multiracial, there is widespread opportunity for interracial contact from the adolescent’s perspective. For instance, a black adolescent who attends a 95% white congregation. Organizationally, we would not categorize the congregation as multiracial, but for the black adolescent there are plenty of opportunities for interracial social contact.

**H2:** I expect to find that, net of all factors, adolescents who attend interracial congregations are more likely to have a close interracial friendship.
Using contact theory I also expect to find that adolescent neighborhood and school racial composition has a significant effect on their close interracial friendships. The more diverse an adolescent’s neighborhood and school are, the more likely they are to have a close interracial friendship.

**H3:** Adolescents who attend school and live in neighborhoods that are increasingly not of their own race are more likely to have an interracial friendship.
National Study for Youth And Religion

I use Wave 1 data from the National Survey of Youth and Religion (NSYR) to examine the relationship between social ties and attendance of a multiracial congregation. The NSYR is a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 U.S. English and Spanish speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, and of their parents. The NSYR also includes 80 oversampled Jewish households, bringing the total number of completed NSYR cases to 3,370. The NSYR was conducted from July, 2002 to April, 2003 by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill using a random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey method, employing a sample of randomly generated telephone numbers representative of all household telephones in the 50 United States. The national survey sample was arranged in replicates based on the proportion of working household telephone exchanges nationwide. This RDD method ensures equal representation of listed, unlisted, and not-yet-listed household telephone numbers. Eligible households included at least one teenager between the ages of 13-17 living in the household for at least six months of the year. In order to randomize responses within households, and so to help attain representativeness of age and gender, interviewers asked to conduct the survey with the teenager in the household who had the most recent birthday. The NSYR was conducted with members of both English and Spanish speaking households. Participants were offered a financial incentive to participate. All randomly
generated telephone numbers were dialed a minimum of 20 times over a minimum of five months per number, spread out over varying hours during week days, week nights, and weekends. The calling design included at least two telephone-based attempts to convert refusals. Households refusing to cooperate with the survey but established by initial screening to include children ages 13 to 17 in residence and with telephone numbers able to be matched to mailing addresses were also sent by mail information about the survey, contact information for researchers, and a request to cooperate and complete the survey; those records were then called back again for possible refusal conversions. Ninety-six percent of parent complete households also achieved teen completes. Diagnostic analyses comparing NSYR data with 2002 U.S. Census data on comparable households and with comparable adolescent surveys--such as Monitoring the Future, the National Household Education Survey, and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health---confirm that the NSYR provides a nationally representative sample without identifiable sampling and nonresponse biases of U.S. teenagers ages 13-17 and their parents living in households (for details, see Smith and Denton 2003). For descriptive purposes, a weight was created to adjust for number of teenagers in household, number of household telephone numbers, census region of residence, and household income. A separate weight is used in multivariate analyses that control for census region and household income, which adjusts only for number of teenagers in household and number of household telephone numbers.

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable in this analysis is close interracial friendships. The survey question measures the number of close friends of a different race that the
adolescent respondent has. The exact wording of the question is as follows: “Which [referring to their five best friends listed], if any, of these people are of a different race than you?” This variable was recoded into a binomial variable so that adolescents either have a close friend of a different race or not. This was done to capture the significant difference between having no interracial friendships and having at least one. Close ties with even one member of a different race in these settings makes a difference, compared to none.

**Independent and Control Variables**

The key independent variable here is congregational racial composition. The exact wording of the survey question is as follows: “About how many of the people in the religious services that you normally attend are the same race as you? Would you say: all, nearly all, most, about half, few or none?” As mentioned above, a congregation in which 20 percent (or more) is racially different than the main racial group is a multiracial congregation (Emerson & Kim 2003; Emerson & Woo 2006). However, due to the fact that it is difficult to interpret what these response categories mean in terms of percentages, this variable is recoded using “about half” as defining multiracial. I code “few” and “none” as an interracial congregation (from the adolescent’s perspective). “All”, “nearly all” and “most” are coded as uniracial. There are 482 respondents who report that their congregations are “about half” the same race as them. This constitutes 17.7 percent of those religiously affiliated who responded to this question and 14.6 percent of the entire survey. This is higher than the 7 percent obtained by the National Congregations Survey (NCS), but if the relationship remains significant despite this over-

1 I also ran the analysis allowing number of friends to vary from 0 to 5 and found similar results.  
2 In a separate analysis, I allow congregational racial composition to vary freely and the results are similar to the present analysis.
estimation, that may justify confidence in the findings. A measure with even greater accuracy would in theory provide even stronger findings. Also, the NSYR is an individual level dataset (as compared to a congregational level dataset in the NCS). The percentage of individuals who attend multiracial congregations is approximately 15.5 percent, so the 17.7 percent in the NSYR is not that different. In the end, this is not a significant difference. 11 percent of religiously affiliated adolescents attend an interracial congregation.

I measure neighborhood racial composition by neighborhood percent not of adolescent’s race. Using Census data, I am able to match adolescent’s neighborhood percent with all of the other NSYR variables. I also measure school racial composition by school percent not of the adolescent’s race. The NSYR has matched the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) codes for each respondent. I am thus able to match public and private school data from the NCES Common Core of Data (2002-2003) and the Private School Survey (2003-2004) to individual respondents. With school racial distribution information from these datasets I calculate school percent not of the adolescent’s race for whites, blacks and hispanics. For instance, if a black respondent attends a school where blacks comprise 25 percent of students, then school percent not of their race would be 75 percent. In this way, I attempt to get a solid contextual picture and examine how interracial contact in different contexts simultaneously matters for interracial friendships.

The control variables I use are of three types: adolescent, family, contextual and attendance interaction. For adolescent controls, I use adolescent race, age, gender and religious service attendance. Family controls include whether the household has at least
one member of a different race, and combined (if two parent household) average
education and income. Contextual controls include adolescent major religious tradition,
census region and neighborhood and school racial composition. Attendance interaction
variables include multiracial congregation x religious service attendance and interracial
congregation x religious service attendance.

My analyses are limited to Blacks, Whites and Hispanics. These three racial group
comprise approximately 95 percent of the NSYR sample. Asians, Islanders, Native
Americans and Other race categories are not included in this paper’s analyses. I think it
unwise to combine these groups, as interracial friendships make work differently for each
group. Furthermore, most of the race relations history in the United States involves the
racial groups included in the analyses. The N for my models is 2725 (3340 respondents in
Wave 1 of the NSYR). The overwhelming majority of cases excluded from the analysis
were those who did not attend church (N = 619). A few respondents reported that they had
no close friendships.

My analysis begins with descriptive statistics showing the basic relationships
between the variables of interest.
RESULTS

Descriptive Results

First, close interracial friendships do vary by adolescent race. 33 percent of Whites reported having at least one interracial friendship compared with 40 percent for Blacks. Hispanic adolescents are at 59 percent much more likely to have a close interracial friendship compared to Black and White adolescents. Quillian and Campbell (2003) also discovered similar findings. They argue that there is an overall tendency towards same-race friendships but that Hispanics are significantly more likely than Blacks or Whites to be involved in an interracial friendship.

The descriptive analysis also reveals some patterns between congregational racial composition and interracial friendships. Most American adolescents who attend religious services are in uniracial congregations. This varies somewhat by religious tradition (See Table 1). Catholic and non-Christian adolescents are more likely to attend multiracial and interracial congregations. These results are consistent with previous research on multiracial congregations that finds that these two religious traditions are more likely to have increased levels of diversity (See Emerson and Woo 2006, Chapter 3). Jewish adolescents are less likely to be in interracial and multiracial congregations, which is not surprising given the racial-ethnic composition and history of the entire religious tradition.
There is also an overall tendency in the data towards same-race friendships. Overall, 62 percent of adolescents report having no close friends of a different race. These results are not surprising and are consistent with the literature on interracial friendships (Quillian & Campbell 2003; Moody 2001; Hallinan & Williams 1989).

However, 50 percent of adolescents from multiracial congregations report having at least one close interracial friendship compared to 35 percent of adolescents from uniracial congregations (See Table 2). The distribution for adolescents in interracial congregations is even more stark with 64 percent having at least one friend of a different race. These descriptive results suggest that social contact may have an important place in shaping the racial composition of adolescent friendship structure.
Regression Results

I use binary logistic regression with nested models to examine the relationship between multiracial congregations. The first model only includes the key independent variable. In the second model, I add the adolescent control variables: race, gender and age. In the third model, I control for household racial composition, parent income and education. In model four, I add Census region and religious tradition neighborhood racial composition and school racial composition\(^3\). Finally, in model five I add the interaction variables. I also ran nested model where the independent variable was added in model

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\( ^3 \) I also ran nested models with interactions between multiracial congregation and (1) each racial group and (2) gender. I also interacted neighborhood and school composition with (1) each racial group and (2) gender. The only significant interaction was a positive (.039): black* neighborhood racial composition. That means that the effect of multiracial congregations does not operate particularly strongly for any racial group or gender.
four instead of model one. Adding the independent variable in model 4 does not change the results in any significant way. Therefore, I use the variable entry order described above.

**Congregational Racial Composition**

First, there is strong support for hypothesis one. The multiracial variable is statistically significant throughout all of the models. Regression results confirm that adolescents attending a multiracial congregation are significantly more likely than those attending uniracial ones to have at least one close interracial friendship, net of all other factors (See Table 3). The results are similar for adolescents attending interracial congregations; they are significantly more likely to have a close interracial friendship.

**TABLE 3:**

**ODDS RATIOS OF ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIPS (WITH ATTENDANCE INTERACTIONS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial a</td>
<td>1.814***</td>
<td>1.909***</td>
<td>1.861***</td>
<td>1.638***</td>
<td>2.030**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interracial a</td>
<td>2.938***</td>
<td>2.782***</td>
<td>2.457***</td>
<td>1.988***</td>
<td>1.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black b</td>
<td>1.227</td>
<td>1.248*</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic b</td>
<td>2.786***</td>
<td>2.572***</td>
<td>1.507**</td>
<td>1.491*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
<td>(0.34)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.852*</td>
<td>0.835*</td>
<td>0.811*</td>
<td>0.815*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>1.024</td>
<td>1.022</td>
<td>1.024</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
<td>0.941***</td>
<td>0.945**</td>
<td>0.952*</td>
<td>0.947*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>Model 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Education</td>
<td>1.001 (0.0017)</td>
<td>1.001 (0.0017)</td>
<td>1.001 (0.0017)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Income</td>
<td>1.000 (0.00029)</td>
<td>1.000 (0.00030)</td>
<td>1.000 (0.00030)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial Household</td>
<td>2.173*** (0.32)</td>
<td>1.294 (0.21)</td>
<td>1.293 (0.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.895 (0.080)</td>
<td>0.896 (0.080)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>1.034 (0.15)</td>
<td>1.040 (0.15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>0.654 (0.15)</td>
<td>0.651 (0.15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.857 (0.094)</td>
<td>0.862 (0.095)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religion</td>
<td>1.124 (0.35)</td>
<td>1.160 (0.36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial Neighborhood</td>
<td>1.648</td>
<td>1.670 (0.45)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial School</td>
<td>6.926*** (1.71)</td>
<td>6.926*** (1.71)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial * Attend</td>
<td>0.944 (0.062)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interracial * Attend</td>
<td>1.209*** (0.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.505*** (0.023)</td>
<td>0.387* (0.18)</td>
<td>0.374* (0.17)</td>
<td>0.250* (0.12)</td>
<td>0.246* (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td><strong>2725</strong></td>
<td><strong>2725</strong></td>
<td><strong>2725</strong></td>
<td><strong>2725</strong></td>
<td><strong>2725</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R^2</td>
<td>0.0205</td>
<td>0.0423</td>
<td>0.0505</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Note:
a. Reference category: Uniracial congregation
b. Reference category: Whites
c. Reference categories: Midwest, Northeast & West
d. Reference category: Evangelical Protestants

Source: NSYR Wave 1 2002-2003
Model five, though, suggests that religious service attendance may work differently for interracial and multiracial congregations. The interaction between attendance and interracial is significant suggesting that increased interracial congregation attendance increases the likelihood of having a close interracial friend. This is not true for multiracial congregations. Those who attend more do not increase the likelihood of having a close interracial friendship. Adolescents who attend multiracial congregations more regularly are no more likely to have a close interracial friend than those with low frequency of attendance.

**School and Neighborhood Racial Composition**

Hypothesis three is only partially confirmed. As expected, the percentage of school that is *not* of the adolescent’s race has a significant effect on whether they have a close interracial friendship. However, neighborhood percent not of the adolescent’s race is not significant. This perhaps indicates that school-based interracial social contact, more so than residential integration, may be one of the key factors in facilitating close interracial friendships among American adolescents. Perhaps this also suggests that adolescents have more contact with peers at schools and religious congregations (for the religiously affiliated) than they do in their residential neighborhoods. I do not specifically test this, but there is related evidence that would lend mild support that institutions such as schools are the primary vehicle for adolescent social contact. Snell et. al. (2009) find that religious leaders report that school activities such as band, sports and clubs are the main competitors for adolescent’s time.

**Control Variables**
There are some noteworthy control variable relationships. First, for the adolescent control variables, Hispanics are significantly more likely than Whites to have an interracial friendship. The coefficient decreases as contextual variables such as school and neighborhood racial composition, but it is still significant at the .05 level in model five. When contextual variables are controlled for Blacks are no more likely than Whites to have a close interracial friendship. This implies that Hispanics, as a racial-ethnic group, have a proclivity towards close interracial friendships. This finding are consistent with Quillian and Campbell (2003) who argue that interracial friendships are more likely to involve Hispanics and Asians than they are Blacks and Whites.

Also, female adolescents, net of all measured factors, are significantly less likely than males adolescents to have multiracial friendships. 57.4 percent of male adolescents reported having at least one multiracial friendship compared to 44.7 percent of females. Still, those who attend multiracial congregations are more likely to have multiracial friendships than those attending uniracial congregations. Perhaps, the general homophily tendency is stronger for females than it is for males; females are more likely to choose friends that are similar in various ways (race, SES, etc.) regardless of whether or not they attend a multiracial congregation.

Our family control variables are not significant at any point in models four or five but, in model three adolescents from multiracial households (where at least one member is of a different race) are significantly more likely to have a close interracial friendship compared with those from uniracial households. This effect goes away we control for contextual variables suggesting again that friendship formation may have more to do with contact in institutions such as congregations and schools. The religious tradition in which
the adolescent is located does not have an effect on whether adolescents have close
interracial friendships in model four and attendance of a multiracial congregation does
not vary by Census region.

Our results indicate that social contact matters. Interracial contact in
congregations and schools, net of all other examined factors, increase the likelihood that
U.S. adolescents will have close interracial friendships.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between adolescent congregational racial composition and close multiracial friendships. I hypothesized that adolescents attending multiracial and interracial congregations would be more likely to have close interracial friendships. Results confirm this hypothesis, that, net of all other control variables, attendance of multiracial and interracial congregations is significantly associated with having cross-race friendships. Congregational racial composition is one of the few consistently significant variables in the models. These results both confirm and build upon previous findings by Christerson and Emerson (2003) and Emerson et. al. (2002) that multiracial congregations are populated with people who “are more integrated across race than the general population” (Christerson & Emerson 2003:166). That is, for adolescents, multiracial congregations influence their friendships choices. I emphasize again the non-voluntary nature of most adolescent religious congregation attendance. As discussed above, 92 percent of religiously involved adolescents attend with and because of their parents. This gives us confidence that the causal direction is as hypothesized and that this is not a selection effect. The current findings also indicate that being in an interracial congregation (where interracial social contact opportunities abound from the adolescent’s perspective) is important for crossrace friendships. The findings suggests that increased opportunities for interracial social contact have implications for the racial
composition of friendship structures. This reinforces a long standing line of research in social contact theory that suggests that “contact” has many benefits that have positive consequences for intergroup relations.

The results also suggest that despite the multiracial and interracial congregation influence, there is a strong same-race friendship tendency among U.S. adolescents. The majority of U.S. adolescents do not have a close interracial friendship. As discussed above, this trend is consistent with the previous literature on adolescent friendships (Quillian and Campbell 2003). Yet, school racial composition seems also to play an important role in how likely an adolescent is to have a close interracial friendship. When percent of school of different races increases, the likelihood that adolescents have a close interracial friendship also increases. This result may seem intuitive; going to a school that is increasingly not of one’s own race increases, the likelihood that one would come into contact with other racial groups increases. However, that assumes that because one’s school is populated with other racial groups, one interacts with those groups. Given the stark residential segregation of U.S. neighborhoods, the results suggest that the prospect of change in interracial relationships is more heavily dependent upon the racial compositions of other social institutions, such as schools, and in our study, religious congregations. The current results suggest that school racial composition continues to be an important factor in interracial friendships.

There are limitations to the present analysis worth noting. First, there is some causal order ambiguity. It is not known for sure whether respondents had multiracial friendships prior to attending a multiracial congregation or vice versa, but I think, for adolescents, it is plausible to construct multiracial congregations as the independent
variable. As I discuss above, the majority of adolescents have fewer degrees of choice as to where they attend religious services because of attending with parents. Future studies need to examine longitudinal relationships between friendship formation and multiracial congregation membership focusing on the temporal order in which these occur. It is true that multiracial congregations are a harbor for people who have significantly more multiracial social ties (Emerson & Woo 2006). Therefore, if parents attend these congregations, familial interracial ties could reasonably shape adolescents’ interracial ties also. However, given the various ways that multiracial congregations form, multiracial congregations may also be an agent of social change propelling congregants to diversify their social networks outside of the congregations. For instance, some multiracial congregations were once uniracial and, as a result of a changing neighborhood or a congregational need for resources, became multiracial (Emerson & Kim 2003). Hence, these congregations may have members who have multiracial social ties formed after experiencing interracial contact in their congregations. Future waves of NYSR will enable further analyses and examination of change among adolescent attendance.

To conclude, there is a strong general tendency in the U.S. towards uniracial social ties and congregations. However, racial-ethnic diversity and interracial social contact in religious organizations has implications race relations beyond matters of theology. Multiracial networks have significant implications for interracial harmony and equality in the U.S. Racial-ethnic diversity in religious organizations plays a part in this endeavor. Those interested in issues of racial harmony and equality have reason, then, to pay attention to the racial composition of religious congregations as an important site where inter-racial social contact is established.
REFERENCES


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