Religion & Health Outcomes

- Hypertension
- Mortality
- Depression
- Suicide
- Promiscuous sexual behavior
- Drug & alcohol use
- Crime & Delinquency
Figure 1. Research Examining the Relationship between Religion and Health Outcomes (2002)
Figure 2. Research Examining the Relationship between Religion & Health Outcomes (2002-2008)

Eight Fields of Study (total of 894 studies reviewed)
Religion & Prosocial Outcomes

- Well-Being
- Hope/Purpose/meaning in Life
- Self-Esteem
- Educational Attainment
Figure 3. Research Examining the Relationship between Religion Prosocial Outcomes (2002)

Four Fields of Study (total of 171 studies reviewed)

Well-Being: 80 Beneficial Outcomes, 18 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 1 Harmful Outcomes
Hope: 25 Beneficial Outcomes, 5 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 0 Harmful Outcomes
Self Esteem: 15 Beneficial Outcomes, 8 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 1 Harmful Outcomes
Educational Attainment: 16 Beneficial Outcomes, 2 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 1 Harmful Outcomes
Figure 4. Research Examining the Relationship between Religion & Prosocial Outcomes (2002-08)

Four Fields of Study (total of 217 studies reviewed)

- Well-Being: 104 Beneficial Outcomes, 23 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 1 Harmful Outcomes
- Hope: 25 Beneficial Outcomes, 5 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 0 Harmful Outcomes
- Self Esteem: 27 Beneficial Outcomes, 12 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 1 Harmful Outcomes
- Educational Attainment: 16 Beneficial Outcomes, 2 NA/Mixed Outcomes, 1 Harmful Outcome
ISR’s Program on Prosocial Behavior

In 2006 we received a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Justice, to conduct a series of studies examining the role of religion in promoting prosocial behavior among youth.
Disadvantage v. Advantage

• Cumulative disadvantage in criminology
  – Delinquency $\rightarrow$ Negative structural consequences (e.g., labeling, negative life events, etc.) $\rightarrow$ Crime
  – A negative causal loop

• Cumulative advantage of prosocial behavior
  – Religious involvement $\rightarrow$ Positive consequences (e.g., “social capital”) $\rightarrow$ Prosocial behaviors
1. The Cumulative Advantage of Religiosity in Preventing Drug Use


- Within a developmental context the present study empirically demonstrates how the cumulative advantage of religiosity, which we conceptualized as originating from religious upbringing, helps adolescents and young adults avoid getting trapped in the addictive habit of using drugs, whether smoking, drinking, or getting high on marijuana and/or other illicit drugs.
Why Might Religiosity Inhibit Delinquency?

• **Social Learning:** Religious observance and taking religious teaching seriously involves learning prosocial norms and values.

• **Self Control:** Religious observance may build self control.
2. Religion, Self Control & Delinquency

• Revised and resubmitted to *Criminology*

• The results suggest that religious youth exhibit higher levels of self control. Also, self control partially mediates the effect of adolescents’ religiosity on marijuana use and drinking.
3. Religiosity & Dynamics of Delinquency: Initiation, Persistence & Desistance

• Revised and resubmitted to *Criminology*.
• Religiosity discourages persistent marijuana use, and may discourage initiation of marijuana use.
• Religiosity does so partly because of its indirect influence on friendships, prosocial attachments, self control, and coping with strain/negative emotionality.
• A strong part of religiosity’s effects are unique, and not due to non-religious factors.
4. Adolescent Use of Drugs and At-Risk Drinking/Smoking in Young Adulthood

• To be submitted to *J. of Quantitative Criminology.*

• Results show that youth who participated in religious group activities between first and eighth grade were:
  – More likely to be religiously involved during adolescence and young adulthood.
  – Less likely to use licit and illicit drugs during adolescence and to engage in at-risk behaviors of drinking and smoking in young adulthood.
5. Why Do Black Youth Use Drugs Less Than White Youth?

- Under review at *Criminology*

Total of 263 studies reviewed

- **Drugs N=101**: 90 Beneficial, 4 Mixed, 6 Harmful, 0 NA
- **Delinquency N=84**: 86 Beneficial, 10 Mixed, 1 Harmful, 4 NA
- **Alcohol N=78**: 91 Beneficial, 5 Mixed, 0 Harmful, 4 NA
Research on Religion & Delinquency: Review Summary

• This review provides overwhelming evidence that higher levels of religious involvement and practices make for an important protective factor that buffers or insulates individuals from deleterious outcomes.

• This review of studies on organic religion documents that religious commitment or practices make for an important factor promoting an array of pro-social behaviors and thus enhancing various beneficial outcomes.