

The Influence of Religion on the Quality of College Organizations

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## Introduction

Many universities set up involvement fairs showcasing on-campus organizations. These many types of organizations all participate in involvement fairs in the hope of attracting new members. As students roam around, being peppered with flyers and shouts of friendly introduction, they search for the social network to which they may most strongly belong. Viewing a fair of this kind makes it clear that one of the most basic human tendencies is to organize into groups and that sharing interest in a certain activity can be the glue that joins together group members. Whether students are attracted to a particular group due to their interests in music, comedy, theater, coding or politics, among many others, they stake part of their social identity on becoming involved with like-minded peers. Although many students choose to become involved in on-campus organizations, the support and value of these groups to their members may not be commensurate among organizations.

The current research project focuses on exploring the similarities and differences of two specific types of on-campus organizations among the many options available to students—religious and non-religious. Understanding the ways in which students feel supported by their chosen organizations is crucial to ensure a fulfilling and enriching college experience for all students. To measure the value of involvement in an organization, a sample of DePaul students were surveyed about their sense of community in an important organization. Two scales measuring religiosity and sense of community, respectively, were employed to evaluate the religious lives of participants as well as the significance of the on-campus organizations in which they are primarily involved. This paper will first review the past literature on this topic, and then will present the results of the survey and analyze the implications of those results.

### **Literature Review**

In this section of this paper, I will review theoretical framework used to study group identity and religion. I will briefly assess the definitional difference between the term “religiosity” and the term “spirituality” and the various ways they are expressed by young adults. Following, I will discuss research that addresses the value of religious beliefs, the importance of religion, and community-based participation in religious traditions among emerging adults in the context of these frameworks in order to provide a description of the religious lives of emerging adults. Finally, I critique the literature to introduce the method of the current study.

#### ***Theoretical Frameworks***

The concept of social identity theory helps explain the value that individuals obtain from organizational involvement. Tajfel and Turner (1979) define social identity theory as pertaining to the features of self-image that are originated from the social groups to which one perceives oneself as belonging. They assert that individuals endeavor to heighten positive self-image and that self-esteem and well-being may be protected or bolstered through involvement with a group that supplies support and status at sufficient levels (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Additionally, group involvement must be integrated into the members’ self-concept for them to truly feel differentiation from another group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Differentiating from another group than one’s own occurs under the goal of achieving or maintaining superiority to other groups, and thus identification with a group exhibits what one believes is most beneficial for oneself and one’s self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner). Consequently, involvement in organizations may help define how individuals identify and expresses themselves.

Community and social identity are foundations of involvement in a religious tradition. Therefore, the features of social identity theory may be applied to assess the value of on-campus

religious organizations. However, the application of these concepts through the psychological study of religion has only recently received greater consideration. Historically, the psychological study of religion has been fraught with controversy, such as the perspective within Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* which relegated religious belief as a widespread delusion that is dangerous to all mankind (Freud, 1927/1961). Many psychological studies about religion have focused on the underlying idea that religiosity is based on a set of beliefs; therefore, scientific inquiry should try to understand why those beliefs are held (Graham & Haidt, 2010). Beliefs are an important aspect of religiosity, although the tendency to study religion primarily as a set of beliefs has underestimated the value of community in the religious lives of young adults. Research in this general field has been limited, although it has been found that both religious and community involvement are related to identity formation in emerging adulthood (Hardy, Pratt, Pancer, Olsen, & Lawford, 2010; Jeong, 2014). However, in these studies social religious involvement was measured solely as church attendance.

Studying the religious beliefs and behaviors of emerging adults is a recently developed field, as the term "emerging adult" was developed by Jeffrey Arnett (2000) and popularized in the last two decades. Emerging adulthood is a period of life that bridges the gap between adolescence and young adulthood and generally spans ages 18-25. Emerging adulthood is a specific period in the lives of young people that developed during the second half of the twentieth century due to changes in industrialized societies (Arnett, 2000). Youth during this period experienced unprecedented societal changes as it became acceptable to live on one's own during young adulthood before getting married. Therefore, they experienced more frequent exploration and change instead of establishing themselves in long-term roles characteristic of adulthood (Arnett, 2000). College students are examples of emerging adults because they have

an extended time of independence and exploration during the late teens and early twenties (Arnett, 2000). There are five distinct facets of emerging adulthood—identity exploration, focus on oneself, instability, being open to new possibilities, and feeling in-between (Arnett, 2004). These features make the social involvement of college students unique and the communal aspect of their religious expression pertinent to study.

The organizational involvements of religious and non-religious emerging adults have been studied individually although minimally compared to one another. Previous studies have explored the benefits of involvement in on-campus organizations. Foreman and Retallick (2016) reported that holding a leadership position in an organization resulted in more strongly aligning with characteristics of being a socially responsible leader. Another study found that participants who were more involved in student organizations reported higher levels of establishing purpose, life management, and cultural participation (Foubert & Grainger, 2006). Religiosity and actively participating in religious traditions and formal services have been linked to higher academic achievement in college as well as satisfaction with college in general (Mooney, 2010). These studies, however, do not examine the specific benefits of involvement in religious and non-religious on-campus organizations or how those groups are similar or disparate from one another.

### ***Religiosity vs. spirituality***

In examining the religious beliefs of emerging adults, researchers differentiate between “religiosity” and “spirituality”. Spirituality can be defined as an “individualized, experimentally based pursuit of positive values” (Pargament, K. I., Mahoney, A., Exline, J. J., Jones, J. W., & Shafranske E. P., 2013, p. 11). In one study, 15% of participants aged 18-23 responded that it was “very true” that they were spiritual but not religious, which was an 8% increase from the same sample of participants surveyed during adolescence (Smith & Snell, 2009). In the same

study, 75% of participants disagreed that religious believers need to be involved in a religious congregation to be truly religious and spiritual (Smith & Snell, 2009). Religiosity may be defined as participating in an institution to promote spirituality, while alignment with a religious institution is not necessary to consider oneself spiritual (Pargament et al., 2013). The lack of belief in the importance of religious congregational involvement is intriguing when compared to the low number of emerging adults willing to describe themselves as spiritual but not religious. Religious religious and spiritual may simply be used interchangeably by some emerging adults to fully describe their personal relationships with religion as they explore identity apart from an institution yet retain certain beliefs and behaviors of a religious tradition.

### ***Beliefs and the Importance of Religion***

Emerging adults' religious beliefs have been found by multiple studies to vary from the religious beliefs of adolescents. Smith and Snell's (2009) book *Souls in Transition* researched emerging adults' relationships with religion in a longitudinal study. Smith and Snell (2009) explored data from the third wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion, which was comprised of 2,458 survey respondents and 230 interviews with emerging adults between 18 and 23 years old who answered the same survey and were interviewed as adolescents. This study found that 78% of emerging adults expressed belief in God, which was a 7% decrease from adolescence. Looking at this statistic in more detail, 63% of respondents believed that God is a personal being currently involved in the lives of people, although only 29% felt extremely or very close to God (Smith & Snell, 2009). Lee (2002) reported similar numbers of emerging adults who described themselves as holding religious beliefs. Studying a national sample of college freshmen in the United States revealed that 48.3% of students felt no change in the strength of their religious beliefs, while 37.9% experienced an increase and 13.7% experienced a

decrease (Lee, 2002). Although the strength of religious beliefs varies, many emerging adults maintain a set of religious beliefs.

A similar rate of decrease may be seen in the general importance of religion from adolescence to emerging adulthood. Rationale behind claiming the general importance of religion in one's life may vary from one person to the next, although one study found that only 18% of respondents who enrolled in a four-year college experienced a decline in the importance of religion from adolescence through college. In the same sample, just 13.6% had disaffiliated from religion completely (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). In Smith & Snell's (2009) study, 44% agreed that religious faith was very or extremely important in shaping their daily lives, which was a 9% decrease from adolescence. The highest percentage that agreed with this statement (57%) pertained to Conservative Protestants and the lowest percentage (16%) pertained to Jewish emerging adults. Overall, religion holds a place of importance in the lives of many emerging adults at only a slightly reduced level than during adolescence.

### ***Organizational Involvement Rather Than Service Attendance***

Formal religious attendance is not valued by emerging adults at the same rate as religious beliefs or general importance of religion. In one study by Arnett (2002), 50% of participants reported that attending religious services was "not at all important" to them, while only 18% reported the same about the importance of religious beliefs. In an analysis of changing religious behaviors over time, Uecker et al. (2007) reported that among adolescents who attended a religious service at least once a month, there was a 69% decline in the frequency of attendance when they became emerging adults. These declines in religious service participation were most apparent in mainline Protestants and Catholics (Uecker et al., 2007). Smith & Snell (2009) found an 18% increase from adolescence to emerging adulthood in respondents who never attend



religious services. They also discovered that 56.4% of emerging adults fit the label of “nonattender” when including those who only attend services a few times a year (Smith & Snell, 2009). However, 25% of respondents were found to have been involved in a college-based religious group at some point. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of these participants came from religious backgrounds (Smith & Snell, 2009).

Emerging adults’ characteristics of independence and identity exploration (Arnett, 2004) influence the way they interact with formal religious involvement. Arnett & Jensen (2002) reported that involvement in religion as a child did not predict religious attendance or beliefs as an emerging adult, although qualitative data revealed this to be associated with independence and an individualistic desire to form one’s own beliefs. However, the influence of how one is raised generally has a strong impact on emerging adults’ religious lives. Smith and Snell (2009) isolated several distinct factors important in sustaining high levels of religious practice and commitment as emerging adults. These factors include having strong relational modeling of religion, usually by parents, internalizing the importance of religious faith and experiences, and continuing personal practice, usually through prayer. Additionally, the importance of parental religious beliefs should not be understated, as 66% of emerging adults were found to share very or somewhat similar beliefs as their parents’ (Smith & Snell, 2009). Although emerging adults are exploring their identities (Arnett, 2000), many emerging adults are guided in their religious beliefs by long-standing parental influences and express independence in other manners.

Formal religious involvement is one way in which some researchers have described the essential factor in religious affiliation—participation in a community. Graham & Haidt (2010) took a social-functionalist approach to the study of religion. As this perspective emphasizes the impact of social interaction as a motivator for behavior, they asserted that community-based

support can be a primary benefit of religious group participation (Graham & Haidt, 2010). Their principal extended metaphor compares God to a maypole. This idea implies that while some may believe that, due to its position in the center of a circle of people, the maypole itself is important, it is really the process of weaving ribbons around the maypole that allows for the group to have a collaborative experience. This unifying act, not the central object itself, describes what Graham and Haidt (2010) believe to be the essential function of religion—community—and the reason for its endurance throughout history. In the context of emerging adult college students, it is important to examine religious students' involvements as opposed to simply surveying their religious beliefs and the perceived importance of religion.

Studies that have examined the value of formal religious attendance in adults are not generalizable to emerging adults because of the low level of their formal religious attendance. Greenfield and Marks (2007) studied the correlation between frequent formal religious participation and subjective psychological well-being by analyzing responses to the National Survey of Midlife in the U.S., which included 3,032 participants between the ages of 25 and 74. This study, operating in the context of social identity theory, explored the potential linkage of participation and well-being as a result of identification as a member of a religious group. Frequent formal religious participation was associated with better mental health (Greenfield & Marks, 2007). Additionally, frequent participation in formal religious services predicted participants having stronger religious identities (Greenfield & Marks, 2007). Although emerging adults with strong religious identities may also benefit from the positive effects on psychological well-being identified in this study, the involvements by which emerging adults express religious identity are different. As emerging adults do not frequently participate in formal religious services, it is necessary to define their religious participation in a different manner.

Studying emerging adults' involvement in on-campus religious organizations has revealed the positive effects of that participation. Bryant (2007) conducted an analysis of longitudinal data derived from the Your First College Year survey. While the majority of survey respondents felt "very successful" in developing a social network on campus, this statement applied to 60% of religious group participants as opposed to 53% of participants who were involved in non-religious organizations (Bryant, 2007). While her findings showed a 10% increase in recurrent depressive feelings that was evenly distributed among both religious group participants and participants who were in non-religious organizations, religious group participants reported slightly higher levels of emotional health than those in non-religious organizations (Bryant 2007). Interestingly enough, when success in developing friendships was omitted from analyzing the relationship between involvement in religious or non-religious organizations and emotional well-being, Bryant's (2007) results showed that participation in religious groups inhibited emotional well-being. However, examining her results in more detail, she hypothesized that this lower level of general emotional well-being could have been a result of religious groups encouraging reflection on one's beliefs and cultural awareness which may inspire a difficult yet healthy struggle with existential topics and having one's own beliefs challenged (Bryant, 2007).

### ***Literature Critique***

Although about half of emerging adults have been identified as having a set of religious beliefs and finding religion generally important (Smith & Snell, 2009; Lee, 2002; Uecker et al., 2007), the traditional method of measuring religious expression through rate of religious service attendance may not capture the full picture in the ways that emerging adults express religiosity and find value in religious affiliation (Greenfield & Marks, 2010). There is a lack of research

about how emerging adults benefit from religious affiliation beyond holding individual beliefs systems and performing individual behaviors. As involvement in on-campus organizations has been found to bolster certain skills and provide benefits for members (Foreman & Retallick, 2016; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Mooney, 2010), it rationally follows that religious on-campus organizations may be a way in which religious emerging adult college students find value in religious involvement. Although emerging adults are influenced in their religious beliefs by their parents and upbringing (Arnett, 2000), college students are provided significant independence and room for identity exploration that is unique to their developmental group. Furthermore, in terms of level of involvement, on-campus religious organizations may be a happy medium between formal religious attendance and individual religious expression as they are a unique part of the college student experience and are spaces that allow for identity exploration.

The value of involvement in a religious on-campus organization may be measured through comparison to non-religious organizations. Social identity theory posits that these two types of groups are not so different when measuring the function of each community to its participants. This study aims to understand whether religious groups on campus support their members in a similar or different way than non-religious groups. This study builds on previous research exploring the benefits of involvement in on-campus organizations and the defining factors of religious emerging adults, although it explores the similarities and differences of religious and non-religious groups and deepens understanding of the value of community in religion for emerging adult college students.

### **Hypotheses**

I developed a series of general predictions that were informed by previous literature and guided my method of data collection. I predicted that emerging adult college students whose

primary on-campus involvement is religious would exhibit a stronger sense of community compared to students whose primary on-campus involvement is non-religious. Additionally, I predicted that length of involvement would have a significant impact on sense of community as students would have had more time to become involved in their organizations and therefore align their identities more strongly with that organization. Finally, I predicted that religiosity would not significantly relate to sense of community under the understanding that emerging adults' religious beliefs do not necessarily translate to religious involvement. In order to measure the relationships between these variables, I designed a survey and distributed it to the college students at DePaul University, which is the population of emerging adults with whom I have the greatest connection. All three hypotheses were disproved by my data, revealing important understandings about meaningful on-campus involvements and their most important facets.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

This study included 43 emerging adult college students at DePaul University, which is an urban Catholic university in Chicago, Illinois. They were predominantly between the ages of 18 and 23, with 3 participants reporting as being older than 23. The mean age of the 40 participants whose ages were 23 or under was 20.58 years old. 58.1% of the participants were female, and 44.2% identified an on-campus religious community as their primary group involvement. Participants were not asked about their ethnic or cultural background. To participate, the only requirements were being a DePaul student involved in at least one on-campus organization and being able to read English. Participants were allowed to choose more than one religious tradition with which to identify; 22 participants reported an affiliation with Catholicism, 5 with

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Protestantism, 6 with Judaism, 3 with Islam, 3 with Buddhism, 4 with no religion, and 6 with a religion that was not given as a choice.

### **Measures and Procedure**

A survey of 50 questions was administered in an online format. Two scales, the Sense of Community Index-2 and the Centrality of Religiosity Scale, were used to assess the primary interests of this study—participants' sense of community and their religiosity. The survey was comprised of 44 questions, and five demographics questions asking about age, gender, religious affiliation and religious involvement prior to beginning college were included at the end of the survey. A final optional question asked participants to include a statement that allowed space for any thoughts about the intersection of community and religion that was not covered in the set of standard questions. To distribute the survey, I contacted organizations through email and social media and briefly explained the topic of the project and the length of the survey. Additionally, I corresponded with the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim chaplains of religious groups at DePaul to reach out to more students involved in these organizations. The data collection process spanned five weeks.

#### ***Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2)***

Chavis and Acosta's (2008) Sense of Community Index 2 (SCI-2) has a flexible design that allows it to be applied to many different kinds of communities. This scale consists of 24 Likert-type questions that asked participants how true a statement was between "Not at all," "Somewhat," "Mostly" and "Completely." A question listed before the SCI-2 questions instructed participants to think about their primary group involvement at DePaul when answering the following questions and type the name of that community. The 24 items included a range of statements about the participant's chosen community that were meant to assess the role and

importance of that community in the life of the participant. For example, “I get important needs of mine met because I am a part of this community;” “I can recognize most of the members of this community;” “This community has good leaders;” and “Members of this community care about each other.” The scale was scored from 0 [“Not at all”] to 3 [“Completely”] points for each question for a range of 0-72 points for the SCI-2 composite score. (See Appendix A for full scale.)

### ***Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)***

Huber and Huber’s (2012) Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) was chosen for its specificity in studying five defined dimensions of religiosity, which are identified as public practice, private practice, ideology, intellectual perspective and religious experience. This scale includes fifteen Likert-type questions and has a flexible design that allows it also to assess spirituality. Five of the questions are split into two sub-questions in which one pertains more to religiousness and the other more to spirituality. Participants were instructed to answer the question that pertained more to their lives. For example, respondents could choose between “How often do you pray?” and “How often do you meditate?” Additionally, “How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life” and “How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are in one with all?” The scale was scored from 1 to 5 points for each question for a range of 0-75 points for the CRS composite score (see Appendix B for full scale.)

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis revealed a few main results. A series of statistical tests were run to explore significant relationships and effects within the data. I first conducted an independent samples t-

test to analyze the difference in the means of total SCI-2 scores between participants in religious organizations and those involved in non-religious organizations. There was not a significant difference in total SCI-2 scores for participants whose primary on-campus organization is religious ( $M = 56.89$ ,  $SD = 11.03$ ) compared to those whose primary on-campus organization is non-religious ( $M = 51.67$ ,  $SD = 10.51$ );  $t(41) = 1.59$ ,  $p < .12$ . Another independent samples t-test analyzed the difference in means for religiosity between those whose primary organizational involvement is religious ( $M = 60.05$ ,  $SD = 18.36$ ) and those whose is not ( $M = 39.58$ ,  $SD = 16.11$ ) and found that there was a significant difference between these mean scores ( $t(41) = 3.89$ ,  $p < .00$ ). To analyze the relationship between the composite scores computed for the SCI-2 and the composite score generated for the CRS, I ran a Pearson correlation and found that these composite scores were positively and significantly correlated ( $r = 0.31$ ,  $p < .04$ ). Higher scores on the SCI-2 were associated with higher scores on the CRS.

Statistical tests were run to analyze the impact of non-religious variables on sense of community. After naming their primary group involvement, participants were asked at the start of the survey if they have a leadership position in that organization. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate a potential interaction effect between the type of organization and the participants' level of involvement on sense of community. The interaction effect was nonsignificant ( $p < .32$ ), although leadership in an organization showed a significant main effect. To analyze this interaction effect, an independent samples t-test was conducted between having a leadership position and sense of community. Those who had a leadership position in their organization ( $M = 56.25$ ,  $SD = 9.19$ ) compared to those who did not ( $M = 47.36$ ,  $SD = 13.26$ ) showed a significantly higher level of sense of community ( $p < .012$ ). As the sample size was not large enough to demonstrate an interaction effect between having a leadership position and the



type of organization, it was not clear as to whether having a leadership position in a religious or non-religious organization could result in a higher sense of community. Finally, a one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the impact of length of time spent in the chosen organization (i.e. Less than one year, Between 1 and 2 years, Between 2 and 3 years, Between 3 and 4 years, and More than 4 years). There was not a statistically significant result ( $F(4, 38) = .736, p = .573$ ) for length of time spent in an organization on sense on community.

### Results

These tests can be interpreted into a few main results. Sense of community was not significantly higher in either religious or non-religious organizations. However, as having a larger sample size could have resulted in the mean differences being statistically significant, this result did not disprove my hypothesis that students in religious communities would experience a greater sense of community. As the focus of my study was on comparing religious and non-religious organizations, this result does not contradict articles within the literature review that discuss benefits of involvement in religious organizations. It suggests that assessing the full value of involvement in religious organizations should include factors beyond those defined benefits. Although neither type of organization was found to create a significantly greater sense of community for its participants, that does not mean that participants of either type of organization have a poor sense of community. The range of non-religious organizations that participants reported as their primary on-campus involvement was wide, including social fraternities and sororities, service immersion organizations, sports clubs, and professional development groups. The range of organizations represented helps generalize this main result across the scope of non-religious organizations available at universities.

Although type of organization was not a significant factor in participants' sense of community in this sample, the most significant effect on sense of community was found to be having a leadership position in an organization. This makes sense because having a leadership position in an organization generally indicates a greater level of involvement than being a member. Additionally, my second hypothesis that increased length of time spent in an organization would result in increased sense of community was disproved. This is logical in the context that having a leadership position accounted for heightened sense of community. While being involved in an organization may provide a satisfactory sense of community for an individual, the most effective way to increase sense of community is not simply by staying in the organization for a great length of time. It is important to become more involved through taking on responsibility within the group.

### **Discussion**

Leadership has a broad definition and may be applied in many ways to various on-campus organizations, although greater discussion is required to understand how each participant experiences sense of community and religiosity and how those meanings may be generalized. As this study included participants from a variety of religious traditions, exploring in detail the general terms used throughout this study may provide a background understanding.

#### ***Difference of "Community" Among Religious Traditions***

While "community" is a general and encompassing term, it is experienced and expressed differently by Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Jewish people. These were the four main religious traditions represented in this study's sample. It is important to briefly explore the various ways in which this term may be construed in order to contextualize how students of

different faith backgrounds may have interpreted survey questions about sense of community. At the end of the present study's survey, an optional open response question was provided so that students could express their varying perspectives on what the standardized scales may have lacked in allowing for personal expression. This question asked: "Is there anything else you want to add as you reflect on the intersection of community and religion that was not covered in this set of standard questions?" A few students responded with elucidating responses about their religious backgrounds or lack thereof. One female student who identified as being older than 23 and Catholic remarked,

There is a huge benefit for society when people still have a moral compass and foster spiritual life. Catholic faith is not restricted to the private sphere it is very social too and requires active participation in the world to promote human dignity, social justice and the common good. Everyday people find it more strange to have faith but I truly believe that being in a relationship with God makes you truly happy because you know you are loved, you strive to live a holy life and make everyone around you the best version of themselves.

This student's perspective aligns with the predominant environment within DePaul University, which is a Catholic university that identifies principally with the religious teachings of St. Vincent de Paul which center on social justice, inclusiveness and serving the community (DePaul University, 2018). Catholic students at DePaul may identify more generally with the perspective of a social religious practice centered on an inclusive community.

There are a wide variety of Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds with a range of cultural diversity in the United States, although there is general support of a unified Muslim ummah, or community, that embraces that diversity (Muedini, 2009). None of the three students

who identified as Muslim on this survey chose to respond to the open response question to express their personal understanding of religious community. On a national scale, however, it is important to communicate that Muslim emerging adult college students have a different daily expression of religious life than many of their non-Muslim peers. Diamant & Gecewicz (2017) found that Muslim millennials are as likely as older Muslim adults to claim religion as being “very important” in their lives, reporting at 66% and 64% respectively. Additionally, 44% of millennials attend religious services weekly or more often compared to 42% of older adults (Diamant & Gecewicz, 2017). This is very important to note, as the opposite trend is found among Catholics, mainline Protestants and historically black Protestants, with the exception of Evangelical Protestant millennials who also maintain rates similar to older adults (Diamant & Gecewicz, 2017).

Alternatively, Jewish Americans hold a cultural identity that may be distinct from religiousness, as 22% of Jewish people surveyed by the Pew Research Center (2013) identified as having no religion. While 62% of Jews asserted that being Jewish is related to culture and ancestry, only 15% described it as mainly a matter of religion (Pew Research Center, 2013). One 19-year-old Jewish male student who responded to the present study’s survey remarked on this division by commenting that “As it pertains to Judaism, many, if not most Jews are secular by nature and relate to Jewish culture and heritage and tradition rather than religion.” Another 19-year-old male who identified as both Jewish and Buddhist echoed this sentiment, commenting that “My identity is strongly influenced by my religious community as a cultural and heritage based identity rather than one of specific divine based religious practice.” For many Jewish students, religiosity may not a unique aspect to on-campus religious organizations that identify as

Jewish organizations. In that case, a cultural perspective may be the most accurate lens by which to view their interpretation of having a sense of community.

In assessing the relationship between Jewish sense of community and religiosity, understanding results may be complex. Rosmarin, Pargament, & Mahoney (2008) did not find a significant relationship between Jewish religiousness (e.g. frequent prayer, synagogue attendance, and traditional religious affiliation) and measures of mental health such as anxiety, depression and happiness. Rosmarin et al. (2008) found a relationship when studying theoretically based variables of religiousness, such as trust or mistrust in God. In this study, mistrust in God was more highly correlated with the chosen mental health variables as opposed to trust in God. The authors evaluated mistrust in God as related to painful life circumstances, including a lack of social support (Rosmarin et al., 2008). Therefore, the mental health value of religious affiliation may be found most strongly in community involvement unrelated to synagogue attendance and measures of religiosity. The unique cultural expression of Judaism may be more important in a Jewish community than more overt elements of religious affiliation.

### **Strengths & Weaknesses**

Through literature review, it became clear that the religiosity of emerging adults had not been previously examined in-depth in the context of the communal value of on-campus religious organizations. This study took the perspective of comparing religious and non-religious organizations to isolate the value of religion in experiencing the benefits of feeling part of a community in college. The results of this study may help inform how on-campus organizations aim to involve new members. Additionally, the quantitative survey method applied in this study allow for relationships to be identified and interpreted to inform specific suggestions for organizations hoping to increase sense of community among their members.

Although the quotes from survey respondents included in this paper give a valuable yet narrow look into their varied perspectives, a fully qualitative method could better express the nuances that were not covered by the two scales chosen for this study's survey method. Furthermore, since the data was self-reported, there is the chance for inaccuracy. A larger sample size could also have provided clearer and stronger relationships between the chosen variables. Additionally, the proportion of religious traditions represented was strongly dominated by Catholic and Christian students. This is fairly representative of the population from which the sample was drawn, a Catholic university, although further research into this topic should explore populations that are not predominantly Catholic or Christian in order to understand how these results may have been influenced by specificities of those religious traditions. Finally, future studies may explore more than one of the organizations that students find important, as engagement and involvement may be split between multiple organizations instead of consolidated in a single primary involvement.

### **Conclusion**

The primary finding of this study, that students whose primary on-campus organization is religious do not necessarily have a greater sense of community than those whose primary on-campus organization is non-religious, reveals that religiousness may not be a defining factor in the quality of their communal environments. Rather, both types of on-campus groups provide the opportunity for satisfactory sense of community by offering leadership opportunities that are based on greater involvement in the organization. Furthermore, active participation in an organization, instead of merely an extended period of membership, is required to reap the benefits of community identification. Of course, sensitivity must be practiced when generalizing

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relationships between sense of community and religiosity to students of various religious traditions.

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**APPENDIX A**

The following questions about community refer to your primary group involvement **at DePaul**.

Is this a religious community?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Please write the name of organization you are most involved in at DePaul.\*

How long have you been involved in this community?\*

- A) Less than one year
- B) Between 1 and 2 years
- C) Between 2 and 3 years
- D) Between 3 and 4 years
- E) More than 4 years

Do you have a leadership position in this community?\*

- A) Yes
- B) No

How important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other community members?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Prefer Not to be Part of This Community	Not Important at All	Not Very Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important

1. I get important needs of mine met because I am a part of this community.

- A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

2. Community members and I value the same things.

- A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

3. This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met.

- A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

4. Being a member of this community makes me feel good.

- A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

5. When I have a problem, I can talk about it with members of this community.

## Running head: INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON ORGANIZATIONS

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

6. People in this community have similar needs, priorities, and goals.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

7. I can trust people in this community.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

8. I can recognize most of the members of this community.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

9. Most community members know me.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

10. This community has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

11. I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

12. Being a member of this community is a part of my identity.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

13. Fitting into this community is important to me.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

14. This community can influence other communities.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

15. I care about what other community members think of me.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

16. I have influence over what this community is like.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

17. If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved.

## Running head: INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON ORGANIZATIONS

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

18. This community has good leaders.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

19. It is very important to me to be a part of this community.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

20. I am with other community members a lot and enjoy being with them.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

21. I expect to be a part of this community for a long time.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

22. Members of this community have shared important events together, such as holidays, celebrations, or disasters.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

23. I feel hopeful about the future of this community.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

24. Members of this community care about each other.

A) Not at all      B) Somewhat      C) Mostly      D) Completely

*\*Question added for current study and is not part of the original standardized set of questions*

## APPENDIX B

**1. How often do you think about religious issues?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very often      Often      Occasionally      Rarely      Never

**2. To what extent do you believe that Gods, deities, or something divine exists?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so      Quite a bit      Moderately      Not very much      Not at all

**3. How often do you take part in religious services?**

- A) Several times a day
- B) Once a day
- C) More than once a week
- D) Once a week
- E) One to three times a month F) A few times a year
- G) Less than a few times a year H) Never

**Between 4a and 4b, answer the question that pertains more to your life (answer one).**

**4a. How often do you pray?**

- A) Several times a day
- B) Once a day
- C) More than once a week
- D) Once a week
- E) One to three times a month F) A few times a year
- G) Less than a few times a year H) Never

**4b. How often do you meditate?**

- A) Several times a day B) Once a day
- C) More than once a week
- D) Once a week
- E) One to three times a month F) A few times a year
- G) Less than a few times a year H) Never

**Between 5a and 5b, answer the question that pertains more to your life (answer one).**

**5a. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life?**

5	4	3	2	1
Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never

**5b. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are in one with all?**

5	4	3	2	1
Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never

**6. How interested are you in learning more about religious topics?**

Running head: INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON ORGANIZATIONS

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so    Quite a bit    Moderately    Not very much    Not at all

**7. To what extent do you believe in an afterlife—e.g. immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead or reincarnation?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so    Quite a bit    Moderately    Not very much    Not at all

**8. How important is it to take part in religious services?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so    Quite a bit    Moderately    Not very much    Not at all

**Between 9a and 9b, answer the question that pertains more to your life (answer one).**

**9a. How important is personal prayer for you?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so    Quite a bit    Moderately    Not very much    Not at all

**9b. How important is meditation for you?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so    Quite a bit    Moderately    Not very much    Not at all

**Between 10a and 10b, answer the question that pertains more to your life (answer one).**

**10a. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God, deities, or something divine wants to communicate or to reveal something to you?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very often            Often            Occasionally            Rarely            Never

**10b. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are touched by a divine power?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Running head: INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON ORGANIZATIONS

Very often      Often      Occasionally      Rarely      Never

**11. How often do you keep yourself informed about religious questions through radio, television, internet, newspapers, or books?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very often      Often      Occasionally      Rarely      Never

**12. In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so    Quite a bit      Moderately    Not very much    Not at all

**13. How important is it for you to be connected to a religious community?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Very much so    Quite a bit      Moderately    Not very much    Not at all

**Between 14a and 14b, answer the question that pertains more to your life (answer one).**

**14a. How often do you pray spontaneously when inspired by daily situations?**

- A) Several times a day
- B) Once a day
- C) More than once a week
- D) Once a week
- E) One to three times a month
- F) A few times a year
- G) Less than a few times a year
- H) Never

**14b. How often do you try to connect to the divine spontaneously when inspired by daily situations?**

- A) Several times a day
- B) Once a day
- C) More than once a week
- D) Once a week
- E) One to three times a month
- F) A few times a year
- G) Less than a few times a year
- H) Never

**15. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God, deities, or something divine is present?**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1



Running head: INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON ORGANIZATIONS

Very often      Often      Occasionally      Rarely      Never