

Religious Service Attendance Among Immigrants

Evidence From the New Immigrant Survey—Pilot

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A growing body of research by scholars of religion and immigration analyzes the religious organizations started by post-1965 immigrants to the United States. Little research, however, focuses on patterns in religious service attendance. The authors use pilot data from the New Immigrant Survey, a nationally representative sample of new legal immigrants to the United States, to systematically consider, for the first time, how demographic, familial, employment, household language, and migration factors influence regular religious service attendance for new immigrants from different religious traditions. Findings lend some support to the theory that immigrants who are less integrated into American society are more likely than others to regularly attend religious services. These preliminary conclusions generate broader hypotheses and potential theories about ways in which the norms of different religious traditions, the availability of religious centers, and the extent of immigrants' ties to their ethnic communities influence their regular religious service attendance.

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First-generation immigrants compose more than 11% of the U.S. population (Lee & Bean, 2004).¹ A large fraction of these immigrants are religious, as described by a growing literature about religion among post-1965 immigrants to the United States (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2003; Warner & Wittner, 1998). Much of the existing research on religion among immigrants focuses on the religious organizations started by new immigrants and describes how immigrants might contribute to and even change existing American religious organizations (Cadge, 2005; Chen, 2002; Ecklund, 2005a; Hurh & Kim, 1990; V. Kwon,

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Ebaugh, & Hagan, 1997; Warner, 2000; Wuthnow & Hackett, 2003). The American Catholic church, for example, is receiving large numbers of immigrants from Mexico, Central America, the Philippines, and other largely Catholic regions around the globe (Menjívar, 1999, 2003; Mooney 2002). In response, the larger Catholic church and individual parishes across the country are making a range of institutional changes to provide religious services to these newcomers. Large numbers of Korean, Chinese, and African ethnic congregations are entering major Protestant denominations, and many individual Protestant churches are receiving increasing numbers of immigrants into their congregations (Ecklund, 2005a, 2005b; H. Kwon, Kim, & Warner, 2001; Min & Kim, 2002).

Immigrants contact and become involved with religious organizations for a wide range of reasons, including the desire for religious and spiritual support and the opportunity to spend time with others from their ethnic or language groups. One of the most studied roles of immigrant congregations is the kinds of formal and informal social services they provide that aide in the process of adaptation (Bankston & Zhou, 1996; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Min, 1992). Some religious organizations, like those Kenneth Guest (2003) described in New York's Chinatown, provide connections to housing, food, and other necessities of life for the largely illegal immigrants who frequent them. Other organizations offer English-language instruction and classes to help with navigating the naturalization process. For example, Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Chafetz (2000), in their study of immigrant religious organizations in the Houston area, found that such centers provide both formal and informal job networks, classes in native language for the children of immigrants, and help with locating housing for new immigrants, among other social services. Although many of these services are offered to first-generation immigrants, others are offered to their children. For example, at several Cambodian Buddhist temples, monks provide guidance for youth (Easton-Waller, 2000), and some Vietnamese Catholic and Protestant congregations provide formal ethnic programs for second-generation children. Such services are positively associated with high educational attainment (Bankston & Zhou, 1996).

Existing research paints richly detailed portraits of diverse immigrant religious organizations and the religious and social lives of individual immigrants based on these primarily ethnographic case studies of individual religious organizations and collectives of immigrant religious centers in particular cities such as Houston, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles (Cadge, 2004, 2005; Cadge & Bender, 2004; Chen, 2002; Ecklund, 2005a; Stevens, 2004; Yang, 1999; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001b). These case studies greatly expand our knowledge of the individual religious lives of and religious organizations founded by immigrants. They are limited, however, in the extent to which they enable comparisons across immigrant groups, both those from diverse national origins and diverse religious traditions and those who live in different parts of the country. Until recently, we have not had the kind of large-scale

survey data needed to understand broader patterns in the religious beliefs and practices of immigrants related to the reciprocal influences of immigration on religion and religion on the process of immigration. Lack of data about immigrants' religious lives mirrors broader data limitations faced by scholars of immigration. General studies of immigrants are based mainly on small surveys of selected immigrant populations or the few immigrants included in surveys of the general population, such as the Current Population Survey and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2000c).

Here we begin to fill these gaps in existing research by analyzing the New Immigrant Survey–Pilot (NIS-P), the first nationally representative panel survey of new legal U.S. immigrants that addresses many of the data limitations in other surveys. The NIS-P was designed to assess the feasibility of a national longitudinal survey of legal immigrants that will gather information about a range of topics.² The NIS-P includes two questions about religion: one about respondents' religious affiliation and the other about their attendance at religious services. The principal investigators for the NIS-P have written descriptively about the religious demographics of new legal immigrants elsewhere (Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2000b, 2003). We expand their work here by focusing specifically on predictors of regular attendance at religious services for new immigrants. Although the NIS-P did not ask questions about the demographics of the religious organizations immigrants attend, how they create and are changing those organizations, or the kinds of educational and social services they receive, it does allow examination of how regularly different immigrant groups attend religious services and how different factors influence their attendance, questions that provide important context and underlying theoretical development to existing ethnographic studies and future studies on the various ways in which immigrants link with religious organizations for the purpose of finding social services.

Scholars of American religion have long been concerned about the religious service attendance of native-born Americans, viewing service attendance as an indicator of their broader religious involvement and participation.³ In this article, we provide an initial assessment of the factors that influence regular religious attendance for new legal immigrants. We pay specific attention to the influence of demographic, familial, employment, household language, and migration factors, such as when respondents first arrive in the United States and how much time they have spent outside of the United States since their arrival. These hypotheses are derived both from existing research about the religious lives of new immigrants and from studies of religious service attendance among native-born Americans. Broader studies of religious service attendance, like those based on the General Social Survey, often include information about attendance for a nationally representative sample of Americans without attention to their religious preferences. In the NIS-P, the question about religious service attendance was asked only of those immigrants who expressed a religious preference.

We, therefore, restrict our analyses of religious service attendance to those 85% of respondents who reported a religious preference and were, consequently, asked about attendance at religious services.⁴

Our findings show a number of patterns in religious attendance among new immigrants that are both similar to and different from those found among native-born Americans. Like the native-born American population and populations around the globe (Miller & Stark, 2002), immigrant women are more likely than immigrant men to attend religious services regularly. It is surprising, however, that these results are not statistically significant. Furthermore, those with less education, those living in the Midwest, and those who speak a non-English language at home are more likely to regularly attend religious services. In contrast, those who are not Christian, specifically Buddhists and Hindus, and those who work outside the home are less likely to attend regularly. Although preliminary, taken together, these findings suggest broader arguments about relationships between the involvement of immigrants in broader U.S. society and their regular attendance at religious services. They also suggest arguments about the connection between access to religious services and organizations for members of certain religious traditions and the religious participation of immigrants. These findings lead us toward a preliminary theory for the link between religious attendance and immigrant incorporation. We argue that the less incorporated new immigrants are into various facets of American society the more likely they are to attend religious services regularly.

Background

Immigrants' Religions and Religious Attendance

The earliest studies of religion and immigration in the United States primarily view religion functionally, pointing to the various ways religious beliefs and organizations eased the challenges immigrants faced on arrival by facilitating the formation of ethnic communities among people from the same home countries (Mol, 1971; Smith, 1978). In *The Uprooted* and the now classic *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, Oscar Handlin (1951) and Will Herberg (1955), respectively, argued for the importance of religion in the lives of immigrants, particularly first-generation immigrants to the United States. In the 1960s, Milton Gordon (1964) argued that immigrants used religion to eventually assimilate into the American mainstream through a series of stages, shedding the ethnic identities they had in their sending nations and becoming more like middle-class, White, Christian Americans.

Among scholars who posited a relatively straightforward process of immigrant assimilation—a theory that asserts immigrants would largely become like other Americans—two broad and conflicting arguments emerged. Some have argued that

religious organizations acted as a kind of “bridge” that facilitated immigrant assimilation and mobility (Barton, 1975; Smith, 1978), whereas others have argued that religion provided more of a “buffer,” which slowed the process of assimilation, serving as what Andrew Greeley (1972) called a “mobility trap.”

Immigrant religious organizations in the United States include religious centers, such as the many Catholic parishes and Protestant congregations that existed before immigrants arrived in the United States. They also include a wide range of Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, Buddhist temples, and Christian groups that immigrants started and sustained after their arrival. Studies of religion and immigration among post-1965 immigrants to the United States illustrate how this broad variety of religious organizations serves, under different circumstances in both bridging and buffering capacities. Some studies show how immigrants find resources in their religious communities that aid the process of adaptation; for example, religious organizations help immigrants learn English skills, provide social services, and create job networks, resources that assist immigrants in their incorporation (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Min, 1992). In contrast, Ebaugh and Chafetz (1999) also described the ways in which religious groups sometimes act as buffers to the process of incorporation. Ebaugh and Chafetz’s study finds that immigrant women gain power and use religion to reproduce ethnicity through their participation in immigrant religious organizations in the Houston area. Pyong Gap Min (1992), in his work on Korean immigrant religion, further argued that first-generation Korean immigrants sometimes use religion to retain national linkages, which might often serve as a kind of buffer to involvements in broader American society.

None of these studies, however, is based on the kind of systematic cross-sectional survey data needed to test assertions about the role of religion in bridging, buffering, or some combination of both more broadly. Before questions are asked about the multiple ways that religion can and does influence the lives of immigrants, it is necessary for scholars to understand which immigrants attend or become involved in religious organizations in the United States and what factors assist or impede their involvement. Existing studies rarely consider these foundational questions, primarily because they focus on religious centers themselves, neglecting the kind of information that would enable comparisons across individuals, such as access to information about people who are not involved in religious centers. Comparisons among ethnic groups and between different religious traditions, as well as comparisons of those who attend religious services regularly with those who do not attend, are also not possible with these research designs.

There are many implicit assertions, as well as those grounded in individual case studies of immigrants’ religious communities, about the reasons that might influence religious attendance. Arguments in recent research point to a number of factors that may influence whether immigrants are involved with religious organizations and how regularly they participate given the norms of their particular religious traditions (Yang & Ebaugh, 2001b), their geographic proximity to an appropriate religious center, the

range of services available at that center (Min, 1992), and a number of demographic factors, in particular gender, employment situation, and timing of arrival to the United States (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 1999; Hurh & Kim, 1990).

A separate body of literature about the religious service attendance of native-born Americans further informs questions about the religious service attendance of immigrants. Much recent research about religious service, primarily "church," attendance in the United States focuses on changes in reported attendance (Chaves, 1989; Firebaugh & Harley, 1991; Hadaway, Marler, & Chaves, 1998; Hout & Greeley, 1987; Iannaccone & Everton, 2004; Marler & Hadaway, 1999) and methodological problems that lead to overreporting of religious service attendance (Caplow, 1998; Hadaway, Marler, & Chaves, 1993, 1998; Hout & Greeley, 1998; Presser & Stinson, 1998; Smith, 1998; Woodberry, 1998). Although religious service attendance is very likely overreported in national surveys, we assert here that it is still useful as a broader indicator of the interest in and commitment to religious organizations among new U.S. immigrants.

A number of themes and hypotheses based in the general literature on church attendance inform our consideration of factors that might influence religious attendance among new legal immigrants. First, multiple studies suggest that a range of demographic factors influence religious service attendance. Older people, African Americans, and those with more education, specifically religious education, attend more regularly (Ploch & Hastings, 1994). Women almost always attend more regularly than men, the reasons for which are the subject of considerable debate (Hoge & Roozen, 1979; Hout & Greeley, 1987; Lummis, 2004; Miller & Hoffman, 1995; Miller & Stark, 2002; Ploch & Hastings, 1994; Stark, 2002; Walter & Davie, 1998). Howard Bahr (1970) and others have argued further that family life course factors, specifically marital status and whether an individual has children, may influence religious service attendance, with attendance increasing after marriage and peaking when individuals have school-age children who, it is assumed, they want to teach about their religious traditions, although empirical evidence for these patterns is mixed (Mueller & Cooper, 1986; Roozen, McKinney, & Thompson, 1990; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995). Employment factors alone, and in combination with gender, are also hypothesized to influence religious service attendance. Some studies suggest that employment status has a different influence on women when compared to men. For example, de Vaus (1984) found that work has no influence on women's service attendance in the United States, but de Vaus and other scholars found that men who work full-time attend services more regularly than men who work part-time or not at all (Edgell, 2005). Additional considerations, like the strength and salience of religious belief, also influence religious service attendance (Ploch & Hastings, 1995, 1998).

Hypotheses

We combine insights from research on religion and immigration as well as on religious service attendance among native-born Americans to consider five sets of

hypotheses about religious service attendance among new immigrants. First, we investigate demographic factors. Based on the previous research on these topics, we expect that older people, those with less education, and women will attend services more regularly than those who are younger, those with more education, and men. We also expect religious preference to influence attendance in various ways based on the norms of different religious traditions, such as the emphasis on weekly attendance for Catholics and Protestants as well as the availability of religious centers for these groups. One hypothesis would be that religious norms about attendance are less important in the United States when compared to a country of origin because as some scholars have argued, the American religious environment encourages a movement of all religions toward a uniform congregation-focused model, which emphasizes the importance of weekly attendance (Warner, 2000; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001a). However, here we hypothesize that Christians (Catholics and Protestants) will be more likely to regularly attend services than non-Christians, primarily because of the wider range of Christian religious organizations available to immigrants in the United States in comparison to religious centers in non-Christian traditions.

Second, we consider how family life course factors, such as marital status and whether an individual has children, influence regular attendance. We hypothesize that people who are married will attend more regularly than the nonmarried. Furthermore, because of the desire people might have to socialize their children in their traditions, we expect that individuals with children will be more likely to regularly attend religious services than those without children.

Third, we examine measures of employment. In contrast to studies of native-born Americans, we expect employment to operate differently in the immigrant population. We expect that immigrants who are not employed will be more involved with religious organizations than those who are employed because of their greater availability, time, and potential interest in gathering regularly with others outside their families, as well as the access such organizations might provide to employment networks.

Fourth, as a rough proxy of the commitment individuals have to their ethnic communities, we expect those who speak a non-English language in their household to attend religious services more frequently than those who primarily speak English in their home, as a way of gathering with others in their language or ethnic group.

Finally, we examine a number of migration-related factors. Specifically, we expect the length of time in the United States to influence church attendance. Because regularly attending religious services is one of the central ways immigrants establish and develop ties with others from their home countries, we expect the most recent immigrants to attend religious services more regularly than those who have been in the United States for a longer period of time and potentially have other venues available for establishing networks.⁵ All of these hypotheses, but particularly the last two, assume that the majority of immigrants worship with others from their home countries or who at least share their non-English language, an assumption that has extensive support based on existing qualitative research but is yet to be tested in broader survey data.

Taken together, these hypotheses suggest two broad and competing arguments. One argument is that factors that lead recent immigrants to be less socially integrated in American society, such as being older, speaking a non-English language at home, being part of a non-Christian religion, or not being employed, might lead them to be more regularly involved in their religious organizations because these organizations provide the kinds of religious and ethnic community support not available in other parts of their lives. A competing argument is that if we conceive of these religious organizations as a primary way that immigrants become involved in mainstream American life, it could be those who are most involved in different aspects of American society through their work, their use of English at home, their longer period of time in the United States, and their Christian religious tradition who would be most likely to be regularly involved in their religious centers, meaning that their religious organizations would act more as bridges than as buffers.

Data and Method

We examined patterns in religious service attendance for recent immigrants using data from the NIS-P, a panel survey of a nationally representative sample of new legal immigrants to the United States. This stratified random sample was drawn from the administrative records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, which recorded all persons who were admitted to legal permanent residence during July and August 1996. The sample was stratified to undersample children and oversample employment-based immigrants, those who obtain an immigrant visa on the basis of their occupational skills.⁶

Baseline interviews were started in October of 1996 and ultimately conducted with 1,130 adult immigrants, 62% of the sample. These interviews were conducted by telephone. To ensure high-quality information, interviews were conducted in 1 of 18 different languages. Follow-up surveys were conducted 6 and 12 months later, with 92% and 95% response rates, respectively. For more information, see Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, and Smith (2000a, 2000b, 2000c) and *NIS—The New Immigrant Survey* (n.d.).

Questions about religious preference and religious service attendance were asked in the 12-month wave of the survey, which included 985 total respondents. The first question, “What is your religious preference? Is it Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, some other religion, or no religion?” showed that almost two thirds were Christian, primarily Catholic followed by Protestant, with a sizeable proportion indicating that they had no religion (Jasso et al. 2003). Those 784 respondents who expressed a religious preference were then asked, “How often do you attend religious services?” with answers ranging from never to every day (Jasso et al. 2003). Among those who reported a religious preference, close to half (47%) reported attending religious services nearly every week or more. Less than 10% reported never attending (see Table 1).⁷

Table 1
Attendance at Religious Services, Full Sample

Attendance	Percentage
Never	9.9
Less than once a year	1.6
Once or twice a year	9.9
Several times a year	13.2
Once a month	9.5
2 to 3 times a month	8.8
Nearly every week	5.8
Every week	30.9
Several times a week	6.3
Every day	4.0

Note: New Immigrant Survey–Pilot, 12 month wave, $N = 784$; weighted data.

To investigate the factors that influence regular religious service attendance, we define respondents who attend religious services nearly every week or more as “regular attenders” and those who attend less frequently as “nonregular attenders.”⁸ We restricted the sample to those 733 respondents for whom we had complete or close to complete information on all of our explanatory variables.⁹ We conducted logistic regression analyses in five steps. First, we examined a logistic regression model for the odds of regularly attending religious services based on independent variables such as demographic factors, including gender, age at the 12-month survey, educational attainment, where respondents lived in the United States, and religious preference. The omitted categories in this model were male, age 18 to 24 years, less than high school education, residence in the northeastern United States, and Catholic religious preference.

Second, we added independent measures of familial status to this model, specifically measures of whether the respondent was single, never married (omitted category), married/cohabiting, or separated/divorced/widowed and whether a respondent had their own children living with them at the time of the 12-month survey.¹⁰ Third, we added a measure of employment that assessed whether the respondent was not working for pay (omitted category) when the 12-month wave of the survey was conducted, working for pay for less than 40 hours per week, or working for pay for 40 hours or more per week. Fourth, we examined whether languages other than English were spoken in the household and added a measure to the logistic regression model that described whether English only (omitted category), English and other non-English languages, or only non-English languages were spoken in the respondent’s household. And finally, we added two migration measures to the model as independent variables. One measure indicated when the respondent first arrived in the United States, before 1990 (omitted category), between 1991 and 1995, or in 1996 or later.

The second measure described the percentage of time, since arriving in the United States, which the respondent has spent outside the United States. A dummy variable was created to indicate those who spent 10% or more of their time outside of the United States since their first arrival. We focused on 10% because it was the mean percentage of time respondents in this sample spent outside the United States since arrival.

Findings

As described in Table 2, just under half of respondents (46.7%) in the sample attend religious services regularly (once a week or more). The largest proportion (30.8%) attends weekly and 10% attend several times a week or more. Among those who attend services infrequently, the largest proportion (23.9%) attends between one and several times a year. It is important to remember that this information represents only those in the NIS-P who expressed a religious preference. The percentage of immigrants who regularly attend religious services would undoubtedly go down if those who do not have a religious preference were also asked the question.

Demographic Factors and Attendance

To better understand the patterns in religious service attendance, Model 1 in Table 3 assesses the odds of regularly attending religious services when demographic factors are used as predictors. Similar to among native-born people, women are more likely than men to regularly attend religious services, but this finding is not significant for this group of immigrants.¹¹ In comparison to findings from the United States and abroad, which show that women almost always attend religious services more regularly than men, these findings might suggest that immigrant women attend less frequently than in their home countries or than native-born women or that immigrant men attend more than native-born men or men in their home countries, as suggested by qualitative research. Qualitative U.S.-based studies by Ebaugh and Chafetz (1999), Kurien (1999, 2001), Min (1992), and others argue that the process of migration may decrease the status of men in their families and ethnic communities in a way that leads them to be more involved with U.S. religious communities as a way of regaining that status. Without baseline information about the extent to which immigrant women and men in this sample attend religious services in their home countries, however, further conclusions based on these findings are not possible.

In addition, this analysis suggests that older people are less likely than those younger than age 25 to regularly attend religious services, but overall, these results were not significant (only for those aged 36 to 45), perhaps because of the relative youth of this population overall. People with more education are also less likely to regularly attend religious services, although this is only a significant finding when

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Percentage	Variable	Percentage
Gender ^a		Lived with their children at base ^a	
Male	43	Yes	50
Female	57	No	50
Age ^a		Lived with their children—12 months ^{abc}	
18 to 25	21	Yes	56
26 to 35	34	No	44
36 to 45	22	Employment status ^c	
45 and older	22	Not currently working for pay	35
Education ^a		Work less than 40 hours	17
Less than high school graduate	16	Work 40 hours or more	48
High school graduate	35	Languages spoken in household ^a	
College graduate	20	English only	13
Postgraduate degree	7	English and one or more others	38
Unknown	21	Only non-English languages	49
Region ^a		Year of first arrival in United States ^a	
Northeast	39	Before 1990	27
Midwest	14	Between 1990 and 1995	38
South	22	After 1996	35
West	25	Time outside United States since arrival ^{abc}	
Religious preference ^c		Away more than 10% of time	22
Catholic	50	Away less than 10% of time	78
Protestant	22	Religious service attendance ^c	
Muslim	10	Never	10.0
Jewish	3	Less than once a year	1.6
Buddhist	5	Once or twice a year	10.4
Hindu	4	Several times a year	13.5
Orthodox	5	Once a month	9.5
Other	1	2 to 3 times a month	8.4
Marital/Family status ^c		Nearly every week	5.9
Single/Never married	19	Every week	30.8
Married/Cohabiting	74	Several times a week	6.2
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	7	Every day	3.8

Note: New Immigrant Survey—Pilot, $N = 733$; weighted data.

a. Data collected at baseline.

b. Data collected at 6-month wave.

c. Data collected at 12-month wave.

high school graduates (i.e., those whose maximum level of education is high school graduation) are compared to those with less than a high school education. Where immigrants live in the United States also has some influence on religious attendance, with those living in the Midwest more likely than those in the Northeast to regularly attend services.

Table 3
Social Factors Influencing Regular Religious Service Attendance
(Adjusted Odds Ratios From the Logistic Regression of Regular
Religious Service Attendance by Selected Independent Variables)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Demographics					
Female	1.26 (.17)	1.33 (.17)	1.05 (.19)	1.02 (.19)	1.01 (.19)
Age 26 to 35	.82 (.28)	.69 (.31)	.80 (.32)	.83 (.33)	.84 (.33)
Age 36 to 45	.56 (.25)**	.51 (.26)**	.63 (.26)*	.67 (.27)	.69 (.27)
Age 45 and older	.85 (.26)	.80 (.27)	1.08 (.27)	1.18 (.27)	1.21 (.27)
High school graduate	.55 (.26)**	.55 (.26)**	.53 (.26)**	.59 (.27)**	.59 (.27)**
College graduate	.88 (.28)	.87 (.29)	.88 (.28)	.97 (.29)	.97 (.30)
Postgraduate	.76 (.38)	.75 (.38)	.70 (.38)	.77 (.40)	.76 (.40)
Unknown	.98 (.29)	.99 (.30)	.86 (.30)	.91 (.31)	.93 (.31)
Midwest	1.70 (.29)*	1.77 (.29)**	1.81 (.29)**	1.73 (.29)*	1.74 (.29)*
South	.92 (.23)	.93 (.23)	.98 (.23)	.99 (.24)	1.01 (.24)
West	1.36 (.22)	1.43 (.22)	1.36 (.23)	1.24 (.23)	1.26 (.23)
Religious preference					
Protestant	1.79 (.21)**	1.80 (.21)**	1.80 (.21)**	2.16 (.22)**	2.16 (.23)**
Muslim	.90 (.30)	.92 (.30)	.77 (.31)	.76 (.31)	.76 (.32)
Jewish	1.12 (.51)	1.18 (.52)	.86 (.49)	.83 (.51)	.90 (.52)
Buddhist	.10 (.60)**	.09 (.59)**	.09 (.58)**	.08 (.57)**	.08 (.58)**
Hindu	.26 (.47)**	.25 (.47)**	.21 (.48)**	.22 (.48)**	.21 (.48)**
Orthodox	.17 (.54)**	.17 (.54)**	.15 (.53)**	.15 (.54)**	.16 (.53)**
Other	1.01 (.80)	.96 (.82)	1.01 (.84)	1.01 (.85)	.99 (.88)
Family situation					
Married/Cohabiting		.63 (.35)	.69 (.36)	.67 (.36)	.65 (.36)
Divorced/Separated/Widowed		1.04 (.28)	1.11 (.28)	1.00 (.29)	.99 (.30)
Kids at 12 months		.84 (.20)	.78 (.20)	.67 (.21)*	.67 (.21)*
Employment					
Working 1 < 40 hours			.41 (.27)**	.40 (.28)**	.41 (.28)**
Working 40+ hours			.41 (.22)**	.41 (.22)**	.42 (.22)**
Household language					
English and others				2.35 (.30)**	2.30 (.30)**
Only non-English				2.75 (.29)**	2.70 (.29)**
Migration measures					
Arrived 1990 to 1995					1.00 (.22)
Arrived 1996+					1.03 (.24)
Away >10%					1.25 (.22)
Intercept	1.24 (.32)	1.45 (.35)	2.77 (.39)**	1.22 (.47)	1.12 (.48)

Note: New Immigrant Survey–Pilot, $N = 733$; weighted data.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$.

The Importance of Religious Tradition

Religious tradition also has a significant influence on regular religious service attendance. Overall, Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, are more likely than non-Christians to regularly attend religious services, Protestants are significantly more likely than Catholics to attend, and Orthodox are less likely to attend. Non-Christians, specifically Buddhists and Hindus, are less likely than Catholics to regularly attend religious services, as described in Model 1 in Table 3. Muslims are also less likely than Catholics to attend religious services regularly but were not significantly less likely to do so.

Although current data limitations make it difficult to thoroughly disentangle the reasons religious tradition is a significant predictor of religious service attendance, these findings could represent one or both of two possibilities. There are different norms in many non-Christian religious traditions, particularly Buddhist and Hindu traditions, regarding weekly religious service attendance, which may influence the likelihood of regular religious service attendance. Furthermore, there is also less availability of Buddhist and Hindu temples for these respondents to regularly attend when compared to Christian congregations in the United States. The high degree of regular religious service among both Catholics and Protestants, but especially Protestants, is likely related to the norm of regular attendance in these traditions and to the large number of Christian groups (with Orthodox groups as the exception) from which immigrants can choose. Additional data are needed on the reasons that immigrants choose or do not choose to attend religious services regularly before scholars can distinguish which reasons actually cause or impede regular attendance. Such data would allow further testing of the early theories generated here about norms and availability of religious centers in different traditions.

Family Life Course and Attendance

Previous studies indicate that family life course factors, such as marital status and the presence or absence of children, also influence religious service attendance. Model 2 in Table 3 presents results when we test the influence of marital status and whether at the 12-month survey, the respondent is a parent with at least one child living in the household on the likelihood of regular religious service attendance. Of respondents, 74% are either married or cohabiting. Although the results for the model testing life course influence are not significant, Model 2 does suggest that those who are married or cohabiting are less likely than the 19% of respondents who are single and have never been married to regularly attend religious services.¹²

Half of respondents (50%) at the baseline survey and a few percent more (56%) at the 12-month survey live with at least one of their children, which could provide further motivation, particularly if those children are of school age, to regularly attend

religious services. Model 2 in Table 3 shows, however, that people who lived with at least one of their children at the time of the 12-month survey are less likely than others to regularly attend services, but not significantly so. If such results are found more widely, they could suggest that for immigrants, the presence of children in a household does not encourage regular attendance. These results suggest the need for more detailed analyses of the relationship between the presence or absence of school-aged children (as opposed to any children as examined here) in the household and religious attendance. More data are also needed about the kinds of programs and services available for children in the religious centers these immigrants attend when compared to schools and other organizations where immigrants with children might find social support. Such additional data would allow for more detailed analyses and conclusions about the relationship between the presence of children in a household and immigrants' patterns in church attendance.

Employment

We shift our attention from familial to immigrants' employment situations in Model 3 to assess arguments found in the religious service attendance literature on native-born Americans about the connection between employment status and religious service attendance using this sample of new immigrants (see Table 3). Close to two thirds of respondents (65%) report working for pay in the 12-month survey, with 48% of all respondents working 40 hours or more per week and 17% of respondents working less than 40 hours per week. When we add those measures to the logistic regression in Model 3, we find that immigrants who are employed are significantly less likely than those who are not employed to regularly attend religious services, regardless of how many hours they work, confirming our hypothesis about the relationship between employment and immigrants' regular religious service attendance.

These results could be interpreted to suggest that legal immigrants who are employed have less free time, which makes them less likely to regularly attend religious services. This finding also lends some support to the preliminary theory that employed immigrants may have less of a desire to regularly attend services because they develop connections with other people in their work that substitute for those others develop through religious organizations.¹³ Some immigrants who are not employed may also go to their mosques or churches partially to access networks and other resources that provide employment opportunities, as shown in the case study literature of particular immigrant groups (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Min, 1992).¹⁴

Ethnic Community and Migration-Related Factors

The final two models in Table 3 (Models 4 and 5) begin to assess the connections immigrants' relationships to their ethnic communities and details of their migration

timing have on their regular religious service attendance. The literature on immigrant ethnic adaptation often uses ability to speak a native language as an indicator of ethnic retention (Alba & Nee, 2003; Mouw & Xie, 1999). Based on this previous literature, we include in Model 4, as an indirect indicator of the ties and commitment respondents have to their ethnic groups and home countries, a measure of whether English only, English and other languages, or only non-English languages are spoken in a respondent's home. English and non-English languages are spoken in 38% of respondents' homes, whereas 49% of the respondents speak only a non-English language. The logistic regression model suggests that individuals who live in households in which non-English languages are spoken at home are significantly more likely than those who live in households where only English is spoken to regularly attend religious services. A respondent is also less likely to regularly attend religious services if he or she has one or more children living at home, a finding that is strongly at odds with arguments about the role of religious organizations in socializing children. This finding may be explained, in part, by the young ages of many of the children of respondents in this sample. Respondents may be less concerned about religious socialization for very young children than they would be for older children.

These results provide further evidence for arguments made through case studies that examine the relationship between ethnic retention and religious participation among new immigrants. Such case studies suggest that many immigrants attend religious organizations, assumed to include large numbers of people from their ethnic, language, or national group, to maintain and sustain their ethnic heritage and traditions. Although these data do not allow us to test the direction of causality for the connection between speaking a non-English language at home and religious service attendance, they do lend support to arguments that suggest it is the opportunity to speak traditional languages and gather with others from a home country that leads immigrants to ethnic religious centers and makes them more likely to attend regularly than they would if they were in their home countries. Further data, gained through future waves of the full NIS sample, will allow us to more specifically test directions of causality.

The final model, Model 5 in Table 3, considers how migration-related factors, here the timing of migration and the amount of time spent outside the United States since first arrival, influence regular religious service attendance. The largest proportion of respondents (38%) first arrived in the United States between 1990 and 1995 and most spent the majority of their time in the United States since arriving. Smaller numbers arrived before 1990 (27%) and since 1996 (34%). Although many left the United States since they first arrived, more than three quarters spent 90% of their time in the United States since arriving. We add to Model 5 measures of when respondents first arrived in the United States and whether they spent more or less than 90% of their time in the United States since that arrival. We expected that those who arrived in the United States more recently and spent more of their time here would be more regularly involved. We find that when respondents arrive in the

United States has little influence on how regularly they attend religious services; 22% of immigrants who, since arriving, spent 10% or more of their time outside the United States are more likely to regularly attend services, but these results are not significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis presented here based on the NIS-P provides a first glimpse into several patterns of religious service attendance among new legal U.S. immigrants. Assuming that the majority of immigrants attend religious services with others from their home countries or who at least share their native languages, the data presented here test two broad arguments about the regular religious service attendance of those who stated a religious preference when surveyed for the NIS-P. Specifically, we assessed whether religious organizations play a buffering role, attracting immigrants who are the least incorporated, or play more of a bridging role, appealing to those immigrants who are the most involved in American life.

We found that unlike the native-born population, gender does not have a significant influence on the likelihood of regularly attending religious services, although women are more likely than men to attend religious services regularly. In addition, we found that immigrants who are not employed outside their homes and who speak a non-English language in their homes are more likely than others to regularly attend religious services. These results give preliminary support to the theory that the degree to which immigrants are integrated into American society likely influences their religious service attendance, with those who are less integrated or incorporated through various aspects of their lives more likely to regularly attend services. The concepts and measures of incorporation used here are somewhat imprecise because they do not allow distinctions to be made among the many ways people are incorporated in various parts of American society. They do, however, lend initial support to the preliminary theory that religious centers are used by new immigrants more as buffers from society rather than as methods of incorporation. These immigrants may be involved in their religious centers in part because of the social services they are receiving from them, although additional data are needed to test this possibility.

In addition to the degree to which respondents are integrated into U.S. society, the norms of their religious tradition and the availability of religious centers in their tradition are potential influences on their regular religious service attendance. The full model (Model 5, see Table 3) suggests that Christians, with the exception of the Orthodox, are more likely to regularly attend religious services than are non-Christians. One possibility is that non-Christian traditions, specifically the Buddhist and Hindu traditions, do not traditionally encourage or require practitioners to visit religious centers on a weekly basis.¹⁴ In addition to the norms of individual traditions, the availability of Hindu temples, Buddhist temples, Muslim mosques, and Christian Orthodox congregations is

likely an unmeasured factor that influences religious service attendance. These types of religious centers are less common in the United States than different types of Catholic and Protestant congregations, which could also lead to lower levels of regular attendance among practitioners. This structural influence on religious attendance also needs to be examined in further detail.

The hypotheses and early theories generated from these findings have a number of implications for broader understandings of the religious lives of recent immigrants. First, they point to the importance of considering what groups of immigrants regularly attend religious centers and why they attend as central questions that ought to logically precede questions about the formation and development of immigrants' religious organizations. Although focusing on the specific religious centers immigrants attend, as much of the religion and immigration literature does up until now, enables detailed arguments about organizational formation and change, asking who regularly attends and why both informs organizational understandings and allows for broader comparisons of individual behavior across geographies, between immigrant groups, and with the native born. It also, at minimum, makes clear on which immigrants these ethnographic studies are likely focusing. Without analyses based on the kind of survey data presented here, arguments about the religious lives of immigrants based on qualitative data have the potential to overstate the importance of religion because they lack attention to comparisons between religiously involved immigrants and those who do not attend or are not regularly involved in religious centers.

Second, these findings suggest a number of broader hypotheses about the relationship between social integration and involvement in religious centers for immigrants, which pave the way for more detailed analyses based on larger numbers of respondents examined in the full NIS, which is currently in the field. For example, these data will provide much more detailed information about the ethnic composition of the religious centers immigrants attend, allowing the assumption that immigrants attend religious services with others from their home country or language group to be interrogated, as well as the hypothesis that immigrants attend services more regularly in the United States than they did in their home countries before migrating.

These findings also point to the need for more systematic analysis of the kinds of social services immigrants receive from their religious centers, what role those services play in the various ways in which they connect to their religious centers, and how these services compare to the services immigrants receive from other kinds of organizations. Most studies that examine the social services provided by immigrants' religions tend to look at religious organizations rather than at the individuals who are receiving social services. Studies at the level of individuals are also necessary, however, to gain a broader understanding of how individuals who receive assistance receive it from different kinds of organizations, including religious organizations. Such data would, in addition, tell us what role receiving these services might play in leading people to go to religious organizations in the first place and to stay involved, centrally important questions that have been examined among the native born (Wuthnow, Hackett, & Hsu, 2004).

Theorizing about the formation of religious organizations, the role of religion in ethnic identity formation and maintenance, the importance of religion in transnational connections, and other areas, however, is far ahead of the systematic survey data available to address these arguments about new U.S. immigrants. This article provides an initial but crucial empirical look at religious service attendance among new immigrants, an issue that logically precedes these concerns.

Notes

1. According to Lee and Bean (2004), when we count all immigrants and their children, nearly 25% of the U.S. population has an immigrant status. Here, however, we are examining only those who were born in a non-U.S. nation and later immigrated to the United States.

2. For more information, see *NIS—The New Immigrant Survey* (n.d.).

3. Recently, these questions about worship attendance asked on national polls since the 1930s have been the source of considerable social scientific attention and debate. See, in particular, the collection of articles on this topic in the *American Sociological Review* (“Symposium,” 1998).

4. The results reported here, however, are quite comparable to those found when using the complete sample and making the admittedly questionable assumption that those who did not report a religious preference do not regularly attend religious services. The central difference between those analyses and the analyses reported here is that when the complete sample is examined, education has a significant negative influence on regular religious service attendance in all models.

5. We do not include respondents’ country or region of origin as a predictor variable because the regions included in the New Immigrant Survey–Pilot (NIS-P) are quite broad and, therefore, difficult to interpret and because adding these indicators did little to increase the explanatory power of these models.

6. Although these data were collected exclusively about legal immigrants, they shed light on the behaviors of illegal immigrants in two ways. First, some of these legal immigrants were previous illegal immigrants, providing direct information about illegal immigrants in retrospect. Second, more indirect information can be gathered by comparing this population with immigrants in other national surveys, some of whom are illegal. For more information, see Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, and Smith (2000c).

7. In comparison to a similar question asked in the General Social Survey (GSS), it is interesting to note that immigrants in the NIS are more likely to attend services weekly than either all the people asked this question in the GSS or only the foreign-born people asked the question in the GSS (Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2000b).

8. We follow Chaves (1999) in so doing. In defining *regular attendance* as that which occurs weekly or more, we recognize that this is a normative assumption based on largely a Christian norm of religious attendance as weekly. However, we use this standard because it is one used in all previous literature on religious service attendance, allowing ease of comparison of our data with other studies of this topic. In addition, the largest percentage of our sample was from a Christian religious tradition and the largest portion did attend weekly.

9. Of the 784 respondents asked about their religious service attendance, 601 have complete information on all of the explanatory variables. An additional 132 (17% of the sample) are missing information only about their educational attainment. We retain these 132 respondents in our analysis, including a dummy variable that indicates information about their educational attainment is unknown. This allows us to examine 733 of the 784 people asked about their religious service attendance or 93% of the sample asked this question.

10. We determine whether the respondent had biological children living in the household when the baseline survey was conducted based on questions in the baseline survey about how many children they had and how many of those children lived elsewhere in the United States or abroad. To determine whether respondents had their own children living with them during the 12-month wave of the survey, we examined

questions in the 6- and 12-month survey and assumed that any children born between the baseline survey and the 6-month and the 6- and 12-month surveys lived with the respondent.

11. There are also descriptive differences by gender within religious traditions, according to Jasso et al. (2000b), to be further investigated in the full NIS, which will have a larger sample size.

12. These results do not change when those who cohabit are excluded and the influence of being married is examined alone.

13. This interpretation is worth further investigation with reference to the ethnic and religious composition of individuals' workplaces and religious centers.

14. We recognize that the Muslim tradition, however, has tended to encourage weekly mosque visits for prayers and Muslims are less likely than Catholics to visit the mosque weekly, although this result was not significant in the full model.

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