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How Parents Balance Desire for Religious Continuity With Honoring Children's Religious Agency

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This study considers relational meanings and processes associated with parents' desire to pass on their religious faith to their children while also honoring their children's personal religious choices. In a nonclinical sample of religious families, we explored meanings related to the significance of faith transmission and children's agency to parents in addition to processes related to religious socialization. Parental desired continuity was defined as parents' desire to have their children remain committed to the faith of their family of origin. Parental perceived agency was defined as parents' perception of their children's right and ability to make personal religious choices. Guided by research questions about how parents balance their desire for religious continuity with their perception of their children's agency, we present a theoretical model that illustrates the relationships between these concepts. Parents and children described relational processes that supported both parent's desires and children's agency such as: (a) teaching principles and values, (b) providing expectations of religious participation and responsibility, (c) setting an example, (d) not forcing faith, (e) allowing exploration and mistakes, and (f) showing respect for children's views. Additional analysis examined parental interpretations of their children's current or future faith choices. These varied interpretations included parents' expressions of failure if their children left their faith, parents' acknowledgment of acceptance of their children's alternative choices, as well as parents' hopes for their children to internalize values and to learn for themselves. These findings support previous research about bidirectional and transactional processes between parents and children and suggest that religious decisions can provide a rich context for these processes.

Keywords: agency, parenting, religious socialization, intergenerational transmission of religion, bidirectional influence

Many parents begin parenthood with high expectations and dreams of what their future family life will hold—they may hope their children will adopt their values, inherit their athletic ability, enjoy their same hobbies, or follow in a similar career path. For many religious parents, one of their most deeply held desires is for their children to find meaning and purpose in the same religious tradition in which the children were raised. Thus, many religious parents walk a fine line: they long to pass on their faith to their children, yet they recognize the need to simultaneously balance their religious desires with their children's growing religious autonomy and with their children's current and future religious choices. For some, making peace with the ambiguity associated with their children's personal religious agency can be soul stretching.

In this study we focus on processes and meanings associated with parents' religious socialization of their children. We investigated parents' desires related to religious transmission (desired intergenerational continuity in religious identity and commitment)

and how parents' beliefs about their children's religious agency (perceptions about respecting one's children's choices about their own faith identity and commitment) seemed to influence relational processes. Although parental perspectives framed our study, both children's and parents' perspectives were explored in order to understand interactions associated with processes of religious socialization.

Review of Literature

In recent decades more people have left the religion of their family of origin (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Colaner, Soliz, & Nelson, 2014), a trend reflected in a national survey on religion and family life which revealed that 44% of Americans reported they had changed or dropped the religion of their childhood (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008). Furthermore, factors such as cultural shifts in values, an emphasis on individual choice (Arnett & Jensen, 2002), and immigration have led to greater diversity in family contexts as well as changes in how Americans approach religion and spirituality (McCarthy, 2007; Numrich, 2007; Walsh, 2012).

The religious and spiritual practices of today's youth comprise a study in diversity as well. Some have joined the religious "nones," others have returned to greater orthodoxy, and still others seem to select some aspects of religion they favor while rejecting aspects that are less appealing (Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013; Willoughby, Marks, & Dollahite, in press). Late adolescence and

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emerging adulthood are times of “soul searching” that feature and involve religious changes including conversion, deepening of faith, switching denominations or even religions, or exiting faith entirely (Smith & Denton, 2005; Smith & Snell, 2009).

In addition to studying religious practices, several studies have explored the religious attitudes of youth and emerging adults. Arnett and Jensen (2002) studied the religious beliefs and mindsets of 140 emerging adults and found that young people consider it a right and a responsibility to make their own religious choices apart from their parents. Additionally, Hughes and Dickson (2006) suggest that religious identity may now be more a matter of personal choice than familial legacy. In *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*, Christian Smith (2011) and colleagues followed a national U.S. sample through the teen years and into emerging adulthood (Smith & Denton, 2005; Smith & Snell, 2009). They concluded that a significant portion of their emerging adult participants appeared to be lost spiritually, occupationally, and relationally (Smith, 2011). Despite trends toward more individuality and less religious continuity, Bengtson et al. (2013) suggest that the changing religious climate among young people may be less about rebellion and more about “rejuvenation” and the restoration of positive religious ideals (p. 206). Bengtson and colleagues suggest that innovation and rejuvenation is vital to the transmission of religion and spirituality and that young people may help to encourage positive religious development over time.

Historically families and religions have been intertwined and have been a means of passing on values from one generation to the next (Bengtson et al., 2013). Several studies have found that parents are the primary source of religious influence on children (Bao, Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Conger, 1999; Denton, 2012; McMurdie, Dollahite, & Hardy, 2013; Myers, 1996), particularly through practices like prayer in families (Chelladurai, Dollahite, & Marks, 2018; Hatch et al., 2016). In a 12-year longitudinal study of parents and their adult offspring, Myers (1996) concluded that parental religiosity is the most significant factor in the religious involvement of adult children. Although Arnett and Jensen (2002) found little relationship between childhood socialization and the religious beliefs of emerging adults, it is important to note that rigorous longitudinal research has found that many young adult “prodigals” who leave their parents’ faith later return (Bengtson et al., 2013). Whether this pattern of return will hold for the Millennial generation is uncertain (Willoughby et al., in press).

Into the early 21st century the transmission of religious values from parents to children was typically regarded as a unidirectional process of parents influencing children (Bao et al., 1999). Indeed, to that point much research documented that parents transmit values and beliefs to their children through teaching, example, and discipline, with little research noting the converse influence of children on parents (Palkovitz, Marks, Appleby, & Holmes, 2003). Subsequently, Palkovitz et al. (2003) posited that the varied contexts of parenting engage bidirectional processes between two or more generations, affect developmental outcomes for parents and children, and influence meanings that families create.

Over the past two decades, researchers have begun to note that parents and children do influence each other religiously (Dollahite, Marks, Babcock, Barrow, & Rose, 2019; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008; Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004). Employing a longitudinal data set, Bengtson et al. (2013) utilized the life course perspective of “linked lives” to explain how children’s and parents’

religious decisions have mutual influence. Indeed, Marks and Dollahite (2017) discussed a phenomenon related to the experience of parenthood where even young children may influence parental religious involvement, sometimes significantly.

Contemporary ideas about socialization acknowledge dynamic interactions, transactions, and processes involving children acting as agents who exert (and resist) influence. These ideas suggest that transformation for both parents and children and not just merely continuity should be anticipated in the processes of socialization (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). In a 20-year longitudinal study that observed parent–child relationships across two generations, Spilman, Nepl, Donnellan, Schofield, and Conger (2013) explored religious continuity and conceptualized religiosity as a resource positively associated with interpersonal skills that influence the quality of family relationships within and across both generations. According to Kuczynski and Parkin (2007), bidirectional influences result from parents’ and children’s understandings of each other’s behavior, the meanings they associate with interactions, and how they accommodate and respond to each other’s goals and perspectives. They also suggest that future research address relational processes between parents and children acting as agents and adapting to each other’s agency.

The value of qualitative research in the study of intergenerational relationships and processes that influence family life has been recognized by several scholars (Kuczynski & Daly, 2003; Marks & Dollahite, 2011; Palkovitz et al., 2003). Kuczynski and Daly (2003) explained that qualitative methods allow for analysis of “lived experiences” through an exploration of interactions between parents and children, as well as the study of meanings attributed to those interactions from their individual perspectives (p. 375). Kuczynski and Parkin (2007) further acknowledged the importance of cross-cultural perspectives regarding how agency and bidirectional influences affect parent–child interactions. The current study employs qualitative methods in a nonclinical sample of 198 religiously and ethnically diverse families to explore relational processes between parents and children related to religious socialization, the influence of human agency, and meanings associated with these interactions. We hope to fill a gap in the social science literature regarding processes of parent–child interactions and to explore how agency may influence these processes and meanings parents attribute to children’s religious choices.

Method

Participants

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to contacting potential participants. Following IRB approval, a two-stage selection process and purposive sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) were used to identify 198 religious families ($N = 476$ individuals) to be interviewed as part of the American Families of Faith project. Clergy were asked to recommend families in their congregations that they considered as “strong in their faith” and “successful . . . in their family relationships.” Given potential variations in what “strong in the faith” or “successful family relationships” could mean in different religious communities, we left it to each clergy member to determine what criteria they would use to recommend families in their congregations to be interviewed.

Families were then approached and asked if they were willing to participate or not. In most cases, religious leaders provided contact information for members of their congregation to the researchers who then contacted members and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. In some cases, religious leaders wanted to contact members directly and ask if they would be willing to be interviewed. Of these referred families, more than 90% consented to be interviewed. Participant referral sampling was sometimes employed among faiths where gaining access was more difficult (e.g., Islam, Orthodox Judaism).

Bronk, King, and Matsuba (2013) conceptualized the exemplar method as an approach to sampling that involves intentionally selecting “individuals, groups, or entities that exemplify the construct of interest in a particularly intense or highly developed manner” (p. 2). Our purpose in interviewing families considered to be “exemplars” in their religious congregations was to understand how religiously committed families navigate the successes and challenges associated with religion and family life. Of these families, most attended weekly religious services, gave an average of 7% of their income to their religion, and spent 11 hr a week in religious activities (including personal and home-based worship). Mean ages of parents were the mid to late 40s (Mothers = 45 years; Fathers = 47 years). Families comprised married or remarried couples who had been married an average of 20 years and had at least one child (with an average of 3.3 children per family).

Of the 198 families who were interviewed, only 55 (28%) involved adolescent children and parents interviewed together. The remainder involved interviews with only parents. This was because permission from the IRB to interview adolescents was only obtained for those 55 interviews. Thus, of the 476 individuals interviewed, only 84 (18%) were adolescent children (44 females and 40 males). Therefore, all of the interviews we conducted involved parents, but only 28% involved adolescent children as well. In sum, data in this study include reports from 396 parents (from 198 families) and 84 adolescent children (from 55 families). The population of coded data included interviews with 396 parents and 84 adolescent children consisting of more than 8,000 pages of interview data. Given coding criteria used in this study, 143 of the 198 interviews were coded, which included 44 interviews that included children. Therefore, 80% (44/55) of the interviews that included adolescent children were included in this particular study. Before being interviewed participants completed an informed consent form.

Through intentional sampling (e.g., Daly, 2007) we attempted to overcome limitations to previous family research regarding religion that has been criticized for primarily focusing on White, American, Christian samples (Dollahite & Marks, 2018, 2019; Marks & Dollahite, 2018). Ethnic and racial minority families were oversampled such that they comprised over half (102/198 families; or 51.5%) of the total sample. Further, more than a quarter (53/198 families; 26.8%) of the total sample were immigrants to the United States. Ethnic minority families were oversampled because they are both understudied and because some immigrant communities have been found to be quite familial and religious, providing a rich context for studying the nexus of families and faith (Dollahite & Marks, 2020; Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Singh, 2006; Perry, 2016).

The racial/ethnic composition of the sample was: 34 African American families (17%), 24 Asian American families (12%), 15

Middle Eastern families (8%), 14 Latino families (7%), 10 Native American families (5%), four East Asian families (2%), and one Pacific Islander (1%) family, with the 96 remaining families (48.5%) identifying as racially White. The European American families included those from various European backgrounds. More than 20 families (11%) were interviewed (in part or in whole) in their native language by a bilingual team member (or with the help of a faith community member) fluent in that same language (e.g., Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish).

The religious-ethnic make-up of the sample included African American Christian (13%), Asian Christian (12%); Catholic and Orthodox (mixed ethnicities, 11%), Evangelical Christian (mixed ethnicities, 12%), Mainline Christian (mixed ethnicities, 10%), Latter-day Saint (mixed ethnicities, 14%), Jewish (mixed ethnicities, 16%), and Muslim (mixed ethnicities, 12%).

In addition to representing rich ethnic and religious diversity, families who participated in this study resided in 17 states from all eight socioreligious regions of the nation identified by Silk and Walsh (2006), including the Mid-Atlantic (6%; DE, MD, PA), Midwest (2.5%; OH, WI), Mountain West (3%; ID, UT), New England (16%; MA, CT), Northwest (12.5%; OR, WA), Pacific (12.5%; CA), the South/Gulf Coast (39.5%; FL, GA, LA), and Southern Crossroads regions (7.5%; KS, OK). Families' socioeconomic and educational experience varied. This was evident in housing circumstances and education levels that ranged from GED to PhD/MD. In summary, the sample is characterized by: (a) high levels of religious commitment, (b) rich racial and ethnic diversity, (c) religious diversity, (d) geographic and regional diversity, and (e) socioeconomic diversity.

Interviewing

In-depth interviews were semistructured and were about 2 hours in length, on average. Open-ended questions were used to explore participants' religion and family life (e.g., “What are some of your deepest spiritual beliefs relating to marriage/family?,” “How important is it to you that your children follow in your faith?,” “How central is your religion to how you are as parents and children in this family?”). Additional follow-up questions were asked for more in-depth understanding.

Couples were interviewed together first. In the interviews that included adolescent children, these children joined their parents for the second part of the interview. Some scholars contend that interviewing spouses separately encourages greater transparency and sensitivity toward gender and power issues (Seymour, Dix, & Eardley, 1995). Babbie (2004) has argued that interviewing people together “frequently brings out aspects of the topic that would not have been anticipated by the researcher and would not have emerged from interviews with individuals” (p. 303). We decided that interviewing family members together would allow them to respond to each other's thoughts, encourage more in-depth discussion (Babbie, 2004; Seymour et al., 1995), and respect differing cultural and religious beliefs and practices regarding opposite-gendered individuals being alone (e.g., Muslim, Orthodox Jewish couples). Although our sample was comprised of religious and family “exemplars,” participants were not immune to relational and religious challenges (Dollahite, Marks, & Young, 2017). We used intensive interviewing to explore the reality of both successes and challenges that religious families experience. After interviews

were conducted, they were transcribed verbatim and coded using a team-based qualitative approach to data analysis (Marks, 2015).

Coding

Data analysis occurred in two phases. A detailed codebook was developed and used to allow for a systematic analysis of the 198 interviews that comprised more than 8,000 double-spaced pages of data in the American Families of Faith project. Consistent with grounded theory we did not rely on preexisting theories or research findings to direct the coding processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Primary analyses. In the first phase, seven coders read through transcribed interviews searching for accounts of how participants spoke of agency. NVIVO 10 and 11 software was used by coders to assist with coding and data organization. Interviews were divided among coders so that each interview was assigned to a pair of coders and was analyzed individually looking for narratives related to agency. Using a “check-and-balance” system, the coders were then asked to review each other’s work and make note of discrepancies. Coding differences were compiled, and both coders came together to decide if the account should be included or not. Interrater reliability was high ($\alpha > .90$). In this stage of data analysis open coding resulted in 504 accounts of agency identified in the 198 qualitative interviews.

Secondary analyses. The second phase of analyses consisted of an in-depth study of these accounts of agency. In this analysis we recognized many themes relating to agency in family relationships and organized these themes into categories of personal, marriage, family roles/extended family, and parent–child relationships. Within these categories, 314 (62%) of these accounts referenced agency in the context of parent–child relationships. We decided to focus the current study on these 314 accounts, which came from 143 of the 198 originally interviewed families (i.e., 72% of the originally interviewed families are represented in these codes). We conducted further analyses to determine common themes within these quotes.

Axial coding. Within these accounts, we explored two salient themes, including (a) parents’ desire to have their children continue in their faith and (b) parents’ perception of their children’s agency. We used participants’ descriptive accounts to illustrate these meaning themes and individual processes described by families. A close look at these narratives reveals that more than one theme was sometimes described within a single quote. Some scholars consider overlap in themes to be problematic; however, it is not uncommon for more than one concept to be mentioned together, especially within participants’ narrative accounts (Daly, 2007). We recognized the frequent mention of parents’ desire for religious continuity and parents’ perception of children’s agency within the same quote to be an indication of the significance of these two challenging concepts for religious parents.

This led to the research question: How do parents balance their desire for religious continuity with their children’s agency? This question guided further analyses. In reference to this question, six common subthemes associated with processes relating to religious socialization were identified. Although both parents and adolescent children spoke about how parents balance these related themes, more descriptions by parents were coded. This is likely because there were fewer children interviewed and because a question asked of parents in original interviews was “How important is it to you that your children follow in your faith?” Questions were not specifically asked about children’s agency in original interviews. Parents and children spoke spontaneously about the topic of personal agency. Additionally, a theme relating to parental interpretations of children’s religious choices was also identified.

The 314 accounts were reanalyzed looking at these common themes until theoretical saturation was achieved; that is, until no additional information was obtained related to our research questions. Table 1 refers to the frequencies of coded themes, the number of interviews each theme was identified in, and the percentage of coded themes mentioned more than once by the same

Table 1
Frequencies and Percentages of Codes for Themes and Subthemes

Themes and subthemes	Frequency of coded accounts	Distinct family interviews ^b	Individual family members ^b	Coded themes spoken by the same person (%)
Parental continuity	76	59	68	11%
Perceived agency Processes	96	76	91	5%
Teaching	54	45	49	9%
Providing expectations	36	30	33	8%
Setting an example	50	45	47	6%
Not forcing	50	42	48	4%
Allowing exploration	32	29	29	9%
Respecting child’s views	25	22	23	0%
Parental interpretations	41	36	41	0%
Total/Mean	460 ^a	n/a	n/a	X = 5.7% ^c

Note. These codes were found in 314 quotes identified in 143 of the 198 original interviews meaning that 72% of families were reflected in these codes. ^a 460 references to themes and subthemes relating to religious continuity and agency were coded in 314 quotes. This number is explained by overlap when more than one theme was coded within a single quote. Each of the 314 quotes contained 1.5 themes, on average. ^b The number of family interviews differs from the number of family members who spoke about a coded theme when more than one family member spoke about a particular theme within a given family interview. The maximum number of times a coded theme was spoken of by the same person was no more than three times. ^c X = 5.7% represents the mean percentage of coded themes spoken by the same person (i.e., a coded theme was spoken of more than once by the same person less than 6% of the time, on average). In summary, these data demonstrate that concepts relating to parent’s desire for religious continuity and children’s agency were spoken of broadly among families and were identified in most of the original interviews.

individual. (The maximum number of times a theme was spoken of by any individual was 3 times).

Researcher Reflexivity

Qualitative scholars should be aware of their own biases and consider this in the research process (Daly, 2007). In an effort to address this reality, we acknowledge that each author is a parent of children we have tried to raise in our faith community. Each author has experienced similar kinds of hopes, concerns, anxieties, and fears about our own children's faith identities and relationship with our own faith communities to those expressed by our participants. Indeed, we have experienced similar tensions between parental desires and child agency. Thus, we have empathy for those we interviewed, and we are interested in accurately reflecting their experiences in this article in an effort to provide meaningful information for scholars and religious leaders. We worked to ensure that we were not projecting our own experiences on the data so that the results and interpretations herein reflect what our participants said. Additionally, the two male faculty authors attempted to address potential gender bias by having female student coders work mostly independently. The first author, while an undergraduate, did the later open and axial coding and identified themes. The faculty members assisted in the last stages of the axial coding processes and in the finalizing of themes.

Findings

Our analyses were guided by questions about the desire of religious parents to have their children continue in their faith and how parents balance their religious desires with their perception of their children's agency. These questions led to the identification of themes associated with meanings for parents and processes related to religious socialization. These included Parental Desired Continuity (Theme 1), defined as parents' desire to have their children remain committed to the faith of their family of origin, and Parental Perceived Agency (Theme 2), defined as parents' perception of their children's right and ability to make personal religious choices. These themes were primarily identified in parents' responses to the question, "How important is it to you that your children follow in your faith?" but also emerged as parents and children responded to other questions. How Parents Balance Religious Continuity with Perceived Agency (Theme 3), featured six processes by which parents balanced their desires for faith transmission with honoring their children's religious agency, including: (a) teaching principles and values, (b) providing expectations of religious participation and responsibility, (c) setting an example, (d) not forcing faith, (e) allowing exploration and mistakes, and (f) showing respect for children's views. Although the topic being discussed was religious, the processes that emerged from our analysis were primarily relational in nature. After identifying the previously mentioned themes an additional theme, Parental Interpretations (Theme 4), stood out in the data. Parents talked about meanings they associated with children's religious choices, whether that meant choosing the faith they were raised in, choosing another faith, or choosing no religion. At times, this theme seemed to represent an adaptation on the part of parents in response to their children's agency. The numbers in parentheses following the theme/process title is the number of times that

theme/process was coded (see Table 1 for a summary of coded themes).

Theme 1: Parental Desired Continuity (76)

We defined Parental Desired Continuity as parents' desire for children to remain committed to the faith they were raised in. In response to the question, "How important is it to you that your children continue in your faith?" parents primarily responded affirmatively, saying that it was important or very important to them that their children continue in their faith tradition, or in the case of some less devoted families, maintain somewhat similar beliefs and practices. The importance they placed on religious continuity often seemed to stem from a sense of parental responsibility and a belief that their faith was protective and might help children resolve challenges or make better choices.

Ephraim,¹ a conservative Jewish father, expressed his and his wife's desire to pass on their faith to future generations:

It's very important to us. What's tough is that we do not control [it]. I do not think there is anything that we would (other than their health and happiness), I do not think there is anything that is as core Jewish, to the core of being Jewish, [that] we would want more than our children, God willing, our grandchildren, and their offspring, to be Jewish and have the same values.

Jianguo, an Asian American Christian father, described the weight associated with knowing how to pass on his faith. "How to pass our belief to our next generation is a burden to me. Let our children believe what we have believed . . . We want them and their next generations to have God's blessings."

Molly, a Jewish mother, used the extremes *Very* and *not-at-all* when explaining how important it was that her children remain Jewish. She went on to say, "I think it's important that they have God in their life, but if they chose not to be Jewish, as long as they are good people, who are doing the right things, then that's okay with me."

Lamiah, an Indian Muslim mother, described the responsibility she felt to pass on faith and an understanding of God to her children:

So, in the course of . . . trying to raise children . . . your faith has to be a significant factor in that. Not only to fulfill your responsibility in passing along faith in God and in understanding that God loves you, and keeps you . . . and provides for you, and is there when even I am not there and will sustain you and make you whole. You have to have faith in that yourself and then you have to instill that faith into your children.

Diego, a Latino Catholic father, similarly shared his belief that commitment to faith will help prepare his children to meet challenges in life:

It is very important because I consider that if my children have a strong faith, the strongest faith can help them, not only to solve their problems during their life, but also the most important thing, to prevent my kids [from taking] . . . a wrong way.

Parents' desire for their children to continue in their faith was a prominent theme that coincided with and sometimes operated in

¹ All participant names are pseudonyms.

tension with the second foundational theme relating to parents' recognition of their children's agency that we will discuss next.

Theme 2: Parental Perceived Agency (96)

We defined Parental Perceived Agency as parents' perception of children's religious agency. Although parents expressed many reasons why it was important to them that their children follow in their faith, they also acknowledged that the choice to do so was a decision only their children could make. Brent, a Jehovah's Witness father, described the responsibility he felt to teach his children religious principles but also recognized that whether or not his children continued in their faith was up to them:

It's, again, that responsibility of instilling in your children, in their hearts, a love for God and the principles that we try to live, [and that] we try to pass on to them. Fully realizing that they have the God-given right to choose not to follow. And that ultimately the desire would be that we would want them to make that conscious choice [that] I believe this is the best way I could be living my life. And so we have the responsibility to lay that out in front of them. Then they have the responsibility to make that choice.

Correspondingly, for Jing, a Chinese Christian mother, it was important that her children have a relationship with God, but she recognized that the decision to believe had to be their own:

We could not decide for them or force them to believe. They have free will. But we should tell them we have responsibility to bring them to God. They make the final decision to believe or not.

Vickie, an Episcopal mother, explained that after teaching principles and values, she and her husband recognized that their job is not to choose for their son. She explained, "It's important that Chad get the grounding and the fundamentals and the values, but we're not here to make up Chad's mind. That's up to Chad."

Abaan, an Arab Muslim father, explained that the outcome he most desires is that his daughter accept his beliefs "by heart" and not out of obligation. He explained his conviction that children cannot be forced to believe:

[Y]ou do not want to force people to accept what you think is true. [You] give them a good foundation . . . a good example. . . . [I]t is very important. Hopefully, we do it in a way that she enjoys it and she accepts it by heart. Sometimes, we have seen in some settings that the parents are very harsh, in terms of how they teach religion to children. That environment is not accommodating toward children's needs and we do not believe that is how it is supposed to be done. Nobody can keep their children in a religion.

Parents' perception of their children's *personal religious agency* was the only theme coded more frequently than *parents' desire for religious continuity*.

Theme 3: How Parents Balance Desire for Religious Continuity With Perceived Agency

Parents and children talked about the processes that parents engaged in to balance parents' desire for religious continuity with a sincere respect for their children's personal agency in religious matters. Not all parents used the word *balance* to describe this process, but a number did. Caleb, a Reformed Jewish father,

explained, "Trying to balance . . . being a supporting father, and at the same time an 'I told you so' father, is really hard, so I guess that's about as central as it gets."

Rachel, an Orthodox Jewish mother, and Levi, her 14-year-old son, described a process of balancing religious expectations with allowing children autonomy:

Rachel: I think that, I think it's like such a juggling act, you know, that you want to . . .

Levi: Balance it out.

Rachel: Yeah, balance it out . . . Somebody once said to me in a very nice way, "You have to have some . . . damage control, and at the same time, you want to also awaken in him the feelings for positive things." So, in other words . . . choose your battles. And each child, the Torah tells us that you have to educate the child according to his will. I think a major parenting tip there . . . you can have family rules, but you have to know that within the family, you're going to have so many individuals. And every rule has to be custom-made to the individual as well, you know.

Many parents described a process of balancing religious standards, teachings, and expectations with allowing children to choose, explore, and internalize teachings. This process included interactions that supported parents' religious expectations, such as (a) teaching ideals and values, (b) articulating expectations of religious involvement and responsibility, and (c) setting an example in addition to interactions that supported children's agency, such as: (d) not forcing, (e) allowing exploration, and (f) showing respect for children's views.

Process A: Teaching ideals and values (54). Timothy, a nondenominational Christian father, talked about the responsibility he felt to teach his children religious ideals and values and the importance of doing so in a way that would be relatable to them.

Fathering puts a pull on you that's not there without it because you realize that you have the responsibility for teaching these life principles in ways that are understandable and attractive. I mean if you believe that there's a God and you believe that it's the most important thing in the universe how you relate to Him, then the most important thing in parenting is to raise your kids in a way that faith is going to be real, meaningful, and attractive to them in a way that they can understand it and deal with it.

Mandy, a Christian and Missionary Alliance 15-year-old daughter, described how her parents answered her questions and explained their beliefs to her:

Ever since I can remember, we always went to church and we pray. [We] read little Bible stories when I was little. And they're always willing to talk to me about any questions I had. And they explained what they believed to me. And when I was ready to choose the religion that they had chosen for themselves, they helped me through that.

Pati, a Native American Pentecostal mother spoke of the importance of teaching her children but also spoke of the uncertainty she and her husband sometimes felt in knowing how to teach them:

The bible says to train up a child in the way he should go and when he is older, he will not depart from it. We try to make sure that we

show . . . our children the principles of God and the way that God would handle things. We fail constantly. We fall short all the time and we're just like any other parents. Sometimes . . . we do not know if we're doing the right thing or not. We struggle with what we should or shouldn't do. It's hard, cause especially if they're getting older, they're wanting to go their way—their own way, and so there is always a struggle. Trying to keep them under God's word and the way that he would have you to do it. It's pretty essential.

Process B: Providing expectations for religious participation and responsibility (36). The following narratives convey the responsibility parents felt to set expectations for their children and to provide encouraging experiences for their children to practice religious teachings. Aaron, a Lutheran father, spoke about the duty he and his wife Kira felt to give their children religious experiences but recognized that they could not force faith. He said, "We feel and felt that our job was to expose them to church. . . . But to make them have our faith, we can't do that. God did that for us." Aaron and Kira acknowledged their belief that God lets them choose, and they allow their children to do likewise—after significant exposure, experience, and encouragement:

Anoki, a Methodist Native American father, spoke about religious tradition.

I think we're very intentional about these practices, and it does establish a tradition and something that our children have just come to know. For instance, that on Sunday morning . . . there's no question about whether we're going to church or not. We are. And so, it's part of a tradition that we hope that as they become older, that they will continue on once they get outside of the grasp, so to speak, of their parents.

Sabir, an Asian, Muslim father described the challenge of balancing expectations with his children's desires:

But like sometimes they don't want to do late night prayers, they are tired, they want to just go to bed, and every now and then they would skip, and I have to ask them, I didn't see it, I told you go pray and then go to bed, and you said okay, we did it. I didn't see it, but God knows what you did and what you didn't do.

Meg, a Latter-day Saint mother, described how the expectation of religious participation has helped her children to eventually make choices to engage in religious practices on their own:

I think that a lot of the things that we do, like family prayer, attending the church, are not the most . . . deep and moving religious experiences at this point . . . [Just] to get them to sit still . . . sometimes that's not easy, but when you see that your efforts start to pay off: when they want to pray on their own; when, even though it's really hard to sit still at church . . . when they realize that they want go because that's wh[ere] Heavenly Father wants them to be, and they start to do it on their own . . . [that is when] they are starting to make the choices that we would make for them, if we could.

Process C: Setting an example (50). In addition to teaching through instruction and experience, several parents and children described the importance of modeling behavior. Debby, a Baptist mother talked about "being a good model of the values" being taught. Molly, a 13-year-old Christian daughter, said of her parents, "When they have a big question that they need to be answered, then they usually go to God first, and . . . that's a good example to us."

Randall, a nondenominational African American Christian father, described the challenge of consistently living his beliefs every day and emphasized that the example he was setting for his children helped him understand that living out his beliefs is vital:

You're trying to be an example. You remember your mistakes, and they're gonna make mistakes, [but] you just try to live according to your faith. You try to live out your faith in front of them. It ain't easy all the time, you know, because sometimes things do get to you and they see it, they do not see the Christian side . . . [and] I have to think, "What kind of example am I setting?" . . . I have to live out my faith, and sometimes it ain't easy. . . . [D]riving in the car, sometimes I [yell], "You jerk!" And [my daughter] says, "That's not Christian." [I have to be humble and say], "Okay, you're right. That's not Christian".

Malcolm, a Catholic father spoke of how he hoped his example will still influence his adult children:

My children are too old now to keep anything out of their life. Right now my primary goal is to set as good an example as I can, [because] . . . the world is gonna pull them without my example, and [hopefully] what I taught them [will] be strong enough to bring them back.

Kari, a Christian and Missionary Alliance mother, reportedly believed that it is vital "to bring children up in the way they should go, not just to let them bring themselves up." She went on to explain, "They'll make their own decisions, but [we must] guide them, and teach them. Spend time together; and to be good examples. . . . To walk the walk, and not just talk the talk."

In summary, participants (mothers, fathers, and children) discussed ways that parents convey religious principles, expectations, and practices. Next, we illustrate how parents balanced religious expectations and teachings with respect for their children's agency.

Process D: Not forcing faith (50). One way that parents reportedly recognized children's agency was by not forcing religious beliefs. McKinney, a Presbyterian father, gave an example of how he might acknowledge both (a) religious expectations and (b) his son's agency by emphasizing his son's ability to choose what he believes. He reflected,

Well . . . [he]'ll say when we get out of church, "I don't believe in God, blah blah blah, this is not real." Then we'll have a little bit of conversation about, "You should think about it" and we're not prescribing that you must believe in God. You cannot prescribe that. But you can say, "You can go, you can listen, we can fulfill our responsibility that you be exposed to this, you get to make your own choice."

Peixia, a Chinese Christian mother, talked about allowing her children to choose baptism for themselves and discouraged making religious commitments merely due to social pressure:

[Our son] wanted to be baptized at 9 years old, but I wanted him to wait until 12 years old [to choose]. My daughter is 17 years old, but she has not [been] baptized. I didn't force her . . . [even though] Minister Huang came to our home and talked with her. . . . We try to set good examples. . . . [W]e emphasize God's words. We do not force them; we will not feel shame for our daughter's [decision] not [to be] baptiz[ed].

Vickie, an Episcopalian mother, similarly explained how she and her husband give their children opportunities to learn, but try not to force it:

I think the biggest thing is to introduce them to the church, get them involved, and then know that they'll make their own decision at some point. Try not to force it too much, down their throats, but just giving the opportunity to learn what it's about.

Process E: Allowing exploration and mistakes (32). In addition to not forcing children to believe, many parents honored their children's agency by allowing children to learn for themselves. Parents expressed this idea in various ways including allowing children to study other faiths, encouraging children to think for themselves and ask questions, and allowing children to take risks and sometimes fail.

Daamin, a Muslim father from Turkey, spoke of his desire to educate his daughter about their own faith but also allowed his daughter to study other religions:

Of course, no one can force anybody to accept any religion, even though it's her own. But also, it's the role of the mother and father to teach their children. Throughout her life, every step we try to teach her the right step, the religious practices, so that when she comes to the age to decide she at least knows her faith. She can study other things, other religions, but at least we want to . . . raise [her as] a moral person . . . I think throughout her education [we will] not make her brain-washed, but . . . teach her.

Devon, a 17-year-old Baptist son, described how his parents encouraged him and his siblings to think and learn for themselves and ask questions about religious ideas:

One of the key things that my parents did, which I am very grateful for, is they give us a good amount of freedom to think, to process things. . . . [W]e've been taught to really think things through [in] our own brains and we can ask them any questions if we need to. And they definitely give me that measure of freedom to . . . make it my own decision.

Caleb, a Reformed Jewish father, expressed his view that it's important to let children learn for themselves by occasionally making mistakes:

There's an expression that I try to keep with me, "the blessing of a skinned knee." The idea is that sometimes, the only way for a child to learn is for the child to do something and to fail at it. The old joke, "Doctor, it hurts when I do this." Then the doctor says, "Well, don't do that." The idea that sometimes you have to let your kids . . . experience pain to learn and to grow, and that we have to allow them . . . to experience pain.

Miriam, a Conservative Jewish mother, spoke with her daughter about the importance of allowing children to have different experiences and see different outcomes:

I think it's good to expose kids, sometimes, to the extremes and then let them see what that's like and then later in life they can choose what they want to do. But if they do not know what's out there, it's sometimes hard to know what your choices are.

Process F: Showing respect for children's views (25). Another way both parents and children spoke of how parents honored their children's agency included parents showing respect for children's views. This idea was reflected in parents' willingness to listen to children's ideas without judgment, parents' expressions of trust, and parent's efforts to engage in a relationship with their children. Nasiha, a 17-year-old Muslim daughter, de-

scribed how her parents expressed interest in understanding her decisions and views:

When you reach maturity, you have the option of following Islam, or other religions, or having no religion. Our parents gave us all the options. They asked us . . . do we want to follow them and they asked us "Why?" It was not just going, "What we do . . . just continue doing it." They asked us why are we following this religion and what we do it for. So when you're asked that, and you have to think about the answer, you have to contemplate your cause for it.

Michael, a 14-year-old Jewish son, spoke of his parents' acceptance of his religious choices:

I think that you guys have brought us up in a way that, like I feel that I could choose to continue with Judaism or I could . . . really, I have the intentions of continuing Judaism, but I still have a long time so something could change. But I feel that you guys would be accepting of any choice that I would make.

Steven, an African American Baptist father, explained how he came to the realization that he needed to let go and trust in his son and now his daughter when they went off to college:

I would say with letting go of the kids, that . . . I used to worry a lot . . . but [Ty] was brought up in a Christian family. He knew right from wrong, and if you bring them up right, then, they know. So, therefore, you have to trust in what they know, trust in them, that they're doing the right thing. And that's the biggest thing, just to let go . . . and [now] trusting in [Shayla], her abilities to do the right thing.

Yuusif, an Indian Muslim father, spoke about an additional way that parents can show respect for their children's views. He described the effort he and his wife make to understand their children, comprehend their challenges, and relate with them at their level:

Instead of just saying, "Do this, don't do this," we are trying to [help] them understand, and reason with them. Being constantly alert with them and close to them in understanding what they're going through . . . and being in touch so that they do not think, "Well, my parents grew up in a different place, different generation, they don't know." Trying to keep up with them sometimes, which means . . . talk the talk and walk the walk, as they say. It can be done. And, of course, we also believe that when you try to do something sincerely, then there is divine help to achieve that. Which doesn't mean that each one of those children will turn out to be saintly . . . but at least you've done [your part].

Theme 4: Parental Interpretations (41)

After identifying and coding for the meaning themes of parental desired continuity and parental perceived agency and the processes of how parents balance these complementary ideas, we identified an additional theme—one related to parents' interpretation of their children's religious choices. Parents frequently spoke of how they felt about their children's religious choices and how they are responding or might respond to their children's different levels of devotion in the future. Although most parents desired for their children to continue in their faith, several parents also described desires for their children to "see for themselves," "have Christ in their life," and to "make up their own mind." Many parents hoped, most importantly, that their children would "follow God," inter-

nalize religious teachings, and choose to live values and principles they had been taught, whether in their faith or another faith.

Though parents were discussing their children's religious development, this theme may relate to parental religious development as well, because many parents seemed to be describing an effort they were making to honor their children's agency. Also, parents acknowledged that as children grew older they became more autonomous and their agency also grew. Not all parents spoke of being able to accept their children's personal religious choices if those choices differed greatly from their own. Some parents felt that a lack of religious transmission would be an indication that they had "failed" or not done their job. Others stated that "all their goals and desires would be lost" if their children did not continue in their faith. However, within this sample of highly religious parents it was noteworthy how many parents expressed a belief that it was important to accept their children's religious choices even when this conflicted with their own religious expectations and dreams for their children.

Angela, a Catholic mother, described how she handled her daughter's decision to leave the Catholic faith she had been brought up in:

It's very important to me. The only thing I have to say is, and I shared it with my oldest daughter before, because she married non-Catholic, and I felt that if it meant her not having her faith, not having God, I would rather see her go to his church than not have God in their life. But I did stress that I would have, not that I'd be disappointed, but I would have preferred to see her keep her faith.

Cindy, an African American Baptist mother, acknowledged that her adult children must make their own decisions but described the struggle she sometimes feels with accepting their religious choices:

And of course, now that they're grown, they have to make their own decisions, but I still do not understand how you can work all week long and do not go to church on Sunday, and of course they do not always do it, but they're grown now. They have to make their own decisions. That's one of the biggest ones.

Gideon, a Jewish father, explained how his expectations have changed as his children have gotten older:

When I was younger, before I had kids it was important. It was important in an abstract way . . . But now as they are getting older and getting wiser, and now I feel like once they go through this process, it's kind of up to them. I feel less worried about that now and am more willing to let them make their own decisions about it.

Jason, an African American Baptist father, used the word *real* to describe what he hoped his children see in the example that he and his wife set. He explained that the type of church his children have chosen is less important to him than that his children desire to live the ideals he and his wife have modeled:

I have learned, our children all love the Lord, but we work and serve in completely different types of churches, and so, while the foundation is the same, the manifestation, or the demonstration of it is quite different. So, we've tried to teach our children as much by how we live as opposed to hammering into them, "You will, you will, you will." Them seeing, "That's real, because I see it in my parents. I want that [faith], and the influence that they've had on us."

Like many other parents, Betty, a Latter-day Saint mother, spoke about her hope that her children would gain a personal conviction of their beliefs and values:

Well, I'm personally convinced to the point myself that they will find a greater source of happiness and satisfaction if they lived through our religious belief. But again, that's something they have to choose themselves. I do not want them to stay [religiously] active [just] because that's what I've always done. But I feel that, I hope each of them would get a personal conviction by themselves that it's the best thing for them. . . . [We] have to come to that personal testimony ourselves. But if they chose otherwise, that would have to be their choice, and I would have to honor whatever choice they've made. But I hope that it never comes to that, where they would choose otherwise. I hope that [they have] gained enough personal experience and example that they would know for themselves that this is the best that could be done.

The fact that Betty used the term "but" four times suggests that she, like most parents we interviewed, is conflicted in trying to balance two firmly held ideals: first, the important positive and profoundly longed-for aspects of family religious continuity, and second, the important religious and moral value of honoring children's agency in choosing their own religious identity and involvement. In sum, there seemed to be an undergirding conviction that having one's child offer her own gift of faith to a shared God would not be an authentic offering unless the gift is freely offered through the child's own personal choice.

Discussion

Based on our findings, we constructed a conceptual model that illustrates relational processes and meanings associated with parents' desires to pass on their faith to their children and parents' perceptions of their children's personal agency (Figure 1). The

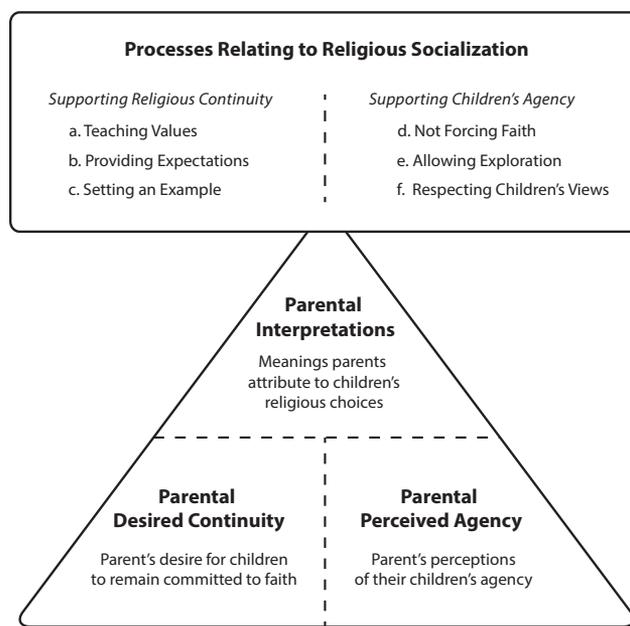


Figure 1. How parents balance desire for religious continuity with honoring children's agency.

model attempts to illustrate the balancing act in which religious parents are engaged. What parents seemed to desire for their children in terms of religious continuity often (but not always) operated in tension with parents' perceptions of their children's right and ability to make religious choices. Guided by the research question—"How do parents balance their desire for religious continuity with their perception of their children's agency?"—we identified interactions that supported parents' desire for their children's religious continuity such as: (a) teaching principles and values, (b) providing expectations of religious participation and responsibility, and (c) setting an example. We also identified interactions that honored children's religious agency, such as (d) not forcing faith, (e) allowing exploration and mistakes, and (f) showing respect for children's views. In addition, parents described how they attributed meanings to their children's varied religious choices.

Our findings are consistent with previous research about bidirectional influences in socialization processes. We considered religion as a context of socialization (Palkovitz et al., 2003) and suggest that parents engage in processes with strategies that support their own religious desires, as well as strategies that accommodate their children's religious choices. In terms of bidirectional influence, parents not only seemed to be influenced by children's choices and behaviors, but accommodations made by parents to honor their children's choices were influenced by the relationship context wherein parents recognized their children as individuals with the right and ability to make religious choices.

These latter findings seem consistent with the concept of personal agency of both parents and children described by Kuczynski and Parkin (2007). Also, in a study of Belgian-Flemish parents and children, De Mol and Buysse (2008) found that an understanding by parents and children of the child as a "complete person" in the relationship was important to their mutual understanding of the child's influence (p. 372). Future research might investigate how parents' perceptions of children's agency contribute to parenting styles such as authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive and affect socialization processes in both religious and nonreligious parenting contexts.

Referring to the work of Diana Baumrind, Husain (2013) suggested that an authoritative parenting style is typically most effective for religious parents who desire to promote the internalization and emulation of religious values in their children. Piquart and Silbereisen (2004) similarly found, in a study of German families, that authoritative parenting also led to greater transmission of values from children to parents. Bengtson et al. (2013) summarized, from findings in their multigenerational, longitudinal study on parent-child relations, that "The warm, affirming relationship pattern was most likely to result in the successful transmission of religion" (p. 186). With these recurring, proauthoritative findings noted, Darling and Steinberg (1993) recognized that although research about authoritative parenting styles has consistently shown positive child outcomes, the relational processes that support this style have been unclear.

We have identified interactive processes related to the religious socialization of children that are consistent with the conceptualization of authoritative parenting by Darling and Steinberg (1993) as "a constellation of parent attributes that includes emotional support, high standards, appropriate autonomy granting and clear, bidirectional communication" (p. 487). In addition to communica-

tion, however, our findings also identified interactions between parents and children that supported both parents' and children's influence. We suggest that parents' recognition of (and respect for) children's personal religious agency may be integral to this process. Indeed, parents' honoring of their children's personal agency was mentioned by parents more than any other theme in our systematic analyses. Additional studies might investigate how agency influences processes associated with authoritative parenting in nonreligious contexts as well.

Although personal agency is a concept found in the faiths represented in our study, different levels of orthodoxy among religious parents, as well as cultural differences associated with ethnicity, may influence the levels of parental authority in parent-child relationships as well as how parents honor children's religious choices. Even so, in contemporary American society, attitudes of increased individualism seem to sway even those who value more hierarchical parenting styles as they balance their own religious expectations with their children's agency (Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008; Numrich, 2007).

Levels of orthodoxy and cultural and ethnic tradition certainly foster the meanings that parents associate with children's religious choices; however, our findings indicate that accommodations parents made to honor their children's agency may have had a significant effect on these meanings as well. As parents spoke of how they responded to or interpreted their children's varied religious choices or potential choices (even choices to not continue in their parents' faith), they spoke of personal feelings as well as aspirations for their children. Some said they would be devastated if their children left their faith. Others felt that they would have failed as parents. However, it was notable how many parents described alternative positive outcomes for their children that they would embrace, accept, or at least be content with. These outcomes included following God (even if in another faith), internalizing values, charitable motivations, good living, learning for themselves, and remembering their upbringing. Some parents also mentioned that although their children might leave for a time, they hoped that they would eventually return to their faith, as some do (Bengtson et al., 2013). This is consistent with the assertion by Kuczynski and Parkin (2007) that when parents set expectations and teach values, there is an assumption that children's choices will represent some level of compromise associated with parents' and children's interactions and interpretations.

Given the value that most religions place on human agency, it is possible that the meanings that religious parents attribute to their children's religious choices could be associated with adult development for these parents. Palkovitz et al. (2003) reasoned that "processes of parent-child interaction become part of the relationship's historical context and contribute meaning (cognitively and affectively) to subsequent interactions" (p. 310). Longitudinal research might be well suited for understanding how processes and meanings, in a religious context, might influence child and adult development across time. This understanding could be useful in guiding clinicians, pastoral counselors, and family life educators as they support families coping with religious differences. On this note, Colaner et al. (2014) recognized the value of accommodative family communication and found that communication that promotes "respect, acceptance, and tolerance" reinforces a "common family identity" even when parents and children may have different religious

affiliations (p. 323). This type of accommodative communication is consistent with parent–child interactions we identified that supported children’s agency.

Despite the implication of this study—that the influence of children’s agency makes religious transmission less sure—parents are still in a position to be the most influential guides in their children’s lives and do have an influence on religious socialization through relational processes, quality interactions, and the paths they set their children on (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). In their landmark study, Bengtson and colleagues (2013) concluded, “*Families do matter* in determining the moral and religious outcomes of young adults, and they matter a great deal” (p. 195, emphasis in original). Although even the most warmly relational and most religiously devoted parents cannot assure certain religious outcomes, the manner in which parents engage in the relational processes of socialization and the meanings they associate with their children’s choices significantly influence the quality of family relationships and the quality of the socialization experience. This understanding of the importance of relational processes in socialization may be key to what several parents in our study described as “laying a foundation.” What is built on this foundation during emerging and middle adulthood, however, lies largely in the hands of the adult child (Dollahite, Marks, & Wurm, 2019). A fascinating question that lies beyond the scope of the present study is what happens when children observe their parents reevaluating their own religious identity and commitment.

Limitations

Although children did talk about how parents balanced religious expectations and teaching with their own religious choices, this study primarily investigated the influence of children’s agency from a parental perspective. This parental perspective limits our understanding of how children perceive their own influence. However, this perspective may give us greater insight into how parents are affected by their understanding of their children’s agency. We recommend that future studies focus on how children’s perceptions of agency influence relational processes.

Additionally, we utilized a sample of moderately to highly religious families; therefore, results may not be generalizable to nominally religious or nonreligious families. Even so, relational processes identified in these families are noteworthy because these intentionally sampled families were identified by community leaders as exemplary and successful families. Also, many of the relational interactions we identified in the socialization process may be related to nonreligious contexts of socialization as well. This should be studied further.

Finally, in this article we focused on positive processes related to religious socialization and did not discuss unhealthy socialization practices. Many, but not all, of the families in our study discussed processes of religious socialization with adolescent children where religious outcomes were still unsure. Therefore, many parents were discussing how they predicted they would respond if religious transmission did or did not occur. Additional studies are needed to investigate relational processes and meanings in families with adult children when religious transmission has not occurred.

Conclusion

How and why does transmission of religious identity and commitment occur? When transmission does not occur, why does it not? Some have suggested that in contemporary American culture, as children mature, socialization sources outside the family have a greater influence on children than sources inside the family. If this is true, how parents balance their desires for their children’s religious identity and commitment with their children’s personal religious choices may be more important than ever before. An agency-sensitive understanding of parent–child religious and spiritual development may give a more textured and realistic picture of what matters most, even if such an understanding concedes that child outcomes are uncertain.

Research supports the significance of agency in socialization and given that this bidirectional perspective makes religious transmission less sure, a focus on processes, meanings, and relationships may be more valuable in conversations about religious transmission than a focus on socialization outcomes. A socialization process that emphasizes parental religious teaching, expectations, relational warmth, and congruent parental modeling—along with an appropriate amount of autonomy granting and respect for children’s views—is likely to foster more healthy family outcomes and relationships. Additionally, with religion being a significant influence in family life for many Americans, with religious differences in families on the rise, and with the responsibility many religious parents feel to pass on their faith to their children, focusing on positive religious socialization processes rather than religious outcomes and benchmarks may help families who are having difficulty navigating diverse religious perspectives.

Clinicians, pastoral counselors, and family life educators may also guide parents in developing realistic expectations of parental religious responsibilities that may be less about insuring certain religious outcomes for children and more about parents providing an enriching environment that is consistent with religious teachings, that fosters religious expectations and responsibility, and that honors children learning and choosing for themselves.

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