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Does Disassociation from the Majority Religious Affiliation
Affect Community Desirability?

Alex Nicholas Andre

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Does Disassociation from the Majority Religious Affiliation Affect Community Desirability?

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Master of Science

How do predominantly religious rural communities influence members who are not associated with the dominant religion? Does disassociation with the majority religious affiliation impact community desirability? Current community literature has shown that religious affiliation identification can influence community sentiment (Jennings and Krannich 2013; Kan and Kim 1981; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990; Mattarita-Cascante, Stedman, and Luloff 2010) while other studies suggest the possibility of either mixed or inconclusive results (Adams 1992; Andrews 2011; Flagg and Painter II 2019; Reitz, Banerjee, Phan, and Thompson 2009). Using data from the *Rural Utah Community Study* in 2017, the current study will examine the association between religious affiliation and community desirability in a unique setting. I find that even when accounting for length of residence, age, and the perception of local services, religious affiliation continues to be associated with community desirability. These findings have potential implications for other communities with a majority religion.

Keywords: religious affiliation, community desirability, rural communities

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
DOES DISASSOCIATION FROM THE MAJORITY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AFFECT COMMUNITY DESIRABILITY?	1
INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY	1
THE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE	2
RELIGION AND COMMUNITY DESIRABILITY	4
DATA AND METHOD	6
MEASURES	7
Community Desirability	7
Religious Affiliation	8
Demographic Variables	8
Social Variables	9
Other Variables	11
Data Analysis	12
RESULTS	13
DISCUSSION	17
CONCLUSION	21

REFERENCES	24
TABLES	32
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of All the Variables	32
Table 1. Continued.....	33
Table 2. Cross Tabulation of Religious Affiliation and Community Desirability.....	34
Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Community Desirability	35
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Latter-day Saints and Not Latter-day Saints.....	36

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of All the Variables	32
Table 2. Cross Tabulation of Religious Affiliation and Community Desirability.....	34
Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Community Desirability	35
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Latter-day Saints and Not Latter-day Saints.....	36

DOES DISASSOCIATION FROM THE MAJORITY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AFFECT COMMUNITY DESIRABILITY?

This study seeks to examine how a resident's disassociation with a religious majority impacts perceived community desirability. To date, there is uncertainty regarding the connection between religious affiliation and community sentiment. The outcomes of various studies show a relationship (Jennings and Krannich 2013; Kan and Kim 1981; Mattarita-Cascante, Stedman, and Luloff 2010; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990), yet other results are mixed or inconclusive (Adams 1992; Andrews 2011; Flagg and Painter II 2019; Reitz, Banerjee, Phan, and Thompson 2009). Rural Utah communities are advantageous to examine the interaction between religious affiliation and desirability of the community because of the presence of a clearly defined single majority religious affiliation (Shortridge 1976; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990). Additionally, the majority religious affiliation in Utah is known to integrate its members with the values and socially desired outcomes of the community (Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Hadaway, Kirk, and Roof 1978; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990). Ultimately, such an examination has the potential to be transferred to other predominantly religious communities for examining the interaction between religious identification and perceived community desirability.

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY

The study of community is one of the fundamental topics of social inquiry (Cope, Currit, Flaherty, and Brown 2015; Erickson 1978). The Durkheimian view characterizes community as the source of individual identity and collective harmony (Riley 2015). Tönnies (1887) and Durkheim (Durkheim 2014; Riley 2015) proposed that the modernization of society is associated with a shift from personal relations to impersonal and economic relations (Aldous, Durkheim,

and Tönnies 1972; Riley 2015). The corrosion of these social relations corresponds with individuals becoming more dependent on society and less connected with one another (Durkheim 2014; Riley 2015). The community is essential in the socialization and well-being of individuals, and social forces continue to impact community dynamics. Therefore, the study of community remains a relevant and necessary aspect of social science research.

Scholars have several approaches to understand community sentiment. McMillan and Chavis (1986) describe psychological community sentiment as membership, influence in the community, integration and fulfillment of needs, and having a shared emotional connection. Sociological studies have proposed linear (Wirth 1938) and systemic (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974) models to study community sentiment. The linear model extends the perspectives of Tönnies (1887) and Durkheim (Durkheim 2014; Riley 2015) by suggesting that population size, population density, and heterogeneity (Flagg and Painter II 2019; Wirth 1938) are associated with community sentiment. The systemic model suggests that one's social position (Goudy 1982; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974), not community size, serves as a better predictor of community sentiment. The systemic model emphasizes the length of residence, position in the social structure, mass society, friendship, kinship networks, formal and informal relationships, length of education, and family life (Goudy 1982). A majority of studies support the systemic model over the linear model—suggesting that community sentiment is affected more by social ties and social measures than linear measures (Beggs, Hulbert, and Haines 1996; Flagg and Painter II 2019; Goudy 1990; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Sampson 1988). These various approaches to community sentiment seek to understand and explain how a resident experiences community.

THE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Previous literature has acknowledged confusion between community attachment and

community satisfaction as both are forms of community sentiment. Community attachment is the feeling of being connected to the community (Brown, Xu, Barfield, and King 2000; Flagg and Painter II 2019). Measures of community attachment pertain to how well the respondent fits in the community and how much the residents have in common (Marans and Rogers 1975). Community satisfaction is the respondent's evaluation of the community and its services. Measures for community satisfaction include ranking the ideality of the community, the desirability over the past five years of the community, and the self-reported level of satisfaction with the community (Brown 1993). As an aspect of community satisfaction, desirability of rural communities is especially relevant.

Community desirability, as an aspect of community satisfaction, is how desirable the respondent views the community (Brown 1993). For rural communities, many residents experience situations which engender or hinder the desire to stay in the community. Small rural communities may be characterized by traditional norms and close kin social networks (McKnight, Sanders, Gibbs, and Brown 2017; Partridge and Rickman 2006; Salamon 2003a; Wuthnow 2013). However, some rural communities have services which do not adequately serve local residents (Lichter and Johnson 2007; Lobao 1996), and residents may be more connected to extralocal organizations than the community itself (Warren 1978). Some rural communities experience high poverty rates (Lichter and Johnson 2007) and struggle to remain economically viable, and consequently, many young people leave (Johnson 2011). As many residents in rural communities tend to be older (Siegel 1993), a lack of health care services may sway the overall health of the community and its desirability (Sanders, Erickson, Call, McKnight, and Hedges 2015), and the desire to leave the community may be exacerbated by the departure of young professionals (Johnson and Fuguitt 2000). However, one should be cautious in studying

communities as each community has its own history and story (Cope, Park, Jackson, Muirbrook, Sanders, Ward, and Brown 2019; Salamon 2003a; Salamon 2003b). As economic factors seem to weakly be associated with community desirability (Brown 1993), other factors need to be considered.

RELIGION AND COMMUNITY DESIRABILITY

Evidence suggests that despite the many challenges facing rural communities, many residents stay. Following the systemic model, social ties, length of residence and age all play an important role (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). Other explanations cite perceived quality of local services and marital status (Erickson, Call, and Brown 2012). Of the available explanations, religion is unique because it fosters cultural cohesion (Andrews 2011) and social networks (Wilson and Janoski 1995; Wuthnow 2004). This may account for why residents desire to stay in their community and older residents decide to age in place (Erickson, Call, and Brown 2012).

Religion is capable of instilling values for cultural cohesion (Andrews 2011) and socialization (Abar, Carter, and Winsler 2009; Barrett 2009) which facilitates community desirability. Individuals associated with the dominant religious affiliation are likely to integrate with cultural values (Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Hadaway, Kirk, and Roof 1978) which may be conducive to social participation (Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990). For example, the Anglican Church induces the culture and schooling of people in England (Francis and Lanksheart 1992). Mainline Protestants and Catholics reportedly encourage interaction and social networking (Wilson and Janoski 1995; Wuthnow 2004). In contrast, conservative Protestants are prone to isolate from other religious groups (Hagan 2006; Marshall and Olson 2018b), which may lead to the formation of in-groups and out-groups both religiously and socially (Smith 2002).

Religion's effect of social exclusion can even be exacerbated in rural communities, which may be more homogeneous and more attached to traditional norms (Andrews 2011; Kan and Kim 1981). Conversely, individuals associated with the majority religion may participate more in community activities and have higher levels of community sentiment (Martinson, Wilkening, and Buttell 1982; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990). Thus, individuals in a majority religious affiliation may be more satisfied with their community, and a minority religious affiliation may feel excluded and find their community less desirable regardless of other factors (Smith 2002). As each community has its own history and story (Cope, Park, Jackson, Muirbrook, Sanders, Ward, and Brown 2019; Salamon 2003a; Salamon 2003b), religious affiliation identification may impact residential community desirability across various communities in important ways. As a result, the interaction between religious affiliation identification and community desirability is a meaningful phenomenon to examine.

The current research emphasizes how identification or disassociation with the majority religious affiliation influences perceived community desirability. Current community literature has shown that religious affiliation identification influences community sentiment (Jennings and Krannich 2013; Kan and Kim 1981; Mattarita-Cascante, Stedman, and Luloff 2010; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990) while other studies suggest the possibility of mixed (Adams 1992; Andrews 2011; Flagg and Painter II 2019) or inconclusive results (Reitz, Banerjee, Phan, and Thompson 2009).

This Study

I argue that individuals not associated with the majority religion will be more likely to view the community as less desirable over time than individuals in the majority religious affiliation, which suggests that religious identity influences community desirability by creating

in-groups and out-groups (Smith 2002).

Studying rural Utah is advantageous for understanding the potential association between religious affiliation majority, religious minorities, and community desirability. Utah has less religious diversity and is dominated by a single religious affiliation (Shortridge 1976; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990) which has also influenced the norms, desired social outcomes, and values of communities (Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Shortridge 1976). Also, rural communities in Utah have changed considerably over time such as an increase in urbanization and access to urban centers (Erickson, Call, and Brown 2012).

In this study, community desirability is based on how desirable it is to live in the community over the last five years (Brown 1993). The systemic theoretical approach is utilized to frame community desirability as an outcome of religious identity. As part of the systemic model, I will focus on how membership or exclusion from the majority religious affiliation influences community desirability. This study seeks to explore not only the association between religious affiliation and community desirability, but it also hopes to transfer its findings to future studies and other settings with a majority religious affiliation (Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990).

DATA AND METHOD

This study used the 2017 Rural Utah Community Study (RUCS) survey to examine the association between disassociation with the religious majority and perceived community desirability. Utilizing this data allows this research to examine the link between religious affiliation and community desirability in a community with a clear dominant religious affiliation (Kan and Kim 1981; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990). The RUCS survey consisted of five sections: Section A (questions about the community), Section B (physical and mental

health), Section C (the natural environment), Section D (educational opportunities), and Section E (questions about the respondent). In addition to self-reported religious affiliation and community desirability, demographic characteristics, social variables, and other variables were gathered in the survey.

The sampling procedure used to gather the data followed the Dillman method of mailing surveys (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian 2009). The populations among the communities sampled ranged between 2,500 and 5,000. Respondents received a letter in the mail notifying them of the upcoming survey. When the packet was mailed to respondents, the packet included a cover letter, a 16-page questionnaire, a \$2 honorarium, and a postage-paid return envelope. 1,286 individuals responded to the survey creating an adjusted response rate of 63%. Mean substitution was conducted in Stata to account for missing responses for respondent's income because the missing value percentage was higher than 10%. All other variables had missing values below 10%, therefore, no changes were made to missing data.

MEASURES

Community Desirability

Community desirability is how desirable the respondent perceives the community. I continue with the measure used by Brown (1993) and operationalize community desirability as whether the respondent's desire to stay in the community has decreased, increased, or stayed about the same. The community desirability question asked, "Over the last 5 years would you say that, in general, your community has become more desirable, stayed about the same, or become less desirable as a place to live?" Responses to the question included (1) Less desirable, (2) More desirable, and (3) Stayed about the same.

Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation refers to the religion reported by respondents. Specifically, respondents were asked, “What is your religious preference?” Responses to the question included Catholic, Latter-day Saint¹, Protestant, No religious preference, and Something else. For this study, 72% of the respondents reported being a Latter-day Saint, 4.5% were Catholic, 16.5% were No religious preference, 6.6% were Protestant, and less than 1% were Something Else (see Table 1 for a full description of all variables used in the analysis). A dichotomous variable was created with Latter-day Saints coded as “0” and individuals who did not identify themselves as Latter-day Saints² (a combination of all the other groups) as “1.” The creation of a dichotomous variable creates a defined, clear in-group and out-group based on association or disassociation with the majority religious affiliation (Smith 2002). The relationship between religious affiliation and community attachment is the focal relationship of this study. Based on previous research, not being affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints³ is expected to be associated with less community desirability (Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990; Toney, and Stinner, and Kan 1983).

Demographic Variables

Demographic variables include age, marital status, sex, income, and level of education. The respondents ages were divided into three cohorts: (0) 0-34, (1) 35-64, and (2) 65-103. The age distributions were as follows: 0-34(5.5%), 35-64(48.5%), and 65-103(46%). The age cohorts represent different potential life stages (Flaherty and Brown 2010) for the respondent such as early career and family, established career and family, and retirement. Marital status was

¹ Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are referred to as Latter-day Saints according to protocol from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

² Individuals who do not identify as Latter-day Saints are called non-Latter-day Saints or not Latter-day Saints.

³ This is the accepted name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

measured by asking respondents “Are you currently married, separated, divorced, widowed or have you ever married? Respondents were asked to select only one of those options. The responses were then recoded as (0) Currently married and (1) Not currently married with 78% current married and 22% not currently married. Sex was measured by asking respondents, “What is your sex?” The respondents were 57% male and 43% female.

To measure income, respondents were asked, “If you consider all your earnings, investments, and personal income, about how much was your total family income in 2015?” The responses were recoded as (1) \$1 to \$10,000, (2) \$10,000 to \$20,000, (3) \$20,000 to \$30,000, (4) \$30,000 to \$40,000, (5) \$40,000 to \$50,000 (6) \$50,000 to \$60,000, (7) \$60,000 to \$70,000, (8) \$70,000 to \$80,000, (9) \$80,000 to \$90,000, (10) \$90,000 to \$100,000, (11) \$100,000 to \$150,000, and (12) Over \$150,000. The missing data for personal income was accounted for using mean substitution which changed missing values to the mean of 6 or \$50,000 to \$60,000. Level of education was measured by asking, “What is the highest grade or level of college completed by each of the people listed below?” The respondent then chose one of the following: 11th grade or less, High school graduate (or GED), 1 year of college or trade school, 2 years of college or AA degree, 3 years of college or trade school, 4 years of college or BS/BA degree, and Graduate degree (MA, PhD, MD, JD, etc.). The responses were recoded and distributed as follows: (1) High school or less (22%), (2) Some college (41%), and (3) Four years of college or more (38%).

Social Variables

The social variables include the length of residence, church attendance, the number of children living in the household, and political party identification. These variables are a continuation of the systemic model suggesting that social ties and social status influence

community satisfaction (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). The length of residence was obtained by asking respondents, “How many years have you lived in this community?” The responses were then divided by their age to obtain a percentage of their life in years living in that community. The length of residence in essence measures the proportion of life lived in the community (Flaherty and Brown 2010) and prevents age and length of residence being conflated. The average percentage of their life lived in their community was 50% (See Table 1). Increased length of residence is generally associated with higher community sentiment (Flagg and Painter II 2019; Goudy 1990) as individuals living in a community may invest in the community and develop social networks.

To account for religiosity, church attendance was utilized. Specifically, the RUCS asked, “Not including weddings or funerals, how often do you attend religious services?” Church attendance responses included (0) Not at all, (1) A few times per year, (2) Once or twice a month, (3) Almost every week, and (4) Every week or more often. The average church attendance was 2, which suggests the average person attends church once or twice a month. Previous research has shown that Latter-day Saints who are active in their religion have higher levels of community satisfaction than Latter-day Saints or others who are less involved with their religion (Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990).

The presence of children may elevate the need for community involvement (Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990) and may be associated with feelings about the community (Flaherty and Brown 2010). Therefore, I include the number of children living in the household. This was assessed by asking, “How many children, aged 17 or younger, live in your household?” The responses ranged from 0 to 11 living in the household. The mean score of number of children in the household is 0.74. As many Latter-day Saints are conservative Republicans

(Olson-Hazboun, Krannich, and Robertson 2017), which may influence feelings about the community, I examine political identification. Respondents were asked, “Generally speaking do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or what? Political identifications included (1) Republican (58.8%), (2) Democrat (11.6%), or (3) Independent or Something else (29.6%).

Other Variables

The other variables that may influence community desirability include natural environment satisfaction, homeownership, employment status, self-reported health, satisfaction with the local high school, and satisfaction with health care. Satisfaction with the environment may encourage desirability through an aesthetic experience and a source of satisfaction (Reynar 2008). The natural environment may also be part of a person’s identity, personal or family history (Reynar 2008) or linked to economic outcomes (Hunter and Toney 2005). Natural environmental satisfaction was assessed by asking, “On a scale from 1 “Dissatisfied” to 7 “Satisfied” please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the quality of the natural environment in your community?” The mean level of satisfaction with the natural environment was 6, which implies many residents are satisfied with the natural environment. Home ownership may be an expression of investment and long-term commitment to the community (Kan and Kim 1981). For home ownership, respondents were asked, “Do you own or rent the home you live in?” 93% of residents own their home and 8% of residents do not own their home.

Employment status and type of job can be a social status (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974) and a potential source of social networks. To measure employment status, respondents were asked, “What is your current employment status? Are you currently: employed for pay in a full-time job, employed in a part-time job, unemployed and looking for work, retired, a homemaker,

and unemployed but not seeking work?” The responses were adjusted to be (0) Not currently employed (53%) and (1) Currently employed (47%).

Self-reported health, health care satisfaction, and high school satisfaction were selected to reflect satisfaction with facilities and local community centers, which may influence positive or negative feelings about the community (McKnight, Sanders, Gibbs, and Brown 2017).

Respondent self-reported health was measured by asking, “On a scale of 1 ‘Very Poor’ to 7 ‘Excellent’, how would you rate your health?” The mean score for self-reported health was 5.29, which suggests most residents may be satisfied with their health. To obtain high school satisfaction, respondents were asked, “How would you rate the overall quality of the schools that most children in your community attend?” High school satisfaction responses ranged from (1) Badly needs improvement to (7) Exceptional. The average level of satisfaction with high school score was 4.3, which implies residents are not dissatisfied or satisfied with local high schools. For health care satisfaction, respondents were asked, “On a scale of 1 “Very dissatisfied” to 7 “Very Satisfied” how satisfied are you with quality of care you get from your primary care physician?” The average health care satisfaction score was 5.57, which suggests many residents are satisfied with the quality of their primary health care.

(Table 1 about here)

Data Analysis

To assess the link between religious affiliation and community desirability, I first conduct a cross-tabulation between change in community desirability and religious affiliation. Next, I use multinomial logistic regression. Prior to analyses, the Stata *collin* command was used to ensure collinearity was not violated in the models. The VIF factors for all of the variables were not significantly greater than 1, therefore, there is no evidence of multicollinearity (Acock 2008).

RESULTS

Table 2 shows a cross-tabulation of community desirability by religious affiliation identity. One of the notable findings of the cross-tabulation involves viewing the community as less desirable for those that are not Latter-day Saints. Over 30% of individuals that are not Latter-day Saints reported the community to be less desirable over the past 5 years, while only about 18.5% of Latter-day Saints reported the community to be less desirable over the past 5 years. The p-value is less than 0.001 and shows there is a significant difference from the expected outcomes. A total of 57% of Latter-day Saints view the community as more desirable, and about 49% of those who are not Latter-day Saints view the community as more desirable. This initial result suggests a negative effect of disassociation from the majority religion as those who are not Latter-day Saints find the community as less desirable over a five-year period. Additionally, it indicates that Latter-day Saint respondents are more likely to find their community more desirable when compared to non-Latter-day Saint respondents. The cross-tabulation predicts that residents' view of community tends to be polarizing based on religious affiliation. The residents tend to view the community as more desirable or less desirable based on religious affiliation identification.

(Table 2 about here)

Table 3 shows the results of a multinomial logistic regression analysis of community desirability with religious affiliation as the focal relationship. Consistent with the preliminary results of the cross-tabulation, not being affiliated with the majority religion corresponds with higher odds (OR= 1.95 in Model 1) of viewing the community as less desirable when compared to individuals associated with the majority religion (Latter-Day Saints). Even with the addition of other variables in Model 2, religious affiliation continues to be statistically significant in terms of

viewing the community as less desirable, which is noteworthy. Model 2 shows that religious affiliation even with other factors such as length of residence or age affects community desirability. This suggests that there is an aspect of religion which influences community desirability. Religious affiliation seems to influence the extremes in community desirability in terms of finding the community as more desirable and finding the community as less desirable. In other words, residents in the rural community are likely to view the community as more desirable if they are a Latter-day Saint and less desirable if they are not (see Table 3).

(Table 3 about here)

In Model 2, the association of religious affiliation on desirability remains even with the addition of other variables. Not being affiliated with the majority religious affiliation is associated with an increase in the odds of viewing the community as less desirable (OR=2.82). Not being affiliated with the dominant religion is associated with an 182% increase in the odds of viewing the community as less desirable compared to those who view the community as more desirable. As stated previously, religious affiliation appears to have a polarizing effect on community desirability with those disassociated with the majority religion more likely to view the community as less desirable. Individuals who have lived a larger proportion of their in the community are more likely to view the community as less desirable compared to those who view the community as more desirable over the past five years (OR=4.84). Residents who have lived a larger portion of their life may have more frustrations than residents who have resided for a smaller proportion of life or the problems are worsened with lengthened residence. Increased church attendance is slightly associated with viewing the community as less desirable in the last five years compared to those who view the community as more desirable (OR=1.16). People who attend church frequently not associated with the majority religion may find the community less

desirable due to different beliefs and social networks or church attendance may occur due to social obligations more than a desire to actually attend. Households with more children in them are more likely to feel invested in the community, higher satisfaction with life, and less likely to view the community as less desirable (OR=0.76). The presence of children in the household is part of an individual's life stage cycle (Flaherty and Brown 2010) and having children in the household creates more stakeholders in participating in the community and the possibility of friendships. Increased satisfaction with the natural environment is associated with a decrease in odds of viewing the community as less desirable over the past five years compared to those who view the community as more desirable (OR=0.75). As previously predicted, respondents who are more satisfied with their primary local high schools are less likely to view their community as less desirable. No association is found between age, marital status, sex, income, level of education, political party identification, home ownership, self-reported health, employment, or satisfaction with health care and viewing the community as less desirable.

Model 3 and Model 4 examine the association between disassociation with the religious majority and viewing the community about the same in the last five years. Religious affiliation is not relevant in viewing the community about the same, which indicates religious affiliation more strongly affects viewing the community as more desirable or less desirable. Before and after the addition of other variables, religious affiliation is not associated with viewing the community about the same over the last five years. Older residents are strongly associated with viewing the community about the same compared to those who view the community as more desirable. Older residents are more likely to be involved with the community (England and Albrecht 1984; McAuley and Nutty 1985; Rank and Voss 1982) and experience interest in the community, close friends, more sorrow for leaving, and close-knit neighbors (Flagg and Painter II 2019). The

quality of relationships in the community may be the foundation of the community experience for older residents even when economic conditions are undesirable (Erickson, Call, and Brown 2012). Residents who are not currently married are more likely to view their community about the same compared to those who are married. Completing more years of education compared to obtaining a high school diploma or less is associated with higher likelihood of viewing the community about the same. The level of education completed can be a status symbol of social position (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974) and may influence friendships and local networks. Furthermore, there may be lifestyle differences between individuals who complete a high school education or less in terms of leisure time and friendships. Residents who have lived in the community for a larger portion of their life are less likely to view the community about the same.

Identifying as a Democrat or Independent also increases the probability of viewing the community the same. Satisfaction with community services such as health care or the local high school also maintains viewing the community about the same. No association exists between religious affiliation, sex, income, church attendance, number of children in the household, home ownership, environment satisfaction, employment status, or self-reported health and viewing the community about the same.

Table 4 explores the differences between Latter-day Saints and non-Latter-day Saints to better understand why both groups experience the community differently. Noteworthy differences between Latter-day Saints and non-Latter-day Saints include marital status, level of education completed, how often church is attended, the number of children in the household, political party identification, and satisfaction with the local high school. Latter-day Saints report higher marital rates (over 80%) while 67% of non-Latter-day Saints are currently married. Latter-day Saints are slightly more educated than non-Latter-day Saint counterparts which may

influence values and personal income. Religion may also influence what types of jobs individuals pursue. One noteworthy contrast between Latter-day Saints and non-Latter-day Saints is church attendance. Over 50% of non-Latter-day Saints do not attend church at all while over 60% of Latter-day Saints attend church every week or more often. This seems to be the best indicator for why Latter-day Saints and non-Latter-day Saints differ. Individuals who attend church together every week may be more likely to associate with one another which may create distinct social groups (Smith 2002). Over 60% of Latter-day Saints identify as Republican, which may be associated with traditional values. Most non-Latter-day Saints identify as Independent, which may be another of division of opinion between the two groups.

(Table 4 about here)

DISCUSSION

The current study examines how religious affiliation identification influences perceived community desirability. I contribute to community literature by addressing the uncertainty between religious affiliation and perceived community desirability. The primary finding of this study is that religious affiliation identification has a polarizing effect on community desirability. Individuals who do not identify with the dominant religious affiliation are especially impacted as they are more likely to view the community as less desirable. The results of this study also confirm previous findings (Jennings and Krannich 2013; Kan and Kim 1981; Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun 1990; Mattarita-Cascante, Stedman, and Luloff 2010) which suggest that religious identification affects community sentiment. Furthermore, the association between religious affiliation identification and viewing the community as less desirable was strengthened even with the addition with other variables. Religious affiliation was the second strongest indicator of viewing the community as less desirable. This finding suggests that religion can

influence how individuals view the community and that religion needs to be considered in future community studies. In agreement with previous literature, religion may be a source of social isolation (Smith 2002) and social networks (Beyerlein and Hipp 2005; Marshall and Olson 2018b).

In effort to explain how disassociation from the majority religious affiliation increases the likelihood of viewing the community as less desirable, I offer some possible explanations. One, many local activities may be religion based, and consequently, limitations exist in who participates in social activities. Two, religion is a source of friendships, networks, and community (Geertsen, Toney, and Kim 1977; Kan and Kim 1981). Therefore, individuals who are not Latter-day Saints may be excluded from these social events and networks. Small rural communities tend to maintain traditional norms and close kin social networks (McKnight, Sanders, Gibbs, and Brown 2017; Partridge and Rickman 2006; Salamon 2003a; Wuthnow 2013), therefore, the effect of religion on culture may be stronger in rural communities if religion influences those norms, values, beliefs, and social networks. The lack of interaction between members in the majority religion and those who are not associated with the majority religion may reduce social trust and create tension between the two groups (Putnam 2007). Some religious affiliations reach out to nonmembers with the intent of conversion (Menjivar 2003). The reputation of Latter-day Saints and missionary efforts may dissuade making networks and personal connections for nonmembers. Mainline Protestants have been shown to be more likely to facilitate social networks in comparison to other religions such as Conservative Protestants (Marshall and Olson 2018b). It is uncertain if Latter-day Saints tend to facilitate social networks or if they tend to be very religious and isolated from outside groups. If Latter-day Saints in rural communities tend to be insular to out-groups, this could explain a lack of social trust between

Latter-day Saints and non-Latter-day Saints and may influence the culture of the overall community. These are a few possibilities for how the presence of Latter-day Saints as a religious majority may dissuade nonmembers viewing the community as desirable. However, further research is needed to understand why nonmembers of the religious majority view the community as less desirable.

Consistent with findings of previous studies, length of residence is one of the strongest predictors of community desirability, especially among social variables (Flaherty and Brown 2010; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Goudy 1982; Goudy 1990). In contrast to previous studies, length of residence has a negative impact on community sentiment. This finding suggests that individuals are less rooted to their community meaning they do not feel connected to their community and may have desires to live outside of their community. Tuan (1980) suggested that rootedness is no longer possible due to modernization and curiosity to experience life outside of one's community and the ability to compare communities. Furthermore, consistent with literature on cognitive dissonance and views of the community, long term residents in rural settings view their community less desirably the longer they have lived there. There are several possible factors for this effect. Dissatisfaction with community resources such as health care can encourage dissonance. Dissatisfaction with economy may also be a factor. According to Erickson, Call, and Brown (2012), the desire to stay in the community is a product of community satisfaction and the perception of local services. Consequently, individuals who have lived in the community for a larger proportion of their life may be more unsatisfied with their community regardless of age. However, one should be cautious with this explanation as community sentiment in this case is the desire to stay in the community versus community desirability.

Increased church attendance surprisingly increases the likelihood of viewing the

community as less desirable. Stinner, Van Loon, Chung, and Byun (1990) previously suggested that Latter-day Saints who are more involved with their religion and long-term residents are more likely to be satisfied with their community than less active Latter-day Saints or individuals who are not involved. Perhaps individuals experience burn-out in their community when they are more active in their religion. Frequent interaction with neighbors could be a source of tension. However, these are only speculations, and a better measure of involvement in church may be necessary for future studies.

Political identification is relevant in rural Utah as many residents are Republican (Peterson and Liu 2008). However, the influence of political orientation on community desirability is slight in viewing the community about the same. Being Independent or Democrat may not increase community desirability, but it also does not lessen community desirability. This finding suggests that the community may be welcoming of diverse political thought despite being mostly Republican. Due to thinking differently from the majority of the community, they may be less vocal in expressing their opinions and seek to have friendships not based on politics or only associate with certain members of the community.

Satisfaction with the natural environment deters viewing the community as less desirable. The rituals and history of an environment can be involved in the formation of an individual's identity and how a person interacts with others (Tuan 1980). Individuals living in the same geographic area can create different identities and different histories based on how they interact with their environment (Reynar 2008). For Latter-day Saints, the natural environment may not only be pleasing aesthetically but also a part of their history and culture. Furthermore, the natural environment may be linked to economic outcomes for residents (Hunter and Toney 2005). For all residents, viewing the natural environment favorably suggests a positive experience living in

the community. Therefore, it is unsurprising that satisfaction with the environment is an essential factor for understanding community desirability.

Satisfaction with local high school and primary health care both influence the desirability of the community as resources for the community (McKnight, Sanders, Gibbs, and Brown 2017). Parents with a vested interest in the community desire for their children to receive an excellent education which is often associated with satisfaction and economic mobility. Parents may even choose to live in a community or leave a community based on the quality of the local schools. Furthermore, where individuals live may dictate which school children attend. For local health care, many adults desire health care which meets their needs as they increase in age. While not all rural areas are retirement communities, many elderly residents desire quality health care. However, the strength of the association between local health care and community desirability is weak. One explanation for this finding may be that residents may be willing to seek health care outside of their local communities. The quality of the health care is probably a higher priority than having health care in the community (Erickson, Call, and Brown 2012).

CONCLUSION

My study has five limitations noteworthy of mention. First, this study does not distinguish between individual religious affiliations and community desirability. The study simplifies religious affiliation by creating two groups: religious majority membership and disassociation from the religious majority. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to individual religious affiliations. As a strength, my study shows that when all religious denominations separate from the religious majority are combined into one group, disassociation from the religious majority is relevant. However, the distinctions between being non-religious and having different religious beliefs from the majority are not specified. This study does not

distinguish the non-religious from other religious affiliations. Future studies should also distinguish members between religious affiliations and from the non-religious.

Two, this study focuses on rural Utah communities that have their own distinct identity and story (Cope, Park, Jackson, Muirbrook, Sanders, Ward, and Brown 2019; Salamon 2003a; Salamon 2003b). Latter-day Saints are unique as a religious majority from other religious denominations. Most religious organizations that increase in size have members who may be less committed to their religion (Stark and Finke 2000). However, Latter-day Saints who migrate to Utah or live in Utah may maintain high religious commitment even with increasing numbers. Furthermore, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a culture is deeply instilled in these rural communities from the beginning and continues for generations.

Three, the current research uses church attendance to represent involvement in church. As Marshall and Olson (2018a) have noted, church attendance alone may be insufficient for measuring involvement. Latter-day Saints have rituals and responsibilities such as ministering or scripture study which are also aspects of church involvement. A scale variable in the future including measures such as prayer, ministering, scripture study, and so on may more effectively measure church involvement. Attending church may also be influenced more by culture or social expectations than religious commitment.

Four, this study reports that individuals not affiliated with the majority religious affiliation have higher odds of finding the community less desirable but only speculates why individuals find the community as less desirable. A qualitative study of rural communities may be beneficial to bring further understanding of the effect of religious affiliation identification and rural community desirability.

Fifth, the findings of this study should not be generalized to community attachment or

satisfaction. This study measures community desirability, which previously was an aspect of community satisfaction (Brown 1993). Despite this weakness, I hope this study can be used as a reference point when studying and evaluating other communities with the presence of a religious majority. Some religious affiliations are more open to social networks than others and facilitate trust. Other religious affiliations are more insulated and do not foster social interaction with members outside of the religious community (Marshall and Olson 2018b). This is an important characteristic to consider with religious denominations in future studies also.

Ultimately, this study develops the association between religious affiliation and perceived community desirability. As suggested previously, religion is capable of forming in-groups and out-groups (Smith 2002), which may foster social isolation in the community. Community desirability is especially impacted for those not in the religious majority. As a potential solution for this challenge, communities should consider activities which encourage community involvement regardless of religious affiliation. A qualitative study of individuals not affiliated with the majority religion can perhaps obtain reasons why these residents view the community as less desirable. Furthermore, do individuals in other communities disassociated from the majority religion experience dissatisfaction with their community? Does dissatisfaction for individuals who do not identify with the majority religion occur in the community regardless of what the dominant religious affiliation is? While each community is unique and different, comparing across different communities may be fruitful for understanding varying levels of community desirability.

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TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of All the Variables

Variable Name	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Counts
<i>Community Desirability</i>		1= Less Desirable	3= Stayed About the Same	1,184
Less Desirable				268
More Desirable				646
Stayed About the Same				270
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		0= Latter-day Saint	1= Not Latter-day Saint	1,131
Latter-day Saint				842
Not Latter-day Saint				349
<i>Age</i>		0= 0-34	2= 65-103	1,139
0-34				63
35-64				552
65-103				524
<i>Marital Status</i>		0= Married	1=Not Married	1,176
Married				918
Not Married				258
<i>Sex</i>		0=Male	1= Female	1,180
Male				680
Female				500
<i>Income_a</i>	6.06	1= \$1 to \$10,000	12= Over \$150,000	1,231
			3= Four Years of College or More	
<i>Level of Education</i>		1=High School or Less		1,166
High School Graduate or Less				253
Some College _b				476
Four Years of College or More				437

^aThe mean income is 6.06, which is \$50,000 to \$60,000.

^bSome college is one to three years of college.

Table 1. Continued

Length of Residence	0.5	0	1	1,139
<i>Church Attendance</i>	2.56	0=Not at all	4= Every week (or more often)	1,158
Not at All				243
A Few Times Per Year				153
Once or Twice a Month				55
Almost Every Week				129
Every Week (Or More Often)				578
Number of Children in Household	0.74	0	11	1,153
<i>Political Party Affiliation</i>				1,136
Republican				668
Democrat				132
Independent/Other/Not Affiliated				336
Natural Environment Satisfaction	5.91	1=Dissatisfied	7=Satisfied	1,172
<i>Home Ownership</i>		0= Owns home	1= Doesn't own home	1,175
Owns Home				1,087
Doesn't Own Home				88
<i>Employment Status</i>		0=Not Currently Employed	1=Currently Employed	1,142
Not Currently Employed				606
Currently Employed				536
Self-Reported Health	5.29	1=Poor	7=Excellent	1,165
Satisfaction with High School	4.3	1= Dissatisfied	7= Very Satisfied	1,165
Health Care Satisfaction	5.56	1=Dissatisfied	7=Satisfied	1,127

^cChurch attendance mean=2.56. (2=One or twice a month)

Table 2. Cross Tabulation of Religious Affiliation and Community Desirability

Religious Affiliation and Pearson Chi-Square Contribution			
Community Desirability	Latter-day Saint	Not Latter-day Saint	Total
Less Desirable	150 (18.47%)	97 (30.39%)	247 (21.92%)
More Desirable	468 (57.64%)	155 (49.36%)	623 (55.33%)
Stayed About the Same	194 (23.89)	62 (19.75%)	256 (22.74%)
Pearson chi-square= 20.4332		p<0.001	

Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Community Desirability

Variables	<u>Less Desire</u>				<u>Stayed About the Same</u>			
	Model 1	95% Conf.	Model 2	95% Conf.	Model 3	95% Conf.	Model 4	
Not Latter-day Saint ^a	1.95***	1.43-2.67	2.82***	1.68-4.75	0.97	0.69-1.35	1.02	
<i>Demographic Variables</i>								
35-64 (Age) ^b			0.97	0.38-2.48			0.28***	
65-103 (Age) ^c			0.53	0.19-1.48			0.22***	
Not Currently Married ^d			0.71	0.44-1.17			1.60*	
Female ^e			1.16	0.81-1.68			1.41	
Income ^f			0.96	0.91-1.02			0.97	
Some College ^g			1.23	0.77-1.96			1.80*	
Four Years of College or More ^h			1.27	0.65-1.91			1.78*	
<i>Social Variables</i>								
Length of Residence ⁱ			4.84***	2.71-8.65			0.48*	
Church Attendance ^j			1.16*	1.00-1.34			1.09	
Number of Children in Household			0.77**	0.65-0.91			0.98	
Democrat ^k			1.55	0.84-2.85			2.16*	
Independent/Other/No Party ^l			1.13	0.74-1.71			1.62*	
<i>Other Variables</i>								
Environment Satisfaction			0.75***	0.65-0.86			1.1	
Doesn't Own Home ^m			0.42	0.17-1.05			0.48	
Currently Employed ⁿ			1.04	0.66-1.63			1.21	
Self-Reported Health			1.06	0.91-1.23			1.14	
Satisfaction with High School ^o			0.86***	0.79-0.93			1.12*	
Satisfaction with Health Care			0.94	0.83-1.07			1.16*	

Reference category for Community Attachment is More Desire to stay in the community.

*p<.005, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

^aLatter-day Saint is the reference category.

^{b,c}Age cohort 0-34 is the reference category.

^dCurrently Married is the reference category.

^eMale is the reference category.

^fIncome is organized into \$10 k units until \$100k.

^{g,h}High School diploma or less is the reference category

ⁱLength of residence is calculated by length of years in community divided by the respondent's age.

^jChurch attendance categories include Not at all, Few times per year, Once or twice a month, almost every week, and Every week or more.

^{k,l}Republican is the reference category.

^mCurrently owning a home is the reference category.

ⁿCurrently not employed is the reference category.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Latter-day Saints and Not Latter-day Saints

Variable	<u>Latter-day Saint</u>		<u>Not Latter-day Saint</u>	
	Mean	Counts	Mean	Counts
<i>Age</i>	62.10	815	60.41	316
Married		674(82.9%)		212(67.3%)
Not Married		139(17.10%)		103(32.7%)
<i>Sex</i>		814		316
Male		469(57.62%)		182(57.59%)
Female		345(42.38%)		134(42.41%)
<i>Income</i>	6.24 ^a	815	5.73 ^b	316
<i>Education</i>		806		314
High School or Less		147(18.24%)		88(28.03%)
Some College		336(41.69%)		123(39.17%)
Four Years or More		323(40.07%)		103(32.8%)
<i>Length of Residence</i>	0.55	815	0.4	316
<i>Church Attendance</i>	3.25 ^c	801	0.86 ^d	310
Not at All		57(7.12%)		168(54.19%)
A Few Times Per Year		62(7.4%)		86(27.74%)
Once or Twice a Month		40(4.99%)		14(4.52%)
Almost Every Week		110(13.73%)		14(4.52%)
Every Week(Or More Often)		532(66.42%)		28(9.03%)
<i>Number of Children in Household</i>	0.87	797	0.48	310
<i>Political Party Affiliation</i>		784		306
Republican		545(69.52%)		106(34.64%)
Democrat		46(5.87%)		73(23.86%)
Independent/Other		193(24.62%)		127(41.50%)
<i>Natural Environment Satisfaction</i>	6	802	5.72	313
<i>Home Ownership</i>		814		314
Owns Home		765(93.98%)		281(89.49%)
Doesn't Own Home		49(6.02%)		33(10.51%)
<i>Employment Status</i>		788		303
Not Currently Employed		414(52.54%)		159(52.48%)
Currently Employed		374(47.46%)		144(47.52%)
<i>Self-Reported Health</i>	5.31	792	5.33	312
<i>High School Satisfaction</i>	4.73	807	3.2	309
<i>Health Care Satisfaction</i>	5.57	781	5.53	286

^aThe mean Latter-day Saint income is 6.24, which is about \$50,000 to \$60,000.

^bThe mean income for not Latter-day Saint is 5.74, which is between \$50,000 and \$60,000.

^{c,d}The average church attendance for Latter-day Saints is 3.25 or Almost Every Week. For non-Latter-day Saints, the average is 0.86, which is between Not at All and A Few Times Per Year.