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Liar, Liar: Adolescent Religiosity and Lying to Parents[†]

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Abstract

We hypothesize that religious adolescents are less likely to lie to their parents than are their nonreligious peers because religious adolescents are more strongly attached to their parents, have a higher level of self-control, are less likely to use marijuana and alcohol, and are less likely to have substance-using friends. As expected, the results suggest that adolescents who believe that religion is important are less likely to lie to their parents. Contrary to our expectations, however, the results suggest that adolescents who attend church frequently are *more likely* to lie to their parents. Although parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends' substance use all mediate part of the relationship between importance of religion and lying to parents, parental attachment and self-control are the most important. In contrast, the effect of church attendance on lying to parents is not mediated by parental attachment, self-control, substance use, or friends' substance use. Supplemental analysis suggests that the effect of church attendance on lying to parents depends on the importance of religion. That is, adolescents are especially likely to lie to their parents when they attend church frequently but do not think that religion is important.

[†]This research uses data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a project designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from seventeen other agencies. Special acknowledgment is due Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Persons interested in obtaining data files from Add Health should contact Add Health, Carolina Population Center, 123 W. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516-2524.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.

Proverbs 12:22 (Judaism and Christianity)

There are three characteristics of a hypocrite: when he spoke, he told a lie; when he made promise, he acted treacherously; and when he was trusted, he betrayed.

Sahih Muslim, Book 1, Hadith 113 (Islam)

All things are determined by speech; speech is their root, and from speech they proceed. Therefore he who is dishonest with respect to speech is dishonest in everything.

Laws of Manu, 4.256 (Hinduism)

A liar lies to himself as well as to the gods. Lying is the origin of all evils; it leads to rebirth in the miserable planes of existence, to breach of the pure precepts, and to corruption of the body.

Maharatnakuta Sutra 27 (Buddhism)

The vast majority of adolescents believe that it is “not all right” to lie (Perkins and Turiel 2007); however, research shows that most teens are not completely honest with their parents about their daily activities and lie about a variety of issues (Darling et al. 2006; Jensen et al. 2004). Jensen and colleagues (2004) found that 82 percent of students had lied to their parents in the last year. More than half the students admitted that they had lied about money, friends, parties, dating, and drug and alcohol use; about one third reported that they had lied about their sexual behavior. In another study, only 5 percent of college students reported never having lied to their parents while they were in high school (Knox et al. 2001). Despite the prevalence of lying, however, 85 percent of these students still thought of themselves as honest people (Knox et al. 2001). Although adolescents who lie to their parents may still consider themselves honest, young people who lie to their parents do seem to pay an emotional price for their lying. Research suggests that lying can lead to depression, lower self-esteem, more stress, and feelings of loneliness (Engels, Finkenauer, and van Kooten 2006; Frijns et al. 2005; Smetana et al. 2009; Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau 2009; Warr 2007).

Research has examined the relationship between religiosity and many problem behaviors among adolescents, such as delinquency and substance use (Baier and Wright 2001; Chitwood, Weiss, and Leukefeld 2008; Hill et al. 2009; Johnson and Jang 2011), but little attention has been paid to the relationship between religiosity and lying.¹ The lack of studies examining the effects of religiosity on lying

¹ Although research on the relationship between religiosity and lying is almost nonexistent, there has been some research on the relationship between religiosity and other forms of dishonesty, such as academic misconduct by students (Smith, Rizzo, and Empie 2005; Spilka et al. 2003).

is especially surprising given that major world religions clearly condemn lying, as the quotes at the beginning of this article make clear. Some studies include lying among several other antisocial behaviors. For example, Bradford, Vaughn, and Barber (2008) examined the relationship between adolescent religiosity and an index that combined six antisocial behaviors, including lying. They found that religious adolescents were less likely to engage in antisocial behavior. Other studies examine the relationship between religiosity and general measures of honesty. Saroglou and colleagues (2005) did not find a significant relationship between religiosity and honesty among Belgian high school students, measured on an eighteen-item honesty subscale from a larger personality inventory, but they did find that religiosity and honesty were positively correlated among a sample of Belgian adults. In another study, Perrin (2000) showed that college students who frequently attended church, participated in other religious activities (e.g., Bible study and prayer groups), believed in an afterlife for “good” people, believed in Jesus Christ, and claimed to be born-again Christians were more honest than were their less religious counterparts (i.e., religious students were more likely to report that they had been given too many points on a quiz). Unfortunately, Perrin’s data were collected from students at a conservative Christian school, and the analysis included very few controls. Therefore research has yet to isolate the relationship between religiosity and lying, especially while taking into account other factors that may contribute to lying.

Given the prevalence of lying in adolescence, the association between lying and other negative outcomes in adolescence, and the surprising lack of research on adolescent religiosity and lying, we decided to use a national sample of adolescents to examine the effects of church attendance and importance of religion on lying to parents. The purpose of our study is to determine whether or not religious adolescents are less likely than nonreligious adolescents to lie to their parents. Also, if religious adolescents are less likely to lie to their parents, does religiosity exert a direct effect on lying, or is the effect of religiosity on lying mediated by other variables, such as parental attachment, self-control, adolescent substance use, and/or associating with friends who use substances?

RELIGIOSITY AND LYING

Lying is only one strategy that adolescents use to manage the information their parents have about them (Laird and Marrero 2010; Smetana et al. 2009; Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau 2009). Avoidance (not disclosing information unless parents ask) and partial disclosure (omitting important details) are two other strategies that adolescents use to manage information. In general, adolescents recognize “three semantic elements of lying, namely (a) the statement is factually false, (b) the speaker believes that the statement is false, and (c) the speaker in-

tends to deceive the hearer” (Engels, Finkenauer, and van Kooten 2006: 950). Therefore “lying refers to situations in which adolescents purposefully provide parents with false information” (Darling et al. 2006: 669). Many adolescents do not consider avoidance and partial disclosure to be lying because “they do not provide their parents with an untrue statement that adolescents intend their parents to believe” (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, and Bosdet 2005: 644). Because adolescents consider lying to be an intentional act of deception and the vast majority of adolescents acknowledge that lying is wrong (Perkins and Turiel 2007), lying is morally more problematic than is avoidance or partial disclosure. Therefore in contrast to avoidance and partial disclosure, which adolescents might not consider to be truly dishonest, adolescent religiosity should be strongly related to lying.

Although adolescent religiosity may have a direct, unmediated effect on lying to parents, we suspect that much of the effect of adolescent religiosity on lying to parents will be mediated by other mechanisms. More specifically, on the basis of previous research, we hypothesize that the effect of adolescent religiosity on lying to parents will be mediated by (1) parental attachment, (2) self-control, (3) adolescent substance use, and (4) friends’ substance use. That is, if religious adolescents are more attached to their parents, have greater self-control, are less likely to use substances, and are less likely to have friends who use substances and if parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends’ substance use are significantly related to lying to parents, then religious adolescents should be less likely to lie to their parents.

Parental Attachment

Religion may contribute to better relationships between parents and children. Pearce and Axinn (1998: 824) argue that “exposure to religious themes such as tolerance, patience, and unconditional love . . . provides parents and children with resources to improve their relationships.” In support of this argument, research generally shows that religious adolescents report better relationships with their parents (Pearce and Axinn 1998; Regnerus and Burdette 2006; Smith and Denton 2005; Stokes and Regnerus 2009). Religious families report less conflict between parents and children (Brody et al. 1994), and parents who attend church more frequently show more physical affection and warmth toward their school-age children (Wilcox 1998). When adolescents’ beliefs that religion is important increase over time, their relationships with their mothers and fathers improve, and they report greater overall family satisfaction (Regnerus and Burdette 2006). The combination of adolescents’ and parents’ religiosity is also important. When mothers and children both believe that religion is important, mothers report better relationships with their children, and children report better relationships with their mothers (Pearce and Axinn 1998). When both parents and children frequently attend

religious services and believe that religion is important, they have closer relationships. However, when parents believe that religion is more important than their children do, relationships between parents and children tend not to be as good. In contrast, when children are more religious than their parents, relationships between parents and children do not appear to suffer (Stokes and Regnerus 2009).

Research also shows that relationships with parents influence how much adolescents lie. Adolescents who experience more conflict with their parents (Warr 2007) and adolescents who feel more alienated from their parents (Engels, Finkenauer, and van Kooten 2006) are more likely to lie. In contrast, adolescents who feel closer to their parents are more likely to fully disclose their activities and less likely to lie to parents (Jensen et al. 2004; Smetana et al. 2009; Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau et al. 2009). Children who are attached to their parents may be less likely to lie to their parents because they do not want to jeopardize their relationship with their parents. As Jensen and colleagues (2004: 103) have argued, “adolescents and emerging adults who form part of cohesive families may be less willing to lie and thereby risk losing trust with parents who are supportive, committed, and helpful.” Therefore if adolescent religiosity fosters a greater attachment to parents and parental attachment reduces lying, then religious adolescents should be less likely to lie to their parents.

Self-Control

Previous research suggests that religious individuals often exhibit greater levels of self-control (Aziz and Rehman 1996; McCullough and Willoughby 2009; Welch, Tittle, and Grasmick 2006). Geyer and Baumeister (2005) theorize that religiosity should improve self-control, thereby increasing “morally virtuous” behaviors, through a variety of psychological mechanisms. Religion likely fosters the three main elements in the operation of self-control (Baumeister and Exline 1999; Geyer and Baumeister 2005): internalization of behavioral standards, self-monitoring, and a desire to control or alter one’s behavior (e.g., to resist sinful behavior and to act more virtuously). Geyer and Baumeister (2005) detail a variety of ways in which religion sets behavioral standards and provides moral exemplars for people to emulate, provides motivation for self-control efforts, fosters self-monitoring, helps people to manage desires that are seen as inappropriate, and helps people to avoid emotional distress (which can trigger failures of self-control).

Research has also consistently shown that adolescents who lack self-control (or self-restraint) are more likely to lie to their parents (Engels, Finkenauer, and van Kooten 2006; Jensen et al. 2004; Warr 2007). If religiosity helps to foster greater self-control and if self-control enables individuals to resist the temptation to lie, then religious adolescents should be less likely to lie to their parents. This

argument is supported by research that has found that self-control mediates the effect of religiosity on other adolescent problem behaviors, including substance use (Hill et al. 2009) and sexual activity (Vazsonyi and Jenkins 2010).

Substance Use

Substance use is inconsistent with religious teachings.² Therefore it isn't surprising that previous research suggests that religious adolescents are less likely to use substances (for reviews, see Chitwood, Weiss, and Leukefeld 2008; Hill et al. 2009). Adolescents often lie to avoid being punished for behaviors their parents prohibit (Darling et al. 2006). Since parents widely disapprove of adolescent substance use, adolescents who drink alcohol and use other drugs may be motivated to lie to their parents to hide their substance use. In one study, 42 percent of undergraduate students reported that they had lied to their parents about their alcohol use when they were in high school (Knox et al. 2001). In another study, more than 60 percent of high school students said that they had lied to their parents about alcohol and drug use in the past year (Jensen et al. 2004). Research clearly shows that delinquent, antisocial, and/or substance-using adolescents are more likely to lie to their parents (Engels, Finkenauer, and van Kooten 2006; Laird and Marrero 2010; Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, and Bosdet 2005; Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau 2009; Warr 2007). For example, greater substance use by adolescents is significantly related to more lying to mothers and fathers (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, and Bosdet 2005). If religious adolescents are less likely to drink alcohol and use marijuana, they may have fewer reasons to lie to their parents. That is, religiosity helps to reduce substance use, and since adolescents are not engaging in substance use, they have fewer occasions to lie to their parents.

Substance-Using Friends

Since religious adolescents are less likely to use substances (Chitwood, Weiss, and Leukefeld 2008; Hill et al. 2009) and the behavior of adolescents and their friends tend to be very similar, religious adolescents are less likely to have substance-using friends and more likely to have religious friends (Desmond, Soper, and Kraus 2011; Smith and Denton 2005). Over half of adolescents with religious beliefs have a close group of friends with the same religious beliefs, whereas non-

² We focus on substance use (marijuana use and drinking alcohol) rather than delinquency more generally for several reasons. First, previous research suggests a stronger connection between religiosity and substance use (Burkett and White 1974; Cochran and Akers 1989). This is because both secular and religious values condemn delinquent behaviors such as violence and stealing, but religious norms are more likely than secular ones to disapprove of substance use. Second, substance use is more prevalent among adolescents than more serious types of delinquency.

religious adolescents have one or fewer friends with strong religious beliefs (Smith and Denton 2005). Therefore if religious adolescents are less likely to have friends who use substances, they may have fewer occasions to lie to their parents. As Warr (2007: 610) argues, not only must delinquents:

conceal the delinquent behavior itself, but because delinquency is predominantly social behavior (most delinquent behavior occurs in small groups, and one of the strongest predictors of delinquent behavior is the number of delinquent friends an adolescent has . . .), they must also conceal their “bad” friends (friends of whom their parents would likely disapprove) or the bad behavior of their “good” friends, along with the forbidden places they visit, the conventional or mandatory activities they miss (school, sports, extra-curricular activities), and the substances, if any, they abuse together.

In support of this argument, research shows that adolescents who have delinquent or substance-using friends are more likely to lie to their parents (Stouthamer-Loeber 1986; Warr 2007). Adolescents with three best friends who drink alcohol and smoke marijuana are three times more likely to lie to their parents than adolescents who have no friends who use alcohol or marijuana (Warr 2007). Therefore the effect of adolescent religiosity on lying to parents may be mediated by friends’ substance use.

Summary

In summary, we hypothesize that religious adolescents will be less likely than nonreligious adolescents to lie to their parents. We also hypothesize, however, that the effect of adolescent religiosity on lying to parents will be partially mediated by parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends’ substance use. Although we hypothesize that much of the effect of adolescent religiosity on lying to parents will be mediated by other variables, religiosity may also exert unique influences that are not mediated (Pargament, Magyar-Russell, and Murray-Swank 2005). Research has often found that adolescent religiosity has direct effects on delinquency and substance use, even after controlling for the effect of peers, social bonds, and self-control (Johnson et al. 2001). Therefore “religion may be a unique aspect of human functioning, one that cannot simply be reduced to or explained away by presumably more basic psychological, social, or physical processes” (Pargament, Magyar-Russell, and Murray-Swank 2005: 680). Thus religion might exhibit effects on lying that are not fully mediated by parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends’ substance use.

METHODS

Sample

We used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The primary sampling frame for Add Health was a list of schools that included an eleventh grade and had an enrollment of more than thirty students. Schools were stratified by region of the country, urbanization, percent white, size, and school type (public, private, and parochial), and a sample of eighty high schools was selected with unequal probability. Fifty-two middle schools that supplied students to the high schools were also included in the sample, for a total of 132 schools. Students were randomly selected from the enrollment list of each school to complete an in-home questionnaire. After students were stratified by sex and grade (seventh through twelfth), approximately 200 students were randomly selected from each school. The Wave I in-home questionnaire was administered between April and December 1995 ($N = 20,745$). At the same time, researchers attempted to interview one parent of each selected student ($N = 17,713$). Researchers interviewed the same adolescents again (Wave II in-home questionnaire) between April and August 1996 ($N = 14,738$). To establish the appropriate temporal order between independent and dependent variables, we took all of the independent variables from the first in-home survey completed by the adolescents and the parent survey, and we took the dependent variable from the second in-home survey, done a year later.³ For all of the analyses, we corrected for the unequal probability of selection and the clustering of students within schools.⁴

Dependent Variable: Lying to Parents

To measure lying to parents, we used a single item: “In the past 12 months, how often did you lie to your parents or guardians about where you had been or whom you were with?” The response format for the question is coded 0 = never, 1 = one or two times, 2 = three or four times, and 3 = five or more times. Almost half of the adolescents (45.7 percent) reported that they had lied to their parents in the past year.

Adolescent Religiosity

We used two items to measure adolescent religiosity. First, adolescents were asked to indicate their frequency of church attendance on a four-point scale rang-

³ For a complete description of the Add Health Data, see Bearman, Jones, and Udry (1997).

⁴ For a discussion of the Add Health sample design effects and how corrections are made, see Chantala and Tabor (1999).

ing from “never” to “once a week or more.” Second, adolescents were asked to indicate how important religion is to them, also on a four-point scale, ranging from “not important” to “very important.”

Intervening Variables

We hypothesized that the effect of adolescent religiosity on lying to parents is mediated by parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends' substance use. We used the following five items to compute a measure of attachment to mother and attachment to father: “How close do you feel to your mom/dad?,” “How much do you think he/she cares about you?,” “Most of the time your mother/father is warm and loving toward you,” “You are satisfied with the way your mother/father and you communicate with each other,” and “Overall, you are satisfied with your relationship with your mother/father.” The response format for the first two items was 0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = somewhat, 3 = quite a bit, and 4 = very much. The response format for the last three questions was 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. Responses to the items were added together to form an index of attachment to mother and an index of attachment to father (alpha for mother attachment = 0.934, alpha for father attachment = 0.980). We then averaged the attachment indices to form a single measure of parental attachment. Higher scores indicate greater attachment to parents.

We used eleven items from the Wave I in-home questionnaire to construct our measure of self-control (alpha = 0.711). First, we used the same five items that were used by Perrone and colleagues (2004), who also used the Add Health data to study self-control. Adolescents were asked how often they had difficulty getting along with their teachers, paying attention in school, and getting homework done. Perrone and colleagues (2004) postulate that these items capture the temper, impulsivity, and preference for physical tasks dimensions of self-control. Adolescents were also asked how often they had trouble keeping their minds on what they were doing. This item taps the preference for simple tasks dimension of self-control. The last item, which Perrone and colleagues (2004) suggest indicates how self-centered an adolescent is, asked adolescents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “You feel you are doing everything just about right.”

To the items used by Perrone and colleagues (2004), we added six items related to how adolescents make decisions and solve problems, since lack of care in decision making and impulsivity are said to be components of low self-control. In general, these items suggest a lack of planning and/or consideration for the long-term implications of behavior, a preference for simple and immediate problem resolution, and a tendency to be physical rather than mental. The items were as follows: (1) “When you get what you want, it’s usually because you worked hard

for it,” (2) “When making decisions, you usually go with your gut feeling without thinking too much about the consequences of each alternative,” (3) “After carrying out a solution to a problem, you usually try to analyze what went right and what went wrong,” (4) “When you have problems to solve, one of the first things you do is get as many facts about the problem as possible,” (5) “When you are attempting to find a solution to a problem, you usually try to think of as many different ways to approach the problem as possible,” and (6) “When making decisions, you generally use a systematic method for judging and comparing alternatives.” Higher scores on the index indicate higher levels of self-control.

For adolescent substance use, we used two measures: marijuana use and drinking alcohol. Marijuana use was measured by using an item that asked how many times in the last year they had used marijuana. The responses to this question ranged from 0 = never to 6 = every day or almost every day. The second item asked how many times in the last year they had used alcohol. The response format for this item also ranged from never to every day or almost every day.

Finally, to measure friends’ substance use, we combined three items asking adolescents how many of their three best friends smoke at least one cigarette a day, drink alcohol at least once a month, and use marijuana at least once a month (for each question, 0 = no friends, 1 = one friend, 2 = two friends, 3 = three friends). Therefore the combined index ranges from 0 to 9, higher scores indicating greater substance use by friends.

Control Variables

Because previous research suggests that sex, age, and race are significantly related to both religiosity and lying to parents, we included these variables in our analysis as controls. Females report higher levels of religiosity than males do (Smith et al. 2002). The results of research on the relationship between gender and lying is mixed. Some studies show that boys lie more than girls do about money and drugs (Jensen et al. 2004), while girls are more likely than boys to lie about their sexual activities (Knox et al. 2001). Other research finds no significant differences in lying between boys and girls (Finkenauer et al. 2005; Smetana et al. 2009; Warr 2007). Sex was coded as a dichotomous variable (1 = male, 0 = female).

With regard to age, religious service attendance shows a modest decline across adolescence. However, beliefs about the importance of religion and the influence of religion in one’s life are relatively stable during adolescence but may decline in early adulthood (Smith et al. 2003; Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler 2007). Research regarding the extent to which age influences lying is mixed (for a review, see Stouthamer-Loeber 1986). To some extent, studies suggest that younger adolescents disclose more than older adolescents do (Smetana et al.

2009). On the other hand, young adults tend to lie less than adolescents do, possibly because they have more autonomy and therefore do not feel a need to lie (Jensen et al. 2004). In our sample, age is a continuous variable that is computed by subtracting the interview date from the adolescent's date of birth.

There are also differences between racial groups in religious involvement. Most research shows that African-American adolescents have the highest level of religious service attendance and belief in the importance of religion (Smith et al. 2002, 2003). Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau (2009) suggest that Latino-American and Asian-American families tend to be more hierarchical and place more emphasis on respect for parents. Therefore Latino-American and Asian-American adolescents may be less likely to lie to their parents. Other research finds that Caucasian-American children are less likely to lie than are African-American children or that there is no racial difference in lying (for a review, see Stouthamer-Loeber 1986). Race was coded as a set of dummy variables. White adolescents were used as the contrast category. Hispanic ethnicity was also included as a dummy variable (1 = Hispanic).

In addition to sex, age, and race, various indicators of social class, such as parents' education and economic well-being, are significantly related to religiosity. Research suggests that maternal education is a predictor of increased religious adherence in adolescence (Benson, Masters, and Larson 1997). Studies examining the influence of socioeconomic status on lying are somewhat mixed. In her review, Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) identifies some studies showing that people of lower socioeconomic status tend to lie more while other studies show no relationship between social class and lying. However, she points out that the studies that find no difference contain smaller samples compared to studies that find a difference.

For the analysis, we included two measures of social class: parents' education and receiving welfare. Adolescents were asked to report how far their mothers and fathers went in school (e.g., "high school graduate," "went to college but did not graduate"). Because many of the adolescents live in single-parent households, education is listed as missing if the parent is absent. For single-parent families, parent's education is the level of education for the parent who is present in the home. When both parents are present, parent's education reflects the parent with the highest level of education. Parents were asked whether they or any other member of their household received Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, and/or a housing subsidy. Welfare was coded "1" if the respondent received any form of welfare and "0" if the respondent did not receive public assistance.

Previous research suggests that family structure is significantly related to adolescent religiosity. Adolescents who are raised by their biological parents tend to be more religious than adolescents who are raised in stepfamilies or by single par-

ents (Petts 2009; Smith and Denton 2005). Some research suggests that adolescents who live with both parents are more likely to lie (Knox et al. 2001). Biological family was a dummy variable coded as “1” if the adolescent lived with both biological parents. Table 1 includes descriptive statistics for all independent and dependent variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Independent and Dependent Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
<i>Independent Variables</i>			
Sex	0.49	0.50	0–1
Age	16.16	1.72	11–21
White	0.50	0.50	0–1
African-American	0.21	0.41	0–1
Asian	0.06	0.24	0–1
Other race	0.05	0.22	0–1
Hispanic	0.17	0.38	0–1
Welfare	0.19	0.39	0–1
Parent education	13.73	2.69	0–18
Biological family	0.51	0.50	0–1
Attachment to parents	16.67	3.11	0–20
Self-control	30.78	5.13	0–44
Friends’ substance use	0.85	0.89	0–3
Marijuana use	0.43	1.05	0–6
Alcohol use	1.08	1.48	0–6
Church attendance	1.70	1.21	0–3
Importance of religion	2.02	1.08	0–3
<i>Dependent Variable</i>			
Lying to parents	.90	1.04	0–3

RESULTS

Baron and Kenny (1986: 1177) indicate that three conditions must be met to establish mediation (i.e., an indirect relationship). First, the independent variables, church attendance and importance of religion, must have a significant effect on the mediating variables (parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends’ substance use). Second, the independent variables, church attendance and importance of religion, must have a significant effect on the dependent variable, lying to parents, when the mediating variables are *not* included in the model. Third, the mediating variables, parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends’ substance use, must have a significant effect on the dependent variable, lying to parents. All three conditions must be met.

Table 2: OLS Regression for the Effects of Adolescent Religiosity on Parental Attachment, Self-Control, Marijuana Use, Alcohol Use, and Delinquent Peers (Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Parental Attachment	Self-Control	Marijuana Use	Alcohol Use	Delinquent Peers
Sex	0.741** (0.075)	-0.487 (0.153)**	0.071* (0.035)	0.071 (0.043)	0.007 (0.024)
Age	-0.310** (0.026)	0.054 (0.052)	0.153** (0.012)	0.227** (0.013)	0.158** (0.009)
African-American	0.074 (0.112)	0.776 (0.205)**	-0.091 (0.062)	-0.250** (0.075)	-0.194** (0.042)
Asian-American	-0.451* (0.218)	0.993* (0.379)	-0.131* (0.064)	-0.452** (0.120)	-0.248** (0.070)
Other race	-0.259 (0.186)	-0.506 (0.378)	0.187 (0.099)	0.047 (0.081)	0.055 (0.052)
Hispanic	-0.255 (0.140)	0.016 (0.291)	-0.013 (0.069)	-0.081 (0.058)	-0.083 (0.043)
Welfare	0.121 (0.107)	0.148 (0.165)	-0.019 (0.043)	-0.201 (0.052)	0.006 (0.034)
Parent education	0.006 (0.016)	0.068* (0.027)	0.003 (0.006)	0.005 (0.009)	-0.016** (0.005)
Biological family	0.294 (0.068)	0.686** (0.132)	-0.234** (0.035)	-0.233** (0.037)	-0.190** (0.024)
Church attendance	0.036 (0.044)	0.089 (0.086)	-0.082** (0.018)	-0.078** (0.022)	-0.073** (0.012)
Importance of religion	0.363** (0.051)	0.625** (0.085)	-0.088** (0.022)	-0.076** (0.025)	-0.048** (0.016)
R^2	0.068	0.036	0.092	0.099	0.140

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$.

To establish the first condition, before we examined the effects of church attendance and importance of religion on lying to parents, we determined whether there was a relationship between church attendance and importance of religion and the variables that we hypothesized would mediate the effect of religiosity on lying to parents, parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends' substance use. The results, depicted in Table 2, indicated that church attendance had a significant negative effect on marijuana use, drinking alcohol, and associating with friends who use substances but did not have a significant effect on parental attachment or self-control. Therefore parental attachment and self-control *cannot* mediate the effect of church attendance on lying to parents, since church attend-

ance had no effect on parental attachment or self-control. In contrast to church attendance, the results indicated that importance of religion was significantly related to all of the hypothesized intervening variables. That is, adolescents who believe that religion is important are more attached to their parents, have higher self-control, are less likely to use marijuana and drink alcohol, and are less likely to have friends who use substances.

The second condition for establishing an indirect effect is the independent variables, church attendance and importance of religion, must have significant effects on the dependent variable, lying to parents, when the mediating variables are not included. Table 3 depicts the results for the multivariate analysis of adolescent religiosity and lying to parents.⁵ Model 1 includes the control variables, church attendance, and importance of religion. As expected, both church attendance and importance of religion have significant effects on lying to parents. Surprisingly, the effect of church attendance on lying to parents is *positive*, while the effect of importance of religion on lying to parents is *negative*. That is, adolescents who believe that religion is important are less likely to lie to their parents than are adolescents who do not believe that religion is important. However, adolescents who attend church frequently are *more likely* to lie to their parents than are adolescents who attend church less frequently.⁶

Model 3 depicts the results for the second intervening variable, self-control. Self-control is significantly related to lying to parents. Compared to adolescents with low self-control, adolescents with high self-control are less likely to lie to their parents. Similar to the results for parental attachment, including self-control in the model does not reduce the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Since church attendance has no effect on self-control (first condition) and the effect of church attendance on lying to parents increases when self-control is added to the model, self-control does not mediate the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. In contrast to church attendance, when self-control is included in the model, the effect of importance of religion on lying to parents is reduced by 41 percent, which is a significant indirect effect.

⁵ Because the response format for the dependent variable is categorical (0 = never, 1 = one or two times, 2 = three or four times, and 3 = five or more times), some might argue that ordered logistic regression is preferable. Others might argue that Tobit regression is the best method, since the dependent variable is censored. We replicated the analysis with both ordered logistic regression and Tobit regression. The substantive results were the same when these methods were used. We present the results for OLS regression, since they are easier to interpret.

⁶ Later in the analysis, we explore in greater detail the positive effect of church attendance on lying to parents. At this point, however, we should note that the positive effect of church attendance on lying to parents is not the result of a coding error. Church attendance and importance of religion are strongly correlated in the expected direction. Also, the bivariate correlation between importance of religion and lying to parents is negative and significant, but the bivariate correlation between church attendance and lying to parents is not significant.

Table 3. OLS Regression for the Effects of Adolescent Religiosity on Lying to Parents (Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Sex	-0.146** (0.024)	-0.103** (0.023)	-0.167** (0.026)	-0.159** (0.024)	-0.152** (0.024)	-0.141** (0.025)
Age	0.003 (0.009)	-0.016 (0.009)	0.008 (0.009)	-0.023* (0.009)	-0.029** (0.009)	-0.028** (0.009)
African-American	-0.029 (0.036)	-0.021 (0.036)	-0.006 (0.034)	-0.008 (0.036)	0.007 (0.037)	0.004 (0.034)
Asian-American	0.041 (0.080)	0.014 (0.079)	0.074 (0.077)	0.102 (0.082)	0.089 (0.079)	0.088 (0.078)
Other race	0.057 (0.058)	0.044 (0.056)	0.031 (0.057)	0.024 (0.059)	0.046 (0.051)	-0.005 (0.055)
Hispanic	0.135** (0.045)	0.116* (0.046)	0.132** (0.044)	0.159** (0.042)	0.163** (0.047)	0.152** (0.044)
Welfare	-0.145** (0.032)	-0.138** (0.031)	-0.147** (0.029)	-0.108** (0.030)	-0.149** (0.033)	-0.115** (0.030)
Parent education	0.026** (0.006)	0.026** (0.006)	0.028** (0.006)	0.024** (0.006)	0.029** (0.006)	0.028** (0.006)
Biological family	-0.044 (0.026)	-0.023 (0.027)	-0.019 (0.027)	-0.002 (0.024)	0.002 (0.027)	0.022 (0.027)
Church attendance	0.033* (0.015)	0.035* (0.014)	0.034* (0.014)	0.049** (0.014)	0.051** (0.014)	0.049** (0.014)
Importance of religion	-0.054** (0.016)	-0.032* (0.015)	-0.032* (0.016)	-0.041* (0.017)	-0.050** (0.015)	-0.021 (0.016)
Parental attachment		-0.063** (0.005)				-0.039** (0.004)
Self-control			-0.038** (0.003)			-0.021** (0.003)
Marijuana use				0.039* (0.016)		0.000 (0.017)
Alcohol use				0.106** (0.011)		0.073** (0.011)
Friends' substance use					0.207** (0.021)	0.057* (0.022)
R^2	0.018	0.053	0.060	0.048	0.050	0.086

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$.

For model 4, we added marijuana use and alcohol use, both of which are significantly related to lying to parents. The more frequently adolescents use marijuana and drink alcohol, the more likely they are to lie to their parents. Similar to the results for parental attachment and self-control, including adolescents' substance use in the model does not reduce the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Instead, the effect of church attendance on lying to parents increases considerably (from 0.033 to 0.049). Church attendance significantly reduces marijuana use and alcohol use, but since the effect of church attendance on lying to parents increases when substance use is added to the model, substance use does not mediate the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Instead of an indirect effect, the results suggest a suppression effect (i.e., the effect of church attendance on lying to parents is suppressed, or hidden, when substance use is not included in the model). In contrast to church attendance, when substance use is included in the model, the effect of importance of religion on lying to parents is reduced by 24 percent, which is a significant indirect effect.

For model 5, we added the final intervening variable, friends' substance use. Similar to the results for marijuana use and alcohol use, friends' substance use is significantly related to lying to parents. The more adolescents associate with substance-using friends, the more likely they are to lie to their parents. Similar to the results for parental attachment, self-control, and adolescents' substance use, including friends' substance use in the model does not reduce the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Instead, the effect of church attendance on lying to parents increases (from 0.032 to 0.053). Similar to marijuana use and alcohol use, although adolescents who attend church frequently are significantly less likely to have friends who use substances, since the effect of church attendance on lying to parents increases when friends' substance use is added to the model, substance use does not mediate the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Instead, the effect of church attendance on lying to parents is suppressed when friends' substance use is not included in the model. In contrast to church attendance, similar to the results for parental attachment, self-control, and substance use, when friends' substance use is included in the model, the effect of importance of religion on lying to parents is reduced, in this case by 7 percent, which is a significant indirect effect.

For the final model, we included all of the intervening variables, parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends' substance use. In the final model, all of the intervening variables except marijuana use are significantly related to lying to parents. Adolescents who are more attached to their parents and adolescents with higher self-control are less likely to lie to their parents. In contrast, adolescents who drink more alcohol and adolescents who have more substance using friends are more likely to lie to their parents. Similar to the results from previous models, including all of the intervening variables in the final model

does not reduce the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Instead, the effect of church attendance on lying to parents increases (from 0.033 to 0.049). Since the effect of church attendance on lying to parents increases when the intervening variables are added to the model, these mechanisms do not mediate the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Instead, the effect of church attendance on lying to parents is suppressed when the intervening variables are not included in the model. In contrast to church attendance, when all of the intervening mechanisms are included in the model, the effect of importance of religion on lying to parents is reduced by 61 percent (from -0.054 to -0.021) and is no longer significant. Therefore it appears that importance of religion does not have a significant direct effect on lying to parents. Instead, the effect of importance of religion on lying to parents is mediated by parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and friends' substance use.

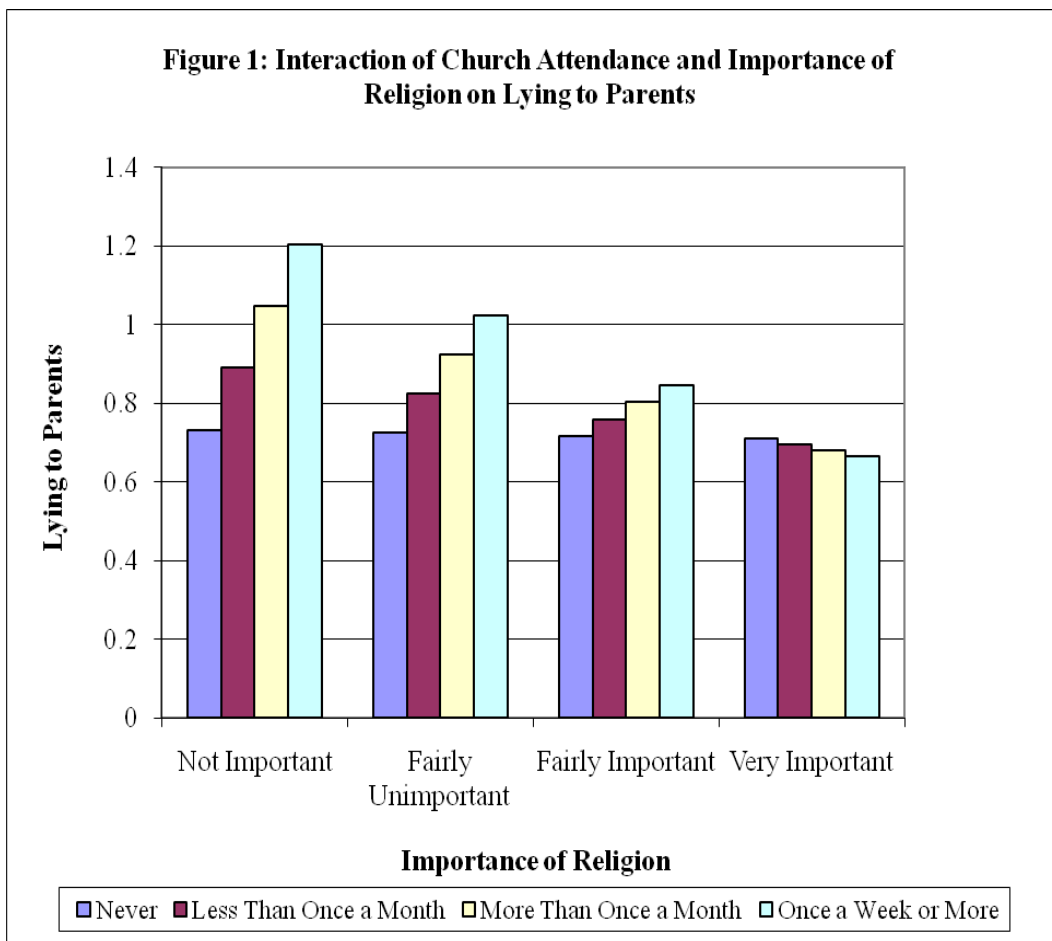
Although church attendance and importance of religion have significant effects on lying to parents, the effects for both are small. Adding church attendance and importance of religion to the model increases the R^2 value very little. Furthermore, in the final model, importance of religion does not have a significant direct effect on lying to parents, and the standardized regression coefficient (analysis not shown) for church attendance is only 0.059 (sex, parent education, parental attachment, self-control, alcohol use, and friends' substance use all have stronger effects on lying to parents). As a rule of thumb, Kline (2005) argues that standardized regression coefficients less than 0.10 are small, those around 0.30 are medium, and those greater than 0.50 are large. Therefore although church attendance and importance of religion have significant effects on lying to parents (direct or indirect), the effect sizes tend to be small.

SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS

Contrary to our expectations, the results indicated that the more often adolescents attend church, the more likely they are to lie to their parents. Given this unexpected finding, we conducted supplemental analysis to determine whether the effect of church attendance on lying to parents might be conditioned by the extent to which adolescents believe that religion is important. Previous research suggests that church attendance can have detrimental effects when adolescents attend church often (presumably because their parents want them to attend) but do not think that religion is important. Longest and Vaisey (2008), for example, found that adolescents were *more likely* to initiate marijuana use when they attended church frequently but did not think that religion was important.

The results from our supplemental analysis (not shown) indicated a significant interaction between adolescents' church attendance and beliefs in the importance of religion. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction effect between church attendance

and importance of religion on lying to parents. Moving from left to right, it is obvious that adolescents are less likely to lie to their parents when they believe that religion is important. However, the effect of importance of religion on lying to parents depends on church attendance. When adolescents believe that religion is very important, church attendance has almost no effect on lying to parents. Adolescents who attend church once a week or more and who believe that religion is very important lie almost as much to their parents as do adolescents who believe that religion is very important but never attend church (the predicted value is 0.67 versus 0.71). In contrast, when adolescents do not believe that religion is important, frequent church attendance seems to have a detrimental effect on lying to parents. Among adolescents who believe that religion is not important, adolescents who attend church once a week or more are much more likely to lie to their parents than are adolescents who never attend (the predicted value is 0.73 versus 1.20).



CONCLUSION

We examined the relationship between adolescent religiosity and lying to parents. Furthermore, we wanted to determine whether religiosity has a direct effect on lying to parents or whether the effect of religiosity on lying to parents is mediated by other factors, such as parental attachment, self-control, substance use, and/or friends' substance use. The results varied for different measures of religiosity. Adolescents who believe that religion is important are *less likely* to lie to their parents. In contrast, adolescents who attend church frequently are *more likely* to lie to their parents. Parental attachment and self-control are the most important factors that mediate the relationship between importance of religion and lying to parents. However, these factors do not mediate the effect of church attendance on lying to parents. Supplemental analysis suggests that adolescents who attend church frequently but do not think that religion is important are especially likely to lie to their parents.

Why might church attendance be positively related to lying to parents? Research suggests that lying may be a way for adolescents to gain autonomy (Jensen et al. 2004; Knox et al. 2001). In short, when adolescents believe that they have enough autonomy from their parents, they do not feel the need to lie. In contrast, if adolescents believe that they do not have enough freedom, they may lie to their parents as a way to gain more autonomy. As Jensen and colleagues (2004: 103) argue, "in families where parents exert a high degree of control by setting strict rules, adolescents and emerging adults may lie more in an attempt to preserve what they regard as the rightful range of their autonomy." Jensen and colleagues also found that many adolescents believe that lying to parents to preserve their autonomy is justifiable.

The relationship between lying and autonomy has been suggested as an explanation for many different patterns. For example, because girls tend to be supervised more closely by parents than boys, girls may lie more often to their parents to gain autonomy. If boys have more freedom than girls, they might not feel a need to lie to their parents as often as girls do. At least one study suggests that adolescents who live with two parents lie more often to their parents than do adolescents who live with only one parent (Knox et al. 2001). If adolescents who live with two parents are more closely supervised than adolescents in single-parent homes, they might lie more often to their parents to gain autonomy. Knox and colleagues (2001) suggest that adolescents lie less often after they leave home for college. Since adolescents have more freedom and fewer restraints after they leave home, they might not feel the need to lie to their parents as often.

Similarly, if church attendance is a proxy for parental supervision and/or control, then adolescents who attend church more frequently might be expected to lie to their parents more often to gain autonomy. On the basis of our supplemental

analysis, when adolescents believe that religion is important, church attendance has no real effect on lying to parents. In contrast, when adolescents do not believe that religion is important, frequent church attendance is related to significantly more lying. If adolescents are attending church often even though they do not think that religion is important, this might indicate an attempt by parents to control their children. Therefore frequent church attendance without believing that religion is important might lead adolescents to lie more often to their parents.

Alternatively, if parents are more likely to believe adolescents who attend church frequently, then adolescents who attend church more often might find that it is easier to lie to their parents. That is, parents often respond to the behavior of their children. If children are “doing well” (i.e., getting good grades, doing well at sports, getting along well with others, and attending church frequently), then parents might be more willing to believe their children, making it easier for adolescents to lie to their parents. In other words, trust between parents and children might have pros and cons. Some adolescents (e.g., those who attend church frequently and think that religion is important) might not want to betray their parents’ trust by lying to them, while others (e.g., those who attend church frequently but do not think that religion is important) might be willing to take advantage of their parents’ trust by lying more.

The purpose of this project was to identify how adolescent religiosity is related to lying to parents, but lying is only one way in which adolescents manage the information they share with their parents. Other research shows that adolescents may avoid telling their parents about certain activities and/or partially disclose (Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau 2009). In fact, some research suggests that adolescents generally prefer strategies that are less evasive than lying (Laird and Marrero 2010) and that lying is less common than other forms of information management (Smetana et al. 2009; Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau 2009). Unfortunately, the Add Health survey included only a question about lying. Future research should consider how religion may influence the extent to which adolescents use other forms of information management with their parents.

In addition to different forms of disclosure, research suggests that how much information adolescents share with their parents depends on the issue or domain of activity (Perkins and Turiel 2007). In one study, teens disclosed more about their high-risk activities, such as drinking alcohol, than about peer activities, such as having a boyfriend or girlfriend (Smetana et al. 2009). Research also suggests that how acceptable it is to lie depends on the reason for lying. Lying for prosocial reasons (e.g., to support or benefit others, to keep others from embarrassment or harm, to avoid causing trouble or conflict) is considered more acceptable (Jensen et al. 2004; see also Perkins and Turiel 2007). In contrast, lying to rebel against parents, to conform to peers, or for revenge against parents is considered unacceptable (Jensen et al. 2004; Perkins and Turiel 2007). Therefore future research

should consider the extent to which adolescents lie about a range of particular activities and how religion might influence the acceptability of lying.

Furthermore, the question that we used to measure lying asks about how often adolescents lie to their parents. Some research has shown that adolescents manage information with mothers and fathers differently. For example, Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, and Yau (2009) found that adolescents disclose more about their personal activities (e.g., how they spend their free time and which friends they spend time with) to their mothers while avoiding discussing multifaceted activities (e.g., staying out late and completing homework) with their fathers. Therefore we suggest that future research consider how adolescents may share information with their parents differentially.

In conclusion, we examined the relationship between adolescent religiosity and lying to parents to fill a gap in the literature that has devoted a great deal of effort to examining the effects of religiosity on delinquency but has paid less attention to how religiosity influences other adolescent problem behaviors, such as lying. This lack of attention is particularly surprising because lying is very common among adolescents, lying can contribute to psychological and emotional problems (e.g., depression and loneliness), and major religions preach the virtues of honesty. In general, we find that adolescents who believe that religion is important are less likely to lie to their parents. Contrary to our expectations, however, adolescents who attend church frequently are more likely to lie to their parents. Furthermore, adolescents who attend church more frequently but do not believe that religion is important are especially likely to lie to their parents. Although our research sheds some light on the relationship between adolescent religiosity and lying, future research should further explore the positive relationship between church attendance and lying, examine the relationship between religiosity and other forms of information management (avoidance and partial disclosure), and determine whether the relationship between religiosity and lying to parents is different for mothers and fathers and whether lying depends on the domain or issue (e.g., are religious adolescents more or less truthful about sex and substance use compared to other issues).

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