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Belonging, Believing, Behaving: The Religious Character of Public Servants

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Abstract

How do public servants compare to the general public in their religious affiliation, beliefs, and behaviors? Using data from the 2004 General Social Survey, we compare public servants in government and outside government to the general public through a series of logistic regression models. Although there is little difference in terms of denominational affiliation, public servants have a stronger commitment to, and are more active in, their religious communities. The implications of these findings for public administration are discussed.

Keywords

public servants, religion, religiosity, logistic regression

Introduction

Religion may play a larger role in the field of public administration than often imagined (Bruce, 2000; Cunningham, 2005; deHaven-Smith, 2003; Lowery, 2005). Surveys show that 95% of Americans say they believe in God, with more than 60% stating that they never doubt God's existence. About 90% identify themselves with one of the major religious traditions (Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, & Dulk, 2004). Rates of church membership in the United States have

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risen, not declined, during the past two centuries (Finke & Stark, 1992). Given these statistics and the recent work examining the religious and spiritual attitudes of public servants (Bruce, 2000; Houston & Cartwright, 2007; Houston, Freeman, & Feldman, 2008; King, 2007; Lowery, 2005), it is evident that religious belief characterizes many in the public service.

Our intent is twofold. First, we present an argument for the importance of expanding our knowledge about how religion might influence work in the public service. Second, we compare the religious "belonging, believing, and behaving" of public servants, both in government and outside it, to the general public using data from the 2004 version of the General Social Survey. Implications of the findings for public administration are addressed.

The Relevance of Religion for Public Administration

Several arguments can be made for the importance of examining the religious attitudes of public servants. First, religion is prominent in the delivery of public services. Although government has long used religiously affiliated agencies in publicly funded service programs (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006, pp. 11-15), the use of religious organizations for this purpose has become especially prominent over the past decade (Hula, Jackson-Elmore, & Reese, 2007). This increase is attributable to greater outsourcing encouraged by New Public Management and adoption of faith-based initiatives such as Charitable Choice. The result is that it is easier for religiously affiliated agencies to receive public funds. For fiscal year 2005, more than $2.1 billion in competitive social service grants were awarded to faith-based organizations, a 21% increase over 2003 (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2006).

Faith-based organizations are diverse, with some having minimal association with religion (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006; S. R. Smith & Sosin, 2001); however, Charitable Choice opened up public funding to church congregations interested in providing social services, bringing religion closer to public service provision. Since the 1996 inception of Charitable Choice and the advancement of faith-based organizations by the George W. Bush administration, there is more often an advocacy mission with religion viewed as relevant to the policy. Certainly many perceive that a common religious worldview dominated in the Bush administration and that his administration actively supported religious involvement in policy formulation and implementation.

The implications of Charitable Choice for the separation of church and state have received a considerable amount of attention (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006; Van Slyke, Horne, & Thomas, 2005; Wilson, 2003). The direct receipt

of public funds by church congregations for the provision of social services raises the specter of these funds being used in ways not permitted under law (e.g., proselytizing, religious instruction, requiring participation in religious activities as a condition of receiving services), a violation of the First Amendment's establishment clause. Furthermore, at times the dictates of the religious provider are inconsistent with state or federal policy. For example, Catholic foster care agencies in Illinois routinely ignore state law that teens be given birth control (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2002).

Violations of the establishment clause may also occur when decisions are made about the distribution of government funds to faith-based organizations. Bias can creep into the awarding of grants or contracts if public managers favor churches from their own denominations or mainstream congregations. Constitutional law scholar Douglas Laycock offered the following assessment in reference to Charitable Choice when testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee: "Choosing someone to deliver social services is more complex then picking the low bidder on a pencil contract. How do you keep thousands of federal, state, and local government employees from discriminating on religious grounds when they award grants and contracts?" (as cited in Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006, p. 155).

In addition, the receipt of public funds carries with it greater monitoring of the activities funded with public money, increasing the possibility of excessive government entanglement with these sectarian organizations. A manager's religious beliefs and attitudes may influence how closely a congregation providing social services is monitored and how strictly constraints on the use of public funds are enforced.

Public administrators are in the position of having to navigate these difficult issues when awarding and monitoring contracts and grants under Charitable Choice (Kennedy, 2003a, 2003b). Yet they are not well positioned to do so effectively. Surveys conducted by Kennedy and Bielefeld (2006) indicate that few public managers or managers of small faith-based organizations understand the legal restrictions on the use of public money; many did not realize that public funds are not to be used for proselytizing. They find "virtually no evidence that program officers were concerned with constitutional compliance, monitored for constitutional compliance, or even knew who (if anyone) in their state had responsibility in such matters" (p. 169). For instance, although direct proselytizing during service provision is not allowed in faith-based organizations receiving public funds, this prohibition has been little enforced (GAO, 2006; Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2002). Furthermore, state agencies lack the resources to effectively monitor whether government funds are used for religious purposes (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006).

Second, religion may be related to the effectiveness of public services. One rationale for the increased reliance on faith-based organizations is that they are viewed as "efficient actors that are highly motivated to serve 'customers' and able to impact long-term behavior in ways not possible for traditional public agencies" (Hula et al., 2007, p. 69). Although little difference between the effectiveness of faith-based versus secular service providers has been reported by some research (Hula et al., 2007; Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006), faith-based programs appear to provide more intangible benefits, such as hope and faith, and report fewer client complaints (Monsma, 2003; Ragan, 2004). In addition, the nature of the interaction between program staff and service recipients may differ between faith-based and secular service providers. For instance, in one survey, "a deep faith in God" was found to be by far the most important variable in promoting trust between caretakers and their clients, even more important than race and a willingness to bend the rules to help the client (Wuthnow, 2004). Even in secular public service organizations, attitudes toward religion may play a role. In one sample of agencies that delivered services to the homeless, researchers found that 26% of respondents reported that they *agree* or *strongly agree* with the practice of praying with clients and 42% approved of speaking about spiritual matters with clients (Ebaugh, Pipes, Chafetz, & Daniels, 2003).

In contrast, it is conceivable that the religious backgrounds and attitudes held by public servants may pose an impediment to service delivery. For instance, one news story reported that when a woman was arrested on an outstanding warrant in Florida when reporting to the police that she had been raped, a county jail worker refused to provide the arrested woman a recommended second dose of the morning-after pill, reportedly because of religious objections (Catalanello, 2007).

The religious character of public administrators also may be a factor when making client referrals for social services. Some clergy indicate that if offered a choice between a sectarian or a secular service provider, they would refer an individual to a sectarian organization even if it may mean a lower quality of service (Collett, Guidry, Martin, & Sager, 2006). Highly religious public managers faced with similar choices may make a similar recommendation, or be less inclined to find for citizens or inform them about secular service alternatives even though required to do so under Charitable Choice. Little is known about how frequently public servants' religious beliefs conflict with job responsibilities or how they handle such conflicts when they do arise.

Third, the growing religious heterogeneity of the American population makes religion an increasingly relevant characteristic for a representative bureaucracy. Research suggests that the demographic characteristics of

service providers can affect service delivery (Hindera, 1993; Keiser, Wilkins, & Meier, 2002; Meier & Stewart, 1992; Meier, Stewart, & England, 1989; Selden, 1997). Studies of representative bureaucracy began with a focus on class, occupations, and geography, then expanded to include race, ethnicity, and gender, and more recently have included ability/disability, sexual orientation, and age (Kelly, 1998; Thielemann & Stewart, 1996), and now may need to address religion. The New Public Management, characterized by employee empowerment, outsourcing, and entrepreneurship, increases worker discretion and makes issues of a representative bureaucracy even more relevant (Dolan & Rosenbloom, 2003) and raises issues about how religion might influence service delivery.

Fourth, the religious heterogeneity of the American population also has implications for the internal operations of public organizations. Although most attention to workplace diversity has focused on primary or unchanging characteristics such as race and gender, secondary dimensions of diversity, such as income, work experience, education, and religion may also influence a person's worldview (Bailey, 2004). Thus, research on the religious beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of public servants would contribute to discussions of diversity in the workplace in terms of how religious orientations might affect decision making and how religious norms of employees need to be accommodated.

Fifth, implicit throughout the above discussion is the general notion that religion influences individual attitudes and behaviors within the workplace. "Religious adherents often hold deeply rooted convictions that, in many cases, include obligations that have a fundamental effect on how they appear and act as employees" (Hicks, 2003, p. 84; see also, Leland & Denhardt, 2005). In a review of several books dealing with the role of religion in contemporary American politics, Zinke (1999) argues: "Religious convictions have definite implications for political and administrative thought and activity" (p. 177). This is confirmed by an in-depth study of two public administrators, which concluded that there was a "deep connection between their religious beliefs and their conception of their professional life" (Lowery, 2005, p. 327). Furthermore, there is evidence that religious conviction is positively related to job satisfaction (Wuthnow, 1994). Although the relationship is complex, religious beliefs also can exert some impact on ethical behavior in the workplace (Weaver & Agle, 2002; Wuthnow, 1994).

In sum, religion is relevant for public administration. Acknowledging the religious character of public managers increases the salience of religion for public administration. It cannot simply be assumed that administrators will be able to leave their religion at the front door of the office building and act

as neutral decision makers. Instead, many people regard their religion to be important in everything that they do, a sentiment that is more strongly expressed by government employees than private sector workers (Houston et al., 2008). In particular, the religious background of public servants potentially has implications for the effectiveness of public services, the nature of their interactions with service recipients, the distribution of resources through administrative discretion, workplace diversity, and workplace attitudes and behaviors. However, little research has focused on the religious backgrounds and characteristics of public servants. Our intent is to rectify this situation by examining the religious affiliations, beliefs, and behaviors of public servants.

The Religiosity of Public Servants

How do public servants compare to the general public in their religious backgrounds, beliefs, and behaviors? One notable exception to the dearth of research on this question is provided by Lewis (1990), who compared public managers and the general public on a range of social and political attitudes using the 1982-1988 General Social Surveys. In terms of church attendance, strength of religious association, praying, and fundamentalism, he found that no significant differences set government employees apart from others in these data. The only statistically significant difference he reports is that the subset of public administration professionals and managers are less likely than the general public to be fundamentalist. Lewis concludes: "Government bureaucrats are about as religious as the general population" (p. 223).

However, research on public service motivation provides a theoretical linkage between public service and religion. Although the existence of a public service ethic long has been assumed to characterize public servants, it was not until Perry and Wise (1990) focused attention on the motivational bases of public service that a theory of public service motivation began to emerge. Initial research focused on developing measures of public service motivation and demonstrating its existence, especially among public employees (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Perry, 1996). Common to the various characterizations of public service motivation are a commitment to the public interest, a desire to serve the public, compassion, and support for social equity. More recently, scholars have examined the implications of a public service motive for behavior (Houston, 2006; Kim, 2005; Naff & Crum, 1999; Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan, 2008).

A theory of public service motivation also needs to identify its sources. For instance, Moynihan and Pandey (2007) indicate that this ethic can be cultivated

by the work organization. More importantly for our purpose, Perry (2000) identifies a broad range of influences as he writes, "An individual's self-concept (i.e., his or her identity and values) is a significant filter through which these motivational processes operate. The individual's self-concept, however, does not rise fully formed in a vacuum. Individuals are social creations who come by their values and identities in a variety of ways, including exposure to institutions and mechanisms of social development" (p. 480). Drawing on socialization research, he identifies "the family, churches, and schools" as institutions important in this development (p. 480).

There are several ways that religion may cultivate a public service motive. First, through an emphasis on communal values, religion serves to balance out the atomistic and egoistic character of modern society. Economic individualism that is a key element of American capitalist culture holds that individuals are not responsible for another's welfare (Cnaan, Boddie, & Yancey, 2003). In contrast, all major world religions emphasize a communal orientation by promoting collective social responsibility, justice, altruism, and service to others. Religion reduces motivation based on materialist and egoistic rewards, instead focusing attention on transcendent values that reward cooperation sometime in the future (Harris, 2003). Involvement in church congregations instills in individuals religious norms of compassion, looking to others, and community involvement. Smidt (2003) sums up this view: "religious life, located within civil society, both enables public moral choices to be made and fosters basic forms of civility and social restraint which, in turn, promote the common, and not just one's individual good" (p. 220). Thus, Perry (1997) concludes: "Religious foundational beliefs are related directly to several facets of public service motivation, specifically commitment to the public interest/civic duty and compassion" (p. 184).

Second, religion provides an opportunity to come into contact with other people and to develop an appreciation for the perspectives and needs of others. Churches are expected to exhibit some sort of outreach to the needy beyond the congregation (Cnaan et al., 2003). The norm of "care for the needy," and "care" more generally, are regarded by Americans as religious values (Ammerman, 1997). As Cnaan et al. (2003) write: "All major religions have developed a theology, a corresponding set of rules, and mechanisms to help others in need" (p. 29). Thus, religious congregations are important in the delivery of social services to a community, especially in urban areas. Through carrying out social services, church members have the opportunity to come in contact with, and work alongside of, others outside their congregation (Cnaan et al., 2003). By providing the opportunity for observational

learning and modeling that Bandura (1986) regards as important for transmitting values and behaviors, religious congregations further inculcate members with religious doctrine and desirable behavior.

Third, churches provide an opportunity for individuals to develop the skills necessary for effective civic engagement (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995) and are one of the most important factors in fostering civic engagement, especially volunteering for charitable causes (Coleman, 2003; Smidt, 2003). Through civic engagement, social trust is generated and an appreciation of other perspectives is developed. As Smidt, Green, Guth, and Kellstedt (2003) conclude: "Participation in voluntary associations fosters interactions between people and increases the likelihood that trust between members will be generated. Group activity helps to broaden the scope of an individual's interest, making public matters more relevant" (p. 154). This is consistent with the finding that public servants are more likely to volunteer and donate blood than are others (Houston, 2006).

It is for these reasons that Perry (1997) hypothesized: "Higher levels of involvement in church activities should be associated with higher public service motivation" (p. 184). Using survey data from a purposive sample of 295 respondents primarily drawn from public sector backgrounds, he finds partial support for the hypothesis in that "closeness to God" is positively correlated with an individual's level of public service motivation; however, church involvement is negatively related.

More recent research suggests a stronger relationship between religion and public service. For instance, Houston and Cartwright (2007) find that spirituality enjoys a greater prominence in the lives of public servants in contrast to their for-profit counterparts. Although religion and spirituality have recently become regarded as distinguishable concepts (Pargament, 1999; Roof, 1993; Wuthnow, 1998), they converge in that both share a sacred core and search process (Pargament, 1999). Spirituality and religion are thus regarded as interdependent yet distinct concepts, which is reflected in surveys that have found that the majority of Americans consider themselves to be both spiritual and religious (Marler & Hadaway, 2002; Scott, 2001; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). In addition, Houston et al. (2008) find that government employees report being more religious and are more likely to state that they try to carry their religious beliefs over into all aspects of their life than others. These government workers also possess less secular attitudes about the role of religion in public affairs.

Thus, even though there are theoretical reasons to expect that public servants may differ from the general population in terms of religiosity, only recently has the religious character of public servants garnered scholarly

attention. We will contribute to this nascent literature by examining the religious belonging, believing, and behaving of governmental and nongovernmental public servants.

Data and Method

The data used for this project come from the 2004 version of the General Social Survey (GSS) that was administered to a national sample of 2,812 individuals (Davis & Smith, 2005). In addition to general questions about religious affiliation asked of all participants, about half of the sample was administered questions that tap religious beliefs and practices. The GSS provides the best available data for studying the religious belonging, believing, and behaving of Americans.

Religious belonging is operationalized as religious denominational affiliation and commitment. To identify an individual's religious denomination, we utilize the coding scheme developed by Kellstedt, Green, Guth, and Smidt (1996; see also, Layman & Green, 2006) that groups the variety of denominations identified in the GSS into the following categories: Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Catholic, other Christians, Jewish, other faiths, and unaffiliated. A second variable created in the GSS classifies religious denominations according to their theological commonalities along a fundamental–moderate–liberal continuum (T. W. Smith, 1990). A third item taps the level of respondents' commitment to their religious denomination: "Would you call yourself a strong [their religious denomination] or not a very strong [their religious denomination]?"[1]

The religious beliefs held by respondents are measured by a second set of questions. The first of these taps beliefs about the Bible: "Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feeling about the Bible?" The response options are: "The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word"; "The Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word"; and "The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men." A second item is a binary variable for responses to the question: "Would you say you have been 'born again' or have had a 'born again' experience—that is, a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Christ?" As for religious behaviors, binary variables represent the following: prays at least once a day, attends religious services at least two to three times a month, belongs to a church or other religious organization, and participates in a church or other religious organization.

In terms of the independent variables included in the analysis, two binary variables were constructed to represent whether a respondent is employed in a public service occupation: governmental public service and public service outside of government. Although previous research on public servant attitudes typically equates government workers with being public servants (e.g., Brewer, 2003; Houston, 2000), we classify individuals employed in industries that provide essential and other services to communities as public servants, regardless of sector. The increased use of contracting out and other alternative service delivery arrangements means that more and more public services are being delivered to communities by individuals not employed directly by government (Light, 1999). Any emerging vision of the public service requires defining public servants based on what they do, not by the sector of employment (Perry, 2007). In addition to all government workers, we classify the following as public service industries: bus service and urban transit, health care, human and social services, utilities, and education.

Other individual attributes associated with religious attitudes and behaviors that are also included in the models are age, sex, race, education, marital status, dependent children in the home, and religious denomination. Religiosity is expected to be higher among women (Miller & Hoffman, 1995; Miller & Stark, 2002), African Americans (Miller & Hoffman, 1995; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995), and individuals that are married and those with a dependent child at home (Becker & Hofmeister, 2001; Chaves, 1991; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995). It is also expected that age is positively correlated with religiousness (Hout & Greeley, 1987; Iannaccone, 1998), whereas education exhibits a negative relationship (Iannaccone, 1998; Johnson, 1997). Binary variables represent being female, African American, other minority race, married, and having a child 18 years of age or younger in the home. Age in years and years of education are continuous variables.

The models are estimated with logistic regression because of the discrete nature of all dependent variables. In some instances, the dependent variable is binary, whereas in others it is a polychotomous nominal variable. Thus, binary and multinomial logistic regression models are estimated where appropriate.

Findings

The final sample from the 2004 GSS used for the analysis is composed of 2,698 respondents, of whom 19% are employed in government and an additional 16% are classified as employed in a public service occupation but not in government. Table 1 reports religious denomination by public service occupation category. Here, religious affiliation is operationalized using a

Table 1. Religious Denomination by Public Service Occupation

	Public service: Government	Public service: Nongovernment	General public	Total
Evangelical Protestant	107 (21.2)	119 (27.4)	468 (26.6)	694 (25.7)
Mainline Protestant	77 (15.3)	66 (15.2)	247 (14.0)	390 (14.5)
Black Protestant	66 (13.1)	65 (15.0)	162 (9.2)	293 (10.9)
Catholic	114 (22.6)	104 (24.0)	405 (23.0)	623 (23.1)
Other Christians	15 (3.0)	9 (2.1)	61 (3.5)	85 (3.2)
Jewish	12 (2.4)	7 (1.6)	34 (1.9)	53 (2.0)
Other Faiths	7 (1.4)	10 (2.3)	37 (2.1)	54 (2.0)
Unaffiliated	106 (21.0)	54 (12.4)	346 (19.7)	506 (18.8)
Total	504 (100.0)	434 (100.0)	1,760 (100.0)	2,698 (100.0)

Note: Values are *n* (%). $\chi^2 = 34.9$; $p = .002$; Cramer's $V = 0.080$.

faith traditions approach. It is assumed that religious denominations are distinct, and that those within a particular denomination share common customs and beliefs (Wuthnow, 1988). In general, the distribution of religious denomination for public servants is similar to that of the general public. The most notable differences are that a smaller proportion of the governmental public servants in the sample are Evangelical Protestants as compared to nongovernmental public servants and the general public. In contrast, a smaller proportion of the general public are Black Protestants in comparison to the public service groups, and the proportion of the sample that are unaffiliated with a religious denomination is lower for the nongovernmental public service group.

Although denominational affiliation used to signal common beliefs and customs, now theological and cultural divides cut across Protestant denominations (Wuthnow, 1988). It may be more important which side of these divides one falls on in this culture wars split than it is the particular denomination to which one belongs (Green, Guth, Smidt, & Kellstedt, 1996; Guth, Green, Smidt, Kellstedt, & Poloma, 1997). Using the classification of religious affiliation as fundamentalist, moderate, or liberal developed for the GSS (T. W. Smith 1990), the first two columns of Table 2 present the results of a multinomial regression analysis.[2] In neither column is the governmental public service variable statistically significant, indicating that the religious affiliation of government workers does not differ from the general public. However, the odds of reporting to associate with a liberal relative to a moderate religious denomination are 0.63 times

Table 2. Multinomial and Binary Logistic Regressions: Religious Belonging

	Multinomial model: Religious affiliation					
	Fundamentalist/ moderate		Liberal/ moderate		Strong denominational commitment	
Public service: Government	0.0489	(1.05)	0.0830	(1.09)	0.2449**	(1.28)
Public service: Nongovernment	−0.0931	(0.91)	−0.4699***	(0.63)	0.3211**	(1.38)
Age	0.0075**	(1.01)	0.0007	(1.00)	0.0146***	(1.01)
Female	0.0338	(1.03)	0.0714	(1.07)	0.3350***	(1.40)
African American	1.3553***	(3.88)	0.0174	(1.02)	−0.1141	(0.89)
Other minority race	−0.8200***	(0.44)	−0.8632***	(0.42)	−0.1891	(0.83)
Education (in years)	−0.0783***	(0.92)	0.0886***	(1.09)	0.0570***	(1.06)
Married	0.1021	(1.11)	−0.2410**	(0.79)	0.4097***	(1.51)
Child <18 years old in the home	0.2344**	(1.26)	−0.1863	(0.83)	0.0198	(1.02)
Evangelical Protestant					0.7965***	(2.22)
Mainline Protestant					−0.3549	(0.70)
Black Protestant					1.4318***	(4.19)
Catholic					0.2034	(1.23)
Other Christians					1.0566***	(2.88)
Jewish					0.6345*	(1.89)
Other faiths					0.4773	(1.61)
Constant	0.0569		−1.3628***		−2.6398***	
N	2560				2255	
LR test	253.3***				179.0***	
Pseudo-R^2	.049				.115	

Note: Odds ratios are in parentheses. Statistical tests were computed with robust standard errors. LR = likelihood ratio.
*$p \leq .10$. **$p \leq .05$. ***$p \leq .01$.

smaller for nongovernmental public servants than for the general public. Among the demographic attributes, age, race, education, and family structure are statistically correlated with denominational affiliation.

Based on this multinomial model, the predicted probabilities of associating with a fundamental religious denomination is .28 for both governmental public servants and the general public and .30 for nongovernmental public servants. In addition, the predicted probabilities of belonging to a liberal denomination are .31, .22, and .30 for governmental public servants, nongovernmental public servants, and the general public, respectively.[3]

The last column in Table 2 examines the strength of an individual's denominational commitment. It is evident that on this item there is a difference between public servants and others. Compared to the general public, the odds of reporting a "strong" commitment to a religious denomination are higher by a factor of 1.28 for governmental public servants and higher by a factor of 1.38 for nongovernmental public servants. Also, a higher level of commitment is reported by women and those who are married, and it increases with both age and education. The predicted probabilities for reporting a "strong" denominational commitment among the three categories are: governmental public service, .48; nongovernmental public service, .50; and general public, .42.

A look into religious beliefs is presented by the models in Table 3. The first two columns report the multinomial logistic regression analysis pertaining to a respondent's view of the Bible.[4] Whereas governmental public servants do not differ from the general public on this important aspect of religious belief, a difference does emerge between nongovernmental public servants and the general public. The odds of responding that the Bible is the "actual word of God" relative to the "inspired word of God" are 1.7 times higher for nongovernmental public servants than for the general public. Based on the multinomial logit model the predicted probabilities of accepting the inerrancy of the Bible are .15, .19, and .11 for governmental public servants, nongovernmental public servants, and the general public, respectively. In contrast, the predicted probabilities of viewing the Bible as the "inspired word of God" are .42, .40, and .39 for these groups, respectively.

In terms of the control variables, the more years of education that an individual reports, the more likely an individual is to view the Bible as the "inspired word of God" as opposed to the "actual word of God," and the more likely they are to view the Bible as a "book of fables" as opposed to the "inspired word of God." Not surprisingly, religious denomination is related to these attitudes. It is noteworthy that Evangelical and Black Protestants are more likely to view the Bible as the "word of God" than are those in other Christian denominations.[5]

Beyond attitudes about the Bible, the binary logistic regression model reported in column 3 provides an additional look at respondents' religious beliefs. This model indicates that public servants are more likely to have

Table 3. Multinomial and Binary Logistic Regressions: Religious Believing

	Multinomial model: View of the Bible					
	Actual word of God/inspired word of God		Book of fables/ inspired word of God		Born again	
Public service: Government	0.2212	(1.25)	−0.2104	(0.81)	0.3793**	(1.46)
Public service: Nongovernment	0.5293**	(1.70)	−0.1802	(0.84)	0.5724***	(1.77)
Age	0.0006	(1.00)	0.0120**	(1.01)	−0.0068	(0.99)
Female	0.1592	(1.17)	−0.3754**	(0.69)	0.1258	(1.13)
African American	0.4085	(1.50)	0.1005	(1.11)	0.6977	(2.01)
Other minority race	0.6220**	(1.86)	−0.0546	(0.95)	0.3230	(1.38)
Education (in years)	−0.2135***	(0.81)	0.0931***	(1.10)	−0.0153	(0.98)
Married	0.2521*	(1.29)	−0.3688*	(0.69)	0.3342**	(1.40)
Child <18 years old in the home	0.0796	(1.08)	−0.1255	(0.88)	0.1839	(1.20)
Evangelical Protestant	1.4811***	(4.40)	−3.0278***	(0.05)	2.5784***	(13.18)
Mainline Protestant	0.2116	(1.24)	−1.7992***	(0.17)	1.0404***	(2.83)
Black Protestant	2.0697***	(7.92)	−1.7487**	(0.17)	1.9584***	(7.09)
Catholic	−0.1702	(0.84)	−1.9843***	(0.14)	0.1560	(1.17)
Other Christians	0.2537	(1.29)	−1.4376***	(0.24)	1.6853***	(5.39)
Jewish	0.0649	(1.07)	0.0633	(1.07)	−0.4058	(0.67)
Other faiths	−0.4620	(0.63)	−0.1072	(0.90)	−1.2389	(0.29)
Constant	1.3037**		−1.1871**		−2.0223***	
N	1221				1242	
LR test	400.6***				264.2***	
Pseudo-R^2	.214				.315	

Note: Odds ratios are in parentheses. Statistical tests were computed with robust standard errors. LR = likelihood ratio.
*$p \leq .10$. **$p \leq .05$. ***$p \leq .01$.

experienced "a turning point in [their] life when [they] committed [themselves] to Christ" than are members of the general public. In comparison to others, the odds of being "born again" are 1.46 times higher for governmental public servants and 1.77 times higher for nongovernmental public servants. The predicted probabilities that a respondent is "born again" are .34 for governmental public servants, .38 for nongovernmental public servants, and .26

for all others. Such an experience is also more common for those who are married and among the Protestant denominations.

The last set of binary logistic regression models considers the religious behaviors of respondents (see Table 4). Four types of behaviors are examined: praying, attending religious services, belonging to a church or other religious organization, and participating in a church or other religious organization. Although there is no statistically significant difference between public servants and the general public in the propensity to pray often (i.e., at least once a day), differences do emerge in the more communal forms of religious behavior.

Public servants, regardless of employment sector, are more likely to attend religious services often (i.e., at least two to three times a month) than are others. In comparison with the general public, the odds of frequent attendance are 1.57 times higher for governmental public servants and 1.38 times higher for nongovernmental public servants. The predicted probabilities of attending religious services at least two to three times a month are: governmental public servants, .44; nongovernmental public servants, .41; and the general public, .33.

A similar pattern is evident in terms of membership in a church or other religious organization. Public servants in government have odds of membership that are 1.48 times higher than for the general public, whereas public servants outside of government have odds that are 1.52 times higher than others. This difference is reflected in the predicted probabilities for the model that indicate that both governmental and nongovernmental public servants have a .68 probability of belonging to a church or religious organization as compared to .59 for the general public.

In contrast to the previous behaviors, the last model in Table 4 indicates that only governmental public servants differ from the general public in terms of active participation in a church or other religious organization. Public servants employed in government have odds of participating in such an organization that are 1.47 times larger than for the general public. Governmental public servants have a predicted probability of indicating that they are active participants equal to .40, as compared to predicted probabilities of .38 and .32 for nongovernmental public servants and the general public, respectively.[6]

As hypothesized, women are more likely to report engaging in each of these four religious activities, which also tend to increase with age and being married. Having a dependent child at home is statistically correlated with more frequent church attendance and belonging to and participating in a religious organization, perhaps reflecting the responsibility that parents feel to act as role models for these observable behaviors.

Table 4. Binary Logistic Regressions: Religious Behaving

	Prays often	Attends religious services often	Belongs to church or religious organization	Participates in church or religious organization
Public service: Government	0.1556 (1.17)	0.4539*** (1.57)	0.3928** (1.48)	0.3858** (1.47)
Public service: Nongovernment	−0.0362 (0.96)	0.3237** (1.38)	0.4185** (1.52)	0.2711 (1.31)
Age	0.0188*** (1.02)	0.0211*** (1.02)	0.0053 (1.01)	0.0145*** (1.01)
Female	1.1269*** (3.09)	0.4121*** (1.51)	0.3799*** (1.46)	0.3722*** (1.45)
African American	0.6894 (1.99)	0.5893 (1.80)	0.2130 (1.24)	0.6823 (1.98)
Other minority race	0.7052*** (2.02)	0.2112 (1.24)	−0.7234*** (0.49)	−0.3826 (0.68)
Education (in years)	0.0166 (1.02)	0.0656*** (1.07)	0.0661*** (1.07)	0.1071*** (1.11)
Married	0.1185 (1.13)	0.6352*** (1.89)	0.4146*** (1.51)	0.5624*** (1.75)
Child <18 years old in the home	0.1472 (1.16)	0.3650*** (1.44)	0.4818*** (1.62)	0.2651* (1.30)
Evangelical Protestant	1.9926*** (7.33)	3.0110*** (20.31)	3.1718*** (23.85)	3.3976*** (29.89)
Mainline Protestant	0.9412*** (2.56)	1.9594*** (7.09)	2.7579*** (15.77)	2.6276*** (13.84)
Black Protestant	1.9827*** (7.26)	3.1990*** (24.51)	2.8596*** (17.45)	2.6576*** (14.26)
Catholic	1.3669*** (3.92)	2.5610*** (12.95)	3.0754*** (21.66)	2.9254*** (18.64)
Other Christians	1.3334*** (3.79)	2.8316*** (16.97)	3.5038*** (33.24)	3.3166*** (27.58)
Jewish	−0.2639 (0.77)	0.6280 (1.87)	1.9966*** (7.36)	1.6260*** (5.08)
Other faiths	0.2626 (1.30)	1.9358*** (6.93)	1.5996*** (4.95)	1.6728*** (5.33)
Constant	−2.7565***	−5.4640***	−3.8054***	−5.9871***
N	1255	2663	1403	1403
LR test	210.4***	423.7***	262.8***	191.4***
Pseudo-R^2	.272	.372	.363	.379

Note: Odds ratios are in parentheses. Statistical tests were computed with robust standard errors. LR = likelihood ratio.
*$p \leq .10$. **$p \leq .05$. ***$p \leq .01$.

Education is positively correlated with church attendance, organizational membership, and organizational participation, contrary to what was hypothesized. All three of these religious behaviors are visible by others in the community and this finding is consistent with the explanation that individuals with high social status will engage in activities that help them to maintain their stature in the community, a notion similar to Wuthnow's (2002) status-bridging social capital.

Discussion

In terms of "belonging, believing, and behaving," the religious character of public servants differs in some respects from nonpublic servants. Although there is little difference in terms of denominational affiliation, public servants have a stronger commitment to, and are more active in, their religious communities. These findings are consistent with previous research that concludes public servants possess more spiritual attitudes (Houston & Cartwright, 2007) and are more religious and less secular when compared to others (Houston et al., 2008). Furthermore, the fact that governmental public servants are more likely to be active in their religious communities than the general public is consistent with previous research that concludes government workers are more civically engaged and more likely to volunteer for charitable organizations than the general public (Houston, 2006, 2008).

Coupled with previous research that reports public service motivation to be higher among public servants, the results suggest a correlation between religion and public service motivation. Although it is beyond the scope of our analysis to examine this linkage, religious institutions may indeed cultivate a public service ethic as hypothesized by Perry (1997). Thus, research on the determinants of public service motivation should explore religion as one explanatory factor beyond the workplace.

However, our findings are contrary to Lewis's (1990) conclusion that there are no significant differences in religiosity when comparing government employees with the general public. The contrasting findings may be a function of several methodological differences between the projects. First, respondents in nongovernmental public service industries are grouped into Lewis's broad category of "general public," which could suppress observed differences with public managers. Second, Lewis's conclusion is based on a bivariate analysis whereas we control for individual characteristics that are correlated with religious beliefs and behaviors. Third, we use a wider range of variables to measure religious beliefs and behaviors. Although the data do come from different

years, there is no theoretical reason to expect that the religiosity of government employees has changed over the past decade.

Conclusion

In contrast to business management and other fields, religion has received little attention from public administration scholars (Houston et al., 2008). This implies that public servants possess a secular character and that religion is irrelevant for public administration. We examine the religious belonging, believing, and behaving of public servants, and in so doing seek to contribute to the nascent literature on religion in public administration. Contrary to what may be assumed, public servants express a higher level of religiosity and participation in religious communities than does the general public. Religion is a relevant topic for scholars of public administration.

Several questions are raised in light of our findings. One such question is, How did these differences in religiosity develop? Work experiences may shape values; public service may somehow lead employees to adopt a greater interest in religious and spiritual values. An alternative route is that religious values lead people to select occupations where these values can be realized. The evidence regarding this latter explanation is mixed (Wuthnow, 1994). However, there are a significant number of Americans who feel a religious calling to their work. For the most religiously active Americans in the workforce, almost half view their work as a calling (Wuthnow, 1994). Future research might examine whether public servants who view their work as a religious calling differ from those who do not share this belief.

What impact do religious attributes have for workplace behavior, such as retention? Given the high burnout rates in public service, findings that show a positive relationship between religious conviction and job satisfaction (Wuthnow, 1994) should lead researchers to examine this relationship in more detail. Are people who are less religious or less spiritual more likely to leave public service, and does this attrition account for the relatively high rates of religiosity among public servants? Another avenue of research is whether religion influences workplace ethics. Although empirical attention to this area has increased in recent years, most studies have been of private organizations (Weaver & Agle, 2002). We have virtually no research in public administration on whether the workplace behavior of those with strong religious convictions differs from those without these convictions. It may be that for most public servants, religion is completely a private concern that has no impact on work. At the very least, these are critical questions that need to be addressed.

Arguably the most important question to be answered is whether religion shapes the delivery of public services. How does the religious belief or spirituality of public servants affect clients' perception of service delivery? After asking AIDS patients what characteristics they desired in their public caregivers, Thielemann and Stewart (1996) concluded, "Weberian neutrality is not always advantageous" (p. 168). The ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation of the caregiver mattered. The observations that efficiency in the delivery of services should be replaced by some other criteria, such as love (Cunningham, 2005; Farmer, 2005), suggest that citizens want something other than or in addition to a dispassionate, objective public bureaucracy. Limited research thus far suggests we should add religion to the list of variables relevant to representative bureaucracy. To the extent that this is desired, our findings suggest that the public service is fairly representative of the public.

Although a good number, even a majority, of clients may prefer a service provider with strong religious beliefs who brings these beliefs into their interactions with citizens (Wuthnow, 2004), this stance raises serious concerns. What about those who do not share the religious convictions of the service providers? Do they feel uncomfortable, judged, or unable to communicate effectively with these public servants? Do they believe they receive the same level of service as those who share the religious beliefs of the service providers? Do they in fact receive the same level of services? Do religious beliefs and practices merely cultivate the values of caring, compassion, and service among service providers, or are they more likely to produce decisions tied to religious dogma in instances when beliefs conflict with circumstances? These are among the questions that need to be answered for us to understand the relevance of religion for public administration.

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Notes

1. Although these were the only two options read by the interviewer, "somewhat strong" was coded if volunteered and "no religion" was used to classify those not offering a denominational affiliation in a previous question. For the 2004 sample, 9.6% volunteered "somewhat strong" and 13.8% were classified as "no religion."

These two categories were collapsed with the "not very strong" response to create a binary variable.

2. The Hausman test of independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) was conducted, generating three test statistics by excluding in turn each category of the dependent variable (exclusion of … fundamental: $\chi^2 = -0.294$, $p = 1.00$; liberal: $\chi^2 = 0.134$, $p = 1.00$; moderate: $\chi^2 = 3.756$, $p = .96$). The statistically insignificant test statistics indicate that adding or deleting each alternative does not affect the odds of the remaining alternatives, satisfying a key assumption of multinomial logistic regression analysis. A negative test statistic indicates that the IIA assumption has not been violated (Long & Freese, 2006).
3. Predicted probabilities were computed using Clarify (Tomz, Wittenberg, & King, 2001) with the other independent variables set at their means.
4. The Hausman test of IIA was generated, and it indicated that the model satisfies the assumption of IIA (exclusion of … Bible is the actual word of God: $\chi^2 = -2.442$, $p = 1.00$; Bible is the inspired word of God: $\chi^2 = -1.271$, $p = 1.00$; Bible is a book of fables: $\chi^2 = -2.788$, $p = 1.00$).
5. A series of tests for the equality of two coefficients indicates that although Evangelical and Black Protestants do not differ from each other in this response ($p > .10$), each is statistically different from each of the other denominational categories ($p \leq .10$).
6. For each of the four religious behavior models, tests for the equality of the governmental and nongovernmental public service variables are not statistically significant ($p > .10$).

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